

Last night on television **Michael Hogan**



A fitting finale for one of the decade's definitive TV shows

Goodbye, *Girls* (Sky Atlantic). After six series of boundary-pushing, Brooklyn-set cult comedy, it was the last ever episode of Lena Dunham's twentysomething saga. The titular heroines had grown up and grown apart. Would they live happily ever after?

Titled *Latching*, this finale found flawed protagonist Hannah (Dunham) starting a new life as a single mother and tutor at a bucolic upstate college. Helping-cum-hindering in her clapboard house were her mother Loreen (Becky Ann Baker) and narcissistic best friend Marnie (Allison Williams).

Hannah had "nipples like iguana skin", was struggling to breastfeed her adorable baby son Grover and felt inadequate. Cue shouting, weeping and swearing. Sounds about right for the first few months of parenthood.

Girls has always been a Marmite phenomenon. Haters forgot it was fiction – a satirical romcom about self-absorbed millennials – and not a documentary about Dunham's own life. They seemed to think we were meant to like these characters, rather than roll our eyes and laugh at them. Over five years, though, we've grown protectively fond of Hannah and her hipsters.

This farewell series had a soulful, elegiac feel. The odd storyline (see Shoshanna's sudden engagement) felt rushed to a resolution but overall it was a fitting swansong. Each episode was like a miniature arthouse movie, full of witty one-liners and bittersweet emotion.

Dunham's creation rarely conformed to expectations and in many ways, this didn't feel like a finale – it was bravely low-key yet uplifting and rather lovely. There was no jarringly contrived ending, just the messy, joyous reality of life moving on. The last time we saw the central female foursome together, they were throwing shapes at a house party – but separately, not in the familiar huddle, each dancing to their own beat.

Marnie decided to apply for law school "because I love rules". Hannah stormed off in an hormonal strop but after an hilarious mix-up which left her shoeless, trouserless and getting a police escort home, she at last bonded with her baby. When Grover latched on, beatific contentment spread across her face.

Hannah headed into the future as a woman, no longer a girl. Over the closing credits, she softly crooned this finale's recurring coda, *Fast Car* by Tracy Chapman. "Maybe together we can get somewhere, be someone..."

I will miss *Girls*. It was mostly great and even when it wasn't, it was still fascinating enough to be dissected with fellow fans the following day. It was *Sex and the City* for Generation Rent. Friends with tattoos instead of shiny haircuts. For all its divisive qualities, it will go down as one of the decade's definitive TV shows.

That haunting photograph of Russian dissident Alexander Litvinenko, physically ravaged and slowly dying in a London hospital



from the world's deadliest poison, was one of the defining news images of the Noughties.

A decade later, feature-length documentary **Hunting the KGB Killers** (Channel 4) told the inside story. This was a Bond-esque tale of the murder of a British citizen on British soil, using rare radioactive poison polonium-210 – and the subsequent international manhunt, which went right to the steps of the Kremlin.

The Scotland Yard detectives who headed the secret murder investigation had never spoken publicly about it before. Now they detailed how their quarry left a toxic trail through the heart of London – on restaurant tables, in teapots and down hotel room sinks.

As a whistleblower on FSB hit squads and Kremlin corruption, Litvinenko made himself a target. It took three attempts to kill him. Even then, he clung on grimly to life, determined to put on record everything he knew.

His wife Marina talked about her 10-year quest for justice. Marina's tearful testimony ("My heart has a big hole") provided a stark contrast with the gallows humour of the police, who chuckled wryly about the merry dance they were led when they flew to Moscow.

With rumours of Russian influence back in the news, this was a timely insight into the dark side of President Vladimir Putin's post-Soviet superpower. This film – a tad overlong with too many recaps, but grippingly told – was a sobering reminder of how far Russia will go.

Girls ★★★★★

Hunting the KGB Killers ★★★



Moving on: Lena Dunham as Hannah in the last ever episode of the comedy drama 'Girls'

