

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Streaming TV

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, March 11th, 2020

It is complicated to navigate the ever increasing number of TV channels that offer original programming via streaming. Not only Netflix and Amazon Prime, but HBO, Hulu, Showtime, Starz, FX, Apple TV, Disney+, etc. However there are many TV programs that in my opinion are worth watching, so you might have to go to the trouble of figuring out how to access them and pay for all those subscriptions. Here is some information about my favorites airing in early 2020.



Lily Tomlin, Jane Fonda © Armando Gallo-HFPA

Grace and Frankie (Netflix-6th season: January 19). A comedy with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin. Two very different women become best friends after their husbands (Martin Sheen and Sam Waterston) reveal to their wives that they have been lovers for years and wish to get married. Issues facing all of us as we age, and our adult children, are dealt with in a humorous manner. Fonda says: "Very often women are shown as being competitive, usually about a job or a man, but it feels really great to be making a show about older women who didn't start off liking each other, but have become so close." Tomlin adds: "And they carry on looking after each other, having each other's back, counseling each other, or just being there and growing more in our relationship. You learn from your friends, and that's why I love this series so much, because it embodies all of that."

Fonda lead four months of protests in Washington DC to bring attention to the climate crisis, last December both actresses were arrested. [On February 7 "Fire Drills Fridays" started in California.](#) Tomlin said March 6: "Elizabeth Warren is the person I was pulling for, but now we've lost her, so I don't know what we're going to do."



Awkwafina is Nora from Queens © Comedy Central.

Awkwafina is Nora from Queens (Comedy Central-January 22) Awkwafina, nickname of Nora Lunn, satirizes her own life, as a 29-year-old still living at home with her father and her Chinese grandmother. She says: "It's an interesting time in a lot of people's lives, being in your mid to late 20's, living in New York with your parents and figuring out what you are going to do. So I am revisiting the way I felt back then. One piece of advice that I always followed is what my grandma told me, that essentially you can't trust the ups and downs of life, because they won't last, and that would make you feel worse when things are going good, but also make you feel better when things are going bad. Even now I still feel like I'm on a roller coaster ride."



Elisa Leonelli, Jim Carrey © HFPA

Kidding (Showtime-2nd season: Feb 6) A dark and bizarre series with Jim Carrey as a the host of a children puppet show, grieving for the death of his son and going through a divorce. After drawing satirical Trump cartoons for 3 years, Carrey says that in 2020 he decided that he won't mention his name anymore, "because the worst thing that you can do is continue to talk about narcissists. So I will celebrate what is good about life going forward, and I will use my vote to speak for me." [Click here to read my 2018 article about Season 1.](#)



Zoe Kravitz-High Fidelity © Hulu

High Fidelity (Hulu-February 14) from the 1995 novel by Nick Hornby that was made into a 2000 movie directed by Stephen Frears with John Cusack. The record store owner going through a heartbreak is now a woman played by Zoë Kravitz, and it's set in Brooklyn. Kravitz, daughter of musician Lenny Kravitz, says: "I grew up with vinyl in the house, because of my father, we always had record players, as well as CDs, I was going to Virgin Megastores and Tower Records. So the whole culture of going to a place and finding new music, talking to people about music, that was something I very much grew up in. I listen to a lot of music, putting on some music and maybe smoking a joint and stretching, makes me very happy. I love friends, music, wine, weed, dancing, ice cream, pizza."



Carrie Martin, Julissa Calderon-Gentefied © Kevin Estrada-Netflix

Gentefied (Netflix: February 21) Set in Boyle Heights, like *Vida*, the series explores gentrification and Latinx culture. A taqueria is threatened with closure due to the increase in rent, the Mexican grandfather running it gets help from his grandchildren, Eric, whose girlfriend is expecting his child, Chris, an aspiring chef, and Ana, an artist. Executive producer America Ferrera says: "'It's always been my guiding force to support and uplift young Latino creative voices, so this is a dream come true for me."



