

Broadcast networks no longer have the monopoly on great television shows in the fall

BY DAVID MARTINDALE SEPTEMBER 22, 2016 3:08 PM



*Thomas Haden Church and Sarah Jessica Parker star in **Divorce**. **Craig Blankenhorn** HBO*

In the old days, cable networks steered clear of launching new shows in September and October.

These months belonged to the broadcast networks, which overwhelmed viewers with a tsunami of new series and returning favorites. It would have been folly for the cable outfits to try to compete.

But those rules no longer apply. Now there are just as many high-profile fall premieres on cable and on the increasingly prolific streaming services. It's debatable whether this decade is the new golden age of television — but it is without question a golden age of choice.

Here are some of the most notable new cable and streaming service programs to consider.

Heavy Hitters

1. Westworld

This sci-fi thriller, from creator-producer Jonathan Nolan (Person of Interest), turns the premise of the 1973 movie inside-out. It's set in an Old West-themed amusement park in which robots are used to fulfill guests' every fantasy. In the original, we rooted for the humans after the robots went rogue. This time, in a 10-episode first season, viewers will sympathize with the suddenly sentient (and oppressed) robots. The A-list cast includes Anthony Hopkins, Ed Harris, Evan Rachel Wood, James Marsden and Thandie Newton. Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 2 on HBO.

2. Marvel's Luke Cage

This Jessica Jones spinoff stars viewer favorite Mike Colter in the title role. Cage is an African-American hero who owes his super strength and unbreakable skin to a sabotaged scientific experiment. As a fugitive trying to start over in Harlem, he is drawn out of the shadows and emerges as a champion for the people in his community. Luke Cage is Netflix's third street-level hero to get a Netflix series. Ultimately Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and still-to-come Iron Fist will team up in Marvel's The Defenders. Available for streaming beginning Friday on Netflix.

3. Divorce

Sarah Jessica Parker, beloved leading lady of Sex and the City, returns to HBO in a much darker comedy about a marital relationship in its unhappily-ever-after stage. Parker and Thomas Haden Church star as Frances and Robert, a couple with two kids. They have drifted apart after more than a decade of marriage and decide to make a clean break. They quickly discover in the 10-episode first season, however, that an amiable split is easy only in theory. The divorce gets uglier and more drawn-out with every episode. Premieres at 9 p.m. Oct. 9 on HBO.

4. Crisis in Six Scenes

Legendary auteur Woody Allen wrote, directed and stars in this six-episode comedy, his first TV series. It's set in the politically turbulent 1960s, where a conservative middle-class suburban couple (Allen and Elaine May) and their two houseguests have their safe lives and unchallenged beliefs turned upside-down by the arrival of a free-spirited hippie (played by Miley Cyrus). A Woody-Miley comedy pairing is unexpected, but Allen says he has been a fan of Cyrus ever since he first spotted her in her Hannah Montana years. Available for streaming beginning Friday on Amazon.

5. Good Behavior

Downton Abbey's Michelle Dockery shifts gears in this seductive thriller. The former Lady Mary plays a thief and con artist who's on parole. When Letty Raines overhears a hit man (Juan Diego Botto) being hired to kill a man's wife, she takes it upon herself to derail the scheme. Before long, she and the would-be killer are on a collision course and entangled in a complicated relationship. The 10-episode season is created and produced by Chad Hodge and Blake Crouch, who kept viewers guessing with Wayward Pines.

Premieres at 8 p.m. Nov. 15 on TNT.

6. Chance

Hugh Laurie stars in this intense thriller, which already has a two-season commitment. Laurie plays Dr. Eldon Chance, a forensic neuropsychiatrist who swims in treacherous waters while treating a beautiful but troubled patient (Gretchen Mol). The case, in which the woman might have multiple personalities, causes Chance to cross paths with the patient's abusive husband, a crooked police detective. From there, things get progressively more dangerous for our man, as he heads into the wayward underbelly of San Francisco.

Available for streaming beginning Oct. 19 on Hulu.

7. Gilmore Girls

It's just like old times. The cast and creative team from the 2000-2007 dramedy have reunited for this four-episode continuation series. Lauren Graham and Alexis Bledel are back as Lorelai and Rory, the best-friends mother-and-daughter combo. Amy Sherman-Palladino, creator and executive producer of the original, and her producer husband, Daniel Palladino, wrote and directed. The series consists of four 90-minute installments, each covering a different season from one calendar year in their lives.

