

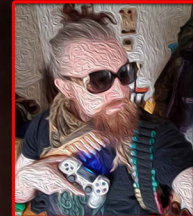
That Nerd Show

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FILM / TV NEWS, STORIES, INTERVIEWS,
NERD OPINIONS, MUSIC NEWS, REVIEWS,
GAMING, COMICS, COSPLAY & SCIENCE NEWS



"A Message From Your Squad Leader"
SNIPER ELITE 5 Review
By K. Scott Cooper

OBI-WAN KENOBI

HOW A GREAT EPILOGUE PERFECTLY CONNECTED THE PREQUELS TO THE ORIGINAL SERIES

By Marcus Blake



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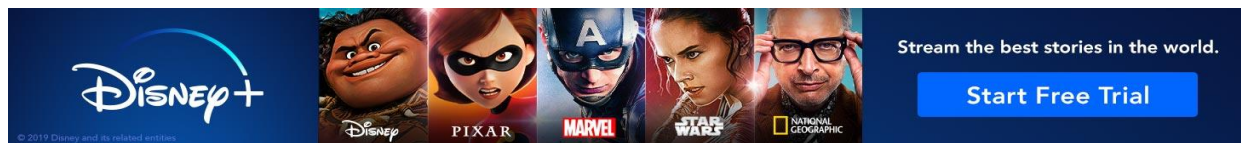
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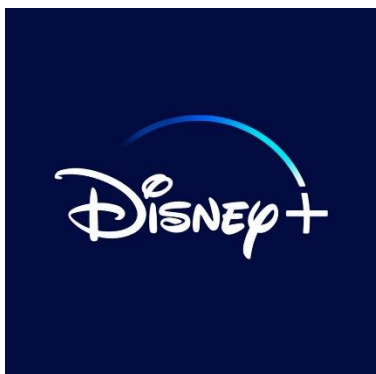
How This Great Epilogue Perfectly Connected the Prequels to the Original Trilogy

By Marcus Blake



Obi-Wan Kenobi is one of the most beloved characters in “Star Wars”. His story during the Clone Wars leading up to his famous duel with Anakin Skywalker is one of the best storylines in the Star Wars universe! He has always been a tragic figure, but his story has always seemed incomplete. What did he do during the 19 years between *Revenge of the Sith* and *A New Hope*?? This is why we needed an Obi-Wan Kenobi storyline that details that time period. It's easy to think that having an Obi-Wan Kenobi story is purely for nostalgia's sake. But it's more than that. What made him into the character that we came to love in Episode 4? That is the man who would sacrifice himself and help Luke Skywalker on his hero's journey. How did Obi-Wan Kenobi deal with the pain of his best friend and former student going to the dark side? And then having to kill him?! So many stories are unfinished in the Star Wars universe, but I think sometimes it's necessary to revisit these main characters and see who they become later in life. With the creation of Disney +, Lucas film is able to tell more of these stories, especially what happened with characters at the fall of the Republic and the Rise of the Empire.

The six-part Obi-Wan Kenobi story is not perfect. I wish I could say that there aren't any flaws, but that would not be true. That isn't to say that I didn't love it. I like it for what it is.... something that's not as good as the original trilogy, (maybe not even as good as the prequel trilogy), but a good story that helps bridge the gap between episode 3 and episode 4. There's been a lot of descriptions about this limited series, but perhaps we should look at it as a six-part epilogue to Episode 3 or a six-part prologue to the beginning of the rebellion. I find it interesting that we are setting this story exactly halfway between episode 3 and episode 4—so a lot is happening in the Star Wars timeline. But I think this particular point is important because you're seeing the Empire become the “Empire” that we knew in series like Star Wars Rebels and then the original trilogy. However, you're also seeing the beginning of what would become the “rebellion”.



We get to see various groups become the underground resistance towards the empire with the simple task of helping to rescue Jedi

who escaped Order 66. The Solo movie is set 10 years after Episode 3, but you don't really get a clear understanding of what the world was like, except through the crime syndicates. The Obi-Wan story gives us a clearer picture of what it was like under the Empire's rule at that time.

What If We Didn't Get the Obi-Wan Kenobi Series?

Maybe we didn't “need” the series, but you have to admit that it's a great connection between the prequels and the original trilogy. For years LucasFilm talked about doing an Obi-Wan Kenobi movie because fans wanted to know what he did in the 19 years between episode 3 and episode 4. Did Obi-Wan really just hang out in the desert and watch Luke Skywalker grow up, having no connection to the rise of the Empire, or even see other Jedi who survived Order 66? Of course, Obi-Wan Kenobi had other adventures, his story didn't end with Episode 3 and his famous duel with Anakin, and then just pick right back up with Luke in episode 4. We know that he has a connection to Star Wars Rebels and that Ezra Bridger found him, leading Darth Maul to Kenobi so they could finish their story arc. That was a great episode but there's so much more to Obi-Wan Kenobi than what we saw in Episode 3 and Episode 4. I think the best part about this series is we get to see a very different Obi-Wan Kenobi than what we saw at the end of Episode 3. He's a Jedi living with PTSD.



Yes, he is supposed to watch over Luke and even tries to get Owen Lars to let him train Luke as a Jedi. But we're also seeing a great Jedi Master having to live with his past. He killed his best friend (or so he thought). He's essentially a man on the run and living in the Shadows of the Empire. What's great about this series is another hero's journey presents itself to Obi-Wan Kenobi. We tend to think that heroes only have one journey, especially Jedi, and that's simply not true. The hero's journey is a continuous thing, and it doesn't happen just once. At this point Obi-Wan Kenobi is kind of pathetic; wallowing in self-pity and regret until he is called back into action with the rescue of none other than Princess Leia.

Some Star Wars fans might disagree that we didn't need this storyline because originally there was no connection between Obi-Wan and Leia except that she was seeking him out for help, which sets off the main story for Episode 4. But I think it lends more to his story that he has a connection to both children. Yes, his adventure with Luke hasn't come yet, but in going off to rescue Princess Leia, he becomes a Jedi again! He is given purpose and finds his strength in the Force again and that is brilliant storytelling. It's laughable to think that Jedi can't fall on hard times or have self-doubt. I think that's why a lot of people hated the movie, The Last Jedi, because they didn't want to believe that Luke could become that kind of Jedi exile himself. He's supposed to turn into a great Jedi Master and here we see him in exile living with self-pity and depression.

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The truth is it's not the first time that's ever happened to a Jedi and that story kind of mirrors Obi-Wan Kenobi. Jedis are at their best

when they find a purpose or are inspired back into action. Obi-Wan Kenobi is inspired to go and rescue Princess Leia. Rey inspires Luke to become the Jedi Master that she always heard about and he sacrifices himself for the new rebellion. It's a beautiful story, just like Obi-Wan's adventure in this series. But at the same time, they're both rooted in the same theme— someone who is one with the Force and overcomes their difficult past. And for Obi-Wan, it's a huge past, full of regret, to overcome. Especially when he learns that Anakin did survive and has become the man in the dark suit known as Darth Vader. Some fans might criticize how Obi-Wan Kenobi found out that Vader survived and how he wouldn't have figured it out after 10 years in exile. It doesn't really matter, it's minor nitpicking because the way they presented it in the Obi-Wan Kenobi series is more dramatic and shows a man who is heartbroken that he left his friend to die. Then to learn that instead he survived and became this mechanical monster that strikes fear throughout the Galaxy, was truly horrifying for Obi-Wan. We needed an Obi-Wan Kenobi series to see who Obi-Wan had become after Episode 3 and the adventure he went on that turns him into the Jedi Master we know in the Original Trilogy.



I'm not going to say that the Obi-Wan series was perfect and didn't have problems. There's a lot to criticize, but overall, it was a great series, especially having him reconnect with Anakin who has become Darth Vader. To have them face off against each other not only once, but twice and then have both of them reconcile what had happened in the past, that's what great storytelling does! It adds a deeper narrative to both characters. As an audience, we connect to both of them, but it also makes each character sympathetic. Even Anakin Skywalker / Darth Vader because he's a tragic figure. We get to see him beneath the mask, the burnt shell of the man he used to be. More importantly, I think it was necessary to tell the story to help solidify some of the things that we may not have quite understood in Episode 4: A New Hope. There's a lot of history that we didn't really know when we first

saw Episode 4 and the Prequel Trilogy was able to tell that history, but there was still a lot of story left untold. We didn't really know what happened with these characters between Episode 3 and Episode 4. We didn't understand the meaning behind certain phrases. This six-part series helps the audience understand a little bit better how old the characters in Episode 4 are truly connected.

How did the Obi-Wan Kenobi Series Make Episode 4 Better?

Some fans might ask, did we really need a series to add more backstory to Episode 4? Instead of asking that question, what about asking, "Why Not?" This series helps to explain some of the things that didn't make sense in Episode 4. How did Obi-Wan Kenobi come to what he called "a certain point of view?" He explains in Episode 6 when talking to Luke about how Darth Vader used to be Anakin Skywalker and how Anakin was seduced by the dark side and then ceased being Anakin Skywalker thus becoming Darth Vader. Or as he puts it in Episode 4 "betrayed and murdered your father." It makes more sense now when Anakin at the end of their final fight in Part 6 of the Obi-Wan Kenobi series, tells his former master, "I am not your failure." "You did not kill Anakin, I did." Darth Vader is telling him, right there, that Anakin was murdered by Darth Vader, he killed that part of himself that used to be Anakin Skywalker. And now Obi-Wan can walk away after saying that "his friend is truly gone."



I loved this scene because not only has Obi-Wan found his strength in the Force and weakened Darth Vader, but he doesn't have to feel guilty anymore, he didn't kill Anakin, Darth Vader did that. He can live with the fact, knowing that his friend is truly gone. This is the part where Obi-Wan Kenobi has reconciled and overcome his past and now he will become the Jedi Master that Luke Skywalker will need in Episode 4. It was a beautiful scene seeing the face of Anakin beneath the cracked mask and hearing him talk in a mixture of Anakin's old voice, but with Darth Vader's voice now. It was hauntingly poignant.

Another criticism is why should Obi-Wan meet Leia and help rescue her? They didn't need

to know each other and if you watch Episode 4, she makes you think that she's never met him. Yes, you could have a story where they've never met and they wouldn't change the original trilogy, but it also lends a little bit more weight to her desperation to find Obi-Wan on behalf of her father because she knows what he's capable of and she has a connection to him. If you watch the scene where Obi-Wan Kenobi plays the message in his hut, Leia is saying very specific lines. "General Kenobi, years ago you served my father in The clone Wars, now he begs you to help him in his struggle with the empire." After she explains how she put the Death Star plans in the Droid then she says, "this is our most desperate hour, help me Obi-Wan, you're my only hope." She starts off by saying this is our most desperate hour and then she makes it more personal by saying help "me" Obi-Wan Kenobi you're "my" only hope. Why would she say it like that if she didn't have a personal connection to Obi-Wan Kenobi? It's true that you can attribute it to a screw-up in how Carrie Fisher delivered the dialogue. And it's not like George Lucas had a clear plan about where he was going at the time of making the first movie because he didn't know he was going to get to make the next three. Things certainly changed, but I do find it interesting that Princess Leia does say "help me obi-wan, you're my only hope!" The writing for Obi-Wan Kenobi has already been criticized by some Star Wars fans. They compare it to the original trilogy or the Mandalorian and think that it's lazy writing and treading more on nostalgia than actual storytelling. That's not true. Perhaps the writers understood based on that line that she might have had a connection to Obi-Wan and this is that story. The six-part series solidifies that particular statement and she understands why she must go and get him even if it's a request of her father. Of course, it's also a great line at the end of Part 6 that if she ever needs help from a tired old man, all she has to do is call or come find him. Another thing, when Vader uses the line right before he's about to face off with Obi-Wan in episode 4, "you should not have come back," couldn't that mean they had met at some point between Episode 3 and episode 4. Again, this is that story. The basis of the Obi-Wan Kenobi series is about him finding out that Anakin is still alive and facing him as Darth Vader. Everything else are minor stories. They may be good stories, but they're minor to what the overall is. It was about Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin facing each other again and reconciling their past. Some might criticize we didn't need a six-part series just for that to happen, a movie would have been fine. Maybe, but there's a lot more that happens in a 6-part story. We get to see how Obi-Wan watches over Luke from afar and how he interacts with Owen and Beru Lars. We see Obi-Wan being connected with what essentially is the resistance that will turn into the Rebellion. It

starts with helping Jedi escape. Not only that, this is Leia's first encounter with the Rebellion. As I said before, you can look at this story as a great epilogue Episode 3 or a really good prologue to a series like Star Wars Rebels and the Original Trilogy. Too much time passes between Episode 3 and Episode 4, 19 years is a long time so of course, there's a lot going on and we need those stories that connect the Prequels to the Original Trilogy. It's true that if you want to tell a story about the rebellion, Star Wars Rebels is probably the best series for that, but the Obi-Wan Kenobi story is just as important as a connection to the past and to the future which will become the original trilogy.

Some Parts of Obi-Wan Kenobi Could Have Been Better!

Not every part of the Obi-Wan Kenobi series is great. Sure, 10-year-old feisty and fearless Leia is cute. She has some wonderful moments. Criticizing a 10-year-old Leia at this point is probably unnecessary as well. But one storyline that could have been better is with one of the Inquisitors. Star Wars fans got introduced to Inquisitors through Star Wars rebels. They're basically Darth Vader's henchmen who hunt down Jedi. It's also the first time we got to see the Grand Inquisitor in live-action and Rupert Friend did a great job as short-lived as his story was in Obi-Wan Kenobi. For Star Wars fans that were worried his story would be retconned after the second episode, don't worry he's still alive and you will see him in Star Wars Rebels, fans worried for nothing. However, fans were introduced to a new character by the name of Reva. The Third Sister Inquisitor is looked down upon by the other Inquisitors. She's important because she is the one that hatches a plan to draw Kenobi out. She wants to capture Obi-Wan Kenobi because he's the big prize and it will incur favor with Lord Vader. She's an interesting character, dedicated, maniacal, powerful, and has all the makings to be a Sith Lord. Sadly, her story could have been delivered better, and unfortunately, it takes a back seat to the overall story of Obi-Wan Kenobi having to face Darth Vader. There's nothing wrong with having a villain experience a redemption Arc. It's obvious from the first episode that her character will have some kind of redemption because she is so devoted to hunting down Jedi. It's a weak narrative because there's no mystery surrounding her redemption story. And, then you find out that she was once a former Padawan who barely escaped Anakin's wrath at the Jedi Temple. No one is really surprised that this is her past. So now her entire story is about revenge, she wants to get revenge on Darth Vader. She wants to be the one to kill Darth Vader, even to the point of drawing down on him when his back is turned

as if he couldn't feel the danger or see through her obvious plan. Unfortunately, it was telegraphed and everybody knew what was going to happen, no surprises that she was not going to win. And even when she somehow survives, after hearing the message left for Obi-Wan from Bail Organa that mentions Luke on Tatooine, her first instinct is to hunt and kill the child out of revenge as if Darth Vader even knows about Luke.



It's lazy writing because someone who we are supposed to believe is still a Jedi but was only infiltrating the inquisitors to kill Vader, she turns to revenge and is willing to kill a child only to complete her redemption Arc by not doing it at the last minute and realizing that she is becoming the dark side version of Anakin Skywalker who killed children. While these scenes provide nice moments on Tatooine and give us some great moments with Owen and Beru Lars, all of this could have been done better. Why couldn't this part of the story be one of the other Inquisitors who hates her, hearing this message about a force-sensitive child and they go to Tatooine to hunt him down, then she arrives and saves the day. And to make that story even better, Owen Lars still finds out that she is looking for him and doesn't know who she really is, so he prepares to defend the homestead against her while not realizing that the other Inquisitors have come to harm Luke. If Reva shows up, kills the other Inquisitors, and then saves Luke, isn't that a much better Redemption Arc. Obi-Wan Kenobi can still feel Luke through the force and arrive on time only to find her battling Reva saving Luke. That's when he recognizes her redemption and with some clever dialogue, it makes it more emotional. The real problem with Reva's story is six episodes isn't enough time to really develop her story arc, it's done too quickly and we don't have time to emotionally connect to her and feel sympathetic to her past. If the Obi-Wan Kenobi series had been 8 to 10 full-hour episodes, even one episode could have been about her backstory becoming an Inquisitor thus showing her true intentions, this would have made her character better.

Is Obi-Wan Kenobi Actually Good!

The Obi-Wan Kenobi series is a good chapter in Star Wars, sure it has its problems. It's certainly not perfect and I don't

think we as fans should have expected it to be. But most of the criticisms are unwarranted. Unfortunately, fans still expect too much from Star Wars. Fans expected to be just as good as the Original Trilogy and every show to live up to their memory as a child when they first fell in love with Star Wars. We've talked about this before at That Nerd Show, nothing will ever be as good as the original trilogy and if you really look at those three movies, they're kind of silly in their own way. Yes, Empire Strikes Back is a Masterpiece, but it's not perfect. All we can really get from Star Wars is hopefully good stories that entertain us. They don't have to be as good as the Original Trilogy. Some may disagree but even the Mandalorian series is not as good. No matter how much we like any series that Dave Filoni has done from the Clone Wars to Star Wars Rebels, they're still not as good. Everything else is good enough. If we are entertained, then Star Wars has done its job. But to expect any Star Wars series to be perfect or just as good as the Star Wars from our childhood, it's just wishful thinking. What the Obi-Wan Kenobi series did was connect us from the Prequel Trilogy to the Original Trilogy and gave us a deeper story about iconic characters such as Obi-Wan, Darth Vader, Princess Leia, even Bail Organa. We understand these characters better during the rise of the Empire which will explain them better in Episode 4. And if you really think of it, the Obi-Wan Kenobi series sells a lot of mysteries in episode 4 in New Hope and even Episode 6. After seeing the final fight between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi, we now know how Vader got the scar on top of his head. Obi-Wan cracks the left side of his helmet with his lightsaber and the cut was clearly so deep that not only did it crack the helmet, but it left a scar on the top of Vader's head. Maybe it didn't need an explanation, but how he got it is more interesting now making it a better narrative. As I explained before, we now know Leia's true connection to Ben or Obi-Wan Kenobi and why it's more personal and that's not a bad thing.



We find out how Luke ends up with the little toy ship that he's flying in episode 4 when he's cleaning up the droids, that's a nice callback. But there are other mysteries that add different layers to the story in Episode 4. When Grand Moff Tarkin blew up the planet Alderaan even after Leia told him the truth, all we see the first time we watch episode

4 is that he's a sadistic Imperial Officer. But there's meaning to why he does it and shows his power over Princess Leia. We know that Bail Organa will be instrumental in the rebellion, it's easy to see how he is pulling the strings when it comes to things like stealing the Death Star plans, his own connection to Obi-Wan Kenobi, and why he trusts Leia so much with those stolen plans and why it's important to find Obi-Wan Kenobi again.



Make all the right
money moves.

