

CALENDAR

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KATIE FALKENBERG Los Angeles Times

DISNEY CHANNEL'S "GIRL MEETS WORLD" stars Danielle Fishel, left, Rowan Blanchard, Sabrina Carpenter and Ben Savage.

DIANE SAWYER STEPS ASIDE AT ABC

BY MEREDITH BLAKE

NEW YORK — In a series of major changes at ABC News, Diane Sawyer will be stepping down from her role as anchor of "World News" after nearly five years on the job and will be succeeded by David Muir, the network announced Wednesday.

In addition, George Stephanopoulos, co-host of the top-rated "Good Morning America" and host of the network's Sunday public affairs program "This Week," has been appointed to the newly created position of chief anchor for ABC News. The new lineup will begin after Labor Day.

According to a note sent by ABC News President James Goldston to staff Wednesday, Sawyer, 68, will continue to report for the network "for many years to come" but will shift to focus on "original reporting, big ideas and interviews for all platforms."

Muir and Stephanopoulos [See ABC, D4]



KEVORK DJANSEZIAN Getty Images

DIANE SAWYER will leave "World News" job.

Worlds collide for kids of '90s and now

'Boy Meets World's' stars are back in 'Girl Meets World'

By YVONNE VILLARREAL >>> World, it's time to meet the girl.

The '90s introduced a generation of viewers to a popcorn-haired squirt named Cory Matthews, and his tight-knit circle — bad boy bestie Shawn Hunter and quirky true love Topanga Lawrence. For seven years, as part of ABC's popular "TGIF" prime-time programming block, the coming-of-age comedy "Boy Meets World" was a fixture in youngster-skewing households.

Now, 14 years later, the world has a new acquaintance to make. On Friday, the Disney Channel will unveil the much-talked-about/tweeted-about/squealed-about "BMW" successor, "Girl Meets World."

Ben Savage and Danielle Fishel, the stewards of "TGIF" royal couple Cory and Topanga, reprise their roles, only this time they are *parents* to the heir-apparent squirt: 11-year-old Riley Matthews (Rowan Blanchard). She is joined in her pre-teenage antics by best friend Maya Hart (Sabrina Carpenter).

"It's a passing of the baton," Savage said recently from the

Disney Channel offices. "It's so much more fun and interesting to now be the adult looking on at all the clowning around."

At a time when networks are gaga for prequels, spinoffs and reboots, "Girl Meets World" presents an interesting strategy: catching up with familiar characters while also trying to land a new generation. But will twentysomethings (and older) tune in with their kids, assuming they have them? Will all the nostalgic excitement translate into decent ratings?

"It really is to be determined," Fishel said. But 12-year-old Blanchard, who was plucked from an open casting call, just wants people to keep an open mind. "I think people are expecting Season 6 or Season 7 of 'Boy Meets World,' and I want them to remember back to Season 1 where it was about kids growing into who they'll be." [See 'World,' D7]

Welcome to the real 'World'

Youth-centric Disney Channel makes room for parents Cory and Topanga in the new "Girl Meets World." D7

AN APPRECIATION

In his roles, the soul of every man

Eli Wallach's talents were grounded in common sense and an interest in others.

CHARLES McNULTY
THEATER CRITIC

Some actors are too good for stardom.

Eli Wallach, who died Tuesday at 98 after a long and distinguished career on stage and screen, was at the top of my list of the best actors I've encountered in the theater — a striking fact given that I was born too late to have seen him in his heyday.

But his intelligence as a dramatic player — his power to illuminate a character at the service of a script — was radioactive even in work that was inferior to his prodigious talent. His brilliance as a widower in "Visiting Mr. Green" elevated a lightweight off-Broadway drama

to something unforgettably moving.

Wallach received many awards, including a Tony for his 1951 performance in Tennessee Williams' "The Rose Tattoo" and an honorary Academy Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2010. But the mark of his greatness as an actor for me was his ability to transmute his own distinctive characteristics into the manner and mannerisms of whatever role he happened to be playing.

From his 1956 film debut in "Baby Doll" to his small, scene-stealing performance in 2010 as an elderly banker with a long memory of financial doom in "Wall Street: [See Wallach, D5]

A true chameleon

Here are 10 memorable movie roles from Eli Wallach's long and storied career. D3



CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

ELI WALLACH, shown in 2010, learned from and inspired Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan during his decades-long career in theater and film.

BET EXPERIENCE

Maxwell is back, finally

He's got a new tour and — he promises — a new album this year.

BY GERRICK D. KENNEDY

Before a word is even said, Maxwell already knows the first thing everyone wants to ask him. "When is the album coming," he says with a laugh.

"It's a good question, because it means people care," he says, speaking by phone from his Las Vegas hotel after a recent gig. "So I understand."

The revered soul singer (born Gerald Maxwell Rivera) has made a career of crafting elegant and seductive R&B rooted in smooth jazz and funk, which since the '90s has yielded the hit albums "Urban Hang Suite," "Embrya" and "Now." But in recent years, he's become best known for pulling one of pop music's most frustrating disappearing acts.

