

# THE CONVERSATION

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The Conversation

## Naked tennis, outback feuds and a chimp named Tonka: what we're streaming in November

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As I write this, people around the country will be recovering from last night's Halloween shenanigans, perhaps even experiencing a candy-induced comedown.

Luckily, this month's streaming picks include a serial killer flick that'll help keep the spooky season around a bit longer. There's also *Chimp Crazy*, an audacious docuseries that's horrific in its own way – as well as some slick new TV shows set against the idyllic scenery of the outback.

Whether you're after funny, frightening or frivolous, there's plenty to kick your feet up to.

## **Territory**

*Netflix*

Territory takes place in the Northern Territory, on the “world's largest cattle station”. The once-great dynasty of its owners, the Lawson family, is thrown into doubt when their heir apparent dies. The Top End's most powerful players – billionaire miners, rival cattle barons, desert gangsters and Indigenous elders – immediately start circling.

### Territory | Official Trailer | Netflix



Filmed in stunning remote locations, the show looks like the most ambitious and sophisticated Tourism Australia ad you've ever seen. The wildlife! The panoramic drone shots! The hat budget! The rest of the world could go from thinking we ride kangaroos to work, to assuming we've all got our own helicopters. While the male characters are brilliant sources of humour and violence, it's the ladies in *Territory* that bring the heart.

*Territory* does a great job of establishing a simmering tension between the traditional owners of the land and the families and businesses that have taken possession of it – but these plotlines move at a frustratingly slow pace. Perhaps this is to cater to a global audience, which will likely lack the context that local viewers have. And maybe, for Australian viewers, the enduring subordination and struggle of the original landowners is the intended takeaway.

Territory is an ambitious and attractive series. It was wonderful to see so many resources poured into a new concept, filmed and set in a part of Australia that rarely sees the kind of spotlight it deserves.

– *Alexa Scarlata*

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***Read more: Netflix's Territory is a Succession-like drama packed with family rivalry and betrayal, set in Australia's outback***

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## **Woman of the Hour**

*Netflix*

Anna Kendrick's directorial debut, *Woman of the Hour*, offers a glimpse into the horrific crimes of serial killer Rodney Alcala. Branded with the epithet "the Dating Game Killer" after his appearance on a popular 1970s dating game show, Alcala is thought to have been responsible for the rape and murder of up to 130 men, women and children.

*Woman of the Hour* is especially interested in the way women of the 1970s were pinned under a critical social gaze which expects them to be nurturing and compliant – resulting in their extreme psychological and physical vulnerability.

Alcala's camera and the cameras of *The Dating Game* both frame and blind the women subjected to their gaze, highlighting social and gendered conventions and restrictions.

Kendrick is a compelling presence as a woman initially proud of and confident in her intelligence, before realising even she can be caught in Alcalá's web. Daniel Zovatto, as Alcalá, is dangerously captivating in the predatory display of his simultaneous charisma and sadism.

Woman of the Hour departs from Kendrick's past, lighter work; I look forward to seeing what she turns her hand to next.

– *Jessica Gildersleeve*

## **Rivals**

*Disney+*

A “bonkbuster” needs three key things. It should be 1) full of sex (the bonking), 2) extremely popular (the -buster) and 3) wildly over-the-top (in other words, bonkers). Rivals, the new Disney+ adaptation of Dame Jilly Cooper's 1988 novel of the same name, has 1 and 3 in spades. And if earlyreception is anything to go by, it's well on its way to 2.

The show revels in the excesses and spectacle of its 1980s setting. It begins with Rupert Campbell-Black (Alex Hassell) having sex with a journalist in the bathroom of a Concorde – a scene which, ahem, climaxes when the plane breaks the sound barrier. The show continues much in the same vein for its eight episodes.

On the surface, the plot seems relatively dry. The titular rivals are two production companies competing for a local television franchise. Corinium is headed by villainous Tony Baddingham (David Tennant), while Venturer is run by Rupert and Declan O'Hara (Aidan Turner). Caught between them is the ruthlessly ambitious producer Cameron Cook (Nafessa Williams), who both sides are desperate to get in bed with (figuratively and literally).

However, the plot is surrounded by so much frothy fun, melodrama and naked tennis that there's plenty of other things to become invested in. Rivals doesn't take itself too seriously, yet it also has a lot of heart. Keep an eye out for the romance between Freddie Jones (Danny Dyer) and Lizzie Vereker (Katherine Parkinson), which is a real highlight.

– *Jodi McAlister*

## **Thou Shalt Not Steal**

*Stan*

Thou Shalt Not Steal follows Aboriginal teen Robyn (the immensely talented Sherry-Lee Watson). She escapes juvenile detention and embarks on a defiant road trip from Alice Springs to Adelaide to uncover a long-held family secret.

Each episode begins with a tongue-in-cheek lesson from Robyn's past. These range from the eponymous "thou shalt not steal" to "thou shalt never go to Coober Pedy".

