



Clockwise from left: Kristen Bell in Netflix's upcoming *The Woman In The House...*; A scene from 1980 spoof classic *Airplane!*; Leslie Nielsen as Officer Frank Drebin in the *Naked Gun* series.

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# Can spoofs make a comeback?

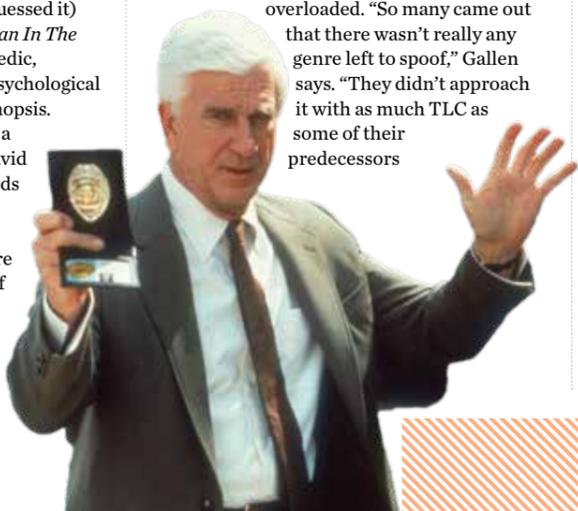
**A new Netflix show sees the return of a hitherto dormant comedy genre. Is this the start of a resurgence?**

SPOOF MOVIES USED to be everywhere. In the '80s and '90s they dominated the comedy landscape (*The Naked Gun 2 1/2* and *Hot Shots!* made the box-office top ten in 1991); in the '00s the landscape became oversaturated and spoofs became a watchword for cheap knockoffs. Lately, they seem to have disappeared. But the genre looks to be making a comeback, with a new Netflix series entitled — deep breath — *The Woman In The House Across The Street From The Girl In The Window*. This new Kristen Bell-starring mini-series parodies (you guessed it) *The Girl On The Train* and *The Woman In The Window* and offers up “a darkly comedic, wine-soaked, satirical slant on the psychological thriller”, according to the official synopsis.

Now is as good a time as any for a revival of the genre, according to David Zucker and Jim Abrahams, two-thirds of the Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker team behind spoof classics such as *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*. “There will always be an appetite for a spoof that makes people laugh,” Zucker says. The trick, Abrahams adds, is having a good story to accompany the jokes too. “We spent 90 per

cent of the time writing the story and 10 per cent writing the jokes”, he recalls. “I think that might be a hidden secret to a successful parody. It’s not just that there’s lots of silliness, you have to pay attention to the nuts and bolts of storytelling.” (Sure enough, the showrunners of the new Netflix series have described it as “very much still a thriller”.)

But why did the genre fizzle out in the first place? According to *Not Another Teen Movie* director Joel Gallen, the genre became overloaded. “So many came out that there wasn’t really any genre left to spoof,” Gallen says. “They didn’t approach it with as much TLC as some of their predecessors



because they just sort of strung together a bunch of lowest-common-denominator jokes, which I think might have turned off some audiences.”

The rise of TikTok and YouTube was another factor, with parody moving into a near-instantaneous, bite-size space. Zucker thinks there’s room for both forms, though. “It’s a whole different format than a 30-second video,” Zucker says. “The challenge is to keep an audience in their seats for 90 minutes, and there’s still a desire for that.”

Gallen and Zucker both have new spoofs in the works, too. Gallen is developing an idea for a Christmas-themed spoof, while Zucker has teamed up with his old writing partner, Pat Croft, and Abraham’s partner from *Hot Shots!*, Mike Mannis, on a new film. “It’s an amazing film-noir script,” he reveals. “It’s an absolutely serious-appearing movie, but it’s really funny and a great story.”

How the world will receive this new wave of spoofery remains to be seen. But we may just see a return to the glory days where Frank Drebin and his bumbling ilk ruled supreme. “The truth is that the spoof was never dead,” Zucker says. “If this new Netflix series is good, people will laugh. It always comes down simply to whether or not you can make people laugh.” **ELIZABETH AUBREY**

*THE WOMAN IN THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE GIRL IN THE WINDOW* IS ON NETFLIX FROM 28 JANUARY



## No./18 NEXT IN THE SERIES

**You fell in love with that incredible new TV show. And then it ended! Don't despair — Boyd Hilton recommends the sibling shows to watch next**

### IF YOU LOVED... THE TOURIST



**THE FALL** (BRITBOX/NETFLIX) Before he was mysteriously stalked by a gigantic truck in *The Tourist* (and negotiated

his way through three *Fifty Shades* films, dignity still intact), Jamie Dornan played serial killer Paul Spector in three series of audacious BBC drama *The Fall*. The character of Spector was designed to show that murderous psychopaths don't necessarily conform to any particular stereotype. Dornan's calm, handsome family-man exterior concealed his fetishistic stalking of women, and together with Gillian Anderson, as uncompromising detective Stella Gibson, helped turn *The Fall* into an intense viewing experience.



