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Actors and Showrunners



12

Contenders one and all, top row, from left: Iain Armitage (*Young Sheldon*), Antonio Banderas (*Genius: Picasso*), Daniel Bruhl (*The Alienist*), Dominic Cooper (*Preacher*), Ted Danson (*The Good Place*), Zach Galifianakis (*Baskets*), John Goodman (*Roseanne*) and Bill Hader (*Barry*); middle row, from left: Joel Kinnaman (*Altered Carbon*), Taylor Kitsch (*Waco*), Peter Krause (*9-1-1*), Damian Lewis (*Billions*), Kyle MacLachlan (*Twin Peaks*), William H. Macy (*Shameless*) and Eric McCormack (*Will & Grace*); bottom row, from left: Dylan McDermott (*LA to Vegas*), Thomas Middleditch (*Silicon Valley*), Jason Mitchell (*The Chi*), Jack O'Connell (*Godless*), Patton Oswalt (*A.P. Bio*), Randall Park (*Fresh Off the Boat*), Dan Stevens (*Legion*) and Milo Ventimiglia (*This Is Us*).

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22 'He's Still a Goofball'

Eleven actors who portray some of the quirkiest guys

on television reflect on why they love their characters and the deeper heart behind their silly exteriors.

32 'All of Us Are on the Verge of Insanity Here'

Six top television drama showrunners talk about race in the writers room, shooting awkward sex scenes and killing off favorite characters ("I was crying while I typed their demise").

ARMITAGE: FOX; BANDERAS: NBC; BRUHL: HBO; COOPER: FOX; DANSON: NBC; GALIFIANAKIS: FOX; GOODMAN: FOX; HADER: FOX; KINNAMAN: FOX; KITSCH: FOX; KRAUSE: FOX; LEWIS: FOX; MACLACHLAN: FOX; MACY: FOX; MCCORMACK: FOX; MCDERMOTT: FOX; MIDDLEDITCH: FOX; MITCHELL: FOX; O'CONNELL: FOX; OSWALT: FOX; PARK: FOX; STEVENS: FOX; VENTIMIGLIA: FOX

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46 John Legend Superstar The multi-hyphenate, one trophy away from joining the EGOT club, reveals the burdens of playing Jesus on NBC's hit live concert event.

48 Moving in With *Will & Grace* "We feel like we hit a home run," says co-creator Max Mutchnick of some of the notable guest stars (Alec Baldwin! Blythe Danner!) who were brought in for NBC's reboot of the classic sitcom.

52 89 Years of *THR* In 1990 and '93, the TV Academy said "cheers" to Ted Danson.

48

Baldwin returned to the *Will & Grace* revival to play Malcolm Widmark opposite his onscreen lover, Megan Mullally's Karen Walker.



Photographed by **Emily Berl**

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-TV Guide Magazine

the BIG BANG THEORY



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EMMYS THE RACE

Can the Big Four Still Win Big in Drama?

No broadcast network has won a drama series Emmy in 12 years, but NBC's *This Is Us* and ABC breakout *The Good Doctor* are now in the hunt

BY SCOTT FEINBERG

In 2017, the rookie season of *This Is Us* — a primetime family drama that was embraced by critics (90 percent on Rotten Tomatoes) and audiences (14.8 million viewers per episode, second only to CBS' *Bull* among network dramas) — represented a beacon of hope not just for NBC but also for its broadcast siblings, ABC, CBS and Fox. It had been six years since a network show was nominated for the best drama series Emmy (CBS' *The Good Wife*) and 11 since one had won (Fox's *24*). And with the networks' drama slates increasingly dominated by formulaic procedurals as cable and streaming services were churning out a flood of inventive alternatives, the Big Four had no other serious prospects.

In the end, *This Is Us* did land a nomination — but lost to Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale*, the first show from a streaming service to win a series honor, drama or otherwise. Did that result mark a final changing of the guard in the drama series category? Or can *This Is Us* — or some other network drama — seriously compete? That question is on the minds of many as Hollywood heads into this year's nomination voting period.



This Is Us is once again the networks' best hope, but there also is another real possibility this cycle: ABC's breakout drama *The Good Doctor*, which isn't quite as well-reviewed but is comparably popular. It began rolling out in September with a Monday pilot that proved to be ABC's most watched in 21 years; its first season was the network's highest rated in 13; it was the most watched series in the 10 p.m. slot — new or returning, on any network — in 11; and it finished as the season's most watched new drama.

But while network dramas often still attract more viewers than those on cable or streaming, the very ways in which they do so might also be what's keeping them from resonating with the TV Academy.

For the Emmys' first 50 years, nothing but shows from the Big Four (or one of their local affiliates) and occasionally PBS (or its

predecessor NET), was ever nominated for best drama series. But during the subsequent two decades, the broadcast outlets have slowly but surely been pushed out of that category. In 1999, a cable show broke in for the first time, and in 2004, one won (in both cases, HBO's *The Sopranos*). By 2012, for the first time, but not the last, not a single Big Four show was even nominated. The deck against the broadcasters was further stacked a year later when a streaming series was nominated for the first time (Netflix's *House of Cards*) and in 2017 when *The Handmaid's Tale* prevailed.

However, network dramas are on the verge of Emmy extinction not just because there are now so many other content providers in the game but also because those other content providers better cater to 2018 audiences' desires and expectations. While there is no upfront fee for broadcast network programming, there is still a "price" to be paid for it: Subject to standards and practices, the Big Four cannot say or show things that other platforms can; dependent on ads, programming is constantly interrupted, necessitating constant re-exposition; and in need of as many viewers as possible in order to sell those ads for as much as possible, the networks generally provide content that is objectionable to the fewest number of people. In short, particularly on the drama side, broadcast fare tends to feel dumbed down and edgeless.

Unfortunately for the Big Four, Americans' appetite for mature and edgy material began to soar just as cable and streaming were coming into their own. By the turn of the century, watercooler discussions were centering not on last night's episode of insert-a-show-here — partly because everybody was increasingly watching different things — but on sex (e.g., the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal) and violence (e.g., 9/11). We lost our innocence, but, for a while, Emmy voters still found the edge they were looking for on the Big Four — again, 24 won best drama series in 2006. Before long, though, even the Big Four's top-tier offerings failed to meet viewers' needs — which, in the ADD era, also include economy. *24* was also the last winner comprising more than 13 episodes; shorter seasons tend to sustain quality better and are more binge-able.

If, in 2007, when Big Four shows accounted for four of five drama series slots, you had told a network TV exec that in 11 years the Big Four would be lucky to snag one of seven slots, you'd probably have been laughed out of the room. But that's how fast change is happening in TV. No perch is safe. **THR**



Left: *This Is Us*' Sterling K. Brown (left, with Justin Hartley) won the 2017 drama actor Emmy. Right: *Good Doctor* is new to the race.

Illustration by Rob Flowers

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‘IT SENT ME INTO A SHEER PANIC’

Whether they had to tackle an especially vulnerable conversation or dive into a nude hot tub foursome, 12 stars reveal the scenes that kept them up at night — and were all the more rewarding to pull off

BY CRAIG TOMASHOFF

ANTONIO BANDERAS

Pablo Picasso

Genius: Picasso (Nat Geo)

Season two of this limited series focused on Picasso's long life, splitting time between his days as a young, passionate painter (played by Alex Rich) and his later years as an established artist (Banderas) in Nazi-occupied Paris.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

“That would be the first scene I filmed for the series. It was a scene on the beach with actress Samantha Colley. It was not particularly difficult, but I was in Malaga, Spain, playing Picasso, and I am also from Malaga. There was the sense of responsibility, of knowing that there was no way back, that I crossed the point of no return, which didn't allow me to sleep the night before. My first acting performance was actually with a group of theater aficionados in Malaga back in the mid-1970s. I was in the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I remember feeling like I was in a dream, like I just visited another universe, a place that definitely was better than my reality at the time. I didn't know if I was good or bad, I just somehow felt that I belonged there and I didn't want to leave.”

DANIEL BRUHL

Laszlo Kreizler
The Alienist (TNT)

Set in 1896 New York, this limited series starring German-Spanish actor Bruhl follows psychologist Kreizler's search for a serial killer with the help of a newspaper artist (Luke Evans) and a police secretary (Dakota Fanning).

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"I'm usually most stressed when a project starts. That first day is always causing sleepless nights. I have this repeated nightmare of me performing my first scene and seeing the horrified faces of the producers as they say, 'Oh, what a mistake!' I also have nightmares that I've learned the wrong scene. That actually happened to me toward the end of production. Things had gotten a bit chaotic as they realized what we'd missed shooting because we were sometimes jumping in between episodes. I arrived on set and was given new pages. It sent me into a sheer panic. It was a long, long scene that was only on me explaining to the team all the conclusions from the whole show. I knew it wouldn't work, and I stumbled from line to line. Then they shot close-ups, so things got worse and worse. It ended up not in the show, but I'd love to see that scene and see the horror in my face."



DOMINIC COOPER

Jesse Custer
Preacher (AMC)

After the season-one finale wiped out nearly every character with an explosion in Custer's Texas hometown, season two picks up with the preacher hitting the road to search for God's current hiding place.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"It was probably the second-season finale. I realized how moving and how

rooted in reality these characters are. Cassidy (Joseph Gilgun) tells Jesse he slept with Tulip (Ruth Negga), creating this conflict between best friends. Meanwhile, Jesse is standing by his belief that he can save Tulip's life even though he knows that her death (after being shot by the Grail organization) is completely and utterly his fault. Now Jesse can't bear to accept that the only possible way to fix what has happened is to allow his (vampire) friend to do something he doesn't believe in because of his faith. So in that moment, Jesse's faith is letting him down monumentally. We sat around talking a lot about the scene beforehand, which helped me get through it. That constant searching is what makes everything better. The moment you don't start getting a bit panicky or your mind doesn't race the night before you shoot something like that, you're in trouble."



