

## The Democrat picks the best of 2010 in

# TELEVISION

This was the year when TV changed from low-definition to high-definition and from squares to rectangles (I still have a square, and I know I'm missing some things off to the sides, but at least I can hear everybody).

Also, TV has never before been as accessible; unless it's on a premium network, rare is the series

that eschews free Internet broadcast (the fact that you can't fast-forward commercials on the web is part of the appeal to advertisers, I'm sure).

The shows themselves haven't improved at the same pace as the technology. The fall season only produced a few shows that stayed on my viewing schedule. Still, there's plenty worth tuning in for, such as the following.

You can share your own top 10 list in the comment threads for this story, which can be found at John Hansen's Entertainment Blog at [sedaliademocrat.com](http://sedaliademocrat.com).

**1. "Star Wars: The Clone Wars" (8 p.m. Fridays, Cartoon Network)** — Last spring, it delved into Boba Fett's backstory, showing that Aurra Sing was his mentor in the art of bounty hunting. Season 3 launched with a "Secrets Revealed" tagline; the best revelation so far is that Jabba earned his status among the Hutts with help from the surprisingly sly femme fatale Sy Snootles. Too bad about Ziro, though. All told, these are the best on-screen "Star Wars" yarns since "Return of the Jedi." **What's next:** The much-hyped Savage Opress arc, which also explores the background of the late Darth Maul, begins on Jan. 7.

**2. "Futurama" (9 p.m. Thursdays, Comedy Central)** — This was my No. 1 show back in 2002 and it feels good to put it on the list again. Because the last two DVD movies were weak, I had a slight concern that the episodes would be misfires, too, but for the most part that's not the case. The episode where Fry travels through the entire history of the universe — more than once — to prove his love for Leela felt like a classic the moment it aired. **What's next:** Season 8 will arrive at some point in 2011. The seventh season (titled "Volume Five") is now available on DVD.

**3. "Life Unexpected" (8 p.m. Tuesdays, The CW)** — This was my No. 1 show for most of the year until the "Tasha and Lux go to court" storyline — c'mon guys, I don't come here for courtroom drama. Even then, the standout cast kept me coming back; I tuned in for "Roswell's" Shiri Appleby, but I've stayed for Britt Robertson, who is achingly expressive as Lux and who will no doubt have a long



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### A SECOND OPINION



In this publicity image released by AMC, Steven Yeun, left, and Andrew Lincoln try to blend in with the zombie population in a scene from "The Walking Dead."

## 'Spartacus,' 'Treme,' 'Dead' among best

BY FRAZIER MOORE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Here, in alphabetical order, are 10 top examples of when TV soared in 2010:

**"Carlos" (Sundance Channel).** For six gripping hours, viewers witnessed a legendary terrorist on an epic scale from up-close-and-personal proximity. Edgar Ramirez is haunting as Carlos the Jackal.

**"God in America" (PBS).** In this six-hour documentary, "Frontline" and "American Experience" joined forces to tell the story of America with religious faith as its narrative thread.

**"The Good Wife" (CBS).** In its second season, this courtroom-and-family drama has been even better and more surprising than before. It stars Julianna Margulies as a wife and mother forced to resume her long-ago career as an attorney in the wake of betrayal when her politician hubby, played by Chris Noth, was jailed for cor-

ruption and infidelity.

**"Luther" (BBC America).** A topflight psychological crime thriller, this British miniseries pits a London police detective against a beautiful, crafty murderer — and, increasingly, it puts him in cahoots with her, too.

**"Mad Men" (AMC).** This series' fourth season resumed in November 1964 with magnetic ad man Don Draper (series star Jon Hamm) divorced and struggling at his startup agency. The season ended a year later as Draper found love — or so he thought — with his beautiful young secretary.

**"Spartacus: Blood and Sand" (Starz).** With all the bloody violence, you felt the urge to take a shower. With all the hardbodies and hanky-panky, you wanted to take a cold shower.

**Super Bowl Ad with Dave, Jay and Oprah (CBS).** It was 15 seconds of ironic bliss. And such a surprise! Here were CBS

late-night host David Letterman and his longtime NBC archival Jay Leno, plus Oprah Winfrey — planted side by side on a couch for what, Dave grumbled, was the "worst Super Bowl party ever."

**"30 Rock" (NBC).** By now, its fifth season, this wildly celebrated comedy should either be feeling its age or larded with self-satisfaction. Instead, it's as zany, fresh and inspired as ever. Meanwhile, the pending takeover of NBC Universal by Comcast — while otherwise no favor to the average viewer — has been a comic boon for "30 Rock" fans.

**"Treme" (HBO).** Set in the months after Hurricane Katrina, this drama is a sometimes joyful, sometimes painful homage to New Orleans.

