

By Adam Thomlison
TV Media

Q: I just watched the movie "Harvey" for the umpteenth time, and something's always bothered me about it. Elwood is supposed to be an alcoholic, right? Then why does he never drink on screen?

A: The Motion Picture Production Code, that's why. "Harvey," the hit 1950 comedy, starred James Stewart as a happy-go-lucky drunk with a human-sized talking rabbit as an imaginary friend. As you can guess, the character's alcoholism was a driving factor in the plot of the film.

But despite that, he's only seen taking one drink throughout the course of the movie (instead, he just talks a lot about it). That is reportedly so that the film could meet the strict rules of the Motion Picture Production Code in force at the time.

The code was a self-regulation regime set up by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America to ensure films met certain "moral standards" (but historians say it was really a way to avoid direct censorship by the government).

One of the issues the code was concerned with was alcohol consumption. It stated that, "The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, should not be shown."

You could argue that "Harvey" required liquor for proper characterization, but of course your question is proof that the point got across anyway.

The code fell out of use in the 1960s and was officially abandoned in 1968, replaced by the film-rating system we know today. The key difference being that the ratings system doesn't mean unscrupulous activities aren't shown on screen, just that the films are labeled appropriately.

Q: Will "Tacoma FD" be back? It's an absolute hoot!

A: Fortunately, the new bosses at truTV agree with you. The lightly scripted comedy series "Tacoma FD" had the truTV execs laughing enough, and impressed enough by the ratings, to earn it a second-season renewal.

They haven't announced a release date yet, but there's no reason to believe it won't be late winter or early spring like the first season. However, the show's going to need a bit more time — the network gave it 13 episodes for Season 2, three more than Season 1.

"Tacoma FD" was created by Kevin Heffernan and Steve Lemme, who also gave us the Super Troopers movies. Typically for them, they managed to squeeze a joke into the renewal announcement.

"While we realize this should be a time for rejoicing, our first thought is: Damn, guess we gotta grow those mustaches back."

truTV recently underwent a major shakeup at the executive level, most notably the replacement of president Chris Linn by Kevin Reilly, who is now in charge of numerous entertainment channels in the Warner corporate family.

Reilly seems interested in continuity, at least for the moment. "Tacoma FD's" renewal came a couple of days after that of "I'm Sorry," another improv-heavy comedy series.

If you're hungry for something similar while waiting for the next "Tacoma FD" season, you could do worse than checking out the aforementioned Super Troopers movies. The original, released in 2001, has attained cult classic status and did for highway patrol officers what "Tacoma" does for firefighters. In an interview with The Fourth Wall podcast, Heffernan said his goal with the series was to deliver a similar type of comedy, but with "some elements of heart, as far as we can take it."

Have a question? Email us at questions@tvtabloid.com. Please include your name and town. Personal replies will not be provided.

▶ STREAMING THIS WEEK



Krysta Rodriguez in "Daybreak"

By Jessica Gosse
TV Media

WHAT'S NEW ON NETFLIX:

"Daybreak"

Anyone who loves zombies but is more of a "Zombieland" (2009) type than a "The Walking Dead" type should be very excited. On Thursday, Oct. 24, Netflix premieres its new comedy zombie series, "Daybreak." An adaptation of the graphic novel of the same name by Brian Ralph, "Daybreak" follows Josh (Colin Ford, "Under the Dome"), a high school outcast who is looking for his missing girlfriend in his post-apocalyptic town. Following a nuclear blast on Homecoming night, the town of Glendale becomes a world of chaos overnight, especially at Glendale High School, where cliques have become warrior gangs and "ruling the school" isn't just an expression. With his school having turned into a scene straight out of "Mad Max," Josh joins together with the last people you'd expect: the somewhat unstable pyromaniac Anjelica (Alyvia Alyn Lind, "The Young and the Restless") and his former bully-turned-pacifist-samurai, Wesley (Austin Crute "Booksmart," 2019). Matthew Broderick ("Ferris Bueller's Day Off," 1986) also stars as Principal Burr alongside Krysta Rodriguez ("Smash") as biology teacher Ms. Crumble, two of the only adults left to try to maintain some control and figure things out. Watch as Josh and his group fight to survive a world filled with zombie-like creatures called "Ghoulies" and Amazonian warrior cheerleaders when this high school dramedy premieres this Thursday.

