

Television

## Ancient Apocalypse is the most dangerous show on Netflix

A show with a truly preposterous theory is one of the streaming giant's biggest hits - and it seems to exist solely for conspiracy theorists. Why has this been allowed?



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**A**t the time of writing, Ancient Apocalypse has been comfortably sitting in Netflix's Top 10 list for several days. This presents something of a mystery, because the show closely resembles the sort of half-baked filler documentary that one of the lesser Discovery channels would slap up at 3am between shows about plane crashes and fascist architecture. Ancient Apocalypse obviously has an audience, but who on Earth is it?

Fortunately, you don't have to watch for long to find out. In quick succession, during the pre-show sizzle reel, we are treated to a clip of the show's host Graham Hancock being interviewed by [Joe Rogan](#). Finally, we have an answer: Ancient Apocalypse must be a TV programme made exclusively for people who like to shout at you on Twitter.

Of course it is. These people are Hancock's bread and butter; the "free thinkers" who, through some bizarre quirk of nature, are often more perennially outraged than anyone else on Earth. They're drawn to Ancient Apocalypse, thanks in part to Hancock's loud and persistent claims that his life's work is being suppressed by Big Archaeology.

The thrust of Ancient Apocalypse is as follows: Hancock believes that an advanced ice-age civilisation - responsible for teaching humanity concepts such as maths, architecture and agriculture - was wiped out in a giant flood brought about by multiple comet strikes about 12,000 years ago. There are signs everywhere you look, he says. To prove this, he spends an entire television series looking everywhere.

Hancock travels to Malta, to Mexico, to Indonesia, and to the US, purely so he can look at remnants of old structures and insist that they prove his theory. Which isn't to say that is all he does, of course, because a great deal of every episode is spent railing at the buttoned-up archeological institutions that fail to listen to him (because, according to them, the whole theory doesn't stand up to any scrutiny whatsoever).

The result - sadly, given it's about an intelligent life form being exploded off the planet in a hail of cometfire - is preposterously boring. Hancock goes to a place and says: "They want you to think it's this, but actually it's that," over and over again. I once got trapped at a party with a Flat Earther. It was a very similar experience to watching this.

Which isn't to say we should dismiss Hancock's theory out of hand, of course. Because if he's right, and the history of humanity really is just the first five minutes

of Prometheus, it would change everything we know about ourselves. But we certainly shouldn't treat his hodgepodge of mysteries and coincidences as fact.

That's the danger of a show like this. It whispers to the conspiracy theorist in all of us. And Hancock is such a compelling host that he's bound to create a few more in his wake. Believing that ultra-intelligent creatures helped to build the pyramids is one thing, but where does it end? Believing that election fraud is real? Believing 9/11 was an inside job? Worse? If you were feeling particularly mean-spirited, you could suggest that Netflix knows this, and has gone out of its way to court the conspiracy theorists.

But, hey, not all conspiracy theories are bad. If you don't like Hancock's story about the super-intelligent advanced civilisation being wiped off the face of the planet, here's another that might explain how Netflix gave the greenlight to Ancient Apocalypse: the platform's senior manager of unscripted originals happens to be Hancock's son. Honestly, what are the chances?

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This article was amended on 27 November 2022 to remove an incorrect statement that the pre-show reel includes a clip of Graham Hancock being interviewed by Jordan Peterson. The interview in question was by a different person.

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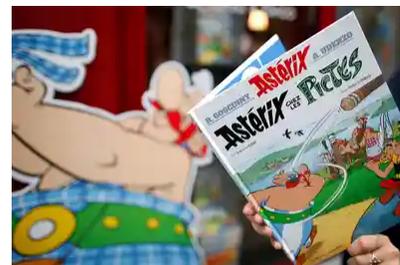
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