

= Pilot ( Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. ) =

" Pilot " is the pilot and first episode of the first season of the American television series Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. , based on the Marvel Comics organization S.H.I.E.L.D. ( Strategic Homeland Intervention , Enforcement and Logistics Division ) , revolving around the character of Phil Coulson and his team of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents as they investigate a super @-@ powered man and the hacktivist group the Rising Tide . It is the first television episode to be set in the Marvel Cinematic Universe ( MCU ) , sharing continuity with the films of the franchise . The episode was written by series creators Joss Whedon , Jed Whedon , and Maurissa Tancharoen , and was directed by Joss Whedon .

The episode was ordered in 2012 , after Joss Whedon wrote and directed Marvel 's The Avengers , and was filmed in early 2013 in Los Angeles , California , with some additional filming in Paris , France . Clark Gregg reprises his role as Coulson from the film series , and is joined by principal cast members Ming @-@ Na Wen , Brett Dalton , Chloe Bennet , Iain De Caestecker , and Elizabeth Henstridge . Cobie Smulders guest stars , reprising her role of Maria Hill from The Avengers , with previous Whedon collaborators J. August Richards and Ron Glass also guest starring . Emphasis was put on consistency and continuity with the MCU films , and some elements are reused from the films throughout the episode , most notably extremis . The visual effects for the episode were nominated at the Visual Effects Society Awards .

" Pilot " originally aired on ABC on September 24 , 2013 , and according to Nielsen Media Research , was watched by 12 @.@ 12 million viewers , the highest ratings received by the first episode of a drama series since 2009 . The episode received a mostly positive response from critics , who praised Joss Whedon 's involvement and Richards ' performance , but were disappointed that the episode did not reach the standard of the MCU films . The use of the name ' Rising Tide ' received backlash from a real life group of the same name .

= = Plot = =

After the events of Iron Man 3 , Mike Peterson is out with his son , Ace , when the top floor of a nearby building explodes . Peterson uses enhanced strength to save a trapped woman from the building , and is filmed doing so by Skye , a member of the hacktivist group the Rising Tide . S.H.I.E.L.D. deputy director Maria Hill interviews Grant Ward for a new team under Agent Phil Coulson , who is officially dead . Coulson assigns Ward level 7 security clearance , and reveals the team 's first mission is to investigate the Rising Tide . Coulson also recruits the reluctant Agent Melinda May , who had previously retired from field duty .

Skye meets with Peterson and warns him about S.H.I.E.L.D. 's penchant for covering up superhero based events . She is shortly arrested by Coulson , and placed in the S.H.I.E.L.D. team 's mobile base of operations ( a plane nicknamed " The Bus " ) . During questioning Coulson slowly begins to gain her trust , and she reveals her limited knowledge of the mysterious Project Centipede and the location of the explosion ; Agents Leo Fitz and Jemma Simmons go to investigate the scene .

Peterson returns to the factory he was recently fired from , and injures his former boss , calling him the " bad guy " and himself the " hero " . Peterson then visits the woman he saved in the hospital , who is actually the doctor that gave him his abilities by implanting the Centipede device in his arm . She warns him against revealing his abilities to the public , which would be against the wishes of her backers . Fitz and Simmons discover from a damaged Centipede device , found at the explosion scene , that it combines several previously known sources of superpowers , including extremis , and it was the unstable extremis within a previous Centipede @-@ created superhero that had caused the explosion .

Peterson abducts Skye and makes her delete his and Ace 's personal information from the government 's systems , though she manages to warn the team at the same time . The two are tracked to a train station by Coulson 's team and a gunman sent by Peterson 's doctor . May takes out the gunman , and Ward shoot ? s Peterson with an advanced stun gun developed by Fitz and

Simmons , which stabilizes his extremis . Afterwards , Coulson is offering Skye a place on his team when a call for an " 0 @-@ 8 @-@ 4 " comes in .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

In August 2012 , ABC ordered a pilot from Joss Whedon , who wrote and directed The Avengers , for a series set within the MCU . Paul Lee , president of ABC , compared the pilot to the series Once Upon a Time , in terms of budgetary and technological ambition , and spoke of his excitement for the crossover potential with the larger film universe . " Pilot " was executive produced by Joss Whedon , Jed Whedon , Maurissa Tancharoen , Jeffrey Bell and Jeph Loeb .

