

## The 10 Best Shows to Watch in Summer 2010

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 22, 2010 - 11:13pm

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CHICAGO – While we all eagerly await the return of our favorite shows and wonder if the networks can top last season’s remarkable freshman class, there are a number of programs currently airing that are definitely worth considering when the heat index breaks 100 or you don’t want to risk another summer thunderstorm. With more and more networks trying to make waves in the typically still waters of summer television, we thought we’d offer some guidance with a list of the ten programs most worth your time.

Despite a few interesting programs that register in our ten runner-ups, it’s interesting to note before we get going that the broadcast networks have not succeeded enough creatively to claim a single of the ten spots on a list such as this one (although vaguely register in the runner-ups). Until CBS, NBC, ABC, and FOX start taking the season as seriously as they do the fall or mid-season, summer is going to be even more for those with cable bills with each passing year.

Runner-Ups: “Big Brother” (CBS), “The Bridge” (CBS), “Dark Blue” (TNT), “The Gates” (ABC), “The Glades” (A&E), “Leverage” (TNT), “My Boys” (TBS), “Psych” (USA), “Rescue Me” (FX), and “White Collar” (USA).



Burn Notice

*Photo credit: USA*

#### 10. “Burn Notice”

Network: USA

Day/Time: Thursdays, 8pm CST

Starring: Jeffrey Donovan, Gabrielle Anwar, Bruce Campbell, and Sharon Gless

Why: One of the most popular shows in any season continues to grow a following with clever, tightly-paced hours of television that perfectly mix the cool behavior of a super-spy and his closest allies with the heat of its Miami setting. With one of the strongest ensembles of the season, including the recently Emmy-nominated Sharon Gless and the simply gorgeous Gabrielle Anwar, “Burn Notice” is never anything less than entertaining. “Burn Notice” has somewhat failed to live up to its second-season potential and occasionally spins its wheels creatively but even when it does that it does so with an incredible amount of style.



Louie

*Photo credit: FX*

#### 9. “Louie”

Network: FX

Day/Time: Tuesdays, 10pm CST

Starring: Louis C.K.

Why: Because Louis C.K. is one damn funny guy and he has some incredibly talented comedian friends. “Louie” may only be in its first

season but the upward trajectory of the episodes that have currently aired hint at a program that could easily become one of the most beloved in FX's continuing attempts at basic cable domination. The network has shifted gears with the end of "The Shield," "Nip/Tuck," and, just recently, "Damages" (which is jumping to DirectTV's network). And with "Rescue Me" coming to a close soon, the network could struggle in the hour-long drama department (which is meant as no offense to the great "Justified" and "Sons of Anarchy," merely a notice of a shift in focus). With the success of "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," "The League," "Archer," and now "Louie," FX could be as much of a comedy powerhouse in the '10s and it was a dramatic one in the '00s. (For more, read our review of the [series premiere](#) [24].)



The Closer

Photo credit: TNT

#### 8. "The Closer"

Network: TNT

Day/Time: Mondays, 8pm CST

Starring: Kyra Sedgwick, J.K. Simmons, Corey Reynolds, Robert Gossett, G.W. Bailey, Jon Tenney, Anthony John Denison, and Phillip P. Keene

Why: "The Closer" has become the elder stateswoman of summer programming, really shaking up the way networks approached the season since its premiere in 2005. "The Closer" draws an incredible and loyal audience every single summer and if you don't think that the other networks have tried to emulate the model of this show with their own addictive programming than you are dumber than the perps who think that they can outmaneuver Deputy Chief Brenda Leigh Johnson (Kyra Sedgwick). The structure of "The Closer," one that blends the mystery-of-the-week format of massive hits like "C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation" or "Law & Order" with more character-driven stories has been copied over and over again across the cable guide and even into the networks. The show has never been appointment television for us but it's always something that delivers high-quality entertainment when it does pop up on TNT, which given the network's propensity to ride their greatest hits into the ground should be in 3, 2, 1... (For more, check out our review of the [recent season premiere](#) [25].)



Entourage

Photo credit: HBO

## 7. "Entourage/Hung"

Network: HBO

Day/Time: Sundays, 9pm CST

Starring — "Entourage": Adrian Grenier, Kevin Connolly, Kevin Dillon, Jerry Ferrara, and Jeremy Piven

Starring — "Hung": Thomas Jane, Jane Adams, Rebecca Creskoff, and Anne Heche

Why: Because the saga of a man whose only remaining asset is his giant pecker is on the way up and the story of a young superstar and the friends caught up in his wake has shown signs of a potential comeback this season. "Entourage" used to be one of the best shows on television and it's far from that now but the potential plot arc started by an increasingly reckless Vince (Adrian Grenier) is a promising one and the show seems to display reinvigorated creative energy so far this season. Let's hope it keeps it up. As for "Hung," it started a bit shakily but had developed a distinct personality of its own by the end of season one. Luckily, it hasn't regressed back to its virgin state in season two and if it continues this upward trajectory it could top this list next summer. (For more, check out our review of the [Hung season premiere](#) [26] and [Entourage season premiere](#) [27].)



