

This is Us Overrated

By Paula Tudor

The new fall television season is here, bringing with it some promising new shows and some not so promising. One such show is NBC's highly anticipated This is Us. People fell deeply in love with this show way before it premiered on the peacock network. To date, the This is Us official trailer has garnered more than 8 million views on YouTube, views which began months before the pilot aired on September 20th. When I finally got around to contributing to that staggering number of views I had a difficult time understanding what all of the buzz was about. Unfortunately watching the actual show did nothing to increase my understanding.

This is Us follows the lives of various people who are celebrating their 36th birthdays. Now firmly entrenched in their 30s, they are all in different places in their lives. Many of them are at a crossroads, trying to figure out their next step. I get what NBC was trying to do here. It is obvious that they were trying to create a beautiful, moving, masterful dramedy. The key word, of course, is *"trying"*. They have tried so hard to create something of substance that much of This is Us feels forced, not authentic. The show is largely an experience in emotional manipulation, from the writing to the acting, and right down to that single-camera technique that NBC is so fond of utilizing. I realize this technique is supposed to make people feel more invested in what they are watching, and quite frankly it is probably cheaper too, but it really is not necessary. Not to mention that personally I have a much easier time focusing on a show's storytelling when the camera is not moving all over the place.

Most of the cast of This is Us are relatively unknown. Mandy Moore will probably be the most familiar name to many, with the exception of Gerald McRaney, who I assume is only in the pilot episode. Other cast members include Milo Ventimiglia from Gilmore Girls, Sterling K. Brown from FX's The People vs. O.J. Simpson, Chrissy Metz from American Horror Story, and Justin Hartley, who just finished up his run as Adam on The Young and the Restless.

This is Us is one of those shows that people are either going to love or hate. If you loved the trailer you are probably going to tune in to the show every week. If, like me, the trailer did not impress you, you will probably want to find something else to watch on Tuesday nights at 10/9c. I think perhaps Justin Hartley's character, Kevin, said it best when he addressed the live audience of a show he was quitting: "It's your fault for demanding so little of us that we settle." If you watch This is Us and truly like or even love the show, then by all means continue watching it. If you have not watched it yet, remember you cannot always believe the hype. Getting caught up in that is one reason why we, as viewers, have thousands of channels to choose from and nothing to watch.

Paula Tudor is a freelance writer, and a distinguished blogger/online correspondent, with more than three thousand followers on twitter. The bulk of her work can be found at <http://www.paulas-soapbox.blogspot.com>