In 2009, Maxwell issued "BLACKsummers'night," his first album in eight years. [See Maxwell, D4]

What would Homer think?

Rogue Machine boldly reimagines a familiar tale in "Penelope." D5

Comics D8-9
TV grid D10

He'll be at BET festival

[Maxwell, from D1] The first in a planned trilogy, the album was one of the year's most lauded releases...

Five years later, is Maxwell any closer to a comeback? Finally, the answer is yes.

Although there's still no firm release date for a new album, the singer is, at least, back on the road.

Mention how long the wait has been since "BLACKsummers'night," and Maxwell will tell you that he's not counting.

"Maybe that's a compliment, when people add the time," says the Brooklyn-based singer.

"They don't understand I'm not getting songs written for me. [People] aren't sending me tracks.

In the meantime? Maxwell has been living life. "You can't produce constantly and you didn't do anything," he says.



KEVIN WINTER/Getty Images

MAXWELL performs at the 2014 BET Awards. He's launching the 2014 BET Experience this weekend.

2014 BET Experience at L.A. Live

Who: Maxwell, Jill Scott, OutKast, Rick Ross, ASAP Rocky, Mary J. Blige, Trey Songz, Jennifer Hudson, Future and the Roots

Where: Staples Center and Club Nokia

When: Friday to Sunday

Tickets: Single-day tickets to Staples Center series are \$39.50 to \$149.50...

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much, if anything, about the new album.

"We're just going to shut it down and put it out. I feel good about it," he says.

He's arguably earned the right to be cagey about his projects. Once dubbed the "Marvin Gaye of the '90s," Maxwell — like Erykah Badu, D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill and Jill Scott — was part of a wave of acts seen as soul revivalists with works that infused jazz, funk and African elements into R&B, birthing the new-soul genre.

Maxwell's comeback comes at a time when the genre has again been shifted by forward-thinking new voices.

"I'm not a child. I don't understand the intricacies and delicacies of certain trends, nor do I feel like I should adhere to them.

"You're always trying to redefine yourself. I'm always trying to upgrade and mess with the sound and change how I look.

"I bet you as soon as this one comes out, next year [people] will be, like, 'So when's the next one?'" he says with a laugh.

Maxwell will use his time on the road to put the finishing touches on the album.

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ABC promotes Muir and Stephanopoulos

[ABC, from D1] opoulos had both been considered likely candidates to succeed Sawyer, whenever she decided to step down from "World News."

On Wednesday, some media observers suggested that the moves mark the further diminishment of the once-vaunted role of the evening news anchor.

"It seems to me the message ABC is sending its viewers by having Muir be junior to Stephanopoulos is that if you want serious news, don't look to the evening news," said TV news analyst Andrew Tyndall.

Kentucky native Sawyer joined ABC News in 1989 and succeeded Charles Gibson at "World News" in 2009, after an extended period of turnover that began with the illness and death of longtime anchor Peter Jennings in 2005.

Gibson became sole anchor in May 2006 but stepped down just three

years later. By then, Sawyer had been co-anchor at "Good Morning America" for 10 years and was one of the network's best-known news personalities.

For a short time before Katie Couric's much-hyped stint at "CBS Evening News" concluded in 2011, two out of the big three network news anchors were women, but Muir's ascension will mark a return to the status quo of solo white male anchors at the legacy broadcasters.

Under Sawyer, the broadcast, which is No. 2 in the ratings overall with a season-to-date average of 8.1 million viewers, has nearly caught up to ratings leader "NBC Nightly News With Brian Williams," narrowing the overall gap to under a million viewers.

In recent months, Sawyer has also edged out Williams in the all-important 25- to 54-year-old demographic, winning May sweeps for the first time in seven years by a margin of 106,000 viewers in the age group.

But Sawyer has also been criticized for a perceived shift toward softer news and so-called infotainment — what Tyndall has decreed as the "Disneyfication" of "World News."

ABC has radically cut back on the amount of hard news and increased its coverage of weather, human interest, celebrities, social me-

dia show business and sports," Tyndall said, though he noted that the change really did not take place until several years into Sawyer's reign at the broadcast network.

Despite her ratings successes, Sawyer began to express interest in a new role to Disney/ABC Television Group's co-president, Ben Sherwood (then president of ABC News), late last year, according to Goldston.

Muir, 40, who is the weekend anchor of "World News" and co-anchor of the news-magazine "20/20," will take over the weekday broadcast on Sept. 2. He will also continue to anchor "20/20" with Elizabeth Vargas.

In his newly created position, Stephanopoulos will be the lead anchor for live coverage of breaking news and other major events and will also continue at "This Week" and "Good Morning America."

The 53-year-old got his start as a Democratic strategist before moving into journalism and is seen as adept at both serious news as well as the lighter fare that has become a "Good Morning America" hallmark.

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HEIDI GUTMAN/Associated Press

DAVID MUIR, left, will replace Diane Sawyer as "World News" anchor. James Goldston, right, says George Stephanopoulos will be chief anchor of ABC News.

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