

INSTANT GUIDE TO...

Birds of Prey

All you'll ever need to know!

The Premise

Batman has deserted the city of New Gotham after halting a reign of terror by The Joker. Since then, two young women have opted to take on the mantle of the Bat, and are joined by a teenager with special powers. Operating from a clocktower, the 'birds of prey' fight criminals, many of whom have superpowers, to keep the city's dark streets safe.

Background

The success of *Smallville* caused The WB to consider other superheroic options, settling on a female-led series (very) loosely based on a DC Comics Batman-related property and produced by the people behind *Smallville*. The comic features Oracle fighting crime from her base, with help from agents out in the field, usually Dinah Lance, aka Black Canary. It also sometimes features the big Bat himself, among others.

First Run

The Birds took flight on 9th October 2002...

Number of Episodes

...but were grounded shortly afterwards due to ratings being very poor. Seven episodes were transmitted before its cancellation was announced, but all 13 eventually saw the light of day.

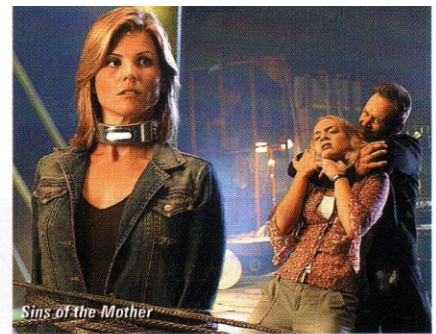
The Good Guys

Barbara Gordon/Oracle (Dina Meyer), formerly Batgirl, but

now wheelchair-bound since a bullet fired point blank by The Joker shattered her spine. She has put her technical knowledge to work, setting up the world's most hi-tech computer programs to continue her war on crime. She is joined by Helena Kyle (Ashley Scott), the daughter of Batman and Catwoman, who has cat-related metahuman powers and goes by the name of Huntress. The girls take in Dinah Lance (Rachel Skarsten), a teenager with mind-reading and telekinetic powers, in order to train her. Also on hand is faithful Bat-butler Alfred (Ian Abercrombie), who lends advice and tea as the occasion demands, while on the streets the girls are assisted by police detective Jesse Reece (Shemar Moore), who falls for Huntress.

The Bad Guys

Hoodlums and thugs mainly, but Harleen Quinzel (Mia Sara), a psychiatrist, plans to take over the city as Harley Quinn.



FLYING HIGH

Pilot

Stylish opener that neatly introduces the cast and concept.

Sins of the Mother

Jesse's background is explored and Black Canary drops by in the show's darkest episode.

Nature of the Beast

Some great work from Rachel Skarsten, as Dinah goes on the vengeance trail when Hawke reappears.

FLIGHTLESS BIRDS

The title of *Split* gives away any surprise; final episode *Devil's Eyes* has too many problems to list.

And Isn't That...

Mark Hamill provides the voice of The Joker in the opening episode, as he has in the *Batman* and *Justice League* cartoons. *X-Files* alumni Brian Thompson and Mitch Pileggi play The Crawler in *Split* and Al Hawke in *Nature of the Beast* respectively, while genre veteran Stephen McHattie plays Al Hawke before plastic surgery in *Sins of the Mother*. *Twin Peaks'* Sherilyn Fenn played Harley in the original pilot, but she was unable to commit to a series.

Overdone Clichés

Huntress refuses to reveal her identity to Jesse and continues not to date him; Dinah is told by Oracle or Huntress that she isn't ready and has to stay in the clocktower. Oh, and the dreadful CGI New Gotham.

Fashion Statements

Black leather for Huntress and, in later episodes, for Dinah, although it doesn't suit her. Lovely pastel colours and flowery tops for Babs.

Paul Spragg



Birds of Prey
Tuesdays & Fridays, 21.00

GH'S SARAH BROWN BATTLES BIRDS OF PREY

SARAH BROWN PLAYS A WOLF in tight clothing as a sexy thief who battles the heroines of *Birds of Prey* this week.

"My character's name is Lucy, a.k.a. Wolf, and I'm the second-in-command in a band of thieves," says Brown (ex-Carly, *General Hospital*). "It's sort of like Robin Hood, but backward — taking from the rich and giving to the rich."

