

# End of an 'Empire': Musical drama renewed for a final season

By Andrew Warren  
TV Media

**End of an 'Empire':** It's inevitable. All empires must eventually come to an end. Rome, Persia and the British Empire all had their time in the spotlight, but in the end, the sun set on all of them. And so must it be for Fox's own "Empire." That's right — "Empire," the musical drama from Oscar-winning filmmaker Lee Daniels, is walking into the sunset. But it isn't dead yet. The series has been renewed for one final season, which is expected to premiere next fall.

"Empire" has been in the news a lot lately, but not for the best of reasons. The story of star Jussie Smollett's ("Giants") legal troubles has been reported extensively, and because of his exploits, he was written out of the show partway through last season. Showrunners have given no indication that he'll be returning for the final season, even though the charges against him have been dropped.

At its heart, "Empire" is a story about family, power and how the two clash. Terrence Howard ("Crash," 2004) and Taraji P. Henson ("What Men Want," 2019) lead the cast as Lucious and Cookie Lyon, the parents of three boys and the founders of music label Empire Entertainment. Smollett played one of their sons, while Bryshere Y. Gray ("The New Edition Story") and Trai Byers ("90210") play his ambitious brothers.

Over the span of five seasons, both the Lyon family and its business have seen more than their share of ups and downs, and last season was no exception. It opened two years after Lucious and Cookie lost control of Empire to a rival, and the season focused on their attempts to get it back. Of course, the family drama was front and center as well, with revelations about previously unknown children and close brushes with death also spending time in the spotlight.

Overly dramatic? You bet it is, but that's what makes "Empire" such a delicious watch. Watch



**Taraji P. Henson and Terrence Howard star in "Empire"**

for the sixth and final season to premiere this fall on Fox.

**Sleuth on screen:** Why has Nancy Drew never been successfully adapted for television? She's one of the most enduring and popular literary detectives out there, yet, besides "The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries," which found mild success from 1977 to 1979, audiences have just never warmed up to seeing the sleuth on screen.

Well, that could be about to change. CW has ordered "Nancy Drew" to series after a successful pilot, and with that network's success at turning wholesome classic characters

into gritty modern ones ("Riverdale," anyone?), it may be the perfect home for Nancy. The show is anticipated to premiere this fall, but no firm date has been set.

Newcomer Kennedy McMann has been cast as the titular character, an 18-year-old woman who has recently graduated from high school and is preparing to head off to college when a family tragedy forces her to put her education on hold for a year. Instead, she finds herself swept up in a ghostly murder mystery, and when she sets her wits to cracking the case, she finds herself uncovering secrets

that probably should have remained buried.

It sure sounds like classic Nancy Drew with a modern twist. After her time sharing the spotlight with fellow literary sleuths the Hardy Boys in the '70s, Nancy finally got her own show in 1995 — albeit one that aired alongside another Hardy Boys series. That show was poorly received and was canceled midway through its first season, and a made-for-TV movie in 2002 that was intended as a backdoor pilot for a new series fared just as well.

She may not have had much luck on TV, but Nancy Drew is still beloved by millions of people

around the world. Watch for CW's "Nancy Drew" next TV season.

**Smulders sizzles:** Cobie Smulders is returning to network television. The actress found fame as Robin Scherbatsky in CBS's "How I Met Your Mother," and since that show wrapped up in 2014, she's been mostly sticking to movies and streaming service offerings like "Friends from College" on Netflix.

That's about to change. Smulders has been cast in the leading role of "Stumptown," a new detective series that's in the works at ABC. Based on the comic book series of the same name, the show had a success-

ful pilot this spring, and was recently picked up for a full series.

Smulders will play Dex Parios, a former military intelligence officer who returns to her hometown of Portland, Oregon, and finds herself stuck in a rut. She's unable to keep a steady job, and her gambling debts are piling up. It's obvious that something has to give — the question is, how soon?

The "Stumptown" comics have been a huge success, praised for their grit, realism and the likeability of their protagonist. Hopefully, the TV adaptation can share some of that success. Watch for the new series next season on ABC.