SPOILER ALERT
This is going to be awesome!

Arriving on Fox

“SON OF ZORN”
That’s no cartoon, that’s my ex-husband!

PLUS
“MARVEL’S LUKE CAGE”
“SECRETS AND LIES”
“JOURNEY WITH DYLAN DREYER”
PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

That’s no cartoon, that’s my ex-husband!
STAFF PICK

Animation and live action come together in “Son of Zorn,” a Fox comedy series premiering Sunday. Co-stars Cheryl Hines and Artemis Pebdani and several of the show’s producers tell Jay Bobbin about merging those aspects to generate the show’s humor.

TOP STORIES

12-13 In Netflix’s “Marvel’s Luke Cage,” Mike Colter stars in the title role of an ex-convict who now fights crime, endowed with superhuman strength and unbreakable skin. Colter discusses how he tapped into his character while show runner Cheo Hodari Coker talks about how much fun it is writing dialog for the show.

14-15 Jordana Brewster is a busy actress this new television season, appearing not only in Fox’s Wednesday series version of “Lethal Weapon” but also the ABC drama “Secrets and Lies,” which starts its second round Sunday. Jay Bobbin talks with her about both shows and roles.

17 A much-anticipated event finally happens as Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump meet in the first of their three scheduled presidential debates, Monday on multiple broadcast and cable networks. Jay Bobbin previews the occasion and recalls some notable past debates.

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CONTRIBUTING STAFF
Managing Editor: Michelle Wilson
Writers: Jay Bobbin, George Dickey, John Crook, Dan Ladd
Magazine Design: Nicolle Burton
Quality: Chris Browne
BY JAY BOBBIN

A merging of live action and animation isn’t new – just consult a number of classic Disney movies – but it hasn’t been tried often in the Fox universe.

That changes as the network’s lineup of Sunday comedy series adds “Son of Zorn” Sept. 25, following an earlier “preview” airing, with Jason Sudekis supplying the voice of a cartoon warrior who leaves his island for California’s Orange County in the hope of reclaiming his flesh-and-blood ex-wife and son (Cheryl Hines, Johnny Pemberton). That won’t be easy, especially since his former spouse Edie has a fiance who happens to be a psychology professor (“Saturday Night Live” alum Tim Meadows).

With Phil Lord and Christopher Miller (“The Last Man on Earth,” “The Lego Movie”) among its executive producers, “Son of Zorn” also uses its central character to satirize various aspects of daily life. An element of the humor is that Zorn doesn’t seem out of place, since in the context of the show, the animated world and the real world simply coexist ... in the same sense as “Who Framed Roger Rabbit,” which the show’s makers use as a descriptive touchstone.

Executive producer Eric Appel confirms the human characters don’t deem Zorn nor his cartoon world (called Zephyria) “crazy, because they know that this place exists. You can do that big, cartoonier, crazier stuff, but your live-action characters are reacting to it in a grounded way because it is a grounded part of this reality that we’ve created. ‘Roger Rabbit,’ I think, is the high-water mark of combining live-action and animation. In that movie, you buy into the fact that Toontown exists, and everyone in Hollywood has an awareness that cartoon characters are just actors.”

That said, the actors now in the “Zorn” zone find one aspect of production particularly helpful, as noted by “Curb Your Enthusiasm”-alum co-star Hines: “The table read, I think, is very important. It’s important for any show, but for this show particularly, because we get to hear Zorn’s voice and hear it all together. When we are on set, you have to imagine Zorn saying (something) and reacting, and then (we’re) reacting to how you imagine Zorn would be reacting.”

However, that also can have an effect the other way around. Artemis Pebdani (“Scandal”) plays the domesticated-again Zorn’s boss in selling industrial soap, and she says, “For the first few episodes, Zorn was pretty much the only thing I was interacting with. Later, I got integrated into a world with actual people – and the first time I got to act with a person was with Cheryl, and I just remember getting lost in her and being like, ‘Eyeballs? She has eyeballs, and they are doing things.’ And, then, I’d lose all of my lines.”

Hiring Sudekis, another veteran of “Saturday Night Live,” to voice Zorn was a purposeful choice. The show’s co-creator (along with Eli Jorne), Reed Agnew reasons, “He’s just a guy who is talking, (saying things) like, ‘Well, I’m not going to kill.’ He’s a person and he’s relatable, and we give him these tropes that are hopefully relatable to us. We can see ourselves, maybe, in Zorn. And maybe feel sorry for him.”
Since you're playing a variation of Dr. Phil McGraw on "Bull," what have your dealings with him been like?
I had a really amazing first encounter with Phil – I think it was five years ago or something – where I did a gag, DiNozzo from "NCIS" was in the audience of the "Dr. Phil" show, and this was a YouTube clip that we did. It was just sort of a silly thing, and Phil was so gracious and wonderful to allow us to have fun in this world. But DiNozzo got "Dr. Phil-ed," and that was my first real encounter with Phil.

