

CableFAX Daily™

October 2010

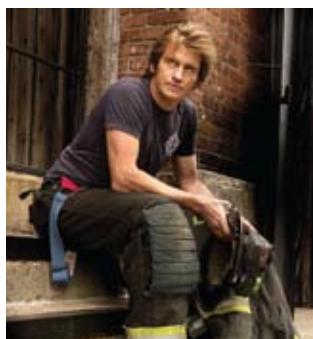
What the Industry Reads First

Volume 21 / No. SPECIAL

Programming Excellence

We'll admit sometimes we get so involved in the minutiae of regulation, personnel moves and deals that cable's lifeblood—its programming—gets less space than we'd like. That's why we relish bringing you the results of our 3rd annual Program Awards, whose winners and honorable mentions are summarized below and who will be saluted at a gala luncheon in NYC, along with our Top Operator honorees. You'll also find profiles of our 3rd Programming Hall of Fame class in these pages. Our thanks to all who entered and to the industry executives who served as judges.

Best Show or Series



BURN NOTICE: Leary's prepping for his final firefighting season.

Winner

Rescue Me, FX: Some series seem to fly slightly under the radar. The brainchild of actor/writer Denis Leary and writer Peter Tolan, "Rescue Me" takes our crown this year—and some would probably say, "It's about time." This drama about NYC firefighters was born in the wake of 9/11 and—in a tribute to Leary and Tolan—hasn't gotten overly

sentimental or maudlin. In places, it's downright funny, in a dark, psychologically disturbed way. And while some might criticize it for glorifying dysfunction, its title suggests that we all need to be rescued at some point.

Honorable Mentions

Secret Life of the American Teenager, ABC Family:

This surprise hit has tapped into teen angst and parenting, showing both sides of the generational divide.

Breaking Bad, AMC: This drama continues to be one of TV's best because of its cast and constant plot twists.

Mad Men, AMC: It just keeps getting better as the characters become more complex—and more damaged.

The U, ESPN: ESPN's "30 for 30" films have been consistently excellent, but "The U"—a cultural history of Miami U's football exploits in the '80s—was a standout.

Damages, FX: An engrossing drama. Good luck if you miss 1 of its detail-rich episodes.

Dexter, Showtime: It must have been a tough pitch. A show about a lovable serial killer. Maybe not. Whatever. We hope "Dexter" is many seasons from its final cut.

Best Show or Series: Drama

Winner

Breaking Bad, AMC:

Why is "Breaking Bad" so good? Is it the acting chops of Bryan Cranston? The crime-driven suspense and constant threat of death under which our main protagonist lives? Or is it just that we all fantasize about quitting our jobs and cooking crystal meth for shady crime syndicates—and getting paid a lot to do it? Let's hope

it's not that last one. In any case, watching Walter White's train wreck of a life unfold in all its horrific glory is like an addictive drug. And we crave more.



ANYTHING YOU CAN DO...
Aaron Paul (left) this year joined Bryan Cranston as an Emmy winner.

Honorable Mentions

Secret Life of the American Teenager, ABC Family:

Teen drama is never easy, but this series and network do it well—and sans a cheesy After School Special feel.

Mad Men, AMC: It's hard to find fault with this dissection of 1960s America, snug in its discrete contradictions and overt hypocrisy. Ah, yes. We need a drink.

Sons of Anarchy, FX: Leave it to FX to take a series about murderous outlaws and make us fall in love with them. Sometimes family can be painful. Very painful.

Spartacus: Blood and Sand, Starz: Blood. Sand. Shirtless gladiators. How's that for drama? Throw in compelling storylines and characters. We're not leaving the arena.

CABLEFAX DAILY (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefaxdaily.com ● fax: 301.738.8453 ● MID-DAY REPORT CONTRIBUTORS: Asst VP, Ed Director: Seth Arenstein, sarenstein@accessintel.com ● Editor-in-Chief: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Exec Editor: Michael Grebb, 301.354.1790, mgrebb@accessintel.com ● Bill Miltenberg, bmiltenberg@accessintel.com ● Publisher: Debbie Vodenos, 301.354-1695, dvodenos@accessintel.com ● Assoc Publisher: Amy Abbey, 301.354.1629, aabbey@accessintel.com ● Marketing Dir: Carol Brault, cbrault@accessintel.com ● Design: Joanne Moran, jmoran@accessintel.com ● Prod: Joann Fato, cdaily@accessintel.com ● Diane Schwartz/VP and Group Publisher ● Subs/Client Services: 301.354.2101, fax 301.309.3847 ● Group Subs: Carol Brault, 301.354.1763, cbrault@accessintel.com

Best Actor

Winner

Ron Perlman, Sons of Anarchy, FX: After 40 years in the game Perlman has proven that he knows what he's doing—and he adds something immeasurable to every role he tackles. In many ways, Perlman is a minimalist who has worked in front of a camera so long that even the slightest curl of the lips or eyebrow can communicate volumes—and still not give away too much.

Honorable Mentions

Bryan Cranston, Breaking Bad, AMC: His dramatic turn in "Breaking Bad" continues to astound audiences and critics alike. And he only seems to be getting better.

Jon Hamm, Mad Men, AMC: Hamm's understated performance as Don Draper has gotten even better in Season 3, with more angst, depth and character flaws than an actor should be allowed to enjoy. But like Draper, Hamm just gets away with it.

Timothy Olyphant, Justified, FX: We loved him in HBO's "Deadwood," and Olyphant has proven that he's no one-trick pony. And no one looks better in a cowboy hat.

Gabriel Byrne, In Treatment, HBO: In a series where there's little action beyond two people sitting in a psychiatrist's office talking, you need top-notch actors and writers to keep viewers interested. Byrne as the doctor and his co-stars as patients are so good that "In Treatment" is more like an acting workshop than a TV series.

Best Actress

Winners

Claire Danes, Temple Grandin, HBO: Talk about pressure. Danes had to impress none other than the real Dr. Temple Grandin with her portrayal of the younger Temple, who overcame autism to lead a very successful life. Danes admits she was terrified. We couldn't tell; neither could the Academy, which awarded her an Emmy.

Edie Falco, Nurse Jackie, Showtime: After years of Emmy wins as Carmela Soprano, Falco's challenge was to become Jackie Peyton, a drug-abusing nurse with a double life. Thanks to Falco's skill as an actor, Carmela's never been seen in All Saints Hospital. And now Falco has another Emmy.

Honorable Mentions

Glenn Close, Damages, FX: Anyone who's seen "Fatal

Attraction" knows Close can play mean with the best of them, which the multi-Oscar, Emmy and Tony winner does to perfection in "Damages." This season she's been asked to display vulnerability, too. Not a problem.

Elisabeth Moss, Mad Men, AMC: Moss' work in the current season of "Mad Men" makes her a favorite for another Emmy nomination, and perhaps a win.

Katey Sagal, Sons of Anarchy, FX: The versatile Sagal is many things, but how does she identify with her biker/gang member character Gemma? By latching on to Gemma's maternal instinct, she told *CableFAX*.

Kyra Sedgwick, The Closer, TNT: How far is Emmy winner Sedgwick from Brenda Leigh Johnson, the character she plays in "The Closer"? The actress is a New Yorker, Johnson is from Georgia. 'Nuff said.

