

Counting Down the 40 Best TV Shows of 2024: #40-31

By Steve Sternberg



There was a time, not too long ago, when I struggled to come up with 20 TV shows that deserved to be on my “best of” list for the season. Today, I have twice as many on my list and struggled deciding which excellent shows to leave out. Ten years ago, streaming was a new word in the media lexicon. Any list of best tv shows consisted mostly of broadcast and ad-supported cable series and a couple of HBO dramas.

Today’s video landscape is so robust, there are many good series, which have already finished multi-season runs, that haven’t been seen by many viewers – particularly those that aired prior to 2020 (before the average home subscribed to multiple streaming services). And shows that a lot of folks might have missed when they were originally on linear TV) are being re-discovered and becoming streaming hits.

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Up until just a few years ago, if you missed a season (or even a few episodes) of a series, you couldn't watch it unless you waited for the repeats, caught it in syndication, or bought the full-season DVD. Today, you can easily binge previous seasons of virtually any "new" show you discover (as long as you subscribe to the right streaming service) – as I and millions of others recently did with [Suits](#), which originally aired on the USA cable network from 2011-2019, and [Justified](#), which originally aired on FX from 2010-2015.



While Netflix and Prime Video, have been airing original scripted series for roughly 10 years, Hulu began doing so in earnest around 2017, the same year that CBS All Access (now Paramount+) debuted. Apple TV+ and Disney+ both launched in November 2019, with HBO Max (now Max) following in May 2020. These are just the biggest streamers. There are quite a few smaller, more niche streaming platforms out there as well. The average household in this country now has more than four streaming services.

The tremendous amount of money being spent on original scripted content over the past few years, resulting from the perceived need to compete with Netflix and place more importance on subscriber growth than profitability, has resulted in two key developments – virtually all streaming platforms are reducing spending (although still spending a lot) while increasing their subscription costs. The inevitable inclusion of advertising tiers, reduces subscription costs (for those willing to put up with commercials) and provides a much needed additional revenue stream.

With several top shows ending their runs last season ([Barry](#), [Billions](#), [Jack Ryan](#), [Succession](#), [The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel](#)), and several more not delivering new seasons until 2025, there is plenty of room on this year's list for some new series.

Here is part 1 of my best 40 TV shows of 2024, which covers #40-31. There are some minor spoilers ahead, but I tried not to reveal too much. For any show on for more than one season, I suggest watching the previous installments first.

40



Elsbeth – season 2 (CBS, Paramount+)

Feb. 2024, Oct. 2024

The character of unconventional and quirky (but brilliant) attorney Elsbeth Tascioni ([Carrie Preston](#)) originated with recurring roles in CBS's *The Good Wife* and later in the Paramount+ spin-off, *The Good Fight*. Now in her own show, Elsbeth moves from Chicago to New York City, where she becomes a civilian consultant to the NYPD – after the police department is sued for making unlawful arrests in a major case, Elsbeth is assigned as an outside observer by the Justice Department to monitor the NYPD to make sure they do things by the book.

This is a “howcatchem” rather than a “whodunnit” – at the beginning of each episode, the viewer sees who commits the crime and then watches as Elsbeth helps solve the case.

Elsbeth's unique investigative skills and unconventional style are instrumental in helping the police, much to the chagrin of police Captain Wagner ([Wendell Pierce](#)), who is forced to work with her, [Carra Paterson](#) is officer Kanya Blanke, who is assigned by Captain Wagner to keep an eye on Elsbeth, but soon realizes how good she is, and becomes sort of a Watson to Elsbeth's Sherlock.

Somewhat reminiscent of [Columbo](#) (and Peacock's wonderful [Poker Face](#)), [Elsbeth](#) manages to win the day often because criminals constantly underestimate her.



While I've always enjoyed [Elsbeth](#) in small doses as a secondary character, I had doubts as to whether she could carry an hour-long series as the star. She has clearly demonstrated she can. [Elsbeth](#) is witty and well-written, and most importantly, fun.

