

# Local series kicks off Vidfest

**SCREENING:** Four hours of *Sanctuary* on deck

BY GLEN SCHAEFER  
MOVIE REPORTER

That *Sunset Boulevard* line, where the aging actress laments that the pictures got small, seems prophetic more than 50 years later.

An explosion of digital media — including video games, digital animation and web-based visual content — is what propels Vidfest, Vancouver's annual industry conference for creators and producers of the bits that go into those and other digital media. Vidfest has teamed with the Vancouver International Film Festival this year for an event that precedes next week's start of the larger festival. Vidfest runs from Saturday to next Tuesday at the Vancouver International Film Centre.

The event includes international business matchmaking, trend-spotting sessions, a recruiting fair, creative seminars — and glimpses of the digital picture so far.

A highlight will be a marathon four-hour screening of the Vancouver-made, web-based sci-fi series *Sanctuary*. Con-



Emilie Ullerup, Amanda Tapping and Robin Dunne in *Sanctuary*.

ceived by Martin Wood and Damian Kindler, who were part of the brain-trust behind the Vancouver-produced *Stargate: SG-1*, the web series stars *Stargate* alum Amanda Tapping as a seemingly immortal doctor who cares for a menagerie of creatures — werewolves, mermaids, spooky little boys — while battling across time with Jack the Ripper. The actors did their work on bare sets, with digital backgrounds added later, and the series was offered by subscription on the web. The story is pulpy comic-book stuff, and the production's digital seams show every once in a while, but it's an early step toward

ering small-screen stories. The *Sanctuary* screening starts at 6 p.m. Sunday.

Other Vidfest events:

- Festival awards ceremony and opening gala, 7 p.m. Saturday.

- Speakers including Mark Verheiden, co-executive producer and writer for *Battlestar Galactica*; and Paul Chadwick, writer of *The Matrix Online*, Monday.

- An international partnering forum with a keynote speech by Disney-Pixar producer John Walker (*The Incredibles*), Tuesday.

Info at [www.vidfest.com](http://www.vidfest.com)

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# Tony alive and well for 24's new season

**TV:** Premiere slated for Jan. 13



CARLOS BERNARD

The Fox network has set the premiere date for the upcoming season of *24* and announced the return of a beloved character previously left for dead.

Following the trend established over the past two years, *24* will launch its seventh day with a two-night premiere event. The season will kick off on Sunday, Jan. 13 with two hours starting at 8 p.m. before settling into its regular time period with a new episode at 9 p.m. the following night.

From there, *24* will stay on Mondays at 9 p.m., airing original episodes into June.

While the premiere date is bound to be exciting for *24* fans, that's nothing compared to the first official confirmation of the return of Tony Almeida. The CTU veteran, played by Carlos Bernard, was one of Jack Bauer's main allies over the show's first four seasons, but the character was left unceremoniously dead at the hands of a terror suspect in Day 5.

"Tony's uncertain fate near the end of Day 5 left the door open for his return," says executive producer and show-runner Howard Gordon. "And since there was no silent clock at the conclusion of his last appearance — the *24* tribute to a major char-

acter's demise — we always kept this as a possibility."

Although Tony's fate didn't appear so uncertain at the time, fans have kept alive the hope of the character's eventual return. Producers admitted that one possible ending for the show's sixth season featured Tony showing up as a cliffhanger.

Instead, Fox just says that Tony's arrival will coincide with the beginning of Jack's seventh day, which will move the show's action from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C.

Other new additions to the *24* cast this season include Cherry Jones, Janeane Garofalo and Colm Feore, plus Annie Wersching, Jeffrey Nordling, John Billingsley and Rhys Coiro.

Although CTU has been disbanded as the season begins, the characters played by Mary Lynn Rajsakub and James Morrison will be back.

— Zap2it.com

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