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***Les Revenants*: a television triumph which failed on return**

The Canal Plus television series *Les Revenants* proved a massive success in 2012, attracting 1.4m French viewers on average in its first season. Based on a recent French source film of the same name, the Canal Plus version maintains the key theme of the dead returning to life, but shifts from the arena of municipal response and social organisation in a realist mode to questions of psychology, mystery and dread in a mode inspired by the resurgent French horror genre in cinema, and by the long-standing European tradition of the Romantic sublime. In the series' production, Canal Plus balanced established value with risk, mobilising a cast with strong cinematic pedigree (including Frédéric Pierrot and Anne Consigny, plus in season two Laurent Lucas and Aurélien Recoing) and yet also taking the risk of backing a writer/director (Fabrice Gobert) from the field of cinema not TV (and who had made only one long *métrage*) on a very expensive project combining remote location shooting with special effects.

This paper will explore the production values of the series. It will compare *Les Revenants* to the French horror genre in cinema, and will examine the reasons for show's success in France and abroad (broadcast rights sold to 114 countries), as well as for the marked decline in viewers for the second season (down to 600,000 maximum). Finally, it will analyse the contrasting practice and rhetoric between Canal Plus and the series' co-producers Haut et Court (the "industrial" vision of the former against the "artisanal" approach of the latter) as a major factor in both the series' huge appeal and the ultimate inability to capitalise on its initial success.