



Two Chairs In Print



Issue 15
Lots of Screen Time



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Season 2 Episode 15, March 5, 2026



Colophon

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Transcript of Episode 15, Season 2

Introduction

David:

Hello and welcome to episode 15 of our podcast *Two Chairs Talking*. My name is David Grigg, and I'm here with my co-host, Perry Middlemiss. And we'll be raring to go to talk about our TV watching. How are you, Perry?

Perry:

I'm fine, thank you, David. Good to see you back here again. Yes, we're still carrying on. I think I said last episode that if we'd gone with our original run sheet, we would have been talking for hours and hours and hours.

David:

Like a week, I think.

Perry:

Or a week I think I was probably going to run to, but at least we got to an hour. I think that's probably about right. This one may not be quite as long, but that's okay. We'll see how we run.

Our Favourite TV Shows Watched in 2025

Perry:

So we're talking about our best television of the year this time around. I've watched a lot of films. So I watched a lot more films than I would normally do in 2025. As a consequence, I probably watched a little less television. Here by television, we're talking about series, mini series, and so on.

You'll get the idea about what it is we're talking about as we go along.

I watched 32 series or miniseries in all. That came to a total of about 210 individual episodes, which seems like a lot. Some of them were only half an hour, some of them were only about 20 minutes or so. Some of them went for the full hour, and some of them went over that. It chews up a lot of time, but it was worth it.

David:

Yeah. Indeed, well, interestingly enough, I also watched 32 different seasons of shows. So we're pretty much on a par there. I don't know how many episodes that was. So never mind.

Perry:

Oh, so this is the thing, you put it all on a spreadsheet, you list the number of episodes, you just do the sum of the number of episodes, and there it is. It's an easy way to run things. So, do you want me to start it off this time? I'll kick off.

David:

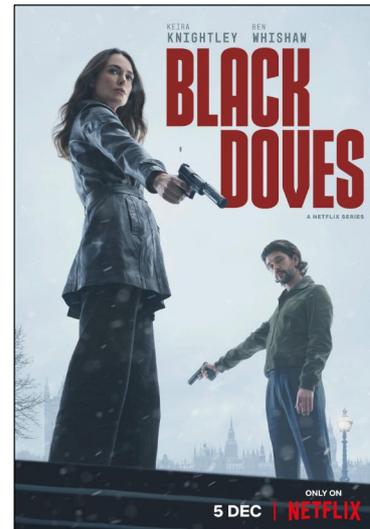
Yeah, why don't you start with your number ten favorite TV show for the year?

Perry's Number 10 Favourite TV Show for 2025

Perry:

Right, okay. My number 10 is *Black Doves*, which was season one. There were six episodes. This was released out of the UK in 2024, and it's on Netflix.

It's an intriguing spy series where Kiera Knightley plays the wife of the UK Secretary for Defence. That seems pretty reasonable until you learn that she's actually a long-term deep cover spy for some quasi-intelligence agency. She's in a bit of trouble because she's had a bit of a fling with somebody and that guy has now been murdered. When the agency checks out what he was doing he's got some connections to the intelligence industry as well. Ben Wishaw has a role as well, as a fixer and a guy with a gun, if you like, in this. Good stuff. I believe there's going to be a second season which will be intriguing. Worth watching. Worth watching.



David:

What platform did you say it was on?

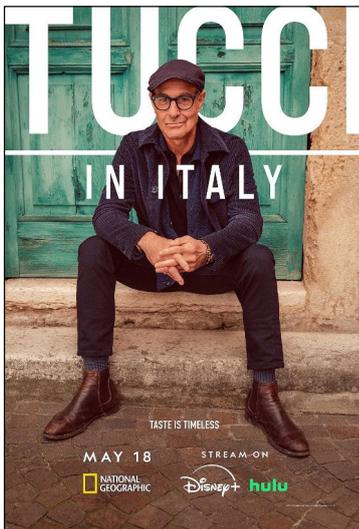
Perry:

Netflix.

David:

Oh well there, I should have a look.

David's Number 10 Favourite TV Show for 2025



David:

Okay, all right. My number 10 was *Tucci in Italy*, documentary series on Disney Plus.

It's basically the actor Stanley Tucci who wanders around different places in Italy. and eats the food and tells you about the food and talks also about the region and the culture and so on. It's very well worth watching, even if occasionally the Italians prepare some food that you go "Oh my god, that's disgusting!" So you kind of forget about those, but the rest of it is really interesting, and he does it so well, and he talks of course—being Italian himself or of Italian descent himself—he talks a fair bit in Italian to people which I always love to hear because I'm trying to learn Italian. So I really enjoyed it. Apparently there will be a second season of that where he visits different places in Italy. So I'm looking forward to that when it comes along.

Perry:

Yes, I've watched bits and pieces of it. I haven't finished it all, but yeah, he's got a good manner, he's intelligent, inquisitive, and he's willing to try anything, put food in front of him, he'll eat it. He does seem to say a lot that everything's

fantastic, but most of them do. Otherwise, putting that aside, I think it's just a wonderful thing to watch. I think, yeah, yeah.

You get a lot of good ideas about the country as well by him meeting people in their own homes and talking to them. Something that I used to like about Anthony Bourdain: that he used to sit down at a table, have a meal with the family, and discuss their lives with them about what was going on in the country in which they lived. You learn a lot about what was happening from somebody that wasn't used to talking to television and was just the average guy in the street, like you and I, David. So interesting stuff.

Perry's Number 9 Favourite TV Show for 2025

All right, my number nine, *Murderbot*. This is the first season, 10 episodes, on Apple TV, came out in 2025.

It's based on the first of the Martha Wells *Murderbot* novella series. which follows the adventures of a private security construct, which has somehow been able to override its governor module and become autonomous. I liked a lot of it. I thought it was very well made, followed the novella pretty well, as far as I could tell.

