

REO Presents: New Year's Recommendations

We write reviews often. We've also had a semi-consistent book review/recommendation series. (We really need to update that...) This will be a little different. Instead of focusing on one thing: movies, books, music, etc... we are going to try to paint a broad view of things we love that we think you should check out. These blurbs are going to be fast and furious – all around 200 words and all about things we think are pretty great. Consider them our New Year's gift to you.

Gowdy Cannon



TV Show – Chuck



This is not a popular show but my wife and I watched it this year on Amazon Prime Video. I was blown away. It's not like any other TV show I've watched. It defies any genre box. It may be a comedy at its heart but it has extremely well-executed action scenes and its most important story arc is romance. In a world full of Ross and Rachels it dared to give us Bartowski and Walker. This show reached deep and pulled

wonderful emotion from me often.

Levi, Stahovski, Gomez, and Baldwin are unforgettable as the main players and like any TV show worth watching the role players are dynamite, highlighted by Jeffster! and their hijinks and musical concerts (which were basically the same thing). It is also replete with unforgettable guest stars and if you loved the 80s as much as I did, you will probably get giddy with their choices.

It can be a tad campy and goofy at times, but that never bothered me. It is exceptional at its strengths and it was fantastic entertainment for five seasons.

Food – Bojangles



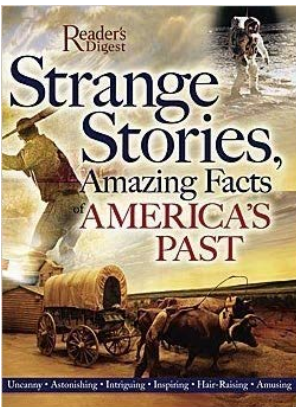
It's a shame that so often in America if you claim you like something, people sometimes interpret that to mean you do not like other similar things. I love Chick-Fil-A and think it is blessed by God, but I also eat and thoroughly enjoy KFC and Popeye's. And to me, the second best chicken place I've had in my life is Bojangles, which seems to be less known than these other three. Probably because it is so regional (though its regional fans are pretty passionate from what I can tell).

Whether sandwiches, strips, sides, or those glorious biscuits, Bojangles has excellent quality in taste. There used to be one in Turbeville, SC and any time I was down there visiting family and someone said, "Let's just pick up some Bojangles for lunch" I would get quite excited. No place has equaled CFA to me but this place is close. And it deserves a huge fanbase.

Ben Plunkett



Book – Strange Stories, Amazing Facts of America's Past



Throughout most of the second decade of my childhood (about 11-18) I was obsessed with what I called fact books (Most people know them as books of trivia, but I prefer fact books. I suppose they might not be useful for a person's day to day life, but is any information actually useless? I think not.)

Anyway, when I was 16 my parents got me this particular quality hardback fact book for Christmas. While I am no longer consumed with fact books and have sold most of them, I still have this one and still read portions of it now and then. This book does not attempt to cover all the important basics of American history. What it does do is to highlight fascinating stories about its history that are not discussed much or at all in history class. My edition was published by Reader's Digest in 1989. They published a new edition in 2007. I cannot comment on that edition since I have not read it yet.

TV Show – Better Call Saul



I realize this show is *fairly* popular but I don't understand why this show isn't more popular than it is. My guess is that people were disappointed that Better Call Saul, which serves as a prequel to Breaking Bad, wasn't a clone of its predecessor regarding its how the story plays out. It is true that the two shows have the same basic outer feel and framework. It is also abundantly clear that the two are part of the same universe (if you are familiar with both, that is). But the individual stories themselves are very different. Better Call Saul is less dark, intense than Breaking Bad. It is also basically an extremely well fleshed out legal story with multiple intriguing plotlines and angles. The show stars Bob Odenkirk who plays Jimmy McGill AKA Saul Goodman but also stars an amazing ensemble cast. Odenkirk and every one of his co-stars bring it every episode. Forgive the hyperbole but most of them deserve every acting award in the history of mankind.

I will probably be destroyed for saying this, but I believe Better Call Saul is better than Break. In fact, it is in the running for my favorite show of all time. It had an extremely good first season and has been greater every season (It recently finished its fourth).

D.A. Speer



Board Game: Dropmix

One of the most off-the-radar board games right now sounds like something right out of the future. DropMix (created by Harmonix studios...you know, the same team that created Rock Band) has players placing cards onto an electronic, Bluetooth-powered board with six spaces for cards. Each card in the deck has a chip inside of it, and each card space is equipped with a wireless chip reader. When you place a card on the board, the game (which runs on a tablet or phone that sits at the front of the board) reads it, syncs it to BPM and the set key, and then incorporates the loop into the mix. There are cards that have drum loops, vocal tracks, instrument tracks, or even custom-designed effects.

You can DJ your own set in "Freestyle" mode, go head to head in a VS mode, or even play a new Puzzle game based on a surprisingly interesting card game that is incorporated. The music source material is all over the place (electronic, rock, country, pop), and more expansion packs are coming out all the time. You can find the base set on sale frequently...I bought a new one for \$30! At the very least, check it out on YouTube and marvel at the technical genius:

Phill Lytle



Food – Aldi “Journey to India” Tikka Masala Simmer Sauce



In the past few years, my wife and I have fallen in love with Indian food. Unfortunately, it's cost-prohibitive to get it as often as we would like. Enter: Aldi and their amazing sauce in a jar. I was skeptical it would taste anywhere close to restaurant quality, but I was wrong. We keep things simple with some seasoned chicken we sauté in olive oil and some steamed veggies added to the sauce to make it a bit more “healthy.” We serve it over white Basmati rice and we are good to go. It's moderately spicy so if that's not your thing, you shouldn't be eating Indian food anyway.

Comedian – Nate Bargatze

Maybe you've seen him on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. Maybe you've seen his special on Netflix. Perhaps you've just seen clips on YouTube. Or maybe, sadly, you've never heard of Nate Bargatze. Well, be sad no more! If you like your comedy clean (yet not lame), dry, and just a little bit odd, then Nate is the man for the job. He holds a special

place in my heart because he graduated from the school where my wife teaches and my children attend ([Donelson Christian Academy](#)). If Nate came from DCA, then there is hope for my family as well.