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The 20 Best TV Shows of 2020

From teens to queens, first loves to worst loves, vampires to aliens and more, these series gave us characters and stories to escape into when the real world was too scary to bear

By **ALAN SEPINWALL**



Back in June, when we published our ranking of [the best shows](#) of the year so far, it felt wholly plausible that our end-of-year list wouldn't look much different. This was a few months into the pandemic, when it was unclear how soon television would be able to go back into production, if at all, and how much material the networks and streamers had stockpiled pre-quarantine. If the answer to either of those questions was bad, we assumed the last three or four months of the year would be bereft of interesting programming.

Instead, the content firehose of the last few years merely slowed to a soothing shower, offering enough quality series to fill more than half of a revised top 10, and eight shows overall out of this beefed-up top 20.

It's a group that includes both reliable veterans at or near the end of their runs and remarkable debuts from untested creators; series about the strains of getting older and ones about the thrills and terrors of adolescence; shows about America's difficult past and ones that imagine what our future might hold. In a strange and often maddening year, it was great to have TV like this to turn to.

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'Bluey' (Disney Jr.)



This animated Australian import about a family of Blue Heeler dogs — dad Bandit, mom Chilli, and daughters Bluey and Bingo — is clearly targeted at preschoolers. But *Bluey* turned out to be an incredible all-ages pandemic balm. Stories seem simple — say, the girls and Bandit find ways to repurpose an old box of felt pens — yet have profound messages to impart about kindness, maturity, and the emotional benefits of imaginary play, both for kids like Bluey and kids at heart like Bandit. (Bandit's willingness to suffer for his daughters' entertainment is also a bottomless source of humor.) The Season Two episode "Sleepytime," where Chilli helps Bingo find the courage to make it through a whole night of sleeping in her own bed, is a four-hankie dazzler about the challenges, rewards, and costs of growing up.

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Alan Sepinwall 
@sepinwall



My picks for the 20 best shows I watched in this very strange and scary year include reliable veterans and thrilling debuts, stories about the perils of aging and ones about the terror of adolescence. Lots of great stuff: [rollingstone.com/tv/tv-lists/20...](https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-lists/20...)



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