= = = Writing = = =

Joss Whedon said that his previous television shows were based on ensembles , with S.H.I.E.L.D. being based in part on the Buffy the Vampire Slayer episode " The Zeppo " . That episode highlighted a lesser seen character , which was something he wanted to achieve with the character of Agent Phil Coulson . It was written by Whedon , along with his brother Jed Whedon and sister @-@ in @-@ law Maurissa Tancharoen . At the same time , he was writing the script for Avengers : Age of Ultron , which meant that he could use the series to explain the resurrection of Coulson rather than trying to include it in that film . Whedon revealed that he received notes from ABC on things to change in the pilot , but noted that the network was encouraging and excited about the project , so " you take the notes . You don ' t take all of them . But you never walk in expecting not to get any . " At San Diego Comic @-@ Con 2013 , Tancharoen talked about telling a Marvel story on a television budget , calling it a challenge but noting that the series is " looking at it through a different lens " , telling the human stories in the superhuman universe , with Coulson , who was the human , grounded character in the films , leading a team of ' real people ' , albeit extremely skilled people .

= = = Casting = = =

In October 2012 , a casting sheet for five lead roles was sent out . Later that month , at the New York Comic Con , Joss Whedon , Kevin Feige and Clark Gregg announced that Gregg , who previously portrayed the character in the Marvel Cinematic Universe films Iron Man , Iron Man 2 , Thor , and Marvel 's The Avengers , as well as the Marvel One @-@ Shots short films The Consultant and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Thor 's Hammer , would be reprising his role as agent Phil Coulson in the pilot . Toward the end of the month , actress Ming @-@ Na Wen was cast as agent Melinda May . In November 2012 , Elizabeth Henstridge and Iain De Caestecker were cast as agents Jemma Simmons and Leo Fitz , respectively . Later in November , newcomer Brett Dalton was cast as agent Grant Ward , while in December 2012 , Chloe Bennet was cast as Skye , the sixth and final main cast member .

In January 2013 , actress Cobie Smulders , who portrayed Maria Hill in The Avengers , indicated that she would be open to appearing in the show . That July it was confirmed that she would guest star in the pilot , with Whedon stating that he wanted to include Smulders because " she IS SHIELD . She 's cool and commanding and has the dry humor that plays so well with Clark 's . " Other guest cast members in the episode include two actors that had previously worked with Whedon on other television shows : Ron Glass , who played Shepherd Book in Firefly and the subsequent film Serenity , appears in " Pilot " as a S.H.I.E.L.D. doctor ; and J. August Richards , who appeared in Whedon 's Angel as Charles Gunn , portrays the character Mike Peterson . Additionally , Shannon Lucio and Bob Stephenson guest star as the Centipede doctor Debbie and Mike 's former boss Gary , respectively .

### === Filming ===

Production on the pilot , under the name of S.H.I.E.L.D. , took place from January 23 to February 12 , 2013 in Los Angeles , to accommodate Joss Whedon 's busy schedule . Additional filming also took place on location in Paris for two days , with Dalton noting that " it lends a kind of authenticity to the show and production value . " When the crew was scouting locations , the weather was " almost too perfect " , but during shooting it was foggy and raining , which Dalton described as " more authentic " rather than unnecessarily " picaresque " . In May 2014 , Jed Whedon revealed that on the first day of shooting the pilot , images of vehicles meant to be kept secret during production of the episode had already been leaked online , quickly showing how difficult dealing with secrecy on a Marvel project would be .

### === Marvel Cinematic Universe tie @-@ ins ===

The episode uses the extremis virus from Iron Man 3 as one source of power for the character of Mike Peterson . Executive producer Jeffrey Bell explained that the idea of using it came up independent of the film , but the crew realized that it would be a good opportunity to tie in with the films , and worked with Marvel [ Studios ] on the tie @-@ in to ensure that " they didn 't feel like we were just ripping off their idea . " Additional sources of power for the character include : Chitauri technology , from The Avengers and Item 47 ; and super @-@ soldier serum , from Captain America : The First Avenger and The Incredible Hulk . The events of The Avengers are referenced numerous times throughout the episode , and archive footage from the film is briefly used in an opening montage . Also , Coulson 's flying car is a working model of the prototype seen in Captain America : The First Avenger .

### === Release ===

### === Broadcast ===

" Pilot " was first aired in the United States on ABC on September 24 , 2013 . It was aired alongside the US broadcast in Canada on CTV , while it was first aired in the United Kingdom on Channel 4 on September 27 , 2013 . It premiered on the Seven Network in Australia on October 2 , 2013 , and on TV2 in New Zealand on February 16 , 2014 .

### === Marketing ===

The first television spot for the episode was released on May 12 , 2013 , during the season 2 finale of Once Upon a Time . It featured footage from The Avengers , along with new footage for the pilot episode , and was noted as having high production values , which were compared to those of the Marvel One @-@ Shots . Two days later an extended trailer was released , " devoted to expository dialogue , setting up the characters and establishing the pecking order " . " Pilot " was then screened at San Diego Comic @-@ Con on July 19 , 2013 , and was met with a very positive reaction from the crowd . Prior to the airing of the episode in the UK , a viral marketing campaign was underway to promote the show . Posters asking for witnesses of " Suspected Extraordinary Activity " were placed around London .

