

By Adam Thomlison
TV Media

Q: I just finished watching HBO's "Chernobyl" series, and I'm wondering why I recognize the actor who played Boris, the Soviet bureaucrat at the center of the show.

A: You recognize him because he's Stellan Skarsgård, Hollywood's favorite pan-European.

He's Ukrainian in HBO's hit historical drama "Chernobyl," but he was a Russian in 2016's "Our Kind of Traitor" and 1990's "The Hunt for Red October," a Norwegian in the first two Thor movies and the second Avengers movie, a historical Anglo-Saxon in 2004's "King Arthur" and a Swede in the two Mamma Mia movies (2008 and 2018).

He also played undefined Euro-types in 1997's "Good Will Hunting" and a couple of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies (2006 and 2007).

In reality, Skarsgård is Swedish, and he actually splits his time between doing American films and Scandinavian ones. His sweet spot is the work of Danish art-house director Lars Von Trier — he's done a number of his films, which are generally popular in Europe and North America (among film nerds, at least).

Q: How much are the participants in "90 Day Fiance" and "Married at First Sight" paid?

A: Reports differ a little, but they all amount to the same thing: not as much as you'd think.

These are two pretty surreal reality shows. TLC's "90 Day Fiance" follows Americans planning to marry foreign citizens as they meet their finances and, as per the U.S. visa process, must decide within 90 days whether to go ahead with the marriage. "Married at First Sight" is similar — this Lifetime series follows strangers who are matched by relationship experts, get married when they meet, and then have a few weeks to decide whether to stay married or get divorced.

The appeal of the shows, generally, is that these are normal people with normal lives but are doing this one really incredible/bizarre thing. And this aspect is key to the salary structure. Because these people are leading their regular lives, the compensation for being on the show is seen as a stipend, to supplement the salary they get from their regular jobs. That means, of course, it's meager.

"Married at First Sight" producer Chris Coelen told Reality-Blurred.com that cast members receive "a nothing stipend. We did not want people who were motivated by the wrong things."

There are differing accounts of exactly how much "nothing" means in this case, but it hovers somewhere around \$1,500 per episode.

That roughly matches what the "90 Day Fiance" cast reportedly gets paid — at least the American members. As for the ones coming into the U.S., an unnamed source told the gossip site RadarOnline.com that they don't get paid at all. "They can't even get paid because they have to wait for a work permit. It's of course different if filming takes place in their country."

Q: Are there any plans to adapt Mick Herron's novels for film or TV? They seem suited to it.

A: There were plans, but they seem to have expired (which is what happens to plans in Hollywood).

There was some buzz two years ago that spy novelist Mick Herron's Jackson Lamb books were being turned into a TV series. Over here, the buzz was a little muted because it was all taking place in Herron's native Britain, but it started when See-Saw Films — a major U.K. house behind massive hits such as 2010's "The King's Speech" and the prestige drama series "Top of the Lake" — optioned Herron's first novel, "Slow Horses."

Have a question? Email us at questions@tvtabloid.com. Please include your name and town. Personal replies will not be provided.

▶ STREAMING THIS WEEK



Taylor Schilling in "Orange Is the New Black"

By Jacqueline Spendlove
TV Media

NEW ON NETFLIX:

"Orange Is the New Black" Season 7

The seventh and final season of one of Netflix's first and most-watched original series drops Friday, July 29, and fans are eager to see how things will finally pan out for their favorite group of inmates. In last season's finale, Piper (Taylor Schilling, "The Lucky One," 2012) was granted early release, and this season sees her struggling to re-adjust to life on the outside. With far bigger problems on their plates, Taystee (Danielle Brooks, "Master of None") has been convicted of a murder she didn't commit, and Blanca (Laura Gómez, "Show Me a Hero"), thinking she was getting early release as well, was instead transported to an immigrant detention center (consider my guts wrenched). There are loads of other characters who deserve a satisfying conclusion to their stories, so the writers really had their work cut out for them this season. And take heart — there's already talk floating around of a potential sequel somewhere down the line.