Best Director

Winner

Barry Levinson, The Band That Wouldn't Die, ESPN: This gem recounts the decision of Baltimore Colts owner Robert Irsay to secretly move the team to Indianapolis (moving vans left under the cover of darkness). It captures the emotion and hurt felt by fans and the dedicated members of this marching band, whose persistence eventually led to the NFL's decision to bring football back to Baltimore. Levinson creates his tapestry with interviews and conversations—all while weaving in extraordinary historical footage. Irsay's drunken press conference to deny the team was leaving, right before the team secretly moved, is worth the price of admission.

Honorable Mentions

Jon Hock, The Lost Son of Havana, ESPN: Hock captures every emotion in the gripping story of Luis Tiant's return to Cuba after gaining fame in the US as a baseball player.

Kurt Sutter, Sons of Anarchy, Season Two Finale, FX: Sutter may be a writer first, but his use of pacing and perfectly styled cinematography in this emotional finale has us wondering if he can also break-dance. His talents seem limitless.

Mick Jackson, Temple Grandin, HBO: What a masterpiece. Jackson not only got one of the best performances of Claire Dane's career, but his sense of storytelling (even using selectively placed drawings to demonstrate Grandin's autistic thought pattern) was superb.

Best New Program or Series

Winners

Life, Discovery Channel: As a journalist, you're trained to be skeptical when programming execs say "you've never seen anything like this before." That's how Silver Spring and the BBC described their 11-part HD exploration of some of the Earth's 30mln plant and animal species. They were right.

The Pacific, HBO: Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg were proud of "Band of Brothers." Then they were inundated with requests from aged WWII vets to tell stories of the Pacific campaign. It took nearly a decade before they were ready to teach new generations about long-forgotten battles in places like Peleliu and Pavuvu and remind us about the sacrifices made for freedom. It was worth the wait.

Honorable Mentions

30 for 30, ESPN: Bristol's tribute to its 30th anniversary really has been a gift to viewers as each of its sports-related docs (22 have been released as of this writing) have been consistently strong.

Justified, FX: The critics have loved this rookie procedural adapted from an Elmore Leonard story about an itchy-fingered deputy U.S. marshal in a cowboy hat (played wonderfully by Timothy Olyphant). Ratings have been strong enough to get it renewed for season two.

WWII in HD, History: Enough with jokes about History being "the WWII channel." This excellent visual summary of "the big war," interspersed with stories of several veterans, overall was a brilliant piece of work.

Nurse Jackie, Showtime: Edie Falco could read the phone book and it would be great. Playing a nurse with a drug problem and an unusual sense of marital fidelity, Falco's Jackie Peyton is dark comedy nirvana.

Best Producer

Winner

Brenda Hampton, Secret Life of the American Teenager, ABC Family: There's no doubt that Brenda Hampton has tuned into the Zen art of understanding today's teen-aged girl. This showrunner's incredible stewardship of ABC Family's runaway hit "Secret Life of the American Teenager" has led to numerous awards and stellar ratings—all within the context of compelling stories that reveal universal truths about teen life and family relationships. Hampton was raised for TV (her dad was a television repair man), and has paid her dues for years as a writer/producer for shows including the WB's long-running hit "7th Heaven" and Showtime's "Fat Actress," starring Kristie Alley. Perhaps second only to her TV resume is her pet resume, which includes three dogs, three cats, 15 parrots and 21 koi.

Honorable Mentions

Randy Barbato, Fenton Bailey, Richard Courtney, Robert Sizemore, Tori Spelling and Dean McDermott, Tori & Dean: Home Sweet Hollywood, Oxygen Media This self-described "docu-soap" must keep up with Spelling and McDermott's hectic lives—a difficult feat always done skillfully.

Debbie Jacobson and Dean Love, What's Next Reunion Show, Retirement Living TV: A fascinating reunion hosted by Sherry Parrish and involving plenty of producing gymnastics by Jacobson and Love.

The Tudors Production Team, Showtime: A production as grand in scale as "The Tudors" requires more producers than we can list here. But this highly successful team effort remains one of the best in recent memory.

Maria Perez-Brown, Latino 101, Model Latina, Elle & Tito: The Married Life, Si TV: One look at her resume, and it's clear that Perez-Brown has established herself as not only one of the best producers of Latino content—but one of the best in any genre.

Best Writer

Winner

Kurt Sutter, Sons of Anarchy, FX: Actor Ron Perlman, who plays "Sons" character Clay, put it best when we asked about creator, showrunner and head writer Kurt Sutter: "He can just flat out write... He's created a world that's original, that's untapped and that no one has ever truly explored." To be sure, Sutter's quick ascension to A-List writer of FX's highest rated show in its history didn't come without a lot of hard work, including putting in years under mentor Shawn Ryan as a writer on "The Shield." But Sutter has more than come into his own, with a unique and efficient writing style that keeps us on the edge of our seats and always wanting more.

Honorable Mentions

Savannah Dooley & Winnie Holzman, Huge, ABC Family: It's hard to watch one episode of this surprising, truthful and always provocative show without finding new appreciation for the writing and characters.

Denis Leary & Peter Tolan, Rescue Me, FX: After six seasons, this poignant show about NYC firefighters skates between drama, comedy and character psychosis—without a bit of cheese or sentimentality. Easier said than done, and Leary and Tolan have done it well.

Steven S. DeKnight, Spartacus: Blood and Sand, Starz: What can we say? Season One was a writing tour de force that took the Spartacus legend to new dramatic heights. DeKnight is fast carving out a place for himself among TV writing greats.

Best Show or Series: Documentary

Winners

Life, Discovery: Be thankful that media companies like Discovery and the BBC still are willing to invest in this type of gargantuan undertaking. Four years in the making and employing nearly 100 nature camera people, its breathtaking scenes of species, large and small, give animals personalities that we thought only humans possessed. More than that, the series gives reason to marvel at the daily plots that compose nature's way. And the slow-motion shots of flying fish in HD aren't bad either.

America: The Story of US, History:

Credit History for its excellent use of graphics and well-done reenactments that made American history interesting, relevant and even cool. Our judges especially liked the Civil War episode, with its discussion of the minié ball, which along with the musket, changed the face of warfare and contributed to the bulk of the 200K killed. A subsequent episode discussing slavery and reenacting slave auctions was particularly memorable because it put a face on this awful period.



SOPHISTICATED LADY:
History's CGI impressed our judges.

Honorable Mentions

Beyond the Barrel: The Race to Fuel the Future, CNBC: A terrific look at unconventional energy sources, from high-tech to olive pits.

The Lost Son of Havana, ESPN: Great music, great footage and of course El Tiente, aka pitcher Luis Tiant, who visits his native Cuba after 40 years.

Ray Johnston Band: Road Diaries, HDNet: Fact is stranger than fiction for Johnston, a mortgage broker who became a basketball player, has beaten Leukemia several times and now sings about all of it.

WWII in HD, History: Yes, the footage was effective, but we thought the storytelling, which mixed veterans' tales with the bigger picture, was every bit as good.

Anatomy of a Closet, Ovation: To some, history can be told by looking at the clothes and makeup people wore. This doc examines the little black dress and red lipstick, among other accoutrements.

Best Actor/Actress/Host: Comedy Winner

Joel McHale, The Soup, Comcast Entertainment

Group: Has anyone cooked up more fun using a single camera and a green screen than the lanky and versatile McHale? It's said that only Nixon could go to China. Perhaps only a good guy like McHale could whack the heck out of pop culture and celebs every week and remain a Hollywood darling. More than that, McHale's become a celeb himself, getting numerous film, commercial and broadcast gigs, most notably his role in the NBC sitcom "Community." Still, he's ready to go to any length to poke fun at reality and scripted TV, celebrities, pols and most definitely himself.