The series also has a well-known cast of weekly victims/villains, which have so far included, [Stephen Moyer](#), [Jane Krakowski](#), [Jesse Tyler Ferguson](#), [Blair Underwood](#), [Keegan-Michael Key](#), [Gina Gershon](#), [Linda Lavin](#), [Geneva Carr](#), [Andre De Shields](#), [Nathan Lane](#), [Vanessa Williams](#), [Pamela Adlon](#), and [Jack Davenport](#).

39



High Potential ([ABC](#), [Hulu](#), [Disney+](#))

Sept. 2024

[Kaitlin Olson](#) shines as Morgan, a divorced single mom with three kids and an extraordinary mind (IQ of 160). She's what they call a "high potential intellectual," with advanced cognitive

ability, a photographic memory, a knack for doing complex math in her head, and an eye for minute details. The show is based on the 2021 French television series, [HPI](#) ([Haut Potentiel Intellectuel](#)).

Morgan's "gifts," her obsession over details, and her tendency to publicly (and bluntly) disagree with anyone who doesn't see what she finds so obvious, have been obstacles to finding and keeping a good job. So, as the series opens, she works at night as a cleaning lady for the LAPD's Major Crimes division, where she doesn't have to interact with anyone.

In the pilot, with headphones blasting, Morgan is dancing around the police station after hours dusting some desks. She accidentally knocks over a file, spilling its contents all over the floor. As she's putting the scattered photos back in their folders, she immediately notices something about a case the cops are working on, which makes her believe someone they had labeled a suspect is actually a victim. She changes their murder board accordingly, for them to see in the morning. This, of course, puts the veteran cops' noses out of joint – until her observations prove correct.



Captain Selena ([Judy Reyes](#)), head of the Major Crimes unit sees Morgan's potential to help them on other cases and hires her as a consultant, much to the chagrin of a by-the-book, seasoned detective ([Daniel Sunjata](#)), who is forced to partner with her.

Morgan juggles her new job with raising her three kids –a toddler, a teenage daughter ([Amirah J](#)), and a genius pre-teen son ([Matthew Lamb](#)).

This fits well into the new sub-genre of lighthearted procedurals about eccentric but brilliant and self-assured women who solve crimes partly because they have high-level observational abilities that enable them to spot clues no one else notices, and partly because everyone constantly underestimates them (see Peacock's [Poker Face](#) and CBS's [Elsbeth](#)).

There's nothing particularly new here. We know Morgan is going to initially be doubted by the more experienced investigators before dazzling them with her insights and eventually solving the crime of the week. But it's entertaining, and [Katilin Olson's](#) winning performance makes it all work.

38



Presumed Innocent (Apple TV+)

June 2024

Legal thriller from David E. Kelley based on Scott Turow's 1987 best-selling novel of the same name. The book was also adapted into a 1990 feature film starring [Harrison Ford](#). In this version, [Jake Gyllenhaal](#) is Rusty Sabich, a successful and well-known deputy district attorney and family man, who becomes a prime suspect when his colleague Carolyn ([Renate Reinsve](#)), with whom he was having an affair, is brutally murdered.

There are some key differences between the movie and TV series, but if you liked the former, you should like this as well. If you can suspend your disbelief with some of the courtroom melodrama, it's still a compelling mystery and quite entertaining.



[Jake Gyllenhaal](#) alternates between being surprised and offended that he would be accused of a crime, to being scared that the true degree of his obsession with Carolyn will come to light, to having violent outbursts that indicate he might actually be capable of murder.



[Ruth Negga](#) is excellent as Rusty's long-suffering wife, Barbara, who, despite her husband's continual lies and deception, believes he is innocent of murder. She is determined to hold their family together (they have a teenage son and daughter, effectively played by [Kingston Rumi Southwick](#) and [Chase Infiniti](#)).



Peter Sarsgaard is Tommy Molto, Rusty's long-time (and less successful) rival at the DA's office, who is now assigned to prosecute the case, relishing every opportunity to bring his colleague down.



