

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN

'Criminal Minds: Evolution' revives mystery series

"Criminal Minds" is back ... but if you ask its stars, it never should have left.

The mystery centering on the cases of the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit ended its 15-season CBS run in 2020, and since then, it has remained popular in repeats on cable networks and



Joe Mantegna stars in "Criminal Minds: Evolution," which begins streaming Thursday on Paramount+.

streaming services. As a result, the show returns with most of its regular cast members when "Criminal Minds: Evolution" begins streaming Thursday, Nov. 24, on Paramount+. CBS also will run the first episode that night. (In Canada, the drama is coming to Disney+, where episodes of the original series are available now.)

The BAU agents have many unsub (or unknown subjects) to pursue this time, thanks to an enemy, played by recurring guest star Zach Gilford ("Friday Night Lights") who has utilized the coronavirus pandemic to assemble a network of serial killers. David Rossi and Emily Prentiss (returnees Joe Mantegna and Paget Brewster) again lead the charge against evildoers, with A.J. Cook, Kirsten Vangsness, Aisha Tyler and Adam Rodriguez also reprising their roles. (Matthew Gray Gubler and Daniel Henner haven't returned for the revival.)

"We never wanted to go away to begin with," executive producer Erica Messer confirms. "We knew that there were plenty of stories to tell, and that's one of the things. You can sort of feel behind the scenes if a show is lagging or, creatively, the scripts aren't hitting. And because we're telling stories of good and evil, it's kind of endless."

Mantegna, Cook, Tyler and Rodriguez also get to direct on "Criminal Minds: Evolution," as they did on the first series. "I've always been a defender of the fact that our show gave that realistic aspect to what these real men and women do," says Mantegna. "Very often, we hear, 'Don't you get nightmares?' or, 'Doesn't it disturb you to do this show?' It doesn't disturb me at all because when they say 'Cut,' that person lying there with the ax in his head pops up and goes over to craft services and gets a sandwich.

"The ones I worry about," Mantegna adds, "are the real men and women of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies around the world who have to really do this for a living. What I love about our show is that we show it like it is, and I think that's important."

Though streaming offers more leeway for adult content and language than broadcast television, Messer notes she's aware that the "Criminal Minds" fan base includes teenagers, thus she "never wanted us to go into full, like, R-rated extra violence or anything that would suddenly feel like a very different series. You just get to live and breathe in this space, and it can be a disturbing space to live in."

In Focus

"Dolly Parton's Mountain Magic Christmas" (NBC — new special, Dec. 1)

This modern-day movie musical about the making of a network TV holiday special follows the frenetic backstage story and charming on-camera results of Dolly Parton's desire to uplift the world's spirits by sharing the "mountain magic" she has always found in and around Dollywood at Christmas. Through production numbers and rehearsal chaos, Dolly finds herself taking a private journey into her past, guided by the mysterious appearances of her personal Three Wise Men in this new special. Willie Nelson, Miley Cyrus and Jimmy Fallon guest star.

"Riches" (Prime Video — limited series premiere, Dec. 2)

Abby Ajayi ("How to Get Away With Murder," "Inventing Anna") is the writer and creator of this

original British drama about an uber-successful family whose world comes crashing down when the patriarch dies and his heirs fight for control of the family business. Deborah Ayorinde ("Them"), Hugh Quarshie ("Absentia"), Sarah Niles ("Ted Lasso"), Adeyinka Akinrinade ("Top Boy") and Ola Orebiyi ("Cherry") head the cast.

"Slow Horses: Season 2" (Apple TV+ — season premiere, Dec. 2)

The sophomore round of this espionage series finds long-buried Cold War secrets emerging that threaten to bring carnage to the streets of London, forcing the dysfunctional team of British intelligence agents of Slough House to overcome their individual failings and raise their game to prevent catastrophe. Gary Oldman, Kristin Scott Thomas, Jack Lowden and Saskia Reeves head the returning cast.



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