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What to Watch Guide

By Meghan O'Dell

As the weather gets chillier, fireplaces are being lit and blankets are being dusted off, and the couch is calling your name at ever-louder volumes. For this month's column, I've rounded up some recent shows that will help make being inside more enjoyable. (Please note that these are all geared toward adults, so if you have kiddos, you might want to save these for after their bedtime!)

The Crown season 4 (Netflix)

If you haven't yet seen any of Peter Morgan's wonderful imagining of what life behind the palace walls is like for Queen Elizabeth II and the Windsor family, you'll want to catch up because season 4 could be the best yet. Based on real events (but with many liberties taken for the sake of drama), this season takes place during the 1980s and largely focuses on Charles and Diana's turbulent marriage and the Queen's own rocky relationship with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, played wonderfully by Gillian Anderson. It also boasts a great soundtrack—you'll never hear Duran Duran's "Girls on Film" again without thinking of a young Princess Diana roller skating through Buckingham Palace.



The Queen's Gambit (Netflix)

While this might sound like another show about royals, it's actually a fictional account of a young female chess prodigy and her rise to fame. Set in the 1950s and 60s, it follows Beth, a young orphan who is taught how to play chess in the basement of the orphanage by a taciturn janitor. The series follows Beth's struggles with addiction as she climbs the ranks in the competitive chess world and grapples with loss, grief, and love. Even if you find the subject of chess yawn-inducing, you'll be captivated by this story.



Fargo season 4 (FX/FX on Hulu)

Each season of Fargo seems to have less and less to do with the movie of the same name, but it's irrelevant because each season is also better than the last (and there's always a through-line tying them all together, even if it's a blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment). Season 4 follows two feuding organized crime syndicates in Kansas City in 1950—a group of Black migrants fleeing the Jim Crow South, led by Chris Rock in an impressive dramatic performance, and an Italian family led by Jason Schwartzman, who adds some comic relief. While the violence and drama is plentiful, the characters in the families' orbit give the show some extra warmth.

What We Do in the Shadows season 2 (FX/FX on Hulu)

Though not as new as the others on the list, this comedy series about vampires who share a Victorian home in Staten Island, New York, is a must-watch. Based on the movie of the same name, the show follows four vampires (and a few humans, most notably their live-in "familiar," Guillermo) in their daily lives, reality-show style. Season 2 is especially hilarious and earned several Emmy nominations (the episode where one of the vampires goes into hiding as a "regular human bartender" named Jackie Daytona is side-splittingly fun).



Moonbase 8

This comedy starring John C. Reilly, Fred Armisen, and Tim Heidecker could be considered a spoof of Away (a great Netflix drama about a crew who embarks on the first trip to Mars), except the crew is still on the ground and their mission is to get to the moon. Taking place in a simulation of a lunar base in Arizona, the series follows a bumbling trio as they try to prove their worth to NASA (if they can only remember what it stands for).

Two Weeks to Live (HBO Max)

I stumbled upon this limited series while scrolling through HBO Max, as I recognized Maisie Williams (of Games of Thrones fame). Without giving too much away, it's not a depressing story as the title might suggest, and viewers are taken on a wild revenge journey that ends up being quite charming, funny, and warm. If you enjoy dark British comedies like The End of the F***** World, this show is a treat.



Other Shows I Loved in 2020

(I started to write short summaries of each of these and then realized this column would be far too long, so feel free to Google them to learn more!)

HBO: My Beautiful Friend season 2, I Know This Much Is True, Lovecraft Country, The Third Day, I May Destroy You, The Outsider, The Vow, I'll Be Gone in the Dark, Insecure season 4

Hulu: Pen15 season 2, Normal People, Ramy season 2, The Great, Little Fires Everywhere

FX: Mrs. America

Netflix: Schitt's Creek season 6, Away, Never Have I Ever, Ozark season 3, Unorthodox, Feel Good, Sex Education season 2, The Haunting of Bly Manor, I Am Not Okay with This, Stateless, Dead to Me season 2, The Politician season 2

AMC: Better Call Saul season 5, Killing Eve season 3, Quiz

Amazon Prime: Homecoming season 2

Meghan O'Dell has been a Long Beach resident for 16 years. She loves reading, seeing live music, and watching too many shows (as evidenced by this column), and she lives with her husband and their Calico cat in the Bluff Heights neighborhood.