

If We Had an Emmy Ballot: The Best TV of 2010 to 2011

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 20, 2011 - 4:19pm

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CHICAGO – It’s that time of year again – the time when the TV industry’s chosen few try to determine which of their peers delivered the best performances of the past twelve months before handing in their Emmy ballots this Friday, June 24th, 2011. As we do every year, we’re back to offer our choices for the most-deserving nominees in the major categories along with input from our readers and listeners to WGN-AM radio.

The nominees this year are guaranteed to include some surprises, simply due to the strength of two major absentees and a strong slate of new programs hoping to step in. Most importantly, AMC’s “Breaking Bad” didn’t air in the last year, which makes previous winners Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul ineligible, and, of course, “Lost” is gone, freeing up a few spots of its own. The absence of “Monk,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” and “Damages” should also make things a little more unpredictable and interesting.

Which dramas and their actors will fall into those newly vacated places? It’s likely to be new blood, but which ones? Will HBO dominate with “Game of Thrones,” “Boardwalk Empire,” or even “Treme”? Or what about AMC with “The Killing” and “The Walking Dead”? Will either be major players? Do they deserve to be?

The comedy categories seem a bit more cut-and-dry, but the wealth of candidates in Supporting Actor (and the dearth of them in Lead Actor) could make for a shocker or two. And will the Academy get in line with critics who love NBC shows like “Parks and Recreation” and “Community” or turn to more popular fare like “Mike & Molly” or, gasp, “Two and a Half Men”?

While I have respect for the Movie/Mini-series and Reality categories, we need to keep this feature under control. Briefly, I’d like to see Kate Winslet, Guy Pearce, Brian F. O’Byrne, and Evan Rachel Wood all get nods for “Mildred Pierce,” and I’d like some love for “Sherlock,” “Luther,” “Carlos,” “Downtown Abbey,” and Diane Lane’s work on “Cinema Verite” and Samuel L. Jackson’s on “The Sunset Limited.” Clearly, these categories are stronger than usual this year.

Let’s get to the best possible scenarios for Drama and Comedy...



Ed O'Neill of Modern Family
Photo credit: ABC

Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy

Chris Colfer, "Glee"

Jon Cryer, "Two and a Half Men"

Garret Dillahunt, "Raising Hope"

Ed O'Neill, "Modern Family"

Danny Pudi, "Community"

Eric Stonestreet, "Modern Family"

This is arguably the most crowded category (it's this one or Lead Actor in a Drama) as a ton of deserving candidates are sure to get snubbed here. Many of the best comedies on television now could fill at least half of this category.

Last year, three of the four adult actors on ABC's amazing "Modern Family" were nominated, leaving the never-nominated Ed O'Neill as the odd man out. It felt this year almost as if the writers of the show took that snub as a challenge, constantly giving O'Neill great storylines, ranging from hanging out with his son's gay friends to trying to emotionally connect with his brother to crying over memories of his mother. He was brilliant this year. He not only deserves a nod but deserves to win.

I'd invite his co-star Eric Stonestreet, the winner from last year, to the party, but, and it hurts to say this, leave Ty Burrell and Jesse Tyler Ferguson out of the club. They're GREAT, but this category is too crowded and they were better last year. Year two of the show was more about Ed and the two women (which we'll get to later).

That leaves four spots. Chris Colfer was the best thing about "Glee" this year and, if anyone could steal the Emmy from one of the "Modern Family" guys, I expect it will be him. Mike O'Malley deserves mention here as well, but I'll be stunned if Colfer isn't nominated, so why fight inevitability?

Colfer, O'Neill, Stonestreet — Three spots to go. What about the NBC ensembles? "30 Rock" had a down year and former nominees Tracy Morgan and Jack McBrayer didn't do enough quality work to warrant nods. I LOVE the ensemble on "Parks and Recreation," but can't pick just one of their talented guys (Nick Offerman, Adam Scott, Chris Pratt, Aziz Ansari). If the Academy does, I'll be very happy, but I can't do it (although, Offerman would be my 7th choice if given one and I'll squeal with manly glee if he actually does get nominated).

