

## TV Feature: The 10 Most Promising New Shows of Fall 2012

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 27, 2012 - 7:24pm

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CHICAGO – The 2010-11 season was a very interesting one for network television. After a few years of undeniable failure, most of the networks found at least one new notable hit. FOX is building an entire night of comedy around Emmy-nominated breakout “New Girl.” ABC is ecstatic over the loyal followings for “Revenge” & “Once Upon a Time” (and “Suburgatory” has the potential to truly breakout in its sophomore season). NBC looks a little more dire but is willing to give “Up All Night” and “Whitney” second chances. And CBS’ “2 Broke Girls” looks like it could be on for a decade. It was a solid crop all around. The good news? This season looks even more promising when one looks at the very top of my annual top ten list of the most promising new shows.

Promising for drama. Comedy is another story. The new comedies of the 21 new shows on the five broadcast networks comprise a dire bunch. A few of them — “Guys with Kids” & “Neighbors” — are truly awful, and the rest top out at average. In fact, the highest ranking sitcom on this list of promising programs is at #7 and even that show is one that I could easily see falling flat by Halloween if the writing doesn’t tighten a bit. We’ll have to wait till mid-season for a hot comedy (at least critically...I expect CBS’ “Partners” will do well simply by virtue of its Monday night timeslot). For the record, Ellen Barkin rules on NBC’s “The New Normal.” It’s the writing that has issues. More on that with the full review (and come back for full reviews of every single new show this season and most of the returning ones).

No, it’s all about drama this year and the best of it comes from the school of high concept that seemed to be the territory of cable TV in recent years. The best new shows take risks. Of course, with risk-taking comes unpredictability and I would guess at least one of my top five will have fallen off its writing tightrope by the end of the calendar year. On the other hand, I think all of my top five (which is significantly stronger than #6-10) could be true breakout hits, critically and commercially, with just a bit of fine-tuning. Here’s what to look out for this year:



Chicago Fire

Photo credit: NBC

## 10. “Chicago Fire”

**Network:** NBC

**Premieres:** Wednesday, October 10 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Jesse Spencer, Taylor Kinney, Teri Reeves, Eamonn Walker, Monica Raymund, Lauren German, and David Eigenberg

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** This tenth spot fluctuated between several shows including “Emily Owens, M.D.” and “Go On.” In other words, don’t consider this the highest level of praise. However, I settled on “Chicago Fire” not just because I like to see my favorite city in the world well-represented on TV but because there’s a lot of potential in the pedigree of the production team for this firehouse drama. Dick Wolf (“Law & Order”) knows TV and Spencer, Kinney, Walker, and Raymund are talented, experienced TV actors. Why the hesitation? “Chicago Fire” is ablaze with melodrama. The writers need to focus on character over cliché to survive the fumes but there’s reason enough to think that could happen if audiences give this drama time to develop.



Arrow

*Photo credit: The CW*

## 9. “Arrow”

**Network:** The CW

**Premieres:** Wednesday, October 10 at 8pm CST

**Starring:** Stephen Amell, Colin Donnell, Katie Cassidy, David Ramsey, Willa Holland, Susanna Thompson, and Paul Blathorne

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** Another superhero drama on The CW sounds like a recipe for bad television but “Arrow” works surprisingly well by playing up what this network does best. Yes, it’s more beautiful people in beautiful places with the highest fashion and best makeup that money can buy. There’s a sheen to The CW programming that actually fits with the tale of a former rich kid turned vigilante superhero with perfect aim. And Amell is a charming lead. “Arrow” is not going to set the world on fire but it could be the kind of solid genre performer (like “Smallville” or “Supernatural”) that hits the target for a network in dire need of one.



