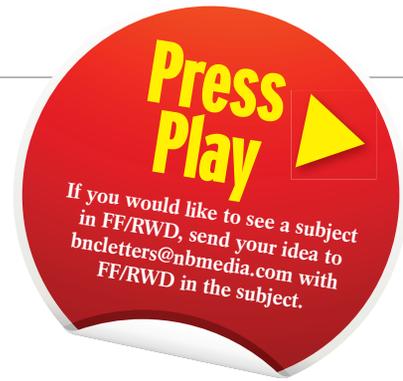


By Jonathan Kuperberg



# The TV Landscape Is Nearly Spy Vs. Spy

As *The Americans* gets set for its season 3 launch on Jan. 28, the spy genre is suddenly as popular as it was in the 1960s and shows no signs of self-destructing in five seconds.

## «RWD

« With its themes of espionage and the threat of nuclear war, the **Cold War** inspired countless television shows. But it was the James Bond films, beginning with *Dr. No* in 1962, that dominated the spy genre in the 1960s and beyond. Bond author **IAN FLEMING** helped create *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, the **NBC** series about a spy agency that ran from 1964-68. *Danger Man*, which originally aired on **CBS** from 1960-62, was revived and reimagined for American audiences in 1964 as *Secret Agent*, with the show adding a theme song and the lead adopting a British accent.



The *Avengers* stars Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg.

« Featuring well-clad, umbrella-toting intelligence man **JOHN STEED** and a rotating group of stylish female assistants, *The Avengers* spanned nearly the entire decade. **ABC** spent an unprecedented \$2 million in 1965 to buy 26 episodes of the spy-fi British series.

« *Mission: Impossible*, starring **PETER GRAVES** as Jim Phelps, director of secret government agent team Impossible Missions Force, originally ran on **CBS** from 1966-73.



Good morning, Mr. Phelps: Peter Graves on CBS' *Mission: Impossible*.

« NBC's *I Spy* in 1965 became the first weekly American TV drama to star an African-American actor, **BILL COSBY**, who won a trio of Emmy Awards for his role. The dramedy aimed to be more realistic than its film and TV contemporaries, often featuring preposterous gadgets and villains. That same year, legendary comedians **MEL BROOKS** and **BUCK HENRY** introduced *Get Smart*, which for five seasons satirized the spy genre during a peak in its popularity.



(Above) Jennifer Garner in ABC's *Alias*; (right) Elisha Cuthbert and Keifer Sutherland in Fox's *24*.



FX's *The Americans* (shown in a black-and-white promo photo) stars Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys as spies posing as a married couple.

« While the 1970s and '80s continued the trend of secret agent-themed shows, including gadget guru *MacGyver*, they were less prevalent in the '90s. Two long-running spy-action series emerged in 2001—*Alias* on **ABC** and *24* on **Fox**.

## FF»

» In 2011, **Showtime** premiered *Homeland*, a CIA-set drama focused on surveillance and paranoia in the post-9/11 world. The show's first season earned six Emmy awards, including trophies for outstanding drama series and its two leads, **CLAIRE DANES** and **DAMIAN LEWIS**.



Claire Danes in Showtime's *Homeland*.

» Other networks have plunged into the spy ring with every twist on the genre. *The Americans*, returning this week on **FX**, focuses on a

pair of KGB agents posing as a married couple in 1980s Washington, D.C. **ABC** doubled down on the public's appetite for the Marvel films with *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* in fall 2013, while **FX**'s long-running animated series *Archer* and its egotistical master spy protagonist offer an extra-dry meta-parody of the genre.



ABC's *Marvel Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* launched in 2013.

» A flurry of new spy shows have hit TV in the past year, among them **AMC**'s **TURN: Washington's Spies**; **Fox**'s *24* re-



NBC's *State of Affairs*.

boot; SundanceTV's *The Honourable Woman*; **BBC** America's Cold War-era throwback *The Game*; and **TNT**'s *Legends*. More recent months have brought *State of Affairs* on **NBC** and *Marvel's Agent Carter* on **ABC**. **NBC** is set to launch *Allegiance* on Feb. 5.

» "It's fundamentally a family drama about people who do not want to be spies, and they're forced into this situation. I thought it was an interesting way into the national security spy world."

—George Nolfi, *Allegiance* executive producer

James Minchin/FX; Showtime; Kelsey McNeal/ABC; Michael Parmelee/NBC