Honorable Mentions

Brooke Elliott, Drop Dead Diva, Lifetime: Plus-size actor/singer Elliott has broken the mold of what a leading lady looks like, much to the appreciation of Lifetime viewers. And they're pleased her character Jane is treated with respect. Elliott insisted on that.

Edie Falco, Nurse Jackie, Showtime: Falco admitted during her Emmy acceptance speech that "I'm not funny." Doesn't matter; she's a master craftsman as an actor.

Tony Shalhoub, Monk, USA: In his swan song as the phobic and OCD-suffering detective, Shalhoub's influence was never clearer. The Dec '09 series finale was cable's most-watched scripted drama ever.

James Roday, Psych, USA: Yes, he plays a bit of a con man, but the NYU grad's credentials are solid. In addition to acting, he's written and directed an episode of "Psych."

Best VOD Program

Winner

Home from Haiti, Central Florida News 13: You just never know. Christine Webb was on vacation, volunteering with a church group in Haiti to help children in one of the world's most desperate places. Then an earthquake struck, and Webb instinctively went back into reporter mode. Armed with a laptop, a video camera and a mobile phone, her reports from the crisis were timely, incisive, balanced and informed.

Honorable Mention

Carolina on Demand: High School Sports, Time Warner Cable: Our judges said the production values of CoD's sports coverage were on par with those of the best regional sports networks.

Best Actor/Actress: Drama

Winner

Mary McCormack, In Plain Sight, USA: Oh, serendipity. For years McCormack was known mainly as Howard Stern's wife in the film "Private Parts." USA's "In Plain Sight" changed that. Yet it nearly didn't happen. For years USA had promised TV critics a series about a federal agent involved with the Witness Protection Program, but it never materialized. Such lengthy delays usually signal major problems. But with McCormack's sexy sophistication leading a strong cast, IPS has been worth the wait, and this summer it was renewed for two more seasons.

Honorable Mentions

Jon Hamm, Mad Men, AMC: Like the character he plays, Hamm literally came from nowhere to lead the talented ensemble that captured an unprecedented 3rd consecutive Emmy for Drama.

Joseph Mazzello, The Pacific, HBO: As Marine Eugene Sledge, Mazzello's character evolved from an idealistic, naïve soldier to a grizzled, psychologically damaged, returnee. In his reunion with Spielberg, the kid from "Jurassic Park" showed he's all grown up.

Matt Bomer, White Collar, USA: The 32-year-old Texan is dripping with charm as conman-turned-FBI consultant Neal Caffrey.

Best Host: Reality/Game Show

Winner

Ben Bailey, Cash Cab, Discovery Channel: When your entire stage position takes place behind the

wheel of a taxi minivan, you need a great personality. Driving while talking comes naturally to Bailey, who's delivered flowers, pizzas and even people as a limo driver. To get the Discovery gig, he had to pass taxi school and become a licensed NYC cabbie (we're told he aced it). The stand-up comedian gives off such a good vibe, we'll bet most passengers would tip him even if they didn't win money from his game show on wheels that's snagged three Daytime Emmys.

Honorable Mention

Heidi Klum, Project Runway, Lifetime: We're supposed to be jealous and hate super models, right? But somehow Klum has worked her way into millions of hearts, becoming as much a staple of "Project" as Tim Gunn's catchphrase "Make it work!" Our favorite part about Klum is that she's more than a pretty face and fantastic figure. Sometimes she's the harshest critic.

Best Host: Sports

Winner

NBA on ESPN, Mike Breen, Mark Jackson, Jeff Van Gundy, ESPN: The chemistry this trio has developed is obvious and lends further enjoyment to telecasts. Play-by-play man Breen directs traffic with understated flair and historical perspective, while Jackson draws on his playing experience. Former pro coach Van Gundy cracks game strategies with an amusing skew that makes his analysis as fun as it is insightful. The mix of disparate personalities and backgrounds works well, forming a team that often is smoother than teams playing on the hardwood.

Honorable Mentions

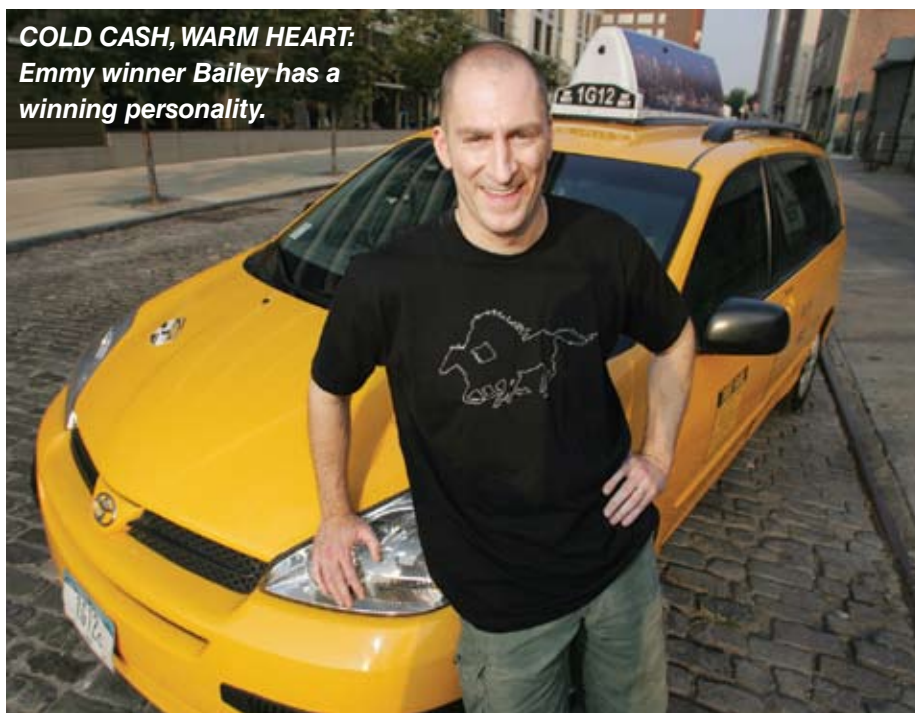
Dhani Tackles the Globe, Dhani

Jones, Travel Channel: Former NFL linebacker and modern Renaissance man Jones' enthusiasm makes for a wildly fun series that explores cultures and sports from Croatian water polo to Nepalese mountain climbing.

Ernie Johnson, Turner Sports:

Does Johnson have the hardest job in sports television, reigning in the thoughts, tantrums and shenanigans of analysts Charles Barkley and Kenny Smith on TNT's "Inside the NBA" and umpiring the comments of former jocks Cal Ripken Jr, Dennis Eckersley and David Wells during baseball season? Regardless, he does it well.

COLD CASH, WARM HEART:
Emmy winner Bailey has a
winning personality.



