
PROGRAMMING TRENDS

Most network programming trends revolve around three basic genres – comedy (families, relationships, friends, workplace), drama (procedural, police/detective, CIA/FBI/military/elite crime-fighting units, legal, medical, sci-fi/supernatural/fantasy), and reality (competition, makeover, relationship, non-fiction). Here is some historical perspective on each.

The Comedy Revival Must Focus on Families

At one time, before the influx of reality shows and the prominence of procedural dramas, comedies were the cornerstone of any successful network schedule. Until around 2000, you only had to see which network had the most sitcoms in the top 20 to know which network was in first place.



There have been a number of periods when comedies were on the wane, only to surge back stronger than ever after a year or two (or three). From 1994-1997, ***Cheers***, ***Roseanne***, ***Seinfeld***, and ***Home Improvement*** ended their long, successful runs in consecutive seasons. From 2005-2006, ***Friends***, ***Frasier***, ***Will & Grace***, and ***Everybody Loves Raymond*** ended their broadcast runs.

Many of the best comedies that have left the broadcast arena are still thriving in syndication and on cable (with full seasons available on DVD and online). People are still watching ***Seinfeld***, ***Friends***, and ***Everybody Loves Raymond*** in fairly large numbers. It makes developing new comedy hits all the more difficult because people are still comparing them to those classics.



Fifteen years ago, sitcoms from the pre-to-mid-80s accounted for the vast majority of all cable comedy telecasts. During the 1999/2000 season, ***Roseanne*** was the only cable comedy that was still airing in syndication. During the past decade, however, while comedies from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s still proliferated on cable, they were joined by more recent hits, such as