

SEED THE SERIES BUDGET



Until we have an experienced television producer and a visual effects house secured, it's hard to know exactly what the budget will be for a show like **SEED**. But we feel reasonably comfortable **estimating it to be about \$4 million per episode**.

The following quotes are from industry professionals analyzing the current state of making television shows in the same or similar genre as **SEED**.

In a 2010 article titled **"Weighty Dramas Flourish on Cable"**¹ the *New York Times* wrote:

*The Sony Pictures Television studio, for example, which produces both "Justified" and "Breaking Bad," generates more hours of drama for cable channels now than it does for broadcasters, even though cable networks pay less — closer to **\$1 million an episode** — than the **\$1.5 million** networks pay to license shows.*

*So the cable shows are produced at lower costs — closer to **\$2 million** an episode on average, as opposed to about **\$3 million** for network shows.*

This episodic television budget of \$2 million to \$3 million came up a lot in our initial research (from 2010 to 2012), when Rob first began putting this Business Plan together for **SEED**. But it didn't take long for those numbers to start climbing. Take this 2014 Gizmodo article, titled **"Low Budget TV Shows That Are Better Than Most Huge Blockbuster Series"**² for instance:

*Television has always been an expensive medium, with **Lost** having an estimated per-episode budget of **\$4 million**, and **Game of Thrones** clocking in at a whopping **\$6 million**. And sometimes, these hugely expensive shows fail. But here are 10 of the best science fiction and fantasy shows, which were made for surprisingly low budgets.*

*Even outside of extremes like **Lost**, **Fringe** or **Thrones**, it's rare to find a science fiction/fantasy show that comes in under **\$1.5 million** an episode today. We may talk about how CW shows are low-budget, but even **Supernatural** costs something in the low **\$2 millions**. It's estimated that a one-hour scripted broadcast drama costs about **\$3 million per episode** to produce, while a cable drama costs about **\$2 million**.*

In September of 2017, *Variety* published an article titled, **"TV Series Budgets Hit the Breaking Point as Costs Skyrocket in Peak TV Era."**³ In it they said:

*The estimates on the cost of content that emerged from these interviews peg the typical range of the production budget for high-end cable and streaming dramas at **\$5 million-\$7 million** an hour, while single-camera half hours on broadcast and cable run from **\$1.5***

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/business/media/05cable.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

² <https://io9.gizmodo.com/low-budget-tv-shows-that-are-better-than-most-huge-bloc-1670583186>

³ <https://variety.com/2017/tv/news/tv-series-budgets-costs-rising-peak-tv-1202570158/>

SEED THE SERIES BUDGET

million to more than \$3 million. With the exception of HBO, which made its mark with lavish productions, that's a significant increase, during just the past five years, over what had been \$3 million-\$4 million for cable dramas and around \$1 million-\$1.5 million for single-camera half hours.

*And Netflix often exceeds the new, higher averages. The first season of its supernatural sensation "**Stranger Things**" was shot to look like a 1980s Steven Spielberg movie and came with a price tag of **\$6 million** an episode for season one, rising to **\$8 million** in season two.*

* * *

*But Netflix is far from alone in its aggressive spending. All the streaming services are ponying up bigger upfront commitments and budgets, raising floor prices for all networks. Amazon is laying out **\$8 million** on action drama "**Jack Ryan**" and **\$5 million per half hour** for "**The Tick**," the superhero comedy with lots of visual-effects shots that also films largely on location in pricey New York.*

* * *

*For broadcast networks, the high end is roughly **\$4.5 million** (with most shows coming in about \$1 million below that). ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox are still struggling to adjust to an environment in which they're not the first stop (or even the second) for hot new projects.*

DigitalSpy.com wrote an article in January of 2019 titled, "**The 18 most expensive TV shows of all time – ranked: It's not just Netflix spending the big bucks**".⁴ Here are just a few shows mentioned, which would be similar to **SEED** in terms of content and genre:

