

CBS begins Thursday primetime with comedy for the first time in more than 40 years



Simon Helberg, Jim Parsons, Johnny Galecki and Kunal Nayyar of *The Big Bang Theory*

# LEADING OFF *with* LAUGHS



What's happened since *Gilligan's Island* left CBS' Thursday night in 1966? Between William Shatner, the *Big Bang Theory* cast, space and time, it's all relative ...

**Sept. 26, 1964**

*Gilligan's Island* premieres on CBS. In its second season, the show moves to the 8 p.m. Thursday time slot.

**Sept. 8, 1966**

A new sci-fi series, *Star Trek*, debuts with a young Canadian actor, William Shatner, as its star.



**January 1968**

Shatner releases his album *The Transformed Man*, containing his own unique and infamous spin on songs such as "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds."



**July 20, 1969**

Apollo 11 moon landing.

**Sept. 26, 1972**

Shatner appears in an episode of the original CBS version of *Hawaii Five-0*.



**March 24, 1973**

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Jim Parsons is born.



**April 30, 1975**

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Johnny Galecki is born.

**Oct. 14, 1978**

TV's seven most famous castaways rescued—then marooned again!—in telemovie *Rescue from Gilligan's Island*.

**J**ust sit right back, and you'll hear a tale ... of how CBS is bringing its big laughs back to Thursday night for the first time in decades. This past May, when network Entertainment President Nina Tassler and scheduling guru Kelly Kahl announced changes to the opening hours of primetime on Wednesday and Thursday, the nation's TV critics pointed out a fun fact: The last time CBS showed a sitcom on at 8 p.m. Thursday, it was *Gilligan's Island* in 1965-66. Now this fall, CBS' Thursday lineup is once again showing us the funny. *The Big Bang Theory*, now in its fourth season, is opening the night at 8 p.m. ET/PT, followed at 8:30 by the comedic dream team behind the new sitcom *\$\$#! My Dad Says*—star William Shatner and executive producers David Kohan and Max Mutchnick, creators of the long-running hit *Will & Grace*.

THEORY CAST: SONIA FLEMING/CBS

## Big Bang Hits the Big Time

As CBS ad sales chief Jo Ann Ross explains, Thursday is a key strategic night for advertisers such as movie studios, retailers and car companies, who want to get us viewers into a buying mood before we head out shopping on the weekend. That's why every TV network has always sent its big guns to lead off the bloody Thursday night battle: think NBC's *The Cosby Show* in the 1980s and, most recently, CBS' reality juggernaut, *Survivor*.

Now, with the former Monday night hit *The Big Bang Theory* having "tapped into that cultural sweet spot," as Kahl puts it, CBS sees an opportunity to make a few scheduling swaps. "We've had a terrific run with *Survivor* on Thursday at 8 for 10 years now, and this year we saw an opportunity to grow on both Wednesday and Thursday nights," Kahl explains.

And so *Survivor* will transport the strength of its loyal audience to shore up Wednesday's 8 p.m. lead-off hour instead. Meanwhile, on Thursday—a night that Kahl says CBS and other networks used to "counterprogram" with genres other than comedy to steer clear of NBC's tough former "must-see" competition from *Cheers*, *Seinfeld* and *Friends*—"we see the Thursday 8 p.m. time slot as somewhere we can really make an impact with a show as strong as *Big Bang*."

## It Ain't Broke. But Keep on Fixing It

With its 20th edition *Heroes vs. Villains* last year, *Survivor* continued its customary dominance in the ratings. And in its third season,

**THE BIG BANG THEORY**  
airs **Thursdays at 8 p.m.**  
ET/PT on CBS

**\$#\*! MY DAD SAYS**  
follows at **8:30 p.m.**

*The Big Bang Theory* continued its exponential growth on Monday. So since neither show was broken, why risk fixing them?

Change, Kahl says, is never an easy decision. "But you have to keep a network's schedule growing, and at times take some steps forward. Sometimes, we have to move successful shows in order to get new shows on the air, and find even more hits." And so, he says, the network is doing just that with Wednesday and particularly Thursday, where the move opens up new real estate for the type of multicamera comedy that only CBS continues to do so well.

At CBS' upfront presentation in May, *Big Bang Theory*'s Jim Parsons, in character as Sheldon, became speechless as he shared the stage—and a hug—with his idol, William

Shatner, whose new comedy *\$#\*! My Dad Says* now follows our favorite geeks at 8:30. In TV scheduler terms, *Big Bang* leading into *\$#\*!* provides ideal "flow."

The strategy is just fine by someone like Ross, who points out that the network can squeeze slightly more advertising

time into two half-hour programs than it can in one hourlong show. For her, more ad spots mean more chances to satisfy her ad clients' needs, and more potential revenue for the network.

But ultimately, she says, the best scheduling decisions still come down to quality. And Kahl agrees. "*The Big Bang Theory* is a show that has people buzzing, that has a real cachet about it right now," he says. "And on top of that, it's really, really funny. That's certainly a great way to start the weekend." — *Jim Colucci*



Will Sasso, William Shatner and Nicole Sullivan of *\$#\*! My Dad Says*

### September 2010

*Big Bang Theory* geeks rejoice as they are joined by Shatner in the new comedy *\$#\*! My Dad Says* on CBS' new 8 p.m. Thursday comedy block.



### March 22, 2010

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Sheldon declares himself "the William Shatner of theoretical physics."

### June 25, 2008

Shatner signs up for Twitter account, begins tweeting.



### July 2006

Twitter's public launch.

### March 21, 2004

Shatner makes first appearance on *The Practice* as Denny Crane, a role for which he would win two Emmy awards.



### July 14, 2000

CBS' *Big Brother* debuts, filmed on the former site of the *Gilligan's Island* lagoon, which had been demolished in 1997.

### May 25, 1999

Shatner makes first of two appearances as alien leader Big Giant Head on *3rd Rock from the Sun*.

### April 6, 1998

Priceline.com launches.

### Nov. 18, 1994

Shatner makes his last live-action appearance as Capt. James T. Kirk in the seventh *Star Trek* film, *Generations*.

### Oct. 9, 1989

Shatner publishes *TekWar*, his first in a series of successful sci-fi novels.



**1991**  
World Wide Web launches.

### Dec. 20, 1986

In a sketch-comedy skit, Shatner urges Trekkies to "get a life." Somewhere in Texas and New Jersey, respectively, young Sheldon and Leonard weep.

### Nov. 30, 1985

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Kaley Cuoco is born.



### March 13, 1982

Shatner trades in his phaser for a policeman's gun, stars in *T.J. Hooker*.



### Sept. 18, 1982

Animated series *Gilligan's Planet* debuts on CBS.

### Dec. 9, 1980

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Simon Helberg is born.



### April 30, 1981

*The Big Bang Theory*'s Kunal Nayyar is born.