JOEL KINNAMAN

Takeshi Kovacs
Altered Carbon (Netflix)

Season one was set 250 years in the future, where death is a thing of the past and former soldier Kovacs has been given a healthy new body by a wealthy businessman in order to solve a murder.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"In episode eight, I'm framing a person for murder and laying out the scenario of how it happened. That scene took a lot of preparation. I had to drive this whole narrative, building a case like a prosecutor. I'm building a lie and ruining a person's life. I worked on it

a couple of weeks in advance because you really have to have total control over the material. You want to control the tempo without having to think, 'What's my next line?' You have to make all these micro-decisions in the moment, so you really want to already know what you're saying. I tried thinking of myself as a lawyer, presenting a case in the most convincing way. Once I had the lines down, I tried to find where to pause, where to speed up, how to move around the room, how to use my body language to do something like come up behind someone to make them uncomfortable. That is acting to me, caring enough to have control of your material but also lose control of your emotions at the same time."





PETER KRAUSE

Bobby Nash
9-1-1 (Fox)

During the debut season, firefighter Nash spends his time at work trying to help others handle personal emergencies, but at home, he's coping with alcoholism and the death of his family.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"It was actually a series of scenes that had one thing in common: how I modulated Bobby's release of emotion. As a first responder, he had to be on top of those emotions, but away from work, like in a flashback scene with his wife, it was a matter of how much I put out there and how much I hold in. Separately, there was a scene where I had to see a motorcyclist who had been bifurcated in an accident. I didn't want to do something the audience might find typical, so I stayed loose

and just allowed something to happen. I became very animal-like. I was that animal backing away from a dead body. It was a moment that ended up being very true and unpredictable."



TAYLOR KITSCH

David Koresh
Waco (Paramount Network)

This limited series chronicles the real rise of rock musician turned cult leader Koresh and his fall during the deadly raid by federal officials on his Waco, Texas, compound.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"What stands out most for me was that first day on set, when I had a nine-page monologue in the chapel about being a Davidian. I'd been prepping for that scene for four and a half months and was just excited to get it out. I wanted to see what was going to happen. That day, you have 90 people sitting in this little chapel ready to see me as Koresh for the first time, so the stakes were high. I'd been waiting behind the church doors for the director to call action, hearing everyone settle into their seats. As soon as I heard the word, I blew through the doors and jumped in to start the sermon. And the minute we finished that first take, John [Erick Dowdle, executive producer] came running in so pumped, saying, 'Oh my God! This is that man! I didn't know it was going to be this good!' When you hear something like that, and you see other actors you admire really listening to what you're saying, it's very empowering. There's no better feeling. Of course, you spend a minute taking it in and then you're off to the next 10-page dialogue scene."



DAMIAN LEWIS

Bobby "Axe" Axelrod
Billions (Showtime)

Trying to rebound from his arrest at the end of season two, Bobby is living apart from wife Lara (Malin Akerman) and searching for a way to avoid a potential 15- to 20-year prison sentence.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"There's a scene where Axe is at a penthouse club party full of beautiful people dancing around, and he's slightly anxious about it all because he ends up naked in a hot tub with three women. I spent the night before thinking about how exactly I was going to get into a hot tub naked while on a rooftop in downtown Manhattan with dozens of windows allowing people to look at my bare tush. They did have me wear what is poetically named a 'sex barrier,' so I was covered up in, shall we say, a limited way."

KITSCH: COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT NETWORK; LEWIS: JEFF NEUWANN/SHOWTIME; KRAUSE: MICHAEL BECKER/FOX



**"THE MOST OBVIOUS
REASON TO WATCH THIS
SHOW: THE UNSTOPPABLE
TEAM OF CATHERINE O'HARA
AND EUGENE LEVY"** -VOX

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES
EUGENE LEVY

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Schitt\$Creek



KYLE MACLACHLAN

Dale Cooper
Twin Peaks: The Return
 (Showtime)

Twenty-six years after the original Twin Peaks ended, special agent Dale Cooper returns to the exact place where he was left: trapped inside the sinister Black Lodge and trying to find a way out while his evil doppelganger roams the earth.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

“It was the night before my first appearance on set as ‘Mr. C,’ or Evil Cooper — I didn’t sleep well. I was nervous. That character is such an extreme departure from any other role I’ve played, and I was very aware of the faith David Lynch had in me to make this character live. I didn’t want to let him down.”



JASON MITCHELL

Brandon Johnson
The Chi (Showtime)

In the first season, Johnson begins as a talented chef hoping to one day open his own restaurant. Then, the death of his brother forces him to make difficult choices that send his life into very dark places.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

“There were a bunch of them, but the block-party scene [in episode five] was particularly intense. My job was to make it look like Brandon was having the most fun in his life, when his ex

shows up with another guy, after he’s seen the guy who shot his brother. This was not a happy moment. To prepare for times like that, I’ll tune out and turn on some music. I like to listen to Nico & Vinz’s ‘Am I Wrong.’ It came out around the time I was doing *Straight Outta Compton*, so hearing it always helps me tune in to what I’m doing. I listen in my trailer, taking two minutes to myself rather than do it on set, because I have to be thoughtful about everyone else’s process. What was so rewarding when we did finish the scene was immediately feeling like you’ve gotten it. It’s like a breath of fresh air. I gained a lot of confidence in that moment.”

JACK O’CONNELL

Roy Goode
Godless (Netflix)

The limited series begins with outlaw Goode on the run from malicious gang leader Frank Griffin (Jeff Daniels), eventually winding up in La Belle, New Mexico, a town run entirely by women after a mining accident killed the men.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

“For the majority of the season, I was just playing a cowboy riding horses who was very unemotional most of the time. But there was one particular scene in the last third of the series, where Alice (Michelle Dockery) has

figured Roy out and thinks he’s about to leave. That was a heavy scene that needed emotion in it. I’m not the kind of guy who can cry on command, so I had to put myself through the mill a bit with no guarantee I could get to that place. To get myself into that head-space and find my own tears and grief, I listened to some music that would remind me of people I might have lost. I knew the scene was coming at the end of that week, but I tried to start the waterworks just prior to doing it out of fear the tears might run out. I feel confident enough to say I was happy with how it turned out. There’s a sort of serotonin release you get after something like that, an endorphin rush when you get it right.”



MITCHELL: PARRISH LEWIS/SHOWTIME; MACLACHLAN: SUZANNE TENNER/SHOWTIME; O’CONNELL: URSULA COYOTE/NETFLIX

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



JARED HARRIS
OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR
IN A LIMITED SERIES

THE
TERROR





DAN STEVENS

David Haller
Legion (FX)

The good news? As season two began, Haller had (literally) purged his inner demon. The bad news? He's been spirited away by a mysterious orb and has no idea where or how long he's been away.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"I'd say it had to be the multiverse episode. It was one of the earliest scripts that [showrunner] Noah Hawley had written for the season because he wanted to get it in my hands early on. It was thrilling and challenging to be handed a script with all these different characters and realities he expected me to play. I was working

with the makeup designer and prosthetics people for the different looks, and each night at home I was trying to root each of these realities in some kind of emotional truth for the main David and all other possible Davids. That doesn't come without its share of sleepless nights, but then again, David is a character who is constantly cooking in my mind. We ended up shooting a lot of this episode in downtown Los Angeles, so that also gave it a very different feel. I have to say, I particularly enjoyed getting to take this weird world of ours out into the real world."



MILO VENTIMIGLIA

Jack Pearson
This Is Us (NBC)

Returning after a season one cliffhanger that left Jack, who has struggled with alcoholism, and Rebecca (Mandy Moore) apart, season two began with the big reveal that Jack died in a fire at the Pearson family home.

MOST STRESSFUL MOMENT OF THE SEASON

"For me it was episode two, at the very end, where Jack admits he has a drinking problem to teenage Kate (Hannah Zeile). When I read the scene for the first time, the idea of Jack trying to hang on to his dignity in probably the worst moment of his life got me

very emotional. Because this was so early on in the season, I was still shaking out the cobwebs and just settling back in on set. Still, I had the weight of what this man is experiencing on me. This moment in particular was like shattering this hero quality that his daughter may see in him. It was also one of those scenes where I wanted to be respectful to the men and women I've talked to about addiction. So with all that going on, before we shot it, I got quiet — very, very still. I felt almost like an athlete before a game, trying to contain my breath and hold on to everything. I wanted to make sure there was honesty and vulnerability. Thank God for Hannah. Her quiet focus and attention was what helped me get through this painful moment."

FROM CHICAGO TO THE UPSIDE DOWN

Standout supporting performers include young newcomers and TV veterans

JEFF DANIELS

Godless Netflix
He's in the race for lead actor for his work on Hulu's 9/11 series *The Looming Tower*, but Daniels could lasso another nomination for his work as the revenge-seeking bearded outlaw in Netflix's Western.



ALEX HIBBERT

The Chi Showtime
The 13-year-old breakout, who starred as the young Chiron in Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight*, plays Kevin, a kid who finds himself in danger after he witnesses a crime on the South Side of Chicago.



HOLT MCCALLANY

Mindhunter Netflix
The veteran actor takes on the role of a jaded FBI agent who teams with an eager newbie (Jonathan Groff) to attempt to understand and track down serial killers in David Fincher's psychological thriller.



NOAH SCHNAPP

Stranger Things Netflix
His character Will Byers was rescued from the Upside Down but continues to need his friends' help as he battles more demons in the second season of Netflix's spooky hit.




MICHAEL STUHLBARG

The Looming Tower Hulu
The actor, who was featured in three best picture Oscar-nominated films, plays counterterrorism adviser Richard Clarke in the 9/11 thriller opposite Daniels.



— REBECCA FORD



**FOR YOUR
CONSIDERATION**

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTRESS IN A LIMITED SERIES
ELISABETH MOSS

FROM
JANE CAMPION

TOP OF THE LAKE
CHINA GIRL

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'He's Rebuilding His Entire Life'

This Is Us' Justin Hartley on his character's struggles with alcohol and identity, the pressure of a hit show and his dream guest star **BY LEXY PEREZ**

The NBC family drama *This Is Us* took two years to reveal what caused the death of Jack Pearson (Milo Ventimiglia), but it was how Pearson's demise affected the rest of the characters that was the focal point of the second season. While each member of the family struggled, it was Justin Hartley's Kevin who stumbled most. Whether battling alcoholism or a strained relationship with his siblings (Chrissy Metz and Sterling K. Brown), Hartley's Kevin journeyed through a dark tunnel only to find a dim light during the season-two finale. Hartley, 41, spoke to *THR* about why he was "relieved" when Kevin's life fell apart and what he hopes for his character's future.