No one on "The Office" stood out this year but, once again, I won't be too disappointed if Rainn Wilson or Ed Helms sneak in. No, the one NBC Thursday night candidate I would nominate has to come from "Community," the best ensemble on TV. Any of the men would be great choices, but Danny Pudi had the most accomplished year, adding a shade of melancholy to Abed that truly made him the stand-out performer. [Erik Childress](#) [22] perfectly makes the case for Mr. Pudi in the comments section to our WGN segment about the Emmy favorites of our readers. (Dark horse alternate: Chevy Chase, who really found the dark edge of Pierce this season.)

Two spots left. Neil Patrick Harris has been nominated before and likely will be again, but I'd pick a different CBS regular. I'm NOT a fan of "Two and a Half Men" at all, but doesn't Jon Cryer deserve a nod just for putting up with Charlie Sheen's shit and handling the fallout with grace? There are more deserving winners, but wouldn't his acceptance speech just be cathartically fascinating?

Who gets the final spot? Garret Dillahunt may be known by film audiences for dark movies like "Winter's Bone" and "Last House on the Left,"

but he’s simply hysterical on FOX’s highly-underrated “Raising Hope.” This is the kind of excellent sitcom that needs nominations to find an audience. Let’s start here.



Sofia Vergara of Modern Family
Photo credit: ABC

Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy

- Julie Bowen, “Modern Family”
- Alison Brie, “Community”
- Jane Lynch, “Glee”
- Sofia Vergara, “Modern Family”
- Kristen Wiig, “Saturday Night Live”
- Casey Wilson, “Happy Endings”

The “Modern Family” love continues. Both of the spectacular actresses from the ABC program — Julie Bowen and Sofia Vergara — were nominated last year and both were even better this year. I’d love to see one of them win this award and think it will very likely go to Sofia.

Hold on Gleeks. Stop your letter writing campaign. Jane Lynch, last year’s winner, will almost certainly be nominated again this year (and is hosting the program) and I have little problem with that, especially given the difficulty in filling out this weak category, but Lynch just didn’t deliver this season like Bowen and Vergara. It should go to one of them, but I’m fine with the divine Jane getting a nod.

In a very rare situation, all six of last year’s nominees are eligible again. We already have spots penciled in for the two “Modern Family” divas and Ms. Lynch. Who does that leave? I’m cool with the recent trend of honoring “Saturday Night Live” in this category and Kristen Wiig is riding high right now thanks to her beloved “Bridesmaids.” Let’s nominate her again.

As for the other two from last year, neither had stand-out seasons — Jane Krakowski of “30 Rock” and Holland Taylor of “Two and a Half Men.” It’s time for some new blood.

But who? The ladies from “How I Met Your Mother” (Alyson Hannigan and Cobie Smulders) aren’t bad and I love “Parks and Recreation” (Aubrey Plaza and Rashida Jones), but there are better choices. I’ve made the pitch for Jenna Fischer of “The Office” in the past and even Kaley Cuoco in “The Big Bang Theory,” but it’s not them either. We need to look to the new...

Alison Brie on “Community” gives one of the most important and accomplished supporting performances on television. She brings a much-needed heart and innocence to a show that can sometimes be overly cynical. And her comic timing is getting better by the episode. It would be a well-deserved nod.

For that final spot, I wanted to recognize an ensemble that I expect will play into more than one nomination next year if it continues on its current trajectory — the cast of ABC’s “Happy Endings.” Supporting Actor is too crowded (although I expect that Adam Pally will — or at least should — be a part of that crowd at this time next year), but there’s room here for Elisha Cuthbert, Eliza Coupe, or Casey Wilson. Casey delivered the most in this shortened first season. She’s an unlikely choice from the Academy (who will probably go with Taylor or Krakowski...yawn), but she would be an inspired one.





Steve Carell of The Office
Photo credit: NBC

Best Lead Actor in a Comedy Series

- Alec Baldwin, “30 Rock”
- Louis C.K., “Louie”
- Steve Carell, “The Office”
- Danny McBride, “Eastbound & Down”
- Joel McHale, “Community”
- Jim Parsons, “The Big Bang Theory”

When did this category get so tough to fill? No offense to the six talented men listed above, but this is easily the category with the least amount of worthy candidates. Larry David takes a year off and Tony Shalhoub ends his series and no one steps in? Rob Lowe even submitted himself as lead for “Parks and Recreation,” probably due to ego but also probably because his agent told him that this is a much easier nomination to land. Sorry Rob, you’re NOT lead on that show. It’s Amy’s show and everyone else is supporting. Even Adam Scott, who submitted as supporting, is a more likely lead. Hell, I think Aziz has more screen time. So, while I might have championed you for supporting, you’re out in the cold here.