There's a reason that Tarkin blows up Alderaan, strategically it's the right thing to do to help quell the rebellion with the Empire's new All-Powerful weapon. One of my favorite little nods to the original trilogy and Prequel trilogy is the gift that Obi-Wan Kenobi gives layout, the holster. Not only does it show where Leia will eventually learn her skills with a blaster, but it's also similar to The holster that her mother wore during the Clone Wars. It's a nice call back to how Leia is like Padme and then I'll be one explains how she is the best of both her mother and father. Another great explanation is how Luke knows of Ben Kenobi even if he doesn't know that he is a Jedi or his true connection to his father, but they have met before. Even though Obi-Wan Kenobi has a series is not perfect, it does make Episode 4 better. I will always love Episode 4 as a movie, it's my favorite right after Empire Strikes Back, but in the grand scheme of things, it's a very short movie. It's three short acts that allow the central characters of the original trilogy to meet each other and go off on their adventure, but there are a lot of unanswered questions.

If you watch it for the first time you have to take things with a grain of salt because there's a lot of history that isn't truly explained. Yes, the Prequel Trilogy and the Clone Wars explain a lot of it, but those are stories that simply tell the story of Obi-Wan and Anakin as great Jedi knights fighting during the Clone Wars and who Luke and Leia's mother really was with that story ending with Anakin's fault at the dark side. The first time you watch Episode 4, you're not exactly clear what Obi-Wan Kenobi is talking about when it comes to Vader betraying and murdering Luke's father, he's essentially talking in hyperbole. The Obi-Wan Kenobi series clears up a lot of mysteries that I think makes Episode 4 and the original trilogy a

better story, even more than the Prequel Trilogy or the Clone Wars series ever did. But more importantly, we see two things that truly connected to the characters of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader in episode 4. We see how Obi-Wan will become the Jedi that directs Luke on his hero's journey. We also see how the final remnants of Anakin Skywalker are gone and he has truly become Darth Vader. Both characters reconcile their past and become the characters we come to know.

Their final confrontation is important for shredding the skin of who they used to be in order to become who they will be by the time we get to Episode 4. Obi-Wan Kenobi has as a series could have been done better, there could have been more episodes to add more layers to the story, and there's many different directions that the writers could have taken, but the truth is every story could be done differently. Maybe there's things that make it better or there's things that make it worse. The Obi-Wan Kenobi series is good for what it is and adds a lot of emotional connection to the characters that we have grown up with in Star Wars. If nothing else that's why it was necessary to make this series and the Star Wars universe is better because we have this series. Of course, we are left to wonder what the series would have truly been if Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni had made it.... we like to think that it would have been better, but there's always the possibility that it could have been worse. Star Wars fans should enjoy this series for what it is because minor nitpicking doesn't make anything better. Maybe as a Star Wars fan, you'll never watch it again, but you have to admit, there are some really great scenes that have a fantastic connection to the Original Trilogy. Perhaps that's good enough! However, if that's not good enough to make you enjoy the series or watch it again then how about that awesome cameo with Qui-Gon Jinn. The Force ghost of Qui-Gon Jinn is one of the best things to ever happen in the Star Wars universe, am I wrong? It was great to see Liam Neeson suit up as the old Jedi again, even if it was just for nostalgia. Sometimes we just need that in the Star Wars universe. But it's also time to start exploring different stories like ones from the Old Republic or even the high Republic. As good as the Obi-Wan Kenobi series is, we don't need a season 2. We should say goodbye to Obi-Wan Kenobi and move on to other characters. And if you're not ready to say goodbye to Obi-Wan Kenobi, you can always go back and watch this series on Disney + as well as The Clone Wars, the Prequel Trilogy, and his fantastic episode in Star Wars Rebels. We have plenty of great Obi-Wan Kenobi stories without having to make more. His story is over and that is where LucasFilm should leave it. But for this 6 Part Series, if I have to give it a grade, it's a solid 8, Yes, it's that good@

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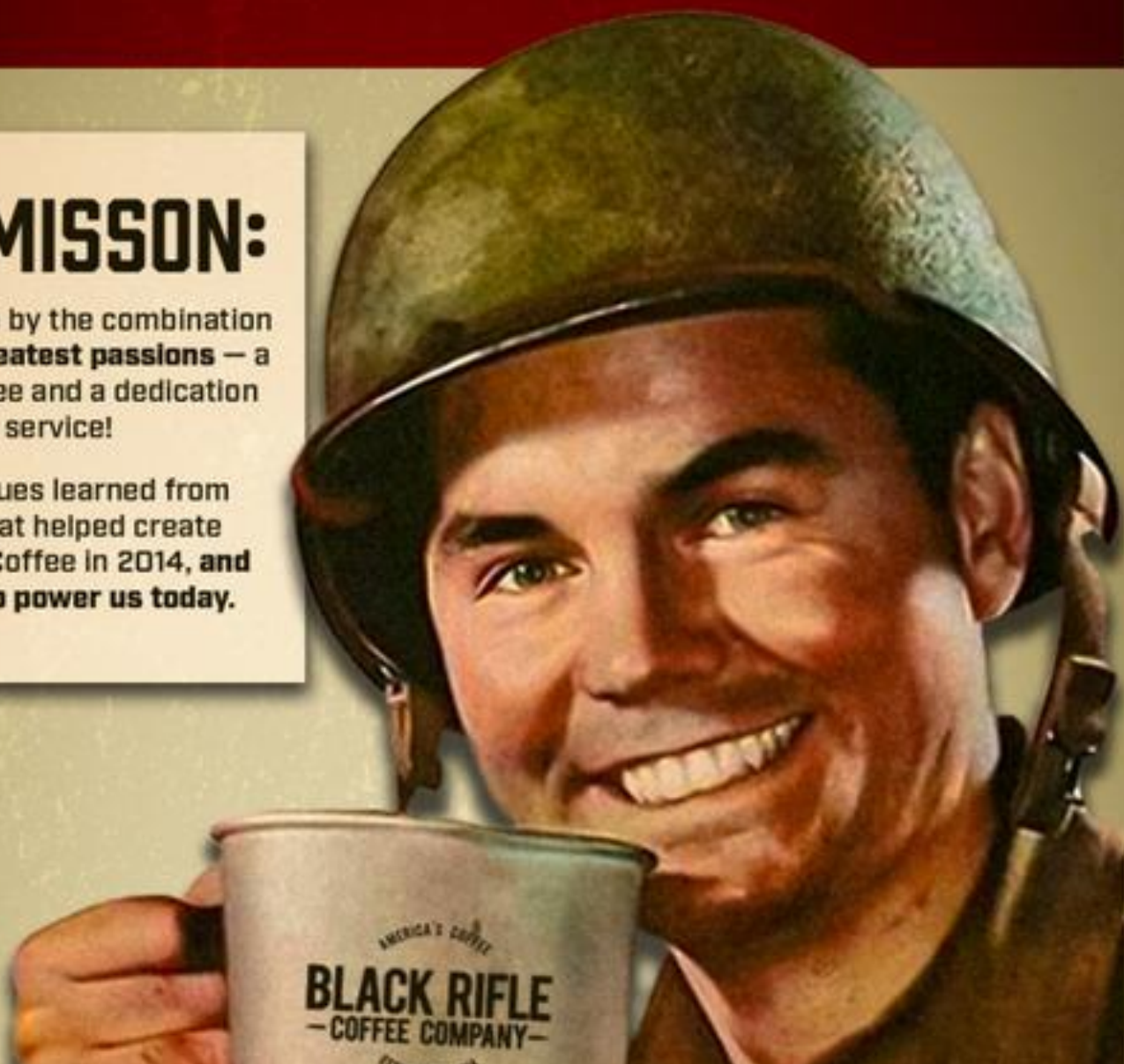
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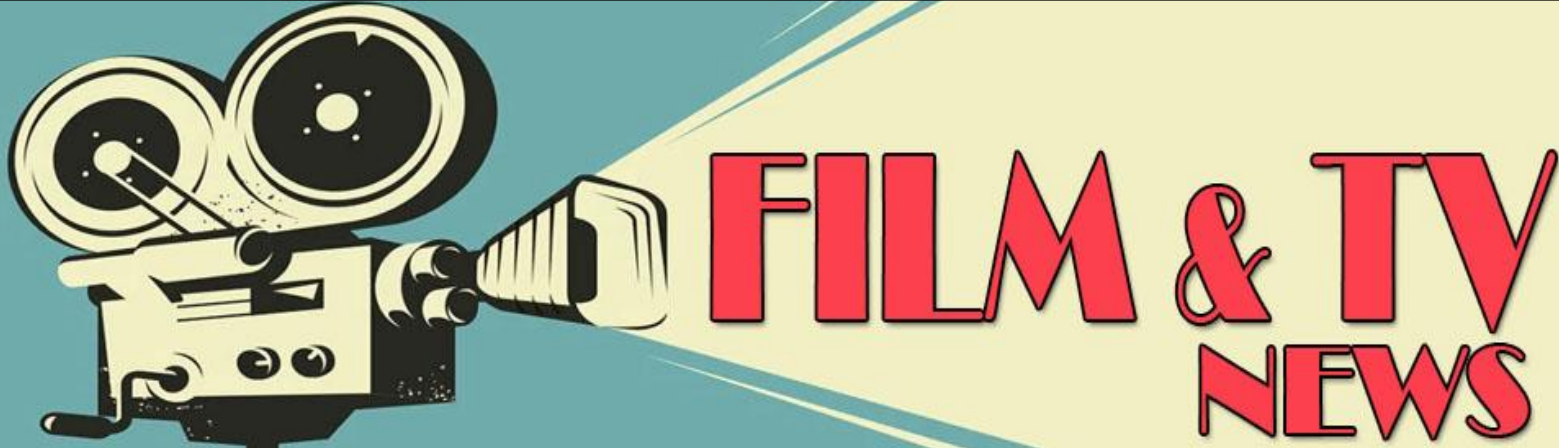
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‘Dune Part 2’: Léa Seydoux To Play Lady Margot In Upcoming Sequel



Striking while the iron’s hot following her acclaimed performances at the Cannes Film Festival, Denis Villeneuve has tapped Léa Seydoux play Lady Margot in Warner Bros. and Legendary’s *Dune: Part Two*. Seydoux is in negotiations and will join the all-star ensemble that includes Timothée Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Zendaya and Josh Brolin, who are expected to reprise their roles, as well Florence Pugh, Christopher Walken and Austin Butler,

who were also recently announced. Villeneuve is back to write, direct and produce. Jon Spaihts will return to co-write with Villeneuve. Legendary had no comment. Production is expected to start in the fall, with the film set to bow on October 20, 2023. Mary Parent, Villeneuve, Cale Boyter, Tanya Lapointe and Patrick McCormick are producing. The executive producers are Josh Grode, Herbert W. Gains, Brian Herbert, Byron Merritt, Kim Herbert, Thomas Tull, Spaihts, Richard P. Rubinstein and John Harrison, with Kevin J. Anderson serving as creative consultant.

In Herbert’s novel, the Lady Margot character is a long-standing servant of the Sisterhood. Even with the first *Dune* going day-and-date on HBO Max, the film was still able to thrive in theaters

with an opening weekend of \$41 million, which exceeded expectations and led to a quick greenlight for a sequel weeks later. The film has grossed \$400 million at the worldwide box office to date, including \$108 million domestically. It also recently racked up 10 Oscar nominations including Best Picture and took home six statuettes. As for Seydoux, the French actress recently had yet another string of films bow at this year’s Cannes fest including David Cronenberg’s *Crimes of the Future* and Mia Hansen Love’s *One Fine Morning*. This comes off her 2021 Cannes, where she starred in several films including *France*, *Deception* and Wes Anderson’s *The French Dispatch*. She also reprised her role as James Bond’s true love in the most recent 007 pic *No Time to Die*.
Reported by Deadline.com

‘Madame Web’: Tahar Rahim Latest To Join Sony Marvel Pic



The Serpent star Tahar Rahim is set to join Dakota Johnson in Sony Pictures’ *Madame Web*. Also on board are Sydney Sweeney, Celeste O’Connor and Isabela Merced for director S.J. Clarkson. Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless penned the

screenplay, with Kerem Sanga also penning a previous draft. Sony had no comment.

In the comics, Madame Web is depicted as an elderly woman with myasthenia gravis and thus was connected to a life-support system that looked like a spider web. Due to her age and medical condition, Madame Web never actively fought any villains. For that reason, sources have stressed it’s possible the project could turn into something else. Insiders say that due to her psychic sensory powers, she is essentially Sony’s version of Doctor Strange. Rahim’s role in the film is unknown.

Sony is coming off a hot streak with *Venom: Let There Be Carnage* making more than \$500 million worldwide, while *Spider-Man: No Way Home* was the

biggest film of 2021 with \$1.85 billion in worldwide sales.

Best known for star-making roles in *A Prophet* and *The Mauritanian*, Rahim recently wrapped filming Ridley Scott’s *Napoleon*, in which he co-starred opposite Joaquin Phoenix. Last year, he earned rave reviews playing the title character in Netflix’s *The Serpent*, where he gave a chilling performance as serial killer Charles Sobraj.

Up next, he will be in Apple TV+ and Scott Z Burns’ limited series *Extrapolations*, as well as *Don Juan*, a French musical directed by Serge Bozon that recently premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. REPORTED BY DEADLINE.COM

Zac Efron To Star In 'The Iron Claw' From A24 And Sean Durkin



Days after announcing his next star studded comedy at Netflix, Zac Efron is continuing to build up his diversified slate as he is set to star in A24's *The Iron Claw*, the latest drama from writer-director Sean Durkin. A24 is set to finance and produce the pic with Durkin writing and directing. Producing alongside A24 are Tessa Ross, Derrin Schlesinger and Harrison Huffman. The film was developed by House Productions, with the support of Access Entertainment, and BBC Films.

Based on the true story of the Von Erichs, the film follows the rise and fall of the Von Erich family, a dynasty of wrestlers who made a

huge impact on the sport from the 1960s to the present day. Efron is having himself quite the moment right now as he looks to the future of his business by developing a broad range of starring vehicles that are not only character driven crowdpleasers but introduce him to filmmakers like Durkin that bring the most out of him as an actor. With his Netflix comedy he gets a fun, crowd-pleaser with plenty of star power that also reunites him with his Paperboy co-star Nicole Kidman. With *The Iron Claw*, the drama brings him a piece of material that is transformative and gritty and is surely unlike anything he's done before in his career.

On top of these projects he also the Netflix series *Down To Earth* which was hugely popular during the pandemic and won him a daytime Emmy for producing and is currently shooting its second season. Coming up next is the highly-anticipated *Greatest Beer Run Ever* at Apple which is Pete Farrelly's follow-up to his Oscar winning *Green Book* that took home the Oscar for Best Picture and won Farrelly a screenplay Oscar. Efron is front and center in that film

which is likely to be in the mix this award season given its pedigree.

As for Durkin, the auteur who first broke out on the scene with his critically acclaimed Sundance pic *Martha Marcy May Marlene*, which premiered in at the 2011 festival and subsequently won Best Director for Durkin. The film went on to screen as part of *Un Certain Regard* at the Cannes Film Festival and is distributed by Fox Searchlight. In 2013, Durkin directed the four-part miniseries *Southcliffe* for Channel 4. The series was nominated for four BAFTA awards including Best Miniseries. His second film, *The Nest*, premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and is distributed by IFC Films. The film was nominated for six 2021 British Independent Film Awards including "Best British Independent Film", "Best Director" and "Best Screenplay." The film also received two nominations for "Best Actor" for Jude Law and "Best Actress" for Carrie Coon at the 30th annual IFP Gotham Awards. from deadline.com



'Batman Azteca': HBO Max Orders Animated Feature Set In Mexico



Batman is heading to Mexico. [HBO Max](https://www.hbo.com) Latin America has ordered an original animated feature-length film that takes the [DC Comics](https://www.dc.comics) character south of the border. The streamer will launch the Dark Knight story *Batman Azteca: Choque de Imperios* (*Aztec Batman: Clash of Empires*). The news

was unveiled at the Guadalajara International Film Festival. The animated feature comes from Warner Bros. Animation and DC in partnership with Anima and Chatrone.

In the time of the Aztec Empire, Yohualli Coatl — a young Aztec boy — experiences tragedy when his father and village leader, Toltecatzin, is murdered by Spanish Conquistadors. Yohualli escapes to Tenochtitlan to warn King Moctezuma and his high priest, Yoka, of imminent danger. Using the temple of Tzinacan, the bat god, as a lair, Yohualli trains with his mentor and assistant, Acatzin, developing equipment and weaponry

to confront the Spaniard invasion, protect Moctezuma's temple, and avenge his father's death. Juan Meza-León (*Harley Quinn*) serves as director, José C. García de Letona, Aaron D. Berger, Carina Schulze and Fernando De Fuentes as producers of the film, which will be produced entirely in Mexico, feature local talent and showcase the region's abundant art. Sam Register and Tomás Yankelevich serve as executive producers. Alejandro Díaz Barriga, a consultant specializing in Mesoamerican studies and ethnic history of Mexico and the Andean region, will work with the creative team to ensure that the indigenous representation portrayed in the film is appropriate and relevant. reported by [deadline](https://deadline.com).

MONTHLY MOVIE



REVIEWS



Jurassic World: Dominion Review by Marcus Blake



The final Jurassic Park film is here. A franchise dating back to 1993 has finally come to an end by bringing back all the original cast along with the new generation for one final fight against mad scientists and dinosaurs. It's hard to believe there have been six films in the Jurassic Park franchise. I don't think anybody would have expected that nearly 30 years ago, but they've been fun, to say the least. Jurassic World: Dominion it's about the world trying to coexist with dinosaurs after they have pretty much escaped from the theme park islands they came from. The big question still looms, can man and dinosaurs coexist and how will it affect the current ecological system. At the beginning of the movie, we find Owen and Claire protecting the young girl they rescued in the last film. And while they are not exactly newcomers, we reintroduce old characters, Alan Grant, Ellie Sattler, and Ian Malcolm from the original movie. At the center of the story is the crazy mad scientist with his billion-dollar company trying to control dinosaurs and genetically alter them or learn from their DNA in an effort to cure disease and hunger, of course, for a profit. He's

Jurassic Park's version of Dr. Frankenstein. And yes, we have seen this before in the world of Jurassic Park. They are scientists with good intentions or so it would seem.

