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THE VIEW FROM MY SOFA

'I'd sooner get the flu'

Sam Neill loves Radio 4 – and Dutch desert island dating shows

I'm picturing you on your New Zealand vineyard, a glass of your own pinot noir in hand, a dog at your feet, watching the TV...
When I'm at home, I don't watch any television. The set is way down the other end of the house and I can't be bothered to go down there. I prefer getting into bed with a good book. But I'm actually in Australia filming right now. When I'm on the road I get completely addicted to television and watch far too much of it.

Do you always watch highbrow dramas, or are there some guilty pleasures in there as well?
I love guilty pleasures. On a wet afternoon, stuck in a hotel, I can normally find a *Come Dine with Me*. I find it both appalling and absolutely hilarious. Another thing that's jaw-droppingly terrible is a Dutch thing called *Adam Looking for Eve*. It's a dating game show set on a remote island and everyone's naked. It is brilliantly poor taste in every possible direction.

If you love reality shows like that, you could always find yourself on a celebrity version...
I abhor anything that's got "celebrity" in the title – I'd sooner get the flu.

What about radio?
I think Radio 4 is the best in the world, followed very closely by the ABC in Australia, and Radio New Zealand. And it's no coincidence that all three are state broadcasters. They report in depth on these times, which are rather too interesting.

Interesting in the UK or internationally?
The UK and the US. We seem to be in a slightly chaotic corner of history and you need intelligent radio to make sense of a lot of it. Especially

given there are still two or three decent newspapers in England, and there's *The New York Times*, but everywhere else, newspapers have been absolutely disembowelled.

Are you a voracious news consumer?
I think we all need to be. How to say this? Democracy is all well and good, but people can make very bad decisions en masse without the benefit of good information. Does that sound diplomatic enough? Long live the BBC, is what I'm saying.

You were born in Northern Ireland, your mother was English and your father a New Zealander. Which do you feel more keenly?
I suppose I'm mainly antipodean, especially in terms of humour. If you don't develop a finely honed sense of self-deprecation you go down in flames here. When I feel buttoned-up, perhaps that's my Brit coming out. And I have the Irish affinity for the surreal and the absurd.

NOTHING TO WATCH?

MY BOOK I just read a Nancy Mitford called *The Pursuit of Love*. It's probably 40 years since I last read her. It was a delight.

MY WEBSITE My own. The Two Paddocks website is about our wine, but also my animals, and there's a section where actor friends give their top ten tunes.

MY APP I used to get BBC iPlayer, but they've excluded me now if I'm not in the UK.



Would you like to do more British television?
I'd love to do more. In *Peaky Blinders* I had as great a character as I could possibly dream to play. I'd sooner not have left the series, but I understand why – Chester Campbell had become so horrible that he had to die. I've also got *Tutankhamun* coming out on ITV soon. I enjoyed making it.

It's rumoured that you will be popping up in *Jurassic World 2* – is that true?
I've been living with these rumours for, I don't know how many years now. But I'm not sure I'm fleet of foot enough to run away from dinosaurs any more.
EMMA COX

Sam Neill is in Hunt for the Wilderpeople, in UK cinemas from 16 September. He's also Graham Norton's guest on his Radio 2 show, Saturday 10am

NEXT WEEK
RadioTimes
Lights, music, dance!
Strictly is back...



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