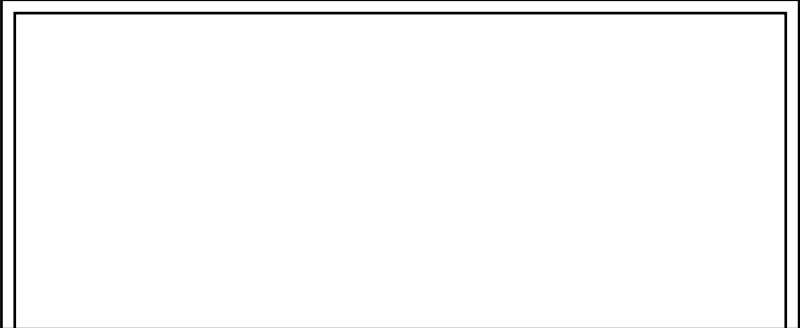
Who else is chilly? Last year’s nominee Matthew Morrison of “Glee,” Lucas Neff of “Raising Hope,” and Matt LeBlanc for “Episodes.” All good, but not good enough. And if they nominate William Shatner for that awful sitcom that CBS has already canceled, I’m boycotting that sh*t.

Who does that leave? Alec Baldwin (“30 Rock”), Steve Carell (“The Office”), and last year’s winner Jim Parsons (“The Big Bang Theory”) are all guaranteed nominees and well-deserving. In fact, I expect Mr. Carell to finally win the trophy that has long eluded him.

But there are still three open spots. In case you haven’t been able to tell, we’re big “Community” fans, and Joel McHale delivered all season long. He deserves it and I may be optimistic, but I think if any aspect of the program gets nominated this year, it will be Joel.

I really wanted Danny McBride to score a nod for the brilliant first season of HBO’s “Eastbound & Down,” but that didn’t happen. The second season wasn’t nearly as strong, but McBride was still utterly fearless. He should get in.

My last choice is a bit out of left field, but there are very few comedians on TV who have successfully brought their vision of comedy to the tube as much as Louis C.K. does on FX’s “Louie.” He writes, edits, stars, and crafts every episode, driving the program in the way that Larry does “Curb” or Jerry did “Seinfeld.” He truly is a “Lead Actor.” It’s probably the least-likely of all of my suggestions, but it would be a fantastic surprise.





Amy Poehler of Parks and Recreation
Photo credit: NBC

Best Lead Actress in a Comedy

- Toni Collette, “United States of Tara”
- Edie Falco, “Nurse Jackie”
- Tina Fey, “30 Rock”
- Laura Linney, “The Big C”
- Martha Plimpton, “Raising Hope”
- Amy Poehler, “Parks and Recreation”

Remember when this category was hard to fill? When as long as an leading actress had a name, she was pretty much guaranteed a nod? Hello, Julia Louis-Dreyfus in “The New Adventures of Old Christine”! Well, times have changed radically and there are at least nine solid candidates here for only six spots. It’s a shame that the same can’t be said about male lead.

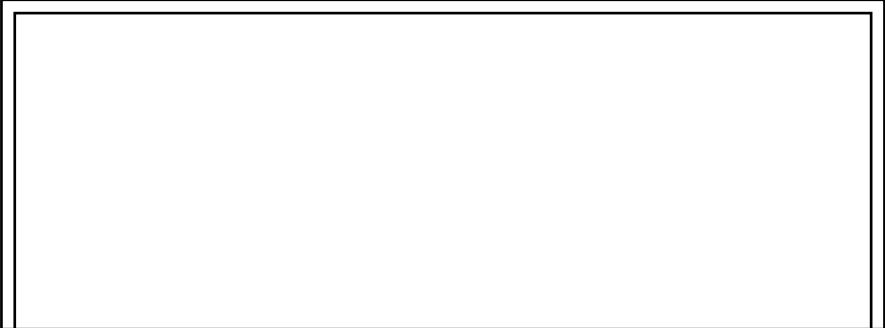
Luckily, it seems like many of the most-deserving actresses will get the nod. Showtime seems likely to OWN this category as Toni Collette (“United States of Tara”) won in 2009 and Edie Falco (“Nurse Jackie”) won in 2010. Both will get nominated again and both deserve it. I even expect that Showtime will make this a perfect hat trick and that the deserving Laura Linney will get a nod this year for “The Big C” and win. Sadly, “Weeds” has gone steeply downhill or else Mary-Louise Parker could make it a four-peat.

