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Year in Review: Robert Lloyd's top new TV for 2011

December 16, 2011 | 11:25 am



Thirteen favorite things new to TV in 2011, in 10 entries.

"Enlightened" (HBO): Mike White and Laura Dern's numinous, luminous comedy on the difficulties of spiritual reform.

"Portlandia" (IFC): Site-specific countercultural sketch show, from an "SNL" stalwart and an alt-rock rock star, examines the attitudes of doing right.

"New Girl" (Fox): Zooey Deschanel stays up on the tightrope her costars keep taut.

"Downton Abbey" (PBS): Julian Fellowes' post-Edwardian upstairs-downstairs, country-house comedy-drama is a digest of British literary and TV traditions.

"Homeland" (Showtime) / **"The Killing"** (AMC): Hazy mysteries trap the attention of troubled, talented female investigators (Claire Danes and Mireille Enos, respectively, as good as can be but better).

"Mildred Pierce" (HBO): Todd Haynes' languorous, detailed adaptation of the James M. Cain novel is lifelike and larger than life.

"The Hour" (BBC America) / **"Page Eight"** (PBS): Hugely satisfying British thrillers; the first jumps like an Aston Martin, the second purrs like a Rolls.

"Boxing Gym" (PBS): A little symphony in pugilistic percussion from Frederick Wiseman, 81.

"George Harrison: Living in the Material World" (HBO) / **"Woody Allen: A Documentary"** (PBS): Great big films about artists easy to take for granted.

"Wilfred" (FX): Brainy low humor with a sweet streak as awesome Jason Gann (in a dog suit) leads Elijah Wood hectically toward the light.

A low point: After 45 years, Jerry Lewis is clumsily cashiered as the public face, and telethon host, of the Muscular Dystrophy Assn.

For more, here's an [essay on TV in 2011](#).

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-- Robert Lloyd

Photo: Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein putting a bird on it in "Portlandia." Credit: Scott Green/IFC.

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