



Binge TV Watching Can Also Be Good Medicine

BY MARY MCNAMARA
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Just as Scout Finch once realized that she never loved reading until she feared she would lose it, I didn't understand the importance of television until my child was too ill to watch it.

The continual complaint about television's negative impact on our health recently erupted into full blown clamor when a study published in the *Journal of American Medicine* seemed to indicate that too much television could shorten a person's life. But there are times when binge watching is not just excusable, it's restorative.

Last year, when my 15-year-old son learned he would spend his summer recovering from spinal surgery, the first thing we did was surrender to his request for a big screen in his room. As soon as he was out of anesthesia, he said, he planned to watch "Game of Thrones" again, from start to finish. It was almost as big a payoff as a straight back. How often does a kid get to watch as much television as he wants?

Danny got his straight back, but he spent almost a week in the hospital, either in debilitating pain or drugged up to his eyeballs. Even after we brought him home, days went by without a sign of my lighthearted, joke-cracking son. He slept a lot and only spoke when he needed something — to be turned over, to use the

bathroom, to fix the pillows against his back. He didn't want to eat, had to be forced to drink, was not happy about having to stand and sit, and had no interest in seeing any of the friends and relatives who wanted to visit.

The flat screen just sat there, black and vacant, while we tried not to panic, to believe the doctor when he said it was all normal, Danny was doing fine, it would just take time. Then one day, about three weeks in, Danny opened his eyes and asked: "So when are we going to start watching 'Game of Thrones'?"

I have written often and long on the glories of modern television, but never have I been so appreciative of them as I was last summer. On a schedule dictated more by pain and medication than the traditional daily rhythms, Danny watched television round the clock. "Game of Thrones," "Falling Skies," "Ripper Street," "Breaking Bad," "Burn Notice" — series after series kept him company and gave him something to think about during those long days when too much conversation tired him, when he couldn't hold a book or sit comfortably enough to play a video game.

His room became the TV room, with friends and family circulating in

and out to catch an hour or two of whatever he was watching. My husband, long dismissive of any story that featured dragons, became a "Game of Thrones" addict. And while I cannot claim to enjoy "Supernatural" with the same dedication that Danny feels, I do now appreciate how many

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dang episodes of it exist.

In the olden days, when Netflix still dealt solely in DVDs, most of us only binge watched when we were sick.

I remember devouring seasons of "Sex and the City" years ago after a surgical recovery myself. Movies are fine, but they end in two hours and then they're gone. When you're sick or weak or simply confined, you need consistency. You want a universe in which you can truly immerse yourself, people you can count on to be there, hour after hour after hour.

And not just to pass the time. Months later, when Danny was on his feet and back at school, the real blow fell: His doctor told him that though he could return to all of his regular ac-

tivities, tackle football was out. Forever. A defensive lineman on the freshman team when he was diagnosed, Danny had dreamed of playing varsity football for years. While all the adults around us offered words of relief — now we wouldn't have to worry about concussions! — we watched our son droop once again, contorted now by something even more difficult to fix than a curved spine.

He grew silent once more, withdrawn; his school work suffered and he didn't care, he returned to his room and his flat screen. There he started watching "Friday Night Lights." Only this time, he didn't want any of us to watch with him; whenever one of us sat down next to him, he would pause the show and wait for us to leave.

Treading water in the doorway, trying to think of yet another way to ask him if he was all right, I worried for the first time about what he was watching and why. The hideously violent story of a chemistry teacher turned drug-dealing killer? Fine. But I was concerned that Jason Katims' finely drawn story of a small-town football team would exacerbate his sense of loss, or I'd shoot a team of what he could no longer do and the fragility of even a simple dream. Instead, those hours spent in Dil-

lon, Texas, seemed to make him stronger. Eventually, he let us watch with him; eventually, he started talking about the show, its characters and the actors.

And eventually he spoke of his own pain and frustration, how lost he felt without a team and the sport he loved, without the hours spent practicing and playing to give his day, and his identity, a tangible form. But his voice rang with a passing tense, as if he were describing a place he was leaving even as he left it, the wreckage still visible in the rearview window, but growing smaller with every passing mile.

We watch television for many reasons, in many different ways, not all of them healthy. Certainly it can be a sedentary activity, especially when combined with mindless eating. In a society where most bodies are already at rest more than they are in motion, it's easy to target television, especially given the American belief that too much of a good thing is never quite enough.

But television, especially nowadays, is an art form, and there are times we need to lose ourselves in art. To open ourselves wide to the thoughts and emotions of others, to see different sides of the human story unfurl slowly before us.

The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are among the most important things we create, and sometimes it takes a while for them to sink in.

'Game Of Thrones' Earns A Leading 19 Emmy Nods

BY LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — The sprawling and blood-thirsty saga "Game of Thrones," defying the Emmy Awards' grudging respect for such fantasy fare, emerged as the leader in the nominations announced Thursday with 19 bids, including best drama series.

Other top nominees included a pair of ambitious miniseries, " Fargo," with 18 bids, and "American Horror Story: Coven," with 17. The AIDS drama "The Normal Heart" received 16 nominations, including best TV movie. The meth kingpin tale "Breaking Bad" got 16 bids for its final season, including best drama and best actor nod for star Bryan Cranston.

The 66th prime-time Emmy Awards ceremony will have big-screen star power to spare. This year's Academy Awards best-actor winner, Matthew McConaughey ("Dallas Buyers Club"), and nominee Chiwetel Ejiofor ("12 Years a Slave") are both nominees for TV projects, as is past Oscar winner Julia Roberts.