HALL OF FAME

Matt Blank



We asked Cable Hall of Famer Marc Nathanson about his fondest cable memories. He mentioned he loved selling cable door to door in Hickory, NC, “with our young, but very energetic HBO rep... his name was Matt Blank.” That youngster’s done pretty well, becoming Showtime’s chmn/CEO and joining

Cable’s Hall in ’09 with one of the funniest induction speeches in memory. No doubt, Blank is among the wittiest execs in cable. He’s also one of the most successful. In ’09’s down economy, the buzz surrounding Showtime’s award-winning slate helped its networks grow to 63.5mln subs (June ’10), up 5.1mln from last year. Blank changed course at Showtime more than 6 years ago when he hired Robert Greenblatt as head of entertainment. Together they moved Showtime to take on fewer but better productions. Hits like “Huff,” “Reefer Madness,” “The L Word” and “Dexter” followed, as did Emmys, Golden Globes and SAGs. Beyond that, the humble and soft-spoken Blank is well known for his generosity. The man simply is unable to refuse a chance to do good. A tireless supporter of diversity, Cable Positive and other causes, Blank serves on numerous boards and last year was co-chair of the NCTA show. Outside of cable, he’s been a trustee of the Harlem Children’s Zone for nearly two decades.

Bonnie Hammer



A member of countless Hollywood power lists, the NBCU Cable Entertainment and Universal Cable Studios president continues to keep USA at the top of the ratings list with “Royal Pains,” “Blue Collar,” “Psych,” “Burn Notice” and “In Plain Sight,” not to mention WWE wrestling. While she quickly deflects

credit to her team, USA’s success can be directly traced to the day in ’04 when Jeff Zucker added it to Hammer’s portfolio, which included Sci Fi (now SyFy). There were plenty of scoffs when Hammer told TV critics she’d re-branded USA with a Characters Welcome tagline. After 4 consecutive years of having the top-rated new cable series, it’s Hammer who’s laughing. And it’s laughter, blue skies and positive escapism that connects USA’s originals. Anyone who knows Hammer can attest these shows have her fingerprints—and personality—all over them. An optimist whose immigrant father taught her to abhor the word “no,” Hammer enjoys her career, but places life successes above it. In the midst of record years for SyFy

and USA, we asked Hammer to name her top recent accomplishment. Addressing her alma mater, Boston U’s College of Communications, was her answer. “It was a great experience—worth every second of anxiety.”

Chris Albrecht



In sports, one measure of a coach’s greatness is being able to produce winners with more than one team. That’s where Starz pres/CEO Chris Albrecht seems headed. We’re not arguing Albrecht has repeated the iconic success at Starz that he enjoyed for years at HBO. Not yet. Still, in less than one year

at Starz, the man behind “Sex and The City,” “The Sopranos,” “Six Feet Under” and numerous other hits has crafted a slate of buzz-worthy originals. Building on the global success of “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” Starz this summer announced a Spartacus prequel, a “Camelot” remake and a continuation of BBC’s “Torchwood” series. And Albrecht’s name has attracted top-flight talent in front of and behind the camera for these projects. A firm believer in collaborating with global talent and production companies, Albrecht’s crafted Camelot as an Irish-Canadian-Anglo-US production. An intensely private person, the former stand-up comedian’s charitable side is known to few, despite its wide influence. He’s co-chairing a \$250mln fundraising effort for Children’s Hospital LA and Comic Relief, which he co-founded 20 years ago, has raised more than \$50mln for the homeless, including those displaced by Katrina.

Linda Cohn



ESPN has its share of icons—talent who’ve been with the network from its beginning 30 years ago. Those days it was a collection of trailers parked in a pasture in rural Bristol, CT. Nearly all of them—including CableFAX Hall of Famer Chris Berman—began as anchors for “SportsCenter,” the daily

roundup and highlight show ESPN still considers its top programming priority. While the list of those who’ve graced SportsCenter’s anchor desk is distinguished and long, none has had a lengthier tenure than Linda Cohn, who joined ESPN in ’93 after turning down an offer from Bristol so she wouldn’t uproot her young family. Today Cohn arguably is the country’s most recognizable female sportscaster. It’s been quite a ride for the college hockey goal-keeper, whose proficiency on the ice was such that she

HALL OF FAME

played a few games for her high school squad, even though it was an all-boys team. Perhaps that experience prepared her to break into sportscasting in the early '80s, when it was even more of a boys' club than it is today. Experienced in television and radio sports, Cohn recently penned a memoir, "Cohn-Head," and has added play-by-play duties to her portfolio, calling WNBA games for ESPN.

Glenn Close



One of the most celebrated movie actresses of the last 25 years, Glenn Close gets a pass for telling FX pres John Landgraf that she'd never heard of his network when he met with her in 2004 to pitch a guest spot on "The Shield." After all, Close is a bonafide movie star. Does she even watch TV?

But her decision to take the role should go down as a major turning point for cable. Her performance as Captain Monica Rawling won raves and proved that cable had the chops to attract A-List talent. And, of course, it led to her taking the lead in FX's legal thriller "Damages," which critics have adored since it debuted in '07. It will take on new life as DirecTV's first original series. Close is a legend, and it seems like her best years remain ahead. That FX snagged her for not one but two series on basic cable speaks to the growing influence and power of the medium—and the persuasive savvy of FX execs.

Bob Johnson



Let's just put it on the table: Bob Johnson took a big risk starting BET in 1980. It was a time of much skepticism about whether a cable network focused on African-American viewers could make it economically. And in the early days, it was mostly music videos and a lot of acquired content. But Johnson believed

in what he was doing. Over time, he added more programming, smartly brought on big MSO partners, took the company public in the early 1990s before taking it back private during the bull market of the late '90s. A bit later he sold the company to Viacom for a cool \$3bln. By then, the skeptics had long crawled back into their holes and Johnson emerged as a billionaire and one of the richest African-Americans in U.S. history. Not bad for a guy who started out as a lobbyist for NCTA. Johnson has stepped back from the industry in recent years, passing the reins to BET CEO Debra Lee, who continues to build on Johnson's legacy. We felt it fitting to honor Johnson during BET's 30th

anniversary year. The skeptics never thought the network would last 30 minutes. They were very wrong.

Geraldine Laybourne



Geraldine Laybourne already was a respected cable name before 2000, when she founded Oxygen, creating the first cable network targeting young women. No one doubted her ability; she had run Nickelodeon since 1984 and made the controversial (but ultimately very profitable) decision to migrate it to

an advertising model. Her vision and business savvy eventually landed her the job of president of Disney/ABC Television Networks, which she ran for two years in the late '90s. So when she left for Oxygen, big MSOs threw their support to the venture, which quickly grew carriage and ultimately blazed a trail that continues today. Laybourne left in 2007 after Oxygen's success attracted suitor NBCU, which paid nearly \$1bln for the privilege of breathing some of that fresh, youthful air. And while Laybourne hasn't been directly involved in cable since, she remains a friend and ally to many of its most powerful execs. She keeps busy with civic activities and by serving on the boards of Symantec Corp, Electronic Arts, J.C. Penny and Move.com.

SpongeBob Squarepants



Speaking of Geraldine Laybourne... SpongeBob's reign came after Laybourne left Nickelodeon, but in a few short years this mischievous sea creature (who wears stylish trousers) has worked his way into the hearts of millions of children. And while most sponges last a few months, Bob's now in

his 11th season. What's even more skillful about SpongeBob's rise is that parents love him, too! Perhaps it's an homage to those Loony Toons shorts of the 1940s. The hijinks that SpongeBob and his buddies create seem equally designed to make kids laugh and amuse adults. Perhaps that's why this rascal's ratings are so darned high. Are parents watching when the kids aren't around?! We can't know for sure, but the phenomenon that is SpongeBob has made its mark. And it's helped solidify cable's position as the premiere spot for kids' programming—a mantle once owned by the Saturday-morning cartoons on broadcast and, of course, PBS. Not anymore. Kids increasingly love basic cable and the success of SpongeBob Squarepants has played a big role in that evolution.

