

Support the Guardian
Fund independent journalism

Support from \$3.45 a week →

Sign in

- News
- Opinion
- Sport
- Culture
- Lifestyle
- ≡

US

Best culture of 2026 so far Television

The best TV of 2026 so far



From ludicrously fun 80s love affairs to outrageously scandalous drama, this has already been a year of great television. Here are our favourite shows of the year

📷 Composite: Guardian Design/Disney/BBC/Bad Wolf Productions/HBO/Simon Ridgway

Kate Abbott, Alexi Duggins, Hollie Richardson and Phil Harrison

Mon 8 Jun 2026 05.00 EDT

A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms

Now/HBO Max

Departing from the doom and gloom of Game of Thrones and House of the Dragon, this lighter, funnier Westeros spin-off was infinitely more enjoyable from the off. Ser Dunk and Egg are a duo worth rooting for as they prepare for the tourney, with Dunk chasing his dream of becoming a knight. Of course, the series isn't without gore - and the Targaryen twist sent things into a blood-soaked spiral. But its simpler storytelling and (mostly) sweet characters made us excited to be back in George RR Martin's world.

What we said: "Perhaps the fact that it is not going to set the world on fire, either literally within the show or metaphorically without it, is the point. The real world is now too Westeros-like for us to cope with any more." [Read the full review](#)

Amandaland



📷 Photograph: BBC/Merman

BBC iPlayer

Lucy Punch has created one of the best TV antiheroes in years. Insufferable? Yes. But the divorced middle-class mum/influencer/kitchen shop worker Amanda cracks us up so much that, by this second series, we just want her dream of moving into a bigger house in SoHa to come true. With Philippa Dunne as her longsuffering friend/dogsbody Anne, and Joanna Lumley also on board as Amanda's overbearing mother, this really is a celebration of some of the best women in comedy.

What we said: "Amanda slots neatly into a lineage of British comedy icons; file her next to the delusional, narcissistic, indefatigable likes of Alan Partridge and David Brent." [Read the full review](#)

Bait



📷 Photograph: Amazon

Prime Video

Patrick Stewart as the voice of a dead pig's head. Guz Khan as an entrepreneur trying to disrupt the taxi market with Muber - the Muslim Uber. An attempt to pursue a thief in a London pedicab pumping out UK garage classics. Riz Ahmed's semi-autobiographical story of an actor striving to become the next James Bond sounds like a straight-up comedy. But it plays out as the woozy tale of a borderline breakdown induced by the pressures of fitting into the mainstream, while staying true to the community you come from. After all, how does a British actor of Pakistani heritage justify taking the role of a white neocolonialist icon? "If I played Bond, he wouldn't be white!" protests Ahmed. "Yeah, but you would be," comes the response. Surely the most wry, witty and brilliant look at cultural identity we'll watch this year.

What we said: "Bait overcomes any viewer skepticism by rooting the silly fun of set-pieces such as the Bond fight send-up in an emotionally authentic family drama." [Read the full review](#)

Children of the Blitz



📷 Photograph: BBC/Minnow Films/John Cheetham

BBC iPlayer

Given that anyone who can actually recall the Blitz is now at least pushing 90, television of this kind goes beyond mere documentary-making and enters the realm of historical record-building. This 90-minute film which spoke to Blitz survivors from all corners of the British Isles was enlightening

and deeply touching: there was testimony that reminded viewers that childhood trauma often lasts a lifetime but also stories of resilience and redemption. The death of the wonderful Patsy Money Penny between filming and broadcast was a poignant reminder that, in terms of preserving these memories, time is running out. Essential viewing.

What we said: “A huge story is told via dozens of tiny, shattering personal reflections. Ted Bush in Cardiff remembers going to the pictures with his dad. When they returned home, they found a pile of rubble: Ted’s father’s first response was to retrieve his son’s Hornby toy train from the remains of their house.” [Read the full review](#)

Heated Rivalry



📷 Photograph: Sabrina Lantos/AP

Now

“I’m coming to the cottage.” It’s the sexy, squeal-worthy hockey romance that has taken the world by storm and unleashed the sheer star power of Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie. Based on Rachel Reid’s novels, the story of pro hockey players Ilya and Shane who pretend to loathe each other but have secret trysts then fall for each other hard is a gorgeous queer love story in the butch world of pucks and padding. It’s pumped full of sex, sure,

but it's also packed with beautiful moments, from Storrie's soul-bearing monologue in Russian to their blissful days together in that lake house. It's such a global smash that there are now Heated Rivalry raves. Sing it with me now: "All the things she said, all the things she said!"

What we said: "In any romance, opposites attract - and soon Shane and Ilya are at it like knives. Knives with fancy hotel rooms and perfect bottoms and legs." [Read the full review](#)

Industry



📷 Photograph: BBC/Bad Wolf Productions/HBO/Simon Ridgway

BBC iPlayer/HBO

Industry is no longer the show it started as; long gone are the slanging matches on the brutal Pierpoint trading floor. But that is no bad thing: the fourth season was outrageously scandalous. Harper (Myha'la) and Yasmin (Marisa Abela) are the only original finance grads left standing now, and trying to straddle friendship with rivalry. But this is about way more than big money. Overdosing journalists! Bloody bust-ups! Claims of incest at a Marie Antoinette party! Heck, the writers even sent Yasmin off on a Ghislaine Maxwell trajectory. The next season has been confirmed as the last and, while this feels right, the nightmares we have witnessed suggest it will end

with the bang of all bangs.

What we said: “In digging deeper than it has previously dared into the tortured psyches of its leads, it manages to be more disquieting and more relatable than ever.” [Read the full review](#)



Most viewed