

Station Control SITCOMS ON A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

BY BENJAMIN CARR

THIS MONTH'S NEW SHOWS feature dysfunctional families with supernatural powers, a workplace sitcom that happens to take place in heaven and a girl who can't keep from dying at the end of each episode. These shows take real world problems and supercharge them with out of this world adventure.



THE UMBRELLA ACADEMY (Netflix)

When your family is dysfunctional, every get-together can be fraught with emotions and drama. When your family is supernatural, it can mean the end of the world. The Hargreeves siblings - all born during a supernatural phenomenon in 1989 - gather in the first episode of the new Netflix series to mark the death of their adoptive father Sir Reginald, who nurtured and tortured all of them throughout childhood to bring out their powers. An unexpected guest shows up at the funeral, though, with a warning. Their long-disappeared sibling Number Five has returned from the future to say that the apocalypse is coming in a week and that they have to stop it.

Oscar-nominated actress Ellen Page stars as Vanya, the seventh of the siblings and the least "special" of all the heroes. But this is truly an ensemble show, with actors Robert Sheehan and Aidan Gallagher particular standouts in the cast. Based upon the comics by Gerard Way and Gabriel Ba, The Umbrella Academy actually improves upon its source material and moves along at a compelling clip toward an epic climax.

MIRACLE WORKERS (TBS)

This new show filmed in Georgia is a

twist on the traditional workplace sitcom. Though the setting is an office-type environment, Miracle Workers takes place in Heaven, a very weird sort of Heaven called God Inc.

The ineffectual boss is God, and, to give you an idea of just how wacky this show intends to be, God is played by a bummed-out Steve Buscemi in sweatpants. The complications of modern life and the world are too much for God to handle effectively, so he decides to end it all and start over with some new project, maybe a restaurant or something. He isn't really sure.

Coming to the aid of Earth are a pair of co-workers named Craig and Eliza in the Department of Answered Prayers, which is severely understaffed to meet the needs of a desperate mankind. Craig likes tedium and not to be bothered by big problems. Eliza is full of spunk and optimism. Played by Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe and Blockers actress Geraldine Viswanathan, the mismatched pair challenge God to a bet to save Earth if they can make one couple fall in love. Eliza believes in the redemption of Earth, and that is something most viewers should be able to invest in.

This plot has been done in movies before, of course, to varying degrees of success, but the wit and talent behind Miracle Workers makes it stand out.

RUSSIAN DOLL (Netflix)

One of the best sitcoms of the new year, Russian Doll takes the stagnant, literally done-to-death premise of movies like Happy Death Day and Groundhog Day and finds something fascinating to mine there. Orange Is the New Black actress Natasha Lyonne delivers a tremendous performance in this Netflix sitcom, but there is far more going on within it than it initially seems.

On her birthday, a video game designer named Nadia keeps getting killed after leaving her party. Either she's hit by a cab or falls down some steps, but she never makes it out alive. And then, like a video game, she restarts the path, trying to find her way.

A problem solver by nature, Nadia keeps trying to puzzle her way out of the loop, which leads her to investigate a number of paths. And there comes a moment early in the series when it breaks its pattern to show us what answers can be found.

Lyonne and co-star Charlie Barnett are wonderful in this acidic, different show, and the repetitive nature of the situation makes it very easy to binge all the episodes in one or two sittings.

THE HERO'S WIFE

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Under The Lights ON STAGE THIS MONTH

MEN WITH MONEY

March 7 - April 7

Aurora Theatre (678) 226-6222

AuroraTheatre.com

Louis, Max, and Sonny are charming, young and eligible bachelors looking to marry their way from rags to riches. This romantic romp is full of dreams, schemes and lavish musical numbers set in the golden age mecca of Manhattan in the 1950's, with a twist. It's an alternative gleaming, fabulous and mighty Big Apple. Plus, two of the leading men are looking for husbands - oh my!



ANGRY, RAUCOUS AND SHAMELESSLY GORGEOUS

March 20 - April 14 Alliance

Coca-Cola Stage (404) 733-5000

AllianceTheatre.org/gorgeous

Angry, Raucous and Shamelessly Gorgeous by acclaimed Oprah Book Club author and playwright, Pearl Cleage is a funny and hopeful new play appearing this month on the Alliance Theatre's Coca-Cola Stage. Artists from different generations and worldviews must find a way to reconcile their different beliefs and



make peace with lingering ghosts from the past. The play looks closely at women's place in society as they age, and how their voices are heard throughout their lives. Directed by the Alliance Theatre's Artistic Director Susan V. Booth.

FALSETTOS

March 23 - April 28

Actors Express (404) 607-7469

ActorsExpress.com

When Marvin leaves his wife Trina for a guy named Whizzer, they all determine to salvage something from the resulting fallout to form a new kind of family. Throw in a lovesick psychiatrist, a precocious thirteen year-old and two lesbians from next door and you get the story of a modern family learning to navigate the stress of family dinners, the pressure of planning the perfect bar mitzvah and the heartbreak of saying goodbye. With a Tony-winning score by William Finn, Falsettos is a landmark musical about how we love, live and grow. With a Tony Award-winning score by William Finn and book co-written with James Lapine, Falsettos was heralded "a perfect musical" by the New York Times. Director Freddie Ashley says, "Falsettos is so funny and so moving. Finn's score guides us seamlessly between laughter and heartbreak with a gentle hand."



HOME THEATER

NEW RELEASES

THE LATEST DVD, BLU RAY & VOD RELEASES

By John Moore

RICK AND MORTY: SEASONS ONE - THREE BOX SET (Warner Brothers)

Who knew a humorous cartoon sci fi sitcom about a scientist and his grandson traveling to other dimensions would become a legitimate pop culture phenomenon? As devotees wait for new episodes to arrive, the first three seasons are available in an impressive box set that boasts fan favorites like "The Ricklantis Mixup" and "Pickle Rick". The set includes 31 episodes as well as bonus content from every season, like commentary and featurettes. A must have for any true Rick and Morty acolyte.



AMERICAN VANDAL: SEASON ONE

(CBS Home Entertainment/Paramount)

Thanks to a mash up of smartly-written sophomoric humor and Making a Murderer-style documentary story telling Netflix was able create a genuine hit about a high school vandal who spray painted penises on cars throughout the school parking lot. This satire boasts plenty of cliff hangers

and false leads as the writers deftly mimic the latest style of true crime documentarians. Catch up on season one and quickly dive into the second season online.

BAND VS BRAND (MVD Visual/Cleopatra)

On the surface, it's an odd topic for a documentary: how the branding a rock band is so important, at times overshadowing the group's music. It seems more apt for a college-level marketing class than an entertaining movie for music fans, but it somehow manages to be just that. Through a slew of interviews with figures in the hard rock and metal world (including musicians from Megadeth, Hawkwind, Great White, Keel and Slayer), director Bob Nalbanian goes to show how the right logo, attitude and legacy songs can outlive original band members with plenty of examples of how rotating line ups seem to have little effect on the success of many groups.