Best Host: Food

Winner

Adam Richman, *Man v. Food*, Travel Channel: That Richman feels like the guy you could share a beer with during “Monday Night Football” keeps you rooting for him as he tackles 12-patty high hamburgers or a five-pound Stromboli. While the formula of each ep is the same—man meets food, man eats food (or tries to)—Richman’s down-to-Earth personality is what keeps viewers tuning in for more gluttony. And the Yale grad puts up a good fight. His record for Season 2: 13-7. Maybe the biggest appeal? While Americans are watching triglycerides and red meat intake, it’s comforting to cheer someone taking a huge bite of forbidden fruit—er, pizza.

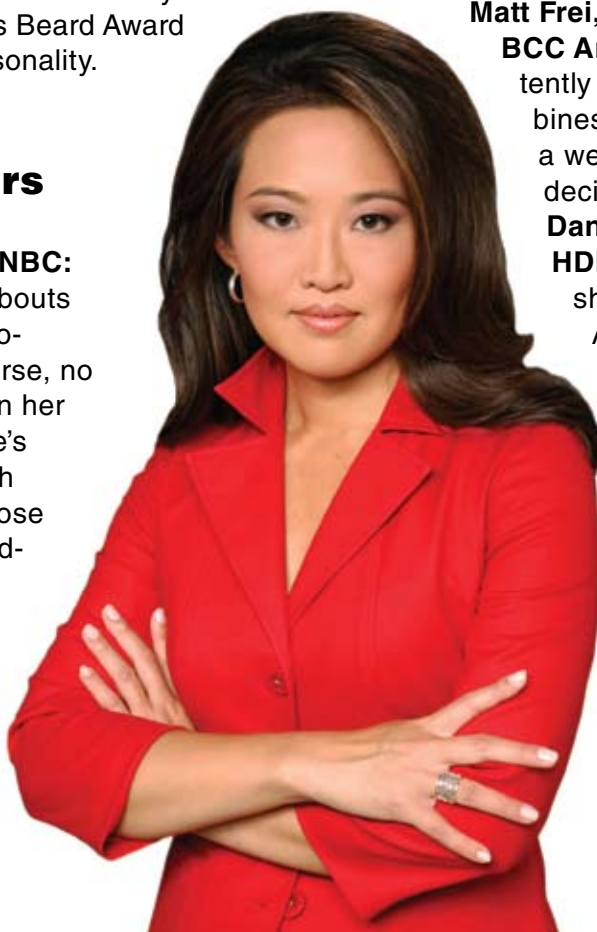
Honorable Mentions

Alton Brown, *Iron Chef America*, Food Network: You think Brown sounds so intelligent because he augments his commentary in post-production? Wrong. **Guy Fieri, *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, Food Network:** He’s a bit of a food rock star, but he never forgets the food and atmosphere are this series’ star. **Andrew Zimmern, *Bizarre Foods*, Travel Channel:** Many media have noted Zimmern’s enthusiasm for exploring ethnic cuisine and culture. This year he won the prestigious James Beard Award for Outstanding TV Food Personality.

Best Host: News/Public Affairs

Winner

Melissa Lee, *Fast Money*, CNBC: When it comes to refereeing bouts between Wall Street’s self-proclaimed Masters of the Universe, no one does it better than Lee. In her fast-moving money show, she’s the fastest, wrestling ably with financial gurus and titans whose downtown vernacular and endless punditry never throw her off. Instead, she keeps things moving while asking poignant and intelligent questions that have guests on their toes—and viewers on the edge of their seats. And she makes it look easy.



LIQUID LIPITOR? Our judges worried about the health implications of Richman's prodigious palate.

Honorable Mentions

Matt Frei, BBC World News America, BCC America: Frei oversees a consistently excellent news program that combines international and U.S. news into a well-balanced presentation—with a decidedly objective viewpoint. **Dan Rather, *Dan Rather Reports*, HDNet:** The truth is that Rather should have a category of his own. And Rather consistently is delivering the best work of his long career.

Paula Zahn, *On the Case with Paula Zahn*, Investigation Discovery: It’s no wonder Zahn’s riveting dissection of horrible crimes and the investigations that followed have made her series the highest rated in ID’s history.

FINANCIAL FURY: Harvard grad Lee’s quicksilver mind might be the fastest part of a slow economy.

Best Host: Other

Winner

Anthony Bourdain, No Reservations, Travel Channel: Years ago, washing pots in the depths of restaurant kitchens, the last thing Bourdain could have imagined himself doing was being a best-selling author and eating and drinking his way around the world as the host of a hit cable series on Travel Channel. But life has a way of throwing you surprises. So here's Bourdain, in his distinctively raspy voice, providing some of the best voiceovers in the business, replete with tips, insights and a few expletives deleted (you can find unexpurgated Bourdain in his Travel Channel blog). The secret is that his voiceovers are so natural and personal, it seems like he's speaking only to you. And it doesn't hurt that he's usually having a great time eating, drinking and globe-hopping.



PARIS MATCH: Bourdain looks dour, but if he's in his favorite country, France, he's actually happy.

Honorable Mentions

Jeremy Wade, River Monsters, Animal Planet:

While not totally fearless, British-born Wade's the guy you'd want beside you during an encounter with a giant sting ray or perhaps a deadly piranha.

Michelle Lepe, The Goodnight Show, PBS Kids Sprout: Lepe's friendly manner and calming voice have eased millions of pre-schoolers to bed, much to parents' delight. So what if she has to share top billing with a co-host whose name is Star?

Best Host: Regional Program

Winner

Paul Lisnek, Site of Remembrance, Comcast Chicago: Paul Lisnek not only grew up in Skokie, IL, encountering many Holocaust victims, but he actually lived through the famous court fight between the town and neo-Nazis who threatened to march there in the 1970s

to torment its heavily Jewish population. So in hosting a special about the new Illinois Holocaust Museum and Educational Center, Lisnek brought an experienced perspective that shone through in the program in more ways than one. While few Holocaust victims talk about the details of their experiences, Lisnek not only got them to open up about the senseless circumstances (including one old woman's chilling description of wrenching hunger) but wrapped their stories into an emotional and compelling argument for why the Center is so important. And why Skokie should be its home.

Honorable Mentions

Chick Hernandez, Redskins Kickoff, Comcast Sports Net Mid-Atlantic: Few sports commentators do it as well as Hernandez, who has an incredible grasp of the game and especially of the DC area's endlessly optimistic embrace of its seldom victorious 'Skins.

Robert Traynham, Roll Call with Robert Traynham,

The Comcast Network: This dynamic Sunday political talk show covers Capitol Hill with scrappy gusto. Traynham sports impressive command of the issues and moderating skills as he interviews lawmakers, journalists, insiders and newsmakers.

Best Opening Sequence:

Winner

WWII in HD, History: This series opens with a mélange of footage, in color and black and white, of the Pacific, African and European campaigns. The most harrowing clips show Kamikaze attacks on U.S. ships. The vantage point and sound are such that viewers feel like planes, bombs and bullets are whizzing right past them. In a moment of pathos, a tiny child, terrified and covered with dust, is comforted by an American soldier. Much of the footage in the opening and throughout the series hadn't been seen before. Later we meet the 12 veterans whose stories will be interspersed with the larger historical materials.