"Another Life"

Sci-fi fans may recognize Katee Sackhoff, who played Starbuck in "Battlestar Galactica," as the star of this new space-set drama starting Thursday, July 25. The series follows a space crew, led by astronaut Niko Breckinridge (Sackhoff), on a mission to locate the source of an enormous alien artifact that mysteriously appeared on Earth. Things go south for the team as they search for the alien species responsible in the hopes of making contact, and the dangers and horrors they face could mean that some — or all — of the crew never make it home. Selma Blair ("Anger Management"), Tyler Hoechlin ("Road to Perdition," 2002), Justin Chatwin ("Shameless"), Jessica Camacho ("Taken") and Samuel Anderson ("Emmerdale") join Sackhoff as some of the crew members aboard the Salvare.

"Workin' Moms" Season 2

The second season of this Canadian sitcom is available to stream Thursday, July 25. It follows a group of young moms as they venture back into the workplace after maternity leave and juggle the many challenges that go hand in hand with being a working mother. In Season 2, Kate (Catherine Reitman, "Black-ish"), Frankie (Juno Rinaldi, "Five Days at Midnight"), Anne (Dani Kind, "Wynonna Earp") and Jenny (Jessalyn Wanlim, "Orphan Black") contend with the daily struggle of parenting toddlers while holding down a job, maintaining a healthy relationship and trying to have a social life. Their lives are ones with which any working parent can sympathize, infused with refreshing and much-needed humor.

NEW ON AMAZON PRIME:

"The Boys"

Evan Goldberg and Seth Rogen have teamed up again to bring another of Garth Ennis's comic book series — the last one being AMC's

"Preacher" — to the screen. "Supernatural" creator Eric Kripke joins them as showrunner for the extremely R-rated series, which flips the traditional superhero genre on its head. The show's team of shiny, attractive superheroes may put on a good show for the public eye, but they're far from the noble do-gooders they appear to be. Enter Karl Urban ("Star Trek," 2009) as Billy Butcher, who leads a vengeful Hughie Campbell (Jack Quaid, "The Hunger Games," 2012) and a team of gritty vigilantes on a hard-knocked mission to take down the corrupt superheroes who use their power and celebrity to do, well, whatever the heck they want. Elisabeth Shue ("CSI: Crime Scene Investigation"), Jennifer Esposito ("Blue Bloods"), Erin Moriarty ("Jessica Jones") and Chace Crawford ("Gossip Girl") also star, and you can watch starting Friday, July 26.

NEW ON HULU:

"Veronica Mars" Season 4

"Veronica Mars" is the latest lucky recipient of a post-cancellation revival. The CW series that made Kristen Bell ("The Good Place") big ended in 2007 and got a Kickstarter-funded feature film in 2014, and now a fourth season is available to stream on Friday, July 26. It serves as a continuation of both the series and the movie and takes place in the present day with teen sleuth Veronica Mars (Bell) — now adult sleuth Veronica Mars — back in her hometown of Neptune, California, and on the case of a serial killer who's murdering spring breakers. Bell told Entertainment Weekly that the new series is "darker and bigger and more cinematic" than "Veronica Mars" of yore, but there are many familiar faces from the original series, including Enrico Colantoni ("Person of Interest") as her dad, Keith Mars, and Jason Dohring ("Deep Impact," 1998) as main squeeze Logan Echolls. Oh, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is on the writing team. Do you need any more reasons to watch?

"Light as a Feather" Season 2

If you were ever a teenage girl and attended a sleepover, you almost certainly played "light as a feather, stiff as a board," but it probably didn't end as badly for you as it does for the luckless participants in this supernatural thriller. The series follows five girls who are met with lethal consequences after playing the game, as they start dropping like flies in the exact ways that were predicted. Having survived Season 1, McKenna (Liana Liberato, "If I Stay," 2014) is dismayed to learn that she's inherited the game's curse and, fighting the evil force's compulsion to play another round, she turns to Violet (Haley Ramm, "Disconnect," 2012), the one person who can help her. The eerie series returns Friday, July 26.



Jack Quaid and Karl Urban in a scene from "The Boys"