

“Russian Doll” is new, improved “Groundhog Day” with grotesque twist

By Livvy Cohen
editor-in-chief

Matryoshka Dolls, or more known as Russian dolls, seem to never stop. Countless wooden dolls buried deep inside one another, just like the story of Nadia Vulvokov’s (Natasha Lyonne) repetitive death scenes in Netflix’s new confusing, overwhelming and downright emotional eight-episode series.

This short new series embodies everything New York—both good and bad. The eclectic parties consumed by drug culture and classic music, late-night trips to the neighborhood bodega, confusing romantic relations, Jewish culture, and struggling to find one’s place in the city. With “Russian Doll,” it’s never ending. Literally. Viewers suddenly find themselves trapped in a “Groundhog Day” style plot line, with Nadia dying over and over and over...and over...and over again on the night of her 36th birthday. Getting hit by a car, falling down the stairs (three or four times at that), a heart attack, crashing in an elevator—you name it, and Nadia more than likely died from it.

Due to this repetitive plot line, it’s only an easy show to watch if you aren’t nauseated by Nadia’s self-destructive, careless personality. I wasn’t, which made this show easy to binge in one weekend. I found a certain emotion in Na-

dia that I haven’t truly seen in many other characters in other shows or movies. Yes, Nadia has smoked enough packs of cigarettes to have the lungs of an 80-year-old man, she repeatedly returns to a toxic, expired relationship and her only true love is the cat she shares with the local bodega, but she’s hard not to love. Her thick New

Yorker accent, progression of coping with her dead mother—who was emotionally abusive to her as a child—, and coming to terms with “righting her wrongs” through this endlessly repeating cycle of death on her birthday, combine to create the dream protagonist. One can easily become extremely tired of Nadia’s persona, but in my

eyes she was one of the most real characters I’ve seen on television in ages. Not only did Nadia make this short series easy to watch, but the soundtrack made it even better. With Harry Nilsson’s “Gotta Get Up” repeating every time Nadia returns to her birthday party after the newest form of death, it adds a strangely monotonous and comforting party feel to the scene, bringing viewers back to why they’re watching—a freakish, lavish New York life traumatized by mortality. Paired with the undeniably beautiful scenes of the city at night, the soundtrack to and cinematography of nightlife, partying and—weirdly enough—death, create an interestingly beautiful show overall.

Now, I won’t spoil the ending, but what I can say is that I was tearful and instantly aching for a second season. Viewers gain insight on Nadia’s character development rapidly, along with her friends, ex-lovers and stand-in mother, creating a bond between the characters and people at home.

“Russian Doll,” created by an all-woman team composed of Natasha Lyonne from Netflix’s “Orange Is the New Black,” Amy Poehler and Leslye Headland, is bound to be Netflix’s newfound success. With one free night, one can be instantly transported into an exciting, chaotic trip with Nadia and her never ending deaths.

RUSSIAN DOLL

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH PLAYLIST

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| 1. TRY A LITTLE TENDERNESS
OTIS REDDING | 8. SOLO
FRANK OCEAN | 15. NO ONE
ALICIA KEYS |
| 2. FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE
STEVIE WONDER | 9. SEE YOU AGAIN
TYLER, THE CREATOR | 16. IT IS WHAT IT IS
BLOOD ORANGE |
| 3. CRANES IN THE SKY
SOLANGE | 10. MAKE ME FEEL
JANELLA MONÁE | 17. STARS
NINA SIMONE |
| 4. ANGEL
ARETHA FRANKLIN | 11. RASPBERRY BERET
PRINCE | 18. EVERYDAY PEOPLE
SLY & THE FAMILY STONE |
| 5. YOU OUGHT TO BE WITH ME
AL GREEN | 12. LOVELY DAY
BILL WITHERS | 19. UNPRETTY
TLC |
| 6. DOO WOP (THAT THING)
MS. LAURYN HILL | 13. CAN I KICK IT?
A TRIBE CALLED QUEST | 20. INSTITUTIONALIZED
KENDRICK LAMAR |
| 7. THIS IS AMERICA
CHILDISH GAMBINO | 14. HE GOT GAME
PUBLIC ENEMY | 21. BETTER MAN
LEON BRIDGES |

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