**"The Walking Dead" (AMC).** A tattered band of survivors faced a zombie invasion in Atlanta (and who knows how far beyond) in a drama that proved macabre, suspenseful, poignant and horribly funny.

career ahead of her. **What's next:** The bad news is that the Jan. 18 two-hour episode, in which everyone finally finds out about Lux's relationship with her English teacher, will be the series finale. The good news is that complete series will hit DVD on April 5.

**4. "Parenthood" (9 p.m. Tuesdays, NBC)** — It's partly a place to see old favorites, including cast members from "Friday Night Lights" (this is also a Jason Katims production). But it's not just about the cast; it's also about the Braver-mans. I'm not exactly saying "Lorelai who?," but I am impressed with how Lauren Graham has made this single mom different. And Sarah Ramos is completely believable and sympathetic as Haddie, a teen who helps at a homeless shelter and gets a boyfriend that her parents might not approve of. **What's next:** It will return at some point this spring.

**5. "Friday Night Lights" (8 p.m. Wednesdays, DirecTV)** — Coach Taylor switched to the other side of the tracks with East Dillon and we met new characters like the quarterback who can't shake his gang buddies and the running back who's needed on the farm. Most affecting of all was Taylor Kitsch, continuing in the role



he was born to play, as Tim Riggs dreams of owning land and gets in too deep with his brother's scheme. **What's next:** The final season is now airing on DirecTV, and it will start on NBC in the spring. Julie is dating her teacher; apparently the writers watched a lot of "Life Unexpected" and "Pretty Little Liars" in the off-season.

**6. "Fringe" (8 p.m. Thursdays, Fox)** — Red World, Blue World, it doesn't matter to me as long as the fringe science is sufficiently weird. And it is, from people trapped in amber to a guy re-animating his loved one after stealing back her organs. The Peter-and-Walter feud has kind of



been set aside — it's as if Peter just can't work up the energy to hate him, which is understandable; he's quite the lovable mad scientist. But the Olivia-Peter relationship has been handled just right. You can't blame him for being tricked by Fauxlivia, and you can't blame her for not being in the mood to date anymore. **What's next:** It switches to Fridays starting Jan. 21, when Peter and Olivia have to work together again here in the Blue World. Awkward.

**7. "No Ordinary Family" (7 p.m. Tuesdays, ABC)** — This family superhero drama works because — unlike the full-of-itself "Heroes" — it gets the tone right. Great actors like Michael Chiklis, who has super strength; Julie Benz, who has super speed; Kay Panabaker, who can read minds; and the adorable



### YEAR IN REVIEW

Check out our year-end top 10 lists in the coming week:  
**Today:** Television  
**Sunday That's Life:** Music  
**Dec. 30 Swoop:** Movies

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Autumn Reeser, who can crank out the scientific tests, play the material straight but they also leave space for viewers to giggle. This isn't groundbreaking TV, but it is a great pick-me-up. **What's next:** It returns on Jan. 4. Katie (Reeser) is still unknowingly dating a bad guy, who — if the writers play it right — will become less bad under her sunny influence.

**8. "10 Things I Hate About You" (canceled by ABC Family)** — High school is a goldmine of comedy, but this was the only show to tap into it in the past year.

Too bad it was canceled after one season. Comedy veteran Larry Miller was in fine form as a lovably overprotective dad, and I suspect Lindsey Shaw and Meaghan

Martin will go on to successful careers, although I fear they will never again get such good material. **What's next:** No news on when the second batch of 10 episodes will be released on DVD; at least they are all available on Hulu.

**9. "Law & Order" (canceled by NBC) and "Law & Order: Los Angeles" (9 p.m. Wednesdays, NBC)** — The New York original was clicking on all cylinders when

it wrapped before its rightful time. Taking some of the sting out of the loss is the fact that "LOLA" is good too. It was envisioned as a spinoff, not a continuation, but it

has served as the latter because the cases are still ripped from the headlines (although they are more West Coast-oriented now) and the cast is starting to click. Terrence Howard isn't Jack McCoy or Michael Cutter, but he brings his own sense of conviction as the ADA. **What's next:** "LOLA" returns sometime in the spring. No news on DVD releases for the recent seasons of the original.

**10. "Being Erica" (10 p.m. Wednesdays, SoapNet)** — A show that intensively examines one woman's life (even her past, via live-in flashbacks that provide the

lesson for the episode) has to have a darn likable woman to make it work. As a successful editor turned struggling author, the adorable Erin Karpluk certainly fits the bill in the best Canadian show since the end of The-N. **What's next:** Season 3, currently airing in Canada, will premiere on Jan. 26.

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### WANTED: NEW YEAR'S EVE LISTINGS

The Democrat is compiling a calendar of New Year's Eve entertainment events at area bars and clubs. If you would like your event listed in the calendar, e-mail John Hansen at [jhansen@sedaliademocrat.com](mailto:jhansen@sedaliademocrat.com); call 826-1000, ext. 216; fax 826-0400; or mail to John Hansen, Sedalia Democrat, P.O. Box 848, Sedalia, MO 65301. Please include time, date, place, admission price and contact information.