RETROSCOPIC

WEEKLY TELEVISION ROUND-UP



WEEK 10 | AUTUMN 2026 | 3rd - 9th October 2026

Previous Week's Highlights

Saturday 26th September - 2nd October 2026

Saturday 26th September

Mr. Rose
There's a recurring theme in this series of Rose trying new secretaries, only for them to exacerbate his problems in one way or another. This time, his secretary takes matters into her own hands to find the identity of a murderer among an intense group of bohemian artists.
This marks the end of the second series with only five episodes of Mr. Rose left to watch.
Saturday Night Movie: The Italian Job
Continuing the semi-recurring theme of classic movies I've never seen, *The Italian Job* was a last-minute choice. No CGI or AI but real cars falling over cliffs, real driving into the back of a coach and real explosions. The score is entirely of the era and is as essential as the amazing visuals. The ending is famous but at face value, it's abrupt. If I had one complaint, it's the movie's brevity. I would like to have spent longer with the characters. Saturday Movie Night is still going strong.

Sunday 27th September

Nicholas Nickleby Episode 5 (of 6)
Smike was freed by Wackford Squeers' newest opponent, while Uncle Ralph's campaign to marry Kate (Nicholas' sister) to the cad, Sir Mulberry Hawk, is brought to an end when her would-be suitor slays his opponent in a duel.
On The Up *Temporary Secretary*
Maggie has gone away, leaving everyone wondering when she will return. Meanwhile, Dawn takes on her job in the office, until a flu epidemic causes most of Tony's drivers to call in sick. The moonlighting model, along with Sam (Sam Kelly) and Tony (Dennis Waterman) don the chauffeur cap to keep business going. Mrs. Wembley (Joan Sims) and Tony's mum (actress) hold the fort in the office, despite being afraid of the computer and saying 'thank you' into the fax machine!
I found this to be a broadly entertaining installment, but the episodes that explore the characters and their various dynamics are much stronger.

Monday 28th September

Upstairs, Downstairs
I used to catch bits of *Upstairs, Downstairs* while channel hopping. My Mum loves it, and everyone on social media told me I was going to love it.
First impressions: It's a very competent production. The quality of the writing is in evidence from the start: Sarah being badgered at the dinner table to say something in French, goes one better and sings a French song instead. The characters and the drama 'downstairs' feels believable but having watched two episodes and seen more of the Bellamys upstairs, I wonder if I'll struggle with them.

Tuesday 29th September

The Last Place on Earth Episode 4 *Gentlemen and Players*
Bad morale in both the British and Norwegian camps. Scott may regret his expedition's over-reliance on ponies and its early faith in motorised transport.
I keep asking myself why *The Last Place on Earth* isn't more widely remembered. It was a big budget prestige production with a fine cast and an enthralling, true, story to tell. It's full of actors who went on to even bigger things, and yet very few have heard of it. Though I broadly know the history of the race to the South Pole, the finer details are new to me, so I don't want to potentially spoiler myself by succumbing to curiosity and investigating the reasons why it isn't famous. But it is dry. Tinderbox dry. At times, the narrative plods. As Scott's wife, Susan Wooldridge was histrionic, the actors comprising the Norwegian expedition with the exception of its leader, Roald Amundsen (Sverre Anker) were unknown to the British audience, as were McCoy, Nighy and Grant.
Richard Morant, who plays Captain "Titus" Oates. There's evidence this production was not as kind to the animals used in the filming as perhaps they could have been, which makes for uncomfortable viewing at times. It's also a little bit soulless and joyless. Given the real-life outcome of this tale, joyless may be appropriate, however.

Previous Week's Highlights (Continued)

I sat through the, frankly interminable 90-minute opening-episode and the slow installment that followed, certain it would become more exciting once the respective sea voyages to Antarctica began. And it did. I'm expecting the drama levels to creep up now that both expedition leaders realise they're in a race to the Pole. I hope I'm right again.
Stars Martin Shaw and Stephen Moore, Richard Morant, Sverre Anker with Bill Nighy, Sylvester McCoy and Hugh Grant in supporting roles.

Mr Big *The Sheiks*
'This was a rather silly episode'. That's what I was going to say, but then I realised that, actually, every episode of Mr. Big is rather silly. Eddie disguises himself as a sheik, with his gang in burqa's as his three wives to infiltrate a top London hotel. As usual, the plan goes wrong and Eddie gets distracted when a real Sheikh wants to buy Ginger (Ian Lavender), concealed by the burqa. In fairness, it's the most useful thing Ginger could ever do. If only Eddie could get away with it. Poor Eddie, he seems to say that a lot. I have almost finished *Mr. Big*, and I'm already looking around for another Peter Jones sitcom.

Wednesday 30th September

Raffles *The Last Laugh*
Raffles is good fun but this episode wasn't quite as fun as the last episode, which involved a hugely implausible feat of endurance from Raffles. This episode, in which the amateur thief attempts to steal a piece of jewellery in a room full of people, including a police inspector who suspects him of being a gentleman villain, makes the character look like a kleptomaniac. It doesn't come over as audacious but foolhardy in the extreme. Convoluted and asinine, my patience exhausted.

