

Speaker 1

In today's quick Lounge Bite, I want to revisit a written rumination that I did back in March of 2019 and that was called 'The Value of British Humour'. (You can find it in the links and show notes.) I wrote about a show after seeing only one episode, mind you, and it was called 'After Life': a black comedy on Netflix by Ricky Gervais. I loved this show so much when I first saw it; I wrote a review after the first episode and now I want to give a little summary about the show since I finished the third season, which, as far as I'm aware, is the last season. 00:00:05

I'm not a huge Netflix fan. I have read downloaded the app each time to watch this show and thoroughly enjoyed it. If you haven't seen it before or haven't read that review that I mentioned, without spoiling anything, it's all about Tony Johnson, the character played by Ricky Gervais, who lives in the town of Tambury and is dealing with the effects and feelings of grief following the loss of his wife, Lisa, to cancer. And this show does a remarkable job. Ricky Gervais is an outstanding writer. He just brings together all of these different issues, such as grief, mental illness, obesity, depression, dating, you name it; there's something in here for everybody, and it deals with issues that society generally feels very uncomfortable or squeamish talking about. 00:00:35

In that written piece that I'm linking to as well, I talked about how he really artfully blends profanity into it. A lot of people, I think, shy away from shows that use a lot of profanity, and of course, profanity can be offensive or tasteless, but Ricky Gervais, I would really class him as a kind of poet of profanity. The one-liners and the societal commentary that he puts into this show through the use of profanity (alongside very emotional, endearing and moving moments)... it's unbelievable what he can achieve. 00:01:02

Speaker 1 (continued)

But the main thing that I wanted to talk about today, which I didn't really elaborate on in that 2019 review of that first episode—now that the series has finished those three seasons that I mentioned—it's the British tendency or tradition (I'm not sure how you want to put it) of making short shows. More than ever around the world, and it's easy to blame the US, but lots of countries do it, and I'm sure that the United Kingdom, they do it too... there's a tendency to make these longer shows. We're always universe building; it's franchises. How can we get more? How can we make movies and TV shows longer? And in many ways I do like that. Whether it's the franchise that I bring up often on Hemispheric Views with Jason and Andrew, or even just with my family, like The Matrix, I would love them to make more. I'd love them to extend it and see where it goes. I like that James Bond movies other than the shorter one, Quantum of Solace, from the Daniel Craig era, they got longer. I like the fact that there can be more storytelling if it's done properly. But in the case of something like After Life, three seasons long, each season really no more than six episodes of about 25 minutes each... really, when you look at each season, it's just an extended movie in parts, so you get more than a movie, but it's not quite as exhausting as larger or longer seasons that build up this huge stretch over numerous years. Sometimes I think it's not just the cleverness of the writing or the situations that makes people like Ricky Gervais so liked or popular or regarded as so funny. It's the fact that the timing is done beautifully in the delivery and the amount of time that is actually used to tell the jokes or tell the story. The premise isn't exhausted. You don't have an issue like, and even as a Lost fan I'll say this, a TV show like Lost, which goes for so long that people actually felt lost in the middle and gave up. You can actually respect your 00:01:50
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Speaker 1 (continued)

viewers or your listeners by publishing less, by keeping things tight and efficient, and not exhausting your premise.

And that's another reason, really, now that I think about it, that I offer these Lounge Bites, when I get around to them. I could probably waffle on about this for 15, 20, 25 minutes, but that would be too long. You'd become exhausted and you have other things to listen to and to read about. So within that five-minute allowance that I've given myself, I would encourage you to have a go at After Life if you haven't already or to explore more of Ricky Gervais's works. They're tight, efficient and sometimes controversial, but I'm sure that you'll feel moved.

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