'Battle Creek' premieres to cheers in Battle Creek

Andy Fitzpatrick, 10:34 p.m. EST February 24, 2015

"Battle Creek" has found its first official fans in Battle Creek.

The police drama created by Vince Gilligan of "Breaking Bad" fame premiered Tuesday at a special event in the city ahead of its 10 p.m. Sunday air date on CBS. The event was sponsored by the city of Battle Creek and WWMT-TV Ch. 3, a CBS affiliate.

The enthusiastic applause from the nearly full W.K. Kellogg Auditorium clearly signaled approval from the hometown crowd.

"Battle Creek" tells the story of a small-town police department's detective bureau getting somewhat unwanted help from the FBI, as an agent played by Josh Duhamel is stationed there to the frustration of Dean Winters' character.

Winters and Duhamel's characters chased a suspect down an alley off Emmett Street. Police headquarters is near Michigan Avenue and McCamly Street. The newspaper of record in town is the Battle Creek Intelligencer.

Anyone concerned by these points should keep Battle Creek Police Chief Jim Blocker's words in mind.

"I think we've got to go into this with a solid understanding that it is fiction, but we're going to have a lot of fun at the same time," Blocker said after the show. "I can appreciate that."

Blocker also liked the show from the perspective of a law enforcement officer.

"I thought it was great," Blocker said. "It's a solid representation of the seriousness and the complexities of crime, but also the reality that we try to make it fun. We laugh at ourselves and we have to be creative to get the job done."

Heading into the show at the red carpet event, though, there was some curiosity about what the show would really be about.

"I work for the Battle Creek Police Department, and show made about Battle Creek and the police department just seems like a pretty extraordinary thing," Jamie Felix said as she entered the auditorium. Her husband, Ray Felix, said the show will probably be good for the city overall.
"It's probably not going to be a great spin as far as the police officers are concerned, but just having something like this, an event like this, in the city of Battle Creek is positive," he said.

Meagan Dunlap of Battle Creek was there with her boyfriend, Thomas Little of Grand Rapids.

"I think it's really cool, especially since it's a really small town, kind of," Dunlap said. "It's like bragging rights when I talk to all my friends and stuff that aren't from here."

Probably the best-dressed couple at the event, Bill and Mary Trupiano, entered in flashy, 1920s attire completed by Bill's top hat.

They had a confession to make, though.

"My niece and nephew gave us the clothes to wear," Mary Trupiano said, laughing. "We had nothing."

The Trupianos were there to see how much the show featured the real Battle Creek and how much would be fiction. Well, and one other reason.

"It's like, what the heck," Mary Trupiano said. "How many premieres are you going to, do you suppose?"

After a performance from Battle Creek Central High School's choir and jazz band, comments from event organizers and a video presentation from Josh Duhamel, Dean Winters and Kal Penn — who plays a detective as well — signaled the start of the show.

Most of the Battle Creek shout-outs in the show such as street names and the occasional prop, like a BCC hat on a desk, prompted cheers or comments from the audience. The most cheers came, though, during the opening credits when footage of real Battle Creek locations was combined with cast and crew names.

Tiffany Blackman and LaToya Robinson of Battle Creek both enjoyed the show.

"I was actually hoping it wouldn't portray Battle Creek in a negative way," Blackman said. "I don't think it did. I really loved that they had street names and stuff like that."

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