With the three Showtime ladies taking up half the spots in the category, it leaves three spots for six talented ladies. One will almost certainly and deservedly go to Tina Fey for “30 Rock.” The show was a bit down this year, but she was typically fantastic.

Even more fantastic was Amy Poehler, who did the best work of her career in the past season of “Parks and Recreation.” Loosening up Leslie Knope and allowing her character to feel less like a goober and more like an actual person really took the show to another level of comedy. She would actually be my choice to win in this category in a landslide.

Although I’d also be pretty happy if an ’80s icon took the prize because then more people would watch “Raising Hope.” Martha Plimpton is SO good on the underrated FOX show and a few Emmy nods might keep it on the air. It’s a really funny show and Plimpton is the main reason.

That’s six. Who’s on the outside? Lea Michele was nominated last year for “Glee” and could be again and Melissa McCarthy is riding such a wave of goodwill for “Bridesmaids” that a nod for “Mike & Molly” isn’t out of the question. The most deserving alternates would be a pair of ABC stars — Patricia Heaton of “The Middle” and Courteney Cox of “Cougar Town.” Both women are fantastic and would have been guaranteed much-deserved nods in lesser years.





Raising Hope
Photo credit: FOX

Best Comedy

“Community” (NBC)
“Modern Family” (ABC)
“The Office” (NBC)
“Parks and Recreation” (NBC)
“Raising Hope” (FOX)
“30 Rock” (NBC)

The peacock network may be in dire straits, but they still do comedy right as they deserve two-thirds of the nominations here. NBC stalwarts “The Office” and “30 Rock” deserve spots again (although just barely... neither had their strongest season and had to end strong to get back into my personal top six). And, of course, last year’s winner “Modern Family” will and should be here. (And will win again. Count on it.)

But what about the other three spots? “Curb Your Enthusiasm” isn’t eligible this year. And other nominees from last year, “Nurse Jackie” and “Glee,” had down enough years that there are better choices. But what should take their place? Other Showtime series like “The Big C” or “United States of Tara”? Good, not great. HBO programs like “Hung,” “Bored to Death,” “Eastbound & Down,” or “Entourage”? Not yet, nope, get real, and maybe a few years ago.

What does that leave? ABC’s “Cougar Town” and “Happy Endings” are better than you think, but neither quite deserves it. CBS series “The Big Bang Theory,” “How I Met Your Mother,” and “Two and a Half Men” have the ratings, but not the critical support. I’d be surprised (although least so if “TBBT” gets in the club.)

In some great alternate universe, FX’s consistently-hilarious “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” would have a shot here. But it doesn’t and so I won’t set my dreams that high. (It’s a dream ballot, but I’m not crazy.)

I hope that the Academy looks to the new blood at NBC, two programs that had stronger seasons than the comedies headlined by Mr. Carell and Ms. Fey — “Community” and “Parks and Recreation.” I think at least one will get a nod, the other will headline my eventual “Biggest Emmy Snubs” piece.

One more spot. It’s about as unlikely as “Philadelphia,” but FOX’s “Raising Hope” was consistently hilarious and heartfelt all year. And it was only getting funnier as the season came to a close. There aren’t nearly enough people watching this comedy and an Emmy nomination could change that.



