



hot zone

Meet The Ass-Kicking New
Women Of Prime-Time TV

Who are these new women that are captivating guys who don't mind a cool girl in charge? Try Sarah, Jessica and Jennifer... the new prime-time hip with an edge.

By Josie Brown



Eye on the Spy

Heroine: Sydney Bristow (played by Jennifer Garner)

Television Show: *Alias* (ABC)

Occupation: Part-time grad student at a major Los Angeles university and full time CIA double agent.

Why we love her: Sydney is always there for her friends, like the time she had to tell her roommate that her fiancé had been two-timing her. Little things—like detonated nuclear warheads, thug assassins and centuries-old encrypted documents—rarely get in her way.

"I like to see that she's not just a suit-wearing, stone-faced spy," says *Alias* creator J.J. Abrams. "Although she may be terrified in certain situations, she knows how to keep it together. I like to see that she will goof off with her friends. Seeing her live the normal part of her life reminds us that she is just one of us."

The Turning Point: What's a girl to do when she finds out that the Company (with a capital "C," as in the CIA) she works for is, low and behold, not the Company at all, but SD-6, a treacherous shadow agency created to steal government secrets? Given the chance to run for her life, Sydney instead chooses to introduce herself to the real CIA, and becoming a mole inside SD-6.

Vamp Champ



Heroine: Buffy Summers (played by Sarah Michelle Gellar)

Television Show: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (UPN)

Occupation: World's protector from netherworldly ghouls.

Why we love her: When we first met Buffy, she was a disaffected teen in suburban Sunnydale—until she discovered that Sunnydale is really Hellmouth, a portal into the underworld, and that she is in fact her generation's "chosen one," a "slayer" whose super strength allows her to fight vampires.

"In the past, women characters in the horror genre were crude devices," explains *Buffy* executive producer Marti

Noxon. "Buffy is symbolic of female empowerment." Noxon attributes Buffy's success to her position as an outsider with a heart of gold. "Buffy is fallible, and that's why we can relate to her."

The Turning Point: Buffy has been less than lucky with love. One of her most significant relationships was with a guy who just so happened to come from the dark side: the vampire Angel.

"Buffy made choices common among many twenty-something women: She tried to downplay her strengths so that it wouldn't overshadow her while she searched for love," says Noxon.

Dream Genes

Heroine: Max Guevara (played by Jessica Alba)

Television Show: *Dark Angel* (Fox)

Occupation: Crafty bike messenger by day, protector of super-genetic misfits (and the world at large) by night.

Why we love her: In a not-too-distant post-apocalyptic America, Max—a loner with a bad attitude but a strong loyalty to her motley crew of on-the-fringe bike messenger co-workers—has a secret: She is in fact one of 12 genetically-enhanced super-humans who escaped from Manticore, a secret military agency.

Unable to live with the knowledge that Manticore is using and abusing the other trans-genes it has created, Max returns to the covert base and frees all of her "siblings." Having done so, Max then realizes they can only survive if they can learn to meld into a world suspicious of anyone or anything "different." In the beginning, explains *Dark Angel* producer Michael Angeli, Max was written very broadly so the character could evolve as the plot unfolded. "Jessica is naturally clever and witty, and she's brought those traits to the role of Max," he says.

It helps, too, that Alba makes Max' martial arts antics look so easy. "There is no doubt that Max makes great television eye candy," laughs Angeli. "But I think we've been disingenuous in a good way. It allows us to be subtle with the rest of the message: Turn every weakness into a strength, and if you are strong, use that talent for the right reasons."

The Turning Point: While robbing his penthouse apartment, Max meets and eventually falls in love with Logan, scion of a wealthy family. Logan also happens to be "Eyes Only," an activist and cyber-journalist who battles government and big business corruption. Soon Logan is able to convince Max to use her souped-up DNA for the good of his cause.

Angeli considers the character of Max to be "the Ferrari of television's female characters." Says Angeli: "Max is a strong woman, but she's not afraid to reach out to her friends for help, or to be there for her friends when they need help."

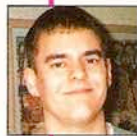


Lovin' the Ladies!

So which butt-kicking females of action leap immediately into the male mind? Who comes out on top of the heap? The answers may surprise you...



"The *Dark Angel* chick—Jessica Alba. She's a little more dark and mysterious than Buffy; she doesn't seem as goody two-shoes. Buffy seems a little bit too tea and crumpets. Jessica seems like she'd go to an underground club and do bad things."
—Jason, 30, law student



"I like the Power Puff Girls. In one episode, they rid the world of broccoli monsters by pouring cheese on them so kids would eat them. I can relate to that."
—Graham, 24, actuary



"I'd have to go with Jennifer Garner on *Alias*. She does all that kicking and never falls out of her outfits."
—Chris, 32, photographer



"Wonder Woman! She was one of the first and the forerunner of all female superheroes. You don't want to mess with a classic."
—John, 34, photographer

Compiled by Jessica Royer