

## TV Review: ‘New Girl,’ ‘Ben and Kate’ Lead FOX Comedy Line-up

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 25, 2012 - 11:56am

- [Ben and Kate](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Dakota Johnson](#) [4]
- [FOX](#) [5]
- [Garret Dillahunt](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Max Greenfield](#) [8]
- [Mindy Kaling](#) [9]
- [New Girl](#) [10]
- [Raising Hope](#) [11]
- [Television](#) [12]
- [The Mindy Project](#) [13]
- [Zooey Deschanel](#) [14]

CHICAGO – NBC has long owned Thursday nights for comedy (although ratings have eroded every year), CBS dominates Monday nights, and Wednesday nights were recently claimed by ABC and the “Modern Family” juggernaut. This leaves Tuesdays for FOX. The network is trying to shape a two-hour block around the success of the Zooey Deschanel vehicle “New Girl,” which returns tonight with two episodes that lead in to new efforts “Ben and Kate” and “The Mindy Project.” The underrated and heartfelt “Raising Hope” returns next week with a new installment.

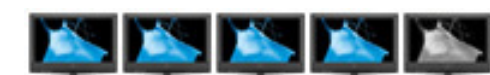
How does FOX Tuesday nights compare to the others? Quite well. Every one of the network comedy nights has at least one dud (CBS’s “Partners,” ABC’s “The Neighbors,” and NBC’s “Up All Night” spring to mind) and the weakest show in this line-up (“The Mindy Project”) is actually not that bad and arguably shows the most room for improvement given the talent level of its cast. “New Girl” has quietly become one of the funniest shows on TV and starts its sophomore season with a hysterical episode guest-starring Parker Posey. “Ben and Kate” is the most surprisingly strong new comedy of the season. And way more people should be watching the consistently funny “Raising Hope.”

In order of premiere:



New Girl  
Photo credit: FOX

### “New Girl”



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

FOX’s only breakout hit of the last year returns with an incredibly funny, sweet, and smart season premiere that perfectly illustrates how this show has improved and will likely continue to do so in the next year. A year ago, “New Girl” was clearly a star vehicle for Zooey Deschanel and her overly quirky Jess. As Jake Johnson and Max Greenfield started to get more laughs, the program developed into an ensemble comedy that really works and the writers opened up the show to play to the entire cast.

In the season premiere, Schmidt (Greenfield) is getting his penis cast off after a summer of celibacy and he's ready to throw a party to celebrate the occasion. Jess (Deschanel) loses her job and ends up trying to be a shot girl at said party where she competes with a great Parker Posey for attention. Winston (Lamorne Morris) gets drunk on girlie drinks made by Nick (Johnson) while Cece (Hannah Simone) introduces the gang to her baffling choice for a new boyfriend. All in all, it's funny, funny stuff, as much so as anything I've seen so far in the new 2012 season.



Ben and Kate

*Photo credit: FOX*

#### “Ben and Kate”

Television Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The model has been the same for years, introduce viewers to a new show after premiering a hit show. So “Ben & Kate” follows “New Girl” and I think those who stick around for this heartwarming comedy will be surprised at what they find there. The show takes a tried-and-true formula — two siblings with vastly different personalities forced to co-exist — but the writers know how to draw out the believable humor from the cliched set-up. The cast is much stronger than typical for a series pilot (comic timing and chemistry typically takes time to develop) and the show is just enjoyable. It may not be a broad laugher but it's a consistent smiler.

The title refers to siblings Ben (Nat Faxon, Oscar-winning co-writer of “The Descendants”) and Kate (Dakota Johnson, daughter of Melanie Griffith & Don Johnson). Kate is a single mother without nearly enough hours in the day. Ben lays around the house a lot. But they love each other and most of the humor comes from that love and their believable chemistry. It helps significantly that Johnson is INCREDIBLY likable. Even as the writing dips into cliché, she makes it easy to root for Kate. I'm rooting for the show all around.



The Mindy Project

*Photo credit: FOX*

#### “The Mindy Project”



Television Rating: **2.5/5.0**

While it looks stronger on paper, there's more reason to worry about Mindy Kaling's star vehicle, a wonderfully cast show that has a pilot episode that I just don't particularly like. This is one of those examples of where it can be really difficult to judge a show on one episode. So while my grade here reflects the scattershot, grating nature of the premiere, I could easily see the problems here being ironed out in weeks two and beyond. The cast is strong enough. But you know that likability I talked about above? It's not here. I don't care about Mindy the way I do Jess, Kate, or the entire clan of "Raising Hope." We need to feel more invested in her story or this will continue to be the half-hour you can skip on FOX Tuesday nights.

Kaling plays an OB/GYN who tries to balance her political and personal life through the filter of Hollywood romantic comedies that have skewed her view of both. The great Chris Messina ("Ruby Sparks," "The Newsroom") co-stars along with Ed Weeks, Anna Camp, Ike Barinholtz, and a series-premiere guest spot from the great Bill Hader. Kaling has proven herself a great writer on "The Office" but this comedy feels too broad, too manic, and too cliched from the opening scenes of Mindy drunkenly ruining a wedding to talking to an insulting doll. I want it to work but it doesn't compare to the rest of this lineup at the start of the season. It might by Christmas. Just not yet.



Raising Hope

Photo credit: FOX

### "Raising Hope"

Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

I really wish more people would watch "Raising Hope," which doesn't return until next week, October 2, 2012 (although the season premiere is now available on Hulu). Over the first two years, the cast here really gelled into one of the best on TV, led by spectacular comic performances from Garret Dillahunt and Martha Plimpton, both of whom should have been pissed when their names weren't read on Emmy nomination morning. The show sometimes feels a bit overwritten in the wacky flashback department but it's much smarter, sweeter, and enjoyable than it's typically given credit for being.

The premiere illustrates all of that as Jimmy (Lucas Neff) and Sabrina (Shannon Woodward) get engaged and we meet Sabrina's mom (a fantastic guest turn from Melanie Griffith). The writers on this show do such a great job of writing for their guest stars, finding a way for them to fit in the fabric of the show without stealing any attention from the leads. They've done it again. Watch "Raising Hope." I'm tired of begging.

*"New Girl," "Ben and Kate," and "The Mindy Project" premiere on FOX on September 25, 2012. "Raising Hope" returns on October 2, 2012.*



[15]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [16]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [15]

Source URL (retrieved on **Apr 24 2024 - 12:40am**):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/20063/tv-review-new-girl-ben-and-kate-lead-fox-comedy-line-up>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ben-and-kate>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dakota-johnson>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/fox>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/garret-dillahunt>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/max-greenfield>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mindy-kaling>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/new-girl>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/raising-hope>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/television>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-mindy-project>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/zooey-deschanel>
- [15] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>