"Jenny Slate: Stage Fright"

Actress and comedian Jenny Slate ("Big Mouth") joins the bill of standup comedians on Netflix as she premieres her first original comedy special, "Jenny Slate: Stage Fright," on Tuesday, Oct. 22, on the streamer. Slate is known for her appearances on such shows as "Saturday Night Live," "Parks and Recreation" and "Bob's Burgers," as well as lending her voice to the popular kids movies "Zootopia" (2016) and "The Secret Life of Pets 2" (2019). In her announcement about the special, Slate described "Stage Fright" as "part standup, part documentary about my family, my fears, my heart and a lot of other things that will make you laugh." The special will feature details on how she managed to overcome the stage fright she developed after being let go from "SNL," as well as interviews with her family and childhood stories. Catch this deeply relatable comedy special when "Jenny Slate: Stage Fright" premieres.

"The Kominsky Method" Season 2

On Friday, Oct. 25, the Emmy-nominated comedy series "The Kominsky Method" returns for Season 2 on Netflix. The series stars Academy Award winners Michael Douglas ("Wall Street," 1987) and Alan Arkin ("Argo"), as Sandy Kominsky (Douglas), an aging actor/acting coach, and Norman Newlander (Arkin), his agent. Season 1 saw many ups and downs for the pair, including the loss of loved ones, dating students, family complications and every man's nightmare: prostate problems. "The Kominsky Method" approaches the reality of aging in an unforgiving industry in a satirical and witty manner. So what's in store for Season 2? Sandy will be bonding with the new boyfriend of his daughter Mindy (Sarah Baker, "Young Sheldon"), despite being uncomfortable with how close he is to him in age. Also, Jane Seymour ("Wedding Crashers," 2005) is set to guest star as an ex-girlfriend from Norman's youth with whom he rekindles a relationship. You won't want to miss this heartfelt comedy when it premieres this Friday on Netflix.

WHAT'S NEW ON HULU:

"Castle Rock" Season 2

The psychological horror series "Castle Rock" returns Wednesday, Oct. 23, on Hulu. Season 1 brought viewers to the world of Castle Rock, Maine, which featured characters and settings from the works of Stephen King, such as the infamous Shawshank Prison. Season 2 is set to introduce single mother Annie Wilkes (Lizzy Caplan "Now You See Me 2," 2016), the villain from King's "Misery," who's on the path to being a full-fledged psychopath. Viewers will also meet Reginald "Pop" Merrill (Tim Robbins "Here and Now"), head of the Merrill crime family. True to the works of Stephen King, "Castle Rock" is dark and twisted and not for the faint of heart. Showrunners have described the series as an anthology, saying, "We're going to tell a new story that gives you a different lens into Castle Rock and into Stephen King each season — each story will stand alone but we will be circling back to those characters whose stories intersect." The end of Season 1 left some lingering questions, such as who/what really is The Kid (Bill Skarsgård "IT," 2018), and will they work him into the storyline of Season 2? Find out this Wednesday when the second season of "Castle Rock" premieres.

WHAT'S NEW ON AMAZON PRIME:

"If You Give a Mouse a Cookie: Halloween Special"

Characters from the popular children's books written by Laura Numeroff and illustrated by Felicia Bond — Mouse and his friends Moose, Cat, Pig, Dog and Oliver — prepare for what Cat promises to be the best "Halloween Spooktacular" ever in "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie: Halloween Special" this Friday, Oct. 25, on Amazon Prime. It's Halloween and the group of friends are all excited about dressing up in costumes and trick-or-treating. Well, all except Moose, who thinks Halloween is the scariest day of the year. When Cat's robotic ghosts get loose and end up flying around the neighborhood, they must round up the ghosts without getting too scared. As their adventure ensues, will the friends be able to find all the ghosts and help Moose overcome his fears and find the fun Halloween? Find out this Friday when "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie: Halloween Special" premieres on Amazon Prime.

"Just Add Magic: New Protectors"

On Friday, Oct. 25, Amazon Prime premieres a specialty episode of the popular children's series "Just Add Magic," entitled "Just Add Magic: New Protectors." While the series focuses on three friends, Kelly (Olivia Sanabia, "Pretty Outrageous," 2017), Darbie (Abby Donnelly, "Malibu Rescue") and Hannah (Aubrey K. Miller, "Raven's Home"), who are protectors of the Magic Cookbook, "Just Add Magic: New Protectors" will see the girls follow the Magic Cookbook to Bay City, where it has appeared to a new set of protectors. When the girls arrive in Bay City to train the new protectors on how to handle the magic recipes and the dangers that come with them, they learn that the new protectors aren't even friends and certainly aren't ready to use magic. Catch this magical special when it premieres this Friday on Amazon Prime.



Jane Seymour and Alan Arkin in a scene from "The Kominsky Method"