Walton Goggins of Justified
Photo credit: FX

Best Supporting Actor in a Drama

- Michael Cudlitz, “Southland”
- Peter Dinklage, “Game of Thrones”
- Walton Goggins, “Justified”
- John Noble, “Fringe”
- Michael Shannon, “Boardwalk Empire”
- Alexander Skarsgard, “True Blood”

There are some definite pipe dreams on that list above, but I’m not yet cynical enough to give in. Who’s MORE likely? John Slattery (“Mad Men”) and Andre Braugher (“Men of a Certain Age”) were nominated last year and likely will be again. Both are certainly deserving choices, but there are SO many great candidates for this category that there could be twice as many nominees and the talent pool wouldn’t be at all shallow.

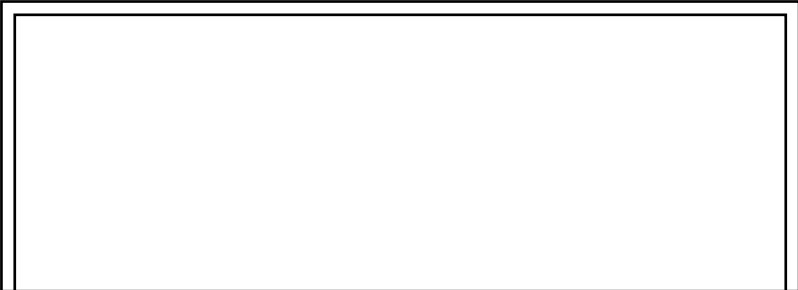
How about just an alternate six? Slattery, Braugher, Irrfan Khan (“In Treatment”), Denis O’Hare (“True Blood”), Alan Cumming (“The Good Wife”) and Michael Pitt (“Boardwalk Empire”) would be a better selection of nominees than most whom have filled out this category in recent years.

And even with TWELVE, there would be worthwhile nominees snubbed — Michael Stuhlbarg (“Boardwalk Empire”), Josh Charles & Chris Noth (“The Good Wife”), Mark Addy (“Game of Thrones”), Billy Campbell & Brendan Sexton III (“The Killing”), Clarke Peters & Wendell Pierce (“Treme”), and Delroy Lindo (“The Chicago Code”). I wouldn’t be too upset if any of them were nominated. This is an insanely crowded category.

So who does make the cut? No one who was nominated last year. Yep, I’m rooting for a complete clean sweep – a new group of talented actors from the entire spectrum of television. Many of my choices are simply the best of some very-talented ensembles. The Academy doesn’t give an ensemble award, but Michael Shannon, Michael Cudlitz, Peter Dinklage, and Alexander Skarsgard are all on programs that would be highly considered if they did. They can represent their entire teams.

Then there are a pair of unique actors who have redefined their programs through their supporting work. More than any other actor on network television, people ADORE John Noble’s complex work on “Fringe” and, even though I’m not a fan of the program, there’s so much passion for his work that I feel it should be recognized. Just look [here](#) [22] for HC reader Ceil’s impassioned plea for “Fringe” love.

With all of this intense competition, my final choice is the man I’d like to see win — Walton Goggins. The former star of “The Shield” took an already-complex character and made him one of the most unique and fascinating in all of television.





Jeanne Tripplehorn of Big Love
Photo credit: HBO

Best Supporting Actress in a Drama

- Michelle Forbes, “The Killing”
- Kelly MacDonald, “Boardwalk Empire”
- Margo Martindale, “Justified”
- Archie Panjabi, “The Good Wife”
- Jeanne Tripplehorn, “Big Love”
- Debra Winger, “In Treatment”

This category may not be quite as strong as the male version, but there are still some spectacular choices available for Emmy voters. As great as the aforementioned Goggins is on “Justified,” the only performer who stole scenes and even entire episodes from him was the great Margo Martindale as the most terrifying character on TV so far this year. I’m a little surprised that Martindale didn’t submit as Guest Actress instead of Supporting, but she’s here and she deserves to be nominated somewhere.