The only thing that I found difficult was that they split it into 10 episodes of about 20 minutes running time each. If they'd just done three one-hour episodes, it would have been a lot better. It just seemed too disjointed to me, but that was it.

Look, it augurs well for future seasons and it's good to see that they're willing to take a risk on doing an adaptation of science fiction novellas. There's a new series coming at the moment, but it's not on a streaming service that I have, which is *Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*, which is based on a series of novellas by George R. R. Martin, set in the world of *Game of Thrones*. That seems to be doing incredibly well as well. It's good that they are doing this. So there's a whole lot more that are out there that they could basically get a hold of. Anyway, I enjoyed *Murderbot*.

Your number nine?



David's Number 9 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

My number nine is *Hanna*, the TV series, not the film. I did go back and watch the film so I could compare it with the TV series, and the film's very good. But I really liked the TV series.

It [went for] three seasons, which I got on DVD. So it's the story of this young girl who was raised in the wilderness by her father to be a fighting machine. It takes quite a while before you understand why this has happened and where it's all come from. You'll later on discover that she's actually part of a genetic experiment by some government organization. Maybe it's the CIA or whatever.

There's one particular executive out of that organization, a woman called Marissa Weigler, who's desperate to keep what's happened secret.

I thought it was very good. Esme Creed Miles is Hanna. Joel Kinneman, who's also in *For All Mankind*, plays the father. And Mirielle Enos is Marisa Weigler. I liked it very much because it's really touching how this young girl grows up and over three seasons she grows up from being just barely adolescent into being a young woman. So you do follow the same actress through the course of it.

The backstory is that David Farr, who was one of the co-producers, co-writers of the original movie, wanted to expand out the story before and after the events of the of the film. Yeah, look, I really enjoyed it very much indeed.

Perry:

Okay, yep. Sounds good. I've seen it around. I'll have to get into it and have a look at it at some point.

Perry's Number 8 Favourite TV Show for 2025

Perry:

My number eight, *Department Q*. Nine episodes out of the United Kingdom in 2025 on Netflix.

Now, this follows Detective Carl Morck, who returns to the Scottish Police Force following a shooting in which he was badly injured, his partner was paralysed, and a young constable was killed. When he returns, he is relegated to the unsolved crime section on level Q, which is way down in the basement. He assembles a bit of a motley crew, namely a woman who wants to get into a bit of detective work but is a bit pushy, and so people are quite happy for her to be shovelled off down into the basement. Also a mysterious character from the Middle East who seems to have had a background in the security, but he's actually moved into I.T. and is now trying to get himself a job in the Scottish Police Force, and so they move him down there as well to get him out of the way. He proves to be incredibly valuable to Carl Morck.

They are trying to solve the mysterious disappearance of a Scottish lawyer who went missing a few years previously, seen on a ferry from Scotland to one of the islands, and then just completely disappeared, didn't make it off the ferry. They don't know what's happened to her, don't know where she is, and so they work on trying to track this down.

Quite an excellent piece of work. It's based on a TV series out of Scandinavia, which I've got copies of on DVD but haven't watched yet. I like this. I like this a lot. It was quite enjoyable. So that's *Department Q*.

Your number eight, David?



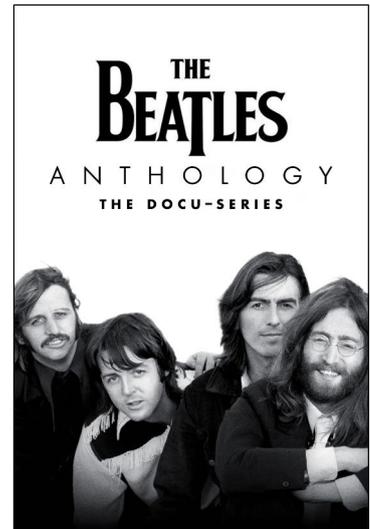
David's Number 8 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

My number eight is *The Beatles: Anthology*, which is available on Disney Plus.

Look, I grew up with The Beatles, what can I say? I was in my early teens when the Beatles started to become popular and I was a big, big, big fan and still am, quite honestly. So this is a TV series produced by the Beatles themselves, or by Apple Corp., not to be confused with Apple Inc., the computer company, but Apple, the music company.

It tells the story of the Beatles from their own point of view and it uses a wealth of interviews and things that have been done of them over the years. It's terrific. For me I thought it was just terrific. As a Beatles fan I just loved it. I found myself singing along to their songs and I'm finding that I remember most of the lyrics. I'm a big fan. So there you go. What can I say? Don't judge me.



Perry:

So what so that was on Disney, did you say?

David:

Disney Plus, it's on, yeah, they've got a whole heap of Beatles stuff. They have the Peter Jackson *Get Back*, which is terrific. Seriously watch if you haven't ever seen that.

Perry:

Oh, yeah.

David:

There's a separate little documentary about them just going to America, which of course features in this series, but that's a separate documentary. It's a whole heap of Beatles stuff if you're a Beatles fan.

Perry's Number 7 Favourite TV Show for 2025

Perry:

Okay. My number seven is *The Studio*. This is the first season released in 2025 on Apple. It's a comedy series that follows the misadventures of Matt Rennick, who's played by Seth Rogan, after he's promoted to become the head of production for the fictional Continental Films, a Hollywood film studio.



Now there are lots of funny cameos here. Martin Scorsese turns up, wants to make a movie about something and they basically completely shaft him all over the place, and Scorsese ends up crying in the corner.

Cherize Theron basically boots Seth Rogan out of a party because Scorsese is crying in the corner about being ripped off and his last big film that he wanted to make, and they've ruined it for him. They bought it and then shut it down.