How have the dynamics among the cast changed from the first to the second season?
I remember coming back for season two and we had a photo shoot

"He's going to run off the road a couple of times," says Hartley of Kevin's future journey.



— it was the first time that we had seen one another in a long time. It was almost like when you go back to visit your high school or college friends. Even on set, we have a kind of shorthand now. I can look at Sterling's face or Chrissy's face, and I can already tell what they're thinking, what their head space is, and they can probably do the same thing for me. There's also less pressure in a way because we already are what we are, but there's *more* pressure in a way because we are what we are. There's a standard now.

How did you feel when you found out what was in store for Kevin in season two?
Not to sound twisted, but I was a little relieved because the whole

[of] season one was building up to something — a crescendo, like, "What's going to happen to this guy?" He just keeps doing the same thing over and over again, and it was interesting, but where's the growth? When is he going to grow up? Then finally when this season happened, I was like, "Good, I'm glad that everything comes crumbling down." He's rebuilding his entire life and being held accountable and learning what his deficiencies are.

What would you say is the biggest misconception about Kevin?
The misconception at the beginning of the series and, quite frankly, three-quarters of the first season — until you saw Kevin leave the play and run to Randall (Brown) and let him know, "You can lean on me; everything's going to be OK" — I think until that moment, the misconception was that he's just sort of this empty, voided-out narcissist and not really going anywhere. Then he had to deal with this identity crisis with not just figuring out who he was, but facing who he was. He chose to do it alone because he doesn't ask for help. One of the

biggest misconceptions is that he can handle things on his own and he's not vulnerable. I think out of everyone you see on that show, he feels the most. He's the most emotional. He's scared. He's the bravest. People sell him short.

So, has he truly gotten his act together?
I think he does have his act together. Someone said something the other day — it was a quote from a TV show — one of the characters said, "A good day is when everything goes my way and I don't drink. A great day is when nothing goes my way and I don't drink." I remember thinking when I saw that, "Oh that's Kevin." This is part of the fabric of his being. It lives inside him.

What do you hope for Kevin next season? Maybe a glimpse at an older Kevin as we have now seen with Randall and Rebecca (Mandy Moore)?
I think that would be cool just to see where he ends up. Like, does he have kids? Is he doing well? Is he divorced? Who's he with? Is he even alive? Personally, as an actor, I'd like to see a 60-year-old Kevin because that means I make it to like season four or five. I want to know what the next year has in store for Kevin — and I mean, what a year he had! He was almost suicidal. He had a total mental breakdown and then a total breakthrough, but now he's got this whole set of information that he's got to download and go forward with.

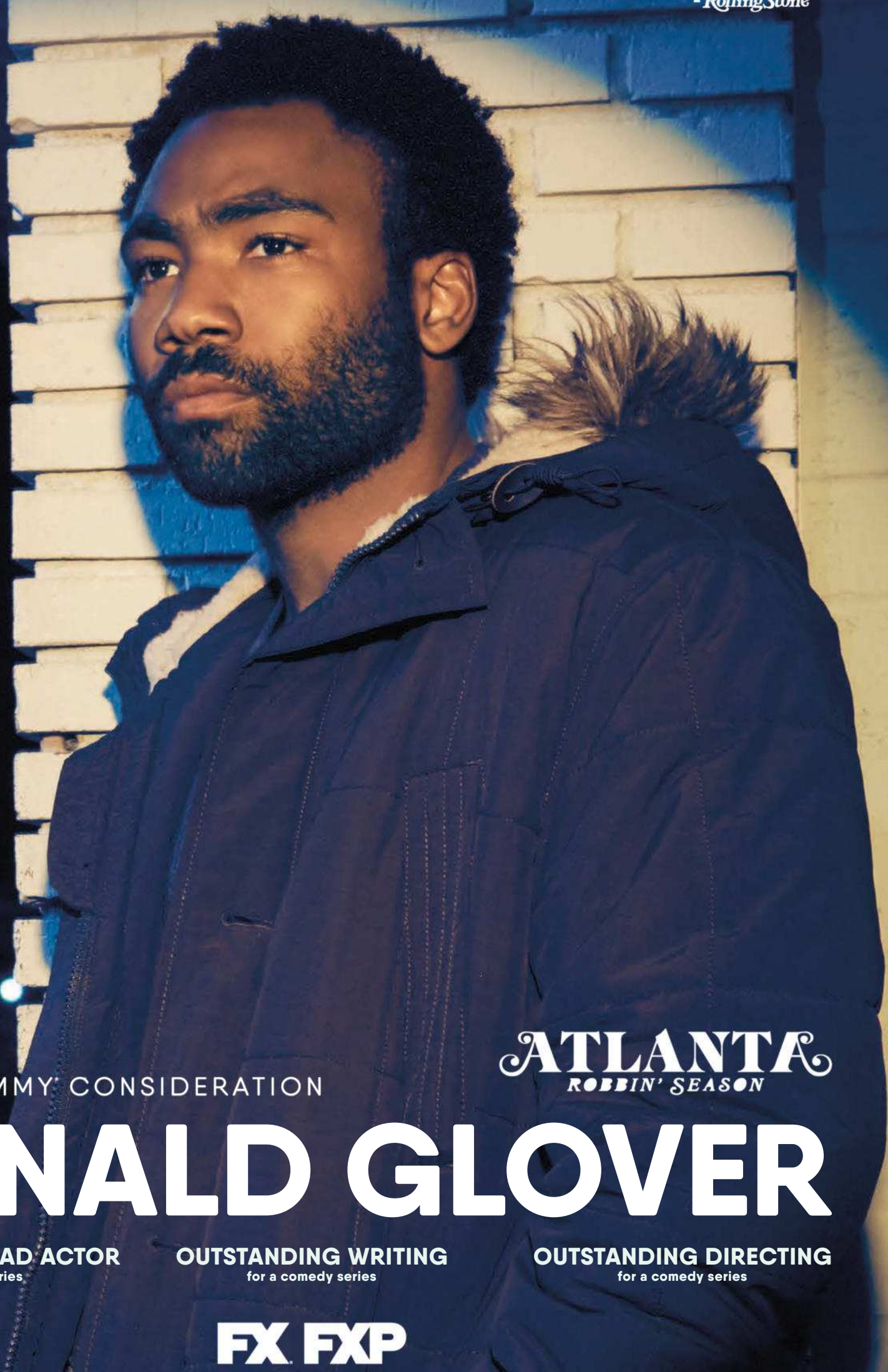
This season had cameos from Ron Howard and Sylvester Stallone. Who would you want as a guest star for future seasons?
I'm going to go real easy here, like real easy to get: Tom Hanks? Have you heard of him? Look him up. How great would that be that Kevin makes it that big? I mean, Tom Hanks does Ron Howard movies! How cool would that be if they did a Ron Howard-Tom Hanks-Kevin Pearson movie? We could do a *Splash 2!* **THR**



Hartley with Metz, who plays his character's twin sister, Kate Pearson.

“THE BEST SHOW ON TV”

-Rolling Stone



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ATLANTA
ROBBIN' SEASON

DONALD GLOVER

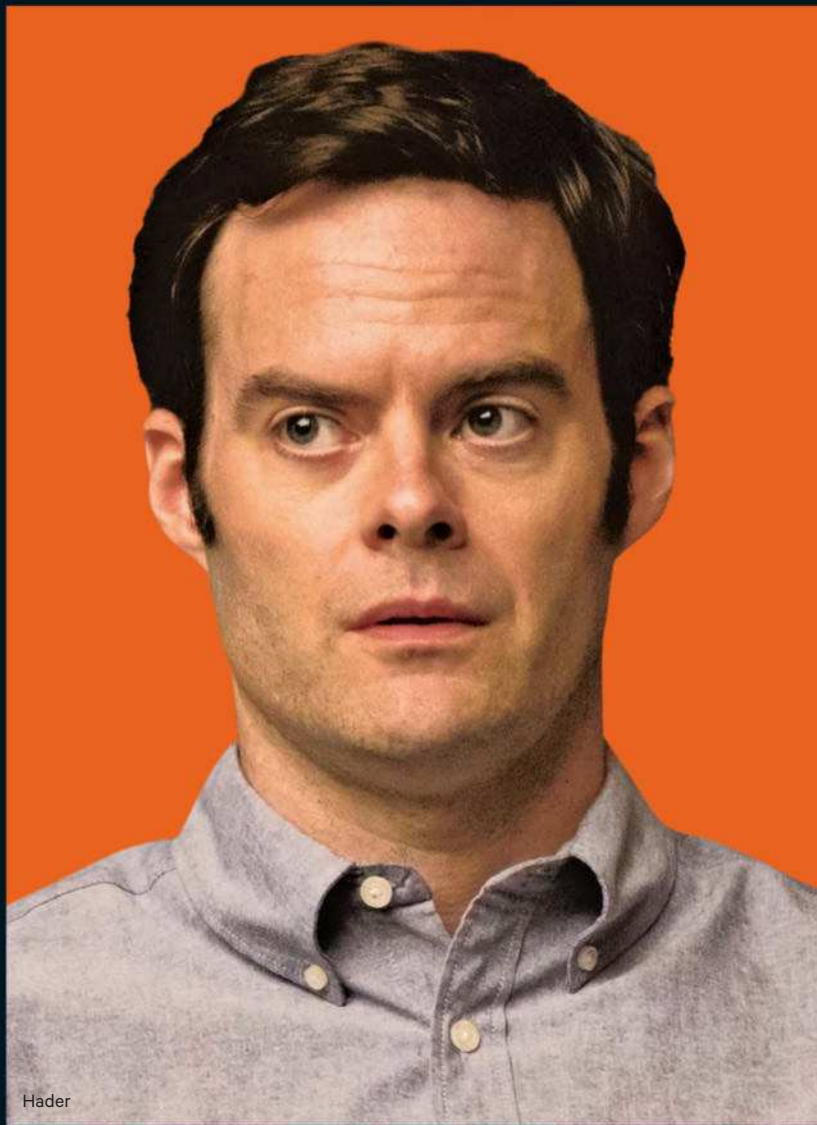
OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR
in a comedy series

OUTSTANDING WRITING
for a comedy series

OUTSTANDING DIRECTING
for a comedy series

FX FXP

'HE'S STILL A



Hader



Danson

THE TV VETS

Actors with long track records continue to deliver some of the best performances of their increasingly storied careers.

