



TRADES

Monday, January 11, 2010

Showtime greenlights Jeremy Irons series

Showtime has anointed a successor to "The Tudors" with a 13-episode order for "The Borgias," a new historical drama starring Jeremy Irons in his first full-time TV series role. The pay cable network made the announcement Saturday during its portion of the winter TCA press tour. "Borgias" is set in Italy in 1492 and follows a powerful crime family headed by patriarch Rodrigo Borgia (Irons). "I can guarantee you've never seen a family quite like this before, and nor could you make up the outrageous twists and turns of their epic saga," Showtime entertainment president Robert Greenblatt said. Michael Hirst, who wrote every episode of "Tudors," will run the project, which originated at DreamWorks TV and Robert Zemeckis' ImageMovers. Neil Jordan, who has been trying to get a "Borgias" feature off the ground for years, will executive produce and direct first two episodes.

'Avatar' wins boxoffice for fourth weekend

Fox's "Avatar" avalanche piled boxoffice higher than any other film for a fourth consecutive weekend, with an estimated \$48.5 million tally in the latest frame producing a \$429 million domestic cume. Doubly deep foreign grosses give James Cameron's sci-fi epic a \$1.34 billion worldwide cume, the second-highest in history after the filmmaker's "Titanic," which cruised to \$1.84 billion in 1997-98. Its domestic total is the seventh-best ever after 24 days of release. The weekend's three wide releases bowed further down the session rankings. Lionsgate's vampire actioner "Daybreakers," starring Willem Dafoe and Ethan Hawke, rung up \$15 million in fourth place. Universal's romantic comedy "Leap Year," starring Amy Adams and Matthew Goode, debuted roughly as expected with \$9.2 million in sixth place.

'24' actor to star in ABC's 'Funny in Farsi'

Iranian-born comedian Maz Jobrani has been tapped to star in the ABC comedy pilot "Funny in Farsi." Another native of Iran, Marjan Nehsat, is set to star opposite Jobrani in the project based on the memoir by Iranian-born author Firoozeh Dumas about growing up in the 1970s in Newport Beach, Calif. Also cast in the pilot, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, is Hrach Titizian. On the period single-camera family comedy, Jobrani will play the dad, Mohammed Sayed Kazem Jazeyeri (aka Kaz), an engineer for an oil company who emigrated with his family from Iran to Newport Beach. Nehsat will play the mother Nazireh (aka Nancy), who finds it hard to assimilate in her new environment. Titizian will play Uncle Mansoor, Kaz's jovial younger brother.

NBC greenlights six drama pilots

After retreating from the drama series genre this season to launch five nights of the ill-fated "The Jay Leno Show" at 10 p.m., NBC is bringing in big drama guns for next fall, greenlighting pilots from David E. Kelley, Jerry Bruckheimer, "House" creator David Shore and "Without a Trace" creator Hank Steinberg. At its TCA presentation Sunday, the network announced it had picked up six drama pilots, in addition to the previously ordered J.J. Abrams drama "Undercovers" and legal dramedy "Rex Is Not

Your Lawyer." The new pickups include Steinberg's remake of the icon British drama "Prime Suspect," Shore's updated version of the classic "The Rockford Files," Kelley's legal drama "Kindreds," the Bruckheimer-produced action procedural "Chase," as well as romantic comedy "Love Bites," from "Sex and the City" alumna Cindy Chupack, and thriller "The Event" from Nick Wauters. Additionally, Abrams has signed on to direct "Undercovers," about a husband-and-wife duo of spies, which he penned with Josh Reims.

Stuart Townsend leaves Marvel's 'Thor'

Stuart Townsend has departed Marvel Comics' movie adaptation of "Thor" because of creative differences, according to sources close to the production. Townsend had been cast as Fandral, an ally of Norse god Thor. He was replaced by Joshua Dallas, according to the two sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record. The cast change came as production was about to begin. Shooting starts Monday on the movie directed by Kenneth Branagh.

Central Talent Booking