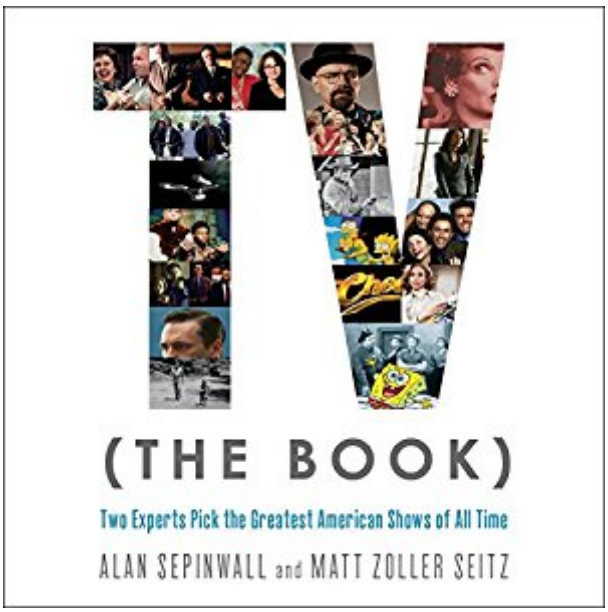
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TV (the Book): Two Experts Pick The Greatest American Shows Of All Time



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Synopsis

Is The Wire better than Breaking Bad? Is Cheers better than Seinfeld? What's the best high school show ever made? Why did Moonlighting really fall apart? Was the Arrested Development Netflix season brilliant or terrible? For 20 years - since they shared a TV column at Tony Soprano's hometown newspaper - critics Alan Sepinwall and Matt Zoller Seitz have been debating these questions and many more, but it all ultimately boils down to this: What's the greatest TV show ever? That debate reaches an epic conclusion in TV (the Book). Sepinwall and Seitz have identified and ranked the 100 greatest scripted shows in American TV history. Using a complex, obsessively all-encompassing scoring system, they've created a pantheon of top TV shows, each accompanied by essays delving into what made these shows great. From vintage classics like The Twilight Zone and I Love Lucy to modern masterpieces like Mad Men and Friday Night Lights, from huge hits like All in the Family and ER to short-lived favorites like Firefly and Freaks and Geeks, TV (the Book) brings the triumphs of the small screen together in one amazing compendium. Sepinwall and Seitz's argument has ended. Now it's time for yours to begin!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are like me and have spent much of your life searching the shelves of Borders and Barnes & Noble in vain for a great book of TV criticism, then TV (THE BOOK) is what you've been waiting for. If you aren't like me, (THE BOOK) is essential reading anyway. Matt and Alan have long been my primary go-tos for TV criticism and recaps - at Vulture and HitFix, respectively. I call them Matt and

Alan, knowing Matt only marginally and Alan not at all, because they offer the reader an informal comfort-zone in which they wear their knowledge of the medium lightly, even though each obviously knows it very well. That they've known each other for years make them ideal co-authors for their Herculean task: ranking the best American shows of all time based on quantitative categories that they knew going in everybody would agree with wholeheartedly and nobody would say indignantly, "What about X?"I'm not going to say, "What about X?" I might say something like, "THE SHIELD is overrated," or "BARNEY MILLER is undervalued," but then I would remember where I was commenting and think better of it. Instead I'll just say that Matt and Alan make a very good case for their choices, and that they complement each other beautifully. Sometimes they pair up on the essays (you can tell who wrote what by the initials left at the end - AS or MZS or both). Oftentimes each tackles a particular show individually, and after a while it becomes fairly easy to guess who wrote the piece. Matt gets the lion's share of "vintage" television and is extremely authoritative on the history of the medium. Alan writes about more contemporary shows, and tends to make a case for "traditional" fare to Matt's leanings toward experimentation and the avant-garde. Let me emphasize that I'm comparing them to each other; when compared to most TV critics, both lead in all of these categories.As anyone who reads their regular work knows, both love dramas and comedies, hit shows and shows struggling to find an audience. Each has also been a consistent champion of shows about women, by women, or "for" women. I still part ways with them on GIRLS, and especially Matt's claim that Lena Dunham "had no idea what a hornet's nest she would stir" with her show, when Dunham's calculated provocations are by now pretty clear. But each is open to the possibilities of television, from its early years to "Peak TV." Film Twitter has been even more defensive than usual since (THE BOOK) launched, always a sure sign that somebody is doing something right.

While I have quibbles with the order of their list, it's hard to argue that these two authors don't love TV and didn't do their research. Shows that I had forgotten about made the list, as well as shows that I never thought I'd see on any best-of list, and that was a pleasant surprise. Some of the essays are surprisingly short, but no show that I thought had to be on the list was left out, so I can't have too many complaints.The show with what I thought was the best finale ever was actually the show they chose for that as well. If you've seen the show, then I don't even think you could argue for anything else. (Spoiler-free review. Buy the book if you want to know which show.)I also appreciated that no currently airing show was considered, as any kind of art needs some time to be fully appreciated.If you love TV now (or have in the past), you should't hesitate to buy this book.

I am not American, and as such I have not seen most of the TV shows in the "Pantheon". But I do have a certain affinity for scripted TV, an affinity that has grown to the uber-availability of content these days. I started actively watching TV shows in 2005, and haven't stopped since. Luckily, just about that time the so-called "Golden Era of TV" was about to burst, and burst it did.This book is terrific in that regard and it manages to scale down all the shows and presents a great starting point for anyone who wants to start watching great TV. Not to mention it has amazing insights into shows I already love and adore (hello there Cheers, hey, good seeing you Tony!). Sepinwall and MZS do a great job in carrying across their thoughts and while ranking such a subjective thing as fiction is inherently difficult, they make it fun and inclusive. I loved their scoring model, which they explain in detail at the beginning of the book, not to mention the essays accompanying each show. The clarity of their thoughts makes the reader want to see the show so bad. I wanna rewatch half the shows I watched after reading this book. It invokes that feeling!All in all, a great read for TV fans, old and new, young and old, novices and buffs.

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