Q: What was your favorite scene from this season and why?

Ted Danson *The Good Place* (NBC)

"It has to be somewhere around the humanization of Michael, where he's just realizing more and more that he just loves his human friends and wants to be like them ... maybe the railroad track [scene] when he discovers actually his little ruse worked. It's such a wonderful

part because you get to bounce around so much. The first year I would watch and think, 'Oh, Lord, either I'm doing the job or I'm really, really bad,' because Michael was kind of one-note. You never got to see him independent of anybody else because if you did, then that would have given the secret away: He would be twirling

his mustache. So to only play a one-note, Willy Wonka kind of character was scary, and then once he flipped, you got to see behind the curtain, you got to see what was really going on — and that's the kind of comedy that I was more used to. The second year was like candy. It was just delicious, all the different things I got to play."

Bill Hader *Barry* (HBO)

"I'm actually pretty hard on myself! Overall, the character of Barry starts off emotionally stagnant. He's shut off in so many ways, and figuring out how to play that in a way that you're not pushing that in any way but you're also not just sitting there and just kind of doing nothing — it was a hard balance. By the last episode of the show, you could see that there's been possibly some growth there, so I was happy with tracking that when I watched it all together. I was like, 'Oh, OK, that seems to track!'"

GOOFBALL'

Eleven actors who portray some of the quirkiest guys on TV reveal why they love their characters and the deeper heart behind their silly exteriors
BY SCOTT HUVER

McDermott



Dylan McDermott *LA to Vegas (Fox)*

“‘Captain Dave’s on a Roll,’ that’s my favorite episode because Dave is teary-eyed and he’s vulnerable and he’s alive. My favorite moment is the muay thai because I remember I had in my mind the idea of jumping on this guy with my legs around his head, my crotch in his face. I remember I pitched it, and everybody was just like, ‘What the hell is this?’ I said, ‘Let me just show you.’ I brought him down. That’s my favorite moment because I laughed. My whole thing about this show, why I do it, is for me to laugh every day. If I make myself laugh, I know I had a great day.”

THE DADS

The oft-befuddled man of the house is a comedy staple, but with these two small-screen pops, fresh tweaks on the foibles of a paterfamilias keep the laughter relatable and relevant for contemporary clans.

Q: How does your character’s role as a dad shape him?

William H. Macy *Shameless (Showtime)*

“Frank’s philosophy of child-rearing is to stay out of their way. He says the best thing you can give your kids is neglect because it makes them stronger. In my own life, I agree with some of his philosophy. I think it’s important as parents that we observe more and say less. I have teenage girls, oh Lord, 16 and about to turn 18. My wife [Felicity Huffman] has been very good at teaching me that when your girls start talking to you about something, for God’s sake, shut up and listen because it’s a minor miracle that they’re even speaking to you. I, like Frank, think, ‘Butt out, check in with them every once in a while, but go on your merry way. Everything will come out as it should.’”

Randall Park *Fresh Off the Boat (ABC)*

“Louis is first and foremost a family man. It’s a big part of who he is, and he relishes any opportunity to pass down life lessons and to help his kids as they grow. For me, it’s been such a joy to literally — like, in real life — see these kids grow throughout the seasons. Working with these three great boys and just being so proud of what they’ve grown into — it’s also parallel to my own personal life, being the father of a 5-year-old girl and experiencing her growing just so fast and just beaming with pride every step of the way. Louis was a classic sitcom dad in a lot of ways, but I feel like over the course of the seasons we’ve seen so many more layers of him. He’s still a goofball, but there is this side of him that’s extremely protective, strong and capable.”



COMEDY ACTOR



McCormack

WHAT'S MAKING YOU LAUGH THESE DAYS?

John Goodman

"I was watching Patti LuPone on *Mom*, and she just, without moving a muscle, had me laughing."

Bill Hader

"The guy who directed the *Thor: Ragnarok* movie, Taika Waititi. The part he played of that rock guy [Korg] — that was hilarious. Every line he had made me laugh. It was a thing where I went, 'Whoa, who's playing that? That guy should have his own movie!' I'm glad he's in the Marvel Universe because I want him to just be on the poster next to all those other guys in the *Infinity War* thing."

Eric McCormack

"Ted Danson [on *Cheers*] could be funny as hell; he could be sexy; he could be weak. There could be moments of absolute frustration when I think of some of the things he did with Shelley Long. There are moments where I stole moves and exasperation from him."

Thomas Middleditch

"*The Death of Stalin*. In classic [Armando] Iannucci style, there are some great one-liners and some great little humanisms. At one point, they're lifting up the dead body, all these sycophantic, worrisome Russian politicians, and they're just arguing about how to lift and who gets the head and the feet. It's just so morbid and stupid and small in this incredibly high-stakes thing."

Patton Oswalt

"Everything that Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson did on the last season of *Broad City* I thought was really amazing. It genuinely made me laugh, watching those two. And Andy Daly on *Review* is hilarious for me." — S.H.

THE REBOOT LADS

These actors get to reinhabit the roles that made them famous, but in a changed cultural context and TV landscape — while one 9-year-old newcomer takes on a beloved character in a new way

Q: What do you love most about your character that made you want to return to playing him?

Iain Armitage
Young Sheldon (CBS)

"I didn't really watch too much of *The Big Bang Theory* because it's not really appropriate for me, but I did watch a clip to kind of see [Sheldon, played by Jim Parsons]. Also, [the producers] don't really want me to watch those too much because you're not the same when you're younger as you are when you're a grown-up, so they wanted me to be my own Sheldon. And I was just really excited about doing it because it's a fun challenge, and it's just kind of fun to be Sheldon. All the other characters are talking about Sheldon and his quirks and oddities, but I'm actually playing Sheldon, so it's kind of hard sometimes to play him because he's a very strange character. He's a challenge, but I like it."

John Goodman
Roseanne (ABC)

"Well, he's a better guy than I am, that's for sure! I like a guy that can work with his hands because I can't. He's got tools. I don't have any. He drives a motorcycle, which I won't let myself do anymore. He doesn't screw around. Yeah, he sure drinks a lot, though, but I guess he needs it. Even though living paycheck to paycheck, they seem to make each other very happy. That to me is the key to the whole *meshuga*. He's unique among the characters that I play because I'd never played anybody for that long and with that much pleasure."

Eric McCormack
Will & Grace (NBC)

"When I was a kid and starting in the theater, I loved roles that



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— GOLD DERBY

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THE ASSASSINATION OF GIANNI
VERSACE
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OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES

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television
studios. **FXP**

★
★
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TAYLOR KITSCH

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR
IN LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WACO

Paramount
NETWORK

“KITSCH IS MESMERIZING”

– NPR





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were as different from me as possible — I wanted to go into the costume trunk and be a pirate. I got a chance to do that through my 20s and into my 30s, then this television came along. I had a few of those opportunities, but as time went on, I started to realize that it's the roles that are the most you that you fit into, that fit like a glove, that feel real and you don't have to stretch across, particularly on television, where you want what you do every moment of every week to be real and something that people believe. Will feels so natural to me. It's not something that I have to ramp up to. I walk on that set and I'm Will Truman, and it never feels false. And I relish the opportunity to obviously be funny again but also to be funny in that body."



Goodman



Armitage

THE STAND-UPS

As anyone who's segued from the comedy clubs can attest, it takes an entirely separate skill set to wring laughs — and often deeper emotions — from ongoing characters rooted in TV series

Q: What scene are you most proud of creating on set this season?

Galifianakis



Zach Galifianakis *Baskets* (FX)

"There's one that sticks out just because it's so physical. It's in the costume shop. There's a recurring theme of a skeleton scaring everyone. There's just a lot going on, and it was tricky to film, but when I saw the outcome, it's everything that the show is, which is a little nuts at times and then emotional at times. I wanted to see if we could get away with that in this type of show. That scene is a microcosm of the show itself. [The TV system] wants

everybody to like you, be likable, and I always find that very strange. I want the audience to see growth in Chip. And Dale is still kind of a mess and hasn't really figured out, or is not really self-aware, but I'm hoping he becomes a better person, too. Those are the trajectories for me is that they both, through their struggles, just try to be better people."

Thomas Middleditch *Silicon Valley* (HBO)

"At the end of [the first episode of the season],

**“A REMARKABLE
PERFORMANCE BY RHYS”**

- IndieWire

FOR YOUR EMMY® CONSIDERATION **THE AMERICANS**

MATTHEW RHYS

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES

FX fox21 television studios. **FXP**

there's this big, long gulping speech. It was one of those things that, on the day, I was just doing a bunch of random stuff, expecting that they wouldn't put that in. But they actually extended the gulping to make it this really gross prolonged thing — which I am a big fan of — in the edit. Overall, what's been fun to have organically come out of Richard's character are the pettier bits of him. He's got ego; he's got envy; he's spiteful. But within that, he also has to be the good guy and moral compass of the show. But to have those negative aspects also be a part of his personality is definitely, as an actor, fun to play with."

Patton Oswalt

A.P. Bio (NBC)

"One of my favorite moments was an episode where I'm staying with Jack [Glenn Howerton] and I have this weird sleepwalking thing that I do, where I talk and scream in my sleep. We shot a much longer sequence where I had this whole storyline going on — the show is so top-heavy with funny characters, it had to be sacrificed — where I imagine I'm an abolitionist helping out the Underground Railroad and I kind of tell this whole, long [story] and it was really, really funny and really, really fun to do. He's an authority figure with no authority, but unlike me — who's much more anxious and has a lot more self-doubt and self-loathing about whatever lack of power I may or may not have — he's reached this near-Zen level with it, which makes it more fun to play." **THR**



Middelitch



Oswalt

5 SIDELINERS STEALING THE SHOW

A TV icon lands a new role, and newly minted Oscar and Tony nominees shine on their series

1 Alec Baldwin

Saturday Night Live (NBC)

For his Emmy-winning portrayal of President Trump, Baldwin finally got a reaction from the tweeting POTUS in March, who called his performance "agony for those who were forced to watch."