In the competitive best-drama series category, "Game of Thrones" will compete with "Breaking Bad," "Downton Abbey," "House of Cards," "Mad Men" and "True Detective."

Whether HBO's "Game of Thrones" can take home the top trophy is another question: Only one fantasy or sci-fi series, "Lost," has ever captured it, according to Tom O'Neil, author of "The Emmys" and organizer of the Gold Derby awards site.

Snubbed in the category was "The Good Wife," despite a season that was both critically acclaimed and gasp-inducing for the sudden, violent death of character Will Gardner (Josh Charles).

Netflix's "House of Cards" which made a breakthrough last year as the first online series nominated for a major award, has the chance again to grab Emmy gold.

"Orange is the New Black," also from Netflix, leaped that barrier on the flip side this time around with a bid for best comedy series, along with a nod for star Taylor Schilling.

Also competing for best comedy honors are "The Big Bang Theory," "Louie," "Silicon Valley," "Veep," and "Modern Family," a four-time winner that has the chance to tie "Frasier" as the all-time winning sitcom with one more award.

"Orange is the New Black," a prison-set hybrid "dramedy," could have been entered in either the drama or comedy category, and

the decision to go for the latter paid off. Not so for "Shameless," a onetime drama contender that tried for better luck on the comedy side but failed to get a top bid.

Another category-buster is "True Detective," the dark-hearted Southern drama that starred McConaughey and Woody Harrelson. It was entered in the series category although it had a close-ended story and its stars have indicated they don't plan on returning for the show's second season.

But the crime anthology qualifies as a series because of the "created by" credit given to Nic Pizzolatto by the Writers Guild of America, said John Leverence, the TV academy's senior vice president for awards. That credit serves as a "marker" to help determine a program's first-year Emmy categorization, which can be ambiguous, Leverence said.

McConaughey and Harrelson both will vie for best drama actor honors, along with four-time winner Cranston for "Breaking Bad," Jon Hamm for "Mad Men," Kevin Spacey for "House of Cards," and Jeff Daniels for "The Newsroom," who won the Emmy last year.

Nominees in the lead actress drama category are last year's winner, "Homeland" star Claire Danes along with Lizzy Caplan for "Masters of Sex," Michelle Dockery for "Downton Abbey," Julianna Margulies for "The Good Wife," Kerry Washington for "Scandal" and Robin Wright for "House of Cards."

"I'm crazy grateful that the TV Academy has acknowledged our show in these ways," Washington said in a statement, giving a shoutout to fellow "Scandal" nominees Joe Morton and Kate Burton. They were recognized in the guest actor and actress categories.

For comedy series, the lead actor nods went to Don Cheadle for "House of Lies," Louis C.K. for "Louie," Ricky Gervais for "Derek," Matt LeBlanc for "Episodes," William H. Macy for "Shameless" and Jim Parsons for "The Big Bang Theory." Parsons won the Emmy last year.

Best actress comedy nominees besides Schilling were Lena Dunham for "Girls," Edie Falco for "Nurse Jackie," Melissa McCarthy for "Mike & Molly," Amy Poehler for "Parks and Recreation" and last year's winner, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, for "Veep."

"This list of nominees would also be the list for the best dinner party in history," "Girls" creator and star Dunham said in a statement, dubbing them "fierce and funny women."

Allington

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severe weather was pretty interesting. As I got more into photography — there isn't severe weather year round for me to photograph — so I started getting into other natural phenomenon such as northern lights, the night sky, wildlife and other things to make it a year-round hobby."

Storm chasing has become a serious pastime for Allington.

"At first, I really didn't shoot storms," he said of getting serious about photography in his mid-teens. "I'd just go to the park, or I'd shoot a sunset. As I got older, I could travel and that's how it got started."

Now 26 years old, Allington chases storms when his job as an assistant manager at a local retail store allows for it.

"Storm chasing can mean hours in a car with nothing to show for it," he said. "You almost have to not like your free time to be a storm chaser, because you spend so much time in the car."

Recently, Allington and a fellow photographer made a trip to Iceland, a place the friends had often joked about visiting. In January, they decided to get serious about making it happen.

"It's somewhere I've always wanted to go," he said. "The weather there was not always conducive for photography. There was a lot of fog and rain. Of the two weeks we were there, we probably only had really good light four or five times. We had to maximize it when we had it, which was a challenge. But it was a fun challenge."

The excursion resulted in

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CHRIS ALLINGTON

Allington taking approximately 4,000 photos, and he has slowly been working his way through them.

The Iceland vacation coincided with the severe weather in northeast Nebraska that resulted in the destruction of Pilger.

"That stung a little bit," said the storm chaser in Allington. "When I got back, I went to Pilger and took a photo. Someone had painted a sign saying, 'Pilger will be back.' There was a storm in the distance with a sunset. That photo has become really popular, and I'm donating all the proceeds from sales of the print to a Pilger charity."

Allington said he would like to make photography his full-time job someday and continues to build exposure.

"It's getting close to being a part-time job," he stated. "I definitely put enough work

in to feel like it's a part-time job. There isn't really a day that goes by that I don't pick up the camera or edit images."

With the plethora of devices that make taking photos or video easier than ever, Allington said he believes there is still an appreciation for those who make an art out of photography.

"I think the still photo will always have a place, because it allows you to tell a story with one image," he stated.

To learn more about Allington's work, visit www.intoherfd.com/ or look up Into The RFD Photography on Facebook.

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