

REDEMPTION
THE BLACKLIST
SPINOFF SERIES

**The Good
Fight** is
waged in
CBS All
Access
sequel to
*The Good
Wife*



**Reese
Witherspoon
and Nicole
Kidman** bring
Big Little Lies
to HBO

23 PAGES OF TOP STORIES, SPORTS,
CELEBRITY Q&A, MOVIES, AND MUCH MORE!

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STAFF PICK

TOP STORIES

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Characters from the parent show pursue their own fight for justice when the NBC spinoff series "The Blacklist: Redemption" premieres Thursday. Stars Ryan Eggold and Famke Janssen tell Jay Bobbin about continuing their roles in the new offering.



12-13 "The Good Fight" continues for Christine Baranski's Diane Lockhart and other characters from "The Good Wife" in a sequel series that premieres Sunday on both CBS and the streaming service CBS All Access, then will continue on CBS All Access alone. Baranski, co-star Cush Jumbo and executive producers Robert and Michelle King tell Jay Bobbin about advancing their collaboration.

14-15 Seemingly content California housewives end up telling "Big Little Lies" in HBO's limited series adaptation of Liane Moriarty's best-seller, premiering Sunday. Oscar-winning stars Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman and teleplay writer David E. Kelley — all executive producers of the seriocomic tale as well — tell Jay Bobbin about working on the project.

17 An icon of modern culture is recalled when "American Masters" debuts the documentary "Maya Angelou" Tuesday (check local listings). The filmmakers and Angelou associates including her grandson and Oscar winner Louis Gossett Jr. tell Jay Bobbin about their experiences with the esteemed poet, author and activist.

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'Redemption' is sought by several 'Blacklist' characters in new NBC spinoff

BY JAY BOBBIN

NBC is keen on a "Blacklist" spinoff, and a Keen happens to be a major part of it.

With its roots established on the parent series – through developments involving Tom Keen, played by Ryan Eggold, as well as characters portrayed by Famke Janssen, Edi Gathegi and Tawny Cypress – "The Blacklist: Redemption" premieres Thursday, Feb. 23, making Tom a member of a rogue group skirting government boundaries in trying to make up for past misdeeds by trying to correct wrongs principally for their own absolution, but also for the greater good.

With "Blacklist" executive producers Jon Bokenkamp, John Eisendrath, Lukas Reiter and J.R. Orci as its creators, "Redemption" still pits Keen against assassin Matias Solomon (Gathegi), though both are under the command of Susan "Scottie" Hargrave (Janssen) ... who is Keen's long-estranged mother. Adrian Martinez also stars as another member of the self-styled team.

Involving James Spader's Raymond "Red" Reddington as usual, the "Blacklist" episode that immediately precedes "Redemption" is designed to feed directly into the new show.

However, Eisendrath says, "I think 'Redemption' stands on its own. 'Redemption' is a world that is independent of 'The Blacklist,' and particularly in these first eight episodes, we feel that it's very important to establish that world and to establish

the dynamics of these characters. Then, if we are lucky enough to have more episodes beyond these eight, I do think there's a real opportunity to find ways that Red's character can interact, in particular of does he have any unseen influence over the world that we're dramatizing here. I think that's to be determined."

So is the tipping of the scale between Keen's new world and the one he has with "The Blacklist's" Liz Keen (Megan Boone) and their infant daughter Agnes. "He has a baby girl with this woman," Eggold notes, "and they have a relationship. And I think that's especially important for Tom Keen, because he never had a family. He never had intimate relationships. He was a guy who was orphaned and trained to be good at killing people and manipulating people and being a spy. So I think this love with Liz is important to him.

"It's not going to go away lightly, but I think the struggle of balancing the sort of work life – which, in this case, is espionage abroad in foreign territories – and that home life of having an intimate relationship with someone, especially when you have a child, and also becoming a father when he never really had a father is also something interesting. That balance between the work and the personal is something we're going to wrestle with."

Sure to be a related factor is Keen's way-overdue building of a connection to Scottie. "I think she's a very complicated woman with many different layers," reasons Janssen, whose screen resume runs from "X-Men" heroism to "GoldenEye" villainy. "I think the main driving force behind Scottie is that she lost her son at a very young age, and it informs every part of her being. It informs how she performs her job, how she goes through life, how she relates to people, her inability to deal with stress, her inability to deal with her job on a daily basis. It's what makes her extremely unique to play as a character."

The "Redemption" makers are hoping for extra mileage from the interplay between Eggold and Gathegi. "There is a little bit of a buddy-cop sort of fun dynamic there that happens," says Bokenkamp, who also created "The Blacklist," which he deems "a crime drama (that), at times, is quite dark and very serious and moody and has its own weird sense of humor. This show, I think, really is a lot more sexy and fun ... and we exist more in an espionage world. We want it to be a big, explosive, wild ride."

GORDON RAMSAY

of 'MasterChef Junior' Thursday on Fox.



The young competitors on “MasterChef Junior” seem to handle the pressure of competition well. Is that what you see?

Yes, you're right. Pressure is healthy. Every Mystery Box Challenge, every Pressure Test, every Restaurant Takeover, every Breakfast Challenge ... it's pressure. But I think pressure's healthy and that's why we put those challenges together. It's about getting them to the position of not always winning but understanding that journey and that pressure.

I saw their faces, God bless them, when they came off that service after running a kitchen in a proper restaurant, they were elated. It was almost like they were just in the final of the soccer World Cup. They were so excited, they don't want to come out of the kitchen. So yeah, I'm a big lover of pressure ... so I think pressure creates perfection, perfection gets you broader and more rounded because you've got something to strive for with an end goal.

Are the kids' mistakes different from the adults?

There's a flipside to that. There's no fear so they're more ambitious. They're less guarded so there's no fear. ... So the biggest issue I've got with the youngsters is just rushing it, to slow them down and say, "No, I'm going to slow you down." ... And that's why I say, "Draw the picture first as raw ingredients on the plate and then start cooking." Literally 45 minutes later, you see the dish already elevated.

Are you running any more Ironman marathons?

This September. Last year I ruptured my Achilles and so I just started running now. So this September I'm hoping to do Ironman Portugal. I need two (events) a year that I stay focused and on line to train, otherwise I'd be 400 pounds. So yes, going to Ironman Portugal the beginning of September.

GEORGE DICKIE'S Q&A

LUKE ARNOLD

of 'Black Sails' Sunday on Starz

How did you like shooting "Black Sails" in South Africa for five years?

It is such a beautiful place and really the only place we could have done this show, I think. With everything we needed for the show and the scale that we needed it, Cape Town was the only place to shoot it but I think it was somewhat unproven that you could do a show of this scale down there. But ... now it seems to be one of the busiest places for shooting stuff in the world. And while it's been very tough for us to give up our Cape Town lifestyle and let the ships go, I think those ships will be popping up in other movies and TV shows for a long time. But I loved shooting in Cape Town and it's been a little melancholy at the moment because this time of year is usually when the "Black Sails" family gets back together and we'll be in the Cape Town sun on the beaches drinking good wine, eating good food, and it's a bit sad to not be doing it for the first time in five years.



So are you through the wistfulness phase yet?

I'd say a lot of wistfulness. We all knew, even while we were shooting it, that you don't get many jobs as satisfying as "Black Sails" was for us. I think we had such an amazing group of people and I think it had a great creative atmosphere from the very beginning. You know, some TV jobs you feel like, you know, you're left out of the loop and the scripts come in ... and it can feel like the same thing every week ...