It was important that (the character of Dr. Jason Bull) had a sense of humor, because a sense of humor isn't just "ha-ha" funny. It means you understand the context of the humor. It has to play because you understand why something's funny. It's setting up things. And Phil, he is a pretty funny guy because he's incredibly smart and he understands human behavior.

Bull's strong suit is his ability to analyze. How do you convey that dramatically?
You're looking at a group of people in an election year like this one ... who's going to vote for who and why, they're the same as the jury. They're the same. The analytics that go into trying to figure out which brand of toothpaste any of us might use is some of the same science that's used to figure out a jury or a voting public or anything else that requires looking at predictive human behavior. And this is really a show about that, and less about the criminal justice system, to me.

What is it like to start a new series and character after such a long run on "NCIS"?
It is an amazing change and discovery, not only because that was an extraordinary, unique ride ... I mean, 13 years. It really felt like a circle that had gone all the way around, and I really felt happy with the resolution of the character and my time on the show.
5 JUICY QUESTIONS FOR BILL HADER

1. Did you get to do any improvisation as Teddy Redbones, the James Carville-like campaign manager in the "Documentary Now!" mockumentary "The Bunker"?

   Not really. Little pieces of it but never a lot. You know why? It’s like 20-some-odd minutes, so you can’t like really mess around too much. And actually it’s more satisfying when you can write something and act it in a way that makes it have that improv feel to it. Those are always my favorite things, especially in British comedy they would always make it feel so alive and immediate and then you realize it was all written. Just really good actors, so we’re more trying to do that style instead of show up and riff.

2. You’re a fan of British comedy? How much does Monty Python inform your work?

   Growing up, Python was huge. Python was kind of — it was Python first and everything else was way down on the list.

3. You once met John Cleese?

   Yeah, once at a party and I was so nervous, and he just sat and chatted with us. He was more interested that my wife was from Boise, Idaho, and wanted to know what Boise was like and what Idaho was like.

4. What other influences do you have?

   SCTV big, yeah. How specific SCTV was, you don’t do it consciously but then you go back and look at those SCTV things, like when Marty Short did Jerry Lewis in the Ingmar Bergman movie. Remember that? And they made it look just like an Ingmar Bergman movie but it’s him as Jerry Lewis in an Ingmar Bergman movie and it’s hilarious. It’s so weird, he’s always typing.
What did you tap into to play your character of FBI agent Phil Rask in Crackle’s “StartUp”?

I’m a big believer in if it doesn’t start with you then you’re kind of not using your best facility, really, because I think in all of us everything resides somewhere under the surface, and it’s about turning up certain things and turning down other things. But clearly there isn’t a whole lot of crossover between me and this guy. But yeah, we all feel rage, we all feel anger, we all feel frustration, so tapping into that was pretty easy for me.

He’s definitely an intimidating character.

Which is nice. I just liked playing some other notes. Every part that an actor plays is always going to have a through line, I guess, because it’s you doing it. You know, this is my Rask or it’s my Richard III or my John Watson or whatever. So it’s always going to be via me but within that you can play A, B and C rather than X, Y and Z and just kind of find out what other little notes you’ve got in there.

And I love that aspect of the job, of things you haven’t really done much of or things you haven’t kind of given full vent to either ever or for a long time. But they’re really good fun. That’s really the most fun aspect of my job, I think.
As September gives way to October, some shows sign off for the year while others get underway in food-related programming airing this week on Food Network.

In the latter category is “Star Plates,” which premieres Tuesday, Sept. 27. Each week on this half-hour series, a celebrity guest gets to experience life as a line cook at a restaurant they love, paired with a famed chef as they prepare their favorite meal on the menu. Celebs set to test their chops in the kitchen include Mindy Kaling, Erin Andrews, Colin Hanks and Alyson Hannigan.

Also debuting is “Cutthroat Kitchen: Tournament of Terror” on Wednesday, Sept. 28. As the name implies, the Halloween-themed hour has 16 chefs slicing, dicing and sauteing their way through a number of fright-inducing challenges, including cooking on headstones and with weapons, while witches, ghosts and zombies lurk. But the scariest character might be host Alton Brown himself.

Sunday, Sept. 25, it’s the first season finale of “Guy’s Superstar Grocery Games,” in which the four remaining celebrity chefs face three rounds of host Guy Fieri’s most epic games yet. The one left standing at the end is crowned champion, with $40,000 donated to the charity of their choice.

That same night, the two final teams on “The Great Food Truck Race: Family Face-Off” must compete as hot dog vendors in the Southern California port town of San Pedro before the watchful eye of host Tyler Florence. Then they catch a ferry to Catalina Island to sell their comestibles side by side, with the winner taking home a $50,000 grand prize.