Ah, it's wonderful stuff. There's a lot of good fun in here. Sometimes it goes a little bit over the top, but there's enough here to like about what must go on in Hollywood film studios. It's while everybody's got these really great ideas about how they'd really like to make deeply

meaningful, relevant programs, they still have to have enough sex and violence to be able to sell it to the average punter in the US.

Yep, worthwhile watching. I think there's - the episodes are shortish. I think only about half an hour or so, so you can watch a couple of them and see how you go and see whether you want to carry on. I mean, I sometimes find Seth Rogan's comedy a bit not quite there, but I enjoyed this.

David's Number 7 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

Fair enough too. Okay, well my number seven is *Manhattan*, which is a two season series. It's heavily fictionalized. Well It's a fictionalized version of the story of the making of the atomic bomb set in Los Alamos in New Mexico. It really cleverly weaves characters which are fictionalized into the real story, and it bends the reality to fit the narrative a lot. I thought it was very well done. Yeah, I just thought it was very well worth watching. So yeah, that's that.



Perry:

People have got to realise from time to time, or actually they should realise that at all the time, that what we're talking about here on a lot of occasions is fictionalized television. These are not documentary histories here. So you're getting an adaptation and as you say, for expediency of the drama and the time it takes that sometimes they have to combine characters into one or they have to split things or the timing is shifted just a little bit. So you shouldn't be using this as your final means of getting your full overall history.

David:

No, no, it's not history. Yeah, it's kind of inspired by rather than [historically accurate].

Perry:

Yeah, that's right. More than that. I've got one later on which is probably coming up in my list, which is probably the same thing's applicable for that. You just have to be careful about it, but think of it as a fictional adaptation of the events that happened.

David:

Yeah, yeah.

Perry's Number 6 Favourite TV Show for 2025

Perry:

Okay, my number six. This is one that you're probably going to find that's going to be terrible because it's a sports documentary. *The Test*.

This was a rewatch for me. This is seasons one, two, and three, so I'll put them all in together. There are all up fifteen episodes, about an hour each. So this is a fly-on-the-wall documentary series. It follows the fortunes of the Australian men's cricket team starting with the 2019 Ashes tour of the United Kingdom. It begins

with the team in complete turmoil after a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa in 2018 and tracks the team's progress through various Test series home and away up to the 2023 tour of the United Kingdom. So not this last season that we had where the English team was out here, but the previous time that Australia went to The UK.

It's very much for cricket lovers. If you're not a cricket fan, you're probably not going to like this very much. Although, if you look at it and just ignore the cricket, which I feel as though you could do, you're looking at it as a documentary about team management, high level professionals having to work in a highly intensive and tense environment and having to make decisions and sometimes completely stuffing them up. This is how they have to present themselves, how they have to prepare, and how they have to go about fixing the problems that their actions have caused over the time, all at the same time, where everybody considers that they have to be completely exemplary because they're in the public eye. If you look at it from that perspective, it's a bit like the film *Moneyball*, which was about baseball. It used baseball as the basis, but it wasn't always about baseball. It was about man management and project management and team management. That's an interesting thing if you're into that. But if you're not and you think, well, it's only about cricket, I'm not interested. Well, that's fair enough. I could understand why you'd say that. I didn't see it that way, but there we go.



David:

That's fine. That's fine.

Perry:

Your number six, David.

David's Number 6 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

My number six is an interesting one. It's a TV series called *Paradise* on Disney Plus again.



It starts off and it seems like almost like a murder mystery. Because the President of the United States, his body is found, he's been found dead, blood everywhere. So you think it's a mystery thriller. There's a few things that don't match. Where the President is [living] is clearly not the White House. It's a nice mansion, but it's not the White House. Anyway, the body is found by a character called Xavier Collins, who's the head agent of the President's Secret Service Division. There's something missing from the apartment, which seems to be of great importance. Only slowly do you discover that this is all not set, not in Washington DC at all, but in a vast underground bunker which has been built where a select group of people, obviously including the top government officials, have retreated to survive a worldwide cataclysm.

There are considerable political shenanigans going on, who actually murdered the President and why, and so on. It's really interesting.

There's one particular character, a woman who seems to actually mostly almost be in charge more than the President. She gets called Sinatra after Frank Sinatra. I can't remember now exactly why. I think, it she does it her way thing. Julianne Nicholson plays that role. It's very cleverly done. Anyway, it's been renewed for a second season, which I shall certainly be watching. Very well done.

Perry:

Okay, all right, I hadn't heard of that one, so I'll keep an eye on it.

David:

Look it up. It's on Disney.

Perry's Number 5 Favourite TV Show for 2025

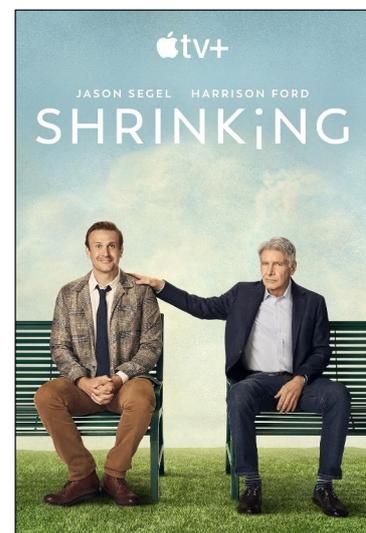
Perry:

All right, okay, for my number five then, *Shrinking*. This is season one, ten episodes that came out in 2023, and season two, twelve episodes that came out in 2024.

I'd seen this around a bit but I didn't get around to watching it until last year. Now this is a comedy drama from Apple Television set in a small three-person therapy practice in California. Jimmy Laird, who is one of the leads in this is played by Jason Siegel, who was also one of the show's creators. He's suffering at the start of the series' first season, suffering badly with grief after the death of his wife in a car accident. One day when he's at his therapy, he just decides that he's going to tell his patients what he really thinks rather than just following up the normal platitudes that he gives them to try and placate them and get them to move them on. He just tells them, "you've really got to get a grip on yourself". He just basically lets them, just tells them.