Bill Camp, who brings gravitas to every role he plays, is Rusty's friend and former boss, Raymond Horgan, who reluctantly agrees to defend him despite not being sure of his innocence or guilt.

There will reportedly be a second season. But since this installment did come to a definitive conclusion, I would guess it will have a different cast.

37



Will Trent (ABC, Hulu)

Jan. 2023, Feb. 2024

Based on Karin Slaughter's detective novels, this procedural drama is filled with interesting characters, none of whom fit neatly into the cliched variety that seem to populate so many new shows these days – particularly on the broadcast networks. The first couple of season 1 episodes manage to entertainingly introduce us to all the main players, without too much exposition, gradually revealing how several of them have inter-related histories and connections. As the season progresses, we see the mostly traumatic backstories of the main characters, and really get a feel for what drives them and how they became who they are today.

[Ramon Rodriguez](#) is perfectly cast as Will Trent, a damaged but brilliant special agent of the Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI). His observational skills are legendary, as are his quirkiness, blunt dismissiveness of those who can't keep up with him, and awkwardness in dealing with colleagues.

Dapper and always dressed in a three-piece suit, he carries both physical and psychological scars that stem from his rough childhood in the Atlanta foster care system – which is one of his driving forces to help others. He's also dyslexic, so instead of taking notes like other cops, he speaks into his tape recorder – which serves as a good device for him to explain to the viewer how he's thinking about solving the crime.

Scorned by most of Atlanta's police department (APD) for having launched a corruption investigation, they nonetheless have to acknowledge his unique gifts in solving crimes that stump everyone else. The APD is forced to work with Will and the GBI on major cases.



The show has a strong ensemble cast. [Sonja Sohn](#) is Will's no-nonsense boss and mentor, Amanda, who has problems with his style, but is constantly defending him to others.



[Ianthe Richardson](#) is Faith, an APD officer who has a personal grudge against Will (her mom was a decorated cop caught up in his corruption probe), but is forced to partner with him.



[Erika Christenson](#) is great as Angie Polaski, an undercover vice detective, a recovering addict who shares a past with Will. Their relationship is one of the more fascinating on television.



having to team up with him now.

Angie's partner, Michael ([Jake McLaughlin](#)), comes across as an arrogant ass, but is also a top-notch detective. He had a one-night stand with Angie years before, and she is not particularly happy about



[Lisa Gay Hamilton](#) is retired APD captain Evelyn Mitchell, who is also Faith's mom. There are several flashback's to 30 years ago when she and Amanda were partners, just starting their careers in a much more misogynistic, male-dominated environment.

Season 3 will premiere in January 2025.

36



Joan (CW)

Sept. 2024

[Sophie Turner](#) is riveting as the real-life Joan Hannington, known as "the Godmother" by the 1980s British criminal underworld. This six-part true-crime thriller is based on Joan's memoir, *I Am What I Am: The True Story of Britain's Most Notorious Jewel Thief*.

This is a prime example of how one actor's bravura performance can elevate a series above its material and supporting cast, as she dons different disguises and accents on Joan's journey from a 20-something housewife and mother, to a jewel thief on the verge of forming her own criminal empire. Her whole persona emanates intelligence, charm, and fierce determination.

As the series opens, Joan is married to Gary, an abusive and violent small-time criminal (we find out she also survived having an abusive and violent father). She has a six-year-old daughter, Kelly ([Mia Millichamp-Long](#)). When gangsters come after Gary and threaten Joan and her daughter, she flees with Kelly to London to start a new life.



To protect Kelly, Joan places her in foster care (temporarily she hopes), and spends much of the series trying to convince social services that she is a fit mother, while at the same time gradually getting more entrenched and adept at becoming a high-end thief.

Along the way, there are ups and downs, and some tragic consequences, but through it all, Joan remains laser-focused on reclaiming her daughter and creating a home for them, taking control of her own life, and not allowing any man to tell her what to do.

