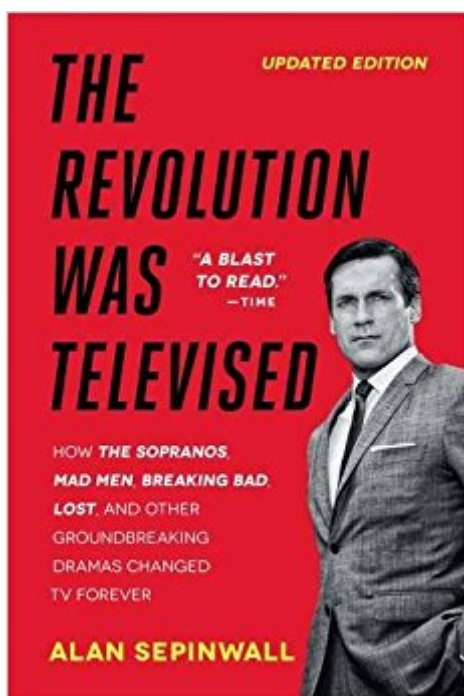


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# The Revolution Was Televised: The Cops, Crooks, Slingers, And Slayers Who Changed TV Drama Forever



## Synopsis

A phenomenal account, newly updated, of how twelve innovative television dramas transformed the medium and the culture at large, featuring Sepinwall's take on the finales of *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. In *The Revolution Was Televised*, celebrated TV critic Alan Sepinwall chronicles the remarkable transformation of the small screen over the past fifteen years. Focusing on twelve innovative television dramas that changed the medium and the culture at large forever, including *The Sopranos*, *Oz*, *The Wire*, *Deadwood*, *The Shield*, *Lost*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *24*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Mad Men*, and *Breaking Bad*, Sepinwall weaves his trademark incisive criticism with highly entertaining reporting about the real-life characters and conflicts behind the scenes. Drawing on interviews with writers David Chase, David Simon, David Milch, Joel Surnow and Howard Gordon, Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse, and Vince Gilligan, among others, along with the network executives responsible for green-lighting these groundbreaking shows, *The Revolution Was Televised* is the story of a new golden age in TV, one that's as rich with drama and thrills as the very shows themselves.

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## Customer Reviews

"Mr. Sepinwall's book, which was self-published, has all the immediacy and attention to detail that has won his blog so many followers (including this one). It also stands as a spirited and insightful cultural history." -The New York Times

"So when I picked up Alan's terrific new self-published book, *The Revolution Was Televised* --by which I mean, when I downloaded it onto my phone and scrolled

nonstop for two days--I knew it would be good. And it is: the book is a smart and substantive walk through the past fifteen years of television drama, making a lucid case for the auteurist mentality among modern showrunners." -The New Yorker"Sepinwall is a sharp and prolific critic in his own right. In Revolution, though, he admirably often stands back and lets his subjects' words speak for themselves. But then he stitches the narrative together with insights that will make you see anew just how a Friday Night Lights or Buffy season truly worked, while tossing off the kind of dead-on descriptions that make his blog a blast to read." -Time --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Alan Sepinwall has been writing about television for close to twenty years. Formerly a TV critic for the *Newark Star-Ledger* (Tony Soprano's hometown paper), he currently writes the popular blog *What's Alan Watching?* on HitFix.com. Sepinwall's episode-by-episode approach to reviewing his favorite TV shows, "changed the nature of television criticism," according to Slate, which called him, "the acknowledged king of the form." Visit [AlanSepinwall.com](http://AlanSepinwall.com).

Sepinwall details the behind the scenes stories of twelve TV series that "changed TV drama forever." Each of the twelve series gets a chapter. At it's best, particularly in the chapters about *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*, Sepinwall adds insights to the broader meaning of the series in American culture that added to my perspective on the series. Many of the chapters also have hidden gems and if, like me, you watched some of the series years ago, reading them is like reading about an old friend. There is a bit too much insider baseball throughout the book. Names of producers and writers come and go in each chapter (and sometime reappear in later chapters) and the lack of an index makes it hard to remember who is who. Also on the minor quibble side, I disagreed with the inclusion of *Oz* in the book. While it may be a precursor to some of the other shows, I felt it devolved into farce by the second or third season and became unwatchable at that point. None of the other series (I've seen 7 of the other 11) have this quality. But if you have lived through these series, which really did change TV drama, this is by and large a very good read.