Jurassic World: Dominion is a fun movie, and it was nice to get the old gang back together, with a connection to the original film because having Laura Dern, Sam Neill, and Jeff Goldblum back together again always makes for a good film. But I question whether it was necessary, did we really need them or was it just for the sake of nostalgia? I'm not saying I didn't enjoy the movie, but there was nothing in this movie that I hadn't seen before. If this film is anything then it's a great bookend to a fun franchise by connecting two generations in the Jurassic Park franchise. It's kind of like the Rise of Skywalker, but for the Jurassic Park universe. It's fun and nostalgic, but you've seen it all before, and everybody is there just to remind you why you loved the original film in the franchise, to begin with. There are a lot of great action scenes, and it does truly feel like a globetrotting adventure. Chris Pratt is great as Owen and who doesn't love Bryce Dallas Howard. Jeff Goldblum is always entertaining as Dr. Ian Malcolm, but it's all way too familiar with nothing new and that is the film's biggest flaw. I have no complaints about the characters, I love them all, and having them all work together is cool. Sam Neill and Laura Dern are just as lovely as ever and will you feel like you're watching the first film all over again. But the sad truth is nothing can quite capture the magic of the first Jurassic Park film. Mostly what works in this film are the great action sequences and the fantastic chemistry among the cast.

As much as I liked this film, the plot was filled with old tropes and the mad scientist is the same kind of Dr. Frankenstein we've seen before in films, just in different clothing. And this mad scientist wasn't even that good. Nothing against Campbell Scott as an actor, but we expect our mad scientists to be a little bit more flamboyant, especially when they feel

like what they do isn't wrong. I guess the film is the ultimate metaphor that humanity doesn't learn from its mistakes, and they really are a stupid species. But I don't need to watch a Jurassic Park film to know that and there are much better stories that perpetuate that truth. This is a typical summer blockbuster movie with lots of great action and fantastic monsters where you don't really need a good plot. And throughout most of this film, the scenes and the terrain within the film just remind you of what made the original film fantastic. It's all too similar, but if there are truly some unique action scenes then they would be with the plane crash. Then again, it's not like we haven't seen a plane crash in Jurassic Park. Didn't that happen in the third film? However, Jurassic Park has become an old and tired franchise that doesn't have any legs left to stand on so I'm glad that this is the final film. I'm not saying it's a terrible film, as I said, it's a great bookend to the franchise. It's just an okay film trying to capture the same old magic and doesn't really deliver. It's not like this year's Top Gun: Maverick or not only does it capture the same feeling magic from the original film but goes beyond. Jurassic World: Dominion is a stylish film, but at times even the dinosaurs look too animatronic.

If you go see this film, see a matinee, that's my recommendation. There was really no reason to make this Jurassic Park film except to have a good ending to the franchise and bring back the original cast. I like nostalgia as much as the next person, but this is a film that can have easily been seen on a streaming service. The only reason that you'll see this movie in a theater is for all the great action scenes with dinosaurs, but that alone can't fix the plot. And even though there's a great social commentary on corporate greed, it's unnecessary. This film isn't going to change corporate greed or how humanity feels about it. There's nothing new that we haven't seen before. Even the cute story of the raptor, Blue having a child and no one having to rescue that

Raptor can't save this movie. At this point it's like the Fast and the Furious franchise... You watch the movie because you've seen all the rest and you got to see how it ends, you got to complete the journey. I'm not saying that I completely hate the film, but it's barely average and you shouldn't pay a full price movie ticket for it. This would be a good film for the dollar theater if they still existed or a good rental. But I will give it a few extra points because it was great to have the original cast back even if it was unnecessary. But hey, sometimes we just need that kind of fun to escape our own shitty world that we live in and at its core, Jurassic Park films are just monster movies, they're good for escape!

Final Grade: 6 / 10 (Adequate)

SPIDERHEAD
Review by Alex Moore



I remember the time I sat down and watched another episode of 'Mystery Science Theater 3000.' It was about a director who was taking a group of women to an island for a photo shoot and in the process they made a crash landing elsewhere. It was in Black & White, the sound was off with the movements on screen by about a quarter of a second and it was of course, a lousy movie. That was Spider Island, but THIS is "Spiderhead" and it is about as far apart from the aforementioned film as one can possibly imagine... thankfully!

Netflix has been on a roll and does not appear to be slowing down any time soon. This is not the first time I have seen Chris Hemsworth ("Extraction") star in a Netflix original, either, though I was not all that impressed with what I previously saw. However, the present time takes priority and I am open to that.

So, what is the story with "Spiderhead?" Well, it is based on the short story, 'Escape From Spiderhead,' written by George Saunders ('Lincoln in the Bardo'). The screenplay was adapted by Rhett Reese ("Deadpool 2") and Paul Wernick

("Zombieland 2: Double Tap"), who have worked together in this capacity several times before. They are also listed on a long line of producers for the movie. At the directorial helm is Joseph Kosinski ("Top Gun: Maverick") who is having quite a year, thus far, to say the least. By the way, if you liked "Ex Machina" or "The Lobster," I think there is a chance you will enjoy this one, too.

Steve Abnesti, played by Hemsworth, is a scientist of sorts. He is manning an experiment at an undisclosed location which is inhabited by violent offenders. Joining him from the all-seeing chamber is Mark Verlaine, played by Mark Paguio. He is mostly subservient and basically just does whatever Steve tells him to do. They soon encounter one Jeff, played by Miles Teller ("Thank You for Your Service"). As time goes on, his back story unravels and we get a glimpse of what brought him to this place and why he is responding in the way that he does.

Jeff is acquainted, above all else, with Lizzy, played by Jurnee Smollett ("Birds of Prey"). She, too, has a dark past, which brought her to Spiderhead, but the details are not explored all that much. At some point, Jeff has to decide if her obvious flaws are worth it to him or not, but in the meantime, he is trying on some new pharmaceutical drugs, which all got their names from a Bingo card. Each prisoner has a device hooked up to their body, which injects the different drugs upon command from a computer. 20 or 30 years ago, this kind of thing would have seemed far fetched for reality, but scarily enough, it does not seem that way today. Is it possible that it is already going on in select facilities already? Do I sound naïve for even asking that as though I am unsure of it?

Things get hot and heavy, in more ways than one, once Jeff engages in sex with multiple partners and is forced to make a decision that impacts he AND the women he has just been with. The greatest scene in the entire movie takes place around this time. It is intense and poignant, so do not look away if you can help it. Jeff also discovers the truth about the faculty and how it is being run, which quickly puts him at odds with Steve. Steve, as you can probably guess, has also been through some dark times, but much like with Lizzy, the film does not explore any of that too much. The choice was to bring Jeff's back story into focus and no one else, at the same level. It makes me wonder if "Spiderhead" would have been better off as a miniseries, instead of a feature-length movie.

With all that being said, I mostly enjoyed this film. There was not anything that I truly disliked, but not too much that I loved, either. It was good, or could be deemed as very good, depending on your own experience. To be reminded of the other movies that I mentioned before is in no way a bad thing, especially "Ex

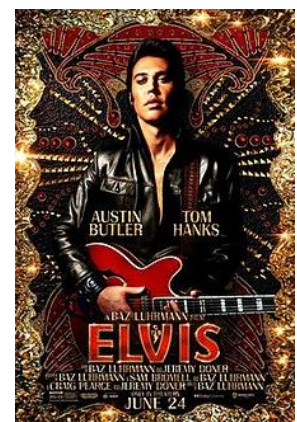
Machina." I would say that I liked this more than "The Lobster," but not as much as "Ex Machina," which means I am willing to rate it higher than most other critics have so far.

I hope that Netflix continues to gain ground on its overall quality of films. I was always impressed with their level of cinematography and technical capabilities, but they had been lacking in great stories and suitable performances. That is not the case any longer from where I sit and view these matters. Take that for what it is worth and enjoy the show.

Final Grade: 8 / 10 (Good)

ELVIS

Review by Marcus Blake



Another movie about Elvis while that's not necessarily a bad thing, this latest movie is written and directed by Baz Luhrmann so I may not be the other film you expect. Baz Luhrmann is an acquired taste to say the least. He is known for such films as the modern telling of Romeo and Juliet with Leonardo DiCaprio, Moulin Rouge, in the latest adaptation of The Great Gatsby. I admit that I am not a fan and watching his films is like looking through a kaleidoscope on an acid trip. Now that doesn't mean that I automatically hate this film about Elvis, there's a lot to like about it, but I think you have to like Baz Luhrmann's style of filmmaking to truly appreciate this film. As much as I didn't like it and we'll get to that later, there's a lot of things I did like about this film. Anytime you make a movie about Elvis Presley you know the soundtrack is going to be great. But there are two things that make this film worth watching. One is the performance of Austin Butler as Elvis and the performance of Tom Hanks as Colonel Tom Parker. With Tom Hanks you'll always get a great performance, I'm convinced that he doesn't make bad movies. But this film is single-handedly rescued by the fantastic performance of Austin

Butler as Elvis, from the way he moved and the way he sang. It's hard to perfectly capture The King, Kurt Russell did a great job 40 years ago, but I honestly have to say that Austin Butler in many ways was damn near perfect!

Mini biographies focus on when the main character is born, but really the beginning of this story is when the Colonel discovered Elvis. He was already managing a country act when the son of the main country star he was representing had Elvis's first record that he recorded at Sun studios. It's at that moment that he realizes he has a gold mine on his hands. This particular story of Elvis is different because it's mostly seen through the eyes of the Colonel who doesn't see himself as a villain even though it's a well-known fact that he completely took advantage of Elvis and worked him into a very unhealthy state that eventually led to his death. And unlike other Elvis stories, this movie for the most part is a musical wrapped up in fantasy so it's hard to know what was actually true or a truth told from a certain point of view. The one thing is for sure, the music is there. It's Elvis and the music is phenomenal. It's true that Elvis's own music is used throughout most of the film, but Austin Butler does sing a lot of the earlier songs representing a budding rock star who's learning to find his voice. This is where his performance really shines, not only from the music, but the moves. I can't say that he's my favorite Elvis, I still think Kurt Russell did a great job 40 years ago, but Austin Butler threw his performance makes this film better than it really is. We all know that Tom Hanks through any of his performances really drives the story in any movie he's in. His performance alone can carry a film, but I honestly think Austin Butler did just as good and should be commended.

The real issue with this film is it's not so much a biopic as it's some kind of fantasy version of Elvis' story. It feels more like a stage musical but through a kaleidoscope in order to make a film, but that is Baz Luhrmann's style. I get it and this might be good for those who like his particular movies, but I also think a story about Elvis should be treated with more reverence and should be told as a biographical story, not a musical because Elvis is a fascinating character and it's hard to capture everything about Elvis in the form of a musical. I think this would have been a great musical on stage and very enjoyable, but not as a film. Just like Moulin Rouge.... to me it's better on the stage. I think that's the real downfall of this movie and while you can make a bigger spectacle of it in film, it doesn't make for a really good story about Elvis. As much as I praise Austin Butler for his performance, he doesn't capture the older and heavyweight Elvis that well. There were two very distinctive parts of Elvis's career, the up-

and-coming king of rock and roll, and then when he made his comeback that landed him doing shows in Vegas until he became fat and bloated and strung out on painkillers. Unfortunately, Austin Butler still looked too young play that particular Elvis. The real issue with this movie is you're not really making a biopic of Elvis so much as you are making so in a lot of ways you gloss over important details about his life. But this movie is more about two warring perspectives, the life of Elvis seen through the king of rock and roll and Colonel Tom Parker's perspective who didn't think he did anything wrong. For me, while a musical about Elvis is fine, to really understand the man and his life, it takes more than a 2 1/2 movie. That's why I think some of the miniseries especially the one with Kurt Russell is better.

If you are a fan of Baz Luhrmann films then you'll probably like his take on Elvis. The performances of Austin Butler and Tom Hanks drive this movie and make it worth seeing. But as I mentioned before these kinds of films are an acquired taste and it only skims the surface of who Elvis really was and his legacy. Sometimes taking something from the stage and making it a movie ruins the magic of the stage production. There are certain stories or musicals that are met strictly for the stage and shouldn't be made into anything else. I feel like this is something that would have been a really great musical on Broadway and done really well with touring. But a story about Elvis deserves better and not even the Great performances of Boston Butler and Tom Hanks can really save this movie. There have been better biopics of Elvis for film and TV. This movie is made for specific fans who like Baz Luhrmann films. The music is great because it's Elvis, but that's really the best part of the movie. If you're an Elvis fan and you're looking for a really good story to stick to one of the many series that have been made over the last 40 years. Honestly, I wouldn't have loved to have seen Austin Butler Tom Hanks make that story for a streaming service over 4 to 6 episodes. That would have been epic. The only thing Worth revisiting with this film is an awesome soundtrack but then again, any box set or greatest hits of Elvis Presley or still do just fine.

Final Grade: 5 / 10 (Average)

LIGHTYEAR **Review by Julie Jones**



I still remember the first time I saw Toy Story and how I loved it. I thought it was really cute and loved the humor. Whether you're an adult or a kid, it plays well and so well that there were several sequels after. Needless to say, it became a staple among parents and kids, but also anyone who wanted a little innocent fun. Buzz Lightyear is basically the film that the toy in the first film is based on. We get to watch the movie that started it all and lit Andy up with excitement. The Buzz in the film is younger and voiced by Chris Evans, but he dons the trademark suit. While he is supported by a lot of great characters, many of them come and go as the film takes place over a great span of time. I don't want to give away too much, but it's basically a story about how he is so determined to go home that he loses sense of all the reasons to stay. He learns so much about himself and is able to take a step back to see it; making the revelation something a little more than just a decision.

While it might be hard to talk about acting with voiced characters, it isn't impossible. And I think that Chris Evans is definitely someone who can express so much with just his voice. Whether it's because we have seen so much of him or because his voice is that expressive, you can almost see his expressions throughout the movie. And bonus points for the animation team for matching them to the film so well! I thought the supporting characters were ok, but they didn't seem to connect like they were intended to. I didn't feel they really connected to Buzz or even to each other. As a result, there is a scene that is meant to be emotionally wrecking (you'll know it when you see it) and was reminiscent of another Pixar film, but it didn't hit me as hard as the scene it paid homage to. I would have liked to feel more between the characters, so I could feel more with them. But, you spend the whole movie looking for it and it feels like a waste.

The animation looks great, though there could be people who will complain that it isn't advanced as it could be. But, remember that the first film came out mid-nineties, and the movie Andy saw wouldn't have been anything

as advanced as the movies we have seen post-Matrix. I thought that it was very fitting for the time it took place in, especially considering it would have been geared towards kids. The palette and other mood manipulation facets weren't really there. And I think that might contribute to a feeling of it falling flat. While there were varying palettes throughout the film, they weren't mood-managing. They were just there for the story and to keep the characters alive. Again, it's supposed to be a kid's movie. So, it would be impossible to say it was a consideration or something that just got left off the table.

While the storyline is something we haven't seen a lot of before, it feels fresh in comparison to other tropes and tellings we have seen in recent years. I did think it was a little weak to base an entire film on, but it did well. Perhaps it was just five degrees off from the target they were aiming for. Overall, I thought it was good. It wasn't as bad as some movies I've seen (I'm looking at you, *Joker*) and it wasn't hard to sit through. There are moments that make you laugh and it's very cute. But, you can see that it's market to children and it did a great job. Children don't care about the emotional connection between characters or palettes in the film. They care about that robot cat and where they can get one. It's great to watch with your kids or to just for some light entertainment, but don't go in expecting too much. Go in hoping for a few laughs, maybe even go somewhere that serves wine to amplify the experience!

Final Grade: 8 / 10 (Good)

Cha Cha Real Smooth Review by Marcus Blake



There's a lot of forgettable romantic comedies, probably more so with *That Nerd Show* since it's not something we really cover, but we do love heartwarming films even if there's a romantic element to it. And this week I found myself not being able to look away and

enjoy watching a movie with heart, honesty, and what I like to call, a true love story because not every love story works out. Sometimes you fall in love and you don't end up the girl or the guy. Cooper Raiff's film, *Cha Cha Real Smooth* is probably one of the more honest films that I have come across and I wasn't disappointed. You can watch it on Apple + and I don't think you'll be disappointed.

The story is about a young man fresh out of college try to find his way in the world and after having moved back with his mother and stepdad, find work hosting Bar Mitzvahs when he makes them more entertaining than the parents putting them on. There he meets an older woman with an autistic daughter and strikes up a friendship that eventually leads to love. Unfortunately, she's already engaged to someone else. But what's unique about this story is his main friendship is not necessarily with the mother, but with the autistic daughter who he helps babysit and then becomes someone that the daughter can rely on when she can be very picky. There are two stories going on, his friendship with the daughter and how it affects his life especially as a big brother when he's trying to offer sage advice to his younger brother about women and then the mother he falls in love with.

As I said it's a very heartwarming story and Cooper Raiff does an amazing job not only as writer and director, but as the lead actor portraying a man who doesn't quite have it full figured out, but accidentally gets inspired by the love for someone he really can't have. This movie is made great by the performances of him and Dakota Johnson and also, the introduction of Vanessa Burghardt who plays the autistic sister, Lola. Plus, Andrew's mom who is also bipolar, played by Leslie Mann and the Lovable Brad Garrett who plays the stepdad. I don't know if I would characterize this movie as a happy movie, but heartwarming and honest. There are moments that make you laugh and cry, that's a good thing, but more importantly will make you feel that life is still going to work out even if it's not how you expect it or want it to work out. Happiness is out there and sometimes we just have to find it, especially if we've been searching in the wrong place. I think feel that's the main theme of this film.

There isn't anything I can really complain about, the pacing is good, and the film doesn't drag especially when you get to the most honest scenes in the film. All characters are likable, even Joseph, the fiancé when you're not necessarily rooting for him, but you find that he's not a bad guy at all. I think Jewish families will connect to this film a lot more especially with their experience of how it portrays the cutthroat world of Bar Mitzvah parties. If there's one thing about the film that I could critique then it is sometimes the scenes

with the two brothers in the bedroom at night linger too long and even though the filmmakers mean well with these poignant conversations between the brothers, they're not the most important part or help drive the story when the most important relationships are between the characters of Andrew, Domino, and Lola. But they are sweet scenes

Overall *Cha Cha Real Smooth* is an adorable film marked by great performances from an outstanding cast. It's a heartwarming story that makes you root for the everyday guy who doesn't always get the girl and sometimes we need on the stories like that. Love is great, but you don't always end up with the girl or the guy and that's okay! But my hats off to Cooper Raiff for making a film full of heart that we can all relate to. And Dakota Johnson is always at her best when she portrays characters that are imperfect and not a sexy even though she herself is gorgeous. She is at her best playing characters that are struggling to figure it all out and have a lovable innocence.... the everyday girl or the girl next door if you will. I would say that the casting in this movie is what makes it almost perfect and worth watching.

Final Grade: 8 / 10 (Good)

The Man From Toronto Review by Marcus Blake



There's no shortage of fun movies to watch on Netflix, especially the "buddy cop" type movies. They are always a crowd-pleaser. The latest "buddy cop" movie to hit Netflix is a film called *The Man From Toronto* although it's not really so much about two cops as it is about a man being mistaken as an assassin. It's a film about mistaken identity that lands a mild manner salesman in hot water as an assassin from Toronto. The film stars Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson. With both of them in the same movie, you know, you will at least be entertained. Kevin Hart's character is trying to have a romantic weekend with his wife at a remote cabin when he is accidentally mistaken for an assassin who must torture someone to get vital information. He does it and with one

photo becomes *The Man From Toronto*. Woody Harrelson, who is the real assassin, shows up and now, has to use Kevin Hart's character to complete his job. As you can imagine, all hell breaks loose, and the best-laid plans get thrown right out the door.

