

The Dog Days of Summer TV

By Paula Tudor

August is an odd month. The weather is still as hot and humid as any day in July, yet we are surrounded by touches of fall. August is even odder if you are a TV viewer. We see previews of great new fall shows while the summer season is still churning out shows of its own.

Hallmark Channel has been promoting their latest original series, Chesapeake Shores, all summer. I assume it was meant to replace Cedar Cove, which was cancelled last year. Chesapeake Shores, which premiered on August 14th, was packaged as a typical summer show, complete with beach-like settings. Unfortunately these settings seem to be the show's only consistency. In fact, the previews did not even offer a complete picture of what the show is about. This is probably because, even after three episodes, it seems like the creators, producers, and writers are still confused about what kind of show they are making. This is strange because it is based on a series of books by author Sherryl Woods. Granted, I have never read these books, so all of the show's problems may very well have originated with them. On the other hand, when has a show or a movie ever followed a book that closely?

Hallmark Channel's promos of Chesapeake Shores touted the show's premise as the reuniting of lost loves after a woman returns home and reconnects with her high school sweetheart. I have been wondering how they were going to turn this idea into a weekly series, especially since none of the other characters were ever really promoted. Of course I knew there would be other characters, but since they were not promoted it was easy to assume they were just going to be supporting players in this "will they, won't they" story. This is not the case, as Chesapeake Shores seems to be more of an ensemble show. In fact, Abby O'Brien and Trace Riley, who I assumed, based on the promos, were the show's main characters, often fade into the background. While perplexing, this does not represent Chesapeake's biggest problem.

The most significant battle that Chesapeake Shores is facing in terms of its longevity is the writing. The dialogue is frequently nonsensical and seemingly pointless, and the plot holes are big enough to swallow up the entire cast. For instance there is a strange scene in one of the episodes in which a fully clothed Abby is swimming in a pond. When Trace walks up she tells him to turn around so he does not see her as she is getting out of the water - again fully clothed. So he turns his head and holds up his flannel shirt for her. She wraps up in it, they talk for a minute, and when the conversation is finished she takes off the shirt and hands it back to him. The fact that these two had just been swimming together the night before makes this scene all the more confusing.

What is frustrating about Chesapeake Shores is that it does not seem like they are making any effort to fix the writing, yet after the first episode they recast the dog. I am not just talking about changing from one dog to another similar looking dog. They switched to an entirely different breed. Apparently someone thought Jesse Metcalfe (Trace) looked more like he would own a German Shepherd instead of a Golden Retriever. What a waste of a talented cast to focus on something so trivial when there are more significant problems in need of immediate attention.

Chesapeake Shores airs on the Hallmark Channel Sunday nights at 9/8c and stars Jesse Metcalfe, Meghan Ory, Treat Williams, Barbara Niven, and Diane Ladd.

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