Monday, Sept. 26, the three remaining finalists on “Food Network Star Kids” play their sizzle reels for mentors Tia Mowry and Donal Skehan while they prepare what could be the most important meals of their young lives. The winner is named the series’ first-ever champion and gets their own series on FoodNetwork.com.

For pure entertainment value, it doesn’t get much better than “Worst Cooks in America: Celebrity Edition” on Wednesday, Sept. 28, in which Anne Burrell and Rachael Ray lead their celebrity teams through a gauntlet of Oktoberfest-themed challenges, including making sausage from scratch. Novices stuffing sausages? That has to be a sight to see.

Fans of noncompetition series can tune it to Cooking Channel on Tuesday for “Man Fire Food,” in which host Roger Mooking heads to Wisconsin to take part in a monster rotisserie as hundreds of pounds of lamb and pork are turned slowly over an open pit of hot coals. Prepare to have your mouth water.

For dessert that same night, check out Cooking’s “Sugar Showdown,” as three chefs are tasked with making Chinese New Year pies using Chinese five spice as the mystery ingredient. Harry Eastwood, Sharone Hakman and Jamika Pessoa judge the final products and determine the victor.

And on PBS’ “Moveable Feast With Fine Cooking” on Saturday, Oct. 1 (check local listings), Baltimore is the location and Duff Goldman and Bryan Voltaggio are the celebrity chefs for a spread that includes blue crab and deviled eggs with crab mayo and sauerkraut. Yum!
Talk to many former cast members of “The Daily Show With Jon Stewart” and they’ll all say the same thing: It was a tough job, they’re glad they did it, but they don’t miss the grind of putting out a topical show five nights a week. And making it funny.

Count Kristen Schaal of Fox’s end-of-the-world comedy “The Last Man on Earth,” which opens its third season Sunday, Sept. 25, among them. She put in seven years with the likes of Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Samantha Bee, John Oliver and many others on the Comedy Central series, and remembers Stewart’s momentous final show in Aug. 2015 as being strangely relaxed.

“She’s grateful for the experience with Stewart and company but she’d rather not work that intensely again.

“I’ve never had to think that hard since like a college final,” she says. “All your brain is hurting when you leave ‘The Daily Show.’”

These days, Schaal is still working hard with several jobs on TV: as eccentric Carol on “Last Man”; providing the voice of youngest Belcher child Louise on Fox’s animated comedy “Bob’s Burgers,” which enters its seventh season later this fall; and as a contributor to “The Daily Show With Trevor Noah.”

Movie credits include:
WIL WILLIS

a former military man turned TV host who can be seen in the current season of “Forged in Fire” on History.

- He was an “Air Force brat,” born off the coast of Portugal in 1975 and lived on various military bases until his father’s retirement in 1991.

- He calls himself an “uber-nerd,” and admits he “used to read a lot of Dungeons & Dragons type of books.”

- He joined the Army in 1993 and after completing basic training AIT and Basic Airborne School, he completed the Ranger Indoctrination Program (R.I.P.) and was assigned to a Co. 3d Battalion 75th Ranger Regt. He carried that post until June 1998, when he cross-trained to the Air Force.

- In 2002, he was stationed at Kirtland, NM as an Instructor of Weapons, Tactics, and Air Operations.

- In August 2007 he enlisted in the Air Force Reserves and was a Pararescueman with the 308th Rescue Squadron until August 2008.

- His television career kicked off with “Special Ops Mission” a reality series that premiered in 2009 on the Military Channel (now American Heroes Channel). On the show he performed solo special operations missions against groups of opposing-force (OPFOR) operatives, which consisted of regular and special operations veterans in a simulated wargame mission.

- In 2011 he hosted “Triggers: Weapons that Changed the World” for the American Heroes Channel. It combined history, science, technology and revealing demonstrations, while it examined the evolution of firearms and how the development of each one changed the face of combat forever.

- In June 2013, he enrolled in New York Film School in the LA campus’ three-year B.F.A. program for screenwriting. He dreams of one day writing Hollywood’s next big action flick.

