

Utopia

A few programmes attract your interest by being all loud and shouty. Others crook a finger ever so slightly in your direction, offer a “come hither” glance, and then slink off, presumably to slip into something more comfortable.

Dodgy metaphors aside, Channel 4’s alluring new conspiracy drama Utopia is just such a programme, and we are completely under its spell. If it was a bloke, our undies would be on the floor in seconds.

The story concerns a comic book called Utopia, which may (or may not) contain hidden messages about a deadly disease. Five people, who spend rather more time than is probably healthy on an internet forum about it, decide to meet - and while three of them make the rendezvous, two are waylaid - one permanently.

You see, shadowing this elusive comic are two deeply dangerous strangers, one who really wants to know where ‘Jessica Hyde’ is, and his pal, who likes nothing better than gouging people’s eyes out with a spoon. Those of a sensitive disposition need not fret - we’re allowed to use our imaginations during a harrowing torture scene involving chillis, sand, bleach and someone’s eyeballs.

At the same time, we follow a borderline suicidal civil servant whose Russian girlfriend is pregnant, and - in one of several brown-trouser-moment inducing scenes - is told by a skin-crawlingly sinister Stephen Rea to ensure that his slippery government minister buys a truckload of a flu vaccine they don’t need.

The story is both clever and complex, hooking us pretty much from the word go and drawing us ever further into this twisted and bizarre world.

But Utopia has looks as well as brains. The photography is jaw-droppingly beautiful, while the cast is, without exception, absolutely flawless.

To say we can't wait for the next instalment is a massive understatement. We will be counting the minutes.

THE WHO, WHAT, WHEN OF IT

WHAT IS IT CALLED?

Utopia

WHEN IS IT ON?

10pm, Tuesday, January 12

WHAT CHANNEL?

Channel 4

WHO'S IN IT?

Alexandra Roach (Hunderby, Anna Karenina, The Iron Lady)

Paul Higgins (The Thick of It, Hope Springs, Line of Duty)

James Fox (Pffft. You name it, he's most likely been in it)

Stephen Rea (The Crying Game, The Shadow Line, Single-Handed)

WHO SHOULD WATCH IT?

Everyone. Nuff said.

WHO SHOULDN'T WATCH IT?

Anyone who is a stranger to programmes where you are made to think.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/utopia/episode-guide/series-1/episode-1>