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## Showtime's 'Tudors' continues reign

### Network gives show an early renewal

By [JOSEF ADALIAN](#)

Showtime is firming up plans for 2008, giving an early renewal to just-launched drama "The Tudors" and greenlighting production on a new Tracey Ullman skein.

Robert Greenblatt, the feevee cabler's prexy of entertainment, has also ordered a second season of the Ira Glass documentary series "This American Life."

Pickups rep a major vote of confidence for "Tudors" and "American Life," which premiered just weeks ago.

Ullman, meanwhile, heads to Showtime after a 14-year association with HBO that saw the production of multiple specials and the Emmy-winning "Tracey Takes On" series.

Her new skein, tentatively dubbed "State of the Union," will offer a satirical look at a day in the life of America. Ullman will create new characters and impersonate famous folks.

According to Showtime, a typical seg could include Arianna Huffington in her Los Angeles boudoir, David Beckham and wife Victoria with the L.A. Galaxy or Nancy Pelosi at her D.C. dermatologist. The same seg might then check in with seniors crossing the border to Canada in search of cheaper prescription meds.

All told, an average episode will feature 20 or more characters, all shot in a highly cinematic fashion.

"I have always loved Tracey Ullman, ever since I was a young development executive at Fox when she was doing the original 'Tracey Ullman Show,'" Greenblatt said. "She is a one-of-a-kind comedienne and sketch-comedy performer, a true artist."

Exec said the skein "will be looking at the wide cross-section of Americans, both celebrating us and sending us up."

Ullman created and will exec produce "State of the Union" via Allan McKeown Presents Ltd. She and McKeown will exec produce, with Stephanie Laing serving as producer.

Showtime will produce at least five episodes of Ullman's new skein, with production set to begin this fall.

As for "The Tudors," the production is the most expensive series in Showtime's history, though a big chunk of the skein's production costs are offset by the sale of international rights. Net will produce 10 episodes for next season, with creator Michael Hirst once again penning all segs.

Greenblatt said the skein "is right on brand for Showtime."

"Michael Hirst has done a masterful job turning history into relevant and entertaining drama," he added, calling the next chapter of the saga "even more compelling" than the current season.

Production on season two will begin next month in Dublin, with Peace Arch and Ben Silverman's Reveille producing.

Second season will document the marriage of Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn, the birth of daughter Elizabeth, the Reformation and (spoiler alert!) the beheading of Boleyn. Jonathan Rhys Meyers will return as star of the skein.

"Tudors" roared out of the gate in the ratings April 1, giving Showtime its highest-rated premiere night in three years (*Daily Variety*, April 4). Show took a dip in week two, but Showtime insiders said cume numbers for this week's replays have the skein quickly making up ground in terms of overall viewership.

Numbers haven't been as spectacular for the TV version of radio skein "This American Life," but Greenblatt said host Glass has created "an American institution" with which he's proud to be associated.

Showtime has ordered six segs of "American Life" for broadcast in 2008.

Renewals, along with the greenlight for "State of the Union," give Showtime its most extensive slate of originals in quite some time.

Net has greenlit new seasons of buzzworthy skeins "Weeds" and "Dexter," along with established success "The L Word."

This summer, it will launch its latest comedy, a David Duchovny starrer that has just been officially christened "Californication."

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