- In 2015 he became host of “Forged in Fire,” the History show in which world-class bladesmiths create iconic historical weapons before a panel of judges.
“Now, you have shows like ‘Vice’ and all … it’s a style (where) you don’t have this precision. You get a new show like ‘Mr. Robot,’ and you’re like, ‘Oh, my God. I love this. I want to live in this world. I want to see a head at the bottom of the screen in all negative space for five more seasons.’” – Pamela Adlon of “Better Things” on FX, about recent innovations in television series that have inspired her

“I used to act a lot on the stage, for years. But my hearing has kind of been funny, and I can’t remember my lines. So I have a little trick sometimes: I put a little plug in my ear, and a friend of mine gives me the lines. That’s the truth.” – Michael Gambon, seen recently in “Masterpiece: Churchill’s Secret” on PBS

“I think there’s a difference between content that becomes viral and content that is created with the hope that it will become viral. We’re more of the former category. When I do my show, when you go out there and you don’t really plan things and the host is as much a part of the discovery process as the audience, that’s when the potential for viral things can happen.” – Harry Connick Jr. of “Harry” in syndication
Fred Armisen of “Documentary Now!” on IFC

“'Game of Thrones.' ... I watch stuff on iTunes. I just watched the O.J. documentary. That’s one of the best things I’ve ever seen.”

Edi Gathegi of “StartUp” on Crackle

“I just finished ‘Bloodline,’ which I think is terrific. I had a lot of fun with ‘Stranger Things.’ But my favorite is ‘Dexter.’ That’s one of my favorites of all time. I’m good friends with Melissa Rosenberg, who was an executive producer on that and I tell her all the time how poetic and interesting that show was. I like ‘House of Cards’ on Netflix. I just did three Netflix shows and one Showtime. ‘Game of Thrones’ is fantastic. So much good TV.”

Roger Mooking of “Man Fire Food” on Cooking Channel

“Well, I travel a lot for work so I’m not around but I know my wife is obsessed with ‘Bates Motel.’ My kids DVR any kind of movie that they want to see that they missed for whatever reason. So there’s tons of kids shows and kids movies on there, some ‘Bates Motel.’ I taped ‘Chopped Canada’ on there. But I live in Canada so I can’t get ‘Man Fire Food’ in Canada, so I can’t even DVR my own show (laughs).”

Kristen Bell of “The Good Place” on NBC

“We never miss ‘Frontline’ or ‘60 Minutes’ – we feel it’s our civic and social responsibility to stay up-to-date – and we just watched all the seasons of ‘The Americans,’ which I find to be an exceptional show. The psychology they delve into is fascinating. We’ve started Season 2 of ‘The Last Man on Earth,’ which I really like; I think it’s such a unique concept. And we’ve been getting through ‘Stranger Things’; it’s very cool. That synthesizer music and the title sequence just invoke all these great feelings of ‘80s nostalgia.”

Fred Armisen of “Documentary Now!” on IFC

“‘Game of Thrones.’ ... I watch stuff on iTunes. I just watched the O.J. documentary. That’s one of the best things I’ve ever seen.”
BY GEORGE DICKIE

With “Daredevil” and “Jessica Jones,” Netflix proved that an avid Marvel Comics fan base would enthusiastically support a pay model for such series. This week, the streaming service hopes to make it a hat trick with “Marvel's Luke Cage.”

Dropping Friday, Sept. 30, with 13 first-season episodes, the action/adventure series stars Mike Colter (“The Good Wife,” “Ringer”) in the title role of an ex-convict imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, who develops superhuman strength and unbreakable skin thanks to an experiment gone awry. He tries to rebuild his life in the Harlem section of New York but is soon pulled out of the shadows to confront his past and fight a battle for the heart of his city.

One of his chief targets is Cornell “Cottonmouth” Stokes (Mahershala Ali, “House of Cards,” “The 4400”), a local nightclub owner and crime boss who uses his legitimate business dealings as a front for his nefarious activities. Another is Shades Alvarez (Theo Rossi, “Sons of Anarchy,” “Cloverfield”), a smooth, street-smart criminal with ties to Cage's past.

Seeking to clean up Harlem's criminal element is Mariah Dillard (Alfre Woodard, “Desperate Housewives,” “True Blood”), a local politician whose life is thrown into turmoil by the actions of Cage and Stokes; Misty Knight (Simone Missick, “Wayward Pines,” “Scandal”), a police detective with a strong sense of justice; and Rafael Scarfe (Frank Whaley, “Ray Donovan,” “Field of Dreams”), Knight's hard-nosed partner and mentor.

Luke Cage first appeared in a Marvel Comics comic book in the early '70s, but showrunner Cheo Hodari Coker told a recent gathering of TV critics in Beverly Hills, Calif., that updating the African American character for 2016 wasn't difficult.

Continued on next page
"Luke Cage came out in 1972, the year I was born, and also, you know, within the era of ‘Shaft’ and ‘Super Fly,’ ” he says. “So the character was always Marvel Universe’s reaction to, to a certain extent, blaxploitation. But all blaxploitation really is, honestly, (is) the ability for an African American character to, you know, fight, get the girl, and have, you know, the low angle shot the ... the same as John Wayne, Sean Connery, Steve McQueen or anybody else that kind of defined an era and even in this current environment. ... It’s no different than anything else except we get to have swagger and, you know, the chance to have a compelling hero and compelling villains.”

