Earlier this year, television critic Tim Goodman noted that television has been experiencing a renaissance of sci-fi, fantasy, and supernatural programming over the last few years. Indeed, many studios have begun producing more sci-fi and fantasy productions as many cable channels and streaming platforms desire to air the next Game of Thrones (HBO, 2011-present). Last year, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos reportedly demanded his studios bring him his own Game of Thrones, instigating a major shift in the streaming giant’s development slate, including production on at least four new sci-fi series (Lazarus, Snow Crash, Ringworld, Culture) and two new fantasy series (Wheel of Time, The Dark Tower). Additionally, Amazon is positioned to spend an unprecedented $1 billion on its upcoming five-season Lord of the Rings small-screen project by the time series production wraps. Meanwhile, CBS has reportedly spent $8-8.5 million per episode on Star Trek: Discovery (CBS All Access, 2017-present), a show that might be one of the most expensive in TV history yet only reaches the approximately 2 million subscribers of CBS All Access.

However, sci-fi television has not always lavished in high production budgets. As J.P. Telotte notes, “SFTV [sci-fi television] has traditionally had to work at a disadvantage.”¹ From the advent of sci-fi television in the 1940s, filming other-worldly and futuristic scenes on limited budgets has typically constrained the narratives of many earlier productions. As efforts concentrated on making sci-fi more visually palatable through visual effects (VFX), studios have found other ways to save money, including relocation of productions to more affordable locations.