



BLACKSTONE, FEATURED, MICHAEL: TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, ORPHAN BLACK, REPUBLIC OF DOYLE, SCHITT'S CREEK, SENSITIVE SKIN, SUNNYSIDE, VIKINGS, YOUNG DRUNK PUNK

HE SAID/SHE SAID: CANADIAN TV SHOWS TO BINGE-WATCH THIS SUMMER

🕒 MAY 4, 2015 👤 GREG DAVID

Join Greg and Diane every Monday as we debate what's on our minds. This week: Key Canadian TV shows to binge-watch this summer.

He Said:

The Canadian TV calendar is starting to thin out as we get into the summer months. Big Brother Canada, Remedy and Orphan Black continue to chug along, Rookie Blue returns and Between debuts on May 21 and CBC's Fool Canada hidden camera series starring Will Sasso is scheduled to bow in June. Other than that, there's not a heck of a lot on, which means it's the perfect time to binge-watch a homegrown program or two (or four or five) during the rest of the spring and into the summer. Here are my picks:

Young Drunk Punk, City

Bruce McCulloch's peek back at the 1980s is tender, funny and sweet, and showcases wonderful performances from its young cast in Tim Carlson and Atticus Mitchell alongside vets McCulloch and Tracy Ryan. Catch all 13 episodes on City's website.

Sunnyside, City

Co-created by Gary Pearson and Dan Redican, Sunnyside is brash, envelope-pushing sketch comedy starring Kathleen Phillips, Pat Thornton, Patrice Goodman, Alice Moran,

Rob Norman and Kevin Vidal playing a wide range of offbeat characters, from meth heads to meat heads, murderers to cops. Wacky co-stars include ponies, clowns, a bleeding wall and a guy who lives in the sewer. Season 1 is available on City's website.

Vikings, shomi/History

If historical drama is more your thing, you should be watching Vikings. Game of Thrones may grab more headlines, but I like Vikings because it's based on real history and Viking mythology. Travis Fimmel is Ragnar Lothbrok, a Viking farmer who yearns for a better, more exciting life. With the help of his wife, Lagertha (Katheryn Winnick), brother Rollo (Clive Standen) and buddy Floki (Gustaf Skarsgård), Ragnar successfully reaches England and begins a bloody campaign seeking riches and fame. Seasons 1 and 2 are available on shomi for Rogers and Shaw subscribers and Season 3 can be watched on History.ca.

Republic of Doyle, CBC

Allan Hawco's co-creation is like The Rockford Files if it was set in Newfoundland. Jake Doyle (Hawco) and his dad, Malachy (Sean McGinley) tool around St. John's in a GTO, solving crimes as PI's and getting into trouble with the local RCMP detachment. Funny and dramatic, Doyle is one hell of a ride. The entire run of Republic of Doyle can be watched on CBC.ca.

Orphan Black, CraveTV

My apologies to die-hard fans of Orphan Black, but I like Season 1 more than the sophomore go-round or this current season. I think it's because I was so blown away by Tatiana Maslany playing Sarah, Alison, Helena, Rachel and Cosima for the first time and the tight storytelling that made it so memorable. This was OB before the accolades and awards, when it still felt like a small #CloneClub was tuning in to greatness. Season 1 is available on CraveTV.

Blackstone, APTN

Created by Ron E. Scott, this gritty Gemini Award winner spotlights the fictional Blackstone First Nations band just outside of Edmonton. Issues of drugs, alcoholism, unemployment, corruption and abuse are acknowledged through an unflinching lens that is entertaining and thought-provoking. All four seasons of Blackstone can be seen on APTN's website.

She Said:

The problem with recommending a binge-watch of Canadian series is many can be difficult to find. You can't just sign up for CraveTV or shomi unless you're with a qualifying cable or Internet company, and some of the binge-worthiest shows aired on cable channels that don't offer episodes online, or aired years ago before online access was a consideration and a broadcaster or producer might not think getting those rights is worth the effort. Does anyone buy DVDs anymore? A handful are available that way.

I'd echo Greg's Blackstone recommendation — I need to get caught up myself — and add that the first season of Young Drunk Punk will come to CBC in the fall, but you could be one of the cool kids (and possibly help the low-rated show get a second season) if you catch up now. Besides those, here's my two cents:



Slings & Arrows, DVD

If you've seen it already, isn't it time to rewatch? If you haven't seen it, you have to at least give a try to the show that tops my list of best Canadian series of all time. If you don't fall in love, fine, be that way, but at least get a taste of the pathos and humour behind the scenes of not-Stratford starring Paul Gross, Martha Burns, Stephen Ouimette, Mark McKinney, Susan Coyne and, in the first season, a luminous Rachel McAdams. All three seasons are on DVD.

Twitch City, DVD

I dare you to find a more intentionally surreal Canadian show than this, co-created by and starring my favourite oddball Don McKellar (see also: *Slings & Arrows*) as a TV addict shut-in. Costars included Callum Keith Rennie, Molly Parker, and both Bruce McCulloch and Mark McKinney as the same character, believe it or not. As far as I can tell, DVD is your only hope.

19-2, CraveTV

The ratings of this acclaimed cop series suggest many of you, like me, haven't been watching as it aired. I got part way through season one during my CraveTV trial, and a seemingly random selection of season two episodes are on bravo.ca. I'll likely wait to complete my binge until Bell starts selling their shows to Netflix (aka when hell freezes over), or if they do the smart thing and rerun the series from the beginning on CTV this summer.

Sensitive Skin, HBO Canada on demand

If you have access, check out this Kim Cattrall-starring black comedy about a woman's mid-life crisis, with Don McKellar and Elliot Gould. It never got its due while it aired, but it is getting a second season so binge away if you can ... unlike me.

Schitt's Creek, Netflix

Ah, CBC, a Canadian channel that actually allows their shows to be sold to Netflix. One of my favourite shows of this past season (no "Canadian" qualifier needed), *Schitt's Creek* is my choice for a binge rewatch of the antics of Eugene and Dan Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Emily Hampshire, Annie Murphy and Chris Elliot. You can also find the season on CBC.ca

but let's be honest: Netflix is a much better user experience.

Michael Tuesday and Thursdays, CBC

A surprise renewal years after its cancellation means you need to catch up on season one before season two arrives likely next year. Starring Bob Martin and Matt Watts as a codependent therapist and patient, the series is hilarious and heartfelt. All episodes are available on CBC.ca.