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Indies flock to N.Y. TV fest

'Fringe,' 'Times of Tim' to screen

By [SAM THIELMAN](#)

For the New York Television Festival, there's the success you want, and then there's the success you get.

The jury's still out on the fest's delivery on its promise to provide newcomers with indie-financed pilots a gateway into the network television world. Fest faves have landed high-profile meetings and even development deals, but nobody has scored a series pickup yet.

On the other hand, nets love having their series debuts treated like movie premieres as part of the fest.

Last year, the NYTVF showcased three high-profile shows -- ABC's "Pushing Daisies," NBC's "Chuck" and Fox's short-lived "New Amsterdam. This season it was twice as many, with CBS, HBO and CW offering up shows to the fest's Premiere Week section, which begins today and runs through Wednesday.

They won't all have gala preems, but producers are hoping that even screenings will help to build crucial buzz around shows that net execs will be watching come sweeps.

HBO's animated skein "The Life and Times of Tim" will screen at the fest about two weeks before it bows on the paynet Sept. 28.

"We haven't done animation in a long time, so we thought it would be a nice thing to showcase," said Casey Bloys, HBO's co-head of comedy.

"It seems to make sense on a lot of different levels. You hope it's a receptive crowd, but at least you know it's a self-selected crowd -- people are there because they love television."

The New York Television Festival promotes the talent involved in the shows as well, so a big-name get such as Barry Sonnenfeld last year or J.J. Abrams, of Fox's "Fringe," this year can pull in a photo op or two, as well as industry types who want to hear what people like NBC Entertainment co-chairman Ben Silverman have to say about how to make a show. Silverman and William Morris CEO Jim Wiatt will discuss TV development at a Monday NYTVF panel.

"Of our entrants, we're seeing a higher and higher percentage of people who have credits on established shows or have credits in the theater community," said NYTVF's Eben Russell.

All that doesn't change the fact that independently produced TV still has a long way to go before it's ready for primetime. NYTVF founder Terence Gray is still hoping that his annual gathering can help the TV biz become a little bit more of a "a meritocracy."

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