

Adieu *Thrones*, bye Avengers—this is the TV/film we're eyeing for the rest of 2019

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Coming into 2019, it felt like pop culture only had two things on its mind: the final season of *Game of Thrones* and the final chapter in Marvel's *Avengers* saga. Looking back from the half-way point in the year, hey, at least one of those delivered.

Of course, pop culture is never that straightforward or simple, and 2019 so far has brought plenty of delightful surprises. Netflix finally hit on another series with the loop-y *Russian Doll*. Jordan Peele followed up perhaps the most beloved horror movie in years with another winner called *Us*. And maybe HBO didn't please everyone with the last chapter in Westeros, but seemingly *everyone* has adored the company's surprise historical hit, *Chernobyl*, to say nothing of the (currently airing) delightfully weird supernatural comedy, *Los Espookys*.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Around Ars, we don't really indulge in Best Of list-making until December rolls around, and there's a simple reason for that: six more months of highly anticipated stuff and out-of-nowhere surprises await

all of us. So as folks work their way through a certain hyped Hawkins, Indiana, show this weekend, don't worry about binging too fast and being without something new and exciting on the horizon. Here's the pop culture from the rest of 2019 that already has us counting down the days.

[embedded content]

The trailer for the first season of *Mindhunter*.

Netflix's second-best show?

With *Stranger Things*' new season out as of this round-up and *Mr. Robot*'s final season not officially pegged to Christmas time yet, the obvious candidates for 2019's best-yet-to-come have been taken off the table. And something like Fantastic Fest—the annual Austin, Texas, genre film event that brought us alien love documentaries, Anne Hathaway as kaiju, and a film entirely set in a 911 dispatch center—can practically top my anticipation rankings every year.

So instead, my mind travels back in time to 1970s' Pittsburgh and DC to an unlikely trio trying to read the minds of a more deranged set. Netflix's *Mindhunter* originally seemed like a quick but forgettable green light: grab a dude from *Hamilton*, make him some kind of authority figure in a crime thing, and darken up the story a bit. Then I watched the show's first David Fincher-produced season and suddenly understood why everyone obsesses over true crime as a genre. *Mindhunter* is much, much smarter than your average *Law & Order* as it follows the origins of the FBI's criminal profiling division while it attempts to understand the known serial killers of the era in order to prevent future ones from striking.

Jonathan Groff (the *Hamilton* guy) plays upstart FBI agent Holden Ford, a man obsessed with the job and with making his way up the bureau food chain. His odd-couple (err, trio) team of Bill Tench (Holt McCallany as a grizzled, skeptical FBI vet) and Wendy Carr (Anna Torv as an academic psychologist in

it for the research data) sizzles every time they're interacting in a scene. That's saying something considering how dynamite Ford's direct interactions with killers can be (Cameron Britton is a revelation as serial killer Ed Kemper, an intimidating physical presence happy to indulge in a little narcissistic "talk about yourself" exercise regularly). The show demonstrates, at times in cringing detail, that the line between hyper-focused good guy and demented, dangerous villain may be thinner than anyone cares to admit. And with all-time evil like Richard Speck showing up S1, the stakes are likely about to get even dicier for Ford and co. as they move further into the era of Charles Manson et al.

—Nathan Mattise, *Features Editor*

[embedded content]

The one trailer that needs no introduction.

Star Wars Episode IX: The Rise of Skywalker

I suspect I will never like the name, no matter how I end up feeling about the film. But Star Wars was foundational media for me as a kid. The first fanwear I ever remember having was a set of R2-D2 Underoos. John Williams' soaring scores are entirely why I ended up playing French horn. The original trilogy, especially the soundtracks, are part of what set me on the path that eventually led to film school, arts criticism, and, indirectly, my entire career.

My inner six-year-old is still giddy at what I've gotten to see on the big screen in *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi*. And my outer adult is giddy at the fact that I can bring my actual six-year-old daughter with me to see this conclusion in the theater later this year.

—Kate Cox, *Tech Policy Reporter*

- Things are not going as planned in the trailer for *Ready*

or *Not*.

- Of course the zombie outbreak spreads in *Little Monsters*.

YouTube/Sundance Institute

- Jesse Custer (Dominic Cooper) faces off against childhood nemesis Jody (Jeremy Childs) in the season 3 finale of *Preacher*.

All the horror comedies

I'm most looking forward to a couple of quirky entries in the horror/black comedy genre. Up first: *Ready or Not*, from Fox Searchlight, is slated for theatrical release on August 23, 2019. Grace (Samara Weaving) is thrilled to be marrying into a wealthy gaming dynasty, the Le Domas family. Her eccentric new in-laws insist it's family tradition to play a game at midnight after the wedding; only then will she be a true member of the family. The game: Hide and Seek, except it turns out that Grace is the prey who must elude detection until dawn to avoid being killed in a bizarre ritual sacrifice. The trailer makes this film look smart and wickedly funny, especially given her in-laws' utter incompetence with weaponry. Learn to shoot a crossbow already!

From there, I turn to *Little Monsters* starring Lupita Nyong'o as Miss Caroline, a perky kindergarten schoolteacher who takes her kids on a field trip to Pleasant Valley Farm just as a zombie outbreak occurs. The innocent excursion turns into a bloody fight for survival, and Miss Caroline must protect her young charges not just from the physical threat, but the threat to their innocence. She's helped by a failed musician named Dave (Alexander England), who's tagging along in hopes of winning her affections, and Teddy McGiggle (Josh Gad), a children's entertainer who also has romantic designs on Miss Caroline. Based on footage released by Sundance earlier this year, it looks like a blast—sort of *Zombieland* meets

Kindergarten Cop. And I am here for that. The film doesn't yet have an official theatrical release date, but it's still playing the festival circuit (like Toronto's Fantasia Fest later this month).

Finally, the fourth and final season of *Preacher* debuts on AMC August 4, 2019. It's based on the DC comic series by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, and it follows the adventures of Jesse Custer (Dominic Cooper), a conman turned preacher who inexplicably becomes the case host for an entity known as Genesis (i.e., the embodiment of the World of God). That makes him a target for a religious order called the Grail, who wants to wield Genesis for its own nefarious purposes. In our year-end Best of TV list for 2018, we singled out a scene filled with a rapid succession of exploding Messiah clones, trying and failing to serve as host to Genesis. The sequence captured "all the over-the-top irreverence and operatic violence (and sometimes downright sacrilege) that we've come to expect from this singular series."

By season three's end, Jesse and the gang were heading for a showdown with Herr Starr (Pip Torrens) and the Grail for control of Genesis. If past seasons are any indication, it's going to be an insane, bloody, unpredictable ride.

—Jennifer Ouellete, Senior Culture and Science Reporter

Listing image by YouTube/Sundance Institute

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