I think "Black Sails" is one of those rare opportunities where it felt like the characters really evolved in a lot of ways according to the actors and that we all ended the show as very different people, both the characters and us ourselves, I think. We ended at a very different place than we started. And we just had a good time.

Tamara Taylor of 'Bones' Tuesday on FOX



Was the "Bones" wrap party emotional?

It was. It was definitely a lot more emotional than I think everybody thought it would be. But thankfully, Fox was kind enough to give us 12 episodes, which is kind of technically a half a season, to walk up to the goodbye. So I think we were ready but it still was tearful and lovely.

Is it strange putting down a character after 11 seasons?

It is. It's weird because I think, again, walking up to it we actually knew that there was an official end date, which was a real gift. But we were all joking that like in January I think it's really going to hit us because right now it's the holiday season and we'd normally have this time off and then we'd go back to work January 4th. And I think probably January 4th when I'm not driving to 20th Century Fox (laughs) to shoot, I think it's really going to hit me that I'm not going back to that office anymore. ... I think it'll become a lot more real then. But so far it doesn't feel as surreal as I think it's going to feel.

Do you have any plans post-"Bones"?

You know, nothing concrete yet but definitely interesting possibilities. I'm excited and looking forward to it.

So you're just enjoying the time off at this point?

Yes. I've read my first book in about two years, which is embarrassing, from cover to cover. Because usually I'm busy reading scripts and trying to memorize lines, and it's actually nice to read again.



NETFLIX'S

'Chef's Table' serves up a smorgasbord of images, info and stories

If it is indeed true that one eats first with their eyes, then "Chef's Table" must leave its viewers absolutely stuffed – without them ingesting a single mouthful.

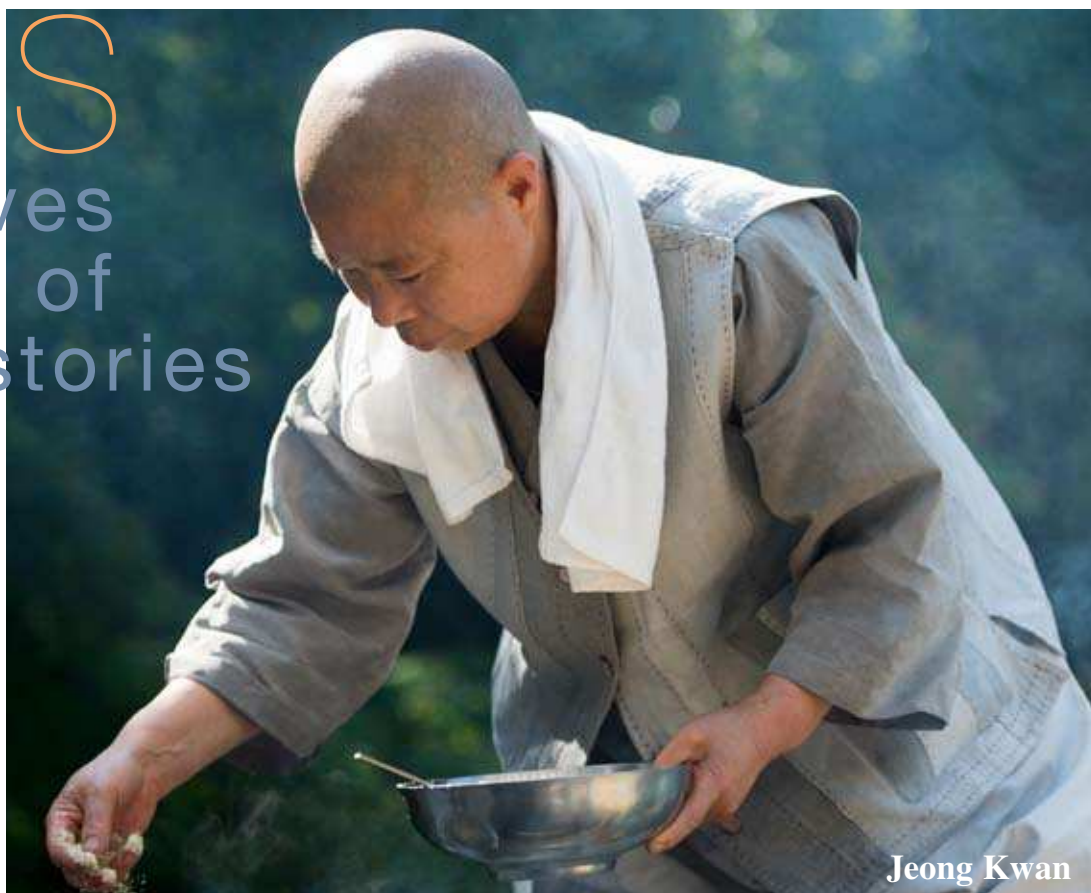
Currently streaming its third season on Netflix, the critically acclaimed food/travel series offers up sumptuous shots of delectable dishes and the international locations from which they originate while getting inside the creative minds behind them. The photography alone makes you want to travel to such exotic places as Slovenia, Argentina, Sweden, Thailand and Australia and try the cuisine there. To use a well-worn cliché, it truly is a feast for the eyes.

And then there are the chefs themselves, movers and shakers within the culinary community who have stories to tell about their creations and how they arrived at this point in their lives. For any self-respecting foodie, this should be required viewing.

"For us, the number one thing we're looking for are people who are kind of changing the game, so people who are thinking outside of the box in a lot of ways," explains Brian McGinn, the series' director and executive producer. "And we're kind of looking for innovators that are similar to kind of I think the way that Silicon Valley people think or try to think. That's what we're looking for in the chef community and everyone in that world (who) is so on top of what's going on."

This season breaks from the previous two seasons of Michelin-starred chefs and restaurants to profile those who are bringing outside-the-box thinking to everyday eating. So in Season 3, viewers are introduced to Ivan Orkin, a New Yorker who opened a ramen restaurant in Tokyo following a personal tragedy; Vladimir Mukhin, a chef at Moscow's White Rabbit, who hails from five generations of head chefs; and Jeong Kwan, a monk and self-taught chef who cooks for nuns at a South Korean monastery.

"It's Korean temple cuisine, which is really fascinating because a lot of limitations that the restaurant world kind of puts on you (don't exist in a monastery kitchen)," McGinn says. "... She has a chili sauce that she's fermented for



Jeong Kwan

years. She has soy sauce that goes back generations. And so she doesn't actually use traditional seasonings in her cuisine, which is vegetarian. She uses these incredible sauces that she's made and then she cooks exclusively using vegetables that she grows herself in a garden at the monastery, and so it's a truly different kind of cuisine than we've done on the show before."

McGinn finds these off-the-beaten path food professionals through research and relationships he has with those in the culinary community, including those who appeared on the show in the past. In three seasons of filming "A Chef's Table," he's found the folks he profiles have several traits in common.

"The throttle's at 100 percent all the time, the passion level is amazing and they're constantly questioning," McGinn says. "And I think that's the number one thing that is a through line with most successful creative people is they don't accept the status quo. They're always asking: 'Why is this like this?' 'Does it have to be like this?' 'How can I do it differently?' ... The number two thing is an incredible dedication. I think the sacrifice that many of these people have made, whether it's in their personal lives or whether it's in not pursuing other interests that they've had in their life, to be great at something you have to give up a lot. ..."