Honorable Mentions

Live From the Red Carpet, E!: Comcast Entertainment Group's unit expertly mixed clips of Hollywood stars, past and present, ending with a shot of a huge Oscar.

NBA on ESPN, Eastern Conference Finals, ESPN:

An energetic opening mixing clips of historic and current Eastern Conference match-ups. If the goal was to rev up the viewer, this intro package succeeded greatly.

Not Fade Away, RLTV: For this documentary, RLTV decided to represent Alzheimer's by showing a series of family pictures that slowly faded to blank. Following that was footage of scientists, representing the medical world's fight against the disease.

NBA All-Star Sunday Night, Turner Sports: An extremely creative package incorporating Arizona Indian folklore. An Indian speaks of wolves, hawks and bears; he blows magic dust and the animals shape shift into NBA players.

Best Show or Series:

Animals/Nature

Winner

No Dog Left Behind, Military Channel: Soldiers are prohibited from having pets in combat zones, according to US military regulations. But the Pentagon wisely seemed to be looking the other way when entire units became so attached to dogs in Iraq that soldiers found ways—with help from private donations and SPCA Intl—to send the pets home to the safety of the States. Our favorite story of many was about Nubs, a wounded mutt who had to be left in the desert. Somehow Nubs tracked down his Marine buddies despite the fact that they'd re-deployed 70 miles away. Nubs now enjoys an easier life—on the beaches of San Diego. He's earned it.

Honorable Mentions

Whale Wars, Animal Planet: The tone sometimes is lighthearted, but the work is serious as amateur crew



CANINE CORPS: SPCA Intl founded Baghdad Pups after donations flooded in to move dogs to the US.

members join professional sailors aboard the Steve Irwin to combat Japanese ships that claim they're hunting whales for research purposes.

Natural Companions, Light and Power, Veria: It's a little-known fact to those who don't own pets, but animals can be afflicted with cancer and other diseases. This compassionate series surveys some of the latest treatments used on animals, including lasers.

Best Host: Talk Shows

Winner

Chelsea Handler, Chelsea Lately, Comcast Entertainment Group: She doesn't pull punches or get wrapped up in the niceties of polite conversation. In fact, she seldom engages in polite conversation. That's why so many have warmed up to Handler's show, which reminds us of Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect," except without the politics or the structured format or, well... actually this show is unique. It's as if a hodge-podge of pop culture-obsessed pals decided to sit at a bar and talk about celebrities while cameras rolled in the background. Sure, Handler occasionally checks notes to keep things moving, but this is freewheeling stuff. And enormous fun.

Honorable Mentions

Suze Orman, The Suze Orman Show, CNBC: A well-known pundit claims to have invented the no-spin zone. We think it was Orman, who's mastered the art of dispensing practical financial advice while making it entertaining—sometimes painfully so, as when she blasts callers for mistreating their money. But it's why we watch.

Susan Swain, Washington Journal, C-SPAN: Even Swain admitted recently, "We're not very exciting at C-SPAN." But her intelligent and pointed stewardship of "Washington Journal" draws you in and doesn't let go. Who needs flashy graphics or loud pundits? For 27 years informed citizens have had Swain.

Best Show or Series: Animated Winner

Archer, FX: Who's Archer? Cross Maxwell Smart with James Bond, throw in a dash of David Niven, a smidgen of Hugh Hefner and top it off with Forrest Gump. There's your protagonist. This hilarious spy spoof creates a fantastical world that mixes '60s spy craft with current attitudes and technology. The result is sublimely ridiculous. Archer's complete lack of self-awareness and aloof attitude (brought to glorious life by H. Jon Benjamin) creates a sort of amoral anti-hero who somehow—through no hard work or merit of his own—gets the job done. The voices of Chris Parnell and Aisha Tyler of "SNL" are icing on the cake.

Honorable Mentions

Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Cartoon Network: Quite simply, this is some of the best computer animation that's ever graced the TV set. It's fitting that Cartoon braved the creative mountains to launch this stunning series, which is enjoyed by adults and kids alike. And that's a good thing.

The Ricky Gervais Show, HBO: This quirky and bizarre cartoon essentially animates Gervais' U.K.-based podcast with long-time pal Stephen Merchant and a phenomenon named Karl Pilkington. How to turn an audio show into a cartoon? Mostly by turning Pilkington's outlandish insights into animated vignettes.

Best Show or Series: Food Winner

Man v. Food, Travel Channel: Even non-foodies are mesmerized by Adam Richman's gastronomical show-downs. His personality, the pacing and the fact that many of the humongous dishes he consumes actually look appetizing make "Man v. Food" much more entertaining than the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating contest. Perhaps one of the biggest indicators of Richman's influence can be seen by the spike in sales at restaurants featured on the series—even in a sluggish economy. Now, if we could just coax Richman to South St Steaks, near our office, to take on "The Mistake Challenge" (5 lbs of cheesesteakiness, including pepperoni, bacon and French fries).

Honorable Mentions

The Next Iron Chef, Food Network: Coming up with dishes involving grasshopper or jellyfish on the fly will hold anyone's attention. Not to mention the stakes— instant fame for the winner.

Hot on the Trail, Veria: Talk about different, host Sunny Savage travels the globe seeking earthy, wild food—from pokeweed to chanterelle mushrooms—and preparing it.

Best Show or Series: Family Friendly Winner

Christmas in Canaan, Hallmark Channel: A heart-warming and worthy addition to a family's pre-holiday collection, especially for fans of Billy Ray Cyrus (aka Hannah Montana's dad). Doing his best to raise three children on a limited income in Canaan, TX, during the Civil Rights era, Cyrus' character faces more than just financial difficulties as the years pass and local racial tensions build. One memorable Christmas teaches the importance of hope and the true meaning of family.

Honorable Mentions

Debbie Macomber's Mrs. Miracle, Hallmark Channel: Starring James Van Der Beek and the ever-charming Doris Roberts, this Hallmark original was a perfect holiday table-setter; a wholesome piece that had viewers rooting for the lovebirds.

America The Story of US, History: An elaborate and ambitious 12-hour event chronicling American history through highly realistic CGI animation, dramatic recreations, celebrities and thoughtful insights.

CHRISTMAS CHEER? *Cyrus strays far from his Hannah Montana role in Hallmark's holiday film.*



Best Show or Series: News

Winner

Dan Rather Reports, HDNet: Liberated from the constraints of a “corporate news” program and armed with a young staff of researchers and producers, Rather’s editorial and creative freedom to pursue comprehensive and unfiltered journalism produces the best investigative and foreign reporting on television. And at 78, he’s still like a hungry bear when chasing down a juicy story. A member of our Programming Hall of Fame, he’s arguably the most experienced Afghanistan reporter around, having visited that country of inhospitable terrain dozens of times, including twice in 2010.

Honorable Mentions:

Banking on Geithner: A CNBC Town Hall Event with the Treasury Secretary, CNBC: CNBC took an enormously complex topic and made it accessible for a wide audience. Also credit Treasury Secretary Geithner for eschewing governmental bureaucratic speak.

Meeting of the Minds: The Future of Health Care, CNBC: From the CEO of insurance giant WellPoint, to heart surgeon/Senator Bill Frist, perspectives and personalities clashed in a quest to balance patients, profits and progress on a plan for America’s healthcare system.

Anderson Cooper 360, CNN:

Love him or hate him, you can’t deny Cooper’s passion for getting behind the day’s headlines. And when he periodically sheds the anchor desk for boots-on-the-ground reporting, there are few better.