The movie is entertaining, it's not going to win any awards, but Kevin Hart films generally don't. You know what you're going to get with Kevin Hart, he's a comedian and he will keep you laughing by doing the one thing he does best, being Kevin Hart. And who doesn't enjoy Woody Harrelson in a movie? I've Loved Woody Harrelson ever since Cheers and whether he's doing a drama like *The Highwaymen* or a comedy like *Surfer Dude*, he never disappoints. I guess it was only a matter of time before you put Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson in a movie together and you know what, it works. Woody Harrelson makes a believable assassin. I hate to say it, but the film is predictable, you have an assassin who doesn't want to do it anymore and has a change of heart while helping the down-on-his-luck husband who's only trying to make it up to his wife. Plus throw in the storyline that the assassin wants to be a Chef, feels like you might be watching Dwayne Johnson in *The Rundown*. But these aren't complaints, I'm comparing this film to other fun movies that have the same tropes. What makes the film

work is you get a great comedy team with Woody Harrelson and Kevin Hart and there's plenty of action that will keep you entertained.

The problem with the film is it's not like we haven't seen it before. In some ways, it feels like a "Rush Hour" film. Mistaken identity movies are nothing new. Alfred Hitchcock made some great movies based on that same theme with *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *North by Northwest*. Bill Murray even made a great comedy mocking The Man who Knew too much with a film called *The Man Who Knew Too Little*. Even though Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson make this film worth watching, it's also the same Kevin Hart film you've always seen. As I said before Kevin Hart is just being Kevin Hart so if you're a fan of his then you will enjoy this film for what it is, but if you're looking for something that's unique or clever, this is not that film. The film goes on for about 2 hours when it could have really been just 90 minutes. The extra time to throw in some more action scenes doesn't make the film any better, but the extra action scenes are entertaining. As funny as the two main actors are in this film, by the time you get to the end, you will have felt like you've seen it before.

I will say that this is a good film for Netflix, I wouldn't have paid to see it in a movie theater, but it's a good one for a

streaming service such as Netflix to keep you entertained when you're vegging out on the couch, and you don't even have to run to Redbox and waste a couple of bucks on a rental. Woody Harrelson and Kevin Hart are the best parts of the film as they do work well together and keep you laughing. But it's not their best film by a long shot. *The Man From Toronto* is pure escapism and a film you'll probably only watch once. The entertainment value of some films is only worth a couple of hours of your time. But I also have a confession to make, I like a lot of the movies on Netflix for what they are. I wouldn't pay to see them in the theater, but I'm glad they're on Netflix and most of them are worth the price of my Netflix subscription. This film is no exception. So, if you're a fan of Woody Harrelson and Kevin Hart, I do recommend the film even if it's largely forgettable. It's not their best stuff, but they do entertain you and sometimes that's all you need after a long hard week at work you're having a lazy day on your couch just watching Netflix. The film is good enough for that.

Final Grade: 6 / 10 (Adequate)



**TASTE,
THAT'S WHY.**

'Yellowstone' Origin Story Starring Harrison Ford and Helen Mirren Gets New Title: *1923*



Taylor Sheridan's *Yellowstone* prequel has a new title. The origin story of the Duttons has been renamed *1923* to encompass the end of WWI (1918) and the start of Prohibition

(1920), both of which will be included in the saga. The new series will star Helen Mirren and Harrison Ford.

The streamer offered no additional information on who the two actors will play, other than saying "*1923* focuses on the Dutton family's next two generations as they struggle to survive historic drought, lawlessness and prohibition, and an epidemic of cattle theft; all battled beneath the cloud of Montana's great depression, which preceded the nation by almost a decade."

It will bow in December and is produced by MTV Entertainment Studios, 101 Studios

and Bosque Ranch Productions. The limited series follows the record-breaking performance of *1883*, the most-watched series ever on Paramount+ globally, and is the latest addition to Sheridan's growing slate on Paramount+, which includes *1883*, *Mayor of Kingstown* and the upcoming series *Lioness*, *Tulsa King*, *1883: The Bass Reeves Story* and *Land Man*. *1923* is executive produced by Sheridan, John Linson, Art Linson, David C. Glasser, Ron Burkle, Bob Yari and Ben Richardson.

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'Raised By Wolves' Canceled By HBO Max After Two Seasons



There will not be a third season of Ridley Scott's *Raised by Wolves*. HBO Max has canceled the sci-fi drama series after two seasons, Deadline has confirmed. "While we are not proceeding with a third season of *Raised by Wolves*, we are beyond grateful to the stellar cast and crew, our creators Aaron Guzikowski, Ridley Scott, David W. Zucker, and the entire team at Scott Free Productions, for their beautiful artistry and unique ability to immerse fans into the world of Kepler-22b," HBO Max said in a statement.

Created by Guzikowski, *Raised by Wolves* centers on two androids tasked with raising human children on a mysterious virgin planet. In Season 2, Android partners Mother

(Amanda Collin) and Father (Abubakar Salim), along with their brood of six human children, join a newly formed atheistic colony in Kepler 22 b's mysterious tropical zone. But navigating this strange new society is only the start of their troubles as Mother's "natural child" threatens to drive what little remains of the human race to extinction. The news was earlier shared on Twitter by series star Abubakar Salim, in a pitch for a pickup of third season somewhere.

"It's not surprising, especially after the news of the mergers and what is happening at Warner [Bros. Discovery, which owns HBO Max], that a lot of shows are not having their stories finished. And unfortunately, one of those shows is *Raised by Wolves*," Salim said. "Nothing has been publicly shared yet. And there is a reason for that. An important one. One which I'm here to share with you now. There is hope.

"You see, we're in a unique position: we have a fully fleshed out and planned storyline, a Goliath of a production team behind us, incredible reception from critics and reviewers

alike, and most crucially, a community base that is so strong internationally, it can not be ignored," the British actor continued. "The reason the cancellation hasn't been announced [is] because there's still a chance the story can continue, and be finished at a new home. As we speak, Scott Free [Productions] and the creatives are pushing for the show to be continued in other homes — sharing the reception and pull of the show to other storytellers.... So I'm asking for action. I see the pure love, passion and questions (too too many) that arise DAILY on Twitter for RBW. I'm now asking that you continue to, and with even more vigor, show that genuine love here, there, and everywhere as we search for that new home."

Raised by Wolves was produced by Scott's Scott Free Productions, with Scott, Guzikowski, David W. Zucker (*The Man in the High Castle*), Jordan Sheehan (*The Terror*), Adam Kolbrenner (*Prisoners*) and Mark Huffam (*The Martian*) serving as executive producers. Reported By Deadline.com

'Snowpiercer' To End With Season 4 On TNT



TNT's *Snowpiercer* will be pulling into the station. The post-apocalyptic drama's upcoming fourth season, which is in production, will be its last. I hear the cast's options were coming up and were not picked up, releasing the actors to book other jobs.

"We can confirm that *Snowpiercer* will end after a successful, multi-season run on TNT," a spokesperson for the network said in

a statement to Deadline. "Its talented writers, actors and crew took an extraordinary premise and brought it to life in thrilling ways. It was critically acclaimed, had a significant impact on the post-apocalyptic genre and now remains in the hearts and minds of fans forever."

Snowpiercer, which follows the passengers of a perpetually moving train carrying the remnants of humanity after the world becomes a frozen wasteland, was the last remaining original scripted series on TNT as the other original drama still on the network, *Animal Kingdom*, is launching its final season on Sunday. The TNets already had been scaling back on original scripted fare; the process was accelerated by the Discovery-WarnerMedia merger.

Based on Bong Joon-ho's 2013 movie, *Snowpiercer* premiered as the No. 1 new scripted drama on all of ad-supported

cable in 2020. Daveed Diggs, Jennifer Connelly, Iddo Goldberg, Katie McGuinness, Rowan Blanchard and Roberto Urbina star in the series, whose Season 4 features cast additions included Clark Gregg and Michael Aronov.

Snowpiercer Season 4 is executive produced by new showrunner Paul Zbyszewski, Christoph Schrewe, Marty Adelstein and Becky Clements of Tomorrow Studios, Matthew O'Connor, Ben Rosenblatt and Scott Derrickson, and the original film's producers, Oscar winner Bong, Miky Lee, Jinnie Choi, Park Chan-wook, Lee Tae-hun and Dooho Choi. The show is produced by Tomorrow Studios, along with CJ Entertainment. ITV Studios handles international distribution.

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WHAT YOU SHOULD BINGE-WATCH

The Boys: Season 3 Returns to Prominence After a Dismal Season 2

Review by Julie Jones



I remember when the first season of *The Boys* came out and I thought it was great! It was nice to see a show that showed more realistic heroes and how they might function in the real world. I thought all the characters seemed flawed and interesting. When the second season came, I thought it wasn't as good as the first one, and I hate to say it, I lost interest. So, when I heard the third one was coming, I couldn't help but wonder if the second season was a fluke or the new standard for the show.

The third season picks up right after the second season, keeping up with all the characters you know and love. While there were some unanswered questions in the second season, the third season not only wraps them all up. But

answers more. You still get to see Homelander act like the entitled brat man-child that we all love to hate, but there are new problems that arise. There is no shortage of underlying stories to follow and keep you occupied if one of them bothers or bores you. If you didn't like the second season, you'll be happy to know that the third season feels more like the first did.



There isn't really anything new as far as acting, direction, cinematography, etc. It's the same as it's always been. However, I thought the first season had a better story overall and I think that was where the second season lacked. This season they are a bit more on track and it feels like they fixed whatever the glitch was in season 2. However, Season 3 does introduce more characters including Soldier Boy who has a big secret of his own. His storyline definitely adds more layers to *The Boys* overall story in Season 3. But I won't spoil anything. Fans are certainly in for some big surprises especially with Billy Butcher getting superpowers for a like a day. It will make things very interesting for the group trying to bring down Homelander and new problems will arise.

Overall, I thought this season was good. It's a good start to getting back to the show we all fell in love with and I

think it's definitely worth a watch. Don't worry, it doesn't suck as much as the second season did and it's much more like the first one. *The Boys* are getting back to it's roots and with more characters and added storylines, season 3 does not disappoint. By the time you get to the end, you will yearn for season 4, which is a no-brainer for Amazon Studios to make. *The Boys* is one of the better shows on Prime. I would give it an 8 1/2, but we don't do that here...so, 8. It's not a 9. And, just a heads up, if you were as excited as I was to see Charlize Theron would be in it; keep it in your pants. She has five minutes in the first episode and then never again. Lame.

Final Grade: 8 / 10 (Good)

Legacies: The Final Season

Review by Allison Costa



For those of us who are long-time “Vampire Diaries” fans, it was a bittersweet week. It was almost like having to say goodbye to that series all over again, as one of its spin-off series, “Legacies”, came to an end recently. While “Legacies” wasn’t a perfect series and definitely had its cheesy moments (think Buffy the Vampire Slayer in its early years), there was something about the next class of Vampires, Werewolves and Witches that just seemed to pull us all in. Of course having the ever-present Alaric Saltzman, played by Matthew Davis, as a permanent part of the cast on the show was a good idea because he was always a fan favorite, and became the bridge between the two series. The show centered around Klaus Mikaelson’s hybrid daughter, Hope, who eventually became the one and only tri-brid (werewolf, vampire and witch all in one), and her attempts to figure out her destiny and whom she was supposed to become. But along the way the series also evolved several other main characters. Alaric’s twin daughters, the gemini twins, Lizzie and Josie, who were birthed by Caroline from the Vampire Diaries. Although not their original mother she did carry the babies and raise them with Alaric after he lost their mother and she lost Stephan in the finale of the Vampire Diaries.

Although Caroline was talked about and referred to quite a bit throughout the entire

series, she never once made an on-screen appearance. That is, not until the finale episode! And although I wish she had had more small appearances throughout the entire series, it was great to see her in the end. There is also a post-humous appearance by the infamous Klaus Mikaelson as well, played by Joseph Morgan. And again, similar to Caroline’s character I wish we had seen him more throughout the series, but he was dead so that was problematic. The way they brought him around in the finale really seemed fitting and a perfect way for Hope Mikaelson (his daughter) to get some closure on their relationship and be able to move forward.

As much as I was sad for this series to come to an end, it was time, as the story arc had been going nowhere for a while. I started out loving the show and the characters and their development. But along the way the plot lines just stopped matching up. And once Hope became the tri-brid and had to kill the love of her life, the show just felt kind of empty to me. Like it was grasping at straws. I did like that they finally had a storyline with her as a fierce Vampire with her humanity turned off—very reminiscent of her father Klaus and of course the famous Salvatore brothers. And then it was kind of cool that the show went on to bring in a new genre of mythical creatures by introducing the “gods”. Only they tried to balance that storyline along with Landon (Hope’s love) storyline of being

lost in limbo and trying to get to peace and it was all just too much. Too many angles and not of it felt sincere or seemed to go together at all.

Suddenly everything felt like it was unraveling and just too desperate to be clever or have good writing. So it was a good call to end it now before it went completely off the rails, and we lost the excitement of the early episodes.

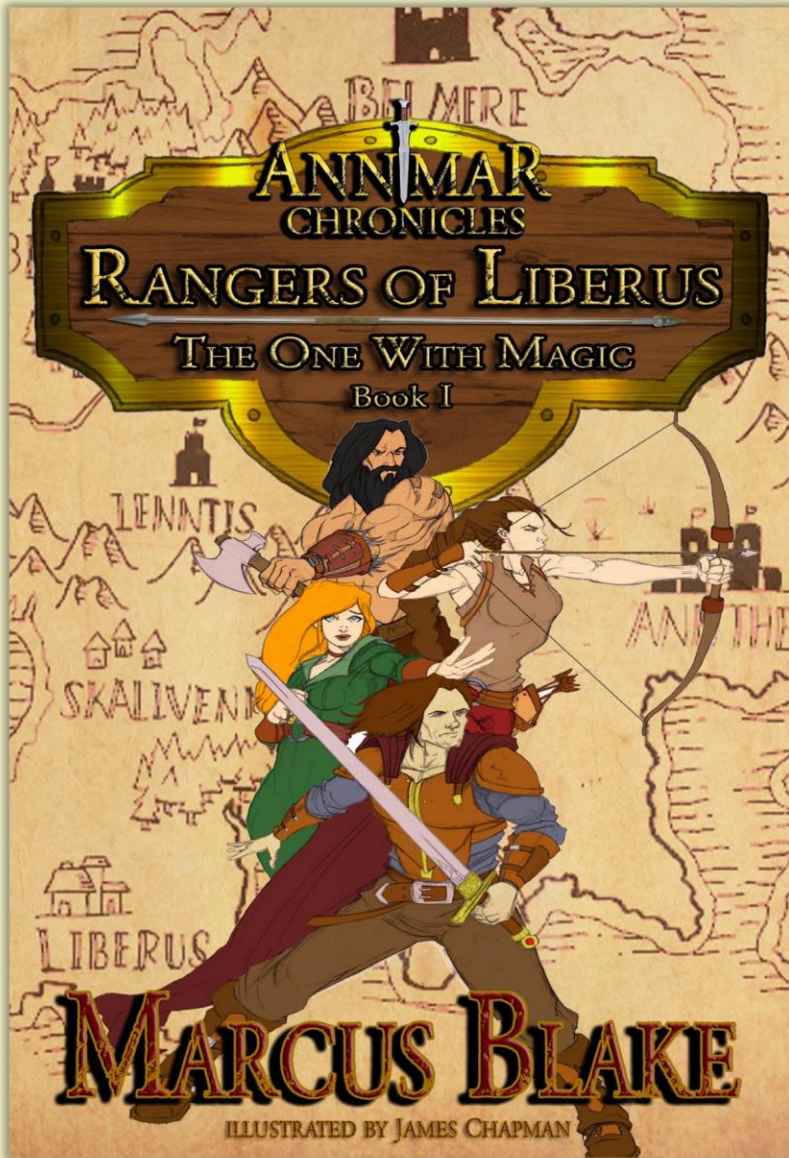
Even with its lackluster last season, I will miss watching the teens of “The Salvatore School”. In many ways it was both nostalgia for Vampire Diary fans but also hinted at allusions to The Xavier School for Gifted Youth, and Hogwarts—granted with a lot more relationship drama than either of those! But the idea that there is a special school out there for mythological creatures will always entice us to want to follow along on their coming of age stories.

So we bid a fond Farewell to “Legacies” and wait to see what new teenage fantasy dramas the CW will introduce. They are already well underway with the introduction of Naomi and Tom Swift, but will there be anymore Vampire spin-offs headed our way?? Only time will tell....

Final Grade: 7 / 10 (Okay)



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JULY



GAMING NEWS

PS5 versions of Resident Evil 7, Resident Evil 2, and Resident Evil 3 have launched!



In 1996, the survival horror genre was established with the release of the first Resident Evil for PlayStation, and the series has brought chills and thrills to every generation of consoles since. Earlier this year, we announced that Resident Evil 7 (2017), Resident Evil 2 (2019), and Resident Evil 3 (2020) are making their way onto PlayStation 5, and that current owners of the PlayStation 4 versions of these games will be eligible for upgrades at no additional cost through the PS4 to digital PS5 upgrade option. I'm happy to announce that the PS5 versions of all three titles will be available at PlayStation Store today. These upgrades include features such as ray traced visuals, 3D Audio and DualSense wireless controller support that will offer deeper levels of immersion, and we're really excited for you to get your hands on them. In this blog, I'll be reflecting on some of the things that made these games so special. A new perspective on fear

On its release in 2017, Resident Evil 7 biohazard completely stirred up the biohazardous pot, we focused on the fear aspect, as the fast-paced gameplay and the third-person perspective of the modern Resident Evil games was transformed into a slower-paced, dread-filled first-person experience that essentially put

you in the shoes of the main character, Ethan Winters, as he explored the dark nooks and crannies of the Baker estate. Our goal with reimagining the gameplay of Resident Evil for this title was to focus on the fear of the unknown – just like when players got their hands on the first game all those years ago and had no idea what to expect, this new setting, character and the first-person perspective made for completely unfamiliar ground and a truly new kind of horror. That said, we also made sure that the game felt like a real Resident Evil game in many ways, preserving the critical survival horror element of escaping dire situations, from the “mansion”-like Baker house to those familiar herbs.