Loved some chapters (the shows I loved like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*), others I skipped. So unless you love all the shows you'll probably read half the book. Some good insight into some of my favorite shows though.

I used to read Alan Sepinwall's summaries and reviews of *NYPD Blue* almost twenty years ago, and

I was always impressed with how clearly he wrote and conveyed his ideas, and how insightful he was into the characters, dialogue, and story of the subject he was addressing. This book is no different. If anything, Sepinwall has grown as a writer. His insight is clear, and his ideas make sense. I had the luxury of having watched some of the series he discusses and not having watched others. Reading about both was a pleasure. He took me down memory lane on some, and it was like talking about old friends (or in some cases, old enemies!). He captured exactly WHY I loved *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*. But he was also able to make me want to try *Oz*, *Deadwood*, and *Mad Men*, because his discussion of those yet unseen (by me) programs sparked curiosity. Having been a cop for twenty years and now a writer (crime fiction), there are plenty of things I could be critical of in a program, or a book like this. But the programs that Sepinwall highlighted were the right ones. They mattered. When I watched them, I didn't find things to nit pick. Instead, I found things to celebrate. Sepinwall takes those things and puts them on display for discussion. Likewise, there was nothing to nit pick in this book. Instead of being a vacuous book length TV Guide feature, it was a meaningful, deep, accurate examination of some of the best shows ever to grace the small screen.

Alan Sepinwall's second book is a collection of interrelated essays that tell the story of the New Golden Age of Television, starting with HBO's *Oz* and *The Sopranos*, all the way through the still-running *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. Sepinwall doesn't spend much time making the argument that we're living in a Golden Age, rather he treats us with the history of the shows that he feels have worked to change the landscape of television. For the most part, I agree with the shows he's included, with the exception of one: *24*. I would have liked him to offer more of an argument in favor of the show's inclusion, rather than taking for granted its importance. I also wish he would have spent a little more time detailing why the show was incredibly problematic; he gets into the controversy surrounding the show, but not as in-depth as I would have liked; perhaps that's fodder for a different book, though. In all, the background and little tidbits Sepinwall shares with us--all pulled from interviews old and new, with showrunners, writers, producers, and executives--are worth the price of admission alone, but where this book really shines is how it reads as a moving, heartfelt love letter to the shows he loves. While the author may not spend much time trying to convince us that these shows are Capital-I Important, he effectively conveys just how special they are, and the best essays made me want to re-watch these shows' runs in their entirety (or, in the case of the few shows I had not already seen, finally make a point of checking them out). The book even convinced me that it might be worthwhile to go back and pick up *LOST* again. I had given up on the show

about midway through the third season, after what I thought was a brilliant first season, an uneven but often great second, and an absolutely wretched third. The essay on *Battlestar Galactica* reminded me that it was a great show, even if my feelings on the last few episodes--and the finale in particular--soured me on the show over all. (Yes, I was one of those people who reacted so strongly to the finale that I felt it retroactively tainted my opinion of the earlier seasons as well, a phenomenon *BSG* and *LOST* fans have in common.) In some cases, I wish the essays would have delved a little deeper, and I would love to see Sepinwall write book-length treatises on *The Sopranos* and *The Wire* in particular. I also wish that the book had spent a little more time on the changing landscape of television, and the way DVR, streaming, and downloads have changed things. This is a topic he touches on at several points, but only in relation to specific shows. I would love to see a more general conversation about the topic. Sepinwall seems to feel that good TV comes and goes, often thanks to sheer happenstance, but it seems to me that the way TV has increasingly come to serve more and more specific niches isn't likely to change anytime soon. Most of those he interviews agree with his view, but I wonder if those on the inside truly have the most clear perspective. My biggest quibble with the book is a question of formatting. Sepinwall keeps the weird annotation method that he uses in his web pieces, where he will include footnotes after paragraphs as opposed to at the end of a piece. While I understand his reasoning for doing this on the web (even if I find it annoying there as well), in book form it's outright obnoxious, and footnotes or endnotes after each essay would have been much preferred. In all, I'd recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the possibilities of television as a medium, who feel that TV is uniquely poised to give us art alongside the big, broad comedies and procedurals, or who just happen to love any of the same shows Alan loves. It's a nice quick read, and Mr. Sepinwall's style and his transparent love for these shows and the medium that brought them to us is actually rather riveting.

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