E! News, E!, Comcast Entertainment Group:

Juicy celebrity gossip seems more palatable and occasionally legitimate when it’s reported by Ryan Seacrest and Giuliana Rancic. And later this month their nightly newscast expands to 60 minutes.

Best Show or Series: Music

Winner

HDNet Concert Series, HDNet: We’re more impressed with this series every year not only because of HDNet’s stunning lineup of top-notch acts. It’s HDNet’s attention to detail in presenting these concerts that hooks us the most. There’s amazing camera work, mind-blowing audio and that HD picture...wow. It’s difficult to put into words the care that goes into this series, which has featured acts ranging from Jack Johnson to John Legend to Judas Priest. And in every case, viewers at home get an experience that feels like they’re actually at the concert. That HDNet is able to keep this up on almost a weekly basis to the tune of more than 150 shows so far, well, let’s say once again we’re impressed. Very impressed.

KABULFAX:
Rather’s knowledge of Afghanistan is based on numerous trips there, including two this year.



Honorable Mentions

On the Record with FUSE, FUSE: This 30-minute interview series with music journalist Toure always hits the mark, whether it’s a chat with Lady Gaga or 50 Cent. **FUSE presents JAY-Z Live from Madison Square Garden: Answer the Call, FUSE:** From the moment Jay-Z took the stage to belt out “Empire State of Mind” to a sold-out benefit for the New York Police and Fire Widows’ and Children’s Fund, we were hooked. Beautiful presentation. Great cause.

Best Show or Series: Other

Winner

Meet the Natives: USA, Travel Channel: Ever day-dream about how a person from long ago would react to the modern world? That’s roughly what Travel showed in this docu series, taking five elders from a primitive S Pacific island and bringing them to various parts of the U.S. Never mind the guys’ fascination with air travel, can you imagine their first glimpses of NYC? Snow? Western food? Priceless. Ditto the narration, by an islander who knew some English. Watching their first ride in an elevator and hearing the narrator call it a “metal room” was wonderful and hilarious at the same time.

Honorable Mentions

Top Gear, Season 13, BBC America: Haven’t yet caught this somewhat eccentric import that challenges cars and is loads of fun? Are you waiting for season 14?

Attack of the Show, G4: Our judges continue to be impressed by this purposely amateurish-looking live, daily romp aimed at geeks and nerds, but that’s entertaining for nearly anyone with a pulse and a sense of humor.

On the Case with Paula Zahn, Investigation Discovery: Henry Schleiff brought in veteran journalist Zahn to anchor ID’s signature series. Well done. Critical acclaim and large ratings gains followed.

Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations, Travel Channel: Based on peripatetic Bourdain’s brand recognition alone, we’d argue Scripps Networks made a smart move in acquiring Travel Channel.

Best Reality Series/Game Show Winner

American Pickers, History: While a plethora of series focus on the shocking practice of hoarding, "American Pickers" takes junk piles to a high level. Giving new meaning to the term trash TV, Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz actually sort through it all to find rare collectibles. This is antiquing to the extreme—knee-deep in dirt, digging through an abandoned chicken house to weed out trash from treasure. It's also very real. It may be painful to watch a WWII vet get \$75 for a saddle that later appraises for several thousand dollars, but this is how those nifty finds make it to quaint little antique shops all over the world.

Honorable Mentions

Pawn Stars, History: The location (Las Vegas), the eclectic items and the eclectic people who bring them to the Gold & Silver Pawn shop keep this series lively.

Jersey Shore, MTV: Never shy, always controversial and loaded with buzz. One thing is certain: The Situation, Snooki & the rest of the crew have put MTV back on the map.

Model Latina, SiTV: Yes, it's another "America's Next Top Model," but weaving in Hispanic roots is refreshing, plus the models are evaluated on character, too. **Ruby, Style:** Kudos to Style for a weight loss show that's more about the journey than the result. The Emmy winning series treats its subject with dignity and respect.

Best Show or Series: Public Affairs

Winner

Walter Cronkite: America's Newsmen, Retirement

Living TV: This expansive documentary explored the career and unprecedented influence of the American news icon, who literally shaped the way news was packaged and presented during his television tenure. The 90-year-old told much of his story in his own words, but the piece was augmented with behind-the-scenes footage from Cronkite's last television work, the commentary spots he did for RLTV. Especially interesting are Cronkite's insights about his motivations and philosophy. For anyone who remembers Cronkite's heyday, this is fascinating viewing. It's useful for the younger set, too, as a must-see dissection of a man whose influence on the news will never again be matched.

Honorable Mentions

It's Your Call with Lynn Doyle: Incest Survivors, The Comcast Network: Doyle has never been one to shy



away from tough tactics. This time, she tackled something even more taboo than her award-winning shows about sex slaves and other hands-off topics: Incest. Doyle's interview skills are top-notch, but she's always honest and sensitive.

Music City: Keep on Playin': A Benefit for Food Relief, Great American Country: In just 13 days, GAC put together a wonderful two-hour telethon to help victims of the Nashville rainstorms and floods, with performances from Keith Urban, Sheryl Crow, Martina McBride and many others. More than 42 artists volunteered to work the phone bank. And the production of the event (remember, they had 13 days) was as polished as something that had been planned for months.

Best Show or Series: Regional Winner

Su Vida, Cox Communications: The first regional weekly that highlights Hispanic culture, community, and heritage in Arizona, "Su Vida" is presented in a magazine format that's hip, bicultural, bilingual and shot entirely in HD. With features on Latin music, art, business, food and entertainment, the show's lively reportage tracks and bolsters the pulse of the Grand Canyon State's Hispanic community.

Honorable Mentions

Home and Away, Free State Studios: This wide-ranging show covers the NE Kansas area, with pieces about architectural trends to suggestions for daytrip getaways, all with local flavor.

Yankees Pre- and Post-Game Shows, YES: Excellent production values, loads of relevant statistics, highlights and interviews help make the country's most famous baseball team even more popular.



PARTY'S OVER: Despite a loyal cult following the dysfunctional crew appears to have catered its final party.

Best Show or Series: Comedy

Winners

Greek, ABC Family: Drunken hook-ups. Love triangles. Parents with, uh... parenting issues. Just another day for the ZBZ sorority sisters as they navigate the social minefields of Cyprus-Rhodes U. And don't be fooled by the polished and colorful look of this series. The character interactions can be brutal and some of the issues heavy. Skillfully walking the line between comedic goofiness and character-rich poignancy, the ensemble features fine performances by Spencer Grammer and Dilshad Vadsaria.

Party Down, Starz: Those of us who loved "Party Down" in its short 2-season run still mourn its cancellation and are hoping beyond hope for a special "final" episode, a Web-based afterlife or even something where the gang goes to Hawaii and jumps a shark. Anything! We can't blame Starz for ending this cult favorite, but the combination of strong writing, quirky characters, great cameos and L.A.-fueled artist angst

made this examination of down-on-their-luck caterers in La La Land great fun. While it lasted.

Honorable Mentions

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, FX: Something is just wrong with us for loving this offensive, politically incorrect and mean-spirited romp. But we do. Sue us.

The Hard Times of R.J. Berger, MTV: Parents will shriek at this realistic (unfortunately) depiction of high school life. Seriously. They do talk and act like this when you're not around. And it's so-oo-funny!

Latino 101, Si TV: Solidly funny and well-produced, "101" mixes education about Latino culture with hilarious vignettes and interviews.