2 Brian Tyree Henry

Atlanta (FX)

Henry, who earned a Tony nomination this year for Broadway's *Lobby Hero*, digs deeper with Paper Boi this season as the rapper struggles with newfound fame while tackling challenges from getting a haircut to surviving a night in the woods.



3 Marc Maron

GLOW (Netflix)

As the only major male character on the Netflix series, the comedian-podcaster's work as the B-movie director turned women's wrestling coach, who has a temper but also a softer side, has earned him praise for his acting chops.

4 Kumail Nanjiani

Silicon Valley (HBO)

Fresh off an Oscar nom for co-writing *The Big Sick* — based on his real-life relationship with wife Emily V. Gordon — Nanjiani returned to play the mostly lovable (and sometimes annoying) coder Dinesh in HBO's geeky hit.

5 Henry Winkler

Barry (HBO)

The *Happy Days* star (and five-time Emmy nominee) takes on another memorable TV role as an enthusiastic Los Angeles acting coach who attempts to train a hit man (Bill Hader) to act.

— REBECCA FORD

**“THE BEST AND CERTAINLY MOST AFFECTING
THING [ZACH GALIFIANAKIS HAS] DONE”**

- NEW YORK

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Baskets
ZACH GALIFIANAKIS

OUTSTANDING LEAD ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES

FX FXP



‘ All of Us Are on the Verge of Insanity ’

Six drama showrunners talk about race in the writers room, shooting awkward sex scenes and killing off favorite characters ('I was crying while I typed their demise')

By LACEY ROSE





A gathering of top showrunners can quickly devolve into a type of therapy session about dealing with audience pressures and network demands. But when this sextet — *The Looming Tower*'s Dan Futterman, 50; *Power*'s Courtney Kemp, 41; *The Crown*'s Peter Morgan, 55; *The Handmaid's Tale*'s Bruce Miller, 53; *The Good Doctor*'s David Shore, 58; and *The Chi*'s Lena Waithe, 33 — gathered on a late-April morning for *The Hollywood Reporter*'s annual Drama Showrunner Roundtable, it managed to avoid the usual subjects of writerly angst, save some musings from Morgan, who lamented a U.K. system that doesn't nurture writers rooms as well as U.S. shows do.

"You can't find people in the U.K. [to write on your show]; everybody's got their own show," he explains. "And we're in this era now of boom TV, so the most inexperienced, fledgling writers have got two or three shows on, and it's like, 'But he's only 18.'" When it's suggested, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that by the time *The Crown* reaches the season about Meghan Markle, he'll have had time to groom a room of writers, Morgan laughs: "I give you my word. I will not get to the Meghan Markle season."

Over the course of an hour, the group talked instead about the value of writers room debates, the politics of who can tell what story, the future of pay parity and the lengths each of them is willing to go to for the sake of a truly safe set.

Let's start broad: What's your best — be it the most amusing or the most horrifying — pitch story?

BRUCE MILLER The one that comes to mind is when I had a pitch that we were going to do a female genital mutilation story on *Handmaid's Tale*. You don't even know how to word anything, I'm just dancing around it as much as my upbringing would allow — and then you realize you're doing it to Rory Gilmore! [Alexis Bledel

starred in *The Gilmore Girls* before *Handmaid's*.] But it was fine for them [at Hulu]; they loved it. I still haven't recovered. I'm turning bright red just thinking about it.

COURTNEY KEMP I was very, very fortunate because the first show I ever pitched was *Power*.

LENA WAITHE Overachiever!

KEMP Yeah, I walked into the room with 50 Cent and, at that time, [the late music executive] Chris Lighty. It was like a hundred dudes and me. There were no other women. Everyone would sit down, and the people on the other side would go, "OK, so who am I listening to?" And I'd go, "Me, the girl from Connecticut, I'm going to pitch you the drug-dealing show." It's not a funny story, but it does speak to how much has changed, even in the past five years.

PETER MORGAN There isn't such a culture of pitching in the U.K., so I pitched *The Crown* but really only to one or two people. [Of course,] when I wrote *Frost/Nixon* for the screen, I had a dozen unsuccessful pitches. Everybody thought it was a catastrophe.

Why?

MORGAN Well, because it's dull. *(Laughs.)* There are two people and they just talk to one another.

MILLER You've just described every movie I like. There are two people and they just talk to each other.

MORGAN I remember jumping up and down trying to animate it by saying it's *Rocky* with words. *(Laughter.)*

WAITHE That's good!

MORGAN I thought, "That will work." It didn't, so I had to write it as a play first. And then, having written it as a play, every single company came back and tried to get it as a film. It was like they just needed to see it first.

MILLER They needed proof of concept.

DAVID SHORE Or they needed something else to blame when it fails.

If I scanned each of your IMDb profiles, what would be the most surprising credit, and what did you learn from it?

← From left: Kemp, Morgan, Futterman, Waithe, Miller and Shore were photographed April 28 at Line 204 Studios in Hollywood.

Photographed by **Koury Angelo**

DAN FUTTERMAN I played Barry on *Will & Grace*. It was a quartet of *Will & Grace* shows called “Fagmalion,” and I was the gay man in training to learn how to properly be gay.

WAITHE That’s so great.

FUTTERMAN Yeah. And when I met my now wife, Anya Epstein, who is the actual great writer in our family, she spent a good portion of the beginning of our marriage saying, “Please just tell me now [if you’re gay]. Just tell me now ‘cause I don’t want to find out 25 years into our marriage.” (*Laughter.*)

WAITHE Amazing!

MILLER And exactly what you always dream of hearing from your wife. (*Laughter.*)

WAITHE I wrote on *Bones* for a season, and what I learned is that I’m not good at writing that kind of television. I also wrote on a Nickelodeon show called *How to Rock*, and I wasn’t good at doing that either. The third show I ever wrote on was *The Chi*. I realized I like writing very specific characters, often people of color who are just living their lives — and since those shows are very hard to come by, I created one.

KEMP My first job was *The Bernie Mac Show*, and I thought, “Oh, this is awesome. My first job as a staff writer is on this great show.” But I got fired because I’m not funny. You gotta come up with a joke, you gotta come up with a button, you gotta get out of the scene. There’s a real structure to comedy, and I was incapable of that. But getting fired was the best thing that happened to me.

SHORE Back up. How did you get hired on it?

KEMP I actually wrote a *Bernie Mac* spec [script], and they hired me off of that. I’d come in and pitch them a bunch of ideas and because I was a black, upper-middle class kid, I had a bunch of stories about that experience. So, I can see the logic now. You would hire that person because they’re walking material — and I was, but I couldn’t write a comedy. So I got fired, and then my agent said, “Well, we have these comedies,

PREVIOUS SPREAD: SET DESIGN BY LEA BAZALOVNA, MORGAN AND SHORE; GROOMING BY SUJAN FOR DEV BEAUTY AGENCY; FUTTERMAN: GROOMING BY JUANITA LYON AT CELESTINE AGENCY; MILLER: GROOMING BY ELONDE FOR ALBANY; AT EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS; WAITHE: HAIR BY FELICIA LEATHERWOOD; MAKEUP BY REBEKAH ALADDIN; ONSET STYLING BY JORDAN CROSSMAN.



but this is the moment where you can decide what you really want to do." I wrote a *CSI* spec and went the other direction.

WAITHE Knowing your weaknesses is such a strength. Sometimes when I ask writers whom I meet, the up-and-coming ones, "What do you want to write?" they say, "Everything." And I always say, "No, what are you really good at? What do you love writing?"

KEMP I believe young writers need a trade, so I became a legal writer. Every year when there were new law shows, I was the person going in and trying to get on one. Because that's what I could do. Even now, when I created my own show, there's a strong legal component to *Power* because I'm like, "I know I can do that."

MORGAN So, you're saying play to your specialized strengths, go narrow?

MILLER It's also develop your specialized strength, don't fight it. Mine was always female characters.

FUTTERMAN Like (to Morgan), I think that you should maybe

think about focusing on royalty. (Laughter.)

MORGAN I had a fantasy of being able to [write] anything and everything. But it's a bit like a doctor, I imagine, you're going to go into all areas of medical practice, end-of-life care or obstetrics or whatever it is, and then you do one good operation on an elbow and suddenly you're the elbow dude.

Save Peter, who oversees a team of researchers, you all run your writers room. What's been the biggest debate you've had, in that room or with the network, about getting material to screen?

WAITHE A big one we had [dealt with the question], "Do black people call the cops?" which is very tricky.

FUTTERMAN Didn't they trust you to answer that question?

WAITHE I don't have a black executive on the studio or network side, and so there is a level of trust that they have to have for me. But this came up in the room, which is predominantly African-American, and sometimes things can be generational. So, there's a crime committed in the pilot, a character's younger brother is shot and killed by someone and he's dating someone from the right side of the tracks, who says, "Maybe you should call the cops?" Ultimately we decided to give him the line, which was, "I'm not about to call the cops, the cops are not about to do nothin'." And we did it because there was a writer in our room who basically said, "Well, if I'm in trouble, I call the cops" — a lot of us in the room would not.

MILLER So you took the debate from the writers room and put it in the story?

WAITHE Yeah.

MILLER That's cool. When I started my career, there was often one woman in the room. And my room now is basically all women and me, and the thing you get from that is the disagreement. Because if you have one black person in the room, that black person speaks for all black people in the universe.

KEMP "Blackipedia" or "Blacktictionary." Been both of those on many shows. (Laughter.)

MILLER We had a very long discussion in our room about what

it actually feels like to get your period and how can you tell or not when you start to bleed. And the room, all they did was disagree with each other.

WAITHE Because everybody has a very different experience.

MILLER Right. And it's funny because you think, "Oh, there's a universal answer to this." And really, I just need a line. (Laughter.) But it doesn't help if you just have one person. It's one person's opinion and there is no one to challenge it.