Now, this brings him into some level of conflict, of course, with the other therapists in the practice, including the senior therapist Paul Rhodes, who's played by Harrison Ford in a wonderful role. I think this is probably the first time he's ever been on a syndicated television program like this. Now Paul Rhodes, played by Harrison Ford, he's got his own issues. He's getting older and it slowly becomes apparent that he's been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

There's an extended cast of characters floating around this practice, and includes the therapist Gabby, that's the third therapist in this practice, who Laird has an affair with. Then there's Laird's daughter, who's also suffering from grief, not only from the loss of her mother, but the fact that her father's been so completely and utterly distant for so long. There's Laird's neighbours who stepped in to look after the daughter to help out. Then there's friends floating around all over the place. They add to this overall mix. We're increasing the levels of stress and grief. Also the depths of the problems that they encounter. It's all handled really quite well with a sense of intelligence and warmth, that it's not just all doom and gloom. I mean, they do actually resolve on some things. Sure, there's a fair bit of talking



about it, but it's actually handled in a rather adult way. I was quite pleased to see it and it really actually makes things pretty engaging.

It's also willing to tackle some really major issues like Rhodes's Parkinson's disease, which I believe in season three they're actually bringing Michael J. Fox in, an actor with Parkinson's disease. So they are tackling this full on about what it is and how it impacts people. There's also the thing in the second season, I think it was only in the second season, of what does Laird do when the man who killed his wife, the drunk driver who killed his wife in a car accident, turns up and wants to apologise to him. What does he do? How does he handle this? How does the daughter handle it? How does that all work? Especially when they find out that he really has been devastated by this whole thing. He ended up in jail. He's now out of jail. But his whole life has disintegrated because of this accident that he [caused]. He had a few too many drinks, went through a red light. Smashed into the woman's car and killed her. And all of these lives have been devastated by it. He's trying to get his life back together again. So what does Laird do? Does he forgive him or does he just basically ignore him? Well, you get lots of different reactions in this. I think it's handled very, very well.

I enjoyed this, and I'm looking forward to the next season on Apple TV.

David:

Hmm. I've just started watching it, so that's it'll be interesting to see how it goes. All right, so we're up to number five, is that right?

Perry:

Yes, your number five.

David's Number 5 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

Yep, my number five is *Shōgun* season one, again on Disney Plus. Terrific series based on James Clavel's book, 1975 novel.

It's about a British sailor shipwrecked in Japan in the early 17th century. Yeah, it's very well, really well produced and acted. I was particularly pleased that all the Japanese characters are played by Asian actors. something apparently insisted on by the guy who plays the warlord, and that all the Japanese dialogue is spoken in Japanese, not dubbed into English. So that was good. Yeah, well really, really well done historical drama, I thought. I don't think there's likely to be a second season of that, maybe.

Perry:

No, I have heard that there were discussions about it, and I believe they're actually going to move ahead with one second season, probably set some years after the first one. The book was really interesting, and I think we've actually mentioned it a couple of times before on the podcast. I should remind people that my father, who was an SF reader from the 1930s said that he thought it was one of the best first-contact novels he'd ever read.

David:

Yeah, first contact, yeah, for sure.



Perry:

It is, and it's a situation where Blackthorn gets stuck in a Japanese environment, in a Japanese society where it is completely alien. He cannot understand why they do the things they do and why they place so much emphasis on honour and what the implications of that are.

It's handled very, very well in this in this TV series. So, yeah, I saw that I think the year before last, and I really enjoyed that as well. I thought it was good. Good choice. Good choice.

David:

Yeah.

Perry's Number 4 Favourite TV Show for 2025**Perry:**

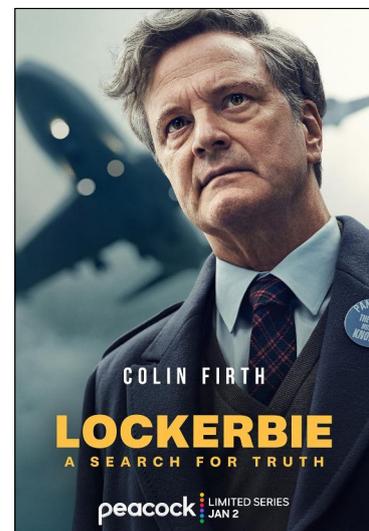
All right, my number four. This is a mini-series of five episodes. *Lockerbie, A Search for Truth*. Now, this is based around the bombing of the PanAm Flight 103 in December 1988, where the plane exploded over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all on board and another 11 people on the ground. Among the people on board the flight was Jim and Jane Swire's daughter Flora. This series follows Jim Swire's decades-long fight to get the truth of what happened.

At first, the British Government of Margaret Thatcher doesn't want to have anything to do with it, refuses to open an inquiry into the disaster while at the same time investigating other minor incidents that are happening at the same time, putting more emphasis on that. So there seems to be a conspiracy going on at the absolute highest level, but you can't work out what's going on. Then the British government decides that a pair of Libyan intelligence operators were responsible for planting the bomb on the plane when it was on the ground in West Germany.

They slipped a suitcase on into the luggage compartment, which then blew up after having flown from Munich to London and then from London heading over towards the US and blew up over Scotland. Now the evidence just doesn't seem to match up terribly well, so you get a lot of the court trial of this particular Libyan, and Jim Swire takes it on himself to try and figure out what's actually going on, and he befriends the Libyan who's convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Now that life imprisonment gets commuted in 2009 when he's diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer and he's sent back to Libya where he died a few years later, still protesting his innocence, still saying that he wasn't involved in this. Now, you don't really get any major revelations about what happened, but it's very interesting watching a man trying to get justice against a system which is trying to deny him that justice by hiding the information.

