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7 things you didn't know about 'Walking Dead'

By MICHAEL GILTZ
Last Updated: 12:19 PM, November 11, 2010
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It was inevitable that the hit series "The Walking Dead" would be renewed this week after only two episodes.

The show's premiere scored 5.3 million viewers — and more than 8 million total when you include the DVR and rerun audience.

For the past few years, cable network AMC, which commissioned the horror series, has dominated the Emmys with shows like "Mad Men" and "Breaking Bad."

But now, "The Walking Dead" has done something the others never did: score big ratings.

So here are some things about this game-changer of a series you never knew to ask:

1 "Did we say six episodes? We meant 16!" AMC executives are probably kicking themselves for their caution in green-lighting just six episodes. Season 2 will have 13 — but no word yet on how soon they'll be able to start filming.



ZOMBIE SLAYERS: Andrew Lincoln (left) and Sarah Wayne Callies star in "Walking Dead," but Jon Bernthal could be the breakout star.

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2 How big can it get? Despite all the nice things critics have written, "Mad Men" and "Breaking Bad" score CW-like audiences — just under 3 million. So, AMC may have just found its "Sopranos" — a critical and commercial triumph. Because the audiences for "Mad Men" and "The Sopranos" tripled and even quadrupled over three or four seasons, AMC should have its heart set on growing "The Walking Dead" into a cable blockbuster. Ten million viewers a week? At least.

3 How much violence can people stomach? "The Walking Dead" didn't pull any punches in the first two episodes. Along with smearing zombie innards all over our hero and draping intestines around his neck, they showed lawman Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) gunning down a little girl zombie in the very first scene. Creator Frank Darabont ("The Shawshank Redemption") said at New

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York City ComicCon he couldn't believe what Broadcast Standards and Practices was letting them get away with. He mimed smoking pot, as if maybe the censors were stoned and

joked, "We're going to make 'Breaking Bad' look like p-----s."

4 Who will be the breakout star? Naturally, Lincoln is the center of the tale as Grimes, a small-town cop who tries to maintain decency in an out-of-control world. Jon Bernthal plays his best friend and fellow cop, Shane (who is sleeping with Grimes' wife) and Sarah Wayne Callies (the doctor on "Prison Break") is Lori, the woman caught between the two. But fans of the comic book love Glenn, so Stephen Yeun should have a blast playing the young pizza delivery guy (and sometime thief) who kind-of welcomed the zombie apocalypse because at least it solved his problem of massive credit-card debt.

5 Why does the show look different? Smart fans may be wondering how the show achieves its distinctive, washed-out but realistic look. Darabont revealed they shoot much, if not all, of the series on Super 16.

6 Who will play The Governor? Perhaps the juiciest role in upcoming seasons is The Governor, the self-styled ruler of a secure, four-block area and a half-mad lunatic who feeds the parts of humans who displease him to the undead and keeps his zombified daughter locked up in chains. Think Ian McShane in "Deadwood" . . . but crueler.

7 Can you stumble, drool, moan and show a fondness for human flesh? In contests for fans every week, AMC is offering walk-on parts as the undead, among other promotional efforts. They're going to need a lot more zombies.

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DEAR INTERNET:

THE WALKING DEAD IS SUCH INTERESTING SHOW. I HAD DOUBTS BEFOREHANDS - MR. FRANK DARAMONT SEEM MORE FAUX-PROFOUND POP PRINCE THAN REAL ARTIST TO ME BUT HE MAKE DEEP QUALITY STORY... ALSO ZOMBIES? SEEM LIKE STUPID JANGLY PUNCHLINE BUT ACTUALLY VERY MEASURED PORTRAYAL AND GOOD NARRATIVE DRIVE IN THIS. PREMIERE SILENCE SUCH DOUBTS WITH GRIPPING BEAUTIFUL THRILLING HOUR OF USA AMERICA TELEVISION! THE 1ST SHOW DID REFLECT TINY HINTS OF WOMEN-HATE AND THE 2ST SHOW DID REFLECT FACILE ANTI-RACISM BUT FUTURE EPISODES PROBABLY AWESOME I AM CONFIDENT. :-)

RESPECTFULLY YOURS,
VLADIMIR ANDREEVICH MAKOGONOV
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