

Table with columns for time slots (3:00-1:30) and rows for various broadcast stations (PBS, KTVI, NBC, etc.) listing programs and their details.

Yeun's The Heart Of The 'Dead'

BY GINA MCINTYRE © 2013, Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — On a sidewalk across Wilshire Boulevard from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Steven Yeun, one of the stars of "The Walking Dead," was handing out refreshments to passersby just before lunchtime.



Yeun

The actor stood by, helping visitors puzzle over the menu, strongly recommending the spicy pig "sammich" with a side of the duck fat fries. When it comes to potatoes, glistening and golden, studded with garlic and rosemary, he noted, it's hard to go wrong.

Yeun's amiable nature is familiar to fans of AMC's hit zombie series. As Glenn Rhee, he functions as a likable everyman, the closest thing to a romantic hero in an unrelentingly brutal apocalyptic world. "Steven is the heart of the show," said Glen Mazzara, the "Walking Dead" executive producer who's set to leave the series at the end of this season.

THURSDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT FEBRUARY 21, 2013

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It's there that Yeun's character was beaten and his girlfriend Maggie (Lauren Cohan) sexually assaulted after being abducted while scavenging for supplies. Having escaped with their lives, Glenn is primed to exact revenge on the Governor for his crimes.

"It's a heavy season for everyone," Yeun said. "But for Glenn, I love that they're continuing to grow a character. They're continuing to have him complete his arc, to keep that trajectory. He starts being self-aware and realizing that it's not just about living for yourself, it's also about living for the people you love, and when you love somebody, that really opens you up."

With a story line designed to explore the ways in which human cruelty can be scarier than the actions of hungry hordes of zombies, Glenn's presence keeps the narrative from teetering into despair. He's a relatable good guy who doesn't carry the same maddening burden of grief as most of the other characters.

The darkness of the series has only served to inspire a passionate and growing fan base. Sunday's return, opposite the Grammy Awards, drew 12.3 million viewers and set a basic-cable record in the key demographic of adults ages 18 to 49. That beat the series' previous record of 10.9 million for its third season debut last October, according to Nielsen.

It's made for quite the calling card for the 29-year-old Yeun, the son of South Korean immigrants. His father gave up a career in architecture to move his family from Seoul to Troy, Mich., in search of opportunity for his boys. Growing up, Yeun played guitar and sang in church and was heading toward a career in medicine when he became involved with an improv group during his freshman year at Kalamazoo College.

"I was like, 'Look how cool everyone looks up there, how much fun they're having,'" Yeun recalled. "Something in my body changed in that moment to be like, 'I think I want to do this.'"

He hatched a plan to move to Chicago to pursue acting after graduation, though he made a point to seek his parents' blessing.

"I felt like I've needed to ask my parents up until about four

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