Futurama

Photo credit: Comedy Central

## 6. “Futurama”

Network: Comedy Central

Day/Time: Wednesdays, 8pm CST

Starring: Billy West, Katey Sagal, John Di Maggio, Tress MacNeille, Maurice LaMarche, Phil LaMarr, and Lauren Tom

Why: Because your DVR could probably use a little variety. The fact is that with the success of shows like “Burn Notice” and “The Closer,” a lot of 2010 summer’s programming has started to look a little similar and “Futurama” is like nothing else on television this season. Far more consistent than the straight-to-DVD movies that served as the warning shot for the return of Fry, Leela, and the rest of the gang, “Futurama” has returned as confident and clever as it ever was on FOX. There’s still some concern that the show could slide a bit as “Family Guy” has post-rebirth but until then we can enjoy all the ideas that the talented “Futurama” writers weren’t able to use when their former home so stupidly pulled the plug. (For more, check out our review of the [series return](#) [28].)



Top Chef

Photo credit: Bravo

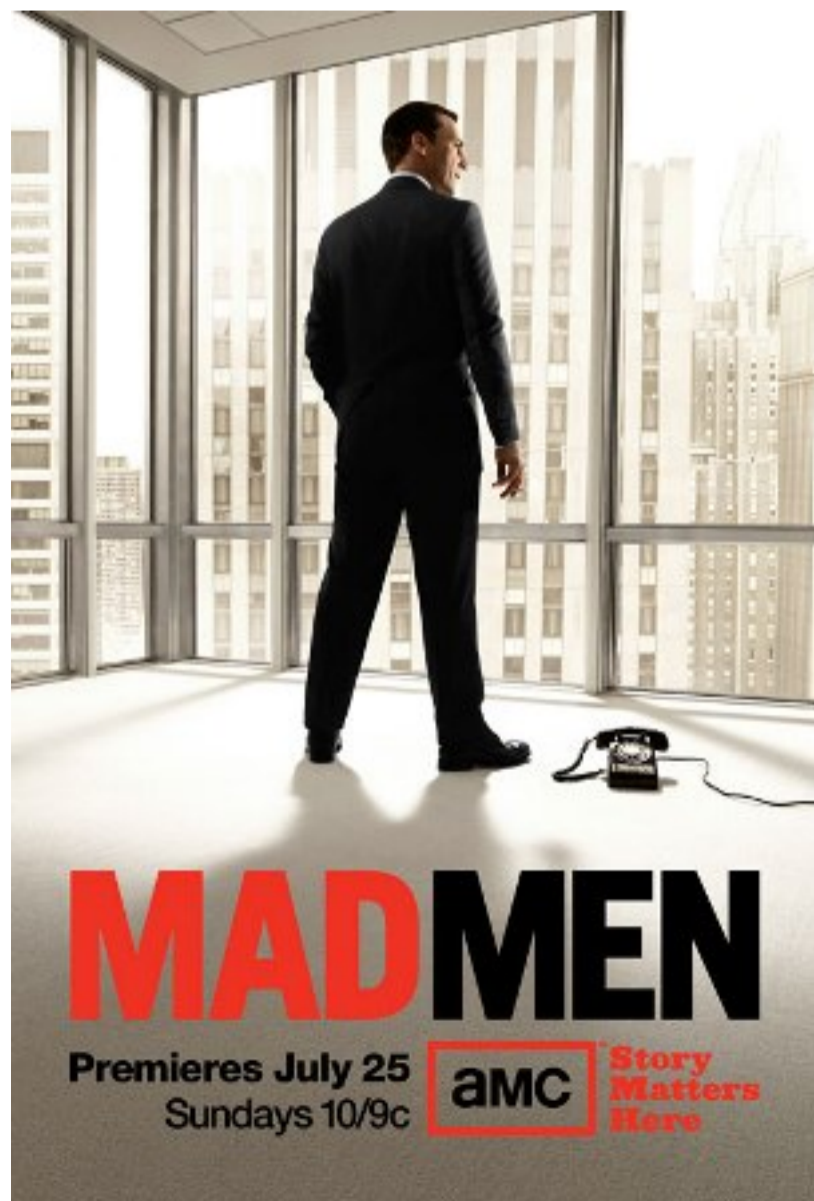
## 5. “Top Chef: D.C.”