Ben and Kate

*Photo credit: NBC*

## 8. “Ben and Kate”

**Network:** FOX



**Premieres:** Tuesday, September 25 at 7:30pm CST

**Starring:** Dakota Johnson, Maggie Elizabeth Jones, Nat Faxon, Echo Kellum, and Lucy Punch

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** FOX is pairing two new shows with Tuesday night comedies “New Girl” and “Raising Hope,” and, on paper, it would seem that “The Mindy Project” with the very funny Mindy Kaling and the very talented Chris Messina would be the odds-on favorite but I vastly prefer the pilot for “Ben and Kate,” a sweet-natured comedy that fits snugly with “New Girl” and comes from the same writer/executive producer (Dana Fox) and executive producer/director (Jake Kasdan). The premise is deceptively clichéd — type A sister (Johnson) struggles with type B brother (Faxon) while raising her daughter (Jones). Many great sitcoms have been built on cliché and the success of this one comes down to the fact that the cast is remarkably likable. Faxon, an Oscar winner for his co-writing “The Descendants,” doesn’t over-play the man-child routine and Johnson is an actress that’s easy to root for and even get emotionally invested in. Smarter and funnier than it looks, “Ben and Kate” could be the key to the success of FOX’s attempt at a Tuesday night comedy block. (Note: You can actually watch the premiere for free on Hulu now by clicking [here](#) [21].)



Animal Practice  
Photo credit: NBC

## 7. “Animal Practice”

**Network:** NBC

**Premieres:** Wednesday, September 26 at 7pm CST

**Starring:** Justin Kirk, JoAnna Garcia Swisher, Tyler Labine, Bobby Lee, Kym Whitley, Betsy Sodaro, and Crystal

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** It’s almost hard to believe that this is the best new comedy of the year but, as mentioned, it’s a small hill to climb. And there’s something affably goofy about this vet-set show that works for me. I’ve always been a big fan of Justin Kirk’s work on “Weeds” and I’d love to see him breakout as a lead on a network hit. Tyler Labine is one of the funniest guys alive who is not yet a household name (go see all of the brilliant-but-canceled “Reaper” and rent “Tucker & Dale vs. Evil” for evidence) and Bobby Lee is an underrated comedian. With behind-the-scenes contributions from the super-talented Russo brothers (directors on “Arrested Development” & “Community”), “Animal Practice” could easily develop into the next great NBC sitcom. It’s better than “Whitney” already. (Watch the premiere of “Animal Practice” [here](#) [22]).



666 Park Avenue  
Photo credit: ABC

## 6. “666 Park Avenue”

**Network:** ABC

**Premieres:** Sunday, September 30 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Rachael Taylor, Dave Annable, Mercedes Masohn, Robert Buckley, Helena Mattson, Erik Palladino, Samantha Logan, Vanessa

Williams, and Terry O'Quinn

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** The model that turned “Revenge” and “OUAT” into massive hits should do the same for this similar high-concept soap that reimagines Faust as a New York TV drama. The great O'Quinn basically plays the Devil and Williams is perfect as the First Lady of Hell. O'Quinn and Williams give the tenants in their lavish Manhattan high rise everything they've ever dreamed of getting...with a price tag, of course. The very likable Taylor and Annable play the couple that moves in and uncovers the Satanic machinations that keep society's upper class humming. At its best, “666” has echoes of great '70s horror films, the ones that imagined urban skyscrapers as buildings in which every door held a new horror story. It's hard to say if this high-rise high concept will get boring after a few weeks but I found the pilot engaging and entertaining.



Nashville

*Photo credit: ABC*

## 5. “Nashville”

**Network:** ABC

**Premieres:** Wednesday, October 10 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Connie Britton, Hayden Panettiere, Powers Boothe, Charles Esten, Eric Close, Clare Bowen, Jonathan Jackson, Sam Palladio, and Robert Wisdom

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** Yes, it's as cheesy as a bad country song, but there's something about this new soap opera that not only works for this viewer but that I suspect will turn it into a massive hit. Not only is the country music audience under-served on network television but Connie Britton is just about ready to be a massive star. Fans of “Friday Night Lights” and “American Horror Story” would argue that she already is but the role of fading country icon Rayna James is the kind of part that makes an actress into a household name. The saga of how James tries to stay relevant in a changing music scene is undeniably over-written and melodramatic (and Panettiere isn't yet convincing in the pilot) but Britton makes everything she does so much more interesting just by her grounded presence as a TV star. The wheelings and dealings of producers, songwriters, stars, and even politicians should make for some soapy entertainment on Wednesday nights and the country twang could separate this tune from the repetitive other ones on the dial.