This game also marked the debut of the then-new in-house RE Engine, which meant that we could bring the audio-visual quality of the game to a whole new level on PlayStation 4, with photogrammetry techniques used to bring high-resolution scans of real-world models, textures and surfaces into the game. With visuals now enhanced with the power of PlayStation 5, you can experience the terror anew! A horror legend reborn

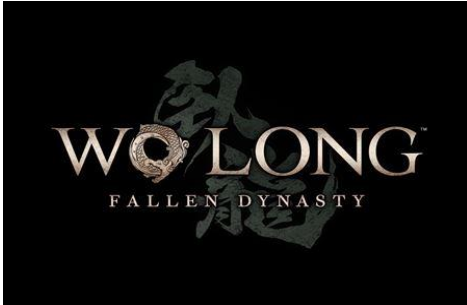
As the development of the RE Engine was coming together, allowing higher levels of visual representation, the development team felt the time was right to finally revisit classic RE titles for which we had received countless requests from fans to remake for the modern age. The first title we chose was Resident Evil 2. As fans of the legendary original game ourselves, we wanted to approach this remake with the utmost care and respect, not just for the work of the original development team but for what the game has come to mean to players. It was difficult and at times contradictory to

balance bringing new and fresh ideas that would modernize the game while keeping it faithful to the original, but with the power of the RE Engine and PlayStation, fans were able to step into Raccoon Police Department once more as Leon and Claire. While every aspect of the game's visuals was revamped to create an atmosphere that surpassed the fans' memories, making the dark, abandoned corridors of the police station more atmospheric than ever before, the zombies in particular were something we focused on making terrifyingly realistic. Let me just say that the glistening, wet gore of a zombie bite has never looked more convincing! An old Nemesis returns

After the Resident Evil 2 remake, we set out to revisit the next chapter in the series which once again saw Raccoon City face disaster. In Resident Evil 3 (2020), players got to experience Jill Valentine making her last escape from a doomed city, vividly reimagined by the RE Engine – but with constant fear on the side during gameplay, there isn't much time for sightseeing! When it comes to Resident Evil 3, we have to talk about the iconic Nemesis. The team was able to build on our work based on Tyrant, “the ultimate B.O.W” from Resident Evil 2 in bringing the Nemesis character to life. Combining all our experience using motion capture and photogrammetry for Resident Evil 7 biohazard and Resident Evil 2, meant that this new version of Nemesis may be one of the most terrifying enemies in the series and indeed in videogame history. Whether you're a PlayStation 4 version owner who's upgrading, or are experiencing these games for the first time on PlayStation 5, I'm sure you'll enjoy every minute of these modern horror classics.

Enter the Dark Fantasy World of **Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty**, Team NINJA's Next Great Masocore Experience

*Above the Darkened Kingdom,
a Dragon Rises!*



KOEI TECMO America and famed developer Team NINJA (Nioh, Ninja Gaiden), are proud to reveal the first details about its epic new supernatural Three Kingdoms thriller, *Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty*. Currently in development for the Xbox Series X|S, Xbox One, PlayStation®5, PlayStation®4, and on PC via Windows and Steam®, the game is scheduled to release in early 2023 and will be available day one with Game Pass on console and PC.

Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty follows the dramatic, action-packed story of a nameless militia soldier fighting for survival in a dark

fantasy version of the Later Han Dynasty where demons plague the Three Kingdoms. Players fight off deadly creatures and enemy soldiers using swordplay based on the Chinese martial arts, attempting to overcome the odds by awakening the true power from within.

A joint creation by Team NINJA producers Fumihiko Yasuda (Nioh) and Masaaki Yamagiwa (Bloodborne), game features include:

1. Demons in the Kingdom

A dark fantasy set during the chaotic Three Kingdoms period, the narrative vividly tells the tale of a militia soldier's strenuous fight for survival during a Later Han Dynasty infested with demons. It's madness in the Three Kingdoms like never before!

2. Awaken the Power Within

Defeat deadly enemies to boost morale and awaken the power from within! Overcome adversity through unique new strategies, including battle styles based on the "Five Phases".

3. Live by the Sword

Renowned for ruthless strikes that can change the tide of battle in an instant, sword practitioners of the Chinese martial arts gracefully change pace as they shift between offensive and defensive maneuvers. Overwhelm opponents with a flurry of force in a series of intense and bloody battles while learning the precision and skill necessary to become a true master of the sword.

For more information on *Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty*, visit the official site, Like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/koeitecmous and Follow us on Twitter @koeitecmoUS.

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Survival is Just the Beginning in the Reawakened Resident Evil 4 on 3-23-2023

**Resident Evil™ Breathes New Life
Into a Genre-Defining Classic to Bring
State-of-the-Art Survival Horror to
Modern Consoles and Steam**



Today on PlayStation's State of Play digital event, Capcom, a leading worldwide developer and publisher of video games, announced **Resident Evil™ 4**, a remake of the original Resident Evil 4 released in 2005. Reawakened for 2023, **Resident Evil 4** preserves the essence of the original while using Capcom's proprietary RE Engine to

deliver modernized gameplay, a reimagined storyline, and vividly detailed graphics. *Resident Evil 4* is scheduled to release on March 24, 2023 for PlayStation®5 (PS5™) console, Xbox Series X|S and PC via Steam.

As a title that set the standard for the later Resident Evil™ franchise, the original Resident Evil 4 introduced the Third-Person-Camera to the long-running series, which has shipped over 125 million units worldwide since the first title debuted in 1996. This new perspective brought players into the action and horrors encountered by protagonist Leon S. Kennedy during his daring rescue mission.

Resident Evil 4 joins Leon S. Kennedy six years after his hellish experiences in the biological disaster of Raccoon City. His unmatched resolve caused him to be recruited as an agent reporting directly to the president of

the United States. With the experience of multiple missions on his back, Leon is dispatched to rescue the president's recently kidnapped daughter. Leon tracks her to a secluded European village, however after making first contact he discovers a fervor beyond reason grips the local populace.

Now, this reimagined tale of survival in the face of overwhelming terror returns to deliver a visually stunning modern gaming experience that is true to the promise of the original release. Many team members from the production of 2019's top-selling and critically acclaimed Resident Evil™ 2 also make their return to delve deeper into the essence of Resident Evil 4. Fans and newcomers alike can revel in both the new and familiar, as RE Engine heightens the original's creative direction to tell a story that is darker and even more unsettling.



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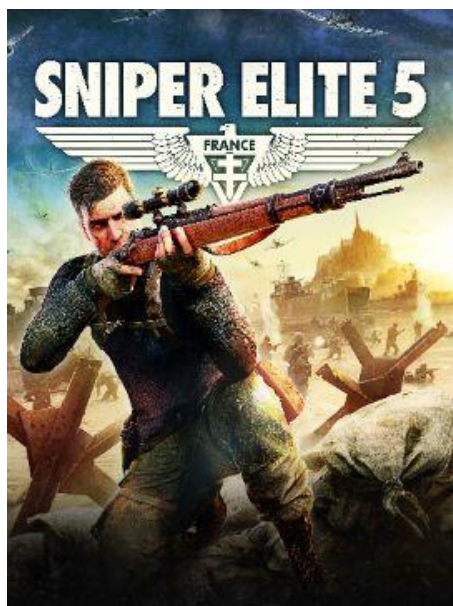
A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SQUAD LEADER!

By K. Scott Cooper

Sniper Elite 5: D- Day

The D Stands for Disappointing!

by
K. Scott Cooper



Have you ever gone to a restaurant that you absolutely love and adore, its had its ups and downs, but all in all its a trusted place you call home? Now imagine that one day the restaurant takes its old menus from the past, renamed it, and then try to pass off a cheap replacement menu as a brand spanking new menu. Well, that's pretty much what Rebellion has done with Sniper Elite 5 and it gave me the shits just like that nasty ass menu would, so now its time to pick through this plate of crap before we send it back to the kitchen.

Seasons Pass?! Why?- why does Sniper Elite need a season pass you ask? I said the same thing and let me tell you what this game does not have enough replay value for a "freakin" season pass. Which is a great way to tell you that if we remember what Rebellion did with Zombie Army 4, they are going to nickle and dime fans to death with lack luster cosmetics and add on missions that are once and only once. Much like this Campaign.

Campaign of Bottomless Boredom!- so Rebellion has taken all the basic plot devices of the last 4 Sniper Elite games and rolled them into one. Where you guessed it boring ass Karl is hunting an Old Nazi scientist hellbent on using V2 rockets to pitch the direction of the war into the hands of the Nazis, Seriously? Why not give me something cool like Karl having to take on an Elite band of Nazi SS sniper that trained high in the German mountains, each given a mission to kill an allied Commander during the phase of the war. That took me 3 seconds to think of and it was better than what Rebellion took years doing.

Do You Know What QA Is?!- this game is filled with SO many basic bottom-bitch level issues, its like they let this whole game get made by one skilled adult cleaning up after 8 preteens. The audio dialogue is horrible, voice acting is terrible and poorly edited, glitches for days, poorly animated characters, and absolute piss poor NPC designs. They keeping calling a character Lieutenant, when he clearly has US Army Staff Sergeant stripes on his sleeve and

why did they need to put an awful Scottish accent on a character of color in the game.

A Stupid Multiplayer Mode Was The Whole Point!- the maps in this game are insanely large and it will take you literal hours of your life to complete most missions, Why? Well because Rebellion had the great idea of "what would it be like if we let another player just randomly drop in and grief your game?" well they did it and they call in Axis Invasion mode, where a player will random drop into your Campaign as a German Sniper and make your life difficult. Rebellion even puts in little features so you can't hide and wait for them, stay in a spot to long and the invading sniper knows where you are. There is no real benefit to having this play mode active unless you want the added stress of not being able to play a sniper game like a "sniper." It's clear that even from the way the maps are laid out, the advantage of lines of sight and better long distant vantage points, all to edge of the invading sniper.

I am a fan of the past Sniper Elite games, But Sniper Elite 5 is a boring complement of past games that feels like chores and having to save every 5 minutes because the autosaves will screw you. The only good thing about this game is its free on Game Pass because if I would have paid \$60 for what is clearly a \$20 game, this review would have scored much, much lower. It shamelessly stands at 4/10.



JUNE MONTHLY GAMES

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PlayStation Plus Monthly Games for June: God of War, Naruto to Boruto: Shinobi Striker, Nickelodeon All-Star Brawl

God of War | PS4

Living as a man outside the shadow of the gods, Kratos must adapt to unfamiliar lands, unexpected threats, and a second chance at being a father. Together with his son Atreus, the pair will venture into the brutal Norse wilds and fight to fulfill a deeply personal quest. This staggering reimagining of God of War combines all the hallmarks of the iconic series – epic boss fights, fluid combat, and breathtaking scale – and fuses them with a powerful and moving narrative that re-establishes Kratos' world.

Naruto to Boruto: Shinobi Striker | PS4

The Naruto franchise goes 4 vs. 4, featuring team-based gameplay with 8 ninjas fighting simultaneously. Players cooperate as a team of four to compete against other teams online. Graphically, Shinobi Striker is also built from the ground up in a completely new graphic style. Lead your team and fight online to see who the best ninjas are.

Nickelodeon All-Star Brawl | PS4/PS5

Brawl it out as your favorite Nickelodeon characters in bombastic platform battles. With a power-packed cast of heroes from the Nickelodeon universe, face-off with all-stars from SpongeBob Squarepants, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, The Loud House, Danny Phantom, Aaahh!!! Real Monsters, The Wild Thornberrys, Hey Arnold!, Rugrats, and more to determine ultimate animation dominance. With unique move sets and attacks inspired by their personalities, each character has an individual style of play enabling endless action for Nickelodeon's legion of fans



Jane Foster to Join Marvel's Avengers Game!

The arrival of the Mighty Thor adds a third flying warrior to Marvel's Avengers for new team compositions and fresh co-op play, bringing the roster to 11 playable heroes, including Spider-Man only on PlayStation. So what's the scoop on Jane's story? In Marvel's Avengers Jane is torn from an alternate timeline through a rift in space-time caused by Tachyon Anomalies. In her original timeline, Jane became the Goddess of Thunder when she took up the mantle from Thor, who in his grief gave up Mjolnir after the A-Day tragedy. Jane Foster is voiced by the talented [Zehra Fazal](#), known for her work across video games and television. In addition to collectable intel documents and character banter, the Mighty Thor's story is told through an electric in-game animatic – Marvel's Avengers – The Mighty Thor: Out of Time – illustrated by veteran Marvel artist Takeshi Miyazawa. So how does Jane play? The Mighty Thor possesses all the strength and power of a God of Thunder, but with human touches all her own. Jane's unique talents with Mjolnir begin with her new intrinsic ability All-Mother's Blessing, and God Tempest, her new Overcharge.

All-Mother's Blessing builds its overcharge meter with melee attacks. Once full, she

unleashes her God Tempest, which increases ranged hammer damage and creates shockwaves with each hit. Her finesse with Mjolnir shines through in several new features including Quick Fire, a new ranged attack combo that allows the Mighty Thor to make a second more powerful ranged attack by timing her next throw. The Seek and Pin upgrade to her Ranged Attack empowers Mjolnir to seek out and pin enemies without needing to aim. Jane's expert control extends to melee strikes with Earth's Finest, which adds a hammer toss to her light attack combo for extra reach. Jane also puts her own spin on classic Odinson moves like Headstrong. She relies on her Thunderkick – a brutal front kick – to send enemies flying. The Mighty Thor's kit culminates in The All-Weapon, her brand-new Ultimate Heroic. Drawn from the pages of her Thor and Valkyrie runs, Jane sends Mjolnir to seek and destroy nearby enemy targets. Meanwhile, she calls forth the All-Weapon Undrjarn to protect her, reducing all damage taken while smiting her foes. The All-Weapon has a full set of specializations and allows you to customize Mjolnir's strikes, making them faster and channeling a powerful shock status against nearby enemies. Jane can even use Mjolnir as a personal orbiting defense

shield. Check her out in action in our most recent War Table Deep Dive below. In addition to her awesome god-like combat abilities, Jane has a variety of Outfits drawing inspiration from the comics. She also boasts unique Takedowns, Emotes, Nameplates, and has her own Hero Challenge Card and mission chain. These allow you to earn special rewards, including exclusive cosmetics and intel documents that delve deeper into Jane's story. We can't wait for you to storm through Marvel's Avengers as the Mighty Thor. This update adds to a game already packed with content, including a sprawling single-player story campaign, 11 playable heroes, and endless multiplayer action for up to four players. What's next for Marvel's Avengers? Following the addition of The Mighty Thor in patch 2.5, we'll be adding two new challenges as part of an ambition to advance our narrative through hero and villain-centric content. More on that to come. Before I sign off – For those of you subscribed to PlayStation Plus, be sure to unlock your membership rewards including the Ms. Marvel Future Suit outfit, a three-day hero's catalyst, a three-day fragment extractor, and 500 Unit.

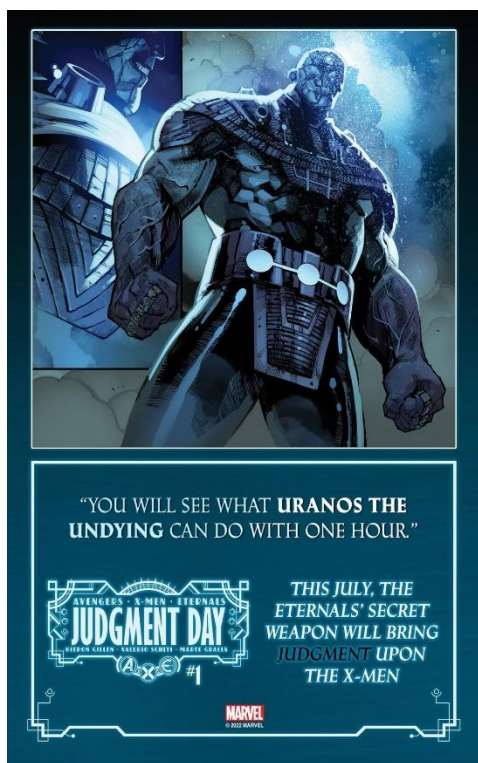




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The Eternals Unleash Their Secret Weapon Upon the X-Men



Uranos the Undying rises in 'A.X.E.: Judgment Day' #1, on sale July 20.

The Marvel Universe braces itself for JUDGMENT DAY! Written by mastermind talent Kieron Gillen and featuring the grand-scale artwork of Valerio Schiti and color artist Marte Gracia, A.X.E.: JUDGMENT DAY is an upcoming Marvel Comics event that kicks off when the Eternals start a vicious war with their new immortal rivals: the X-Men! The Eternals' plan for mutant annihilation will include unleashing the most brutal members of their species, starting with Uranos the Undying. Imprisoned for millions of years, the grand-uncle of Thanos will be instrumental in the conflict, leading the attack against the new mutant planet of Arakko.

And Uranos won't be the only new Eternals threat that the X-Men will have to

face. Check out our interview with Schiti for the reveal of THE HEX, mega-powerful Eternals that have awakened from a millennia-long slumber to stomp out mutantkind...

"The Eternals are the aggressors here," Gillen explained to Popverse in a recent interview. "This is the Eternals about to go to war. You get to see the prime Eternals building their armories, working out how they're going to kill people, various plans and kidnappings, and the good Eternals perhaps being a bit more lost."

"It's preparation for war. That's what it is. I think that's the best way of describing it, as well as being also a really good restatement of what's going on in the Eternals. Because if you haven't read issues one to 12, this is like, 'OK, I don't know anything about Eternals. I don't know, why would [they] be going to war? Who are they even?' It's that as well. This is the preparation of the war happening and everything you need to know going in."



VENOM VISIONARIES DONNY CATES & RYAN STEGMAN RETEAM FOR UPCOMING SERIES VANISH THIS SEPTEMBER



From the all-star creative team—Donny Cates (God Country, Hulk, Thor), Ryan Stegman (Venom, King in Black), JP Mayer (Absolute Carnage, Fantastic Four), Sonia Oback (Amazing Spider-Man: Renew Your Vows, Han Solo), and John J. Hill (Crossover, Harley Quinn)—

comes an [all-new series titled Vanish](#).

This brutal-as-hell tale of magical worlds, gifted youth, evil sorcerers, superheroes, war, blood, guts, and death is set to launch in print from Image Comics this September, and digitally by way of the [KLC Press Substack newsletter](#). "Sick and tired of all these 'young adult' stories about magic, and wizards, and destiny and love and bla bla bla? Well, good news! We are too!" said Cates in [an exclusive announcement of the series at ComicBook.com](#). "So we made Vanish to answer the one question we've all been asking; What if magic was....metal? This is a project that Ryan and I have been secretly building and working on quietly in the background for years now, and we cannot wait to unleash it on you. And the fun part for us is, well, pay attention closely....like the reveal of any great magic trick, you'll never see this one coming..."

In Vanish, Oliver Harrison was a mythical hero who slayed the greatest threat to his realm before even hitting puberty. But that was then. As an adult, Oliver leads an average cookie-cutter suburban life—aside from the fact that he's mentally unstable, massively paranoid, smokes like a chimney, and

gets blackout drunk every night to hide from his horrific nightmares. Will the arrival of a superhero team called the Prestige prove the madness isn't all in Oliver's head? And what about all the epic fantasy crap from his childhood?