"I remember the first season, (Italian chef) Massimo Bottura's wife says – I'm paraphrasing – 'I didn't just marry a guy. I married a restaurant as well,'" McGinn continues. "And I think that kind of says it all. All these people are in some ways, even if they have families, they're married to their restaurants and to their work."

PETE HOLMES

details a stand-up comic's
'Crashing'

Pete Holmes knows a lot about "Crashing."

The stand-up comedian is very familiar with the struggles faced by performers in that profession, and he's pulling back the curtain on them in his HBO series that partners him with Judd Apatow ("Girls") as an executive producer and premieres Sunday, Feb. 19. The fictionalized, sweet-natured Pete played by Holmes is devastated by his wife's (Lauren Lapkus) infidelity, prompting him to pursue his dream of performing comedy in New York while getting life lessons and couches on which he can crash from other comics including Artie Lange (in the show's debut), T.J. Miller, Sarah Silverman and Dave Attell.

"I think there is a really interesting threshold that all comedians kind of have," Holmes reflects, "Actually, I'll broaden it out to anybody pursuing any sort of personal or extraordinary dream. There is a part when you have one foot in the shallow end, then sometimes, it takes a crisis – in this case, like a divorce or something – to really rattle your cage and push you into the pool.

"That's the time in my life where I was doing comedy, but I hadn't really had a taste of what the world was about. I was too young to know what I really cared about, what I was really passionate about, and what I actually thought was truly very funny. That's the point that I'm trying to focus in on, and tell, in this story."

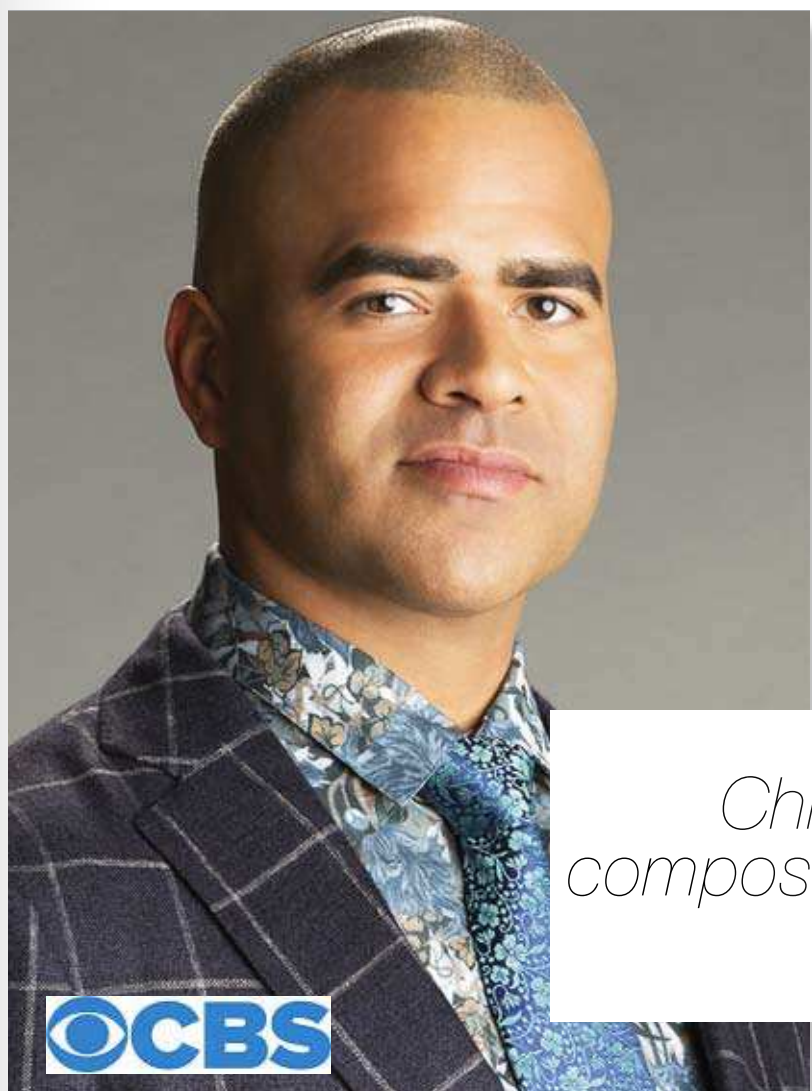
Though "Crashing" is humorous, Holmes maintains it's not meant to be "a biting satire, but something that I think both Judd and I think is compelling is how you keep your soul in a world that keeps trying to negotiate for pieces of it. It's like, 'What kind of a person are you going to be in the real world, really, when the rubber meets the road?' I think back on that time of my life. You're all kind of happy, and then you get sent out into the wilderness. It's an interesting thing to see how much of that can you maintain."



HBO

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

WHERE HE WAS FROM, HOW HE BEGAN, THE ROAD TO SUCCESS



- Born on September 30, 1975 in Cairo, Illinois, as Christopher Neal Jackson.
- He attended the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City.
- He and his wife, Veronica, have two children; son, C.J., and daughter, Jadelyn. They also have Sam, an inordinately affectionate Labradoodle.
- His first real job as an actor was as a background extra on "New York Undercover" playing a person at a homeless shelter.
- His very first foray on Broadway was in "The Lion King" starting in 1997, where he eventually worked his way up to the role of Simba.

Christopher Jackson is a singer, composer and actor who can currently be seen on "Bull" on CBS.

- He and "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda have been working together for years on a number of different projects. One of their earliest collaborations was as members of Miranda's Freestyle Love Supreme, a hip-hop improv group.

- He served as a composer and songwriter for the iconic children's program, "Sesame Street." While working on "Sesame Street," he won a 2010 Emmy Award for his song for the show with artist Will.I.Am, "What I Am."

- Following his son C.J.'s autism diagnosis in 2007, he and his wife became advocates for Autism Speaks, the autism awareness organization.

- In 2010, Jackson released his first solo album, "In The Name Of Love," on Yellow Sound Lab Records. Currently, he is working on his second album and has several musical projects in development for the stage.

- For his performance as George Washington, in the award-winning megahit musical "Hamilton," he received a 2016 Tony Award nomination for "Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Musical." He left the role, which he originated, back in November.

- In his first role as a series regular on TV, he plays Chunk Palmer on "Bull," which stars Michael Weatherly as an unconventional but in-demand trial consultant. Chunk is a stylist on the team who helps prepare defendants for trial, and is a former All-American lineman. The series was bumped up to a full season thanks to its popularity and good ratings for CBS, and a second season seems to be a strong possibility.

- He can be heard as the singing voice of Chief Tui Waiialiki in the Disney movie "Moana."