It reminded me very much of the *Mr. Bates versus the Post Office* and also RoboDebt here, the scandal here in Australia.



So there are many questions left unanswered. You come to realize that some of them will never be resolved. The answers are there, but they're all hidden away in the intelligence community, and somebody knows exactly what happened, but they're not telling anybody because it's going to look make them look bad or do something. Now, really, the only thing you can take away from this is that Governments and the people who work for them look after themselves first and foremost. They're not here to look after you, they're here to basically maintain their hold on power. Sometimes things slip and information comes out. Sometimes like this, it looks as though it's come out, but really it's being hidden all the time. Colin Firth plays, as I said, Jim Swire and does an excellent, excellent job. If you watch this and you watch that *Mr. Bates versus the Post Office* scandals, you'll get an idea of the depth of deception that goes on from governments from time to time. All right, that was my number four.

David's Number 4 Favourite TV Show for 2025



David:

My number four then was is *Severance* Season Two, Apple T V.

Yeah, it's a very strange setup, but if you don't know the background it's basically the idea that there's some technology developed which enables people to split their working life and their social life. So they arrive at work and this little switch they've had put in their brain turns on, they have no memory of their home life, and same when they go home, this little switch turns the other way, and they have no memory at all of their working life and what they do at work. So they're almost two different people. The series just keeps exploring that and exploring that as a scenario. Particularly in this season, it is very clever. There's actually one period where they managed to set things up...

The people who are working in this very strange organization the Lumen Corporation actually start to realize they hate what they're doing and they hate the fact that they have no memory of their private lives, and they have their own relationships and so on, which don't aren't replicated in "the real world". There's one very clever scene where they manage to set it up a way for the working personality to talk to the ordinary life personality, and there's this conversation going back and forth between the same guy, he's talking to himself, but there's two different versions of this character, he's talking to himself. So cleverly done. It's really weird.

I really hope that we eventually get some conclusion to what the meaning of it all is. It's bizarre and really interesting. Produced, it's directed by, I think produced and directed initially by Ben Stiller. I think he's still the producer of it and doesn't direct all the episodes, but very well done. That's again an Apple T V series.

I heard just recently on a podcast that Apple just bought the production company who'd been producing *Severance*, I mean, they'd been producing it for Apple, but presumably the rights would eventually have lapsed and they would have been able to sell it to other people. They were in financial trouble, the production company, and Apple just bought them, kind of so that they would they would be able to hang on to the rights and to make sure that the series keeps getting produced. So that was that was interesting, I thought.

Yeah, it's weird, it's absolutely totally bizarre, and this company, this organization and the office where they work is very, very odd, very strange. Then there's the goats...

Perry:

I've watched a couple of episodes of it, and I know you remind me I really need to get in there and finish it off and catch up because yes, it's got a bizarre look and feel to it and corporate life gone crazy, isn't it, really?

David:

Yeah, it's such a clever concept.

Perry:

And a nice discussion, or raises nice discussions about what it is that corporations do to people and how much they demand of them. When you're here, your whole life is ours. When you're away, you can do whatever you want.

It was it reminds me I don't know, odd, but it reminds me a bit of when I was at high school back in the late 60s and there was discussions about how long people could have hair. One of the teachers says, "On the weekend you can have your hair as long as you like. When you come to school, it's got to be above the collar." So this idea that there is a complete separation of what you do in your own time and what you do with your corporation.

David:

Yeah, yeah.

Perry:

So, yeah, a very interesting thing to examine. So, I must get back to it. Thanks for reminding me.

Perry's Number 3 Favourite TV Show for 2025

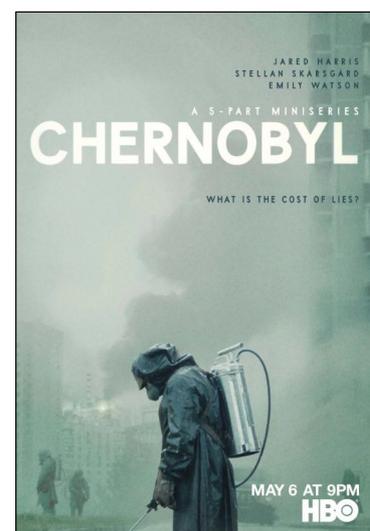
Perry:

Right, my number three is a mini-series of five episodes. Another sort of factualization adaptation and this is *Chernobyl* from 2019.

It took me five or six years to get around to watching this but by God I'm glad that I did. It talks about the lead up to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as it was then. This is before the fall of the USSR. And talks about the lead up to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the subsequent cleanup and what actually went on.

Now, sure, it takes a lot of liberties with the actual events of course in order to keep the production down to a certain size and so it can have it under control. There's a cascading series of disasters that go on after the thing melts down, mostly because people are denying there's any problem, will not listen to the people that have been put in charge. Until the authorities decide that they really need to get this thing cleaned up.

Valerie Legasov, who's played by Jared Harris as a physicist who's brought into a meeting of the Soviet Council of Ministers to advise them, to advise Mikhail



Gorbachev, and that's basically just "Sit there, shut up and look serious, don't say anything". But he pops his head up and raises objections to the official account of the accident, and scares the ministers enough that he's assigned to the staff of the character played by Stellan Skarsgaard and sent to Chernobyl to oversee the operation.

Nothing's clean here, everything's a total mess. The program really delves into the investigations, the analysis, the sacrifices made by many Soviet individuals as they battle major odds. There's a whole lot of nuclear material on top of the roof of the reactor space, they can't leave it there. So they actually have to send guys up. They have 30 seconds to get in there with a shovel and shovel something over the top and then run back out again when a new guy comes in. Because anything longer than 30 seconds. and you'll get a lethal dose of radiation and you'll die. And then they realize that there's a problem with the reactor melting down into the water table. So they have to basically get some Soviet miners to come in to dig a tunnel all the way underneath so they can flood it all with concrete to stop it all.

