

Favorite Stay at Home Picks

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We've all been spending more time at home during the Covid-19 crisis. For me, this means I've been consuming a lot more books, media, and pop culture. I thought I'd share a few of the things that I have enjoyed most in the hopes that they might intrigue some of you.

Over this past weekend I succumbed to the craze for the Netflix documentary, *The Tiger King*. This is the story of three exotic animal zoos/parks and the wild rivalries between their owners. The story centers on Joe Exotic, an eccentric and volatile large cat breeder, who has serious grievances against Carole Baskin, the owner of a rival park who publicly calls Joe out on his breeding practices. The tension escalates, and more shady characters are added to the story, until Joe calls a hit on Carole. This story is proof that the truth is much stranger than fiction.

I have also been watching a variety of fashion-competition shows, including *Project Runway* (Bravo), *Making the Cut* (Amazon), and *Next in Fashion* (Netflix). All of the shows follow a similar format: each episode the designers have to design around a specific challenge or theme and take a "look" from concept to final product. It's fascinating to watch the different ways designers interpret the challenge/theme and to see them problem-solve along the way. While these shows are similar in format, they have very different personalities. *Project Runway*, the first fashion-competition show, has always been more cutthroat and at times downright catty; *Making the Cut* has more of a professional, business-driven vibe; and *Next in Fashion* focuses on the artistry of its designers. I have enjoyed all of them, mainly because I love to see what the designers create.

One of my favorite ways to distract myself from another tedious round of dishes is to listen to a podcast. My favorite podcast is called *Dr. Gameshow*. Comedians Jo Firestone and Manolo Moreno play listener-created games with a guest and call-in contestants. These games are often ridiculous. For example, on one episode callers were instructed to sing an Elton John song and pretend to slowly turn into a werewolf. Contestants were judged on how convincing their transformation was. I love this podcast for its absurd silliness. It's also family friendly; many kids call in to play the games. I usually just listen to the recordings in podcast form, but if you'd like to participate in the live show follow *Dr. Gameshow* on Facebook; the call-in shows are streamed through Facebook Live.

Another podcast I enjoy is *Pop Culture Happy Hour* from NPR. Host Linda Holmes and three other rotating panelists discuss movies, TV, books, music, plays, podcasts, and more and make their own pop culture recommendations. This is a great way to learn more about various pieces of pop culture and find more interesting things to watch, listen, and read. These podcasts can be downloaded for free through various podcast apps.

I recently finished reading *Uncanny Valley* by Anna Wiener. Wiener started her career in the New York publishing industry, but left it after becoming frustrated with the lack of advancement opportunity. She moved to San Francisco and worked for several tech startups during the boom period of 2013-2016. She describes how torn she was between her desire to be part of something from the ground floor and her disgust for the misogynistic and greedy culture she encountered. I was captivated by this peek into the tech world.

I just started reading Samantha Irby's latest collection of essays, *Wow, No Thank You*. Irby describes what life is like in her late 30s now that she has settled down in Kalamazoo, Michigan with her wife. She makes the most mundane hilarious, from making new friends as an adult, to trying to avoid dinner plans, to staying up late so she can have the TV to herself. Irby's honesty is refreshing and makes her relatable. I highly recommend this book.

As you can see from my recommendations, I've mostly been seeking out the funny and light recently. I hope that you are finding things to read, listen, and watch that help you keep your chin up. For more recommendations, visit the library's Facebook page: [New Ulm Public Library-City of New Ulm](#). We'll be sharing virtual storytimes, book recommendations, helpful links, updates on our temporary closure, and more.