Joan is the type of limited series you might ordinarily see on a streaming platform these days, rather than a broadcast network. The difference in quality is apparent from the get go. It's a fun ride, and sets up a potential second season (although it was designed as a miniseries and there hasn't been any announcement regarding a new season).

The cast includes, [Frank Dillane](#) as Boisie, a London antiques dealer who becomes Joan's partner-in-crime and eventual husband, [Gershwyn Eustache Jr.](#) as Albie, an old criminal acquaintance of Boisie, who helps them with a major jewel heist, and [Kirsty J. Curtis](#) as Nancy, Joan's older sister.

35



Cross (Prime Video)

Nov. 2024

Based on James Patterson's Alex Cross novel series, this crime thriller stars [Aldis Hodge](#) as the decorated D.C. homicide detective and forensic psychologist – with observational skills well beyond most of his colleagues. He and his partner, John Sampson ([Isaiah Mustafa](#)) have to track down a brutally sadistic serial killer, Ed Ramsey ([Ryan Eggold](#)), while dealing with a dangerous figure from his past who is stalking him and his family. At the same time, Cross is still struggling with grief and anger issues more than a year after the murder of his wife – his violent beating of an innocent Black suspect went viral, and he's been suspended.



While all that is going on, Cross is pulled into a high-profile case involving the murder of a local Defund the Police/Black Lives Matter activist. The politically ambitious white police chief ([Jennifer Wigmore](#)) wants a Black detective as the public face, and a quick resolution, blaming it on gang violence. But Cross believes the real culprit has yet to be revealed, and may be actually be connected to the serial killer. He continually bucks authority and puts his career on the line to prove he's right.



[Cross](#) is more akin to [Criminal Minds](#) than a typical detective series. [Ryan Eggold's](#) platinum blond Ed Ramsey is arrogant, wealthy, and deranged. His smoothly sinister demeanor plays well against Aldis Hodge's angry intensity. Ramsey is obsessed with legendary serial killers, and has been dubbed "Fanboy." Some of his scenes with his latest victim, Shannon ([Eloise](#)

[Mumford](#)), who fiercely resists him for days, are not for the squeamish. Can Cross and his team figure out where Ramsey has taken Shannon and rescue her and at the same time protect his girlfriend ([Samantha Walkes](#)) and children ([Caleb Elijah](#), [Melody Hurd](#)) from the threat from his past?

There are some overly dramatic twists and turns, but it still adds up to an entertaining ride. It was renewed for a second season before its season 1 premiere, so Prime Video smells franchise – particularly because it is reportedly Prime Video’s number 3 debut ever.

34



Hightown – season 3 ([Starz](#))

May 2020, Oct. 2021, Jan 2024

Organized crime, the opioid epidemic, local drug dealers, murder, sex trafficking, corrupt cops, and everything in between intersect at Cape Cod in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Virtually everyone here is addicted to something, whether it be drugs, alcohol, sex, or the risk-taking that comes with participating in or fighting against this dangerous world.

There’s sex, drugs, and violence throughout this gripping series, as flawed “good guys” face off with vicious bad guys as well as one another. To know what’s going on, you need to watch the first two seasons (18 episodes) before the third seven-episode series finale.

This intense crime drama shows how it all impacts the lives and careers of the stellar ensemble cast:



[Monica Raymund](#) (who you might recognize from [Chicago Fire](#)) is Jackie Quinones, a National Marine Fisheries Service Agent in Provincetown. She’s happens to be a lesbian, who’s an alcoholic, and

addicted to drugs – she’s trying to get clean as she joins the local police department and gets obsessed with tracking down and catching drug dealers and sex traffickers.



[James Badge Dale](#) is Massachusetts State Police Detective Ray Abruzzo. He’s Jackie’s friend and a good cop, but has a history of sex addiction, and has no problem breaking the rules if it helps him catch the bad guy. He has an ongoing affair with a confidential informant who is engaged to a major drug dealer he is pursuing.



