

FALL TV'S BALANCING ACT

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During Upfronts week, broadcasters' fall television presentations usually reveal a central theme in their programming strategies. Two years ago, there was a wave of nostalgic reboots. Last year, it was a return to mass and feel-good TV (and some more reboots).

This year, however, the theme seemed to be that there is no theme. Instead, networks focused on balancing their schedules by occasionally playing against type with the genres they've picked up. A pinch of procedural here, a heaping cup of comedy there, and yes, a few more reboots.

Networks pulled in new shows from every direction. City, which is historically focused on comedy, bolstered its schedule with dramas and superhero titles, while Global, after a year of rolling out numerous hour-long episodic series, brought in three new half-hour comedies. CTV made a bold move with a new primetime talk show, while CBC shifted one of its most popular comedies to midseason.

But fall TV has always been about more than just the new shows; it's also about strategic scheduling, digital offerings and exciting new ad products. Read on to see how the big Canadian TV networks are preparing for the upcoming season.

What's new on the tube?

There's change in the air, with most of Canada's networks making slightly different moves from last year.

Corus Entertainment's Global is rolling out seven new shows, from action dramas and episodic comedies to ensemble dramas and family-friendly reality shows.

Most of the network's pickups last year contained themes of heroism and epic triumph, with titles like SEAL Team, S.W.A.T. and The Brave. The picks had mixed results: S.W.A.T. performed consistently, with an average audience of 1.2 million. SEAL Team was less consistent, missing the one million viewer mark for a few weeks, but eventually getting renewed in the U.S. and Canada. The Brave started out with modest audiences in the 1.1- to 1.2-million range, but after several months on the air, the show struggled to stay above the million viewer mark and was subsequently cancelled by its U.S. network, CBS.

This fall, EVP Barbara Williams says Global has more well-rounded shows and "not necessarily ones that have violence at the centre."

One of those shows is medical drama New Amsterdam (pictured above). Despite the hospital setting, Williams says it's more about the relationships between the characters. She compared it to CTV's ensemble drama This is Us, known for its intricate plot points, a large cast and plenty of tears.

New Amsterdam stars The Blacklist alumni Ryan Eggold as Bellevue Hospital's newest medical director, who arrives with the hopes of getting more meaningful work done. Supporting cast includes Freema Agyeman (Doctor Who) and Jocko Sims (Crash), with the show airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m. It follows another newcomer, FBI, at 9 p.m. FBI is another procedural, executive produced by Dick Wolf (Law & Order) and looks at various FBI agents (including Missy Peregrin, Jeremy Sisto and Zeeko Zaki) and their work at the bureau, as well as their personal lives.

Global has also added a bevy of new comedies with big names, such as Cedric the Entertainer in The Neighborhood and Damon Wayans, Jr. in Happy Together (pictured above). The two comedies, both focusing on neighbourly relations and family dynamics, kick off Global's Monday lineup, with The Neighborhood at 8 p.m. and Happy Together following. On Thursday nights at 9:30 p.m., it's got I Feel Bad, produced by Amy Poehler and starring Sarayu Blue (Sons of Tuscon) as a working mother who strives to "do it all" while plagued by persisting mommy-guilt.

It will also bring new ensemble comedy Abby's to midseason. The series from the producers of The Good Place, stars Natalie Morales (Parks and Recreation) and Neil Flynn (The Middle) and centres around an unconventional watering hole – an unlicensed bar in titular character Abby's backyard.

Williams says comedies are harder to read in terms of their potential longevity, but big names like Cedric the Entertainer, Damon Wayans and Amy Poehler give the network "a little more faith."

Taking a cue from dance competition shows and "junior" editions of reality shows, Global will also roll out Dancing with the Stars: Juniors on Sundays at 8 p.m.