Look, it's astounding to watch this and see what they went through and how hard they had to work to get there. The poor people that had to do the actual work, the problems they had fighting against the bureaucracy that was trying to deny them everything under the sun, when they were on the brink of a disaster that could have had massive ramifications across the whole of Europe, is pretty disturbing, this whole thing, but really quite compelling, and it's a wonderful thing to watch. Really recommend this.

David:

I haven't seen that, but I read an extremely good book which I can recommend, which is *Midnight at Chernobyl*. I've forgotten the name of the author. It doesn't matter, but that's the title, *Midnight at Chernobyl*. That goes into great detail. He manages to interview a whole lot of people and get a lot of Soviet records which were released once the Soviet Union collapsed.

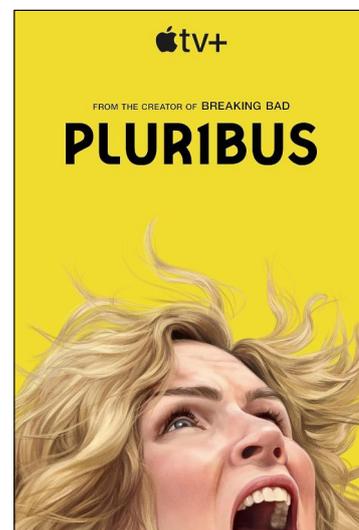
Anyway, so there you go. Fascinating.

David's Number 3 Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

All right, my number three then is *Pluribus* on Apple TV, just newly released. It's a wonderful new SF series from Apple, actually by created by Vince Gilligan, the guy who did *Breaking Bad*. It's the fascinating premise of a radio message being intercepted on Earth, which has the recipe for a virus, which human beings on earth then decide to put together and it then gets out of the lab and everyone gets infected by it and it changes their mentality so that they become part of a hive mind, a global mind.

There's just a handful of individuals who are immune. Of those, one of those is Carol Sturka, who writes these trashy romantasy novels. She's has this really snarky personality and she's determined not to give in and accept what's going on or join this hive mind. It's very clever. So it'd be interesting to see how it goes from season to season as we go on. The first season's out,



obviously the second season is coming, so we'll see. Again, very clever concept. I like clever concept TV.

Perry:

Yes, well I'll be talking about that a bit later as well, but we'll get there.

David:

Oh yeah, okay, there you go.

Perry's Number 2 Favourite TV Show for 2025

Perry:

I probably just shouldn't have mentioned that because I'm coming up to number two and my second best TV program for this year was *Ripley*, a mini-series of eight episodes on Netflix.

Released in 2024, and it's an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, with Andrew Scott in the lead role. He's excellent in this part. In the early episodes, you'd really think that you could be forgiven for thinking that he's not doing anything, he isn't acting at all. It seems like a complete black [box], unemotional and aloof, until as the story goes along, you start to realize that there's a lot going on behind the eyes and the face that just doesn't disclose things because that's really important to what he needs to have later on. It's just a blank demeanor, and Scott does it so well. He's noted in interviews over the past that he wanted to not define Ripley too closely. So you don't get much of an idea of who or what he is, but rather to leave him enigmatic. He's worked that out really, really well.

Now this TV series is filmed completely in black and white, which is a bit of a change from TV series these days. But it fits the requirements of the story and the characters really well. So the cinematography begins to become a character in its own right and it enhances the feeling of dread and despair that's going on about this particular story and what's going to happen and I thought it was a brave decision to do it, but I'm very glad they did because I think it suits it beautifully. And if you think about it, the vast bulk of the story is set in the bright sunny climate of the Amalfi Coast. If you had all that colour, it would have saturated the whole of the story and the background. You wouldn't have got those major concepts of the story coming through.

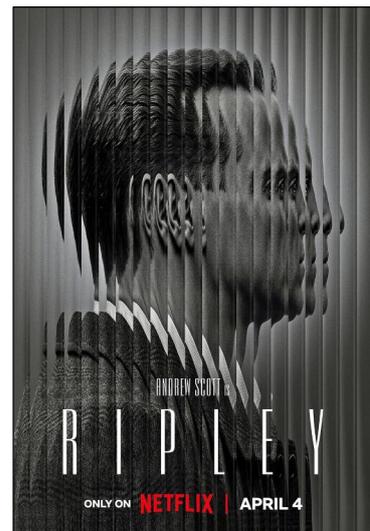
This is a wonderful piece of work. I really enjoyed it. I wonder whether they're going to do any more in the series. I haven't read any more beyond the first one, but looking back at it now, I'm thinking, yeah, I really should go back and read some more of these because Patricia Highsmith had a very quirky weird way with her characters. Very interesting indeed, very interesting

David:

Hm. Andrew Scott is the actor who played Moriarty in the *Sherlock* series, isn't that right?

Perry:

That's the that's the one, yeah.



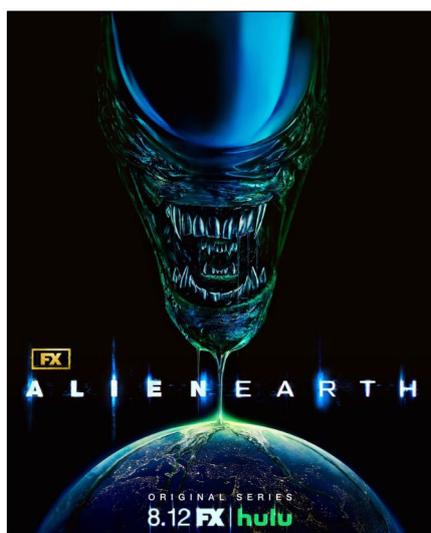
David:

Yeah, which is also a brilliant bit of acting, I think.

