

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## Stalking, sexual assault and a toxic fixation: **Baby Reindeer** review

SPOILER ALERT! Coach John critiques the Netflix mini-series everyone is talking about.



**Baby Reindeer** is a gripping series that may sound sweet, but it's far from **lighthearted** and is based on a true story. Main character, Donny Dunn, is played by Scottish comedian Richard Gadd, who also wrote the series. Donny's nickname, "**Baby Reindeer**," comes from his **stalker**, Martha, who becomes obsessed with him.

The story starts with Donny offering Martha a free cup of tea, thinking she's just a lonely older woman. However, their friendship quickly turns toxic as Martha becomes increasingly disturbing in her attempts to **win** Donny **over** and later ruin his life. Throughout the series, Donny not only **deals with** the stalking but also struggles with his sexuality and past sexual assault.

**Baby Reindeer** is hard to categorise into one genre. While it's marketed as a black comedy, it also has elements of a thriller. The cinematography is dark and intense, with close-up shots that make you feel immersed in the

story. Some scenes are violent and explosive, while others are deeply emotional.

The episodes are relatively short, like **sitcoms**, and Donny often wears a clown-like suit, **hinting** at his insecurities. Scenes with Donny's parents are more dramatic, including a **heart-wrenching** moment where he opens up to them about his past trauma.

Gadd narrates the entire series, providing even more insight into Donny's thoughts. He often isolates himself from others, but strangely, he lets Martha get close to him, as he admits later on.

What makes **Baby Reindeer** even more disturbing is that it's based on a true story. Somewhere out there, a real-life Martha exists. Some dedicated fans have even tried to identify her through social media accounts. Despite its challenging content, **Baby Reindeer** is **binge-worthy**.

The acting in the series is excellent, and the supporting cast shines. **Baby Reindeer** shines a light on the incompetence of the police and the lack of legislation when it comes to stalking. Donny's multiple attempts to seek help from the police are dismissed, reflecting the unfortunate reality for many stalking victims, especially women.

It's important to have thought-provoking art that criticises societal issues while still being entertaining.



by **ECP coach**

**John Hird**

## Word list

**gripping: (adj)** holding the attention or interest intensely; fascinating

**lighthearted: (adj)** cheerful or carefree in mood or disposition

**stalker: (n)** a person pursues, follows or harasses another person against their wishes.

**win over: (v)** to gain the favour, consent, or support of someone

**deals with: (v)** to take action and/or attempt to solve a problem

**sitcom: (n)** a situation comedy

**hinting: (v)** to make indirect suggestions

**heart-wrenching: (adj)** extremely sad or distressing

**binge-worthy: (adj)** engaging enough for a viewer to watch multiple episodes in succession

## Let's chat about that!

1. Give a summary of the texts to your coach or classmates
2. If you have seen **Baby Reindeer**, do you agree with John's critique? If not would you like to see it?
3. Is it okay to be 'entertained' by a such a serious subject?
4. As **Baby Reindeer** is based on the stories of real people - what are the possible ethical questions?
5. Why is the series called **Baby Reindeer**? (If you know, you know!)
6. Read the definitions of Domestic Abuse terms on page 2: What do the terms, *gaslighting*, *love bombing*, *negging* and *stonewalling* mean?

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN DOMESTIC ABUSE

**Domestic abuse (DA):** a term used to define physical, emotional, psychological, economic, tech, and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner or between people who are personally connected. Although DA can be perpetrated by anyone against anyone, it is much more commonly perpetrated by men against women.

**Coercive control:** Controlling behaviour that is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour. It can include assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

**Gaslighting:** a form of emotional or psychological abuse where an abuser misleads and manipulates his partner, creating a false narrative and making her question her judgments and reality.

**Love bombing:** Signs include excessive or unwanted gift giving, pressure to take relationship steps too quickly and negative reactions to the perpetrator's advances being rejected by his partner. The goal is to create a sense of indebtedness or dependence, which can later evolve into more manipulative forms of control.

**Negging:** Stands for negative-feedback. It is a deliberate ploy where the perpetrator purposefully undermines his partner's confidence by insulting her, while disguising it as a compliment.

**Stonewalling:** A form of emotional abuse where a partner deliberately shuts down all attempts to communicate. This could be through silent treatment, constantly changing the subject, or physically leaving whenever productive discussion is attempted.

[Click here for more DA definitions](#)

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