

CC recommends

selected by [Rodney Clapp](#) in the [December 15, 2009](#) issue

In Review



State of Play

David Yates

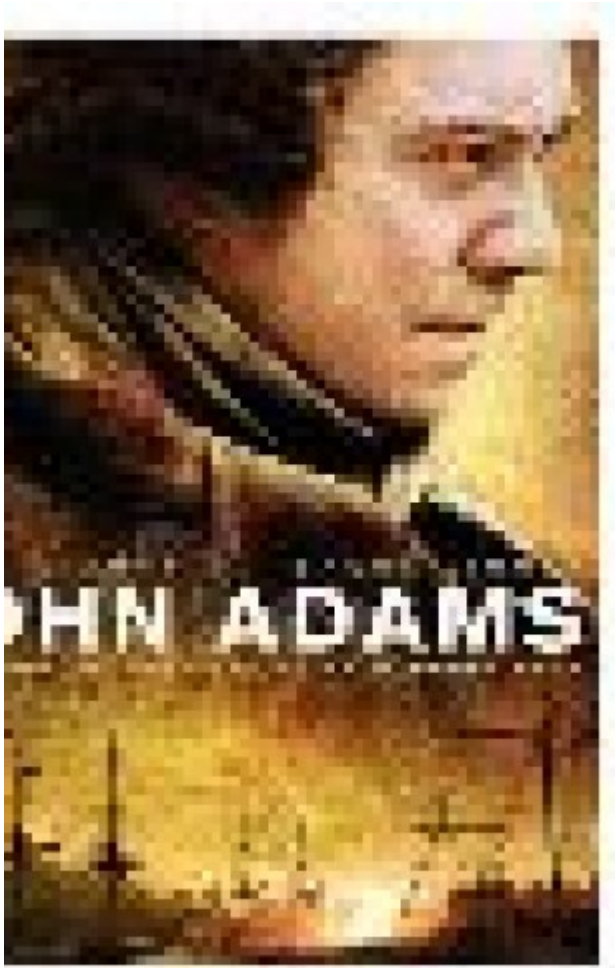
BBC



Torchwood: Children of Earth

Euros Lynn

BBC Wales



John Adams

Tom Hooper

HBO Films



Slings and Arrows

Peter Wellington

Acorn Media

Skip the American movie version of this story and view the series made by BBC for television. Focused on the press and shady doings in the upper echelons of government, this investigation of a murder unfolds over six hours. The depth of characterization gets viewers invested in the story and makes the suspense all the more (pleasantly) unbearable.

Those who love—or even just tolerate—science fiction should seek out this British TV series. With cliffhanger endings, this potboiler, by the folks who produced *Dr. Who*, eventually takes a dark turn into an exploration of the most disturbing ethical dilemma imaginable. A haunting, wrenching drama.

Besides the topflight acting by Paul Giamatti in the lead role and Laura Linney as Abigail Adams, this drama revels in a richly recreated Revolutionary War atmosphere, from a muddy, drafty barn of a White House to the horrors of 18th-century smallpox inoculations. The script draws abundantly on letters exchanged between John and Abigail, an impressive figure in her own right.

The delightful conceit of the series follows a Shakespearean summer theater troupe and how the actors' tempestuous lives echo the comedy and tragedy of Shakespeare's dramas. The proceedings are enlivened by whip-smart actors such as Paul Gross and Martha Burns, who are having the thespian time of their lives. Hilarious, touching and, like the plays it reverently parodies, endlessly rewatchable.

More CC recommends:

[Theology](#) ~ [History and current events](#) ~ [Fiction](#)

[Poetry](#) ~ [Graphic novels](#) ~ [Children's books](#)

[Television on DVD](#) ~ [Popular music](#) ~ [Choral music](#)