

New shows battle old favorites in US fall TV line-up

A woman, covered in tattoos, emerges from a duffel bag in Times Square. Supergirl soars. Carrie Mathison has left the CIA and is living in Berlin. And Miss Piggy has a late-night show. Get your DVRs ready, refresh your Netflix queue and make sure your on-demand service is up and running. It's fall television premiere time in the United States.

More than 100 new and returning shows are on the packed schedule, shared between traditional networks, cable channels and online offerings from streaming powerhouses Netflix and Amazon. And not all of them will survive. In any given season, only about half of the new shows are picked up for the following year. "A show has to be really good at what it does," says Robert Thompson, a professor of television and popular culture at Syracuse University in New York state.

"You have to have very good writing and characters that people care about." Among the debuts on network TV, NBC's "Blindspot"—a thriller about discovering the identity of the aforementioned naked, tattooed Jane Doe—is getting some buzz. CBS will unleash the hotly anticipated "Supergirl" next month, while ABC is heavily promoting its terror-angled "Quantico," about a group of FBI recruits suspected of involvement in an attack in New York.

There will be blood

In the new crop of shows, violence and lots of blood are in store. On Fox, "Scream Queens" is the latest entrance in the slasher comedy genre, while Lady Gaga will star in



The Netflix company logo is seen at Netflix headquarters in Los Gatos, California, in this April 13, 2011, file photo. — AFP

"American Horror Story: Hotel," the latest chapter in the scare fest anthology on sister cable network FX. Thanks to its binge-ready release format, Netflix got the jump on the networks with "Narcos," its blood-soaked look at the reign of Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar, which hit the Internet last month to raves from critics.

"Wicked City" (ABC) follows cops on the hunt for a serial killer in 1980s Los Angeles, and medieval epic "The Bastard Executioner" (FX) will also offer plenty of gore. The bloodbath interestingly features several top names from the pop music world: Gaga on AHS, Ariana Grande on

"Queens" and Ed Sheeran in a featured role in "Executioner."

Beyond the gore, networks are also looking to draw viewers with known quantities. "Minority Report" (Fox) and "Limitless" (CBS) are based on films of the same name, and "The Muppets" (ABC) are returning with a new format and cheeky dialogue to draw a more adult audience. On AMC, "Fear the Walking Dead"—which premiered last month—is looking to capitalize on the wild success of "The Walking Dead," the zombie apocalypse saga based on a comic book series. "When it's already a brand, it makes sense to piggyback on that," Thompson

says. Of course, the formula does not always work. "Friends" spin-off "Joey" was a flop, as was a recent reboot of "Charlie's Angels." "This is an issue of show business, and not of science," notes Thompson. And then there are the returning powerhouse shows. One of the breakout debuts of last winter was Fox's music family saga "Empire"—which is up for three Emmys on Sunday including best actress in a drama.

"It's a really good old-fashioned soap opera," Thompson says. "Empire" was really fun to watch." ABC is counting on Shonda Rhimes—the brains behind ratings juggernauts "Grey's Anatomy," "Scandal" and "How To Get Away with Murder"—to produce another hit with midseason thriller "The Catch." On Showtime, "Homeland" will pick up the action after Mathison (Emmy-nominated Claire Danes) walks away from the CIA.

Wait and see

Thompson explains that networks now have more time to let shows attract a following before pulling the plug, thanks to better technology.

DVRs and on-demand viewing have negated the need to be home to see a show at a particular time. The professor cites the example of "Mr Robot," about a young computer programmer leading a double life. The USA Network psychological thriller gradually built up an audience and critical praise over the summer. "People were talking about it. It got some buzz," Thompson says. "Before, if you didn't grow fast enough, your show would be cancelled." — AFP



Alejandro Rose-Garcia, also known as Shakey Graves, accepts the Emerging Artist of the Year Award at the Americana Music Honors and Awards show. — AP photos



Gillian Welch, left, and Dave Rawlings accept the Lifetime Achievement Award for Songwriting.



The Mavericks accept the Duo/Group of the Year Award.

Simpson, Graves win Americana awards

Country singer Sturgill Simpson and Austin, Texas-artist Shakey Graves took home early awards at the Americana Honors and Awards show on Wednesday night. The Kentucky-born Simpson won song of the year for his psychedelic-honky-tonk jam, "Turtles All The Way Down," during the roots music awards show held at the Ryman Auditorium.

Graves, whose given name is Alejandro Rose-Garcia, took home the emerging artist award. The Eagles drummer and songwriter Don Henley and '60s folk singer Buffy Sainte-Marie were special honorees for lifetime achievement awards. Performers included Keb' Mo', Lee Ann Womack and Ricky Skaggs. — AP

Performers including Los Lobos, The Mavericks, The McCrary Sisters, Buddy Miller and Rhiannon Giddens share the stage for the final song at the Americana Music Honors and Awards show.