Fringe

*Back in 2012, the then-president of Fox admitted that madcap sci-fi thriller **Fringe** was "an expensive show" – no kidding, it's believed to have cost **\$4 million per episode**, with the feature-length pilot clocking up a whopping **\$10 million**.*

Lost

*Lost is also said to have cost **\$4 million per episode**, but its pilot apparently cost between **\$10 and \$14 million**. That was largely due to the expense of purchasing, shipping, and dressing a decommissioned airliner to represent Flight 815's wreckage.*

Altered Carbon

*Figures are unavailable for Netflix's futuristic sci-fi set in a world where humans can download their personalities into different bodies, but some estimates put it as high as **\$7 million per episode**.*

Looking at current market trends as well as the sort of special effects driven, CGI intensive production **SEED** will be, we believe it is reasonable to estimate our episodic budget to be in the \$4 million range.

⁴ <https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/ustv/g24696/most-expensive-tv-shows-budget/?slide=1>

SEED THE SERIES BUDGET



TOTAL BUDGET **\$3,564,567**

ABOVE-THE-LINE COSTS **\$1,095,316**

Executive Producers



David Shore \$75K
Mark Johnson \$25K
Tommy Moran \$42.5K

Shore (*House*) and Gilligan (*Breaking Bad*) shared "created by" credit, but Shore was the active showrunner on *Battle Creek* and was paid accordingly. Johnson, Moran and the team of *Friend* and Lerner served as additional executive producers.



Russel Friend & Garrett Lerner \$48K
Vince Gilligan \$35K

Cast



Josh Duhamel \$150K
Dean Cain \$77.5K
Janet McTeer \$60K
Kal Penn \$60K
Aubrey Dollar \$45K

Producer and Director



Esta Spalding \$35K

Veteran on-the-ground producer Spalding (*The Bridge*, *Masters of Sex*) was brought in on the pilot and produced five episodes. Singer directed the pilot (receiving a director fee and what the budget calls a "royalty"), entitling him to a fee and credit as an executive producer on remaining episodes.



Bryan Singer \$49.8K

BELOW-THE-LINE COSTS **\$2,469,251**

Biggest Production Costs		
Locations \$246,291	Transportation \$160,000	Set construction \$109,437
Extra talent \$108,337	Set operations \$104,712	Camera \$102,379

The pilot's 15-day shoot in Los Angeles generated \$1,614,712 in production period costs, including everything from lighting and makeup to extras and fees for vehicles and animals (\$12,000). Above are the six largest budget lines during that period (excluding talent and other above-the-line costs).

Postproduction Period Alone	
Music.....	\$86,500
Film editing.....	\$51,590
Film and laboratory.....	\$47,150
Postproduction sound.....	\$40,010
Visual effects.....	\$25,000
Main and end titles.....	\$1,500
TOTAL	\$251,750

Music was the most expensive part of the pilot's postproduction budget, especially since the episode did not feature extensive visual effects or elaborate main titles.

The picture to the left is from a 2015 Hollywood Reporter article titled, "*Budget Breakdowns: What a Typical Movie and TV Pilot Really Cost to Make Now (and Why)*"⁵

It is easy to see where such a budget is "bloated" and full of Hollywood ego. However, this does give us a generally good idea what the "going rates" are these days.

We believe we will save money across the board when it comes to the Above the Line costs as this will be an independent project, without so many "chief big wigs" taking huge chunks of the pie.

At least in the beginning, the goal would be to keep the Above the Line costs below \$1 million. This can be achieved by not having so many high-priced people in the Executive Producer category and by hiring lesser known actors and/or hiring well-known actors, but cutting down on the

number of days we'll need them. The latter can be one of the particularly beneficial reasons to go all CGI. If we get our act together in Pre-Production, we can shoot and record all of the actors

⁵ <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/budget-breakdowns-what-a-typical-827862>

SEED THE SERIES BUDGET

in the motion capture studio – primarily to capture both their voices and emotive facial expressions. Since everything will be CGI, character body mechanics can be done with staff and stunt people later for a fraction of the cost of using the actual actors.