[Stegman added](#): "Vanish is the most exciting thing I've drawn. Doing an Image comic has always been my ultimate goal as a creator and we've pulled out all the stops to make this special. Donny's and my goal with this project is to create something that we could never do at Marvel and, well...We've succeeded at that I assure you." "Somehow Donny and Ryan have been able to meld five different genres into this vast Vanish world they've created and it works wonderfully. There's something in it for everyone... superheroics, fantasy elements, dark brooding aspects, beatdowns and gore. And most of all, it's FUN," [said Hill](#). "Fans of Venom, God Country, Thor, and Crossover will eat it up. The entire creative team is working magic on every page."

Vanish #1 will be available at [comic book shops](#) on Wednesday, September 7:



JOURNEY THROUGH A WORLD OF FANTASY AND WONDER WITH 'THE ART OF TINY TINA'S WONDERLANDS'



Dark Horse Comics and Gearbox Entertainment are once again teaming up on an ambitious new art book, highlighting the fantastical and creative mind of Tiny Tina. Available online and in-stores everywhere starting November 30, **The Art of Tiny Tina's Wonderlands** is an oversized, hardcover, full-color art book that documents the making of Gearbox's all-new, fantasy-fueled looter shooter. Starting today, the art book is available for preorder on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and at your local comic shop or bookstore for \$49.99 (MSRP). In addition to diving deeper into the lore and whimsical level designs, the new art book features:

- New details and art on the chaotic cast of unforgettable characters and wacky accomplices seen throughout Wonderlands

- Pages of new concept art on the tabletop world of Wonderlands, highlighting environments and creatures from the mind of one of the most beloved characters in the Borderlands franchise

- Out-of-this-world imagery of the chaotic band of enemies found in Wonderlands, plus a better look at the weapons and spells you'll need to become the ultimate Fatemaker

Developed by Gearbox Software, Tiny Tina's Wonderlands is rated "T for Teen" by the ESRB and is now available on Xbox Series X|S, Xbox One, PlayStation®5, PlayStation®4, and PC. For more information on Tiny Tina's Wonderlands, please visit playwonderlands.com.

DARK HORSE PRESENTS 'SHOCK SHOP' A FLIP COMIC HORROR ANTHOLOGY SERIES



Venture into a haunted comic book shop for tales of terror!

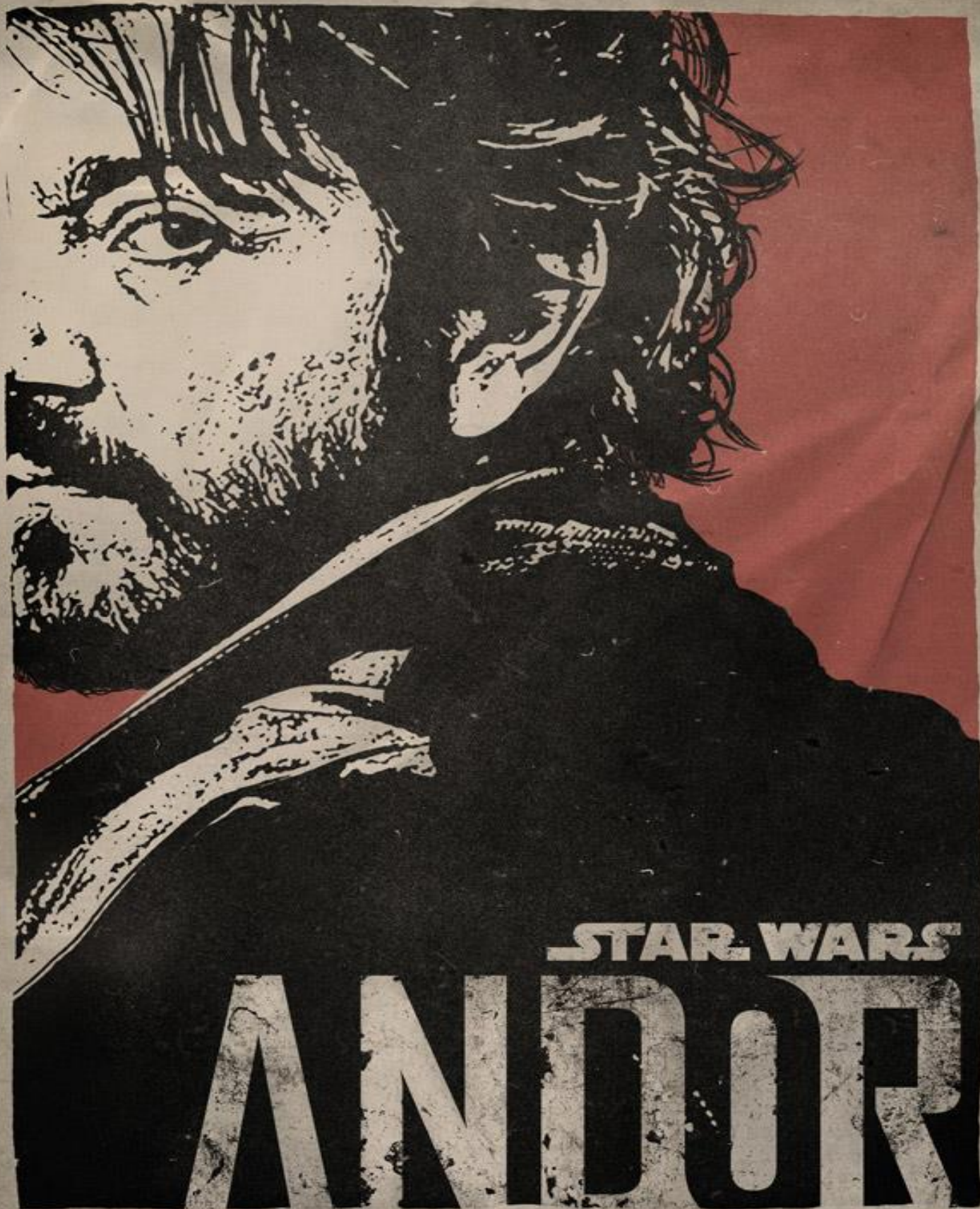
Cullen Bunn (Harrow County), Danny Luckert (Regression), and Leila Leiz (The Last Book You'll Ever Read) present **Shock Shop!** **Shock Shop** is a brand-new horror anthology flip comic that takes place in a haunted comic book shop, featuring a twisted retailer filled with tales of terror. Readers will encounter two scary stories told across four comic issues. Each issue will feature variant covers by a host of horrifyingly talented artists, including Francesco Francavilla, Fábio Moon, Caitlin Yarsky, James Stokoe, James Harren, and Tonci Zonjic.

In **FAMILIARS**: After a painful divorce and custody battle, Trevor rents a house and tries to

rebuild his life. Soon, he discovers that his house appears to be "haunted" by more than one spirit: the minions of a long-dead coven of witches. When the creatures begin feeding on Trevor's feelings of anger and guilt, they lash out at those who draw his ire, whether he wants them to or not.

In **SOMETHING IN THE WOODS, IN THE DARK**: A husband and wife who are going through a tough time go on a camping trip with a few friends into the deep woods. As they trek further into the forest, they realize that they are being stalked. Something in the woods starts killing the campers—a hideous, inhuman thing that may have more ties to the campers than any of them realize.

Shock Shop #1 will be available at comic stores September 7, 2022 and is available for pre-order at your [local comic shop](#), with a retail price of \$3.99. Shock Shop is recommended for ages 14 and up.



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Cosplay



ABOUT MUNCHKIN COSPLAY

Keely Graesser (Munchkin Cosplay) is a nerd mom of three. She homeschools her kids and on top of giving them a proper education, she teaches them in the ways of “nerdom.” An avid Sci-Fi Fan, especially Star Wars, she instills her love for those things in her children. Keely is a Graphic Designer by trade and when she isn’t designing fantastic layouts for clients she is working on her next cosplay. Keely is a D&D gamer too. Cosplaying since 2003, you can find her and her kids dressing up as various Star Wars characters or even Ripley from Aliens. Keely generously gives her time as Cosplayer to the Children’s Hospital and other charity events such as National Adoption Day!

Orange Mando – Star Wars

MUNCHKIN COSPLAY



LYRA ERSO

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munchkincosplay.weebly.com

INTERVIEW

How Did You Get into Cosplay?

I actually started cosplaying in 2003, back when I was working for the start-up anime convention, Oni-Con, creating their marketing materials. I saw so many people having fun in costumes I wanted to join in!

Who is Your Favorite Character to Cosplay and Why?

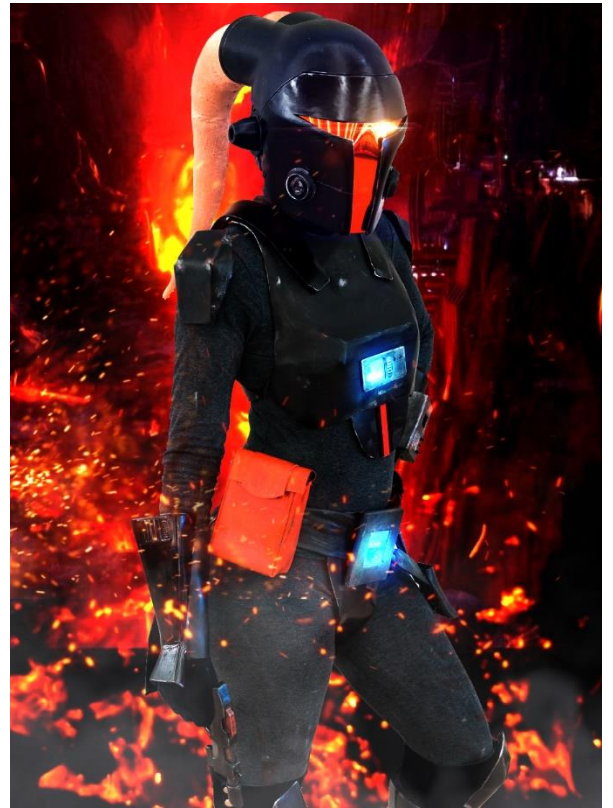
It's got to be a tossup between my orange Mandalorian and my Ripley, from Aliens. My Mando is special to me because she's all custom and, frankly, impressive. But Ripley means a lot to me because I adore the character and I've looked up to her since the movie came out when I was seven.

What Tips Do You Have on Making a Costume?

If you're wanting to make Star Wars costumes specifically, I'd say look for locals that have the same costumes and ask for their help. It's very difficult to shape armor by yourself - especially backplates!

What is Your Favorite Memory of Being a Cosplayer?

Wearing my Mando to the Children's Hospital and my Black Widow to National Adoption Day. Getting to work these charity events and making kids feel better is an amazing feeling!



Black Mando – Star Wars



What Advice Do You Have for Fans Getting into Cosplay?

Do it for yourself, not for the likes! Pick characters and costumes that speak to you personally - you'll be much happier with your build if you do!

If You Could Have a Weapon or Superpower to Fight the Forces of Evil, What Would you Choose?

Gravity powers! Getting to fly and also manipulate one of the four fundamental forces of the universe is pretty powerful!

Lyra and Jyn Erso – Star Wars

Next Page: Ripley / Newt - Aliens





STAR WARS
THE HIGH REPUBLIC



Music News



Sir Paul McCartney to Reunite with John Lennon at Glastonbury



Sir Paul McCartney is set to virtually reunite with John Lennon at Glastonbury. The 79-year-old music legend is to take to the stage at the annual musical festival at Worthy Farm next week (25.06.22) and will be joined by his former Beatles bandmate - who was shot and killed in 1980 - and Paul is reportedly gearing up to stage a "virtual duet" with him as part of a tribute.

A source close to Paul said: "He is tinkering around with the setlist but it looks like he will do a virtual duet with John Lennon. There is some footage of Lennon singing 'I've Got a Feeling', from 'Let It Be', which Paul puts up on the big screen, and then he turns around and

sings to him. John's vocal has been isolated in the footage and it is stunning."

The source went on to explain that the 'Hey Jude' hitmaker has been duetting with John on recent tour dates in the US and may also be tempted to perform a John Lennon classic as he brings a Ukrainian flag onto the stage at Glastonbury in support of the war-torn country.

The insider told the Daily Mail newspaper: "He has been doing that on recent dates in America and it is likely that he will bring that to Glastonbury. Paul may well be moved to add 'Give Peace A Chance' to his set list, and he will run onto the stage for his encore carrying the Ukrainian flag."

Paul will take to the Pyramid stage as part of the penultimate day of the five-day festival on Saturday (25.06.22) following on from Billie Eilish - who is set to headline the night before - and Motown songstress Diana Ross is to fill the coveted Legends slot on the Sunday.



Unreleased Version of David Bowie's Starman Released for Ziggy Stardust Anniversary



An unreleased version of David Bowie's 'Starman' has been revealed to celebrate 50 years of 'The Rise And Fall of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars'. The late musician's iconic album was released on June 16, 1972 and Parlophone Records has marked the occasion with a special streaming single. 'Starman (Top of the Pops Version 2022 Mix)'

has been based on the BBC's master of the 'Top of the Pops' broadcast recording.

The master itself was first released on the 'Starman' 7" picture disc a decade ago.

According to the Musicians Reunion rules in 1972, in order to appear on 'Top of the Pops', the artist had to re-record their track and sing live over the top.

The new 2022 version of 'Starman' takes the backing track - which was recorded at Trident Studios) for the purpose of the show - and lead vocals from the album version. The fresh mix comes from 'Ziggy Stardust' co-producer Ken Scott after he created it earlier this year from the multi-tracks. In another move to celebrate the iconic album, it's being released as a "limited edition 50th anniversary half speed mastered LP and a picture disc", which includes the same master and a replica promotional poster.

Meanwhile, Tim Burgess is marking the occasion with a special listening party on Twitter at 10.30pm on Thursday (16.06.22).

He said: "I'm really excited to be hosting a Ziggy Stardust Listening Party on the 50th anniversary of the album's release.

"Fans from all around the world can take part and we've enlisted a few friends to help us out too."

Bowie sadly died aged 69 in January 2016 following a secret cancer battle.



The Vamps Have Promised Fire and Lasers on Their 10 Year Anniversary Tour.



The 'Can We Dance' hitmakers are celebrating a decade as a group when they hit the road later this year, and they're looking forward to putting on a real show featuring a fan-pleasing 'greatest hits' set. Drummer Tristan Evans told the Daily Star newspaper's Wired column: "We've never done a tour where we will play all of the hits.

"We want songs people can rock out to so we are putting all our energy, blood, sweat and tears into this tour because it's going to be crazy!

"For this tour, it's bigger, there is a lot more production where we can do fireworks, fire, lasers and all that."

Meanwhile, bassist Connor Ball revealed he is keen to transform his instrument into a flamethrower to build on previous stunts.

He added: "In the past, I have had fireworks come out of my guitar so we want to push that without burning me, ideally."

The Vamps will start their tour with a show at Manchester's O2 Apollo on November 23, and they'll be putting a fresh spin on their older tracks.

Tristan explained: "It's more in your face, getting people signing. It's still the same songs but I think in a cooler way."

The band - completed by Brad Simpson and James Brittain-McVey - previously revealed they are keen to "celebrate" their whole career, and they noted how "special" the early period was working on debut album 'Meet the Vamps'. Back in April, Brad said: "That time around the first album was special for us, so we want to celebrate that music and breathe new life into it.

"We've got some fun ideas about reinterpreting old songs."



Rolling Stones cover The Beatles at First Liverpool Concert in More than 50 Years



The Rolling Stones paid tribute to The Beatles by performing 'I Wanna Be Your Man' for the first time since 2012 at their Liverpool concert on Thursday night (09.06.22). Sir Mick Jagger and co were performing in the 'Here Comes the Sun' hitmakers' home city for the first time in more than 50 years at Anfield Stadium, having last played at the legendary

Empire Theatre in 1971.

And the 'Paint it Black' hitmakers had a special treat in store for fans, as they performed the John Lennon and Sir Paul McCartney-penned hit, which the Stones ended up releasing before The Beatles on November 1, 1963, just weeks ahead of the track being released on the latter's 'With The Beatles' LP. Frontman Mick, 78, revealed they were planning to cover Liverpool FC anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone' by Gerry And The Pacemakers as they were at the football ground, which drew a mixed reaction of boos and cheers from the audience. He said: "But, we decided instead to do a cover of a song written by some other local lads so

we're doing this especially for you Liverpool, OK?" Mick, Keith Richards, also 78, and Ronnie Wood, 75, also dedicated the show to late drummer Charlie Watts, who died in 2021 aged 80.

Mick told the crowd: "In 1962 we met a drummer called Charlie Watts and this is our first tour in England we've done without him so we'd like to dedicate this show to Charlie." Steve Jordan has been performing drums for the band since the legendary sticksman's passing. Mick remarked: "It's great to be back in Liverpool after such a long time. Long time, no sec." The show was the first of the UK leg of their 'SIXTY' anniversary run. Before the show,

Mick visited some famous landmarks, hugged a statue of Liverpool icon Cilla Black and even had a chippy tea. Alongside photos of himself at the Liver Building, Irish boozer Shenanigans and the Empire, he wrote on Instagram: "I went past The Grapes. I had a chippy. "I had a look at the Empire. We played there 12 times in the '60s – 12 times, I can't believe it. "I hugged Cilla Black in Mathew Street. Which is a lot closer than I got to her in real life." The 'Satisfaction' group are due to perform in Amsterdam on Monday (13.06.22) and they will be back on UK soil for a pair of American Express presents BST Hyde Park shows on June 25 and July 3.

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Purple Ruminations

MUSINGS ABOUT "PRINCE" BY CHAD WOMACK

Purple and Gold

Remembering the Syracuse Show from 1985

This has been a banner year to be a Prince fan.... especially if you're a fan of vinyl....which I AM!!



June of 2022 has seen the release of 2 distinctly different projects covering 2 completely different phases in Prince's storied career. First off, we saw the release of the historic Syracuse show from March 30, 1985, that EVERY Prince fan, worth a damn, probably went through half a dozen copies of on VHS. The audio has been completely remastered from a

recently discovered 2-inch source tape locked away in the fabled Paisley Park Vault and released on vinyl for the first time ever. It also includes a digitally restored Blu-ray of the show with an amazing Dolby Atmos surround mix. This is an absolute feast for both old school fans and new recruits into the Purple Army. This show aptly titled Prince and The Revolution Live, catches them at the height of their popularity and prowess, cranking out monster hits from Controversy, 1999 and, of course, Purple Rain in its entirety, leaving both the audience in the Syracuse Carrier Dome, and the millions of fans watching via satellite the night of the broadcast completely spellbound.

The new audio mix catches details Brown Mark's incredible bass licks and Eric Leeds's phenomenal sax that were never this clearly defined in the previous audio source. The package is beautifully crafted regardless of the format you decide on, but the Super Deluxe Edition is really the only way to go, since it contains ALL of them. It's an absolute MUST own!! But if THAT weren't enough...and let's face it...when it comes to Prince fans, there's no such thing as enough, we

finally saw the re-release on vinyl of what is arguably the finest album that Prince released in the 90s.... The Gold Experience on Record Store Day. From the opening chords of the dance floor juggernaut P. Control to the closing guitar wails of the title track Gold, it's a sheer delight that this album has seen the light of day again after being locked away since it's initial release in 1995 due to a long brewing lawsuit concerning the hit single The Most Beautiful Girl In The World.

