



# Ars TV Guide: All the new shows you'll want to check out this fall

Killer robots, dork rappers, time traveling terrorists, jerks in heaven, and more!

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**Luke Cage is coming, and your bullets mean nothing to him.**

Fall TV season is in full swing, but there's still time to figure out what's worth watching from the new crop of shows just underway. At Ars, we've painstakingly evaluated the new fall titles for possible geek-related awesomeness and found a

baker's dozen for you to check out. Remember—we've only included *new* shows, not returning ones that are coming back for a second or twelfth season. But feel free to wax poetic about your love for everything from *Homeland* to *The Walking Dead* in the comments.

## Drama

### *StartUp*

This intriguing series combines Miami gangster action with the tale of a startup that has created GenCoin, a crypto currency that could save the developing world (or... just allow drug dealers to launder their money faster). Either way, this is probably the season's most unexpected tech thriller, streaming on Crackle with a fantastic cast that includes Martin Freeman, Otmara Marrero, and Adam Brody.

*StartUp* is a tech series in the vein of *Mr. Robot*, where hacking isn't just a get-rich-quick scheme for VCs in Silicon Valley—it's also about global politics. In *StartUp*, building a tech company is a chance for its founders to escape from poverty and to help millions of other people in the world have access to bank accounts via mobile. Unfortunately, their angel investors are drug dealers, and their roadblocks involve eluding FBI investigators.

**The series started streaming on Crackle on September 6.**

### *MacGyver*

What else could you want? It's *MacGyver*, the ultimate nerd wet dream show, where tinkering with tech gets you out of literally every terrible situation on earth. In this reimagining of the original 1980s show, Lucas Till plays the secret government operative who stops crimes/disasters using the power of science. He's younger than the original MacGyver and also has a team that includes his boss (Sandrine Holt) and a surly computer hacker (Tristin Mays). It may not quite measure up to the original—and

MacGyver's hair is a bit concerning—but it does promise to be fun in a kind of *Scorpion* way. **The first episode aired September 23.**

## *Van Helsing*

This Syfy series sounds absolutely batshit insane, and that's why I'm so excited about it. Remember the character Abraham Van Helsing from *Dracula*? The learned older chap who knows all about vampire lore? Well, this is about his granddaughter Vanessa Helsing (nicknamed Van, of course), who has awakened from a coma to fight post-apocalyptic vampires of the future. Why was she in a coma? Why does she have the power to bite vampires and turn them human? Why is her name Vanessa Helsing instead of Vanessa Van Helsing, thus making her Van Van Helsing? Oh shut up and just watch the undead *Mad Max*-style action, presided over by twisted showrunner Neil LaBute. It's going to be great (especially after six beers). **The first episode aired September 23.**

## *Luke Cage*

Ever since our brains exploded with the awesomeness that was the Netflix series *Jessica Jones*, fans have been waiting for this series about Jessica's ambivalent partner Luke Cage. Like Jessica, he's got super strength and mega-healing powers but nothing fancy like flight or laser eyes. He's just a serious badass with a heart of gold who wants to clean up Harlem.

In this series, Cage goes up against evil Harlem gangster/club owner Mahershala Ali, who is in cahoots with corrupt politician Alfre Woodard. Cage is a man with a past who tried to flee a horrible tragedy by quietly running a bar and staying out of everybody's way. But the bad guys keep getting worse, so he reluctantly takes up the mantle of vigilante superhero to bring justice to the city. The action looks terrific, and Mike Colter plays

Cage with a perfect blend of calm calculation and righteous anger. I guarantee you will be binge watching this one *soon*. **The series will be available on Netflix starting September 30.**

## *Westworld*

With an all-star cast, twisty-smart plot, and outrageously cool special effects, HBO's *Westworld* is poised to become your new obsession. Created by Jonathan Nolan (*Person of Interest*, *The Dark Knight*) and Lisa Joy (*Burn Notice*, *Battlestar Galactica*), it's the story of a far-future wild west theme park full of robot "hosts" that are virtually indistinguishable from humans. The human guests who visit Westworld can do anything they want to the robots, which as one engineer puts it in an early episode, means "fuck and kill."

But the park's creator, Ford (Anthony Hopkins), has just rolled out an update that has given the robots a new perspective on the humans. Head programmer Jeffrey Wright has to grapple with the consequences, while park guest Jimmi Simpson finds himself sympathizing with the machines. Meanwhile, James Marsden wants nothing more than to romance the kind, artistic robot Evan Rachel Wood—though evil Man in Black Ed Harris has horrific plans for her and every other bot in the park. Our perspective shifts between robots, guests, and programmers as we piece together the mystery that fuels this dystopian game world. Truly mind-expanding explorations of AI and robot consciousness intermingle with ultra-violence and corporate politics in what is guaranteed to be the fall's best new science fiction series. **The first episode airs October 2.**

## *Timeless*

This premise is a little bit *Doctor Who* and a little bit *Sherlock*. A master criminal (Goran Višnjić) steals a time machine in order to sabotage history, and a group of investigators (Abigail Spencer, a historian; Malcolm Barrett, a scientist; and Matt Lanter, a

soldier) must go after him to prevent the timeline from imploding. Expect lots of historical conspiracies with a serious dose of action. Show creator Eric Kripke made his mark on television by creating cult favorite series *Supernatural*; he was showrunner during the first five seasons, which were well-paced and led up to a fantastically interesting take on the apocalypse, complete with angels who are dicks. Kripke floundered a bit with his post-apocalyptic fascist cowboy series *Revolution*, but he always has intriguing ideas and a flair for dark humor. This series is definitely worth a look. **The first episode airs October 5.**