[Amaury Nolasco](#) is Frankie Cuevas, a drug kingpin whom Jackie and Ray are intent on bringing down. [Riley Voelkel](#) is Renee Segna, an exotic dancer involved in the drug trade, who is engaged to Frankie but is having an affair with Ray. [Louis Guzman](#) is Frankie’s violent cousin and second in command, who does not trust Renee.



[Dohn Norwood](#), as Alan Saintille, A Massachusetts State trooper (and Ray’s partner) assigned to the Cape Cod Interagency narcotics Unit. Ray’s behavior puts him at odds with his much more by-the-book partner.



[Atkins Estimond](#) as Osito, a dangerous drug trafficker who initially works for Frankie as his enforcer, but eventually wants to take over his drug empire.

33



The Brothers Sun (Netflix)

Jan. 2024

As this action crime comedy gets underway, Charles Sun (Justin Chien), a leading member of the Jade Dragons triad gang, fights off a group of unknown assailants in his Taiwan apartment (while he's watching his favorite baking show on TV). His father, Big Sun (Johnny Kou), the head of the Jade Dragons, is also attacked and shot, putting him in a coma. A clandestine group known as the Boxers are trying to destroy the triads and are responsible for the attack on Charles and his father.

Charles goes to L.A. to protect his younger brother Bruce (Sam Song Li) and his mother, Eileen "Mama" Sun (the wonderful Michelle Yeoh), whom he fears will be the next targets. Eileen had taken Bruce to California years earlier, when he was a young boy, to build an ordinary life, safe from the dangerous world of the triads.

Charles is a legend in the triad underworld for his fighting skills. He is nicknamed "Chairleg," because he broke off the leg of a chair to kill an assassin who attacked his parents when he was a teenager. While Charles looks the part of the weapon wielding, hard-fighting triad soldier he is, Bruce has been living a vastly different life for the past 15 years. He's a shy, pre-med student who drives a Lyft on the side for extra cash, and has no idea his father, mother, and brother are among Tapei's most feared gangsters.



Charles reunites with his mother after killing an assassin called the Giant who came to her home to murder her. When Charles and Bruce walk in on Eileen dismembering the Giant's body in their kitchen, Bruce realizes his mom is not who he thought she was. He will do anything to help protect his mother, but he is now in a world he knows nothing about, with none of his brother's well-honed fighting skills. He must adapt fast if he's to survive. He is also shocked to see how adept (and fierce) his "mild mannered" mom is at protecting her family. Several episodes later, when Eileen kills an assassin, Charles says to Bruce, "I didn't know she could fight," to which Bruce replies, "I think there's a lot about mom we don't know."



The series is thrilling, fun, and entertaining, with a perfect mix of comedy and drama. While there is humor sprinkled throughout, they are all playing a dangerous game with deadly consequences. Charles and Bruce are in constant danger, which is often belied by silly (but well-written and funny) banter. The fight sequences are inventive and often spectacular.

Despite strong reviews and viewership, Netflix canceled the show after a single season. While this caused some consternation among fans of the show, another season is not really needed. The story came to a satisfying conclusion, and a second season would be a completely different show (although I would be interested to see what happens to these characters going forward).

32



Murder in a Small Town (Fox)

Sept. 2024

Karl Alberg ([Rossif Sutherland](#)) moves from the big city, where he was a top-notch detective, to the small, idyllic coastal town of Gibsons, British Columbia, to be the new police chief. His new home has secrets lying under the surface, and, as the title indicates, murders that keep washing ashore. This Canadian series is based on L.R. Wright's popular *Karl Alberg* books – it debuted simultaneously in Canada and the U.S.

The series is beautifully shot and the town is inviting (I almost want to move there). The leisurely pace actually makes the show less intense than most crime dramas, but nonetheless enjoyable. Karl Alberg's easy-going style seems to conflict with the notion that he was recently a big-city detective (but maybe that's just because I'm thinking New York or Chicago, rather than Canada). But as is often the case in this type of series, we quickly discover that his observational skills are far superior to anyone else's.

