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## 9-1-1's Angela Bassett Says Don't Count Out a Ryan Murphy Twist

Or is this a "normal" Ryan Murphy show?

[Tim Surette](#) Jan. 2, 2018 at 5:09 p.m. PT

It only took three days into the new year for prolific producers [Ryan Murphy](#) and [Brad Falchuk](#) to get another new series on the air. The delightfully deviant creators of *American Horror Story* already have three series on television and are back at it again with [9-1-1](#), a new Fox drama that follows the complicated lives of first responders on the job and in their equally stressful personal lives.

But in one of Murphy's most startling twists yet, *9-1-1* is much more in the vein of traditional television than his previous efforts. Gone are the killer clowns and witches of *American Horror Story*, nonexistent is the bloody tongue-and-cheek humor of his last network effort *Scream Queens* and nowhere to be found is the enhanced reality of true crime that made the experiment *American Crime Story* such a huge success. Instead, Murphy and Falchuk settle back down to Earth with... a procedural? Yep, but it's their own take on the tried-and-true television genre, and it may just work.

"It's a procedural with a bit of a twist," star [Angela Bassett](#) tells TV Guide. "These heroes are coming from mundane circumstances that we all have to deal with, so it's just twisting the procedural element just a bit."

A stellar cast -- par for the course for Murphy these days as his projects draw big talent with ease -- is led by former Murphy muse [Connie Britton](#) (*Friday Night Lights*) as a 911 dispatcher who's weighed down at home with an ailing mother, [Peter Krause](#) (*Six Feet Under*) as a firefighter recovering from addiction and Bassett, another Murphy collaborator on *American Horror*

*Story*, as a tough cop whose marriage smashes into an obstacle that may destroy it.

These characters' problems, which will be relatable to many and are *just* different enough from what you see on neighboring network procedurals to feel fresh, work largely because they're in the capable hands of these stellar actors. Britton elicits sympathy as she escapes her home prison to work the emergency phones, Krause turns alcoholism into a smoldering past better than a younger, more chiseled actor could and Bassett is her usually *en fuego* self as a wife betrayed. And a common theme is that these characters use their dangerous jobs as a means to escape their personal problems.

"You wrap up those outcomes [on the job] but you come home to drama situations that carry on and on that aren't as neat as putting out a fire, or saving a life or resuscitating someone," Bassett says of the characters. And it's true; Britton's dispatcher would rather have someone else's life in her hands than her own mother's, something that will be mined for personal drama down the line.

When these heroes are on a call, Murphy makes the most out of crafting some atypical 911 emergencies and ratcheting up the tension. In the pilot, a run-of-the-mill home invasion is preceded by a reptile-related 911 call and a situation with a newborn baby that I never thought was possible, adding more of that slight twist to the genre to remind you that the creator of *Nip/Tuck* is pulling the strings. There's hope that even if you know these handful of problems will be solved by our heroes each week (a must for any procedural) they'll at least be weird enough to not make things boring, and boring is something the pilot manages to avoid with ease thanks to a brisk pace.

Also making *9-1-1* different from other procedurals is the fact that the series encompasses multiple branches of emergency responders rather than those folks in Chicago who split up their procedurals into three (at one time four, R.I.P. *Chicago Justice*) individual series. This means that we might not always see these acting heavyweights sharing as many scenes as we'd like, but that also means one of them is almost always dominating a scene on screen, and because of the titan names mentioned above, that's a good thing.

This is less of an ensemble and more of a mash-up of three shows that frequently crossover with each other. In fact, Bassett says she and Britton hardly share a scene together through the first five episodes, unless you count talking on the phone.

The real question is which direction *9-1-1* will steer toward as it moves forward. Will it embrace Murphy's obviously odd tendencies or will it succumb to the comforts of safe broadcast television? The pilot shows possibilities of both, but just because *9-1-1* feels more standard than what you're used to from Murphy, don't count out something turning the show on its head. Is there a mind-blowing Murphy twist coming? Someone who would know isn't counting it out.

"I haven't seen it yet, we've only done five episodes," Bassett tells TV Guide. "But if past history is an indicator of the future, then I would bet on it."

*9-1-1* debuts Wednesday, Jan. 4 at 9/8c on Fox.