

WATCH OUT

Black Mirror: Bandersnatch sinister Netflix ploy to steal THOUGHTS and manipulate politics

The hit Netflix feature could be even creepier than we thought...NETFLIX REFUSES to say if NETFLIX or third-parties psychologically analyze your behavior on NETFLIX!!!!

Exclusive

By Sean Keach, Digital Technology and Science Editor




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BANDERSNATCH is one of the most talked-about Netflix episodes ever – and it could be the beginning of a sinister conspiracy to harvest your thoughts.

The Black Mirror episode lets viewers choose their own path through the story using on-screen options, but experts warn that it marks a dangerous future of surveillance.

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Charlie Brooker's latest dystopian TV wheeze is a Choose Your Own Adventure story played using a remote control.

But experts are now warning that this gives Netflix a wealth of data on the personal choices you make.

Netflix hasn't revealed exactly what it'll do with this data, but the company does offer up data to marketers and advertisers – and government organisations, when asked.

"Netflix is bound by privacy laws especially when dealing with European subjects," Adam Brown, a cybersecurity expert at Synopsys, told The Sun.

 [Viewers can direct the storyline by making plot choices using their TV remote](#)

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Viewers can direct the storyline by making plot choices using their TV remote

"Those same laws do have exceptions, for example law enforcement agencies can of course legally access the data."

For instance, imagine if you were charged with committing a violent crime.

The police could request Netflix data showing what decisions you made when watching TV shows.

For instance, Bandersnatch gives you the option to kill certain characters in very brutal, gory ways.

Data suggesting you chose violent actions during a viewing session could potentially count against you.

"Choices could reveal aspects of a viewer's psyche to law enforcement agencies," Brown explained.


But he added that your personality could be revealed by regular TV choices too – outside of Choose Your Own Adventure stories.

 [The TV show features some violent scenes, depending on the choices you make](#)

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 [Experts say there's a risk that data on the choices you make in interactive TV shows and movies could be abused](#)

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Experts say there's a risk that data on the choices you make in interactive TV shows and movies could be abused

When combined with other data, this could mean bad things for your privacy, as one expert explains.

"Your smart TV, games console and AI assistant might know what you're watching, hear all the comments you're making, and even know which part of the screen you were looking at when you said that or made that expression," said Dr Ian Pearson, a professional futurist, speaking to The Sun.

"Your fitness band meanwhile is measuring your excitement level via your heart rate.

"So the data will go much deeper and more personal than just choosing a storyline."

What is Bandersnatch?

Here's what you need to know...


- Bandersnatch is an interactive film / TV episode released by Netflix on December 28, 2018
- It's part of the Black Mirror TV series created by Brit writer Charlie Brooker, which features standalone episodes that portray dystopian futures
- Bandersnatch follows a young programmer named Stefan who is adapting a Choose Your Own Adventure book into a video game in 1984
- During the episode, viewers get a chance to direct the plot by selecting options that appear on screen
- This results in viewers seeing different storylines and endings, depending on the choices they make
- The average viewing is 90 minutes, although it's possible to watch the episode at a length of between 40 minutes and 2.5 hours
- There are five "main" endings, although endings have small variants too
- The episode received largely positive reviews, although some criticised the storyline

This data could then be accessed by governments or big-money advertisers.

Dr Pearson explained: "While much of the data gathered about you is low value, just from filling and clicking, that might not give true indications about you, your intimate behaviours and choices

when watching a programme alone could reveal much more accurate and detailed data about you.

"All of that could be available to any company willing to pay or any government official with the right to access it."

 [Netflix could learn about your personality by tailoring questions in future Choose Your Own Adventure shows](#)
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Not everyone is convinced that Bandersnatch can provide such detailed data, however.

Michael Pachter, a media expert at Wedbush Securities, told The Sun: "It's not clear that Bandersnatch was effective in driving much consumer interest beyond the novelty of the experience.

He called the episode an "abject failure" and said: "I don't think that Netflix has the skills set (yet) to make a compelling interactive experience.

"They need video game developers to make the "game" if they want it to be fun, and they're letting movie makers dabble with a medium that they aren't particularly good at."

Pachter thinks that Netflix will create more Bandersnatch-style shows and will "endeavour to derive information", but said it "won't be effective or productive".

"Keep in mind that they know very little about users beyond what they watch," said Pachter.

"They don't know age, gender, purchase habits, household income, or pretty much anything else about their customer. They may know that I like Stranger Things, but so do 13 year-old girls.

"Marketing feminine hygiene products to me based upon my choices in Bandersnatch would not be a particularly effective strategy."

A Netflix spokesperson told The Sun: "The privacy of Netflix members is a priority for us.

"Documenting choices improves the experience and interactive functionality of Black Mirror: Bandersnatch.

"All interactions with the film and uses of that information are in compliance with our privacy statement."

"Netflix does not sell or rent personal information to third parties for their marketing purposes or any other use."