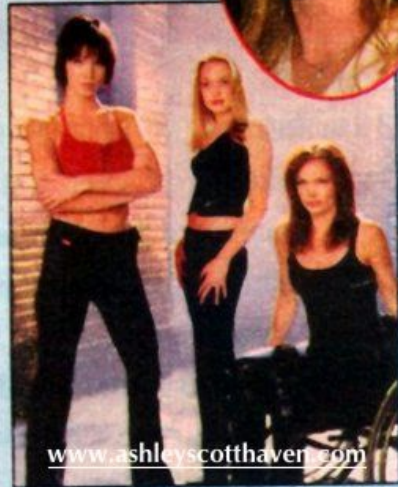
Lucy doesn't have any super-powers, but in keeping with the show's theme, she does sport a wild outfit. "It's very sexy. We wear a lot of leather, tight-fitting jeans and chrome-heeled boots, kind of *Mad Max*," Brown explains. "I wear a wolf mask when I'm doing my heist."

The heroic Huntress infiltrates the bad-girl gang undercover, and butts heads with Lucy, leading to some serious action.

"I got to do a lot of stunts. I got a few battle scars," Brown says enthusiastically. "I came home with a couple of nice big purple bruises on my leg. I got a real nice shiner. I twisted my ankle because I'm moving quickly up a staircase in very tall boots with pin heels. I ride a motorcycle, I shoot a big gun and get into fist-fights with Huntress. I shoot pool and play strip poker; I had to take my top off — don't miss that!" Brown adds with a laugh.

"I got along really well with Ashley Scott (*Huntress*), and I got to see Shemar Moore (Reese; ex-Malcolm Winters, *The Young and the Restless*)," Brown notes. "I had a blast."

Birds of Prey airs Wednesdays at 9 p.m. EST on The WB. ★ — JD



FIGHTING GLAD: Brown (inset) loved entering the world of (from left) Huntress, Dinah and Oracle.



Birds' superbabes Meyer, Skarsten and Scott (from left)

Ladies Who Punch

Xena who? Fierce, sexy and slightly campy; action heroines return to TV with the WB's *Birds of Prey*

THE STARS Ashley Scott, Dina Meyer, Rachel Skarsten

THE STORY The Huntress (Scott) — the superpowered daughter of Batman and Catwoman — and the Oracle

WHAT'S GOOD The pilot's dark, moody look is reminiscent of Tim Burton's *Batman* movies. Scott, who looks like she's been genetically engineered to play a twenty-first-century action

butt-kicker shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Alias*. (Smoldering gazes between the leads suggest the show may be going for *Xena* fans.) What's worse, the producers have said they may deglam the Huntress's eye-catching battle garb. In the original pilot, when the Oracle suggested that the Huntress wear a practical costume better suited to crime fighting, she responded, in horror, "You want me to dress like my parents?" In a word: No. **FINAL SAY** ★★ A pleasingly lite *Dark Angel*.

(The WB, Wednesdays, 9 P.M.; series premiere, October 9)

television

BY TOM CONROY

(Meyer), who was known as Batgirl until the Joker's bullet left her wheelchair-bound, battle crime in New Gotham City. Their teenage sidekick: psychic Dinah (Skarsten).

heroine, manages to be both menacing and funny while delivering lines like "I'm the Huntress, and you're the prey." **WHAT'S BAD** *Birds of Prey* doesn't quite live up to female

by Tom Glatto



Following in the footsteps of her superhero dad, the Huntress (Scott) battles a flock of villains.

Show of the week

Birds of Prey

The WB (Wednesdays, 9 p.m. ET)

It's hard to resist a supergirl series that has the gumption to kick off with more back story than *The Forsyte Saga*. To wit, here's just part of the lengthy premise to *Birds of Prey*: Catwoman has been murdered and Batman has vanished from the scene, but their illicit love child has grown into a statuesque looker who tends bar and is endowed with metahuman strength. Calling herself the Huntress (Ashley Scott), she swoops through the night sky in a lacey duster that looks as if Anne Robinson, *Weakest Link*'s former headmistress, had begun designing for Victoria's Secret. The

Huntress fights crime along with the former Batgirl, Barbara Gordon (Dina Meyer), who's now confined to a wheelchair—a victim of the Joker's gunfire—and concentrates on detective work from a clock-tower lair. There the two are joined by Dinah (Rachel Skarsten), a teenager with unexplained psychic powers.

Birds mixes the foxy-cuties-in-action of *Charlie's Angels* and the dark mutant fantasy of *X-Men*. It's fun, fast, no-cal: a caprice that incongruously unfolds in the heavy shadows of New Gotham. Things get a tremendous lift from Mia Sara as the Huntress's psychiatrist—the (now-jailed) Joker's lover. With spiky blonde hair and piercing eyes, Sara—unrecognizable from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*—is stiletto sharp. Her relationship with the Huntress promises to be a lot more twisted than Tony Soprano and Dr. Melfi's. **Bottom Line:** Watch the birdies