CBC, which went heavy on serialized drama last year with the likes of 21 Thunder and Burden of Truth has also added more lean-back and episodic content, such as the heartwarming family drama Northern Rescue, which stars William Baldwin (MacGyver) as a search and rescue officer and a widower who takes up residence in a rural northern town. Programming GM Sally Catto says the drama, which is produced by Don Carmody Television (Between) is ideal for family co-viewing. The time slot it's set to occupy is still TBD, but CBC has confirmed all episodes will begin streaming on its app in December.

"There's a very core audience that loves episodic series that they can drop in and out of," says Catto, citing the success of CBC series like Frankie Drake (which drew an average audience of 782,000 for its first season, prompting a move from midseason to fall). "We want to bring more of that to the schedule this year, to come in and out of the world."

Most of CBC's new series won't touch down until midseason, however. There's the new legal procedural Diggstown (Wednesdays at 8 p.m.) from creator and showrunner Floyd Kane (This Hour Has 22 Minutes). The series has yet to decide who will play its title character Marcie Diggs, but the goal is to cast a black actress, making Diggstown Canada's first original drama to feature a black female lead.

Also coming to midseason for CBC is family comedy Cavendish (Thursdays at 9 p.m.), which is created by Andrew Bush and Mark Little of Picnicface fame, who also star in the show as brothers who return to their quirky hometown to take care of their ailing father.

The public broadcaster is bringing on dark procedural *Coroner* (Mondays, 9 p.m.), created by Morwyn Brebner (*Saving Hope*) and follows a widowed coroner (star TBA) as she investigates mysterious deaths. Then there's the buzzed-about revival of '90s classic *Street Legal* (Mondays, 9 p.m., following the finale of *Coroner*). Cynthia Dale will return as crusading lawyer Olivia Novak as she pursues a new venture. Finally, true crime series *Unspeakable* (Wednesdays at 9 p.m.) revisits Canada's tainted blood scandal and stars Sarah Wayne Callies (*The Walking Dead*) and Shawn Doyle (*Bellevue*).

CTV, which had a knockout season with hits such as *The Big Bang Theory*, is currently focusing on content and audience diversity.

New crime dramas *The Rookie* and '80s reboot *Magnum P.I.* (pictured above) give the Bell Media network some edge to contrast the feel-good energy of last season, which paid off for the network with series *The Good Doctor* and *Young Sheldon* ranking among the top five series of the year for all demos, according to Numeris.

Magnum P.I. (Universal Television) stars Jay Hernandez as Thomas Magnum and airs Monday at 9 p.m. Much like the original, the show revolves around an ex-Navy SEAL who starts up a private investigation business in Hawaii.

Bell Media's president of content and programming, Mike Cosentino is particularly excited about *The Rookie* (pictured above, airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m.), a new cop drama produced by and starring *Castle*'s Nathan Fillion.

"It has the chemistry, star power [and] story... it feels authentic and real," he says. "To me it jumped out of the pack as the standout pilot and [it's] in the sweet spot of what we think our viewers expect."

Of course, CTV is also bringing some positive vibes to screens. It's picked up *God Friended Me*, which stars Brandon Michael Hall (*The Mayor*). Produced by Warner Bros. Television and executive-produced by Marco Siega (*The Vampire Diaries*), Hall stars as an atheist radio host whose life takes a bizarre turn when he gets a friend request from God. It's also adding *The Alec Baldwin Show*, which features the former *30 Rock* star in a primetime talk show position. Both air Sunday nights, with *God Friended Me* at 8 p.m. and *The Alec Baldwin Show* at 10 p.m.

To complement its other medical drama *The Good Doctor*, CTV also snatched *The Resident* (pictured above) from City, bringing it to Monday nights at 8 p.m., two hours before *The Good Doctor* airs.

CTV is also bringing comedy to midseason with CTV original, *Jann*, starring Canadian singer Jann Arden as a fictionalized version of herself dealing with everyday trials and tribulations. *Jann* is produced by Project 10 (*Spun Out*) and Seven24 (*Heartland*).

