

Playing with parallel universes: New season of 'Fringe' focuses on science of choice

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The Fringe team returns in the season three premiere airing Thursday, Sept. 23 at 9 p.m. ET on FOX. Pictured L-R: Blair Brown, Jasika Nicole, Joshua Jackson, Anna Torv, John Noble and Lance Reddick. Credit: Andrew Macpherson/FOX ©2010 Fox Broadcasting Co.

There are moments in everyone's life where a decision is made that affects everything that comes after it. Making a different choice long ago may have changed your life as well as your personality forever.

This is one of the themes that will play out for each character in season three of Fox's hit television show "[Fringe](#)." At the end of the last season, two parallel universes collided. In season three, the cast will be using science fact and fiction to untangle them.

"Well, one area where we are letting the cat out of the bag is that season

three will be very different than the first two," said Robert Chiappetta, one of the story editors for "Fringe." "In season one, science was neutral. Some of the characters used it for good and some for evil, viewers saw both sides. In season three, we are going deeper to understand why things have turned out the way they did."

Connecting physics to [psychology](#), this season plays with the fringe science of parallel universes, where there are other universes related to ours that may have come from ours, but have different outcomes; chaos theory, where a small change in the beginning can cause a large impact at the end; and the psychological theory of nature versus nurture where your [personality](#) is shaped at birth, from your experience or a little of both.

"There are very crucial differences that trace back to key choices the characters have made," said Glen Whitman, another story editor for "Fringe." "What I love about this is that it connects chaos theory and how a very small difference in the initial conditions can lead to dramatic outcomes; it really gets to the idea of how decisions affect our lives."

"In life, you have to make a decision, you hope that it's right and moral, but that doesn't mean that it won't impact other relationships," said Chiappetta. "This season is all about the fallout and consequences of the choices the characters make."

The results of biochemist Walter Bishop's (played by John Noble) earlier life-and-death decision will continue to have a ripple effect throughout the season.

"Both Walter and Walternet (Walter in the other universe) started out the same, but they each made a different decision; now Walter is driven by guilt and Walternet by anger," said Whitman. "Viewers will constantly be surprised by the by the ways the characters in the two universes are

the same and different."

Seeing the same character in two different worlds also gives viewers a chance to get to know the characters of "Fringe" in whole new light.

"You'll see more of other character's stories such as Astrid Farnsworth (played by Jasika Nicole), Nina Sharp (played by Blair Brown) and Agent Phillip Broyles (played by Lance Reddick)," said Whitman.

"You'll find out how they developed in the other universe. In this universe, Agent Broyles is divorced but in the other universe, he is more of a family man. Viewers will find out how the characters were exposed to different circumstances and how it changes them."

Some of the characters are more similar between the two worlds than others.

"Astrid's character is the one that is the most different from this universe to the other, both personally and emotionally," said Whitman. "In the other universe, she is a savant with Asperger's syndrome that allows her to do some amazing things."

"This season the characters will do things that viewers might not expect or agree with," said Chiappetta. "Agent Olivia Dunham (played by Anna Torv) will do something and the viewers will go 'Oh My God, I don't like the fact that she did that!' but they'll understand why she did this, there are reasons."

The writers have enjoyed the unique challenges of writing for two universes.

"Luckily, there is no shortage of new science that continues to inspire us," said Chiappetta. "There are even old ideas that we'd like to crack open and explore this season."

"Thinking in another dimension is definitely a challenge, but the goal is to further these relationships and to take the show to a new level, it's really two shows in one," said Whitman. "It's intriguing and scary. In each decision, you can become a different person -- what do you do and what does that [choice](#) do to you?"

On September 23, the third season of "Fringe" begins with Olivia Dunham, Walter Bishop and Peter Bishop (Joshua Jackson) digging a little deeper to untangle two universes with some subtle but consequential differences, while taking audiences on a thrilling and sometimes chilling ride.

Source: Inside Science News Service

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