Available for streaming beginning Nov. 25 on Netflix.

8. The Crown

This ambitious and expensive drama goes behind the locked doors of Westminster and Buckingham Palace to tell the story of the royal family and Queen Elizabeth II's reign. The series opens in the late 1940s, with Claire Foy playing a 25-year-old newlywed who will soon lead the world's most famous monarchy. John Lithgow co-stars as Winston Churchill. It's based on creator/showrunner Peter Morgan's play The Audience. The plan is for the series to run six 10-episode seasons, each season spanning about a decade.

Available for streaming beginning Nov. 4 on Netflix.

And The Rest

Van Helsing

Kelly Overton, an actress who played a werewolf in True Blood, is still rubbing elbows with vampires. Here, she's Vanessa Van Helsing, descendant of the famous vampire hunter who battled Dracula, as she leads the human resistance to a vamp uprising. Premiered this week. Airst 9 p.m. Friday on Syfy.

Aftermath

Anne Heche stars as a kick-butt mom in an action-packed, special effects-filled story about a resilient family trying to survive the end of the world. It's quite literally the Apocalypse, with natural disasters, plagues and supernatural demons running amok. Premieres at 9 p.m. Tuesday on Syfy.

Insecure

Issa Rae stars in this comedy as a late-20s black woman who's trying to figure out what she wants in life and how to take control of it, while fumbling along every step of the way. Rae created the show with Larry Wilmore of The Nightly Show. Premieres at 9:30 p.m. Oct. 9 on HBO.

Channel Zero

A man returns to the hometown of his youth, where the murders of his brother and four other children were never solved. Could the crimes be connected to a creepy 1980s puppet show that the kids used to watch on TV? Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 11 on Syfy.

Falling Water

Three strangers — a police detective, a security officer and an artist — come to the conclusion that they're dreaming separate parts of the same dream. Once they investigate this phenomenon, they learn that the fate of the world might be in their hands. Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 13 on USA.

Haters Back Off

YouTube star Colleen Ballinger stars as Miranda Sings, a spectacularly untalented theater kid who continually fails upward, primarily on the strength of her unflagging belief that she was born to be a famous and beloved star. Available for streaming beginning Oct. 14 on Netflix.

Goliath

Billy Bob Thornton stars as a down-but-never-out lawyer in this David E. Kelley legal drama. He lands a tricky malpractice case against a corporate behemoth. The A-list cast also includes William Hurt, Molly Parker and Maria Bello. Available for streaming beginning Oct. 14 on Amazon.

Wolf Creek

An American family vacationing in northern Australia is targeted by a serial killer who hunts tourists in the Outback. College student Eve, the sole survivor, vows to bring the villain to justice — or to die trying. It's a follow-up to the 2005 movie, a cult favorite. Premieres at 9 p.m. Oct. 14 on Pop.

Berlin Station

This contemporary spy drama involves a CIA agent who's new to Berlin and assigned to track down a famous whistleblower. His investigation, filled with risks and moral compromises, ultimately unearths a conspiracy with ties back to Washington. Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 16 on Epix.

Graves

Nick Nolte stars in this half-hour dramedy as former U.S. President Richard Graves. Twenty-five years after his two terms, he sets out to right all the wrongs perpetrated by his administration. Sela Ward co-stars as his wife, a woman with her own political agenda. Premieres at 9 p.m. Oct. 16 on Epix.

Eyewitness

This thriller involves two teenage boys who witness a triple murder. They have a secret of their own (plus, they're afraid of being pursued by the killer), so they decide to keep what they saw to themselves. It won't be easy. One kid's foster mom is the sheriff. Premieres at 9 p.m. Oct. 16 on USA.

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency

Elijah Wood stars as the reluctant sidekick to an unconventional detective played by Samuel Barnett. The eight-episode series is inspired by two comic thrillers written by Douglas Adams of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fame. Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 22 on BBC America.

Good Girls Revolt

This series explores gender politics in the late 1960s. A group of young female researchers at a New York news magazine ask to be treated fairly in the workplace, a request that triggers massive changes — positive and negative. Available for streaming beginning Oct. 28 on Amazon.

People of Earth

This out-there comedy stars Wyatt Cenac as a journalist investigating a support group for alien abductees. The more he digs into their oddball claims, the more truth he finds in their stories. Ana Gasteyer and Oscar Nunez also star. Premieres at 8 p.m. Oct. 31 on TBS.