Over at Rogers Media, City has gone the escapist route with *The Gifted* (previously on CTV), bringing the superhero show to Tuesdays at 8 p.m. It's also picked up *The Simpsons*, which aired on Global for the last three decades. Airing Sundays at 8 p.m., it anchors a trio of adult comedies (which includes *Bob's Burgers* and *Family Guy*) previously acquired by the network. That block is followed by new comedy *Rel* (pictured below), created by and starring Lil Rel Howery (one of the breakout stars of critically acclaimed *Get Out*) as a newly single father trying to move on from his failed marriage with the help of his family and friends.

And, for those seeking to escape to a different time, *Murphy Brown* is also being revived on City. The '80s classic will air Thursdays at 9:30 p.m. and bring back Candice Bergen as the beloved hard-hitting reporter as she gets up to speed with the state of journalism today.

Other new programs on City are 20th Century Fox and ABC Studios comedy *Single Parents*, starring *Gossip Girl*'s Leighton Meester (Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.), which follows the ups and downs of raising kids while starting new relationships; drama *A Million Little Things* starring Allison Miller (*Thirteen Reasons Why*) whose group of friends comes to appreciate life more after a death (Wednesdays, 10 p.m.); and World War Two-era crime drama *The Bletchley Circle: San Francisco* (pictured above) about British women who solve mysteries and break codes, starring Jessica Harmon (*iZombie*) and airing Friday at 8 p.m.

Hayden Mindell, VP of television programming and content at Rogers Media, says that this year, the task was to mix easy-viewing comedies and heart-felt dramas that “connect with viewers on a deeper level.”

Time(slot) on my side

Broadcasters know that it's not just the shows you acquire that put you over the edge. The art of scheduling a series can often mean the difference between a renewal and a premature cancellation. And all of the networks are working on the perfect formula.

For example, CBC is scheduling family-friendly content around the Sunday 7 p.m. timeslot because it's still “strongly tied to appointment viewing,” says Catto. *Anne* will take the slot, moving from midseason to fall for its second season following a successful first season run with an average of 900,000 viewers. Sunday night mainstay *Heartland* will move from fall to midseason and take the same spot in the winter.

Also making a move is *Still Standing*, previously a summer show. It will come to fall in the 8 p.m. timeslot on Tuesdays and has big shoes to fill as it's taking over from the popular *Rick Mercer Report*.

Catto says *Still Standing*, which has a similar satirical style to Mercer's show, has experienced some momentum in terms of its audience (its second season pulled in an average of 492,000 viewers, up 15% from last season), and the show recently won its second consecutive Canadian Screen Award for best writing in a factual program.

With a dependable audience and subject matter close to Canadians' hearts – with comedian Jonny Harris (*Murdoch Mysteries*) visiting small towns across the country and interacting with the locals – Catto says it made sense to put *Still Standing* in the anchor spot for Tuesdays, which has long been a “comedy night” for CBC.

This Hour Has 22 Minutes will hold the 8:30 p.m. slot and the *Baroness Von Sketch Show* is moving from summer to fall in the 9 p.m. slot. Although *Baroness'* linear audiences have been middling (season one took an average audience of 265,000), its online videos have seen greater success, generating millions of views per video. This prompted a renew as early as last fall.

Kim's Convenience, on the other hand, will move to midseason. *Kim's*, which boasted an average audience of 715,000 for its second season, is a “dependable” pick to kick off Tuesdays at 8 p.m., Catto says. *Kim's* will be followed by other midseason comedies, *Schitt's Creek* and *Workin' Moms*, in an effort to sandwich the three popular comedies. Catto says while CBC usually aims for as diverse an appeal as possible, the broadcaster had to play around with the Tuesday night schedule between fall and midseason to keep everything cohesive.

“*Kim's* really is an 8 o'clock show, but *Baroness* is not,” she says, referring to *Baroness'* slightly more subversive and adult styles of humour, compared to *Kim's* family comedy offering.

Unlike CBC, Williams says Global likes to balance dramas with comedies in the same night. For example, she says the lighthearted and boisterous *Neighborhood* (pictured above) and *Happy Together* add “a sense of balance” to Monday nights, which also contain heavy subject matter from *9-1-1* and *Bull*. She also pointed to *I Feel Bad* airing Thursday nights at

9:30 p.m. just before the intense and action-packed S.W.A.T.

