



Watching the defectives

Monkeying around with viewing for leisure

I try to be good, I really do. I set aside top-class literature for future reading, but seldom get to it or the serious periodicals piling up on my bedside table, begging for attention. I also note when significant art house movies are screening on television, although I seldom watch them. My default setting is for less edifying fare, I'm afraid.

In my own defence, however, let me say that I do read the winner of the Booker Prize for fiction each year, but oh how I struggle with it. I'm even having trouble getting through last year's, a mercifully slim volume, *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes.

There are plenty of other things I should be reading, but I'm not.

Meanwhile, on our FOXTEL iQ box, I have recorded countless educational documentaries about artists and writers, mostly from the STVDIO channel, but each evening I end up watching *Seinfeld*.

My son and I also watch a variety of weird and wonderful shows together, programs that have nothing to do with bettering ourselves. The poor lad has inherited his father's taste in television and we enjoy a

raft of mind-expanding programs such as *Ancient Aliens* and *Ghost Hunters*, along with various documentaries about UFOs, the history of tank warfare and that sort of thing.

I was channel surfing with my boy the other evening when he spotted a movie I had recorded called *Doomsday Prophecy*. His eyes lit up immediately: more trash!

We have movie nights and during the Christmas break we watched all the *Terminator* movies (they're really very good), while more recently we sat through all five (yes there were that many) of the original *Planet of the Apes* movies. That's not counting the 2011 *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, which renewed our interest in the franchise.

When we're stuck for something to watch, we usually resort to old favourites. No, not *Battleship Potemkin* or *Three Colours: Blue*. I'm talking about *Dumb and Dumber*, *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* or *Mr Bean's Holiday*.

Being, among other things, a film critic, I'm often asked what my favourite film is and I usually say

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Dirty Harry. That seems to surprise people, although it shouldn't. It isn't nearly arty enough, apparently.

I shudder at the prospect of sitting through pretentious films that have won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

Despite my good intentions, instead of sitting down at night and opting for an SBS film with subtitles, I'm much more likely to end up watching reruns of *Deadliest Catch* or a documentary about the secret US military base known as Area 51. You know, of course, that the US government has made contact with aliens and is in possession of their spacecraft and bodies, which they are holding there.

I wouldn't put it past our lot to have some too. We'll continue watching and keep you informed, OK?

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