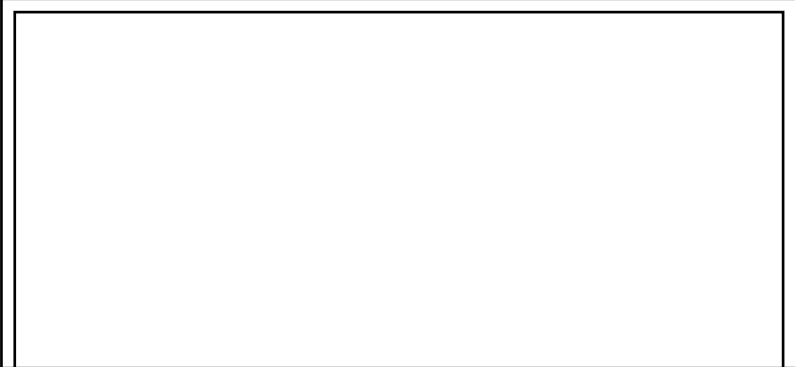
Last year’s winner Archie Panjabi should return for “The Good Wife,” but if her co-star Christine Baranski gets the nod instead I won’t complain. The only nominee I would return from last year is one of the two “TGW” ladies, as Sharon Gless (“Burn Notice”) didn’t deserve it then and doesn’t deserve it now and Christine Hendricks (“Mad Men”) just barely misses my cut.

Other runner-ups include Lena Headey (“Game of Thrones”), Natalie Zea & Joelle Carter (“Justified”), Chloe Sevigny & Ginnifer Goodwin (“Big Love”), Khandi Alexander & Melissa Leo (“Treme”), Jennifer Carpenter (“Dexter”), and Amy Ryan (“In Treatment”).

Who does that leave? “Big Love” never became the Emmy powerhouse that we expected it to be, but it was still one of the stronger programs this year and the best performance of the final season belonged to the always-underrated Jeanne Tripplehorn as a woman watching her husband make progress toward acceptance of that which he believes in, but, who in turn, is held back from her own beliefs. She was stellar.

Tripplehorn isn’t the only supporting actress from HBO deserving of a nomination as Kelly MacDonald and the great Debra Winger did nomination-worthy work as well. It’s a shame so few people watched “In Treatment” that it won’t be on again, but I hope it gets at least one nomination for its final season and Winger is the best choice.

That leaves only one spot and, after much debate, it belongs to Michelle Forbes as a woman watching everything she built fall apart after the death of her daughter. Forbes (thanks in no small part to excellent supporting work by Brendan Sexton III as her husband) rarely went for the easy melodrama, choosing instead to embody a pain that most of us can never even fully imagine.





Steve Buscemi of Boardwalk Empire
Photo credit: HBO

Best Lead Actor in a Drama Series

- Steve Buscemi, “Boardwalk Empire”
- Michael C. Hall, “Dexter”
- Jon Hamm, “Mad Men”
- Jeremy Irons, “The Borgias”
- Hugh Laurie, “House”
- Timothy Olyphant, “Justified”

The line-up above has changed more than any in this feature. If I actually did have an Emmy ballot, this is the one that would drive me absolutely crazy. (It nearly did here and my vote doesn’t even count.) How do you compare such a strong crop of choices?

Let’s start with the obvious runner-ups, the men who did strong work, but who I never actually considered for the final six — Kyle Chandler (“Friday Night Lights”), Ray Romano (“Men of a Certain Age”), Sean Bean (“Game of Thrones”), Denis Leary (“Rescue Me”), Holt McCallany (“Lights Out”), Donal Logue (“Terriers”), Nathan Fillion (“Castle”), Jason Clarke (“The Chicago Code”), Bill Paxton (“Big Love”), and Peter Krause (“Parenthood”). Some great actors in there and the real tragedy is that most of them are from shows that have been canceled, meaning that their chance at nomination is probably gone. I look forward to what they do next.

Two of our readers [commented](#) [22] on the worth of Vincent D’Onofrio’s work on “Law & Order: Criminal Intent” and I won’t disagree. He’s an extremely accomplished actor. There’s a small problem, though, in that this Emmy year ran from June 2010 to May 2011 and most of this final season hits after that May deadline. In other words, he’d be a better candidate next year, if the Academy could remember that far back.

Who does that leave? Ten very worthy candidates who have circulated in and out of my dream nomination list like a revolving door. I love Gabriel Byrne’s work on “In Treatment,” but he just barely misses out. As for the AMC men — Andrew Lincoln (“The Walking Dead”) and Joel Kinnaman (“The Killing”) — they are both spectacular, but I think they need time develop. They just miss out to the veterans on the list above but I hope to be able to include at least one next year.