FUTTERMAN We have a similar thing on our show [which follows the FBI and CIA in the years leading up to 9/11]. There's a lot about the Quran, and there's a lot of Arabic dialogue. And we were leading up to a big interrogation in the 10th episode with Ali Soufan and a terrorist named Abu Jandal, and it's in Arabic. A lot of the way he gets [Jandal] to speak is he shames him about his lack of knowledge about the Quran. And when we handed in the episode, we got a call from Hulu. They said, "You realize that this is 12 pages in Arabic and it doesn't cut to anything else, right?" And we said, "Yeah, we do realize that." (Laughter.) That was intentional, and we've been leading up to this." But in terms of the opinions, you ask two Jews about the Torah, you get three opinions; it's the exact same thing about the Quran. We had a couple of guys of Muslim descent, and then we had the actors, and we had about 14 opinions about where this conversation should lead.



THIS SPREAD: CHI/PARRISH LEVINS/SHOWTIME; HANDMAIDS: GEORGE KRAVTCHUK/HULU; DOCTOR: ABO/JACK ROWLAND



SHORE My challenge is I have a character at the center of this show who has autism. So how do I make him fully dimensionalized while being true to people with this condition and on this spectrum? It's important that I don't turn him into the magic person with autism where he's got a condition, but he's fine, he'll solve all the problems. How do I be true to his weaknesses and his strengths? It continues to be a challenge.

One of the big debates can be about killing off characters. Courtney, you recently did so with a young character on *Power*. How does that decision and conversation go, and does it differ because of the actress' age?

KEMP On my show, characters die every season. I've had actors who I loved personally and I was crying as I typed their demise.

MILLER But they die so well.

KEMP They do die so well. (Laughter.) But in that case, I felt like there was no other choice,

[storywise]. I did hide it from the network for a little while, but I always talk to the actor about a week before the production draft goes out. Here, you have to talk to the actor *and* their mom.

So what is that conversation?

KEMP This person will no longer

be on the show after episode nine, and it's not personal and it's not about your performance, it's just about where the story takes you, no different than anyone else. [But it's a] child actor, [so they may] be frightened and confused, [so] you bring the parent in to say, "Hey, it's not the end of the world, there will be other jobs." That was a hard one — not the hardest.

What was the hardest?

KEMP I had one actor who told me that I was ruining the show and that if he wasn't on it, that a certain segment of the population would never watch it again. I was like, "OK, dude." (Laughter.)

SHORE "You just made it easier."

KEMP Yeah, in a way. But it's hard because you're firing someone. You're ending their employment. And especially for a series regular, that's a big check you're telling them they're not getting anymore. So, it's tough but it's also part of our show. And by the end of the season, there's a joke among the actors, "Do you have to go talk to Courtney?" (Laughter.)

MILLER You're the hammer!

KEMP I'm the grim reaper. (Laughter.) And some have to be real troopers because their dead bodies have to stay in one position for a couple of hours in the scene.

WAITHE They're thinking, "Did I put enough in my savings

account? I shouldn't have bought that Tesla." (Laughter.)


Lena, you've said, "The hardest thing about being a black writer in this town is having to pitch your black story to white executives." How would it be received differently if that room was populated by a bunch of black executives?

WAITHE Usually it's predominantly white execs or there's often the poor token black exec they bring to the room, whoever they can find in the office, "Come on, we've got a black person coming in here, we want to look good." (Laughter.) And that black exec can either be friend or foe.


How so?

WAITHE Because they don't want to come off like, "Oh, I'm only vying for the black show." And there are other times, too, if their black experience is different from yours, if they are a black person who grew up in Connecticut or went to a private school, and I'm in there pitching *The Chi*, they're going to go, "Well, that wasn't my experience. I've seen that experience of black people before, I don't want to greenlight a show that's going to tell that story again." The truth is, going in to pitch is hard, period, but what people don't realize is that when you're someone who is "othered" — and it's not just for

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PETER MORGAN


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black people, it's if you're a trans person, if you're someone who maybe has a disability and you want to come in and tell a story about that — if you're sitting with people for whom that's not their experience, yeah, if you have something that's phenomenal and they can just kind of relate and get it, they'll do it, but oftentimes there is a level of not understanding and not being able to relate. Also, the top execs, the people with greenlight power, they live in Brentwood, their kids

go to private school. It's *Big Little Lies*. So, if you're not pitching *Big Little Lies*, sometimes they're like, "Huh, I don't get it." Or they say yes and then try to make it more relatable to them.

Are those rooms changing with the success of projects like *Power*, *Empire* and *Black Panther*?

KEMP Certainly the people who are saying yes at the top haven't changed.

WAITHE Not at all.

KEMP I feel like you can go in two different ways, and this is what I tell younger writers. You can go in and pitch the universal part first. So, I go in and pitch *Power* and I say it's about the path not taken, it's about my first love, the one that got away, it's about, does my past dictate my future. Anybody can relate to that. You tell that

story first, the specifics don't matter. That's one way of doing it. And if you can't find the universal in your pitch, it's not the right show. Because it's not going to work. A show that's just about you and living on your block is not going to be interesting enough. But you also have to research the people in the room before you go in because if you are just looking at them as a monolithic group of upper-middle-class white people, well, you screwed up, too, because somebody in there is specifically from 10 miles from where you grew up and then you can connect on that level.

MILLER Or have greenlit 20 really cool, interesting shows all over the map.

KEMP What appeals to them? Because if you go in and you see that this person has greenlit

this, that or the other, they might actually vibe with one specific thing in your pitch. What are your references? What are the things that you like? I can go in and for the first 10 minutes talk about how much I love *The Crown*. Walls go down. Now when I pitch you the show about the drug dealer, it doesn't matter, I'm the girl who likes *The Crown*. I think sometimes we make the whole argument about, "I'm different, so they're not going to buy it." Nope. Go in with a good pitch and if the reason they don't buy it is because you're different, that's their loss. When I was pitching *Power*, I had an executive say, "Well, I already have a black show." He said that right to my face.

SHORE Wow.

KEMP That's OK. It's not on his network. We did all right without him.

One of the more interesting conversations that has gone on in recent years is about who can tell what story. Bruce, I know this is a subject you thought a lot about when you signed on to tackle a feminist story.

MILLER The "Who the hell do you think you are" question. (*Laughs.*)

Whose blessing did you feel you needed?

MILLER My situation was relatively unique because I was writing based on a feminist novel that had had a long life. People had experienced it as a novel first, so it had a certain amount of credibility and it also had a live author [Margaret Atwood] who could bless me in terms of what I was doing with the book. That was helpful. But every time I write a character, it's not me. I mean, there are not too many 53-year-old Jewish guys with three children who live in Studio City on TV. So, you're always writing people who are different from you. What you have to do, and what I did because I was the biggest worrier in this, is look at your weaknesses and reinforce them with all the other people who you're working with.

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↓ From left: Shore, Waithe and *Handmaid's* Miller, who says his speciality "was always female characters."



KEMP But if you hear Dan talking about how careful he was about writing the dialogue between those characters in that scene; or David, he's not autistic, but he's very careful; and obviously Peter's not a royal ...

FUTTERMAN I have mixed feelings about this because I actually asked Ali Selim, who is on staff, to write the 10th episode with me, and he wrote that scene because half of his family is Egyptian Muslim and he knows a lot more about that than I do, and I didn't feel equipped to do it. So, I wrote all the America stuff and he wrote all the Yemen stuff. I felt like I needed help in the room from people who had direct experience with a lot of it, and I think the show is better for it. Having said that, I don't only want to write about 50-year-old guys who grew up in Larchmont.

SHORE We're all writing about people who aren't us.

FUTTERMAN This is a complicated question right now.

SHORE But I'm not going to just

write me, nor do I want to. There are going to be aspects of me in any character, but, at the same time, there are characters whose lives are so separate from mine that I wouldn't know where to start.

KEMP Of course, but when we start to say that only this person can write this narrative, those of us who are of color or somewhat

othered, that means we can only write ourselves? Uh-uh, I ain't signin' up for that. I'm not going to say that only people of color can write people of color because that means only white people can write white people and that's not OK. Every writer should be able to write anything if you do the research and you're sensitive enough to ask the questions.

WAITHE Almost 80 percent of showrunners are white, straight men, and as the times change, that number hopefully will change, but that means most of what we're watching is a very similar narrative. Even if people are writing different stories, you can't help it, that's where you come from. So a big thing for me is if you're a white, straight, male showrunner

KEMP Yes.

WAITHE And the problem is that they don't have to ask for help because, remember, a lot of the execs look like them and they're like, "Yeah, this story about this black family makes sense to me." "Me too." "OK, cool." And never asking a black person, like, "Yo, is this right?"

"I'm not going to say that only people of color can write people of color because that means only white people can write white people, and that's not OK. Every writer should be able to write anything." KEMP

and you want to tell a story that isn't like your life, that's totally cool, but you've got to have somebody whose life you're writing about right next to you and you've got to be asking them questions. Because what I don't love is the white male straight showrunner who acts as if they have the audacity to tell a narrative that isn't theirs without asking for help.

Peter, your cast just unwittingly found itself at the center of a controversy over pay parity. How much responsibility have you felt in the past and/or going forward to get involved in such things?

MORGAN I've been listening to everyone talking, particularly about firing people and stuff, and I wouldn't do that. No, no, no. Each one of us is doing six

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full-time jobs. So, you have to think, “Well, where am I prepared to let other people just take over completely?” And there are some areas where some of us write less, some of us write more. I have absolutely nothing to do with business affairs, nothing at all. So, when that story broke [about star Claire Foy earning less than Matt Smith], I was as horrified as the next person.

Are you guys going to be more involved or at least be knowledgeable going forward?

MORGAN No, but you can't be.

You can't be?

MORGAN If you want to stay healthy and alive — and I would suggest that all of us are on the verge of bad health and insanity — you have to delegate. Bruce tells me he goes on set a lot, and I really would love to go on set more. And to micromanage the culture of the show you're on, I'd love to know more about what decisions are we making with pay, who are we paying and what are we doing, but I simply have to let my colleagues and co-producers do that and I have to choose. I have to say, “Well, if I only have so many hours or so much energy, this is the bit I think I'm best suited to.”