### === Home media ===

The episode , along with the rest of Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. ' s first season , was released on Blu @-@ ray and DVD on September 9 , 2014 . Bonus features include behind @-@ the @-@ scenes featurettes , audio commentary , deleted scenes , and a blooper reel . It was released in Region 2

on October 20 , and in Region 4 on November 11 , 2014 . On November 20 , 2014 , the episode became available for streaming on Netflix .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In the United States the episode received a 4 @. @ 7 / 14 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 , meaning that it was seen by 4 @. @ 7 percent of all households , and 14 percent of all of those watching television at the time of the broadcast . It was watched by 12 @. @ 12 million viewers . This was the highest ratings received by the first episode of a drama series in the United States for almost four years since the pilot episode of ABC 's V , however NCIS was the most viewed show in the time slot with more than 20 million viewers . " Pilot " was watched by 2 @. @ 71 million viewers during its Canadian premiere , earning the third highest viewership for the week on the network . It was watched by 14 @. @ 2 percent of all viewers in the UK watching television at the time of the broadcast , an average of 3 @. @ 1 million . The broadcast had a 27 percent share of those aged between 16 and 34 . It was the most viewed new drama on Channel 4 in 2013 . The Seven Network premiere in Australia was watched by 1 @. @ 3 million viewers , the top show of the night . In New Zealand , the first episode premiered to 326 @, @ 790 viewers , the fourth highest show of the night , and the most watched show on TV2 .

= = = Critical response = = =

Jason Hughes of The Huffington Post said that " Everything about this premiere worked " . He felt that the show was a cross between Fringe and Heroes with elements of The X @- @ Files included . He thought that there was a potential for the series to be a success and thought that it would attract both Marvel fans and new viewers alike . Dave Bradley gave the episode four and a half out of five for SFX magazine , saying that the show was going to become a phenomenon alongside Doctor Who , The Walking Dead and Game of Thrones . He felt that using the Skye character to introduce the viewer to the series was cheesy , but effective . He praised J August Richards ' performance but did not enjoy some of the characterizations of the main characters , which made him think the team was similar to that seen in Torchwood .

Eric Goldman at IGN rated " Pilot " 8 @. @ 5 out of 10 , stating that the " inspired collaboration " between Joss Whedon and Marvel that began with The Avengers is highly entertaining , and should keep fans wanting more , but noting that viewers wanting the series to have the same scale as the MCU films " will be disappointed ? this is a high budget TV series , but it is a TV series " . Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club gave the episode a " B " , feeling that the episode had enough " fun and funny moments " to indicate that the series could " settle into a groove with time " , but also that there were cautious and predictable moments , and that even at its best , the episode feels like " the product of several hundred cooks . "

Brian Lowry , writing for Variety , found the episode to be " OK " , finding some dialogue to be " a little precious and clunky " and feeling the plot to be " yet another twist on a procedural , albeit with a few mythological elements to sweeten the experience " , summing that " with great boxoffice and ostentatious synergy come super @- @ sized expectations . " Tim Goodman of The Hollywood Reporter was not sure from the pilot whether the series would go on to be good or not . He thought that having Joss Whedon 's name attached the project would lead to positive reviews for at least a month . Goodman said that " It 's a fun hour and calling it ' good but not great ' has more to do with expectations in the wake of the Marvel movies than anything else . "

Jim Steranko , known for his work on Nick Fury , Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. , felt the episode was unfocused and " had no menace , no tension " . He lamented the absence of Samuel L. Jackson 's Nick Fury , and felt the episode needed " to be much tougher , much stranger , much edgier to reach its potential " . James Hunt of Den of Geek , thought that the episode struggled to meet expectations

. He thought that the CGI was worse than that seen on Smallville and that the sets seemed small . However , he praised the script and in particular the speech given by Richards ' character at the end of the episode . He thought that the start was better than Whedon 's Dollhouse , but was not perfect .

= = = Accolades = = =

" Pilot " was nominated for Outstanding Visual Effects in a Broadcast Program at the 12th Visual Effects Society Awards , but lost to the Game of Thrones episode " Valar Dohaeris " .

= = = Controversy = = =

The episode introduced a group called the " Rising Tide " , also the name of a real @-@ life volunteer group who work on climate change issues . The group issued a statement saying that they were concerned with the use of the name for the fictional group which appeared to be similar to Anonymous . They have since been mistakenly contacted on Twitter by fans of Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D and have created a petition against The Walt Disney Company to stop using the name .