It's pressed on translucent gold vinyl, making the presentation even more impressive. This album signaled the end of an era 4 Prince as it was the 1st project that he released without the name Prince on the cover, opting to use his newly adopted name O(+> instead. It may have caused confusion in record stores and provided endless tabloid fodder on newsstands across the globe, but there was no mistaking the artistry at work on this absolute masterpiece, providing a sonic experience that is truly wondrous to behold. PLEASE do yourself a solid and pick these up at your local "wrecka stow"you ears will thank you for it!

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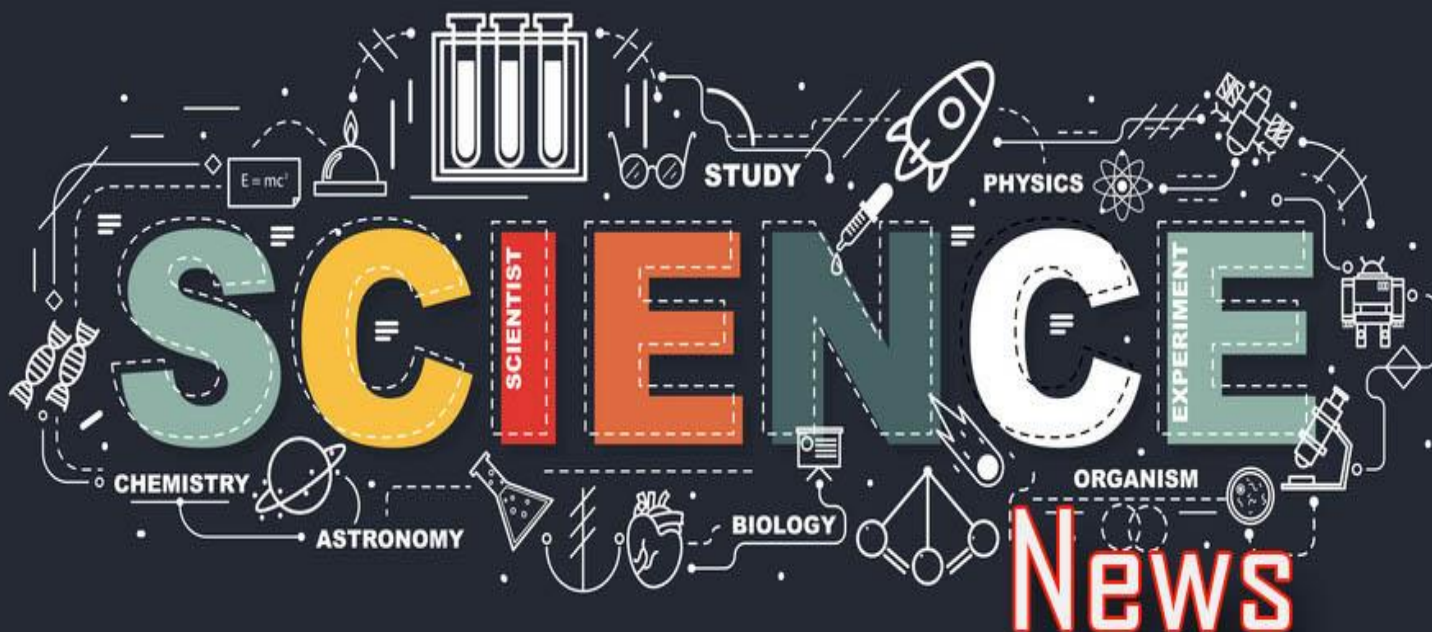
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Astronomers May Have Detected a 'Dark' Free-Floating Black Hole



Black holes, by their nature, are invisible unless part of a stellar binary or surrounded by an accretion disk. Most stellar-sized black holes aren't, but astronomers have been searching for them through gravitational microlensing events, where the black hole brightens and distorts light from stars toward the galactic center. A UC Berkeley-led team may have found the first free-floating black hole, though more data is needed to rule out a neutron star.

If, as astronomers believe, the death of large stars leave behind black holes, there should be hundreds of millions of them scattered

throughout the Milky Way galaxy. The problem is, isolated black holes are invisible.

Now, a team led by University of California, Berkeley, astronomers has for the first time discovered what may be a free-floating black hole by observing the brightening of a more distant star as its light was distorted by the object's strong gravitational field -- so-called gravitational microlensing.

The team, led by graduate student Casey Lam and Jessica Lu, a UC Berkeley associate professor of astronomy, estimates that the mass of the invisible compact object is between 1.6 and 4.4 times that of the sun. Because astronomers think that the leftover remnant of a dead star must be heavier than 2.2 solar masses in order to collapse to a black hole, the UC Berkeley researchers caution that the object could be a neutron star instead of a black hole. Neutron stars are also dense, highly compact objects, but their gravity is balanced by internal neutron pressure, which prevents further collapse to a black hole.

Whether a black hole or a neutron star, the object is the first dark stellar remnant -- a stellar "ghost" -- discovered wandering through the galaxy unpaired with another star.

"This is the first free-floating black hole or neutron star discovered with gravitational microlensing," Lu said. "With microlensing, we're able to probe these lonely, compact objects and weigh them. I think we have opened a new window onto these dark objects, which can't be seen any other way."

Determining how many of these compact objects populate the Milky Way galaxy will

help astronomers understand the evolution of stars -- in particular, how they die -- and of our galaxy, and perhaps reveal whether any of the unseen black holes are primordial black holes, which some cosmologists think were produced in large quantities during the Big Bang.

The analysis by Lam, Lu and their international team has been accepted for publication in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*. The analysis includes four other microlensing events that the team concluded were not caused by a black hole, though two were likely caused by a white dwarf or a neutron star. The team also concluded that the likely population of black holes in the galaxy is 200 million -- about what most theorists predicted.



Same data, different conclusions

Notably, a competing team from the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore analyzed the same microlensing event and claims that the mass of the compact object

is closer to 7.1 solar masses and indisputably a black hole. A paper describing the analysis by the STScI team, led by Kailash Sahu, has been accepted for publication in *The Astrophysical Journal*.

Both teams used the same data: photometric measurements of the distant star's brightening as its light was distorted or "lensed" by the super-compact object, and astrometric measurements of the shifting of the distant star's location in the sky as a result of the gravitational distortion by the lensing object. The photometric data came from two microlensing surveys: the Optical Gravitational Lensing Experiment (OGLE), which employs a 1.3-meter telescope in Chile operated by Warsaw University, and the Microlensing Observations in Astrophysics (MOA) experiment, which is mounted on a 1.8-meter telescope in New Zealand operated by Osaka University. The astrometric data came from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope. STScI manages the science program for the telescope and conducts its science operations.

Because both microlensing surveys caught the same object, it has two names: MOA-2011-BLG-191 and OGLE-2011-BLG-0462, or OB110462, for short.

While surveys like these discover about 2,000 stars brightened by microlensing each year in the Milky Way galaxy, the addition of astrometric data is what allowed the two teams to determine the mass of the compact object and its distance from Earth. The UC Berkeley-led team estimated that it lies between 2,280 and 6,260 light years (700-1920 parsecs) away, in the direction of the center of the Milky Way Galaxy and near the large bulge that surrounds the galaxy's central massive black hole.

The STScI group estimated that it lies about 5,153 light years (1,580 parsecs) away.

Looking for a needle in a haystack

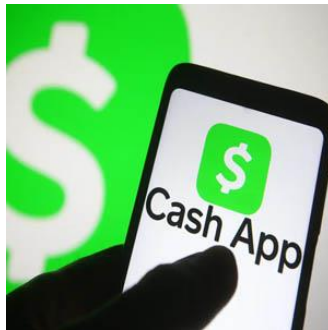
Lu and Lam first became interested in the object in 2020 after the STScI team tentatively concluded that five microlensing events observed by Hubble -- all of which lasted for more than 100 days, and thus could have been black holes -- might not be caused by compact objects after all.

Lu, who has been looking for free-floating black holes since 2008, thought the data would help her better estimate their abundance in the galaxy, which has been roughly estimated at between 10 million and 1 billion. To date, star-sized black holes have been found only as part of binary star systems. Black holes in binaries are seen either in X-rays, produced when material from the star falls onto the black hole, or by recent gravitational wave detectors, which

are sensitive to mergers of two or more black holes. But these events are rare.

"Casey and I saw the data and we got really interested. We said, 'Wow, no black holes. That's amazing,' even though there should have been," Lu said. "And so, we started looking at the data. If there were really no black holes in the data, then this wouldn't match our model for how many black holes there should be in the Milky Way. Something would have to change in our understanding of black holes -- either their number or how fast they move or their masses."

When Lam analyzed the photometry and astrometry for the five microlensing events, she was surprised that one, OB110462, had the characteristics of a compact object: The lensing object seemed dark, and thus not a star; the stellar brightening lasted a long time, nearly 300 days; and the distortion of the background star's position also was long-lasting.



The length of the lensing event was the main tipoff, Lam said. In 2020, she showed that the best way to search for black hole microlenses was to look for very long events. Only 1% of detectable microlensing events are likely to be from black holes, she said, so looking at all events would be like searching for a needle in a haystack. But, Lam calculated, about 40% of microlensing events that last more than 120 days are likely to be black holes.

"How long the brightening event lasts is a hint of how massive the foreground lens bending the light of the background star is," Lam said. "Long events are more likely due to black holes. It's not a guarantee, though, because the duration of the brightening episode not only depends on how massive the foreground lens is, but also on how fast the foreground lens and background star are moving relative to each other. However, by also getting measurements of the apparent position of the background star, we can confirm whether the foreground lens really is a black hole."

According to Lu, the gravitational influence of OB110462 on the light of the background star was amazingly long. It took about one year for the star to brighten to its peak in 2011, then about a year to dim back to normal.

More data will distinguish black hole from neutron star

To confirm that OB110462 was caused by a super-compact object, Lu and Lam asked for more astrometric data from Hubble, some of which arrived last October. That new data showed that the change in position of the star as a result of the gravitational field of the lens is still observable 10 years after the event. Further Hubble observations of the microlens are tentatively scheduled for fall 2022.

Analysis of the new data confirmed that OB110462 was likely a black hole or neutron star.

Lu and Lam suspect that the differing conclusions of the two teams are due to the fact that the astrometric and photometric data give different measures of the relative motions of the foreground and background objects. The astrometric analysis also differs between the two teams. The UC Berkeley-led team argues that it is not yet possible to distinguish whether the object is a black hole or a neutron star, but they hope to resolve the discrepancy with more Hubble data and improved analysis in the future.

"As much as we would like to say it is definitively a black hole, we must report all allowed solutions. This includes both lower mass black holes and possibly even a neutron star," Lu said.

"If you can't believe the light curve, the brightness, then that says something important. If you don't believe the position versus time, that tells you something important," Lam said. "So, if one of them is wrong, we have to understand why. Or the other possibility is that what we measure in both data sets is correct, but our model is incorrect. The photometry and astrometry data arise from the same physical process, which means the brightness and position must be consistent with each other. So, there's something missing there."

Both teams also estimated the velocity of the super-compact lensing object. The Lu/Lam team found a relatively sedate speed, less than 30 kilometers per second. The STScI team found an unusually large velocity, 45 km/s, which it interpreted as the result of an extra kick that the purported black hole got from the supernova that generated it.

Lu interprets her team's low velocity estimate as potentially supporting a new theory that black holes are not the result of supernovas -- the reigning assumption today -- but instead come from failed supernovas that don't make a bright splash in the universe or give the resulting black hole a kick.

The work of Lu and Lam is supported by the National Science Foundation (1909641) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NNG16PJ26C, NASA FINESST 80NSSC21K2043).

SOURCE: [Materials](#) provided by [University of California - Berkeley](#). Original written by Robert Sanders. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

Study Examines Why the Memory of Fear is Seared into Our Brains



Experiencing a frightening event is likely something you'll never forget. But why does it stay with you when other kinds of occurrences become increasingly difficult to recall with the passage of time? A team of neuroscientists from the Tulane University School of Science and Engineering and Tufts University School of Medicine have been studying the formation of fear memories in the emotional hub of the brain -- the amygdala -- and think they have a mechanism. In a nutshell, the researchers found that the stress neurotransmitter norepinephrine, also known as noradrenaline, facilitates fear processing in the brain by stimulating a certain population of inhibitory neurons in the amygdala to generate a repetitive bursting pattern of electrical discharges. This bursting pattern of electrical activity changes the frequency of brain wave oscillation in the amygdala from a resting state to an aroused state that promotes the formation of fear memories.

Published recently in *Nature Communications*, the research was led by Tulane cell and molecular biology professor Jeffrey Tasker, the Catherine and Hunter

Pierson Chair in Neuroscience, and his PhD student Xin Fu. Tasker used the example of an armed robbery. "If you are held up at gunpoint, your brain secretes a bunch of the stress neurotransmitter norepinephrine, akin to an adrenaline rush," he said. "This changes the electrical discharge pattern in specific circuits in your emotional brain, centered in the amygdala, which in turn transitions the brain to a state of heightened arousal that facilitates memory formation, fear memory, since it's scary. This is the same process, we think, that goes awry in PTSD and makes it so you cannot forget traumatic experiences." This research was led by Tasker's lab and was conducted in collaboration with the Jonathan Fadok lab of Tulane and the Jamie Maguire lab of Tufts. Fadok is an assistant professor of psychology who holds the Burk-Kleinpeter Inc. Professorship in Science and Engineering at Tulane. Maguire is an associate professor of neuroscience at the Tufts School of Medicine. Story Source: [Materials](#) provided by [Tulane University](#). Original written by Barri Bronston. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

Sharks May be Closer to the City Than You Think



The world's coastlines are rapidly urbanizing, but how this increased human presence may impact species living in the ocean is not fully understood. In a new study led by scientists at the University of Miami (UM) Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, researchers tracked the movements of three shark species, bull, nurse and great hammerhead, in relation to the city of Miami. Given the chemical, light, and noise pollution emanating from the coastal metropolis, researchers expected sharks to avoid areas close to the city, but that's not what they found.

Some animals, like pigeons and raccoons, thrive in cities. These species, known as "urban exploiters," often become dependent on human garbage for food. Other animals, known as "urban adapters," may show some use of urbanized areas, but still largely rely on natural areas. On the other hand, some species such as land predators such as wolves are very sensitive to human disturbance. These "urban avoiders" avoid big cities.

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"Few studies have investigated the movements of ocean predators in relation to urbanization, but since other studies have shown that land predators are urban avoiders, we expected sharks to be too," said Neil Hammerschlag, director of the UM Shark Research and Conservation Program and lead author of the study. "We were surprised to find that the sharks we tracked spent so much time near the lights and sounds of the busy city, often close to shore, no matter the time of day." The researchers concluded that the behaviors of the tracked sharks resembled that of "urban adapters." The study speculates sharks could be attracted to shore from land-based activities, such as the discarding of fish carcasses.

The relatively high use of urban-impacted areas by the tracked sharks may have consequences for both sharks and humans. "By spending so much time close to shore, sharks are at risk of exposure to toxic pollutants as well as fishing, which could impact their health and survival," said Hammerschlag. While shark bites on humans are rare, the study also pinpoints areas close to shore that could be avoided by human water users to reduce probability of a negative shark encounter, promoting human-shark coexistence.

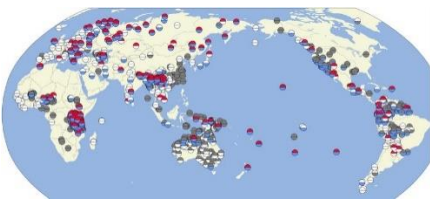
The study's authors include: Neil Hammerschlag, Mitchell Rider from the UM Rosenstiel School, and Robbie Roemer, from Ocearch; Austin J. Gallagher from Beneath the Waves; and Lee Gutowsky from Trent University.

This research was funded through support from the Ocean Tracking Network, the Disney Conservation Fund, the Save Our Seas Foundation, the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Southeast Fisheries Science Center, the Batchelor Foundation, the Herbert W. Hoover Foundation, Ruta Maya Coffee, the International Seakeepers Society, and through a grant 'Implementing a Marine Biodiversity Observation Network (MBON) in South Florida to Advance Ecosystem-Based Management' funded under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP, RFP ONR BAA #N00014-18-S-B007, in partnership with NOAA, BOEM, and NASA) and the US Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Program Office.

Materials provided by University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science. Original written by Diana Udel. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

Shedding Light on Linguistic Diversity and Its Evolution



Scholars from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany and the University of Auckland in New Zealand have created a new global repository of linguistic data. The project is designed to facilitate new insights into the evolution of words and sounds of the languages spoken across the world today. The Lexibank database contains standardized lexical data for more than 2000 languages. It is the most extensive publicly available collection compiled so far. Is it true that many languages in the world use words similar to "mama" and "papa" for "mother" and "father"? If a language uses only one word for both "arm" and "hand," does it also use only one word for both "leg" and "foot"? How do languages manage to use a relatively small number of words to express so many concepts? An interdisciplinary team of linguists, computational scientists and psychologists have created a large public

database that can be used to study these and many more questions with the help of computational methods. "When our Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution was founded in 2014, I presented my colleagues with an ambitious goal: there are more than 7000 languages in the world. Create databases with the most extensive documentation of the linguistic diversity as possible," says Max Planck Director Russell Gray. "Our inspiration came from Genbank -- a large genetic database where biologists from all over the world have deposited genomic data," Gray continues. "Genbank was a game changer. The large amount of freely available sequence data revolutionized the ways we can analyze biological diversity. We hope that the first of our global linguistic databases, Lexibank, will help start to revolutionize our knowledge of linguistic diversity in a similar way.



New standards and new software

The Lexibank repository provides data in the form of standardized wordlists for more than 2000 language varieties. "The work on Lexibank coincided with a push towards more consistent data formats in linguistic databases. Thus Lexibank can serve both as a large-scale example of the benefits of standardization and a catalyst for further standardization," reports Robert Forkel, who led the computational part of the data collection. "We decided to create our own standards, called *Cross-Linguistic Data Formats*, which have now been used successfully in a multitude of projects in which our department is involved." The new standards proposed by the team are accompanied by new software tools that greatly facilitate linguists' workflows. "We have designed new computer-assisted workflows that enable existing

language datasets to be made comparable," says Johann-Mattis List, who led the practical part of the data curation. "With these workflows, we have dramatically increased the efficiency of data standardization and data curation."

Identifying patterns of language evolution

In addition to collecting and sharing the standardized language data, the authors also designed new computational techniques to answer questions about the evolution of linguistic diversity. They illustrate how these methods can be used by computing how languages differ or agree with respect to sixty different features. "Thanks to our standardized representation of language data, it is now easy to check how many languages use words like 'mama' and 'papa' for 'mother' and 'father'," reports List. "It turns out that this pattern can indeed be found in many languages of the world and in very different regions," adds Simon J. Greenhill, one of the founders of the Lexibank project. "Since all the languages with this pattern are not closely related to each other, it reflects independent parallel evolution, just as the great linguist Roman Jakobson suggested in 1968."