Thursday 1st October

Probation Officer Episode 5
Episode 4 of Probation Officer is missing from the archive so the DVD goes straight to the fifth episode. The plot of the third episode looped back to the situation the probation officers were dealing with in the first episode. The second episode sat in the middle of this two-episode story arc and presented a highly engaging and extremely mature story.) The third episode looped back to the first, it's possible the missing fourth installment linked back to the second. I am unable to find an episode synopsis online, so I'll have to go on wondering.
Despite starring Alfred Burke as a man married to an ex-prostitute, and the script gave Honor Blackman more to do, it was so very dull, I literally couldn't wait for it to end. The dialogue was dry and lacked sparkle. Alfred Burke was a fantastic actor but was wasted in playing a petty jealous husband. The episode ended with the couple having made-up and inviting the probation officers for a drink to celebrate, only to start arguing again just moments before the officers arrived. Was everyone too quick to celebrate? I'm curious about the format of this series. Is it a different story-of-the-week, or are we heading for a soap-opera style show? It will be interesting to find out. Well, I hope so anyway.

Nearest & Dearest
This series is really making me laugh. The setting of the pickle factory is unusual, and although the actors did not enjoy working together, they have strong chemistry. I have vague memories of watching this with my mum as a child and her telling me to watch out for silly old Walter.
I have enjoyed this so much I've watched nearly every episode on the single DVD I own (Series 1). By the time you read this, I'll probably have watched them all .

Friday 2nd October

V: The Mini Series Part 1
I'm tired of having no action on Friday nights, so I decided to have myself some V. I didn't phrase that very well. But it's true V is perfect. I haven't seen it for ages and there's plenty of action.

- The projected outlook for the week ahead is on the next page. The Saturday Night Movie will be postponed this week because I will not be at home in the evening.

This Week...

Saturday 2nd - Friday 8th October 2026

Dates in UK format (dd/mm/yy). Episode / series number / TX date omitted where information is in dispute. All times approximate.

Saturday 2nd October

Upstairs, Downstairs
Series 1, Episode 3: *Board Wages*
James Bellamy (Simon Williams) returns home to find the servants running amok and decides to teach them a lesson with champagne.
First transmitted: 24.10.71
Series 1, Episode 4: *Path of Duty*
In the fourth episode, the youngest Bellamy daughter returns from Germany with firm ideas about what she wants for the future, sending her on a collision course with her father and Rose.
First transmitted: 31.10.71
BBC TV

Sunday 3rd October

Sword of Freedom
Forgery in Red Chalk
De Medici is interested in Leonardo's plans for an underwater machine and kidnaps his mute assistant to assure the maestro's co-operation.
First transmitted: 21.03.58
Made by Sapphire Films for ITC

Nicholas Nickleby
Episode 6 (of 6)
Smike is seriously ill and a ghost from the past haunts Ralph until tragic news is delivered. Finale.
Nigel Havers as Nicholas Nickleby
Peter Bourke as Smike
Derek Godfrey as Ralph Nickleby
Robert James as Newman Noggs
Kate Nicholls as Kate Nickleby
Hilary Mason as Mrs. Nickleby
Malcolm Reid as Mr. Alfred Mantalini
Derek Francis as Wackford Squeers
Patricia Routledge as Madame Mantalini
Patsy Smart as Miss La Creevy
Anthony Ainley as Sir Mulberry Hawk
Nigel Hughes as Lord Frederick Verisopht
Denis Gilmore as Wackford Jnr
Osmund Bullock as Snobb
Raymond Mason as Charles Cheeryble
David Griffin as Frankie Cheeryble
Preston Lockwood as Tim Linkinwater
Andrew McCulloch as John Browdie
John Hewer as Edwin Cherryble
Ron Pember as Mr. Snawley
Isabelle Amyes as Miss Fanny Squeers
Hetty Baynes as Matilda Price
Patricia Brake as Madeline Bray
Edward Burnham as Mr. Lillyvick
Anne Ridler as Mrs. Squeers
Mark Teale as Belling
Pauline Moran as Miss Petowker
Denis Edwards as Mr. Walter Bray
Freddie Jones as Mr. Vincent Crummles
Pauline Letts as Mrs. Crummles
Paul Curran as Arthur Gride
Liz Smith as Peg Sliderskew
Written by Hugh Leonard
Directed by Christopher Barry
Produced by Barry Letts
BBC TV

Nearest & Dearest
Series 1, Episode 5: *You Make Me Feel So Young*
A cupboard containing jars of decades-old pickles seems to have given old Stan renewed vigor. Eli spots an opportunity.
Written Tom Brennard & Ray Bottomley
First transmitted: 02.09.68
Granada TV

Monday 4th October

Sword of Freedom
Vespucci
An explorer is desperate to receive funding for his next voyage at the risk of angering Venice, and soon his only proof the New World exists, a Native American, is kidnapped by De Medici's thugs.
First transmitted: 28.03.58

Sergeant Cork
Series 3, Episode 13: *The Case of the Cynical Traitor*
The C.I.D. are called in to help an army regiment find a spy selling information to Germany. Guest stars Michael Aldridge, Patrick Wymark and Jonathan Newth.
Written by Bill Craig.
Last in series.
First transmitted: 27.06.64
Made by Associated Television (ATV)

Tuesday 5th October

Sword of Freedom
The School
Marco traces betrayal of the resistance movement to a boys academy for science and art, where he takes a job as a teacher to find the culprit. Guest starring Kenneth Williams and Patrick Troughton.
First transmitted: 08.08.58

This Week...