Perry:

He's wonderful there. This one, though, as I said, he looks completely and utterly blank. He's like a blank slate, which is exactly what the character is trying to do. He's trying to make him completely merged into the background so that nobody even knows he's there.

It's beautifully done. Beautifully done. Nice, very nice piece of acting work, this.

David's Number 2 Favourite TV Show for 2025**David:**

Well my number two is *Alien: Earth*, season one, which is on Disney Plus.

I've made no secret of the fact that I'm a big fan of Ridley Scott's alien movies. I actually like all the alien movies that he made, Ridley Scott made. Once you put aside the horror and just look at them as interesting movies, I think they're great.

So this is a new series, a series rather than a film. I think Ridley Scott was an executive producer, so he's obviously authorized it, if you like. It's clever in the sense that it's set before the events of the first *Alien* movie, the 1979 movie. There's another spacecraft which has been exploring the galaxy to try to pick up alien species and examine alien species. This ship

crashes on Earth. It's been sabotaged actually, and the spaceship crashes into Earth with this load of alien creatures, including some of the original aliens out of the original *Alien* movie, but quite a few other alien species too. Some of which are really, really creepy, creepy, scary monsters. They're actually worse than the original alien. It seems like the alien-type monster out of *Alien* actually seems like the *least* scary of the monsters.

I thought it was very well done. It's particularly well done because it's very faithful to the original movie. The spacecraft is very close to the interiors of the original 1979 movie. It has things to say about super rich people because that spaceship crashing is one thread, but another thread is set on Earth, where there's this corporation headed by this trillionaire guy who's like Elon Musk on steroids. So super laid-back. What they're doing is they're taking dying young children who are dying of cancer or whatever and they're transferring their personalities into healthy bodies. But they're the healthy bodies of adults and they're synthetic creatures that they've been transferred into and who are more powerful than human beings. They're kind of like like robots, very much like Ash in, the original movie, the original 1979 movie.

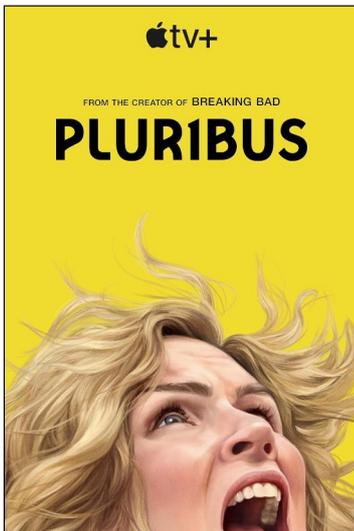
There's all these ethical issues about, is what they're doing ethical to essentially let these kids die, but take their brains or their intelligence and put them into these adult bodies? They're only still children mentally, but they're put into adult bodies, because the bodies are not going to grow and change, so they have to put them into adult bodies.

I really liked it, and I believe that there is a second season coming, which I'll be definitely watching when it comes in.

Perry:

Okay, I shall have to catch up with that.

Perry's Top Favourite TV Show for 2025



Perry:

Okay, so we come to my first one, which is one that you've already mentioned, *Pluribus*.

David:

All right, there you go.

Perry:

So nine episodes from last year on Apple Television and you've mentioned a lot about it already. So I won't go into a huge amount. It's just that Carol Sturka, played by Rhea Seahorn, she's angry. She's angry at everything. She's really pissed off about everything. But she wasn't happy about her writing career before the joining happened, which is when the aliens take over. Now she's not happy that her partner has died in the actual process because she fell down, hit her head and died. She's especially not

happy that everyone seems to have turned into mindless drones and don't seem to realise that individuality is going out the door.

So she really feels as though she's the one that's right out there leading it all, until she learns of somebody from Paraguay who's driving from South America to meet her. And she learns that she's probably not quite as angry as *he* is.

Look, nine episodes I thought very well made, very well laid out. As you said, it was made by Vince Gilligan, who gave us *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*. It's set in Albuquerque in New Mexico again, so you get these big vistas that really look like Australia, there's distant mountains over there, but not very high mountains. It's all very dry. The sky is a big, massive blue color. There's lots of little things that go on here and that really get it all together.

The interesting thing is, they have not relied on high level or highly recognizable actors to play the parts here. So they are letting the stories be script-driven rather than actor-driven. I think that enhances the whole thing.

There's so many questions that this raises. I mean people are really that I've spoken to about it... Some people, well my wife hated it. She watched the first episode, "I can't stand this" and wouldn't watch it. So, anyway, fair enough. That's okay, that happens. But there's other people around that I would have thought that it would have gone for it who said they find the whole thing very slow, very boring.

I just find it's just working its way through all of these different problems that it's coming up with, and that it's leading towards something further on down the track. My only complaint is we may have to wait two years before the next season's available because they didn't really start working on the second season until the first one was starting to be shown, and it took them 18 months to make the first one. So this is a bit of a nuisance. Anyway, I'm looking forward to seeing what happens in this in the future. I think it is one of yes, it's very intriguing.

Great concept, good idea. Yes, it's been used before in other things. So what? This is a different way of looking at it. And I think certainly worthwhile staying with.

David:

Yep, indeed.

Perry:

Yep.

David's Top Favourite TV Show for 2025

David:

Okay, well my number one pick is not a TV series at all, but a mini series. It's self-contained, there won't be any more seasons.

That's *Station Eleven*, which is based on the book by Emily St. John Mandel, Canadian writer. I really liked the book. It's interesting because it's about a pandemic that hits the world. It was actually written before COVID happened, so it's quite interesting that it's prescient in that way. This particular flu, this particular virus, this flu that hits the world, is really, really, really severe. It's got a literally like 99% fatality rate. So obviously civilization collapses.

