

The Best Show on TV

by Joe Mulder

"The Office" (NBC) – 2/9/2006 - 4/2/2006
"Huff" (Showtime) – 4/2/2006 - 8/26/2006
"Big Brother" (CBS) – 8/26/2006 - 10/4/2006
"South Park" (Comedy Central) – 10/4/2006 - 11/30/2006
"The Office" (NBC) – 11/30/2006 - 1/14/2007
"24" (Fox) – 1/14/2007 - 4/5/2007
"30 Rock" (NBC) – 4/5/2007 - 4/10/2008
"House" (Fox) – 4/10/2008 - 10/5/2008
"Dexter" (Showtime) – 10/5/2008 - 11/18/2008
"The Shield" (FX) – 11/18/2008 - 11/24/2008
"How I Met Your Mother" (CBS) – 11/24/2008 - 1/8/2009
"30 Rock" (NBC) – 1/8/2009 - 9/9/2009
"Glee" (Fox) – 9/9/2009 - 10/28/2009
"Friday Night Lights" (NBC) – 10/28/2009 - 2/10/2011
"Community" (NBC) – 2/10/2011 - 7/17/2011
"Breaking Bad" (AMC) – 7/17/2011 - 9/29/2013
"Parenthood" (NBC) – 9/29/2013 - present

Look upon Vince Gilligan's works, ye mighty, and despair.

"Breaking Bad" is over. It was one of the best shows ever by almost any measure, and it may in fact mark the high point of our current so-called "Golden Age of Television." It was, for quite a while, The Best Show on TV.

But now it's gone, and so it is my duty to keep my loyal reader(s?) appraised as to the identity of the current Best Show on TV. As I've said before (it may be difficult to remember, as "Breaking Bad" has held the title for so long that I haven't written one of these pieces in a while), this isn't just some list of my favorite TV shows. Keeping such a list would be a rather pointless waste of time and energy. This is a documentation of the Best Shows on TV, and I as an objective observer am simply tasked with alerting the public whenever the title changes hands, whether the title change occurs because a champion retires all but undefeated or because a show comes along and delivers the rest of the competition a knockout blow.

So without further ado, I'm pleased to announce that The Best Show on TV is "Parenthood."

One caveat: I'm only on Season 2 of "Parenthood," and Season 5 just started airing. The show may have cratered without my being aware of it, but I doubt it; "Parenthood" is shepherded by Jason Katims, one of the creative forces behind previous Best Show on TV titleholder "Friday Night Lights," which never came close to dipping in quality (outside of one much-reviled Season 2 story arc that everybody seems OK with ignoring, and that sort of flies by harmlessly when you binge-watch the series).

There are similarities; both "Parenthood" and "Friday Night Lights" are shows about regular people living their regular lives. Both are relatable to just about anyone; you didn't have

to like football to love "Friday Night Lights," and you don't have to have kids (or even parents) to love "Parenthood." Both have large casts and handle them so well that you never grow tired of one plot line at the expense of another. Both are extremely low-concept shows; "football coach coaches football, has family" and "aging couple has four children, several grandkids," as hooks go, don't necessarily carry the OOMPH of "cancer-stricken chemistry teacher becomes embroiled in the seedy New Mexico meth trade when he decides to cook the drug to leave money for his family." But that's fine; as many great TV shows have absurdly simple premises as don't (guy with wife and kids lives across the street from his nosy parents, people hang out in a bar, racist grouch sits in living room chair, there's this hospital).

So "Parenthood" is not going to grab you with a flashy premise, that's for sure. Zeek and Camille Braverman live a relatively comfortable Bay Area life near all four of their children: Adam, Sarah, Crosby and Julia. Each one has their own kids. And that's the show. It's difficult to explain how or why "Parenthood" is so good to people who don't watch, because it doesn't sound like anything. Just know that Jason Katims and his team wring every last drop of emotion and drama and pathos out of every possible family relationship, to the point where you find yourself every bit as invested in cousin Haddie and cousin Amber's fight over a high school boyfriend or Crosby's prickly relationship with Jasmine's mom as you did in the fate of Walter and Jesse when they were kidnapped to Mexico by an insane drug lord.

There's not much more to say. "Parenthood" nails it every single time, and it's so good that with the departure of "Breaking Bad" there wasn't actually a great deal of competition for the title of Best Show on TV.