This deadpan humour cleverly introduces significant issues. There are the inordinate rates of incarceration of Indigenous youth, alcoholism, assault, toxic masculinity, bullying and weaponised religion, among others.

Over the first six of its eight short episodes, *Thou Shalt Not Steal* maintains a balance between acerbic comedy and perilous road trip. Its final episodes revel in a series of over-the-top scenarios that nevertheless tie up narrative loose ends in an enjoyable way. Indeed the shift to outright absurdity reveals the show's gentler message: about finding a chosen family.

It is a slick, well-made series with terrific attention to detail. The gorgeous landscapes contrast with the dank, grimy spaces occupied by the antagonists and the soundtrack is its own treasure trove. *Thou Shalt Not Steal* is most definitely a fun ride.

– *Kelly McWilliam*

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***Read more: [Thou Shalt Not Steal: new Stan series is a perversely funny road trip through Central Australia](#)***

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### **Fisk season 3**

*ABC iView*

Nothing is certain but death, taxes and Fisk being hilarious – especially in relation to the first two. In season three, things are changing at small wills and probate firm Gruber & Fisk. The signature brown suit remains, but as a freshly named partner our “spiky little lawyer friend” Helen Tudor-Fisk (Kitty Flanagan) must tackle more responsibility, pressure and general idiocy than ever before.

In the office, Roz (Julia Zemiro) is giving her mediation business a red-hot go – to varying degrees of success – and scribbling ideas for an imminent hit album. Ray (Marty Sheargold) is loudly enamoured with his fashion psychologist “lady-love” Melissa (Justine Clarke), to everyone's vexation. And probate clerk George (Aaron Chen) is in the crossfire from his usual post at the front desk while his role as The Webmaster faces competition.

The quiet hysteria of office life ramps up to a frenzy when threats are made and co-working space politics arise. There are also guffaws a-plenty to be found in Fisk's handling of useless nepo hires, her ageing ex-judge father's forthcoming memoir, suspicious will amendments scrawled in biro, and a scheming “grammer” (granny scammer).

Fisk's star-studded third season doesn't disappoint. It offers a smorgasbord of Australian comedic talent including Sam Campbell, Claudia Karvan, Tom Ballard and Rhys Nicholson, to name a few. With previous seasons given the approving title of "accurate" by law experts, I might find you in contempt if you don't give it a watch.

– *Marina Deller*

## **Chimp Crazy**

### *BINGE*

Chimpanzees terrify me. They're our closest genetic species; one minute they're sweet – the next, angry and violent. Similarly, Chimp Crazy gave me the creeps. In this docuseries, hit Tiger King director Eric Goode focuses on another animal obsessive, Tonia Haddix.

Haddix entangles with great apes when she volunteers with a for-profit facility run by Connie Casey. This is where Haddix forms an attachment with a "humanzee" Tonka, who grew up performing in Hollywood films before disappearing from view.

However, Goode can't get close to Haddix and Tonka: all bridges to the big animal community have been reduced to ashes thanks to how things went down with Joe Exotic. So Goode employs former circus clown Dwayne Cunningham as a proxy director.

While the issue of deforestation doesn't rate a mention, Chimp Crazy comments subtly on the stratification of society in North America and on a lack of love. All the action occurs in the deep south, with "white trash" under the microscope.

Goode explores an alternative angle with representatives from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), who hound Haddix tooth and manicured nail. Their take is that chimps don't need us and deserve "humane" conditions.

Ultimately, the docuseries erects another streaming era icon: Haddix is plastic, unapologetic, flawed and reminiscent of a mother who's about to be separated from her offspring. It just so happens her kid is a 32-year-old chimpanzee.

– *Phoebe Hart*

## **The Office**

*Prime*

The new Australian remake of The Office mirrors closely the American version: a romance storyline, tensions between office and warehouse, an old-school boss who loves, craves and needs camaraderie, and a staff for whom work life comes second to what they'd rather be doing.

Hannah Howard (Felicity Ward) is the devoted office manager who loves her job too much and runs an underperforming, dysfunctional workplace of uninterested staff. Like David Brent and Michael Scott before her, Hannah is optimistic, naive, relentless and terrible at staff management. She forces pyjama days and bus trips on her employees, who are clearly unwilling yet never actively rebel. There is plenty of comedy in the awkwardness and small moments.



The first Australian season of *The Office* might not be anything new, but I kept watching. It felt safe, even comforting. Perhaps in a similar way going to someone else's family for Christmas lunch can feel familiar: recognisable foods, decorations, known characters – but with the frisson that maybe something different will happen this time.

This remake knows what it is. It's been made to satisfy an audience wanting to be in a world that reflects their own experiences, but takes it just that bit too far. It's not setting out to break moulds, but to bring the mould up to date and give it an Australian voice for the world to hear.

– *Philippa Burne*

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***Read more: [A decade after the US version ended, Australia remakes \*The Office\*. It's not new, but it's funny.](#)***

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