[Kristin Kreuk](#) is Cassandra Mitchell, a local librarian Karl meets through a dating app, who becomes his love interest (and occasional foil). But rather than having the typical will-they-or-won't-they vibe (they already did), the question is can they continue – something happens early on that put's her life in danger and traumatizes her to the point where she has trouble with the idea of dating a cop.



Karl's team includes, Corporal Edwina Yen ([Mya Lowe](#)), Sergeant Sid Sokolowski ([Aaron Douglas](#)), and Constable Andy Kendrick ([Fritz-Klevans Destine](#)) – all are competent, quirky, and fit the mold of what you might expect from a TV version of a small-town police force.

The show is fairly predictable as Karl (and any discerning viewer) figures out who committed the crime of the week, but it's a formula that made [Murder, She Wrote](#), which took place in another unusually crime-heavy small town, so successful.

This is not your typical Fox show (if there is such a thing anymore), and its ratings are middle of the pack, but if you like procedural dramas, this is one of the best on broadcast television.

31



NCIS: Origins ([CBS](#), [Paramount+](#))

Oct. 2024

[NCIS](#) has been one of the longest-running and most popular franchises on television – the original, which debuted in 2003, is still going strong. A spin-off of [JAG](#) (1995-2005), it has spawned several successful spin-offs of its own ([NCIS: L.A.](#), [New Orleans](#), [Hawaii](#), and [Sydney](#)). Now it serves as a lead-in to [NCIS: Origins](#), a prequel that follows the early years of Leroy Jethro Gibbs (played by [Mark Harmon](#) on [NCIS](#) and [Austin Stowell](#) here). This series chronicle's Gibbs' heretofore only hinted at past, when he started his career more than 30 years ago as a newbie special agent on a gritty ragtag team led by NCIS legend, Mike Franks.

For the many fans of [NCIS](#), this series is a winner. As the series opens in 1991, new Probationary Naval Investigative Service (NIS – the precursor to NCIS) Agent Gibbs is still reeling from the murder of his wife and daughter by a vicious member of a Mexican drug cartel. Still processing the trauma and obsessed with getting revenge, the rest of his team tries to keep him balanced as they tackle crimes using the technology of the day and their own smarts (while dealing with issues of their own).

The excellent cast includes:



[Kyle Schmid](#) as Special Agent Mike Franks, a top agent and leader of the team. He's rough around the edges and willing to break the rules if need be, but is a brilliant investigator and fiercely loyal to his unit.

Despite Gibbs failing his psych evaluation, Franks sees something in him and takes a chance by putting on the team. An older Mike Franks was played by [Muse Watson](#) in the original [NCIS](#) series.



[Mariel Molino](#) as Special Agent Lala Dominguez, a former marine (and former partner of Franks) who is a top-notch investigator, determined to stand out in the male-dominated workplace. She has an interesting and complicated dynamic with Gibbs that plays out over the course of

the season. While she feels sorry for his loss and seems to like him, she sees him as competition and potentially having a less-qualified male leap-frog over her in the hierarchy. She is not referred to at all in the original series, so we have no idea where her character is going or what impact she has on Gibbs' life.



[Dianey Rodriguez](#) as Special Agent Vera Strickland, a tough, no-nonsense agent who fights the bureaucracy (and misogyny) to develop methods for profiling suspected serial killers. [Roma Maffia](#) played an older version of her in the original series.



[Caleb Foote](#) as Special Agent Bernard "Randy" Randolph, the team's "golden boy," who is dealing with trauma of his own (related to the death of Gibbs's wife and daughter – and the agent who was assigned to protect them).



[Tyla Abercrombie](#) as Field Operation Support Officer Mary Jo Hayes, the self-described "Head Secretary in Charge."

[Mark Harmon](#) narrates the series, much like [Jim Parsons](#) did on [Young Sheldon](#). It's already been renewed for another season.

Next up, #30-21.