There are two new Showtime leading men that I’m sure are being strongly considered — William H. Macy for “Shameless” and Jeremy Irons for “The Borgias.” For some reason, I would only choose one and I went with the latter because I think he more clearly leads that program whereas Macy may not even be the best thing about “Shameless” (Emmy Rossum and Joan Cusack steal episodes).

As for the other finalists, Michael C. Hall, Jon Hamm, and Hugh Laurie seem inevitable and deservedly so. They have come to define their programs. HC reader Becky [is right](#) [22] when she says Laurie has carried his program. Hall and Hamm do the same. They are true leads, and I expect they will be nominated, just as they were last year, and will be happy that Bryan Cranston won’t be there to steal the prize from them (I expect Hamm to finally win unless Buscemi steals it).

Finally, there’s Steve Buscemi and Timothy Olyphant. What more is there to say about these two amazing actors? Honestly, in all the iterations of this category through multiple drafts of this feature, they never lost their spots.



Mireille Enos of The Killing
Photo credit: AMC

Best Lead Actress in a Drama

- Connie Britton, “Friday Night Lights”
- Mireille Enos, “The Killing”
- Regina King, “Southland”
- Juliana Margulies, “The Good Wife”
- Elisabeth Moss, “Mad Men”
- Katey Sagal, “Sons of Anarchy”

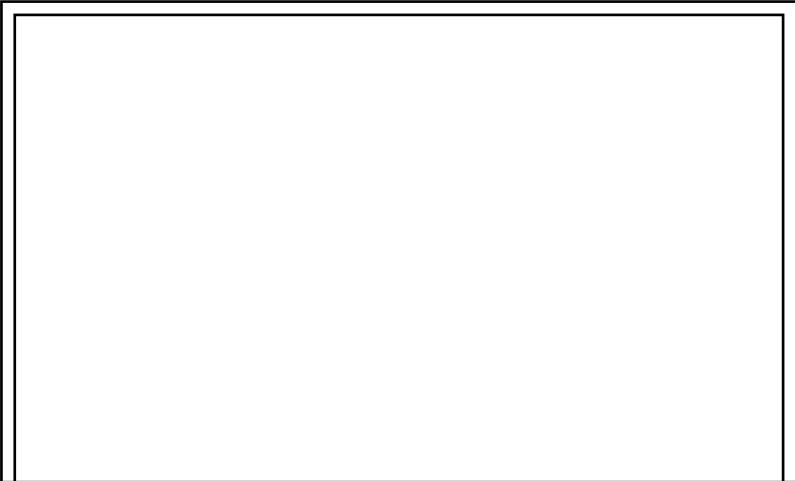
Kyra Sedgwick walked away with this prize last year and is likely to get nominated again, although, admittedly, there are more deserving choices. I’d also leave last-year nominees Mariska Hargitay (“Law & Order: SVU”) and January Jones (“Mad Men”) off the list. As for former nominees, Connie Britton and Juliana Margulies absolutely deserve to be here and I expect both to be nominated (and Margulies to win), while Elisabeth Moss goes from supporting last year to lead this year. She’ll get in. And she deserved it.

But that leaves three spots (two if you think Sedgwick is getting in) — who deserves it?

Let’s start at the top — Mireille Enos gave the best Lead Actress performance of 2010-11 in AMC’s “The Killing.” She was riveting in every scene, taking a character who could have become a cliché (a single mother detective) and making her feel completely genuine. I don’t think it will happen, but I’d be ecstatic if Enos won. We need more strong, confident, intelligent female characters on TV.

Two more such characters belong to the great Regina King and Katey Sagal. King probably should have submitted as a Supporting Actress (I would consider everyone on TNT’s best program supporting), but she’s good enough that she can still break into this group. As for Sagal, she’s the best thing about “Sons of Anarchy” and won the Golden Globe just a few months ago. Yes, we should (and very likely could) have a situation where Peg and Al Bundy are both nominated for Emmys for the FIRST TIME. And given the strength of the premiere of NBC’s “Up All Night,” Christina Applegate is likely to join them next year. (Someone get David Faustino a pilot!)