With *The Neighborhood* and *Happy Together* kicking off Mondays, followed by 9-1-1, Williams says that it's "basically an all-new Monday night" – and having *Bull* (which finished two seasons with an average audience of nearly two million per episode) at the end of the night (10 p.m.) should make for a solid lineup.

Similarly, Corus' Williams says the broadcaster had to do a bit of juggling to get the formula right. The network has added 9-1-1 to fall, following its surprise success in midseason (the emergency room drama started last season with fewer than one million viewers per episode, working its way up to an average of 1.5 million viewers for the finale).

It's also bringing newbie *FBI* (pictured above) to Tuesdays at 9 p.m., pairing it with *NCIS*, which pulled in an average of more than two million viewers last season. While Williams believes *FBI* has the makings of a hit artistically, placing it next to *NCIS* will likely give it a boost. "FBI is a show that deserves a really big launchpad," she says.

According to Colette Watson, SVP of television and broadcast operations at Rogers Media, City's strategy includes creating a lineup that flows from show-to-show and reviving its 10 p.m. timeslot with series such as *A Million Little Things* and *Manifest*. Mystery thriller, *Manifest*, has been dubbed "the new *Lost*" and got plenty of buzz of coming out of the Los Angeles screenings, Watson says.

The cancellation of action-drama show *Scorpion* on Monday nights made room for *Dancing with the Stars*, which Watson considers a "nice, regular block that flows nicely into *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*."

"That means our Monday nights will flow from September all the way to May and June, and that was our strategy for Mondays," she adds.

As for having its *Murphy Brown* reboot compete with shows like CTV's *Station 19* in the 9:30 p.m. timeslot, Watson says City didn't have a drama to put against *Station 19*, so it went for another audience.

"A completely different viewer would be watching *Murphy Brown* than would be watching *Station 19*," she notes, adding that City's target is those age 25 to 54.

"We were excited about the reboot of *Murphy Brown* as we know there is an audience who is hungry for topical and satirical programming," she says. "We think this show is a perfect brand fit for Citytv and works well in the 9:30 p.m. timeslot as a complement to our hit returning comedy, *Mom*."

Talkin' bout my generation

With the 18- to 34-crowd increasingly shedding their pay TV subscriptions in favour of SVODs, broadcasters have spent the better half of a decade trying to get young people to watch live.

But this year, there's a new perspective. What about the older crowd?

City, for example, has always had a good track record among the under-34 audience. But now the network is raising its profile with Gen X and Boomers through the reboot of *Murphy Brown*, as well as retirement home comedy *The Cool Kids* (pictured above).

Rogers' Hayden Mindell, VP of TV programming and content, says these two shows will likely connect with the 45- to 55-year-old demo, while also attracting their kids as a periphery demographic.

The CBC's Sally Catto echoed the sentiment that children and families should be a bigger priority. She's hoping the broadcaster can keep up its tradition of attracting families to its Sunday night lineup with Anne in place of Heartland, but it's also adding a junior version of Canada's Smartest Person (hosted by Kim's Convenience star Paul Sun-Hyung Lee) to Monday nights mid-fall.

Global, which has plenty of procedurals and dramas targeted at 25 to 54, is also aiming for co-viewing with Dancing with the Stars: Juniors.

Shaking up specialty

What's in a name? It would seem a whole lot, considering the major rebrand Bell Media's specialty channels underwent in June.

Bravo, Space and Comedy networks will now be reimagined as CTV Drama, CTV Sci-Fi and CTV Comedy, with the more recent network Gusto taking on the moniker CTV Life.

Bell's Mike Cosentino, says the changes help leverage brand recognition through a cohesive CTV umbrella and is a sign of the ever-changing specialty TV landscape.