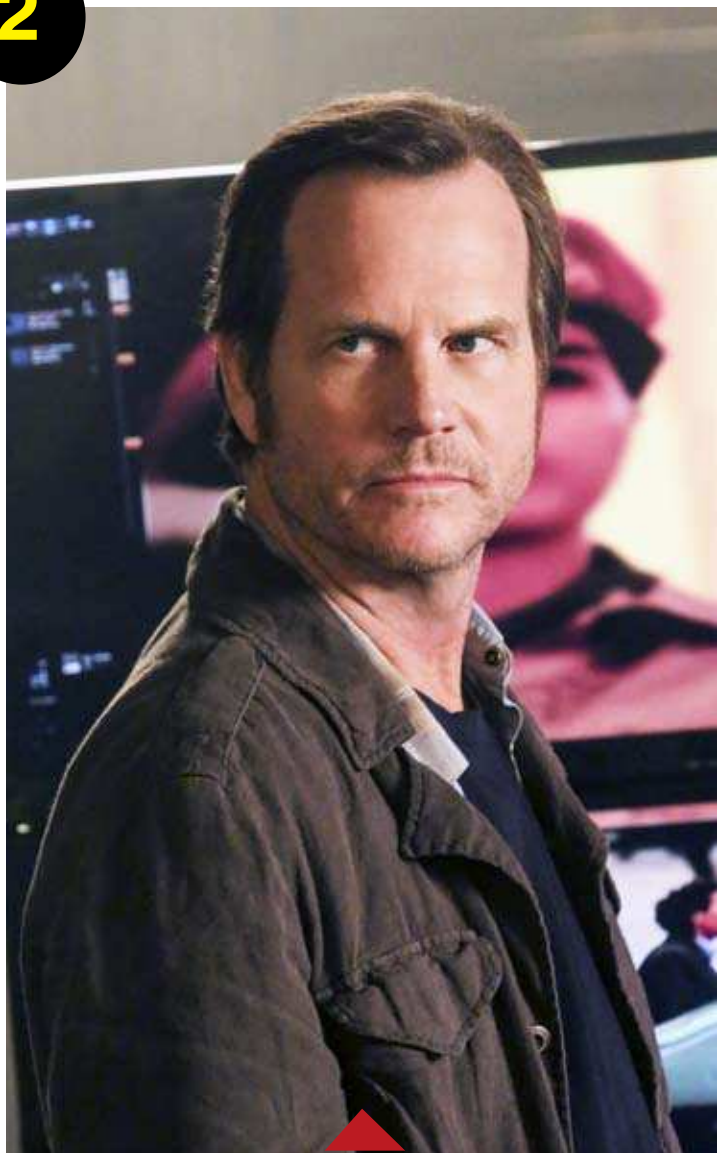
The BUZZ

1



“It does take kind of a lot to get to this moment right here ... just to get the pilot made, then just to get it picked up, then just to have even a few episodes to shoot and see if people will like it. It’s a whole exciting process, but it’s also terrifying and stressful and can be – if one goes there, which I’m trying very hard not to – scary.”
 – Katherine Heigl of “Doubt” on CBS, about tackling the weekly-series process again

2



“I love that it’s an L.A. show. We’re set in L.A., and L.A. is an amazing place. It is really one of the biggest diverse melting pots in the world. Several cultures have their biggest populations outside their countries in Los Angeles, and we celebrate that.”
 – Bill Paxton of “Training Day” on CBS

3



“He is sort of an average human being with extraordinary sort of ability, in terms of being a soldier, but the rules of engagement are very different on the home front. And there’s an adjustment period that we’re going to have to sort of watch him stumble through, messily.”
 – Corey Hawkins of “24: Legacy” on Fox, about his series character, Eric Carter

What's ON

Ever wonder what the **Celebs DVR?**



Keeley Hawes of “The Missing” on Starz

“Well, I love ‘Orange Is the New Black.’ That’s one of my favorite shows. And a box set I watched – and I’m a bit behind the times – was ‘Breaking Bad’ with my oldest son. And it’s very difficult after that because really nothing can top it. (Laughs) And ‘Modern Family’ is my family’s all-time, out-and-out favorite show. We’re sort of being drip-fed that at the moment. We have one episode every Friday night, so we all sit down, we all know where we’re going to be and we all sit there and for half an hour we are in heaven. They are so brilliant, every one of them, and the writing – just everything about it I think is perfect.”

Pete Holmes of “Crashing” on HBO

“‘The Simpsons’ has been so hugely influential. It’s a program that runs concurrently with the English language. There’s just a shorthand to the structure and the economy of the jokes that we learn from ‘The Simpsons.’ And, certainly, ‘Seinfeld’ and ‘Curb Your Enthusiasm’ ... I love all those shows.”

Charles Esten of “Nashville” on CMT and Hulu

“Well, my daughter by now is in charge of a lot of it (laughs). She records shows ... like ‘The Voice’ or ‘Dancing With the Stars’ and those types of shows as well. I’ve been recording recently my friend all the way back to high school, Diedrich Bader, is on ‘American Housewife,’ and sometimes if I’m shooting I don’t get a chance to see it so I want to make sure that I get to see it. I definitely try to record football games and the like. There’s a lot of shows that I don’t record because if I don’t see them, they’re available elsewhere anyway. So that’s a lot of the cable shows, HBO, or a ‘Westworld’ or something like that. But that’s most of it.”

Curtis Stone of “My Kitchen Rules” on Fox

“One thing I love is the UFC. I watch a lot of UFC (laughs). So it doesn’t sound like it would be a good wind-down thing to watch when you get home from work at midnight but it’s what works for me, so I watch the fights. My wife is an actress, so she watches a lot of scripted stuff. You know, ‘Breaking Bad’ was one of our favorites. I like ‘Sons of Anarchy.’ I guess I like stuff that’s either crime-related or violence-related. ... (On Netflix, I like) ‘Chef’s Table,’ of course; I watched that start to finish. It’s one of my favorites. And I love watching documentaries.”

'The Good Fight' in CBS All Access sequel series

Premiering Sunday on CBS and CBS All Access

BY JAY BOBBIN

To an extent, it's "The Good Wife" unplugged, since it doesn't have the constraints of broadcast television.

CBS' streaming service CBS All Access is making a push into original scripted programming by debuting the sequel series "The Good Fight" Sunday, Feb. 19. The premiere also will be shown the same night on the parent CBS network – in a version devoid of bluer language, especially notable in dialogue delivered by attorney Diane Lockhart (continuing cast member Christine Baranski) – with that evening's second episode and subsequent weeks' chapters available on the Netflix-, Amazon- and Hulu-like CBS All Access only.

With "Good Wife" Robert and Michelle King also remaining on board as executive producers, "The Good Fight" starts a year after its predecessor left off, as Lockhart and her fellow-lawyer goddaughter Maya Rindell (Rose Leslie, "Game of Thrones") become victims of a financial scam. Forced to leave Lockhart & Lee, they find slots at another Chicago firm that employs Lucca Quinn (Cush Jumbo, also reprising her "Good Wife" role).

Robert King specifies that on CBS All Access, the "Good Fight" premiere "will be 49 minutes and 10 seconds, and the other version will be 42 minutes and whatever-we-are-allowed-on-network. We're cutting two different versions, one of which is

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Pictured: Christine Baranski

Continued from previous page

‘cleaner’ for network TV that doesn’t lose any content, but I would say the biggest distinction (is that one) will be shorter because of the needs of the network.”

The Kings’ ongoing involvement with the franchise was in question initially, but in part, they were drawn to having to do only a 10-episode first-season. Also, Michelle King points out, “You’re going to hear people talk the way they speak in life. These are educated people. You know, they’re cultured. They’re elegant, so you’re not going to hear them sound drastically different, but they’re going to use the swear words you would have expected them to use in ‘The Good Wife’ if you could have heard those.”