Network: Bravo

Day/Time: Wednesdays, 8pm CST

Starring: Tom Colicchio, Padma Lakshmi, Gail Simmons, and Eric Ripert

Why: Thank God for the invention of DVRs that can record more than one thing at once (as clever readers will note that this entry and the previous one air at the same time). “Top Chef” continues to be one of the best reality competition shows on the air (and was recently nominated for an Emmy in said category) with its wonderful blend of culinary excellence, creative challenges, and one of the most underrated crew of judges on television. Reality competitions live and die on three things — editing, casting, and the judges. “Top Chef” is great in all three departments, brilliantly weaving together episodes that don’t place too much emphasis on the personal issues of the contestants or the judges like other shows tend to do. For “Top Chef,” it’s all about the art of food.



Mad Men

Photo credit: AMC

## 4. "Mad Men"

Network: AMC

Day/Time: Sundays, 9pm CST

Starring: Jon Hamm, Elisabeth Moss, Vincent Kartheiser, Christina Hendricks, January Jones, Aaron Staton, and John Slattery

Why: What does "Mad Men" have in common with "Lost" and "24"? One of the most acclaimed and award-winning shows on television has become a cultural phenomenon like those other programs because it so daringly unique. In a world of a thousand channels, there's literally nothing else like "Mad Men." It can be almost off-putting when you watch a season premiere of the hit show in a way not unlike listening to jazz after a steady diet of heavy metal. The show just has its own unique rhythm and the ensemble is easily one of the best on television in any season. I think that the writing is not quite as consistent as when the program began but it's still damn entertaining drama that will likely maintain its loyal following for years to come. Programs this original don't come along that often.



True Blood

Photo credit: HBO

## 3. "True Blood"

Network: HBO

Day/Time: Sundays, 8pm CST

Starring: Anna Paquin, Stephen Moyer, Sam Trammell, Ryan Kwanten, Rutina Wesley, Chris Bauer, Nelsan Ellis, Deborah Ann Woll, and Alexander Skarsgard.

Why: Here's another unique gem of a show that only gets more entertaining with each passing episode. "True Blood" promises things you won't see on any other show (like the head-spinning sex scene that ended episode three of this season). As the cast and writing staff of "True Blood" get more and more confident with their daring blend of sex, violence, and creatures of the night, the following for "True Blood" continues to grow. The second season was just nominated for Best Drama — something "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" could never do — and this season has been even stronger with some truly fantastic new supporting players. We're just about at the halfway point of the third season, which is when all HBO shows spin their wheels a bit, but "True Blood" has set up some amazing plot arcs to conclude in the second half of the season. We wouldn't miss August in Bon Temps for anything. (For more, check out our review of the [season premiere](#) [29].)



Royal Pains

Photo credit: USA

## 2. “Royal Pains”

Network: USA

Day/Time: Thursdays, 9pm CST

Starring: Mark Feuerstein, Paulo Costanzo, Jill Flint, Reshma Shetty, Campbell Scott, and Henry Winkler.

Why: USA has become the most successful network of the season by offering popcorn escapism but the character-driven charms of their stable of shows have led to a bit of underrating of their best current program — the ridiculously entertaining “Royal Pains.” We know that some people may balk at the idea of including what is essentially a procedural that admittedly doesn’t have the vision of a show like “Mad Men” or “True Blood” but there are very few hours as purely enjoyable as “Royal Pains” any time of the year. And it’s the perfect summer cocktail of humor, drama, and beautiful people in beautiful places. The ease with which actors like Mark Feuerstein and Reshma Shetty segue from witty banter to serious drama should be the model by which more networks design their summer escapism. (For more, check out our review of the [season premiere](#) [30].)



Being Human

Photo credit: BBC

## 1. “Being Human”

Network: BBC

Day/Time: Saturdays, 9pm CST

Starring: Leonora Crichlow, Russell Tovey, Greg Chillin, Aidan Turner, Jason Watkins, Sinead Keenan, and Annabel Scholey

Why: Yes, two of the best shows of the summer feature vampires. Bloodsuckers rule the day. But “Being Human” is far from your average creature feature. As fun as “True Blood” can be, it doesn’t approach the emotional honesty of the saga of Mitchell, George, and Annie — the vampire, the werewolf, and the ghost who found their humanity by becoming something very different. The blend of humor, action, and moving drama on “Being Human” is unlike anything else on television. Don’t miss an episode. (Watch for our review of the season two premiere soon and check out our look at the [season one Blu-ray release](#) [31] until then.)



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