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The fall television season hasn't really begun until NBC begins their Thursday comedy lineup. With the premiers of four major NBC comedies this last week, how does the block fare as they enter a new year and a new season?

The block begins with my most anticipated premier this year, the return of "Community." Season two, for the most part perfect television, ended with two major cliffhangers. First, Pierce Hawthorne's supposed departure from the study group, and second, the unnerving drop in quality in the second half of the season. In this way, the premiere was a mixture of anticipation and nervousness.

"Community," despite its brilliance in single episode narratives, seems to have difficulty in handling longer arcs, quickly abandoning long term character development, giving the show a cyclic nature that serves as its only major flaw.

The premiere, "Biology 101," is at least comfortingly solid. Pierce Hawthorne (Chevy Chase) returns within minutes of the opening Glee-spoof musical number, along with a gentler less evil

personality. This is of course met with suspicion from “Community” fans, as Pierce’s personality fluctuates more sporadically than the funniness of “Saturday Night Live” sketches, but if maintained could be an intriguing shift in the usually inflexible dynamic of the show.

Jeff Winger (Joel Michale) once again goes through his cycle of dickishness, alienation and sudden revelation that we’ve become a little too familiar with, but McHale once again completely sells the emotional roller coaster despite narrative repetition.

While some elements of the episode didn’t work (Abed’s “Cougar Town” withdrawal being only a fraction as funny as it should’ve been), monkey knockout gas, John Goodman’s spiritual domination of Jim Rash, and the promise of Ken Jeong’s character Chang back in a position of authority reminds me why there’s nothing on TV quite like “Community,” and for that it’s worth treasuring.

Comparatively, “Parks and Recreation” starts their new season with confident control, earned by their sudden and recent renovation of their show from “The Office” knock-off to their own charming and hilarious brand of humor. Everyone is feeling the fallout of last season’s flawless finale, Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) has to literally choose between love and career, Ron Swanson (Nick Offerman) has to flee before the impending shadow of his first ex-wife, Tammy , and Tom Haverford (Aziz Ansari) gleefully promotes his useless media conglomerate.

The episode “I’m Leslie Knope” confirms what we already knew last year, that “Parks and Recreation” is self-assured comedy gold, finding its place and existing there without forcing unnecessary drama or resorting to cartoon tactics. Between a perfect parody of recent political sexting scandals and Ron’s miraculous beard growth, the show also clearly defines the path forward, setting Leslie on the path to political office, making of all of Thursday’s premieres, “Parks and Recreation,” the clearest in setting up what we should expect the rest of Fall.

Of course in terms of hype, “The Office” premiere dominated NBC ad space. With Steve Carell leaving “The Office” and with the job of proving it’s continued relevance, NBC made sure to dedicate its slowly deflating ratings powerhouse with plenty of ads generating anticipation of the new office manager.

In the end, it’s a surprise, Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) is a predictable choice considering that of the remaining cast only Ed Helms has been consistently flawless. James Spader also temporarily lends his talents as the new CEO, the equally hyped Robert California. The result? Mixed. The episode

opens with an amusingly brutal take down of the latest worthless Internet fad 'planking' and moves on to the sporadically funny results of California's bizarre presence in the Office.

While Helms sweats blood trying to replace Carell the show seems hell-bent on sabotaging the funny. Pam is pregnant again (due to an undisguisably pregnant Jenna Fischer). 'California' proves to be disappointingly normal despite amusing attempts to convince us otherwise. The episode isn't laughless, but it isn't successful at proving it didn't deserve to be canceled last year.

Despite "Whitney," the NBC line up is an exciting promise of a great new year of comedy. While the summer has been surprisingly kind to us with shows such as "Children's Hospital," "Louie," and "Wilfred" it's just not quite the same as fall TV, making every class just that little bit easier knowing that Thursday is on the way.