Last year Corus pivoted W's focus away from a lighthearted "female network" to a destination for intense dramas targeted at women, featuring more edgy shows like Valor and Mozart in the Jungle. Daniel Eves, SVP of specialty networks says Corus tracked its highest audience rating in 13 years.

Now, it's doubling down on the dark and dramatic slate.

New series to W include: high school football drama All American (Warner Bros and Berlanti Productions) starring Taye Diggs, reboots of 90's classics Charmed and Roswell (both by CBS Studios and the CW) and a spin-off of Pretty Little Liars (Warner Horizon Television) – all geared primarily toward children of the '90s and early-aughts, while new seasons of Outlander, The Good Wife and Crazy Ex-Girlfriend cater to W's older audience. While W did a good job last year of retaining the 25 to 54 crowd, Eves says this newest slate is targeted at those age 18 to 34 and 18 to 49.

Corus is also using ABC Spark as a net for young adult audiences.

According to the network, Crown-ish finished the season as ABC Spark's fourth-most popular show, a significant achievement for a new series. Now, the Black-Ish spin-off will be joined by new coming-of-age comedy Besties and Good Trouble (pictured above), a spin-off of LGBT-themed drama The Fosters

Timeslots have yet to be set for Corus' specialty series.

Digging into digital strategies

Broadcasters have been fighting an uphill battle against online streamers. Netflix alone now penetrates more than half of Canada's Anglophone households, according to the Media Technology Monitor. Smaller players, like Amazon Prime Video and CraveTV, are also gaining market share.

But there's still hope – according to the MTM, more than 70% of OTT users subscribe to traditional television.

With that in mind, broadcasters are arming themselves for the digital age with new streamers, apps and subscription

offerings.

Rogers Media introduced two new ad-supported streamers for City and FX. The model, akin to Rogers' Sportsnet Now app, is free and ad-supported, but requires users to already have subscriptions to City or FX. Subscribers can watch shows immediately after TV broadcast, as well as access seasons-long archives of City and FX's current shows.

According to Rogers' Colette Watson the apps are part of an effort to extend the viewer experience, not to compete with the likes of Netflix and Amazon, adding they marry "the immersive experience of premium and primetime television with the immediacy of on-demand."

Bell Media has had its similar Go apps for CTV and TSN for several years. However, it's now refreshing its mode, offering a new "super-hub" of subscription and streaming services. The hub will include properties under the CTV banner (Comedy, Sci-Fi, Drama and Life, as well as CTV Vault and Movies) as part of an effort to drive discoverability. The Vault and Movies services (launching Q4 2018) will be free and ad-supported, while the others will require users to subscribe to their linear counterparts.

Corus, meanwhile, has its own on-demand platform for Global TV. Greg McLelland, EVP and CRO, says Corus is focused on "aggressively scaling" its digital product by adding Global content to connected TV products such as Apple TV and Chromecast.

Corus is also diving into social content, launching a new content studio called So.da and pairing with Twitter Canada on new programming featuring ET Canada and Food Network Canada personalities.

New programs include #OneDirtyDish, a series featuring Food Network Canada's celebrity chefs creating meals using ingredients selected through Twitter polls; #TrendingTonight, a twice-weekly round-up of big news in the entertainment industry; and #ThisIsViral (working title), a daily series that covers trending topics.

McLelland says the shows are all aimed at millennials, and were chosen to complement the social setting.

As for CBC, it's rolling out new digital originals (mostly short-form) to the new CBC TV App, which includes a free, ad-supported tier and an ad-free, subscription-based tier. New series on the platform range from mockumentary to irreverent comedy.

CBC will also unveil 11 short docs and three new podcasts. Dark new series Uncover and Kaitlin Prest take a cue from returning hit Someone Knows Something (which has been downloaded more than 32 million times), while Tai Asks Why? will court kids as tween host Tai Poole looks for answers to life's biggest questions.

For CBC, digital has been in the forefront since launching its "Strategy 2020" initiative three years ago.

According to ComScore numbers from CBC, the pubcaster has reached some of its targets two-and-a-half years early, boasting an average online reach of 18 million unique monthly visitors.