“The thing that I think is going to surprise people,” he continues, “is that you’re going to come in thinking it’s serious, and it’s fun. You are going to come in thinking it’s fun, and it’s serious. I mean, we kind of go back and forth, and there’s so much emotional depth to all of these characters. And with these wonderful actors, I mean, they just they bring it so hard.”

For his part, Colter, who added 30 pounds of muscle to play the 6-foot-6-inch, 425-pound Cage, hopes to project a positive image of black superheroes and culture.

“We’re just trying to tell a story about a superhero who’s going through the same kind of changes that other superheroes, who are not black, go through,” he says. “But because we are in small numbers, and there’s not as many of us, we’re kind of looked at differently .... But we’re just trying to tell a unique story. And I think we’ve done so. And anything you can glean from that, then that’s not something that we’re trying to overtly do. We have no agenda. But I’m proud that people do think he’s a good superhero. And I hope that the black community can feel good about him as well.”
“Secrets and Lies” Sunday on ABC

‘Lethal’-ly keeping ‘Secrets’: Jordana Brewster does double series duty

BY JAY BOBBIN

What’s more exciting for a performer than having one new series role? Having two ... just ask Jordana Brewster.

The “Fast and the Furious” movie-franchise staple has been quite active in television lately, thanks to her work on TNT’s now-finished “Dallas” revival and as Denise Brown in FX’s much-acclaimed “The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story.” She’s carrying that momentum into the fall season, co-starring in both Fox’s Wednesday series version of “Lethal Weapon” and ABC’s “Secrets and Lies,” which starts its second round Sunday, Sept. 25.

“I’ve always loved doing television,” the pleasant Brewster maintains. “I love going to the set every day and seeing the same crew and the same cast, that sense of normalcy. Especially being a mom of two now (the younger son just born in June), I just think that’s so important. I feel very blessed to be working in television right now ... and there’s so much good material.”

While Juliette Lewis returns as Detective Andrea Cornell, “Secrets and Lies” resumes with a fresh case revolving around the murder of Brewster’s character, whose well-to-do husband (Michael Ealy) needs the cop’s help in getting to the bottom of the crime. Terry O’Quinn (“Lost”) and Charlie Barnett (“Chicago Fire”) also are in Season 2 of the show, which was inspired by an Australian series.

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Since her alter ego becomes the tale’s victim early on, Brewster notes, “What’s fun about that is that it sort of goes backward. I knew what the end result was, but she unravels before my eyes and the audience’s eyes, episode by episode.”

On “Lethal Weapon,” Brewster is playing Maureen “Mo” Cahill, a police therapist whose concerns include troubled maverick cop Martin Riggs (Clayne Crawford). “Interesting issues come up in her job,” Brewster says, “like is she on the patient’s side or the force’s side? Those are the things I want to talk about with someone who actually has to grapple with them.”

Months later, Brewster continues to bask in the reception, both inside and outside the entertainment industry, to “The People v. O.J. Simpson.” She reflects, “I knew with (executive producer) Ryan Murphy at the helm that it would do quite well, but it was amazing. For me, the most poignant part was getting the role, because I wanted to be in it so badly. I felt drawn to Denise Brown, and I live in Brentwood (Calif.), so I knew all the landmarks. I loved working on something where there was so much research to be done, and it was just a rich experience.”

Brewster also is looking forward to her latest return to the “Fast and the Furious” world in “Fast 8,” scheduled for theatrical release next April, and she marvels as much as anyone at the series’ ever-bigger car stunts. “Short of going into space, you kind of wonder what else they can do,” she muses. “It is incredible.”

Continued from previous page
Dylan Dreyer doesn’t have to go all that far to take her newest television journey.

The lively NBC “Today” and MSNBC meteorologist serves as a guide to nature in a variety of such locations around the world as the Arctic and the Serengeti – thanks to technology that inserts her into the footage – as “Journey With Dylan Dreyer” premieres Oct. 1 as part of NBC’s new Saturday-morning “The More You Know” lineup produced by Litton Entertainment (check local listings).

“When they first approached me about the show, I was just so excited to be a part of it,” the friendly Dreyer reflects, “then when they said the title was ‘Journey With Dylan Dreyer,’ I was like, ‘Get out of town! My name is in the show?’ I’ve never really thought of myself as a brand. I’ve just always done the work and done what I’ve loved to do, so I hadn’t considered that. But I’ll take it!”

Dreyer maintains the footage shown on “Journey” is “so intense and so up-close and personal in these wild environments. Some of the footage they shot was of a cameraman duct-taping himself to the belly of a plane … and no, I was not a part of capturing any of that. These are extreme professionals who are getting visuals you’ve never seen before, and that’s what I think is so special about the show. Even though I’m not in these different locations, we are bringing such beautiful imagery of these places.”

