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## ‘Transparent’ Review: Jeffrey Tambor Will Break Your Heart in Amazon’s Binge-Worthy Show



TV | By **Diane Garrett** on September 25, 2014 @ 11:39 pm

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### Tambor’s kids find out about their father’s secret female identity in Jill Soloway’s new Amazon show

“Transparent,” the latest gift from the streaming Gods, is being released in its entirety Friday, the better for binge watching one half-hour episode after another.

The Amazon series, created by “Six Feet Under” and “The United States of Tara” alum **Jill Soloway**,

revolves around an L.A. family that would give Fox News anchors a cow if they stumbled across it: The father (**Jeffrey Tambor**) has been secretly dressing as a woman for years, and eldest daughter Sarah (**Amy Landecker**), a stay at home mom with kids, begins screwing around with her lesbian lover from college soon after they meet again. Then there's music producer Josh (**Jay Duplass**), who has had a secret affair with the family's baby sitter, and is carrying on with a young musician client Kaya (Alison Sudol).

Youngest Ali ("Girls" co-star Gaby Hoffmann) has no job and questionable judgment.

The Pfefferman family, in other words, is gloriously unconventional. Even better, it is not studiously so. Family members can't help but follow their hearts wherever they lead them; they are not trying to create waves.

**Also read: [The Advocate Meets Jill Soloway's 'Transfirmative' Cast and Crew of Amazon's 'Transparent'](#)**

The serio-comedy opens with Mort, now identifying as Maura, summoning his children to dinner. He wants to come out to his kids, but is having a hard time getting them to see him for who he really is.

This Trans-parent is not transparent to his children at all.

When he tells them he wants to unload the family home, they start squabbling over it. Tambor, who delivers a touching and heartfelt performance in the title role, decides against his announcement. He loves his children, but is frustrated by them.

"They are selfish," Mort/Maura tells a group at the LGBT Center. "I don't know how it is that I raised three people that can't see beyond themselves."

But Sarah inadvertently learns his secret anyway.

"When I was a kid, ever since I was five, I felt something was not right. And I couldn't tell anyone about my feminine side," Mort/Maura tells her in a heartbreaking confession. "My whole life I've been dressing up like a man. This is me."

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Episodes cut to flashbacks of Mort starting to embrace that feminine side. Even as he moves forward as Maura — visiting the makeup counter with his daughters on a brunch outing — he encounters censure.

**Jeffrey Tambor and [Amy Landecker](#) in *Transparent***

src="http://p1cdn02.thewrap.com/images/2014/09/TRANSPARENT\_amy-landecker-jeffrey-tambor.jpg" width="618" height="420" />

His children, meanwhile, are grappling with their own messy romantic concerns. Sarah has fallen head over heels back in love with Tammy Cashman (Melora Hardin), and finally tells husband Len (**Rob Huebel**) about

her same-sex past. And Josh pushes his Glitterish singer too hard, causing serious repercussions.

Soloway, whose father came out as transgender a few years ago, does not sugarcoat a difficult process in “Transparent.” The dialogue can be incisive, and the comedy sharp: Siblings riff on their Jewish heritage and zing each other about their foibles.

Real estate, not too surprisingly given the L.A. setting, is a preoccupation of “Transparent” characters, who live in various parts of the city.

“I’ve been Zillow-ing the shit out of this place,” Josh tells his siblings after their father announces his desire to sell the family’s expansive Pacific Palisades home. “Do you know how much it’s worth?”

“Oh, he’ll never move to the westside,” his sister says later.

**See video: [Laverne Cox Corrects Gayle King’s Trans Terminology on ‘CBS This Morning’](#)**

But there’s a melancholy underneath the discourse. Nobody has their act together, and their dad’s revelation about his sexuality has thrown the kids for a loop.

“Why is he doing this now?” Ali quizzes.

“Why did he wait so long?” Sarah parries.

Tambor anchors the show with his sad eyes, but Landecker, Duplass and Hoffmann also turn in strong performances as the addled children. **Judith Light** plays the children’s mother, but she seems to be a half-generation older than her ex in an unusual head scratcher for the sure-footed series.

Angelenos will appreciate the local signifiers from Canter’s to Griffith Park; those of a certain age will appreciate the homage to Jim Croce and Neil Young vocals. The opening credits, of home movies set to plaintive music, are also effective.

With “Transparent,” Soloway has created a distinctive family serio-comedy that she considers a five-hour movie broken up into 10 increments. Episodes might break your heart, but you’ll keep coming back for more.

Take heed, Netflix: Two can play at the binge game.

*“Transparent” debuts on Amazon Prime on Friday.*



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