

As 'SNL' Season Ends, Signs Of A Shift

BY JAKE COYLE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK — How can "Saturday Night Live" possibly replace (fill in the blank)? ... "Impossible!" said some in 2006 when Tina Fey, Chris Pennell, Horatio Sanz and Rachel Dratch headed for the door...

But in their wake grew one of the most versatile, multi-threat casts in "SNL" history, one that firmly established its own "SNL" era. Kristen Wiig, Andy Samberg, Bill Hader and Jason Sudeikis all became cast members in the 2005-2006 season...

At the time, "SNL" creator and executive producer Lorne Michaels pronounced them "the wave of the future" and Fey likened herself to a senior seeing "exciting freshmen" arrive...

Wiig, Samberg and Sudeikis have been reported to be leaving, though Michaels has said any decision will wait until the summer. With a presidential election looming...

Of course, the 2008 election season was a historic one for "SNL," one that saw record ratings for the show as Fey returned — to much fanfare — to play Sarah Palin...

A transition period, whether sooner or later, seems on the horizon. Perhaps more than any previous cast, this one has already expanded considerably from the show.

Wiig, of course, starred in and co-wrote the hit "Bridesmaids," but even before that had notable roles in "Friends With Kids," "Paul," "Adventureland" and "Knocked Up"...

Hader, who played Wiig's husband in "Adventureland," co-starred in "Superbad" and has numerous projects lined up, including a bit as Andy Warhol in the upcoming "Men in Black III"...

The typical path used to be to exit "SNL" with a film based on a popular character — as Bill Forte did recently with the box-office disappointment "MacGruber"...

With a cast of half-a-dozen stars, there hasn't always been a lot of airtime for younger cast members. Most avid viewers would like to see more of featured player Jay Pharoah...

But this season has made clear

MONDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT MAY 21, 2012. Table with columns for time slots (3:00-1:30) and rows for broadcast stations, pay channels, and cable stations.

TUESDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT MAY 22, 2012

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