The TV series goes back in time quite a bit, so right back to when the pandemic originally hits. We follow this young girl who's a child actress. She's actually in a Shakespeare play. She plays a child version of Goneril in *King Lear*, an additional thing [with Lear's children] that they added on into the play. She's saved by this adult who kind of accidentally [gets involved], he's walking her home and then realizes that there's nobody at her home and the pandemic is really starting to sweep through. People are dying, and he ends up having to look after this kid for quite a while.

Then we jump 20 years forward where there are still a few survivors around, and they're gathering together in communities, and there are some towns and things, or clusters of communities of the survivors. It follows this particular character, the young child who's now an adult, who's part of an acting group or a theatre group who wanders around and does a circuit and visits these different communities and puts on Shakespeare.

Yeah, I thought it was just really, really well done. The adult version of this character is played by Mackenzie Davis. I hadn't made a note, I'm sorry, the child actress, which I should have done, because she's very good. Mackenzie Davis is the lead actress in it. Again, a Canadian actress, and so there's a lot of Canadian stuff in it. It's made partly in Canada and partly in America.

So, yeah, it's just really interesting. There's some... There's a character who turns up who initially seems to be really quite evil and is organizing a group of kids who are prepared to murder people, but there's a twist on that character too. It's clever. It's well done. I'll have to go back and read the book again, but yeah, I liked it a lot, and it was my number one for the year.



Perry:

Well, that was a good range of material that we covered there, without much of a crossover, which was interesting. Yeah, just a couple here and there. So that's good. So that's all right. It just goes to show that there's a heck of a lot of stuff floating around and it pops up on the various streaming services. Good idea to keep an eye on it to see what's going on and staying in the conversation if you like, because there's a lot of interesting things happening on television. There's a big demand for a huge amount of material, and whenever that happens there's got to be some quirky stuff that pops up, and that's the stuff that we're interested in watching, David.

David:

Absolutely.

Perry:

That is the stuff. All right, I think we're done for these two episodes now to finish off last episode we did film, this time we've done television. In our next episode, not too sure when that's going to be and how soon after this episode comes out, but...

David:

In March sometime, later in March.

Perry:

Sometime in March, we'll be back to our normal arrangements of looking at a book and a film. And the book that we're going to be looking at is the new Claire North novel *Slow Gods*. Now I know you're a massive Claire North fan.

David:

I am. I've got everything she wrote, just about.

Perry:

You'd read her laundry list.

David:

I would.

Perry:

You'd go with that. And the film that we're going to see is *Marty Supreme*. You and I have both watched this, and we have differing views on this one, which will be good to hear.

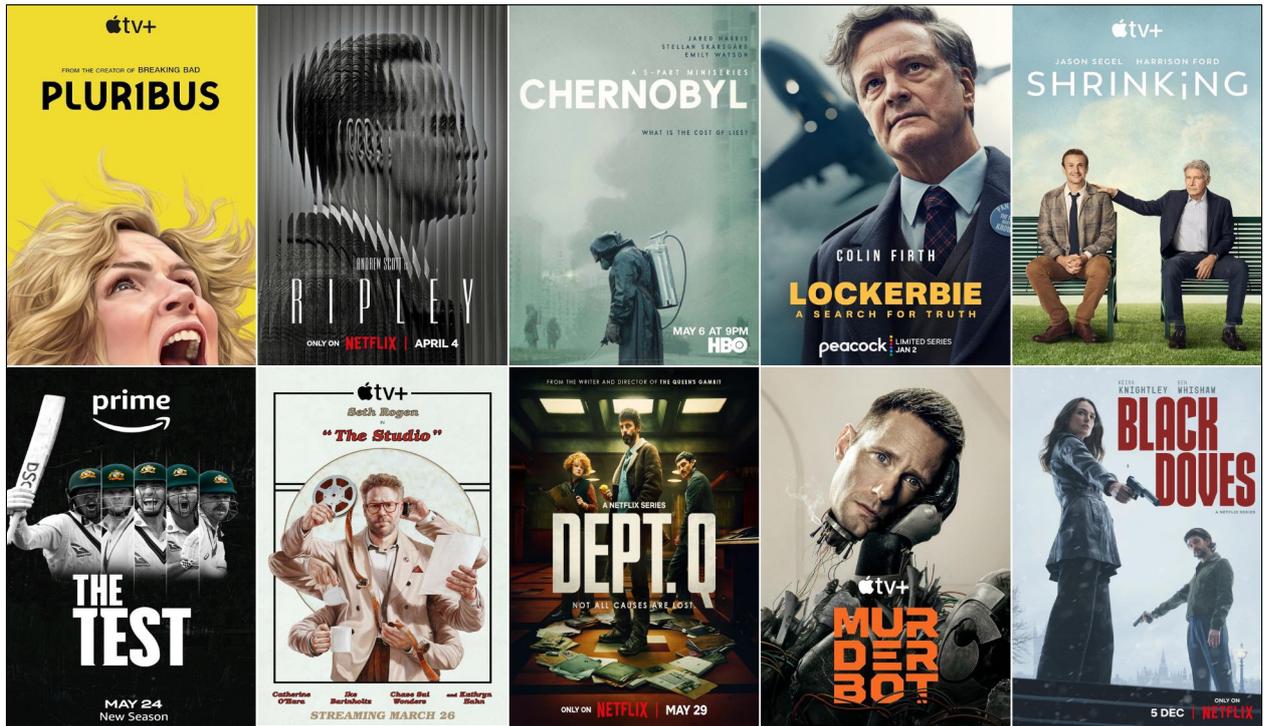
So that's what we're going to be having in our next episode. So I think until then, David. Let's say goodbye to each other and also goodbye to the listener and thank them very much for being sticking with us through the our book, film, and television lineups for what we liked from last year. And now we'll get back to normal programming. We'll be resumed.

See you next time.

David:

See you next time. Okay, bye.

Perry's Top 10 TV Shows of 2025



David's Top 10 TV Shows of 2025