In a sense, Dreyer is on her own journey with the program, since she’s learning how to work within its virtual-reality set. “I’m kind of in the environment” that way, she reasons, “and it’s not just the visuals. It tells the stories of people, like those who travel from the beginning to the end of the Nile River, something that’s never been done before. It’s their story to be told, so I’m not there to distract from that.”

Nevertheless, in her “Today” work since going to the network from the Boston television market four years ago, Dreyer has been well-traveled in doing general features - encompassing playing “The Price Is Right,” on which her grandmother was a big winner many years ago – as well as weather stories.

“I’ve definitely racked up the frequent-flier miles,” she allows, “mostly covering storms, but it has taken me to some pretty amazing places. Whether covering a hurricane in Bermuda or getting the chance to do a Mother’s Day story in Costa Rica with my mom when we went white-water rafting, ‘Today’ just offers me so many opportunities to do things I never, ever thought I would do without researching or hiring some kind of travel agent. Now, it’s just part of the job.”

Among the five other Litton-made shows joining the “More You Know” block: “Wilderness Vet,” following Dr. Michelle Oakely’s house calls throughout the Yukon; “Give,” in which Jenna Bush Hager, actor Blair Underwood and other celebrities highlight the efforts of small charities; and “Heart of a Champion With Lauren Thompson,” in which the Golf Channel personality showcases top athletes and the obstacles they overcame.

“I think there’s this drive to make more educational programming available to children,” Dreyer notes. “If there’s something fascinating on TV, they’ll watch it. This is really three solid hours of programming for children and teens to have something to take away when they’re done watching. With our show, maybe it gives you a place you want to visit. As a woman in science, I find the world we live in is so fascinating … and maybe coming from a female scientist, maybe children resonate with that a little bit and get something to look up to.”

Dreyer admits she’s relieved not to have to venture to “Journey” locations at this particular point in time, since she and husband Brian are expecting their first child to arrive in mid-December. While she’s still a regular presence on the Saturday edition of “Today,” she no longer has Sunday duty since that airing’s approach was revised several months ago.

“Most weeks, I work six days,” Dreyer reports. “Especially with the baby on the way, having Sunday off is very much appreciated, because it’s kind of a guaranteed day off that I didn’t have before.”
BY JAY BOBBIN
They've faced and surpassed challengers and challenges within their own parties, and now, it's time for the showdown many have awaited: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, on the same stage.

With the controversies surrounding the election in November, the first of three scheduled presidential debates is all but guaranteed to draw a big audience when it's staged at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., on Monday, Sept. 26. As is traditional for such events, it be will televised by ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, PBS and the cable news networks ... each having its own anchors, correspondents and analysts on hand to set up and then review the first official face-off between the much-covered candidates.

Virtually any journalist or historian will agree that this has been a campaign like no other, with a political-outsider business mogul securing the Republican nomination and a Democratic former first lady vying to become the first woman to occupy the Oval Office. Countless barbs have been exchanged between them via individual appearances and media reports, so there surely is an “anything is possible” feel about the first occasion when they actually take questions from the moderator and panelists while finally sharing the same space at the same time.

The result well could be history-making – as could their two other matchups, scheduled for Oct. 9 and Oct. 19 (the lone vice-presidential match-up is slated for Oct. 4) – and if so, it will join a list of televised debates that have been standouts for one reason or another. Here's a look at some of them.

1960: John F. Kennedy’s telegenic image famously goes a long way for him, prompting opponent Richard Nixon to abstain from debating on TV in his later presidential campaigns.


1984: Reagan addresses questions about his age by suggesting rival Walter Mondale’s “youth and inexperience,” to sustained laughter ... including from Mondale.

1988: Michael Dukakis is devoid of emotion in responding to a death-penalty question that poses the notion of an attack on his own wife.

1992: George H.W. Bush is caught looking at his watch, eventually confirmed to be his checking to see how much longer his debate against Bill Clinton and Ross Perot would go.

2004: George W. Bush looks impatient with John Kerry in reaction shots while the latter is speaking.

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Clemson’s Deshaun Watson among College Football’s BEST

FULL NAME: Deshaun Watson
BORN: Sept. 14, 1995
BIRTHPLACE: Gainesville, Ga.
HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 6-foot, 3-inches/215-pounds
TEAM: Clemson Tigers
POSITION: Quarterback
NO.: 4
YEAR: Junior
HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS: Heisman Trophy finalist, 2015; ACC Player of the Year, 2015; USA Today High School All-American, 2013
The Clemson Tigers came up just five points short in the 2015/16 College Football Championship game, losing to Alabama by a score of 45-40. With junior quarterback Deshaun Watson under center they once again have high expectations. Watson and the Tigers begin their conference play in the Atlantic Coast Conference when they meet the Louisville Cardinals on Saturday, Oct. 1. At press time the game was scheduled to air either on ABC or the ESPN networks, who have a contract with the ACC through the 2035 season.

