

## 'Defiance' attempts blend of TV series, video game

April 13 2013, by Ryan Pearson

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This publicity image released by Syfy shows Grant Bowler as Jeb Nolan, left, and Stephanie Leonidas, as Irisa, in a scene from the series, "Defiance," premiering Monday, April 15, 2013 at 9 p.m. EST on Syfy. (AP Photo/Syfy, Ben Mark Holzberg)

Earth is recovering from an apocalyptic event, alien races cooperate warily, a wise-cracking outsider suddenly finds himself shouldering new responsibilities.

Yes, the world of "Defiance" features familiar [sci-fi](#) touchstones, but it's taken an ambitious approach to how you can experience them: Through both a weekly TV series and an online-only [video game](#).

Five years in the making, the joint project is the most high-profile and big-budget attempt at ongoing "transmedia" entertainment, promising characters and storylines that crisscross between the Syfy network show and Trion Worlds game.

Set in 2046 on a "terraformed" Earth where humans live alongside seven alien species, the series premiering Monday displays a space Western vibe with bar brawls, interspecies politics and love, plus actors familiar to genre fans like Julie Benz and Jaime Murray. The already-released game, a multiplayer third-person shooter, has plenty of guns to upgrade, quests for supplies, and boss battles in which players cooperate to bring down giant monsters.

Though they can be experienced separately, somebody who both plays the game and watches the show will gain an extra layer of insight to each, promises actor Grant Bowler, who appears in both. Bowler said he was impressed and a bit wary of that idea when he signed on to play lead Joshua "Jeb" Nolan, who becomes "lawkeeper" of the city of St. Louis, renamed Defiance by survivors.

"I thought 'Gee, this thing is either going to change the business model of how we make television, and add a new one, or we're going to go screaming down in flames,'" he said. "But either is—funnily enough—fine with me."



This publicity image released by Syfy shows Julie Benz as Amanda Rosewater, left, Graham Greene as Rafe McCawley, and Grant Bowler as Jeb Nolan, right, in a scene from the series, "Defiance," premiering Monday, April 15, 2013 at 9 p.m. EST on Syfy. (AP Photo/Syfy, Ben Mark Holzberg)

It's a strategy fraught with challenges. Time and again, games based on successful series or movies have flopped, as have movies or series based on hit games.

"When you take the synthesis of the game and the show together, you're at a whole new level of excitement, you're at a whole new level of difficulty," Bowler said in an interview. "You also increase your chances of blowing it exponentially. Because it's not like one plus one. It's more you're cubing the level of difficulty. Which is why nobody has ever attempted to do it in as integrated a way as we've done it before."

Bowler began his work on the project by doing motion-capture

performance for the game-makers. They asked how his character would act before he'd had a chance to consult with a show-runner or writer, "which is odd for an actor. You're used to having a director ... Here it was the lunatics were running the asylum."

Since then, each company created new positions in order to pass information along to the other and bring their production schedules into harmony.

There still were "a lot of occasions" in which ideas put forth by one company were shot down by the other for technical reasons, Bowler said. And at least at first, there's no "interactive" storytelling in which players' choices or actions cause substantive show changes from week to week: Choose Your Own Adventure TV.

"The nature of incorporating ... two very, very different delivery systems is incredibly problematic," Bowler said. "How you would do it in a more immediate, spontaneous way, I don't know. I think maybe our experience, what we're attempting to do, will move us closer to being able to see that idea."

**More information:** [www.defiance.com](http://www.defiance.com)

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