

Good actors performing badly. It's great

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Disasters, big old dinosaurs and smokin' the weed. Here comes the weekend.

Flood (Sunday, Monday, CBC, 8 p.m.) is a run-for-your-lives disaster miniseries set in London and Scotland. It's actually brilliant in a horribly overdone way.

They don't make gob-stopping, melodramatic, juiced-up miniseries like this any more for U.S. network TV. They used to turn up all the time. Nuclear disasters or crazy swarms of bees on the loose, that kind of thing. An estranged family (usually a separated, bickering couple and their kid) is brought together by the disaster. Special effects are dominant. The camera shakes a lot when disaster strikes.

Well *Flood* is that kind of miniseries. But it is British and has a stellar British cast – Robert Carlyle, David Suchet, Tom Courtenay, the gods of *Masterpiece Theatre* and challenging English movies. Here they are not so much acting as they are imitating actors in some wretched but fun U.S. disaster TV-movie made in 1979 or thereabouts. If your taste runs mainly to Brit TV, you've never seen anything like this.

It's all about the weather, global warming, flooding and the wrath of nature. We used to be afraid of a nuclear war. Now we're afraid of Mother Nature giving us a damn good spanking. Here, an esteemed meteorologist (Courtenay) and his marine-engineer son (Carlyle) are obliged to work together because London is about to sink under torrential tides. Already, Scotland has been dunked by a thing called a North Sea Superstorm.

This is absurdly overwrought drama, with good actors taking the money and running with the absurdity. You can tell by the look on their faces that they are desperately hoping that special effects will save the thing from being gruesomely bad. The effects don't. They are rinky-dink, with the same shot of a barrier to stop the Thames from overflowing appearing on the screen over and over. At times you imagine that such distinguished actors as Suchet and Courtenay are muttering among themselves, "Quick, hide under the water before anyone realizes it's us, the big-shot thespians."

That's what makes it enjoyable, in a you-can't-believe-your-eyes way. *Flood* is one awfully entertaining guilty pleasure.

Secrets of the Dinosaur Mummy (Sunday, Discover, 9 p.m.) is far more down to earth, even if it is about a giant critter from way, way back in time. We are told that in one of the most exciting finds in the history of paleontology, Leonardo, a young Brachylophosaurus, was unearthed in Montana, fully intact but dead as a doornail, a few years ago. Leonardo challenged previously held beliefs about dinosaur physiology. He was a four-legged, plant-eating, duck-billed dinosaur, the first young member of the species discovered with some skin intact. Only about four years old when he died, he would have been more than six metres long, weighing about 900 kilograms.

We watch as scientists identify what a plant-eating dinosaur ate, a new knowledge apparently. Not-so-little Leonardo's last meal was a bunch of leaves, including ferns, magnolias and conifers. And other prehistoric plant pollen is discovered in his tummy. This is not *Jurassic Park* writ small. It's a lively, non-lurid look at what Leonardo's existence was like on this planet.

Also airing this weekend

Cock'd Gunns (Friday, Showcase, 9 p.m.) is a spoof documentary series about a bunch of hosers who believe they can and will be the biggest rock band in the world. They are oblivious to the fact that they can't play very well (Barry, the drummer, is particularly hopeless), have no fans and no record deal either. Like that's ever stopped anybody. It's more droll and rude than hilarious, but it's fun. **Weeds** (Sunday, Showcase, 10 p.m.) returns for a new season. Last season, pot dealer/suburban mom Nancy Botwin (Mary-Louise Parker) suffered the devastation of having her suburban dope den burn to the ground. Now Nancy and cohorts relocate to the border with Mexico and get into even deeper trouble.

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