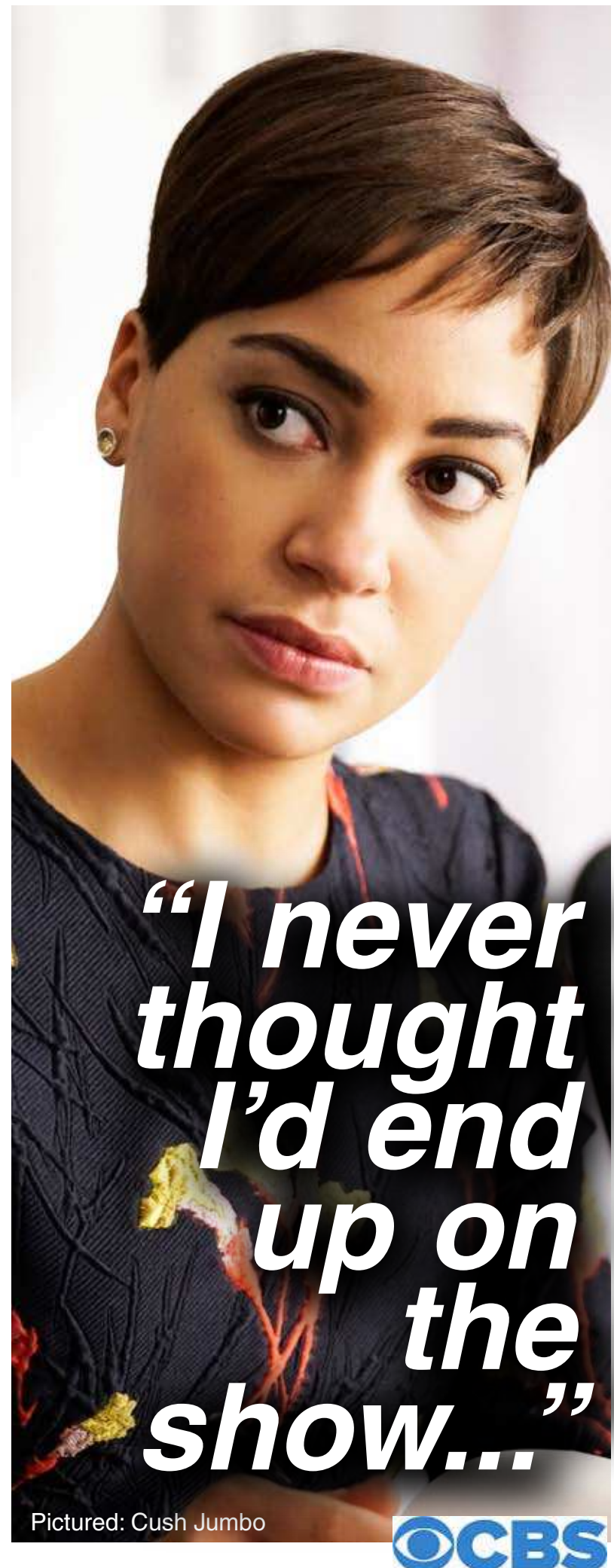
Baranski notes that in her initial conversations about resuming the part of Diane, “we did speak about how she processed all that had happened to her, particularly in those final (‘Good Wife’) episodes, and where her life was as the new show began in terms of her marriage and her position at the firm. It seems she’s estranged from her husband (Gary Cole, who reappears) for reasons of his infidelity, but she’s at the top of her game when this show starts.

“Curiously, poised as No. 1 now in the show, she loses everything halfway into the pilot,” Baranski explains, “so she’s just back scrambling. It jumps off from where ‘The Good Wife’ ended in a very interesting way, but then it turns very dramatic very quickly, especially for Diane.”

“Star Trek: Discovery” was intended to be the first original scripted series from CBS All Access, but its production delays paved the way for “The Good Fight” to assume that slot. Sarah Steele is another “Good Wife” returnee as Eli Gold’s daughter Marissa, and Zach Grenier, Jerry Adler and Emmy winner Carrie Preston resurface as well. The new cast adds Justin Bartha (“The Hangover”) and Erica Tazel (“Justified”), plus such acting veterans as Delroy Lindo, Paul Guilfoyle (“CSI: Crime Scene Investigation”) and Bernadette Peters.

Co-star Jumbo says she’s grateful for the chance to continue because she “wasn’t really ready for ‘The Good Wife’ to end, from a fangirl perspective. I’d been watching the show from the first episode on the first day in England. I never thought I’d end up on the show; otherwise, I wouldn’t have geeked out on it so much, because it’s embarrassing to come to work and know too many things. That’s not cool.

“I didn’t want to be that way, but I ended up on this great show, and I felt like I was just beginning to get who Lucca was. The last thing I’d want to do is a diluted version of ‘The Good Wife,’ because I love ‘The Good Wife’ that much.”



Pictured: Cush Jumbo





**Premiering
Sunday**

BY JAY BOBBIN

Having two Oscar-winning actresses as stars and executive producers of a project is a big, not little, thing for HBO.

Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman are key players of “Big Little Lies,” the limited-series adaptation of Australian author Liane Moriarty’s best seller that begins its seven-episode run Sunday, Feb. 19. Adapted by multiple Emmy winner David E. Kelley (“Ally McBeal,” “The Practice”), the seriocomic saga – about several moms living supposedly ideal lives in scenic Monterey, Calif., until betrayals and murder interfere – reunites Witherspoon with director Jean-Marc Vallée, who also guided her to an Academy Award nomination for “Wild.”

Well-meaning Madeline (Witherspoon) and much-admired Celeste (Kidman) are longtime friends who bring newcomer Jane (Shailene Woodley, “Divergent”) into their inner circle, but a death at an elementary school event sparks suspicions and accusations ... and starts exposing cracks in various relationships that seemed solid. Witherspoon’s “Wild” co-star Laura Dern, Alexander Skarsgard (“True Blood”), Adam Scott (“Parks and Recreation”), Zoe Kravitz, James Tupper and Jeffrey Nordling also have prominent roles in the tale.

Witherspoon developed “Big Little Lies” (for which HBO reportedly outbid

Continued on next page

Oscar winners Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman tell ‘Big Little Lies’ for HBO

Pictured: Nicole Kidman

Continued from previous page

Netflix) for television with her former producing partner, Bruna Papandrea, and she explains the Moriarty novel reflects her own experiences in many ways.

“I saw myself in different stages of motherhood all through my life,” the Oscar owner for “Walk the Line” reflects. “I was a mom when I was 22, like Jane; then I was a mom who was 40, like Madeline. I’ve been divorced. I’ve been remarried. There were just so many aspects that were so relatable to the lives of women, and the really amazing part was (its) actually digging deep into the lives of women. It wasn’t about them being ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ It’s just that it showed every spectrum, every color of women’s lives, and I thought it was a really unique opportunity to have so many incredible parts for women in one piece of material.”

Currently an Oscar nominee again for “Lion,” Kidman – who has one of the statues for her work in “The Hours” – was glad to work with Witherspoon, calling the two of them “very, very close friends. We’re able to talk about anything. A lot of the conversation was personal, then we would do work, which is a great way (to go). I love that this is about women coming together and making something happen very quickly, with friendship being the core of it. And we laugh. We have fun, and I’m at a stage in my life where I want to be with people I really like. I want to be contributing and working with people that I like and love, and this is this was the perfect combination.”

Writer-producer Kelley, whose other TV works have included “Picket Fences” and “Chicago Hope,” also has been making the Golden Globe Award-winning “Goliath” for Amazon lately. “Big Little Lies” is a rare experience for him in working with a story devised by someone else.

“It was both easy and challenging,” he maintains. “The easy part was, I could stay faithful to the story. I love the book. I was really drawn to the characters. The architecture was there, the character development was there, the (tale’s) world was there. That made it easier.