(Continued)

Ghost Squad
Series 1, Episode 9: *Million Dollar Ransom*
A scientist working on a new missile system is kidnapped and held for ransom.
Stars Michael Quinn and Donald Wolfit
Produced by ITC with Rank Organisation TV and ATV

Man at the Top
Series 2, Episode 7: *You Make a Fortune*
With Susan mentally ill in hospital and his professional life in tatters, Joe attempts to get his himself moving again, if his conscience doesn't get in the way.
Written Tom Brennard & Ray Bottomley
First transmitted: 17.07.72
Thames TV

On The Up
Series 3, Episode 4 *Parental Choice*
Stars Dennis Waterman, Sam Kelly, Joan Sims and Jenna Russell.
Written by Bob Larby.
First transmitted: 19.10.92
BBC TV

Wednesday 6th October

Space Precinct
Illegal
An illegal immigrant saves Brogan's life in a shooting incident.
Episode 10 (of 24)
Ted Shackelford as Lieutenant Patrick Brogan
Rob Youngblood as Officer Jack Haldane
Simone Bendix as Officer Jane Castle Jerome Willis as Captain Rexton Podly
Mary Woodvine as Officer Aurelia Took
Colette Hiller as the voice of Took
Lou Hirsch as Officer Silas Romek
Nancy Paul as Sally Brogan
Nick Klein as Matthew Brogan
Megan Olive as Elizabeth Brogan
Joseph Mydell as Officer Lionel Carson
Gary Martin as the voice of Slomo
Created by Gerry Anderson
Executive producer Tom Gutteridge
Producer Gerry Anderson
Gerry Anderson Productions for Grove Television Enterprises, 1994

Thursday 7th October

Special Branch
Series 3, Episode 4 *Assault*
Stars George Sewell. Guests Bob Keegan, Richard Vernon, Angus MacKay, Rod Beacham
Writers Tom Brennand & Roy Bottomley
Director Douglas Camfield
First transmitted: 25 April 1973
Thames TV

Mr. Big.
Series, Episode 3: *The Great Betting Shop Swindle*
Stars Peter Jones, Prunella Scales. Ian Lavender & Carole Hawkins
Written by Christopher Bond & Peter Jones
Directed by Ray Butt
BBC TV, 1977

Friday 8th October

V: The Mini Series
Episode 1, Part 2
Strange events begin to occur. Scientists in become the objects of increasing media and public hostility. They experience government restrictions on their activities and movements. Others begin to disappear or are discredited. Noted scientists confess to subversive activities
Written and directed by Kenneth Johnson
Kenneth Johnson Productions for Warner Bros. Television
First US transmission 01.05.83 (NBC)
First UK transmission August 1984 (ITV)

'A Comedy Programme'
It might be Red Dwarf, Morcambe and Wise, or I may finally make good on my promise to break out Ripping Yarns. Whatever it is, I'll do my best to end the week with something humorous, and something alcoholic to go with it.

- You can read 'the story so far' - what this is all about and how I came to be so routine-driven over the page.

The story so far...

When linear television was at its height in the UK, with 60–80 channels to choose from (depending on regional coverage), I had my own schedule. Flitting between channels to catch my favourite programmes and using tapes from my video cassette collection when there was nothing else worth watching, it was a personal routine of programmes slotted in perfectly between school, friends, family commitments, homework, and my own projects.

Now, it's my job, smallholding and home life that demand my attention. But I'm a creature of habit, so I absolutely need my routines.

This is the viewing diary that I keep for myself, but with added context and detail. It runs from Saturday to Friday. You might notice that I like my TV shows to be aged to perfection, like wine.



About the author

I specialise in the history of vintage British TV, classic radio, and audiobooks and writing offbeat, atmospheric stories. This includes deep-dives into 1960s television (like the definitive companion to Granada's 'The Man in Room 17')

When I'm not excavating television history, I write offbeat stories like 'Morrison's Ghost', focusing on suspense with a sharp, unconventional edge and urban tales, such as 'Phil's Marvellous Machine and Other Stories' I have also written for the character Lethbridge-Stewart by Candy Jar Publishing.

I live in Wales (UK) with my brain, 'Old Spongy'. I'm in my late-thirties and habitually lie about my age and stubbornly clings to an AOL email address.

Whether I'm reviewing a classic T.V. series, doing a podcast or telling a story, I aim to be non-political and non-judgmental. I do not represent or endorse any religious or political societies, associations or institutions.

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