

CHUCKY Season One

Charles In Charge



★★★★★

UK Sky Max, Fridays

US Syfy, finished

► Showrunner Don Mancini

► Cast Zackary Arthur, Brad Dourif,

Alyvia Alyn Lind, Bjorgvin Arnarson

EPISODES 1.01-1.08 **It's taken 33**

years for Chucky to get sole billing in his own franchise, which can be split into two distinct eras. There's the straight horror of the *Child's Play* years, then there's the wilder, wackier...of *Chucky* period.

Don Mancini's been there for all of it, as writer, director, and now TV showrunner. But just because Mancini's made the show's title as simple and direct as it's ever been doesn't that it's been dumbed down. It's a complex blend of the two eras, which dares to make every single moment canon, with plenty of ideas of its own.

We follow Jake, a troubled teenager struggling with his sexuality. While Jake's story contains some clichéd tropes (he's bullied both at school, and at home), he's unique in this franchise: Chucky doesn't see him as a potential victim, but a possible protégé. Mancini cleverly weaves in Chucky's backstory through a series of increasingly interesting flashbacks, which peak when Fiona Dourif saunters in, playing her father Brad – yes, you read that right. Dourif Sr, incidentally,

“It's a complex blend of the two eras, daring to make every single moment canon”



is as incredible as ever as the voice of Chucky.

The ensemble cast is superb, especially Alyvia Alyn Lind, whose Lexy treads a fine line between hateful and occasionally sympathetic with camp relish. Other highlights include a brilliant score, wince-inducing sound effects, and some cinematic practical effects.

The unique approach continues

into the excellent final scene, which contains both a cliffhanger and a conclusion. Perhaps Mancini was concerned about the production line's capacity to churn out another doll. He needn't have. Season two's already greenlit. If it's as good as the first, he'll be our friend 'til the end. **Sam Ashurst**

i Jake is the first LGBT lead in the *Child's Play* series, but the fifth (human) LGBT character after David, Barb, Jill and Carlos.

INVASION Season One

The world ending with a whimper

★★★☆☆

UK/US Apple TV+, streaming now

► Showrunners Simon Kinberg,

David Weil

► Cast Golshifteh Farahani, Shamier

Anderson, Shiori Kutsuna, Billy Barratt

EPISODES 1.01-1.10 **While it's**

unlikely that the one-line pitch for *Invasion* was “Let's make the dullist alien invasion show ever!”, by the time you've sat through all 10 mind-numbing episodes you can't help thinking it's possible.

The intention is clear: an invasion of Earth seen from the viewpoint of ordinary people with no access to privileged information, showing the confusion, the terror and the struggle to survive when you don't know what's going on. In a series of parallel storylines we see the events unfold globally through the

eyes of a dysfunctional family in the States; a group of kids going full-on *Lord Of The Flies* in the UK; a soldier in Afghanistan; an aerospace engineer in Japan; and, oddly, a small-town US sheriff whose plot is abruptly curtailed in episode one and appears to have only been included so they could get Sam Neill's name into the pre-publicity.

Sounds promising? Sadly the aliens seem in no hurry to trash the planet, the human characters are uniformly dull, and everything

“The show clearly wants to be *Lost* but the backstories here are mundane”



and anything takes aeons of the running time to achieve. The show clearly wants to be *Lost* but the backstories here are a mundane litany of off-the-shelf relationship woes that it's hard to care about.

When some semblance of a sci-fi plot does surface, it's fairly humdrum, derivative stuff and hardly enough to reward your efforts to stay awake. The series certainly looks lavish, but feels like

a waste of production values. There are some effectively tense action set-pieces, and a gloriously silly bit with David Bowie saving the world. But mostly *Invasion* feels like the ultimate experiment in delayed gratification – which will come only after the show's been cancelled. **Dave Golder**

i The series was inspired by *The War Of The Worlds* – not the book, but the panic surrounding the Orson Welles radio play.