As for the Below the Line costs, the **Battle Creek** budget showed their biggest expenses to be in the categories of locations, transportation, set construction, set operations and camera. Nearly all of this goes away if we have one centralized, motion capture studio. There would be minimal construction costs by comparison and everything else will be CGI. This is not to say that CGI is cheap though. What **Battle Creek** spent on the above will likely be what we'll be paying our 3D artists and animators. In the long run, our expenses in this category will get cheaper, as our CGI library of 3D assets grow. The more we have done, the less we'll have to do. But for now, we believe \$2 million to \$3 million is a reasonable Below the Line production budget. And our Post Production costs will likely be comparable to theirs (minus the Film and Laboratory expenses). The difference being that Visual Effects will be more in the Production side than in the Post-Production period as the whole thing will be Visual Effects.

We are hopeful and believe that it is more than possible to raise the budget for **SEED** through crowd-funding – especially given the recent success of another crowd-funded TV series called, **The Chosen**. Dallas Jenkins (son of Jerry Jenkins of the **Left Behind** novels) partnered with VidAngel studios to launch the most successful crowd-funding campaign of all time (for a Film/TV project),⁶ raising over \$11 million from more than 16,000 people to shoot the first four episodes of their planned multi-season TV series about the life of Christ.⁷

Story about the life of Jesus emerges as largest crowdfunded entertainment in history

"When we started this whole thing I'd be impressed if we brought in \$800," Jenkins told Fox News.⁸ "The notion that we could start from scratch and shatter the all-time crowdfunding record was ludicrous, but this whole year has gone to show that there's a passion for something different."



You can learn more about this project at TheChosen.TV and on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/InsideTheChosen/>.

Again, we won't know the exact numbers until we are able to hire an experienced television producer and visual effects house to do an actual breakdown of the scripts, but with all of this in

⁶ <https://medium.com/@catapoolt/top-10-highest-crowdfunded-movie-projects-you-can-not-afford-to-miss-354ffa2853ff>

⁷ <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/lindsay-elizabeth-duce/16-000-christians-rally-together-and-raise-10-million-to-fund-tv-show-about-the-life-of-christ.html>

⁸ <https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/story-about-the-life-of-jesus-largest-ever-crowdfunding-campaign-for-a-tv-show>

SEED THE SERIES BUDGET

mind, we have an estimated budget of at least \$12 million for the three-part Pilot Episode. And ideally, to really sell the series, we should include the fourth episode, as it is the first episode following the Pilot, which effectively sends the characters into the beginning of Act 2 in Season One's story arc. **Therefore, we are seeking a minimum of \$4 million for the first episode and \$15 million to launch the series.**

Believe it or not, George Lucas launched a multi-billion dollar media empire with about the same budget (actually a little less) back in 1977.⁹ Entire generations were influenced by what he created and even today, this influence is still felt all over the world.

When considering the current state of the industry and the fact that even the independently produced, crowd-funded TV series *The Chosen* cost \$10 million for four episodes,¹⁰ we think \$15 million is a reasonably conservative number for what we are attempting to do with *SEED the series*.

The point being – if they could do it, so can we!

⁹ <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=starwars4.htm>

¹⁰ It is our opinion that the \$10 million budget for *The Chosen* is either quite bloated (if it was just for the production of the first four episodes) or it must include the funding for advertising, marketing and possibly the production of more episodes. We say this because, while the production value of the first four episodes is quite good, the story is about the life of Jesus, depicting people in peasant robes and Roman armor in very limited settings. So, it's hard to imagine it costing \$10 million just to do that. By contrast, the 10 hour mini-series *The Bible* cost \$20 million and was *far more* epic in scale:

<http://www.davidpaulkirkpatrick.com/2013/01/15/roma-downey-and-mark-burnett-bring-the-bible-to-the-screen/>