

The Streaming TV Party is on—here’s what we’re watching

1 message

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Welcome to **Streaming TV Party**, a newsletter that goes deep into older shows in a spoiler-free manner without any pressure from your friends who keep pushing more shows on you. Our first series? HBO's **The Leftovers** (2014-2017). Today:

- The Leftovers* Elevator Pitch
- Why Didn't You Watch *The Leftovers* When It Aired?
- How Will This Work?

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I'm About to Start 'The Leftovers.' Join Me!

I’m starting month No. 3 of social distancing and I don’t know about you, but I’m the sort of person who likes to keep as busy as humanly possible. I’ve already [stress-knitted](#) my way through seven hats and finished a scarf and a shawl, but I’ve also made a huge dent in my TV list. It’s been a mix of shows I needed to catch up on ([Doctor Who](#), [Steven Universe Future](#), [Better Call Saul](#)); new shows/episodes ([Mrs. America](#), [The Mandalorian](#)); new shows/episodes ([The Clone Wars](#), [She-Ra and the Princesses of Power](#)); and rewatching older shows ([Lost](#), [Avatar: The Last Airbender](#)).

Now, I’m about to start *The Leftovers*, one of the most critically acclaimed series of the past decade that I've somehow never seen, and I want to invite you along for the ride.

Sponsored

If 10,000 hours of new content sounds like the solution to your quarantine ennui, look no further: HBO Max has that and more. *The Not-Too-Late Show with Elmo* alone is worth the [price of admission](#).

[Get Ready to Stream](#)

The Leftovers Elevator Pitch

The logline on [HBO's official website for *The Leftovers*](#) is simple and to the point, and it's one of the few things I already knew about the show beforehand: "After two percent of the world's population inexplicably vanishes, those left behind grapple with what's next."

The Leftovers is the series that writer Damon Lindelof made between *Lost* (2004-2010) and *Watchmen* (2019) and is based on Tom Perotta's [2011 novel of the same name](#). It spanned 28 episodes over three seasons, and while I've heard some generally mixed things about season 1, the latter two seasons are supposed to be fantastic. I don't know what it is just yet, but there's a reason that it ended up on so many best-of-year and best-of-decade lists.

When TV is your job, you end up missing out on a lot of great television

Being a TV critic is great 95% of the time. You get to dig really deep into a series and examine what works, what doesn't, and the story that's being told. You can use your clout to highlight smaller TV shows that some people might not know about beforehand. In the best weeks, your job exposes you to shows you might never have given a second glance, upending preconceived notions and helping you find new favorites.

The downsides? Sometimes, you have to watch a show you don't like at all. And there's so much TV that you're missing out on. Chances are, the most common response I'll have to your inquiry about [Insert Prestige Show Here] will be, "I haven't seen it, but I've heard it's really good" and/or "I'll add it to the list!"

My list of shows to check out has grown so long that I physically wrote them down to keep track. *The Leftovers*, which is the kind of series that my Twitter feed* is pretty vocal about, has long been on that list, and I think it's finally time to take it on. (*Granted, I follow a lot of TV critics and reporters.)

Why Didn't You Watch *The Leftovers* When It Aired?

I had to wrack my brain at this question because, honestly, I'm not sure. If anything, *The Leftovers* sounded very much like My Shit. I really like Lindelof's stuff. I especially loved the character-driven and existential parts of *Lost*, and, years later, I loved *Watchmen*. Part of the reason I'm finally watching *The Leftovers* now is to see how Lindelof evolved as a storyteller between those two shows.

Everyone else? One guess is that some people really hated how *Lost* ended and didn't want to risk getting sucked in at risk of getting burnt again. (I've been defending the *Lost* finale since 2010, so that isn't an issue for me.) The legacy of *Lost*—which [ended 10 years ago this month](#)—especially loomed over Lindelof as he was about to launch *The Leftovers*.

Why *The Leftovers* is the perfect show for These Times

When it comes to my quarantine entertainment, I've gone the escapist route. So it's stuff like [Making It](#), [feel-good cooking shows](#) like *The Great British Bake Off*, and rewatching those formative shows over your Contagions and Outbreaks; [Annihilation](#), which does feature a mysterious illness upfront, is probably the closest I've gotten to the latter.

From what I've heard, *The Leftovers* is similar to what we're dealing with now in that while it deals with a world-altering event (but instead of a pandemic, 2% of the population vanishes), it turns out to be more about the uncertainty and how it affects those it left behind. Like the pandemic that we're all in the middle of right now, there is a lot we don't know—and even more that we don't know enough about.

Recommended

Avatar: The Last Airbender is one of the [best shows](#) I've ever watched—and [it's finally back on Netflix](#).

Did you love *The Favourite*? Hulu's historical satire [The Great](#), starring Elle Fanning and Nicholas Hoult, is very much in the same vein.

Tumble into nostalgia with [Disney+](#) and sing along to all your childhood favorites. Also, Baby Yoda.*

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[Start Streaming](#)

How Will This Work?

Like a **book club**. We watch a couple of episodes each week, I can offer some observations, thoughts, and theories, and maybe offer a few prompts for other first-time watchers who are following along. (And if you're rewatching, I'm sure you can get a kick out of what I'm not noticing, so feel free to email me with questions and comments.)

For next Wednesday, let's come prepared and **watch the first two episodes of season 1**.

Luckily for us, *The Leftovers* is easy to access. You can stream it on [HBO Max](#) or however you get HBO—whether it's through cable or another streaming service add-on. You can also purchase episodes on [Amazon](#), [iTunes](#), or wherever you get your streaming titles.

What they said then

"More than anything else, me taking this show says: 'Yeah, I've made my persona into the guy who is clearly emotionally affected by your dislike of **Lost**, but here we go again.' I'm getting back on the roller coaster because I can't help myself."

—Damon Lindelof in [Taffy Brodesser-Akner's excellent 2014 New York Times magazine profile](#)

Now playing: [Radiohead — "Exit Music \(For a Film\)"](#)

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