“What was challenging was, probably, living up to the book,” adds Kelley, “living up to the complications of some of those characters, and also having to make cuts. There are nuggets in the book that, if we had more time, we could have explored more crevices. But it was a pretty smooth process and a fun process overall, and I give credit to Liane. She wrote a terrific piece.”



Pictured: Reese Witherspoon



A new voting system brings fresh blood to the NBA All-Star Game

BY GEORGE DICKIE

With the 2017 NBA All-Star Game, the league took the vote out of the sole hands of the fans in the hope that deserving players will get to start.

In the new system, the fan vote is weighted 50 percent in the balloting's outcome, with 25 percent of the say each coming from players and the media.

Did they get it right? There will always be disagreement but the final product will be on display Sunday, Feb. 19, on TNT, when the 2017 NBA All-Star Game tips off at Smoothie King Center in New Orleans.

"Overall, I think the guys who are there, you couldn't say, 'Well, they shouldn't have made it,' " says TNT's Kenny Smith, who will provide analysis alongside Charles Barkley, Shaquille O'Neal and host Ernie Johnson on the "NBA Tip-Off" studio show that night. "In years past, there's guys you could have said, 'Well man, he shouldn't have even made it.' But I don't think you could say that now."

The West starting lineup has the more familiar names: Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant of the Golden State Warriors, James Harden of the Houston Rockets, Kawhi Leonard of the San Antonio Spurs and Anthony Davis of the hometown Pelicans. All are having outstanding seasons and Leonard and Davis are first-time starters.

"Kawhi Leonard has built himself into possibly the most complete all-around player in basketball other than

LeBron James," Smith says of the Spurs' high-scoring small forward. "... He's the top defender at his position, without question. And then Anthony Davis is an anomaly in terms of his skill set at that size."

In the East, four first-time starters will take the court with the Cleveland Cavaliers' 13-time All-Star LeBron James: the Cavs' Kyrie Irving, DeMar DeRozan of the Toronto Raptors, Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks and the Chicago Bulls' Jimmy Butler. Again, all deserving players but especially so for DeRozan, the three-time All-Star who makes his first start in his eighth year in the league.

"The great thing about it, being (that DeRozan plays) in Canada, a lot of times people don't get to see (Raptors) games as much," Smith says. "And then the fan support. Like you could be in Boston and you could find a bunch of Laker fans but it's hard to be in Boston and find a bunch of Toronto fans. So ... that was great."

No matter which team wins, several things are certain: The players will be relaxed and putting on a high-scoring show, the fans will thrill to these athletes' high-flying heroics and the parties of All-Star Weekend will rage on in the Big Easy. For Smith, who hosts a bash of his own that weekend, it's a fun gig.

"I just like the overall atmosphere of All-Star Weekend," Smith says. "You know, Bourbon Street will be like a collection of what I call your walking trading cards."



The impact of Dr. Maya Angelou rises again in new 'American Masters' profile

BY JAY BOBBIN

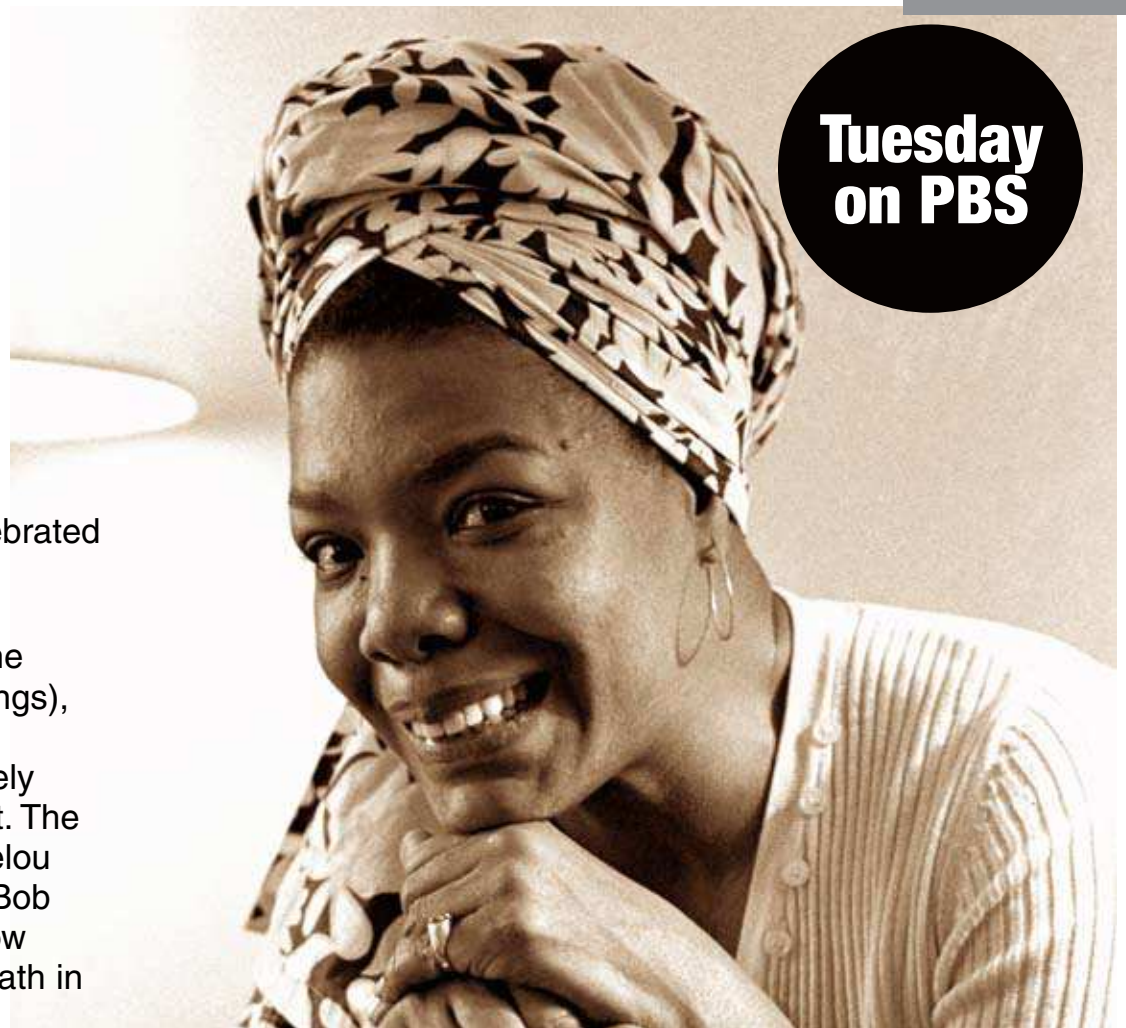
The name Maya Angelou is one of the most celebrated and revered in modern culture.

As always, though, there was a person behind the icon ... and on Tuesday, Feb. 21 (check local listings), a new edition of PBS' "American Masters" titled "Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise" profiles the hugely influential writer, poet, singer, dancer and activist. The documentary offers many remarks from Dr. Angelou herself, via interviews conducted by filmmakers Bob Hercules and Rita Coburn Whack with the "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" author before her death in 2014.

Among the many others commenting are former President Bill Clinton (for whom she wrote and read a poem for his 1993 inauguration) and wife Hillary, Oprah Winfrey, Oscar winner Louis Gossett Jr., Quincy Jones, Common, Cicely Tyson, Alfre Woodard and Dr. Angelou's son, Guy Johnson.

