

Summer of funny

Comedy acts compete in NBC's 'Bring the Funny'

By Kyla Brewer
TV Media

After months of hard-hitting dramas dominating the airwaves, the sunny days of summer give way to lighthearted prime-time fare, and one network is about to bring a whole lot of laughs to TV viewers with its new comedy competition series.

Performers set out to prove they've got what it takes to make it in the cutthroat world of comedy in the premiere of "Bring the Funny," airing Tuesday, July 9, on NBC. Comedian Amanda Seales ("Insecure") hosts as comedy acts of all sorts take the stage in the hopes of winning the life-altering \$250,000 grand prize and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to perform at the iconic Just for Laughs comedy festival.

While there have been other comedy competition series featuring standup comics, "Bring the Funny" goes beyond standup to feature a variety of comedy styles. In addition to standup comedy performers, the show shines a spotlight on sketch comedy troupes, musical comedy acts, magicians, puppeteers, vaudeville performers, YouTubers and more.

In a February article by the Hollywood Reporter, NBC executive Meredith Ahr explained why the new competition series includes more than just standup comedy.

"Great comedians know how to make us laugh while serving as a reflection of the times, and we are excited to embrace and support the myriad of ways funny people bring us levity and humor today," Ahr said.

Like many other reality TV competition series, the show features a panel of judges who will weigh in on the acts after they've performed. "Bring the Funny's" judges include "Saturday Night Live's" Kenan Thompson, who holds the record as the legendary sketch comedy show's longest-serving cast member, having joined the cast back in 2003. His

extensive experience in sketch comedy makes him an excellent candidate to determine what's funny.

Standup comedian, author and TV personality Jeff Foxworthy ("The Jeff Foxworthy Show") also sits on the judging panel. Famous for his "you might be a redneck if" one-liners, he's well versed in how to get laughs out of an audience. In fact, as a former Just for Laughs performer, he has first-hand insight into what it takes to keep audiences engaged.

The third member of the judging panel is model, author and activist Chrissy Teigen ("Lip Sync Battle"). Described as a "cultural tastemaker" in an official news release about the new show, Teigen has her finger on the pulse of pop culture.

Each of the judges brings a unique perspective to the panel, but their job won't be easy. Producers have lined up an eclectic mix of 40 different comedy acts to vie for the coveted prize.

These hopefuls, along with many more, will compete in four rounds of competition in the summer series. The fun kicks off with an Open Mic round, followed by a Comedy Clash and then a Showcase. In the end, American TV viewers will get to vote for their favorite act in the live Finale. The winner will walk away with the \$250,000 prize package and a gig at the 2020 Just for Laughs Festival. The world-renowned festival has featured some of the biggest names in comedy since its inception in 1983, and could lead to even more success for the "Bring the Funny" champ.

NBC is no stranger to comedy competitions. The network was the home of the standup comedy talent search competition "Last Comic Standing," which spanned nine seasons off and on between 2003 and 2015. Over the course of its run, the show featured then up-and-coming comedians such as Amy Schumer ("Inside Amy Schumer"), Tig Notaro ("Tig



Kenan Thompson is a judge in "Bring the Funny"

Notaro: Boyish Girl Interrupted"), Gabriel Iglesias ("Gabriel Iglesias: I'm Not Fat, I'm Fluffy") and Nikki Glaser ("Not Safe with Nikki Glaser"). Interestingly, none of these now prominent comedians won their seasons.

The peacock network is known for keeping things light in the summer, and viewers looking for more laughs can tune in to the season premiere of "Hollywood Game Night," which airs Thurs-

day, July 11. Jane Lynch ("Glee") returns to host this hilarious game show in which two contestants play party games alongside celebrities.

Each of the contestants teams up with three stars as they go head to head in a series of goofy games to score points. The games vary widely in scope, from pop culture questions and wordplay to physical challenges and timed tasks. After five rounds of play,

the contestant whose team has amassed the most points chooses a celebrity to tackle the bonus round in the hopes of winning \$25,000. Meanwhile, the chosen celeb competes to win \$10,000 for the charity of their choice.

Since its premiere in the summer of 2013, "Hollywood Game Night" has been a hit with game show fans and critics, and it has garnered respectable ratings for a summer series. The show has

won the Writers Guild of America Award for Quiz and Audience Participation three consecutive times, and Lynch has won two Emmys for Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality-Competition Program.

Viewers looking for laughs this summer may want to check out "Bring the Funny" and "Hollywood Game Night," airing Tuesday, July 9, and Thursday, July 11, on NBC.