Vegas

Photo credit: CBS

#### 4. “Vegas”

**Network:** CBS

**Premieres:** Tuesday, September 25 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Dennis Quaid, Michael Chiklis, Carrie-Ann Moss, Jason O’Mara, Taylor Handley, and Sarah Jones

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** This new CBS drama has a more interesting cast and crew than most of the films that will open in theaters over the next month. Quaid, who should have done TV years ago as he fits so perfectly here, plays former Las Vegas Sheriff Ralph Lamb in the 1960s as the Las Vegas as we know it now was growing out of the desert and being watered by mob money. It’s very hard to say what “Vegas” is going to look like from week to week and I really hope I get to see more than the pilot before passing final critical judgment but the cast and production values here are impossible to deny. Quaid, Chiklis, and Moss are great actors. Will they be given great material? There’s so much set-up in episode one that it’s too soon to tell but I know I’ll be watching episode two and that’s all that really matters when it comes to judging whether or not a pilot works — do you want to watch the next one? I do.



Elementary

*Photo credit: CBS*

### 3. “Elementary”

**Network:** CBS

**Premieres:** Thursday, September 27 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Jonny Lee Miller, Lucy Liu, and Aidan Quinn

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** I know some of you are rolling your eyes. I’m in no way suggesting that CBS’s new take on Sherlock Holmes comes close to the genius of BBC’s “Sherlock” but they’re not playing on the same field. Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman are making movies when they explore the legend of Mr. Holmes and Mr. Watson in complete stories three times a year. The very charismatic Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu have to use the same foundation for a weekly mystery series. A complete mystery in 44 minutes, 22 times a year. And the creators of “Elementary” wisely know that the only way that this show works is if people like its stars. Miller, Liu, and Quinn are great here, delivering the kind of entertaining performances that elevate shows like “Castle,” “Bones,” and “The Mentalist.” Those of you who like shows like those, just Season Pass this one now and save yourself some time. I have a feeling it will be on for years.





Revolution

Photo credit: NBC

## 2. “Revolution”

**Network:** NBC

**Premieres:** Monday, September 17 at 9pm CST

**Starring:** Billy Burke, Tracy Spiridakos, Graham Rogers, Anna Lise Phillips, Zak Orth, JD Pardo, David Lyons, Tim Guinee, Elizabeth Mitchell, and Giancarlo Esposito

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** I so want this show to be great. I feel invested in it right after the first episode — the sign of a great pilot. I want the second episode to be even better and then the third and so on. Part of that investment is because it’s admittedly not humming on all cylinders from day one. It’s not an instant creative success like the pilot for “LOST” even if all of the elements are there to suggest that it quickly could become that solid of a program. The cast? Stellar all around from the charismatic Billy Burke to the soon-to-win-an-E Emmy (I hope) Giancarlo Esposito. The direction? The premiere was shot by Jon Favreau (“Iron Man,” “Cowboys & Aliens”) and looks like a Hollywood production. The writing? With J.J. Abrams and Bryan Burk behind the scenes, you know it’s good. What if everything stopped and we had to start society over again? It’s a great idea for a weekly drama. And the end of the premiere features one of those “oooh” moments that gets viewers counting the days until the next episode. NBC has struggled to find a dramatic hit in the ratings or with critics. This show is their first in some time that could live up to its title for a network that really needs a revolution.



Last Resort

Photo credit: ABC

1. “Last Resort”

**Network:** ABC

**Premieres:** Thursday, September 27 at 7pm CST

**Starring:** Andre Braugher, Scott Speedman, Daisy Betts, Dichen Lachman, Daniel Lissing, Sahr Ngaujah, Camille de Pazzis, Autumn Reeser, Jessy Schram, and Robert Patrick

**Why You Should Set Your DVR:** Let’s recap. Promising shows are often built around their cast and crew. As I’ve stressed in this feature, it can be extremely difficult to say how well a show will work based on one episode. Sometimes the writers blow all their good ideas early in a series run and start spinning their wheels. And sometimes they actually need a few weeks to gain traction. So how can we judge the most promising show? First, look at that cast. Braugher is one of the best actors in the history of television. Speedman, Patrick, and Lichman are instantly engaging in the premiere. And the show was created by the great Shawn Ryan of “The Shield” and “The Chicago Code.” Braugher plays the captain of a sub equipped with nuclear weapons. When World War III starts, he and his crew end up trapped on a NATO-run island in the middle of nowhere where they basically are forced to stay put and try to figure out what’s going on. Power struggles, a beautiful setting, a great cast, Ryan’s gift with character & dialogue, and stellar production values — while we may not know the future of any program, choosing “the most promising show” is based on the potential displayed in the premiere. This was an easy choice.



[23]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [24]  
Content Director  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [23]

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