Psych, USA: If there were a "consistently funny" award, "Psych" would win it hands, er, heads down.

Best Show or Series: Educational/Instructional

Winner

Good Eats with Alton Brown, Food Network: Rarely has science been taught on TV in such an entertaining and appetizing manner as it is in Brown's goofy, tirelessly inventive series. Loaded with pop culture, comedy and good eating, Brown explores the origins of ingredients and decodes culinary customs, often through fictional characters and experiments. Punctuated by unusual interludes, simple preparations and unconventional discussions, Brown simultaneously makes fans salivate while raising their foodie IQ.

Honorable Mention

Yard Crashers, DIY Network: Landscape contractor Ahmed Hassan lies in wait at home improvement stores for helpless weekend warriors and transforms their lawns into backyard oases.

MY PLATE OR YOURS? A favorite with our judges, Brown's culinary talent helped him get dates in college.



Best Show or Series: Sci Fi

Winner

Survivors, BBC America: So a virus has wiped out 99% of the population. Where do you go? What do you do for food? And how do you deal with other survivors vying for the same scarce resources, especially when some of them think this is the perfect opportunity to adopt a “Mad Max” outlook on life? These are some of the questions posed by BBC America’s apocalyptic character study, where even an abandoned grocery store or warehouse can become the site of a nasty turf war. BBC A often takes a more cerebral approach to the action/thriller genre, and “Survivors” is no exception. While this show is decidedly sci-fi, it does the genre justice without falling back on special effects or gimmicks.

Honorable Mention

Caprica, SyFy: Brought to you by the geniuses behind the stellar “Battlestar Galactica,” “Caprica” is a prequel that shows us how the human race got itself into such a bind with those murderous robots in the first place. Arrogance. Technology worship. Lack of long-term thinking. Yeah... there are some parallels to today’s society. But that’s the point.

Best Show or Series: Sports

Winners

The Journey: Big Ten Basketball 2010, Big Ten Network: A 10-part “Hard Knocks”-meets-hard wood documentary-style series gave viewers a deeper look at Big Ten players during the conference’s basketball season. Shot weekly, the shows were produced and edited to include timely footage. They attracted a legion of better-informed fans craving more.

Small Potatoes: Who Killed the USFL? ESPN: Spoiler alert: The United States Football League never defeated the NFL. Yet in 1983 the upstart league enjoyed respectable crowds and TV ratings. Director Mike Tollin showcases the influence and history of the rival league that was brought to its knees by a single rogue owner.

Honorable Mentions

Without Bias, ESPN: What might have been? A trenchant look at the short life of Maryland star Len Bias and his tragic, drug-induced death, just as he was to join the Boston Celtics. Director Kirk Fraser weaves interviews and historic footage to give context to Bias’ sad story.

Inside the NBA, Turner Sports: The engaging post-game team of Ernie Johnson, Kenny Smith and Charles Barkley breaks down the night’s action with skill and hysterical banter. It’s a must-see for the insomniac basketball fan.



MY ONE AND ONLY: With 99% of the population dead, playboy Al (Phillip Rhys) has fewer choices.

NHL on VERSUS, VERSUS: With more than 50 regular season games, wall-to-wall playoffs coverage and a 30% post-Olympics ratings boom, it’s safe to say the NHL has found a loving home on VERSUS. And now parent Comcast’s, er, goal... is the acquisition of NBC.

Yankees Baseball, YES Network: With as many as 22 HD cameras, including the first Sony 3X Super Slo-Mo camera, YES produces one of the most visually stunning packages at least 162 times per year.

Best Show or Series: Talk

Winner

CenterStage, YES Network: It’s unusual that a sports show receives our award for talkers, but “CenterStage” is an unusual show. It’s unusually intelligent and features a diverse slate of guests. Host Michael Kay brings a certain introspection to interviews and manages to cull unique insights from subjects ranging from John Elway to Quentin Tarantino to Snoop Dog. YES’ decision to tape CenterStage in front of an audience enhances the show, invigorating guests and adding excitement. We especially enjoy the “Hit and Run” segments where guests must give knee-jerk first answers to a litany of questions. The results are always surprising.

Honorable Mentions

The Suze Orman Show, CNBC: In this uncertain economy, Orman’s sage advice has never been more welcome and helpful. And her show remains a vital part of the financial recovery ecosystem.

It’s Your Call with Lynn Doyle: Incest Survivors, The Comcast Network: As one of the bravest interviewers around, Doyle never flinches from a tough subject. Her show on incest survivors carried on that tradition.

Chelsea Lately, E!: Handler knows when to sit back and let her show breath, which is why it works so well as a holistic unit. Fast-paced and always funny in a guilty sort of way.

Best Online/Mobile Extras for a Linear Show

Winner

TNT RaceBuddy, Turner Sports: You almost don't need to watch TNT's racing coverage if you have RaceBuddy. Well, almost. The app provides a 360-degree experience, including live leader boards, In-Car cameras, the Pit Road cam, integrated social media platforms and select clips from TNT's broadcast booth. Buddy attracted 2.4mln stream views during six weeks of TNT race coverage in '09.

Honorable Mentions

Better Call Saul, Sony Pictures Television: These hysterical webisodes are hosted by Saul Goodman (played by Bob Odenkirk), the criminal lawyer (emphasis on criminal) from AMC hit "Breaking Bad." Saul offers 'priceless' legal advice, like telling viewers he'll help them sue anyone from religious institutions and foreign governments to friends and family members.

In the Kitchen with Andrew Zimmern, Travel Channel: Zimmern's site showcases his extensive training as a chef and experience as a world traveler who'll eat what often seems inedible. Fortunately (or not) his downloadable recipes seem more mainstream, from miso glazed black cod to braised rabbit in red wine.

Tour de France Tour Tracker, VERSUS: With icon Lance Armstrong back in the fold in '09, VERSUS launched its online Tracker, complete with GPS, minute-to-minute updates on rider positions and standings. It was so good, we felt like we were in the peloton.

Best Online-Only/Mobile-Only Show

WINNER

Ghost Adventures: Asylum Of The Damned, Travel Channel: Birthplace of the modern lobotomy and home to horrific psychiatric treatments, patient neglect and murder, the Trans-Allegheny Lunatics Asylum in WV doesn't lack for a certain, shall we say, atmosphere. A three-part doc chronicled its history, featuring interviews with former employees and ghost hunters (sorry, no patients). Horror-techies gobbled it up, driving ratings for the linear "Ghost Adventures Live" and inducing a 200% year-over-year increase in web-traffic, proof that plenty of



BRANDBUDDY: The lil' guy seems to know where his bread's buttered.

people feel comfortable stalking ghosts from their computer chair and their couch.

Honorable Mentions

E! News Now, Comcast Entertainment: Keeping ever-hungry viewers stuffed with the latest celebrity and entertainment news, E! News Now features more than 12 original short-form news segments streamed daily for Hollywood scoop addicts on the go.

The Jump on NBA.COM, NBA Digital/Turner Sports: A weekly interactive NBA.com exclusive loaded with news, interviews, analysis and questions taken from user videos and tweets.

Off the Track with Tony Stewart, Turner Sports: Go behind the visor—and the barrage of emblazoned company logos—with Stewart as he dishes about his favorite locations away from the oval.



SOUL MEN: (from left) Nick Groff, Zak Bagans and Aaron Goodwin sought ghosts at the former asylum.