As for runner-ups, the following talented ladies deserve mention and won’t aggravate me if they get nominated like Kathy Bates will if she lands a nod for the mediocre “Harry’s Law” (undeserving nods like that happen far too often when Oscar winners do TV) — Anna Paquin (“True Blood”), Stana Katic (“Castle”), Emmy Rossum (“Shameless”), Lauren Graham (“Parenthood”), and Anna Torv (“Fringe”).





Game of Thrones
Photo credit: HBO

Best Drama

“Boardwalk Empire” (HBO)
“Dexter” (Showtime)
“Game of Thrones” (HBO)
“The Good Wife” (CBS)
“Justified” (FX)
“Mad Men” (AMC)

I’ve been writing about television for a decade now and I’ve never had so much trouble filling out the six choices for TV’s best drama. It’s clearly a great time for fans of dramatic TV as evidenced by the eleven very worthy candidates for six spots here. If you ask me again tomorrow, I may say that my dream ballot would include “Friday Night Lights,” “In Treatment,” “Southland,” and “The Walking Dead.” And, believe it or not, I would even say that some of those shows are technically better than the ones I’ve chosen above, but Emmy nominations are a tricky business. They have influence. And there are reasons I went with my six. Here’s why:

First, a note on “The Killing” — I was a big fan of the program but, like most of you, think the finale was nothing but a cop-out, hampered by cheap, manipulative writing. The show demanded closure and it wasn’t there at ALL. It was like a talented team losing in the fourth quarter. It doesn’t impact the way I feel about any of the performances throughout the season and so I keep Enos and Forbes where they belong and won’t be too upset if the show gets the big nomination. But, and I can’t believe I’ll be alone here and expect actual voters to feel similarly, that last-minute fumble barely edges the program out of the top six...although the show certainly did enough right up until the end to warrant status as a runner-up.

Now, the runner-ups beyond the big five mentioned above that nearly made the cut. The next tier if you will: “Shameless,” “Sons of Anarchy,” “True Blood,” “Big Love,” “Parenthood,” “Treme,” “Terriers,” “Lights Out,” “Fringe,” “The Borgias,” and “The Chicago Code.” I won’t scream if any of those are nominated like I will if “Private Practice” gets a Best Drama nod.

HollywoodChicago.com reader Joy [makes the case](#) [22] for “Parenthood” by noting that she is “...*never ready for the show to be over each episode and look forward to the next week.*” In many ways, that’s what we all want from a drama, something we can’t wait to see again.

“Boardwalk Empire” and “Game of Thrones” — I went back and forth on whether or not to include both of HBO’s new series or pick a favorite, but I found that I just couldn’t choose one. Both programs represent what we need more of on television — ambition and scope. They perfectly embody what television can do that film cannot, with detailed storytelling and the kind of character depth that can only be found on TV (and usually only on HBO).

“Dexter” — Very few programs, if any, were as riveting as the fifth season of Showtime’s best series. And what was so remarkable about this year was how successfully the writers managed to build on what was arguably the most fascinating and daring season finales in history from the year before. “Dexter” (along with “The Walking Dead” and “The Killing” but this is the best of the three) is proof that violent programming doesn’t have to be stupid programming.

“The Good Wife” — Technically, I think “Dexter,” “Southland,” and “The Walking Dead” are better shows, but here’s why “The Good Wife” would make my cut: I’m not ready to give up on dramas on network TV and this one is the best. If all six of the nods here go to cable, it will

only encourage the networks to program more reality shows and variations on “C.S.I.” A statement needs to be made that quality, character-driven storytelling can still survive on the broadcast nets. At least for another year.

“Justified” — The best program of the Spring as FX’s drama went from interesting in its first season to downright fascinating in its second. With more confidence, the entire production took off.

“Mad Men” — It would be illogical for the 4th season of AMC’s hit show to not get nominated. Will it win for a fourth straight year, something that has only happened twice before (“Hill Street Blues” & “The West Wing”) or will one of the strong new contenders stop the streak? I don’t think it should win, but it needs to be nominated just to make the race that much more exciting. Like so many categories this year, it should be fun to see how it all shakes out.

Who are your favorites? Who did we forget? Stay tuned all summer for Emmy coverage, including nominations on July 14th, 2011.



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