

FX boss: There's 'too much television' with decline ahead

August 7 2015



In this image released by FX, John Landgraf, CEO of FX Networks & FX Productions speaks during the Executive Session panel at the 2015 FX Summer TCA on Friday, Aug. 7, 2015, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Landgraf noted that last year the total of original scripted TV series had swollen to an eye-popping 370 and he predicted this year the number would likely exceed 400. With such a proliferation of viewing options, even the good shows contribute to the problem as they "get in the way of the viewer finding the great ones," Landgraf said. (Frank Micelotta/FX via AP)

A roundup of news Friday from the Television Critics Association summer meeting, at which TV networks and streaming services are presenting details on upcoming programs:

—

TV OR NOT TV?

John Landgraf, the CEO of FX networks, feels the audience's pain.

"I long ago lost the ability to keep track of every scripted series," he confessed. "This year, I finally lost track of the ability to keep track of every programmer who's in the scripted programming business."

Viewers, along with network bosses, can all agree with Landgraf: "This is simply too much television."

Last year, he noted, the total of original scripted TV series had swollen to an eye-popping 370—and he predicted this year the number would likely exceed 400.

Adding to the influx, of course, have been program newcomers like Netflix and Amazon and, in the season ahead, a boosted push by digital services such as Crackle.

With such a proliferation of viewing options, even the good shows contribute to the problem as they "get in the way of the viewer finding the great ones," Landgraf said. "This has had an enormous impact on everyone's ability to cut through the clutter and create real buzz."

This trend won't be going on much longer, he warned, saying 2016 will likely represent the programming peak.

"We will begin to see declines coming the year after that and beyond," he said.

An across-the-board erosion in ratings will lead to this reduction in series as well as outlets that provide them.

"You take a fixed audience and divide it by 400-plus shows, it stands to reason their ratings will go down," he said. Meanwhile, viewers' access to programs has extended from the night a given episode is introduced to potentially any time after that, thanks to video-on-demand and digital platforms spreading out each series' audience over days and even months.

"You're seeing a transformation in the mode that people are using to access television," Landgraf added. With increasing viewership on apps or subscription video-on-demand, "that's putting a lot of pressure on linear channels and ratings."

One way for a programmer to navigate these stormy waters: cultivate and rely on that network's own brand identity, which can be a rallying point for viewers.

"Brand is a mission statement and a promise to viewers," said Landgraf, whose FX brand represents shows that range from "Louie" and "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" to "American Horror Story," "Fargo" and

"The Bastard Executioner," an upcoming series from "Sons of Anarchy" creator Kurt Sutter. "FX is a brand viewers love and trust," he said.

But while voicing confidence that FX can prevail, Landgraf didn't soft-pedal the struggles that lie ahead for his network group and others.

"Managing through this transition is hard," he declared. Speaking for the shakeout that will face the TV business overall, he said, "It's going to be a messy, inelegant process."

FROM HITS TO HORROR

Lady Gaga is going from pop star to the hospitality industry—she'll be playing a hotel owner in "American Horror Story: Hotel."

Ryan Murphy, the show's co-creator, showrunner and director, announced that her character's name is Elizabeth and "she owns the hotel and she is sort of a very wealthy social doyenne who is consumed with art and fashion and people."

"She has a nefarious plan that is revealed in the first episode that plays out of the course of the season," he said. Gaga starts shooting Monday.

They've built the set "from the ground up" on the Fox lot with a working elevator, and cast member Kathy Bates calls the creation "jaw-dropping."

"Not just the hotel itself but the rooms ... how they're decorated. You won't believe it," she said.

The season boasts a cast including Matt Bomer, Chloe Sevigny,

Cheyenne Jackson, Wes Bentley and Sarah Paulson.

Viewers will also see some big former "American Horror Story" actors make appearances. "You will see people from various seasons check into the hotel," Murphy said.

He also teased that "AHS: Hotel" will be a lot like Season One in tone with psychological, primal fear being at the forefront.

For Murphy, who has two other shows in production ("American Crime Story" for FX and "Scream Queens" on Fox) said making "American Horror Story" is "one of the great joys of my life."

"It's exhausting at the end of a season but I'm so energized by it every year because it does reboot and the actors and the stars are so cool and I have a real passion for that," he said.

He also stays passionate by casting a troupe of actors like Bomer and Paulson, whom he regards as friends.

"I've directed all of these actors in different incarnations and from it comes this great shorthand and I think they know that they are safe because we've worked together. They've seen other things that we've done, they feel protected," he said.

"American Horror Story: Hotel" premieres Oct. 7 on FX.

ANOTHER LEAVE FOR LOUIS

Louis C.K. is taking a break before doing a sixth season of his FX comedy, "Louie." But that doesn't mean he won't be busy.

FX CEO John Landgraf says the comedian needs an "extended hiatus" before returning to work on the critically acclaimed series.

"He's made 61 magnificent episodes of television, and we did an overall deal with him a couple of years ago and that has proven incredibly productive," Landgraf said.

The actor-comedian will continue to make shows for the network during his break.

He has co-created a new comedy, "Better Things," with frequent collaborator Pamela Adlon. He will also produce.

"Better Things" follows Adlon as a working actor with no filter who is trying to juggle her personal and professional lives.

Landgraf also said Louis C.K. has a third series in the works for FX but the details aren't ready to be revealed.

BRADY PASSED

Marshawn Lynch is able to poke fun at his Seattle Seahawks' final offensive play in the Super Bowl during the season premiere of FXX's "The League."

The running back appears on a beach with Jon Lajoie's character, Taco, in the seventh season opener, which airs Sept. 9 at 10 p.m. EDT.

Taco's brother, standing nearby, asks for a beer.

Lynch argues that if the beer is handed to him, he can simply run the

beer over to Taco's brother. Taco decides to throw it instead.

Someone producers weren't able to get for the final season was quarterback Tom Brady, whose New England Patriots became Super Bowl champions after the Seahawks' pass play was intercepted at the goal line.

"We really tried to get Brady to be on the show, but it didn't work out. He's a little bit occupied right now," joked Jeff Schaffer, the show's co-creator.

Brady is appealing a four-game suspension for using underinflated footballs during the AFC championship game in January.

"The League" does address the controversy in an upcoming episode and is ready if Brady's suspension gets reduced.

"We have shot (alternative scenes)," Schaffer said. "Let's put it that way."

"The League" is a partly improvised comedy about a group of friends who have a fantasy football league. It also stars Paul Scheer, Nick Kroll, Mark Duplass and Katie Aselton.

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: FX boss: There's 'too much television' with decline ahead (2015, August 7) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-08-fx-boss-television-decline.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--