Watson accomplished great things in 2015 when he led the Tigers to a 12-0 regular season record and a No.1 ranking in the polls. They began raising eyebrows after manhandling then sixth-ranked Notre Dame in early October and then outlasting Florida State later in the season, who was ranked sixteenth at the time. After winning a shootout with North Carolina in the ACC Championship game they met Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl for the College Football Playoff semifinal and pulled away from the Sooners in the second half, leading to their showdown in the final with Alabama.

Watson’s 4,104 passing yards and another 1,105 rushing make him the only player in college football history to ever surpass the duel 4,000/1,000 passing/rushing mark. He is one of a number of quarterbacks expected to highlight the 2017 NFL Draft, assuming he foregoes his senior season. Until then, expect Watson and the Tigers to be among the best this season with him a likely Heisman Trophy candidate.
One of Charles Bronson’s best movies was “The Mechanic,” a minimalist 1972 thriller about a hired killer who insisted on operating by his own credo, no matter who was paying his freight.

It was refitted in 2011 for Jason Statham, another actor who usually fares better when he’s using his fists than speaking dialogue. Certain elements of the story were revised significantly for him – including, very notably, the ending – enabling him to resurface five years later in “Mechanic: Resurrection,” which gathers a good cast in a project they likely made for the paychecks.

Like Michael Corleone in the immensely better “Godfather” saga, Statham’s Arthur Bishop gets pulled back in when he tries to leave the murder game. His girlfriend (Jessica Alba) is kidnapped and used as a pawn by an old enemy (Sam Hazeldine) who wants Bishop to kill three people for him.

These aren’t local missions, either: They take Bishop to Africa, Australia and Bulgaria ... so at the very least, “Mechanic: Resurrection” offers a variety of scenery. It also gives you time to wonder if this is the best material Oscar winner Tommy Lee Jones and Michelle Yeoh (“Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”), who turn up in the course of Bishop’s travels, is being offered these days.

“Mechanic: Resurrection” is incredibly standard, particularly for Statham, who seemed to be on the verge of broadening his image when he spoofed it in last year’s Melissa McCarthy comedy “Spy.” For as distinctive as the Bishop role is meant to be, this is interchangeable with just about any other Statham movie, no matter what role he’s playing in it. If you’re going to take a part that was rather iconic for another actor, at least don’t water it down to that point.

Alba also is a performer capable of much more than she gets to do here. An ultra-basic damsel-in-distress role at this stage of her career? Again, it had to be the paycheck. There can be reasons for that – a new addition to the house, the kids’ education – but without knowing that, or even with that knowledge, this appears to be a pure money grab.

Other than studio executives who evidently wanted to run with whatever profits could be made, it doesn’t seem many people needed the Mechanic resurrected. And now that “Mechanic: Resurrection” actually has been seen, that’s even more the case.
UPCOMING DVD RELEASES

“KNIGHT RIDER: THE COMPLETE SERIES” (Oct. 4): Troubleshooter Michael Knight (David Hasselhoff) and his talking car KITT (voice of William Daniels) come to Blu-ray. (Not rated: AS, P, V)

“MIAMI VICE: THE COMPLETE SERIES” (Oct. 4): Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas star as detective partners Crockett and Tubbs in the Blu-ray debut of the trend-setting drama. (Not rated: AS, P, V)

“X-MEN: APOCALYPSE” (Oct. 4): The younger incarnations of the Marvel heroes try to save mankind from a more malevolent mutant; Jennifer Lawrence and James McAvoy star. (PG-13: AS, P, V)

“THE LEGEND OF TARZAN” (Oct. 11): The jungle-raised hero (Alexander Skarsgard) returns to his roots through an enemy’s (Christoph Waltz) manipulation. (PG-13: AS, P, V)

“ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS” (Oct. 18): Alice (Mia Wasikowska) returns to Wonderland to help the depressed Mad Hatter (Johnny Depp). (PG: P, V)

“INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE” (Oct. 18): Twenty years later, aliens invade Earth again; Jeff Goldblum and Bill Pullman return, and Liam Hemsworth joins the cast. (PG-13: P, V)

“THE SHALLOWS”

