



Matt's 10 Best of the Year

BY MATT ROUSH

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From top: Tolman, Freeman, Thornton, and Hanks were all Emmy-nominated for their terrific work.

1 Fargo You betcha we loved FX's sensational miniseries, inspired by the iconic film, which triumphantly mined new depths of icy evil amid heartfelt humanism. Noah Hawley's fable gave fabulous star turns to Billy Bob Thornton (a hit man), Martin Freeman (a mousy murderer), and newbie Allison Tolman as a deputy who stole a meek cop's (Colin Hanks) heart. And ours.

2 The Good Wife In its sixth season, CBS's wonderfully entertaining and engrossing drama of legal, personal, and political morality never stops surprising and shocking us. So much juicy conflict for Alicia (Julianna Margulies): the devastating death of former partner/lover Will Gardner (Josh Charles), a possible jail term for new partner Cary (Matt Czuchry), a turbulent campaign for public office. This show always gets my vote.



Margulies in *The Good Wife*.

3 Jane the Virgin If you're a Jane virgin, here's what you're missing: the season's most delightfully outrageous yet sweetly romantic (in every sense of the word) comedy. The CW hits the critical big time with this exuberant spin on the telenovela, in which every lurid and wacky twist is made credible by the genuine warmth of Gina Rodriguez as Jane, whose surprise pregnancy (the result of an accidental artificial insemination) has given birth to an instant favorite.

4 Game of Thrones How satisfying it can be to watch a few of the bad guys finally bite the Westeros dust. The dragons are bigger and more unruly than ever, and so is the bloody and sprawling plotting as HBO's epic fantasy vividly dramatizes pivotal events in the finest volume (*A Storm of Swords*) of George R.R. Martin's enthralling saga. Long may



FDR: Conquering fear Itself.

those dastardly Lannisters (King Joffrey and grim grandpa Tywin) rot.

5 The Roosevelts: An Intimate History Leave it to Ken Burns, PBS's poet laureate of impassioned historical storytelling, to upstage a mediocre fall season with seven immersive nights of personal and presidential lore, illuminating and humanizing a political dynasty that transformed government through two world wars and the Great Depression. The night devoted to FDR's battle with polio was as moving and uplifting as any classic tearjerker.

6 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon Studio 6B in 30 Rock is TV's giddy party central, and we're so lucky to be invited every night into Jimmy Fallon's playhouse. The genial host transformed what had become one of NBC's stodgier institutions into an anything-goes opportunity for celebrities to loosen up, playing hilarious games (like lip-sync battles)

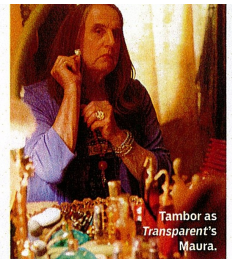


Jeff Daniels cuts loose with Fallon.

or submitting to slapstick stunts. Under Fallon, *Tonight* has become a viral phenom that happily revives the time-honored traditions of true musical-comedy variety.

7 The Americans Spying on Mom and Dad carries potentially lethal consequences in FX's bracingly original espionage thriller. The riveting second season ratcheted the tension up a notch by focusing on the fallout within the family of the suburban Soviet agents and masters of disguise, played with intense subtlety and chameleon virtuosity by Matthew Rhys and Keri Russell. The foundation of lies on which they've built their lives and covert careers has begun to crack, leaving us in breathless suspense.

8 Transparent Jeffrey Tambor graduates from great character actor to sublime leading lady, giving the year's stand-out performance as Maura, formerly



Tambor as *Transparent's* Maura.

Mort, in Amazon's poignantly human comedy of self-realization. Creator Jill Soloway's transcendent empathy extends to Maura's adult kids, each on his or her own rocky, often erotic, journey of discovery.

9 The Normal Heart and Olive Kitteridge A shattering AIDS drama and a memorably quirky character study gave HBO bragging rights once again as the most consistently powerful of TV-movie/miniseries producers. Ryan Murphy's all-star adaptation of Larry Kramer's explosive polemic teemed with sorrow and anger, while Frances McDormand brought feisty, cranky Olive (from Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer-winning novel) to vibrantly uncompromising life.

10 The Affair In another banner year for Showtime—introducing the baroque Victorian-era monster mash of *Penny Dreadful*, delivering strong second seasons of *Masters of Sex* and *Ray Donovan*, and rejuvenating *Homeland* with 24-like vigor in a Pakistani hot zone—the network's boldest drama was also its quietest. In *The Affair*, the illicit lovers (Ruth Wilson and Dominic West, superb) are unreliable narrators of their tempestuous love story, as each episode relives events from their separate perspectives, which rarely jibe. The only truth we're sure of: the pain they've caused their spouses (well played by Maura Tierney and Joshua Jackson).



Wilson and West sneak a moment of private passion during a transformative Montauk summer in *The Affair*.