Mikey Madison, Olivia Edward, Hannah Alligood-Better Things © Suzanne Tenner FX

Better Things (FX-4th season: March 5) Pamela Adlon created this comedy series from her own life experience, as the divorced mother of three young daughters, living next door to her British mother. I will not spoil the new season for you, since it's not available all at once for binge watching, except for pointing out that Episode 1 opens with a tracking shot of a rainy day in Los Angeles and a homeless woman sweeping the sidewalk in front of her tent. This image encapsulates the female-centric compassionate attitude of this funny and poignant series. [Click here to read my 2019 article about Season 3.](#)

You may wish to see this exhibit at the Central Library: [Female Homelessness in L.A.](#) – Photographs by Francine Orr



Margherita Mazzuzzo, Gaia Girace-My Brilliant Friend (c) HBO

My Brilliant Friend: The Story of a New Name (RAI-HBO-2nd season: March 16) Based on the

second book of the four part Neapolitan saga *L'amica geniale* by Italian writer Elena Ferrante, about the life-long friendship between two girls growing up in a poor neighborhood in Naples, Italy, from childhood to adolescence and middle age. Particularly interesting for me, as an Italian, because it's about my generation of women raised in the 1950s and 60s in a male-dominated culture.



Zoe Kazan- *The Plot Against America* (c) Armando Gallo-HFPA

The Plot Against America (HBO-March 16) from the 2004 novel by Philip Roth, imagines an alternate reality where, after Charles Lindbergh instead of Franklyn D. Roosevelt is elected President in 1940, anti-Semitism and Fascism invade American society. Zoe Kazan, who plays a Jewish wife and mother in Newark, New Jersey, and is the granddaughter of Elia Kazan, daughter of directors-screenwriters Nicholas Kazan and Robin Swicord, says: "My hope is that our show is not didactic politically. It does not have an agenda, but certainly it has a point of view, and that is that Fascism can be spread so easily that it can look like nothing is happening at all, it's like a slow creep, as we have seen within the last 3 years of this presidency. When the 2016 election happened, when we elected someone who is interested in limiting who can come into this country and who is seeking profit for himself and his family and not for the average person, some people saw this like a break from who we are as Americans. So we're on an alternate timeline right now. I am hoping that the political divisions that Trump is capitalizing on and promoting are eased, as we face trying to save the livability of our planet, because it's clear from all the signs that we're on the precipice of a climate disaster."



Kerry Washington, Reese Witherspoon-*Little Fires Everywhere* © Hulu

Little Fires Everywhere (Hulu-March 18) from the 2017 novel by Celeste Ng, with Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington as two different kinds of mothers facing issues with their daughters. Witherspoon says: "After I read this phenomenal book, I optioned it and turned it into an 8 hour miniseries. It's all about the idea that your mother isn't necessarily the person that you are born to, it's where you find her. It's about parenting teenagers and about class and race in our country. I play a seemingly perfect mother of four children, and Kerry Washington portrays an artsy single mother raising a daughter. They live in the Cleveland, Ohio suburb of Shaker Heights, and they both have secrets. Having secrets is part of the human condition, it's part of survival, it's part of fitting in in society, and what's fascinating is who you reveal yourself to and who you don't."



Cate Blanchett-*Mrs. America* © Armando Gallo-HFPA

Mrs. America (Hulu: April 15) Cate Blanchett plays Phyllis Schlafly, the conservative Christian woman who fought against the Women Liberation Movement in the 1970s, helped defeat ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and give rise to the Moral Majority. Rose Byrne is Gloria Steinem, Tracey Ullman is Betty Friedan, Margo Martindale is Bella Abzug.



Mishel Prada, Melissa Barrera-*Vida* © Magnus Sundholm-HFPA

Vida (Starz-3rd season: April 26) Two sisters (Mishel Prada, Melissa Barrera) move back to the

East Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights after their mother dies, they try to save from the threat of gentrification the bar and building that she owned with her wife. Latinx culture and LGBT themes are explored. Barrera says: “Even though Lynn left and is trying to separate herself from the community, she still was born and raised there. At the root of her, in her heart and her essence, she is from the neighborhood. I spent time in Boyle Heights and I realized that they were very warm and nurturing people, very community oriented, supportive of each other, they really stick together. At the forefront of our show are these queer characters that are struggling like any human does. Your sexual preference or the way that you identify is a part of who you are, but it doesn’t define everything about you, it’s not the entirety of your being. That’s why our show is so powerful, and it’s not only being watched by the LGBTQ or Latinx communities, because everyone can identify with these characters, connect to their feelings and emotions.”

[Click here to read my 2018 article about Season 1](#)



Hillary Clinton, daughter Chelsea ©Barbara Kinney-Hulu

Hillary (Hulu-March 6) a 4-part documentary on Hillary Clinton, that premiered at Sundance, is particularly timely. Now that Elizabeth Warren has dropped out, and Joe Biden is only competing with Bernie Sanders for the Democratic Party nomination, our hopes that we will finally have a responsible and competent woman as US president are dashed once again, as they disastrously were in 2016.

You may click on TV program titles to watch trailers.

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