Not to oversell it, but by sticking to the no-frills basics, this thriller from director Jaume Collet-Serra (“Non-Stop”) proves to be a reasonably suspenseful diversion. Blake Lively acquits herself nicely in what amounts to a one-woman show, playing a surfer who’s mourning her mother – but she soon gets other concerns when a Great White shark attacks, leaving her wounded and stranded on a small land mass within sight of shore. She has to use her wits to figure out how to get there without letting the shark finish its “meal.” DVD extras: four “making-of” documentaries; deleted scenes. *** (PG-13: P, V) (Also on Blu-ray and On Demand)
SUNDAY
8 p.m. on ABC
Once Upon a Time
Storybrooke gets plenty of new residents, some of them not necessarily welcome, as the fantasy-drama’s sixth season opens with “The Savior.” Escapees from the Land of Untold Stories arrive in sizable numbers as Emma (Jennifer Morrison) displays an unexpected result of giving the town’s populace their memories back. Regina and Zelena (Lana Parrilla, Rebecca Mader) decide to share quarters. Deniz Akdeniz and Oded Fehr appear as Aladdin and Jafar. Season Premiere

10 p.m. on ABC
Quantico
Fresh challenges await Alex Parrish (Priyanka Chopra) as she switches agencies — moving from the CIA to the FBI — as Season 2 of the drama series begins with “Kudove.” The two institutions don’t necessarily work together smoothly, so Alex is destined to be torn over her alliances on cases that involve both. Among those entering her sphere are characters played by Blair Underwood, Russell Tovey and Aaron Diaz. Jake McLaughlin and Johanna Braddy also return. Season Premiere

TUESDAY
8:31 p.m. on FOX
New Girl
The upcoming presidential election is on the collective minds of the gang in the new episode “Hubbedy Bubby.” Schmidt (Max Greenfield) doubts Jess and Cece (Zooey Deschanel, Hannah Simone) can inspire others to go to the polls, so the women make a bet with him that indeed, they can enlist new voters. Nick (Jake Johnson) gets a questionable education from Winston (Lamorne Morris), Kate Flannery (“The Office”) and Nasim Pedrad guest star. New
9 p.m. on PBS  
Frontline  
Every four years before a presidential election, this program presents an episode that digs deep into the backgrounds of the principal candidates — and it’s time for “The Choice 2016,” profiling and analyzing Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. The two-hour installment delves into what made them who and how they are, including their respective childhoods and college days, and also considers the sharp political divide that has marked their campaigns. Season Premiere New

THURSDAY  
8 p.m. on ABC  
Grey’s Anatomy  
Actions have consequences, a fact that Alex (Justin Chambers) must face anew in the new episode “Catastrophe and the Cure.” Meredith (Ellen Pompeo) ponders who her true allies are, Amelia and Owen (Caterina Scorsone and Kevin McKidd, the latter also the director of this story) stage a dinner party that has its share of surprises. The recovering April (Sarah Drew) gets a big assist from Jackson (Jesse Williams). Chandra Wilson and James Pickens Jr. also star. New

8:59 p.m. on FOX  
Pitch  
A gender-related comment rendered years earlier by Al (Dan Lauria) doesn’t make matters any easier for Ginny (Kylie Bunbury) as she tries to find her place within the team in the new episode “The Interim.” Mike (Mark-Paul Gosselaar) tries to cope with personal and professional changes in his life. Evelyn’s (Meagan Holder) efforts to rally to Blip’s (Mo McRae) defense with reporters have pronounced results. Ali Larter and Mark Consuelos also star. New

FRIDAY  
8:30 p.m. on ABC  
Dr. Ken  
Some of Ken’s (Ken Jeong) fears about Allison (Suzy Nakamura) working at the same place come true in the new episode “Ken and Allison Share a Patient,” as the two of them have different opinions about treating someone. Damona (Tisha Campbell-Martin) isn’t the only one in the office with a new romantic interest, as Pat (Dave Foley) demonstrates. Dave (Albert Tsai) decides he needs a do-over before starting middle school. Krista Marie Yu also stars. New

9:01 p.m. on FOX  
The Exorcist  
Tomas (Alfonso Herrera) gets Saint Aquinas refugee Father Marcus (Ben Daniels) as an ally in trying to exorcise one of the Rance daughters in the new episode “Chapter Two: Lupus in Fabula.” Bishop Egan (Brad Armacost) is against the procedure, which Angela (Geena Davis) may end up playing a pivotal role in. Ritualistic killings on Chicago’s South Side pose added concerns. Alan Ruck, Brianne Howey, Hannah Kasulka and Kurt Egjiawan also star. New

SATURDAY  
9 p.m. on SYFY  
Movie: The Crooked Man  
Premiering as part of Syfy’s 31 Days of Halloween programming event, this new original TV movie revolves around one of those murderous entities who appears to wreak mayhem if you’re so foolhardy as to carry out a forbidden summoning procedure. In the case of the titular Crooked Man, the ritual involves singing a nursery rhyme. Once any rash person does so, everyone in the house is cursed to die by this fiend’s hands. Michael Jai White and Amber Benson star. Premiere