Given how hot-button this is and how much a conversation like this can usurp a show, do the rest of



you feel a responsibility going forward to be more involved or at least check these things?

SHORE I'll probably make a phone call to Sony to say, “Hey, you're doing it right, right?” 'Cause I literally don't know what my people are being paid and I'm counting on them to be responsible.

FUTTERMAN I'm going to make absolutely sure that I get paid as much as the actors. *(Laughter.)*

WAITHE I've been very involved in Time's Up and that movement, and for season two, we're making sure that women feel safe on the set and we're hyper aware of

↑ *Power's Kemp (with Futterman), says she feels an obligation as a woman to work to make actresses feel safe during sex scenes. Below: Morgan says delegating is a key for showrunners.*

what that means because there are sex scenes. We want to make sure we're talking to these actresses and also talking to our male actors and making sure they're aware. 'Cause I don't play. I'm like, “It's the city of Chicago, people die every day, so if you want to play that game and be disrespectful or misbehave on set with an actress or anyone, I'll happily call Showtime and say this person has to go, and you will get shot up and it'll be a wonderful finale.”

KEMP I actually have, on sex scene days, thrown people off set. “It's a closed set, so, like, why are you here? What is your function? If you're not holding the boom or operating a camera and you're not holding the robe, [go.] There are, like, 10 jobs that are necessary for a sex scene. Other than that, you can get off set.” And I will go around and boot people. In a way there is something about having a woman showrunner, which means that I have actually asked you to take your clothes off and go through this sex scene and I've promised you you're going to be

safe on my set and you believed me because I was also female, so now I have to ...

WAITHE It's your responsibility.

KEMP Right. I have to take the responsibility on.

FUTTERMAN Yeah, we did the same thing and I left set as well. There were as few people as possible.

MILLER We do a lot of very odd sex scenes. I have to say that our crew is so respectful to the point where every single monitor there has a whole box of black around it so nobody sees anything, and we have guys who stand on set with their backs to Lizzie [Moss]. So, the boom operator is doing his job, and the guy who is pulling his cable is not looking.

SHORE I don't do [sex scenes] as often, obviously, but, yeah, [when we did,] I chose to leave the set. And then the next day, the actress came to me and asked how she was in that scene, and I go, “Uhhh ... Jesus, I don't know how to behave.” *(Laughter.)* **THR**

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Saturday Night Live's Elder Statesman

Kenan Thompson, the show's longest-tenured castmember, weighs in on its just-wrapped 43rd season and when he'll take the final bow Lorne Michaels 'dreads' **BY SCOTT FEINBERG**



Kenan Thompson still has the same animated baby face that endeared him to a generation of kids who watched Nickelodeon in the '90s — but despite appearances, a lot of time has passed since *All That* and *Kenan & Kel* were on the air. Now 40, Thompson just completed his 15th season as a member of the cast of *Saturday Night Live* — at the start of which he passed Darrell Hammond for the longest tenure in the show's illustrious history.

Thompson, who received his first Emmy nomination in 2017 (for the song "Last Christmas," which he co-wrote for *SNL* with Chance the Rapper), recently sat down with *THR* in his dressing room at 30 Rock, where he reflected on the most recent season, his long stay and what might be next.

Over the past two seasons, the show has been on a remarkable run. When did you realize it was on a different level?

I knew it was on a different level from the first time [Alec Baldwin] did Trump. He knocked it out of the park like real hard. And I've seen that happen a few different ways, like when Tina [Fey] was doing Sarah Palin — every word out of her mouth, people were unable to contain themselves because it was so smart and funny and unexpected at the same time. They felt privileged to be witnessing it. Once he did it and it got that same kind of response — it was explosive.

Fans love your impressions and versatility. What aspect of your contributions to the show are you proudest of?

Even if you are a great impersonator, if you are not able to contribute to the rest of the show, that becomes readily apparent. I always wanted to be well-rounded. I'm a big-time team player. I've also known that I need people. If I was able to sit down and type a sketch all by myself, I might be more of a dick. I'm

humble enough to know that I do well when I'm working with others.

A lot of SNL castmembers have said that they can't really figure out what Lorne Michaels is thinking about them.

He does the greatest Jedi mind trick ever. He has a way of being like, "So you know people would like this to be good, right?" And then he'll walk away. It's like, "Is it not good? What the fuck is going on?" Then you'll go out there and destroy it. He has a way of lighting that flame under people, which is great coaching.

This season you broke the Darrell Hammond record for longest-tenured castmember. How did you process that?

I almost felt a little guilty because I've always been close to Darrell. I've always seen him as Yoda, and he reciprocated that — he was always checking in on me, and he would always jive with me. I don't think anybody has said "Live from New York" more than Darrell because there was a ginormous window where it was just all political cold opens. So when I started approaching the record, I was like, "Man, that's crazy." I felt a little guilty at first, but he was always cool about it.

Michaels has said of you, "I dread the day when he actually leaves." Do you think about leaving? How will you know when the time has come?

I think about leaving and I fear it. This is such a special place, you want to do your part here, but you also want to make room for people that are coming behind you. This was the first year I really started feeling like, "OK, I could push out of it now." Chris Redd is super-duper strong, and I really look forward to his potential on the show. That was the first time I thought, "Maybe I should give this dude more room." If that's the case, then it might be time to move on.

No actual plans?

Not really. I'm not overly excited about going back to auditioning. **THR**

Thompson on His 4 Most Memorable Alter Egos

STEVE HARVEY

"I know Steve from doing *The Steve Harvey Show*. Once he did *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, it was more of a joke that people could relate to because it was like, 'Maybe Steve should have prepared a little bit more.'"

DAVID ORTIZ

"It's just glee all over that dude. Happy about food, happy about life, happy about being a stud, you know what I mean?"

AL SHARPTON

"Anybody with a big voice is always a lot of fun in life. I've loved him since David Alan Grier was doing him on *In Living Color*, with the perm and the jumpsuits. The fact that Sharpton stayed relevant enough for me to keep doing it in my time — I love that."

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"Another joyous one. He's just all happy about dealing with the littlest things that excite him in life, which is mostly science-based stuff that nobody else can relate to, but it tickles him."



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John Legend Superstar

The multihyphenate reveals the burdens of playing Jesus on NBC's hit live concert event

BY REBECCA FORD

John Legend is one Emmy trophy away from joining the EGOT club (those artists — 12 so far — who've won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony). And now he has a chance to earn the coveted title thanks to his lead performance in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, NBC's live showing of the iconic 1970s musical that aired April 1. The 39-year-old singer-songwriter, whose most recent

big-screen appearance was in 2016's *La La Land*, spoke to *THR* about the challenges of singing songs that aren't his own and whether he'll ever take his talents to Broadway.

What was the hardest part of taking on this role?

The initial challenge was just learning a bunch of new songs that I didn't write myself. I haven't had to do that for most

of my career because I'm so used to writing my own material and spending a lot of time working on the songs in studio before I go out on the road. So performing an entire show of someone else's music isn't something I normally do. And my schedule threw an extra wrench in my life because I had an Asian tour right in the middle of the rehearsal schedule. So we had to start rehearsing early and then take a three-week break and do 10 shows in Asia — that's taxing on you physically.

On the day of the show, did anything go awry?

It was about as close to flawless as I can conceive of. I'm sure somebody in the crew knows of something that didn't go right, but I didn't see anything. We had a hitch in dress rehearsal where somehow there's a stool that Mary (Sara Bareilles) and I sit on, and at the end of "What's the Buzz," before we head into "Everything's Alright," one of the legs broke during dress rehearsal and so we had to stand up. In that moment,

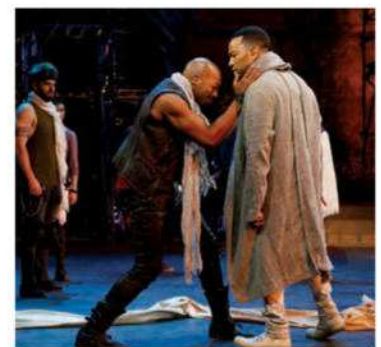
I thought, "Well, something like that's probably going to happen tomorrow too," but it didn't happen during the show.

After the show, did you get any memorable feedback?

I read a lot of the feedback, I read some of the reviews. I was kind of buzzing for a few days afterward because I felt so good about how everything went, and then once I read a lot of the feedback, it was so positive. Obviously you can't get 100 percent of the critics to love it and 100 percent of the fans on Twitter to love it, but the overwhelming sentiment was so positive. But the most important feedback was from [the musical's] composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and lyricist Tim Rice — they emailed me a few days later and told me how grateful they were for how we put our heart and soul into it and how proud they were. They said, "It's the best reviews our show has ever gotten." I was happy that they were happy.

Is there any other person you would love to portray in a movie or show?

I'd always thought about doing Marvin Gaye, and I still think about that. When it comes to doing Broadway or something like that,



Legend (right) with Brandon Victor Dixon, who plays Judas.

