

COLLIDER

‘A.P. Bio’ Is the Best Comedy You’re Not Watching, and Now’s the Perfect Time to Catch Up

by [Adam Chitwood](#)



There is officially too much television. Even during a pandemic, during which most people have been under quarantine and trying to find ways to fill time, they *still* can’t catch up on all the great TV that’s been released over the past few years/decades. “You *must* watch ***Breaking Bad***.” “Don’t sleep on ***Better Call Saul***!” “But also make sure you watch ***Mad Men***!” “And don’t tell me you haven’t seen ***The Sopranos*** yet!” The thing about so-called “prestige TV,” though, is that you really have to be in the mood. They’re mostly thoughtful, hourlong dramas with heavy themes and high stakes. That’s not exactly the ideal mindset to sit in when you’re already living through a five-month (and counting) anxiety attack.

But there is one show I can wholeheartedly recommend as A. A genuinely great TV series that’s worth catching up on and B. Something that will make you feel happy and joyful. And that’s ***A.P. Bio***.



Photo by: Trae Patton/NBC

If that title sounds familiar, it should. The brainchild of **SNL** alum **Mike O'Brien** and executive produced by **Seth Meyers** and **Mike Shoemaker**, *A.P. Bio* premiered on NBC in 2018 to so-so ratings. *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* alum **Glenn Howerton** leads the stellar ensemble as Jack Griffin, a pompous and wildly inconsiderate Harvard philosophy scholar who winds up teaching an A.P. Biology class in a Toledo high school. The twist? Instead of actually teaching A.P. Bio, he uses his class of gifted youngsters to help him plot his comeback and exact revenge on his personal nemesis — or really just anyone he feels has wronged him.

The show was renewed for a second season, but then during the season it was cancelled due to low ratings. But then a couple months later, NBC un-cancelled the series and renewed it for a Season 3 – to air exclusively on their new streaming service Peacock. And you know what? *A.P. Bio* feels more like a streaming service anyway, and the show's third season doesn't miss a beat, keeping the hilariously inappropriate hijinks rolling with slightly more leeway in terms of “adult” content.

Many things set *A.P. Bio* apart from most other half-hour comedies. For one, this isn't a show in which a teacher at first hates his kids but then grows a heart and starts dutifully fulfilling his job. Jack is pretty much a dick the whole time, and refuses to actually teach A.P. Bio throughout. He uses the students as his personal braintrust, but O'Brien and his team of writers inject *just* enough heart and

empathy to keep Jack from being repulsive. The endearment to his students comes not from witnessing them being bullied or struggling in school, but from showing genuine pride when they start coming up with nefarious and dangerous revenge plots on their own. If Jack is the star of the show, his students are its beating heart – the ensemble of youngsters like **Allisyn Ashley Arm**, **Nick Peine**, **Eddie Leavy**, and **Jacob Houston** are consistently hilarious and skilled assassins when it comes to one-liners.



Photo by: Evans Vestal Ward/Peacock

But the show's MVPs are **Patton Oswalt** as the school's lovably "Beta" principal Ralph Durbin and **Paula Pell** as his trusty and goof-prone secretary Helen DeMarcus. Oswalt's character is consistently out of his depth, and yet the performer brings a warmth to the role that makes you immediately sympathize with his character no matter how inept he proves himself to be. And Pell, who for years has been an invaluable writer on *SNL*, is full-stop the funniest part of the whole dang show. Her knack for physical comedy and talent for putting a unique spin on each and every line delivery is a gift to us all — and a gift we sorely need right now.

A.P. Bio also doesn't look like any other comedy on television. It's beautifully cinematic, taking advantage of its single-camera format to actually engage with the art of cinematography. There's even a split-diopter shot in Season 3!

Speaking of, the show's third season strikes the perfect balance between "more of the same that makes the show great" and "refreshing new stories to explore." Jack's relationship with his students is a bit looser and more familiar this time around, but no less playful. And the students themselves feel more dimensional. Unsurprisingly, following Pell's promotion to series regular status in Season 2, the writer and performer continues stealing the show as she becomes a student in the new season – bringing with that all the hijinks you would expect.

If you haven't seen a lick of *A.P. Bio* yet, all available episodes are now streaming on Peacock, and it makes for an exceedingly pleasant binge-watch. Guffaw-inducing jokes, a lovable ensemble, and genuinely interesting visuals (I cannot stress enough how good the cinematography is) make this one of the best comedies on TV right now. And one well worth catching up on. Just don't tell your friends you still haven't seen *The Sopranos*.