

Good drama in the form of TV, movies, books, etc. is about people, relationships, and issues. Good writers and producers realize this and make good content. They make content that will cause people to cross genre lines. Some people may come to the media because of the genre, but stay because of the story. Some people will only come to the media because they have heard about how good the story is and then discover new things in that genre.

I enjoy a wide variety of music, TV, movies and books. But for this post I want to focus on TV. The lessons can be applied to all types of media. As I said, I enjoy a variety of programming. I watch reality TV, comedy, drama, action, sci-fi, and much more. There comes a point where I draw a line. I ask myself, is this show something I enjoy watching casually or am I dedicated to it. If I am dedicated to it, I watch it live or very quickly afterward on my DVR. If I am dedicated to it, I am reading about it online during the week and listening to podcasts about it. The big factor that causes a show to cross the line to dedication, is the story (be it real life or scripted).

Here is some background on me that influences this thinking. First, I am a Christian and I try to please Christ with what I put into my thoughts and mind. I think critically about things and try to see the world view. Sometimes this means I watch a show but strongly disagree with some of the story lines and philosophy and will make it known. Sometimes it means, that no matter how well written or engaging the story is, I will not watch or will stop watching the show. Secondly, I majored in broadcast communications and minored in film. It gave me the tools to appreciate the craft and art behind the productions. It has also given me the tools to examine and critique the production. These two factors and more go into to my thought when looking at the story.

Here are just a few practical examples of where story and writing get it right. *Lost* had, for the most part, very good writing and acting of the story lines. I had good mystery, sci-fi elements, and even comedy elements. But story won the day. *Fringe* is very heavy in sci-fi but they are finding a good balance with story line. *Mad Men* has intense stories and drama that draw you in to them. I'm not a huge fan of some of the content. *Stargate Universe* is just now finding a rhythm but the people are fighting to keep it on the air. *The Walking Dead* is hard because of the zombie storyline but the truth is that the story is about the human condition under major stresses. *Downton Abbey* deals with social, class, and moral struggles. Well I need to finish but one more example is the U.S. version of *Being Human*. The story deals with very human issues through the lens of fantasy. I do not mean to leave

out reality TV. The human element is just a little more clear there.

My fear is that the networks and powers that be (advertisers etc.) drive for money and ratings will kill off more good and quality shows. Why is this? Because good story takes time. Most networks are too inflexible with their schedule. They will not give full seasons to shows that need it. I'm looking at you Syfy. Some shows cannot have seasons split in two and spread out. Some shows need a year to develop a following and they need good promotion and a good time slot. But the TV rating system and advertising system don't allow for that.

Why do I watch so many British shows? Why do British imports do well in converting to U.S. Audiences. The easy answer is that the U.K. does more and better quality for the money they have. They make the investment into well written and acted shows. Those shows succeed in the U.K. and see airtime on BBC America. Once the story and success have been proven, the U.S. makes a version. However, if they do not take the good stories and provide new twists what is the point of doing a new version. The Office and Being Human are examples of good U.S. versions. Others, not so much. Some things should never be adapted, Doctor Who for example.

So I hope and the U.S. industry, that is not HBO and AMC, can learn and give the support needed to make quality stories.

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