**RELLIK** (AMAZON PRIME VIDEO) Sibling writing/producing team Harry and Jack Williams are a mini-industry creating

TV thrillers from *The Missing* to *The Tourist*. One of their most intriguing, if lesser-known, projects is *Rellik*, which aired in 2017 on BBC One at the same time as their series *Liar* was on ITV. The title (“killer” spelled backwards) reflects the show’s device of telling the story in reverse. It opens with a serial killer being caught, then the crimes being committed and the search for the perpetrator by detective Gabriel Markham (Richard Dormer). *Liar* was the bigger hit, but *Rellik* is a fascinatingly weird curio.



**CLOSE TO ME** (ALL 4) *The Tourist* is the latest in a long line of TV dramas featuring protagonists suffering

amnesia. One recent and oddly overlooked

example is *Close To Me*, in which Connie Nielsen plays interpreter Jo Harding, who’s suffered a head trauma and can’t remember what happened over the previous 12 months. The six-part series teases the possibility that Jo is the real villain, while deploying Christopher Eccleston at his creepiest as her deeply ambiguous husband.



**THE CRY** (BRITBOX) The Australian Outback setting of *The Tourist* is perfect for its existential thriller atmosphere,

giving Jamie Dornan’s lead character nowhere to hide. Similarly effective in its use of landscape is 2018 BBC series *The Cry*, in which Jenna Coleman plays a teacher whose baby disappears while she’s visiting Australia with her fiancé (Ewen Leslie). Adapted from the novel by Helen FitzGerald, the show jumps around between myriad timelines to powerfully disorientating effect, and Coleman is the personification of traumatised turmoil.

*THE TOURIST* IS AVAILABLE NOW ON BBC IPLAYER

## No./19 Walking off into the sunset

**As *The Walking Dead*'s final stint gears up, we look back at the best — and worst — moments from the ultimate zombie TV show**

### DEAD GOOD

**NO GUTS NO GLORY** (SEASON 1, EPISODE 1) The image of Glen and Rick’s bloody walk amongst the dead remains one of the show’s most iconic. Draped in entrails to disguise their scent, the two venture out into a sea of grasping walkers, exchanging increasingly panicked glances with every step. Almost unbearably tense.

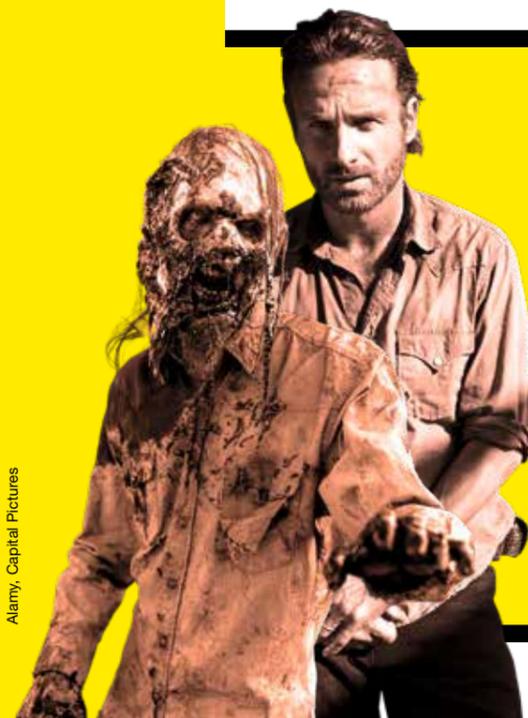
**HEADS YOU LOSE** (SEASON 9, EPISODE 15) “Oof” is the only word to describe this. After a run-in with crazed Whisperer Alpha, Carol, Michonne and Daryl are presented with this spectacularly harsh rebuke. The Whisperer has marked her territory with a row of sharpened stakes... bearing the severed heads of several major characters!

### PLAIN ROTTEN

**HERSHEL'S FARM** (THE WHOLE OF SEASON 2) Season 1’s excitement was followed by a 13-episode agricultural interlude, in which the survivors hang out on a farm and do wildly mundane things like clean out a well. There are stand-out moments (Shane! Sophia!), but no-one watching shed a tear when the farm went up in flames.

**BATTER UP** (SEASON 7, EPISODE 1) We waited a year to find out who Negan bludgeoned to death. But when the moment came, it was a step too far, offing two characters in an act of sadistic violence that bordered on obscene. **JAMES DYER**

*THE WALKING DEAD* IS ON STAR ON DISNEY+ FROM 21 FEBRUARY



Alamy, Capital Pictures