"We started the project five years ago," Hercules reports, "so we were able to do a number of interviews with Dr. Angelou prior to her passing. And those formed the core of our film, because it's her story. It's her really narrating, but we were able to find a lot of interviews with her from many, many sources. When you're making a film like this, it's a detective hunt ... so we had to dig really deep and find other interviews that would be connective threads. Rita and I, I think we both have an obsession in a way with archival footage. So it was really challenging, but I'd say a great challenge."

Colin Johnson is Dr. Angelou's grandson, and from a uniquely personal standpoint, he recalls her as "the grandma that had your favorite dish in the kitchen as soon as you were coming home, your favorite dessert on the counter. I got to ask her (to do) ridiculous things like come talk to my 6-year-old daughter's class, and really, I look at myself really having three parents.



I traveled with her when I was younger. We all have these moments when you're a kid, (when) you can't talk to either of your parents. She'd send for me, and so I traveled the world with her, to Africa and Europe and all over."

Shown last year at Sundance, "Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise" also has been exhibited at other film festivals internationally. Being televised by PBS as part of both its Black History Month programming and its "Inspiring Woman" initiative, it includes Gossett's memories of having acted with Dr. Angelou in an Off-Broadway staging of Jean Genet's "The Blacks." He notes that as the years went on, "She grew and grew in my opinion of her. She is a woman of history, so that's why I'm here, to keep her name and her philosophy as strong and as important in this country as possible.

"The thing that she brought back to me and some others," adds Gossett, "is a reminder of how we've passed on our story from one generation to another. That was essential to us and our survival. We did it orally, and we did it for many centuries, and she brought that back. We have to know who we are, what we have to pass on to the next generation. Regardless of social media and the movies and all that stuff, there's an oral story that is our job to pass on from one generation to the next."



A photograph of James Harden in a red jersey, captured in the middle of a jump shot during an NBA game. He is looking upwards, and the basketball is suspended in the air above his hands. The background shows a basketball court with a blue wall and a wooden floor. The text 'HARDEN, A FAMILIAR FACE AT NBA ALL-STAR GAME' is overlaid on the left side of the image in large, bold, white and red letters.

HARDEN, A FAMILIAR FACE AT NBA ALL-STAR GAME

FULL NAME: James Edward Harden Jr.
BORN: August 26, 1989
BIRTHPLACE: Los Angeles, California
HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 6 foot 5 inches/220 pounds
COLLEGE: Arizona
DRAFTED: 2009, third overall pick

TEAMS: Houston Rockets, 2012-current;
Oklahoma City Thunder, 2009-12
POSITION: Guard
NO.: 13
HONORS AND ACHIEVEMENTS: NBA All-Star,
2013–2017; NBA Sixth Man of the Year, 2012;
Olympic Gold Medalist, 2012



JAMES HARDEN

BY DAN LADD

James Harden is one of the most recognizable figures in the NBA thanks to his big fluffy beard. He's also at the top of his game, which has earned him a starting spot on the court for the 66th NBA All-Star Game airing Sunday, Feb. 19 on TNT. The Houston Rockets shooting guard will join former teammate Kevin Durant as a starter for the Western Conference along with Stephen Curry, Kawhi Leonard and Anthony Davis. The Eastern Conference starters include Kyrie Irving, DeMar DeRozan, LeBron James, Giannis Antetokounmpo and Jimmy Butler.

This will be Harden's fifth trip to the All-Star Game in as many seasons as he's been in Houston, which thus far in the NBA season are among the league's best. Harden has been piling up the statistics in the form of triple-doubles, which included him becoming the first player ever to record a 50-15-15 stat line when he scored 53 points, had 17 assists and 16 rebounds in a 129-122 New Year's Eve day victory over the New York Knicks.

Harden came into the league with the Oklahoma City Thunder and was their first draft pick after they relocated from Seattle as the SuperSonics. But in OKC he was never a starter, and played in the shadows of Durant and Russell Westbrook. Still, he was a big part of the 2012 team that made the NBA Finals, losing to James and the Miami Heat. Fearing he'd depart as a free agent, the Thunder traded Harden to Houston, where he has excelled as a starter and is among the league leaders in points and assists.

VIN DIESEL

is rated 'xXx' again in action sequel

Our Take

When you go to a Vin Diesel movie, you pretty much know you won't be getting Shakespeare – though it has to be said that the chrome-domed muscleman has made some admirable departures.

Mostly, though, he stays in the mode of pounding enemies, which he's done with huge success in the "Fast and the Furious" franchise. Fifteen years ago, he tried to parlay that into a showcase all his own with "xXx," about an extreme-sports veteran who used those skills as a spy. It fared pretty well, but Diesel elected not to return for the first sequel. In a considerable switch of actor, Ice Cube took the lead in Edition No. 2.

That's remedied with "xXx: Return of Xander Cage," whose title leaves no doubt Diesel is back in the driver's seat ... literally, in some scenes. There's some unintended hilarity as Cage tries to out-Bond a certain Agent 007 again, particularly in the number of romantic conquests he has before the film barely has gotten going. A bit overboard? Absolutely, and it's up to the individual viewer to determine whether it's meant seriously or not.

The adventure uses the "Fast and the Furious" conceit of surrounding Diesel with colorful co-stars as Cage tries



to find out who's causing military satellites to drop out of the sky. That's actually a pretty good spy-movie premise, but when your title star exudes roughly the same acting skills as one of those satellites, that's a problem.

Whether playing Cage or "Furious" car-racing aficionado Dom Toretto, Diesel knows what he can get away with, and he plays that card to the fullest extent in the latest "xXx." To a degree, it's hard to blame him for relying on what he's so

aware works for him, but just the slightest hint of acting inventiveness would be welcome on his part here.

Still, the action sequences are well-staged – a "must" in a movie like this – and co-stars including Toni Collette and "The Vampire Diaries" alum Nina Dobrev do spirited work, as does Donnie Yen as the chef villain of the piece. And for a kicker, the original film's Samuel L. Jackson also is back as Cage's handler.

"xXx: Return of Xander Cage" clearly knows what it wants to do. Despite its bountiful energy early on, it just runs out of Diesel's fuel.

JAY BOBBIN'S DVD DIGEST



“MANCHESTER BY THE SEA”

Now up for six Oscars including best picture, writer-director Kenneth Lonergan’s (“You Can Count on Me”) much-praised – and rightfully so – drama offers a superb performance by Casey Affleck as a troubled loner stunned, and unsettled, to find he’s been given guardianship of his late brother’s son (Lucas Hedges). Michelle Williams also is excellent as the Affleck character’s remarried ex-wife, with whom he shares a tragic past. Kyle Chandler, Gretchen Mol, Tate Donovan and Matthew Broderick also are in the very fine cast, and Matt Damon is among the film’s producers. **** (R: AS, P) (Also on Blu-ray and On Demand)

DVD Top Pick

Pictured: Casey Affleck

UPCOMING DVD RELEASES



Pictured: Tim Roth

“CHRONIC” (Feb. 28): A private nurse (Tim Roth) develops highly interdependent relationships with his terminally ill patients. (R: AS, N, P)

“ALLIED” (Feb. 28): Brad Pitt and Marion Cotillard play spies who fall in love while teamed on a top-secret World War II mission. (R: AS, N, P, V)

“DOCTOR STRANGE” (Feb. 28): The Marvel Comics character (Benedict Cumberbatch) takes a new path after a car accident robs him of the use of his hands. (PG-13: AS, P, V)