## *Chance*

If you miss Hugh Laurie in *House*, this Hulu series about a very different kind of doctor may ease the hurt. Laurie plays Eldon Chance, a mentally unstable psychiatrist in San Francisco who makes a few bad decisions and then finds himself on the wrong side of an out-of-control detective's wrath. In many ways, this series feels like classic noir, with a main character who is drawn to people with dark pasts. We're not always sure what's real as Chance weaves through the shambles of his life to solve a mystery that is linked to domestic horrors and police corruption. Hulu has already ordered a second season of this suspense thriller, so if you get hooked there's always more to come. **The series debuts on October 19.**

## *Pure Genius*

Finally, here's a cool biotech thriller that isn't about forensics. *Pure Genius* is set in a high-tech hospital where Dermot Mulroney plays a surgeon whose OR is packed with futuristic, life-saving gadgets. He's working with a tech entrepreneur (Augustus Prew) who is trying to disrupt hospitals—mostly by making them look like Microsoft concept video about the future. There's definitely a gadget-of-the-week vibe going on: there are ingestible cameras, adhesive computers, and brain-to-brain computer interfaces. But the show also promises to be about the

brave new world of personal genetic analysis and digital health. Jason Katims, the show creator, was previously the head writer for *Friday Night Lights*, so you can expect strong character development and a little bit of schmaltz. **The first episode airs October 27.**

## Comedy

### *Atlanta*

If you loved Donald Glover in *Community* (and if you didn't, who are you?), then this FX series created entirely by the comedian should be on your watch list. Glover plays Earn, a Princeton dropout trying to make ends meet working crappy jobs and crashing with his baby mama Zazie Beetz, who loves him but wants something better for their kid. Suddenly Earn's cousin Alfred (Bryan Tyree Henry) scores a decent hit song as rapper Paper Boi, and Earn decides to become his manager. Earn, Alfred, and their weirdass friend Darius (Keith Stanfield) bumble through life, geeking out about everything from Twitter to hip hop, while also confronting some serious issues (like, you know, a murder charge) on the streets of Atlanta. The pacing is fantastic, and the writing ranges from sharp satire to surreal stoner reveries. Watch for some goofy moments that are reminiscent of Cheech and Chong's hit 1970s movie *Up in Smoke*, which was also about a loser band dealing with real social problems. Glover is in fine form, and already the critics are raving that this series is an instant classic. There's still time to catch up! **The first episode aired on September 6.**

### *Son of Zorn*

Imagine if Archie Bunker were a cartoon barbarian who left the wars on his cartoon island to see his ex-wife and estranged son—who are live-action human beings in a California suburb. That is the seriously bizarre premise of FOX sitcom *Son of Zorn*, where Jason Sudeikis voices Zorn, literally a patriarchal,

warmongering savage lost in a world of vegans, hipsters, and middle managers. When he realizes that his son (Johnny Pemberton) barely knows who he is, Zorn decides to stick around, take an office job (where he has to wear a tie over his furry animal thong), and teach his kid about broadswords and monster slaying. In the pilot, he tries to win his son over by getting him an SUV-sized flying steed instead of a car. Obviously, hijinks ensue. The setup is high concept, but at its heart this is a show about an old-fashioned dad trying to bond with his alienated son. **The first episode aired on September 11.**

### *The Good Place*

Eleanor (Kristen Bell) has died in the most embarrassing possible way, and now she finds herself in "the good place," a carefully crafted wonderland built by first-time boss angel Ted Danson. As a new boss, he's made a few mistakes—including the placement of Eleanor, who it turns out was a vapid, terrible, selfish person who should have been sent downstairs. As she tries to hide her true identity, Eleanor begins to undermine the entire fabric of paradise. She enlists her reluctant "soulmate" (William Jackson Harper) to help her become a better person so she can stay out of hell. It's a delightfully odd premise, and Bell's terrific comic timing makes it come to life (especially in flashbacks, where we get to see her being a hilariously awful person). Danson is also funny, and there's just something deeply satisfying about watching the afterlife spiral crazily out of control. **The first episode aired September 19.**

### *Insecure*

This HBO series created by YouTube star Issa Rae (*Awkward Black Girl*) will appeal to anybody who bingewatched *Master of None*. Rae plays Issa (of course), a slightly dorky, seriously funny everywoman in Los Angeles who is about to kiss her twenties goodbye without ever having figured out what the hell

she wants to do with her life. Her job is starting to chafe, partly because her colleagues keep having "white people meetings" where they get judgey about her work and partly because she has bigger ambitions. On top of that, all her boyfriend wants to do is sit on the couch every night. So, Issa decides to change her life with some help from best friend Yvonne Orji. Rae earned a huge following for her semi-autobiographical YouTube sketches, and this is her first jump to old-fashioned cable TV. The results look promising. **The first episode airs October 9.**

### *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*

Based on the two brilliantly silly novels by Douglas Adams, this BBC America series follows the adventures of a detective whose methods are both unorthodox and frankly wrong. Dirk Gently (Christian Bako) doesn't need clues to solve crime, because he's tuned in to the interconnectedness of all things in the universe. Or so he tells his reluctant sidekick Todd (Elijah Wood) as they attempt to solve a murder while also navigating a semi-supernatural landscape full of the usual Adams-style absurdities. The series was created by Max Landis (*Chronicle*, *American Ultra*), who has a flair for quip-laced action. This is going to be good. **The first episode airs October 22.**