I think the most likely scenario would be doing something like what Sara did with *Waitress* and writing something original that I would sing. If the right idea comes along, the right material, then I'll try it. I'd probably do it with [*La La Land* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* producer] Marc Platt. **THR**

Chrissy Teigen's Tweet Storm

'She's my favorite person to follow on Twitter,' says Legend of his wife, who kibbitzed throughout the broadcast

I have no idea what's going on I'm assuming these people are bad because coats

I have a feeling whoever has the deepest V[-neck] will be crucified

Oh shit the lepers that was the rehearsal I brought [daughter] Luna to. That was a mistake





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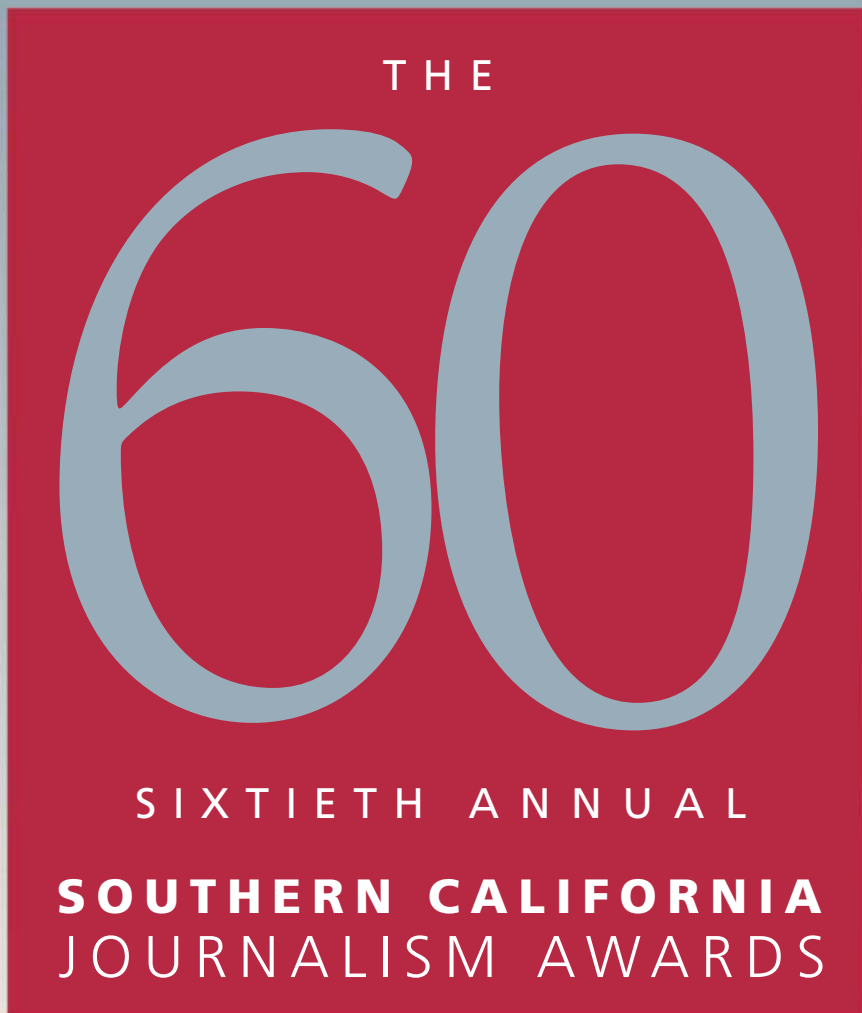
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Moving in With *Will & Grace*

'We feel like we hit a home run,' says co-creator Max Mutchnick of the notable guest stars (Alec Baldwin! Blythe Danner!) who stopped by the NBC reboot's set to surprise, confuse and torment the show's central duo BY JACKIE STRAUSE

Photographed by **Emily Berl**



1 Mutchnick (third from left) calls the scenes with Mullally and guest star Alec Baldwin, who played her lover, some of “the funniest we’ve ever done on the show.” The finale episodes, titled “One Job” and “It’s a Family Affair,” were directed by James Burrows (third from right). **2** Hayes (with Messing, Klein and Danner) says the writers don’t set out to be political. “The angle is: funny first,” he says. **3** Messing and McCormack in *Will & Grace*’s New York apartment, which is an upgraded version of the original set. The first iteration of the series won 16 Emmy Awards. **4** In the finale (which pays tribute to the late Debbie Reynolds, who played Grace’s mother, Bobbi Adler), Will and Grace are thinking, “Everybody seems to be doing things in reaction to what our life is; maybe we are deluding ourselves,” says co-creator David Kohan. **5** Will Jack and fiancée Estefan (played by Brian Jordan Alvarez) make it to the altar? “Either these weddings are happening or they’re not — in which case, both are stories, right?” says a coy Kohan. **6** Director’s chairs bearing the names of the cast.



The revival season of *Will & Grace* ended with a new crisis: Grace’s (Debra Messing) dad and Will’s (Eric McCormack) mom (played by guest stars Robert Klein and Blythe Danner) find themselves enjoying each other’s company so much so that they announce a quickie engagement.

The idea of becoming “siblings,” however, is too much to bear for Will and Grace, who cap the season by suffering a mutual existential crisis. To top it off, Jack McFarland (Sean Hayes) has accepted a marriage proposal from a brand-new boyfriend and Karen Walker (Megan Mullally) has called off her long-term affair to make her own marriage a priority — each of them motivated to not end up like Will and Grace.

The two-part finale was shot over the course of 10 days in January (*THR* was on set Jan. 29) in L.A. The potentially friendship-altering moment was filmed in front of a live audience at a different soundstage from the one used for the show’s original run, but Will and Grace’s apartment and hallway feel familiar to those who enjoyed the comedy’s first eight seasons (1998 to 2006) on NBC. “The live audience has gotten better,” says co-creator Max Mutchnick. “They know the nuance of the characters. It’s such a blessing for us as writers and for everybody that’s on that stage to load in an audience every week that is totally familiar with the characters they are about to watch tell a story.”

With *Will & Grace* already renewed for two more seasons, the writers have the opportunity to explore the complicated ways Will and Grace justify their relationship. Next season should welcome back Danner and Klein in their roles as a newly engaged couple, with two weddings potentially on the horizon. The singleton duo at the show’s center, meanwhile, must each figure out how to leave their own mark on the world. Adds Kohan, “Anything is on the table.” **THR**



1 The live audience can be deceptively responsive. "They're primed to like it, so we have to see if it's going to play as well with just ourselves as it will with an enthusiastic audience," says Kohan. (Pictured: Hayes and Mullally with groomers.) **2** McCormack warmed up the crowd. Klein (in background) stepped in as Grace's dad Martin, originally played by Alan Arkin. **3** The live audience got riled up during a simulated sex scene between Karen and Malcolm Widmark (Baldwin) that went on and on. "The real question was: How far can we go?" says Kohan with a laugh. **4** "Baldwin was such a big get for us that we built the week around his time," Mutchnick says. **5** Messing's wardrobe. **6** "We're a lot more political than we ever were," says longtime director Burrows. "But there's a lot of low-hanging fruit." **7** Danner with Will's "brothers." **8** "There have to be twists and turns," says Kohan of setting the show's foursome on different paths. "It can't just be stasis for them because the show will get stale." **9** Of the chemistry between Klein and Danner, Mutchnick says, "We feel like we hit a home run."



Memorable moments from a storied history



1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 **1990** 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000

In '90 and '93, the Academy Said 'Cheers' to Danson

In 1982, *The Hollywood Reporter* said that predicting the success of NBC's *Cheers* was simple. It has "a top ensemble cast with impeccable timing whose constant thirst of humor is being fed by fine comedy writers. ... Ted Danson is remarkably good as Malone." This talent was enough to fuel the show for 275 episodes over 11 seasons. For Danson, now 70, who is back in the awards race with NBC's *The Good Place*, the show brought Emmys in 1990 and 1993 for acting in a comedy series. His path to *Cheers* had begun with studies at Carnegie Mellon and followed by a few years as a struggling off-Broadway actor (the low point arriving

when, to earn money, he got a promotional job walking around New Jersey dressed as a lemon chiffon pie-mix box. "And I was recognized," he once told Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show*. "I had the indignity of someone saying, 'Aren't you Ted Danson?'" Theater work led to a two-year stint on the soap opera *Somerset*, then a gradual rise through TV guest spots before more high-profile roles in the features *The Onion Field* (1979) and *Body Heat* (1981). Then, five years into doing *Cheers*, Danson starred in the Leonard Nimoy-directed blockbuster *Three Men and a Baby*. The film grossed more than \$170 million worldwide (\$375 million today). In

the U.S., it was the year's highest-grossing film. In 1987, Danson told *THR* that as result of *Baby*, "I'm a little more into a pick-and-choose moment." Those choices turned out to be as varied as a part in *Saving Private Ryan*; a voiceover role as Sam Malone on *The Simpsons* (Homer wanders into the *Cheers* bar just as Carla is telling Sam he's "too old to go on a date with two twins the same night you're supposed to marry Diane without Rebecca knowing"); four seasons as a graveyard shift supervisor on *CSI*; three seasons as a scene-stealing magazine editor on *Bored to Death*; and now that celestial architect on *The Good Place*. — BILL HIGGINS

Celebrity Spotlight

Ted Danson 'Cheers' himself on with role in 'Three Men'

By SCOTT DUGAN

After five years of an on-again, off-again romance with Diane Chambers (former co-star Shelley Long) on "Cheers," Ted Danson has suddenly found himself on steady ground with a girl. But it's not Long's replacement, Kinsie Alley. Nor is it anyone on the hit NBC sitcom.

No, Danson has lost his heart to the scene-stealing co-star of his newest film, "Three Men and a Baby" — Mary, the baby.

Danson stands to strengthen — or really, establish — his box-office potential with this Leonard Nimoy-directed remake of the 1966 French film "Trois Hommes et un Crinoline" ("Three Men and a Cradle"). In it, he doesn't depart a whole lot from the playboy image of his Sam Malone bartender character, but — together with co-stars Tom Selleck (who's been in search of box office legitimacy, too) and Steve Guttenberg — the 39-year-old actor has nonetheless attached himself to a winner. Which is a welcome change after his last crossover delve into the feature arena, Blake Edwards' "A Fine Mess" with Howie Mandel, which didn't win, place or show at the nation's theaters.

"I think as a result of 'Three Men and a Baby' and the kind of energy that's happening now, I'm a little more into a pick-and-choose moment," the 6'2", hard-eyed former Ariston and Irons his office adjacent to the "Cheers" set at Paramount. "It has a shot at becoming certainly the most successful film I've done, and is definitely one of the most charming

fraternal Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

In "Three Men" Danson plays Jack Holden, a "highly insecure, flaky New York actor who keeps screwing up in life." Television commercials have made him a successful single who can afford to room with two other such types — architect Peter Watson (Selleck) and cartoonist Michael Kellam (Guttenberg). In the film, there's no secret about it; Mary, the sexy little girl (played alternately by twins Lisa and Michelle Blair) who's dumped at the bachelors' doorstep one day, is Jack's. And the role awakening her faces as the trio's hitless resident Don Zuan is a humbling adjustment in behavior and attitude well-delivered by Danson.

"O.K., I'm an actor," Jack says when first handed his child. "I can do

Ted Danson: "I love acting, so for right now, producing and acting work together for me."



↑ Danson won his first Emmy at the 42nd Primetime Emmy Awards on Sept. 16, 1990, at Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

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