“MOONLIGHT” (Feb. 28): Director-screenwriter Barry Jenkins’ widely acclaimed drama traces the life of a young black man at different stages in his struggles; Naomie Harris plays his mother. (R: AS, P, V)

“RULES DON’T APPLY” (Feb. 28): Director, screenwriter and star Warren Beatty plays billionaire Howard Hughes; Lily Collins and Alden Ehrenreich also are featured. (PG-13: AS, P)

“THE EYES OF MY MOTHER” (March 7): An ex-surgeon (Diana Agostini) lives an isolated life with her daughter (Olivia Bond) until a visitor arrives. (R: AS, N, P, V)

Family Viewing Ratings

AS Adult situations P Profanity V Violence N Nudity GV Graphic Violence



Akbar Gbajabiamila co-hosts "American Ninja Warrior"



Maggie Siff stars in "Billions"



Savannah in "Chrisley Knows Best"



Mary McDonnell stars in "Major Crimes"

SUNDAY
10 p.m. on SHOWTIME

Billions
As this superb but under-watched adult drama opens Season 2, U.S. Attorney Chuck Rhoades (Paul Giamatti) faces scrutiny from the Attorney General, while hedge fund king Bobby "Axe" Axelrod (Damian Lewis) tries to re-fortify Axe Capital and considers options for retaliation against Chuck. Elsewhere, Wendy (Maggie Siff) entertains an offer from a rival hedge fund manager, while Lara (Malin Akerman) intervenes during an emergency at her children's school in the season premiere "Risk Management." **Season Premiere New**

MONDAY
8 p.m. on NBC

American Ninja Warrior
Normally debuting new NBC episodes in the summer, this competition serves up another new "All Stars" special edition, with "dream teams" of past contenders chosen by hosts Matt Iseman and Akbar Gbajabiamila and co-host Kristine Leahy. Those athletes tackle obstacles that will be familiar to viewers of the show, but there also are several "supersized" challenges that include the Endless Invisible Climb (which just sounds scary) and the Super Salmon Ladder. **New**

TUESDAY
10 p.m. on USA

Chrisley Knows Best
When Nanny Faye decides to give the world of online dating a try, Todd takes it upon himself to play chaperone, despite a rousing lack of enthusiasm from anyone else for that idea, in the Season 5 premiere, "50 Shades of Faye." Elsewhere, Chase and Savannah may be proud new homeowners, but they don't let that pride stand in the way of them competing shamelessly for Todd's handouts to furnish their new abodes. **Season Premiere New**

WEDNESDAY
9 p.m. on TNT**Major Crimes**

In the Season 5 winter premiere, "Heart Failure," Sharon (Mary McDonnell) and her team find their investigation into the murder of a young woman in the L.A. River impeded by a mysterious private eye who's working for a tech industry millionaire as well as an adversary from within: Deputy Chief Winnie Davis (guest star Camryn Mannheim), who sees Sharon as her chief rival for the coveted position of assistant chief of the Los Angeles Police Department. G.W. Bailey and Tony Denison also star. **New**

THURSDAY
9 p.m. on CW**Riverdale**

The Blossoms continue to harbor secrets as Jason's funeral nears in the new "Chapter Five: Heart of Darkness," while Betty (Lili Reinhart) is stunned by what she finds in probing Jason's death. Veronica and Cheryl (Camila Mendes, Madelaine Petsch) become allies. Archie (KJ Apa) is distracted from football by a music opportunity. A strange message sends Hermoine (Marisol Nichols) to seek counsel from Fred (Luke Perry). Cole Sprouse also stars. **New**

10 p.m. on CMT
Sun Records

Adapted from the Tony-winning Broadway musical "Million Dollar Quartet" and set in Memphis during the turbulent early days of the civil rights movement, this new music-filled drama series stars Chad Michael Murray ("One Tree Hill") as iconic record company founder Sam Phillips, who serves as a guiding force as such young titans as Elvis Presley (Drake Milligan), Johnny Cash (Kevin Fonteyne) and Jerry Lee Lewis (Christian Lees) begin their rise to stardom. Billy Gardell ("Mike & Molly") also stars. **Series Premiere New**

FRIDAY
9 p.m. on ABC**Shark Tank**

It had to happen on this series, and in this new episode, one of the agreements between entrepreneurs and the Sharks takes the show over the \$100-million mark of deals made over the program's eight-season history. Among the contenders to do that: two San Diego people sold on, and hoping to sell others on, their brand of nutrients; and college friends from Brooklyn, N.Y., who market apparel illustrated with elephants. The Sharks include Mark Cuban and Lori Greiner. **New**

SATURDAY
8 p.m. on TLC**Say Yes to the Dress**

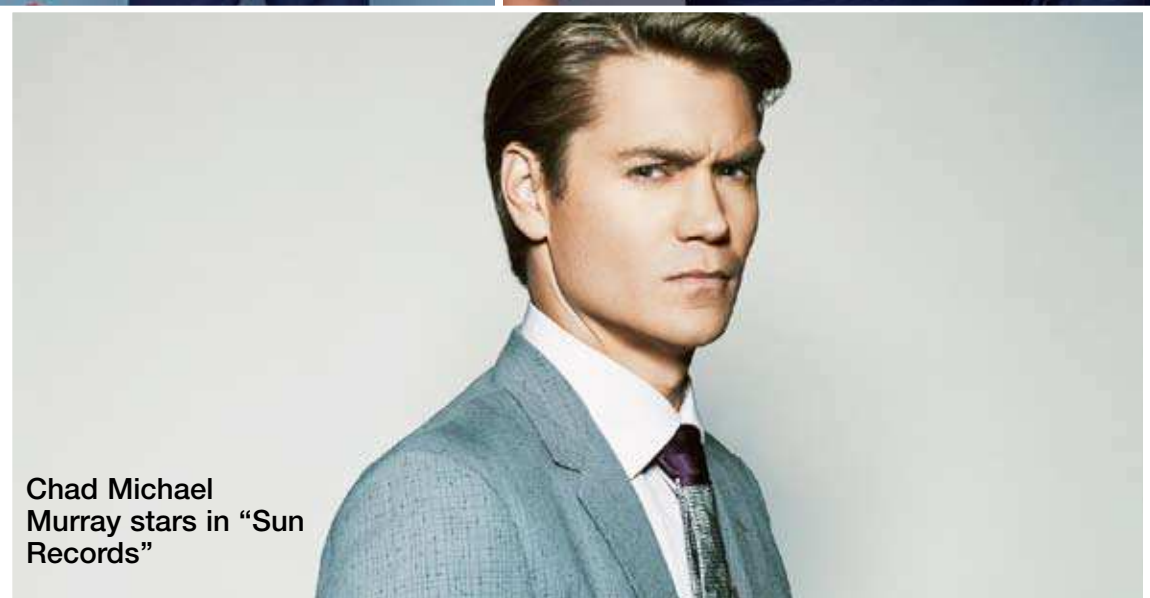
One of TLC's flagship reality series marks its 10th anniversary by moving to a new night for the premiere of Season 15, although the show's setting — Kleinfeld Bridal in Manhattan — remains the same. TLC promises more drama than ever during this celebratory season, as Kleinfeld's first male consultant, Shay — who joined the show in Season 14 — continues to search for a way to work amicably with "bridal gown whisperer" Randy Fenoli and his team of consultants. **Season Premiere New**



Randy Fenoli is featured in "Say Yes to the Dress"



Lori Greiner in "Shark Tank"



Chad Michael Murray stars in "Sun Records"