Expanding the data and developing new methods

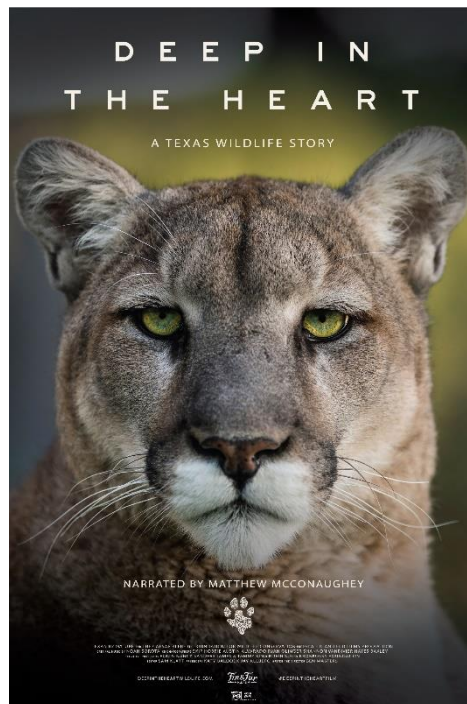
The new data collection, and the automatically computed language features will contribute to new insights into open questions on linguistic diversity and language evolution. "Nobody thinks that the analysis must stop with the examples we give in our paper," says List. "On the contrary, we hope that linguists, psychologists, and evolutionary scientists will feel encouraged to build on our example by expanding the data and developing new methods," adds Forkel. Even in their current study, the authors present findings that warrant future investigations. "When investigating which languages use the same word for 'arm' and 'hand', we found that these languages typically also use the same word for 'leg' and 'foot'," List reports. "While this may seem to be a silly coincidence, it shows that the lexicon of human languages is often much more structured than one might assume when investigating one language in isolation." Materials provided by Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.



Science Films You Should Watch!

By Marcus Blake

Texas is a land of many things. Texas is probably the most unique state when it comes to wildlife. It is a state that could be five different states or even countries with different climates and different terrains that leads to some of the most diverse wildlife in the world on both land and in water. The film *Deep in the Heart* takes viewers into an intimate look at what makes Texas wildlife so unique. Narrated by Texas native, Matthew McConaughey, the film serves as a love letter to the unique wildlife and terrain that encompasses this beautiful state. If you think you know everything about Texas wildlife, this film will prove that you don't. I'm not one that jumps at the chance to watch a nature documentary, but I found myself fascinated by the wildlife of Texas in the land that they inhabit. There was an awful lot I didn't know about the state that I've lived in so long, but I've also come to find that there's always something to learn about Texas. And perhaps the greatest mystery lies within the land that the wildlife inhabit. Director Ben Masters has done a masterful job of capturing the wildlife of Texas, but more importantly, letting us get to know the various groups that seek to protect and study the various living creatures in Texas.



Deep in the Heart is a wonderful film. It is a great example of how conservation is important

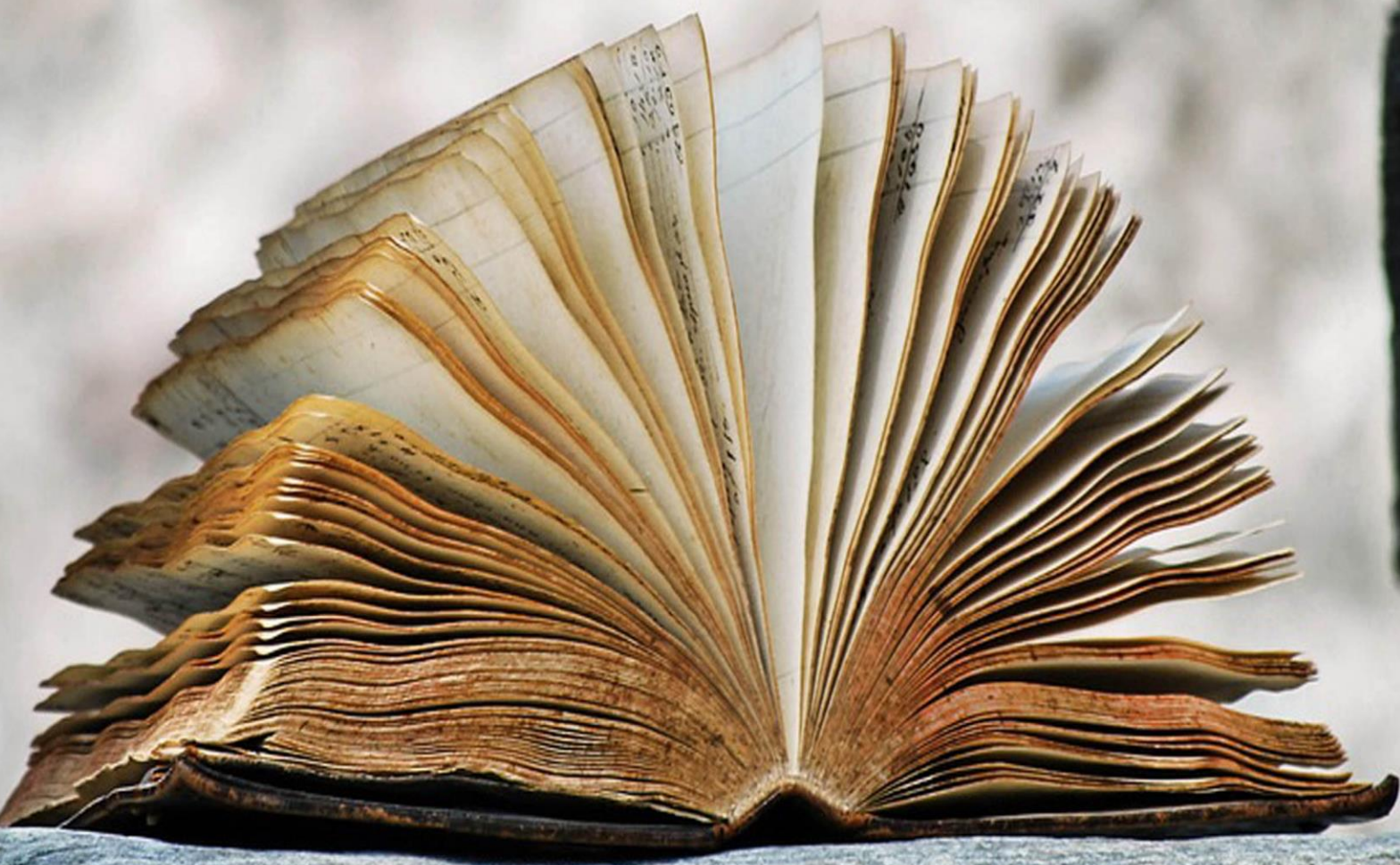
and maintaining the natural beauty of Texas. But it is more than just a nature documentary, it also shows us an uglier side to the laws of Texas that do more harm than protect the wildlife such as trapping bobcats. As beautiful as the film is, sometimes it's hard to watch when you realize that most Texas politicians don't care about preserving the wildlife, even when it adds to the natural beauty of this land. It's a very informative film, but also brings attention to a lot of the problems with conservation in Texas, and how enough is not being done by the government. More can be done. More funding needs to be made available to help the efforts of Texas citizens who want to preserve natural wildlife. Director Ben Masters does a wonderful job of sharing the story of wildlife in the Lone Star State and how we can come together and do more, including pressuring the government to be better when it comes to conservation. It is truly a film every Texas citizen needs to see. And whether you know much about the wildlife of Texas, viewers can learn a lot from this film. *Deep in the Heart* does not disappoint and truly shows another beautiful side to what makes Texas great!

In Theaters: June 3rd and Streaming Online: July 18th



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Storytellers

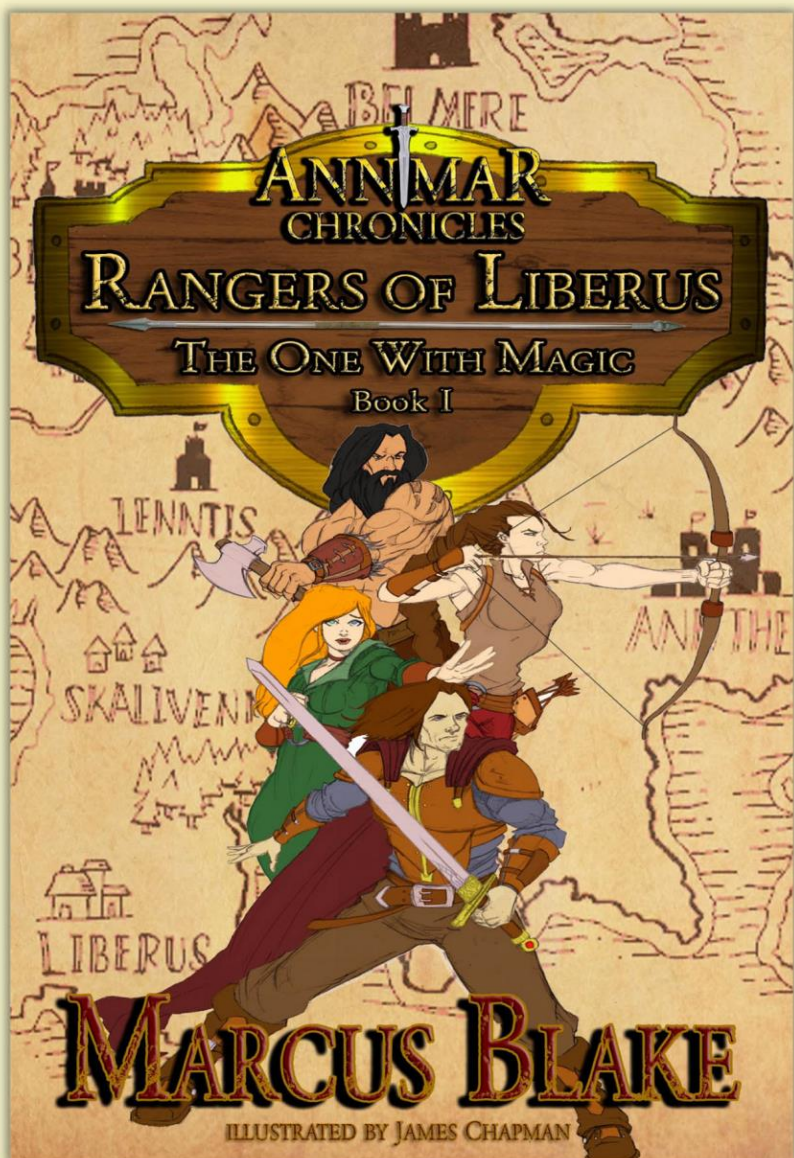


A Skywalker Dream

By Jessica Skywalker

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A Skywalker Dream

By Jessica Skywalker (Pen Name)

Part 1: Trouble Starting

Tattooine-

On Tattooine a boy named Luke Skywalker with his older sister Jessica Skywalker were helping their Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru Lars with stuff when something happen. Like everything change, Owen saw something or someone coming near his homestead. While in the speeder hanger, Jessica was training Luke the ways of the Force. She sensed something wrong so did Luke when she saw him looking at her.

"Jessica is something wrong? You think Old Ben sensed it?" he asked.

Jessica sighed and got up. "I don't know but something is not right. I think he does," she answered to her little brother.

They looked at each other. Owen knew something was going to happen to his niece and nephew so he run where Jessica and Luke is.

"Luke! Jessica! Run!! Now! Trouble!" he yelled.

"What about you Uncle Owen? And Aunt Beru?" Luke asked.

Owen smiled. "Its ok Beru and I be ok trust me. Now GO!" Owen answered with a yell. Jessica and Luke looked at their Uncle before running to the speeder and jump in it to speed off. Owen hoped that Jessica and Luke can reach to Ben Kenobi's hut.

In the Speeder, Jessica was piloting it. "We better hurry to Ben's to see if he is okay," she said to Luke.

Luke nodded. "Yea! We were lucky to have the droids with us too," he said to his older sister. Jessica nodded in agreement.

Threeipo sighed. "Oh dear, I hope Mistress Jessica knows what she is doing,' he said with a wince and Artoo beep at his friend like saying /Not to worry she's like Anakin/ Threeipo stared at him.

~*~*~

Alderaan-

On Alderaan, Princess Leia (Skywalker) Organa didn't know that her unknown siblings are in trouble, she was studying when her foster father Bail Organa came in her room.

"Leia, I'm sorry but you need to get out of here oit's not save. I know your (real) mother thought you be safe here, but it won't. Go to Tattooine I'm sure Obi-wan will help you," Bail said to his foster daughter.

Leia nodded at him. "Will you be okay?" she asked before leaving.

"I'm sure," he said to Leia who hugged him and run off to do what he asked and wanted.

Once on a ship, Leia fly to Tattooine to be wih Obi-wan. I hope he knows what's going on? She thought to herself while reaching to Tattooine.

Tattooine-

Back on Tattooine, Jessica, Luke and the droids found Ben's hut.

"Threeipo, you and Artoo stay here. We will be right back," Luke said.

Jessica and Luke walked over to Ben's hut. The move to the doorframe, Jessica reached out with the Force to Ben while Luke call out for him.

"Ben? Are you here?"

Leia made it to Tattooine and landed on the planet but had to reach to Obi-Wan Kenobi's hut she got a speeder and someone told her how to get to Ben's (Obi-Wan's) hut. While driving the speeder, Leia was thinking who was her family and siblings. She was wondering if they were alive. Leia knew one of her siblings though she was a baby, but she could forgot who it was.

There was a shadow figure watching the Princess heading to Ben's hut. At Ben's hut, Jessica and Luke walk inside the hut to see if Ben is okay. Then an old/young man shows up.

"Ben!" Jessica and Luke said together looking at him. Ben smiled at them.

"Sorry Luke for not answering. Are you two okay?" he said and asked.

Part 2: Family Reunited

Jessica and Luke nodded at him.

"I guess you knew what's happening," Jessica said to him and Ben nodded. "

So Luke is how's your training going? I hope Jess is training you okay," he said.

Luke nodded 'yes' and said to Ben, "Yea she is even your own training is helping," he told him who nodded. Just than another speeder came up to the hut and See-Threeipo saw the speeder then he walked to the hut.

"Mistress Jessica we have new guest with us and I'm glad to be here before that," the droid said and Jessica nodded. So Jessica went outside to meet the newcomer. She saw a young girl who was at the same age as Luke.

So she show the girl in. The Princess followed the older girl inside of Obi-Wan's hut when Leia saw Obi-wan she stared at Jessica and Luke.

"Obi-wan? Who is that?" she asked pointing at Jessica and Luke.

Obi-wan smiled knowing it is time to tell. "Well Leia, Jessica is your older sister. Did you sense her at night?" he asked and explained, "And Luke is your twin bother."

Leia nodded. "Yea I did though I thought she die with you," she answered. Then she was in shock about this. "So, you saying that we were in hiding though Jessica was four years old at the time," Leia said and Obi-wan nodded.

Jessica and Luke smiled at Leia even wait for her to hug them. Leia looked at Jessica and Luke than at Obi-wan before deciding what to do. The dark figure watched this and smiled at the picture. Now he understood what his former Master and his Angel did about hiding all three kids so that the Emperor couldn't find them or know they were alive.

At Obi-Wan's hut, Leia started to understand what happen so she run up to Jessica and hugged her tight. Then she hugged her twin brother. "I'm so glad you two are okay," she said.

Both of them smiled at Leia and she smiled back at them.

"Jessica, Luke can I talk to the two of you alone?" Leia asked them.

Jessica nodded at Leia, the three of them went in next room.

"Obi-wan, we will be right back," Luke said and Obi-wan nodded at Luke.

In the next room, Leia looked at her sister and brother.

"I think there's someone three unknown people watching us," she said.

Jessica stared at Leia.

"What you mean Sis?" she asked.

"Well one is in a dark Jedi outfit with a black robe on thought I couldn't see his face to well. The other one has the light brown outfit with a light brown Jedi robe on like Obi-Wan's robe but I only saw him before coming here. Then there was a woman in a white outfit with a white hood on and I saw her with the one I only saw before finding you," Leia explained to Jessica and Luke.

Part 3: Old Friends and Family Member Returns

Jessica and Luke looked surprised by this. Luke hugged Leia tight.

"It will be okay now Leia," Luke said.

While the three Skywalker siblings talked, the man in the Jedi robes on and his companion (the woman) made it to Obi Wan's hut and Threepio saw them so the droid quietly walked by Ben(Obi-Wan) to get to Jessica, Leia and Luke. When he reached to them.

"Mistress Jessica. Master Luke. We have another person with a friend. The person as white and gray bread on and light brown robes on," Threepio said and saw Leia, "Hello Mistress Leia nice see you again."

Leia had to smile at Threepio Jessica stared at Threepio before running to the front to see. Ben saw her run.

"Jessica Skywalker! No Running in the hut!" he yelled at her.

"Sorry Ben!" Jessica yelled back to him.

Leia and Luke had to laugh at their older sister. Outside the man in the brown robe and the woman waited until Jessica show up. She was blushing. *Damn! Now I know how my Father felt,* she thought to herself. Then she saw the man and woman almost took a double-take with the woman. The woman was like an older version of her baby sister Leia but the dark figure was on top of the hut now

"Well, I'm surprised to see a 25-year-old girl get busted. Hi there who are you?" he asked while the woman nodded 'hello'.

"Well, Ben isn't that mean since my Uncle has. You would be surprised with the last name," Jessica said to the man.

The man smiled at Jessica. "Try me," he said.

Jessica nodded. "Well my name is Jessica Skywalker," she said.

The man stared at her and the woman almost fainted.

"Come on let go inside before something bad happened," Jessica said leading them in.

The man and woman followed Jessica in.

Luke tell Leia to keep Ben busy I think I know who this guy and his friend is. Make sure you and Leia are in the main room. She said through the Force to her baby brother.

Inside the hut, Luke got the message and told Leia what needed done. The twins wonder what Jessica mean in her message through the Force. The twins waited for their older sister in the main room of Ben's hut. While Threepio kept Obi-wan busy. Once Jessica and the man even the woman came in, Luke and Leia hugged Jessica tightly one more time.

"And this is Luke and Leia Skywalker, the twins and my baby siblings," Jessica explained while Leia and Luke bow at the man and his friend who was more surprised.

"Well, a deal is a deal. I'm Qui-Gon Jinn," the man said.

Jessica and the twins stared at Qui-Gon. Qui-Gon chuckled at them.



WORD

games

Star Wars

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Emporer

Jabba the Hutt

Lightsaber

Rebels

Sith

Xwing

Darth Vader
Falcon

Jar Jar

Naboo

Resistance

Skywalker

Yoda

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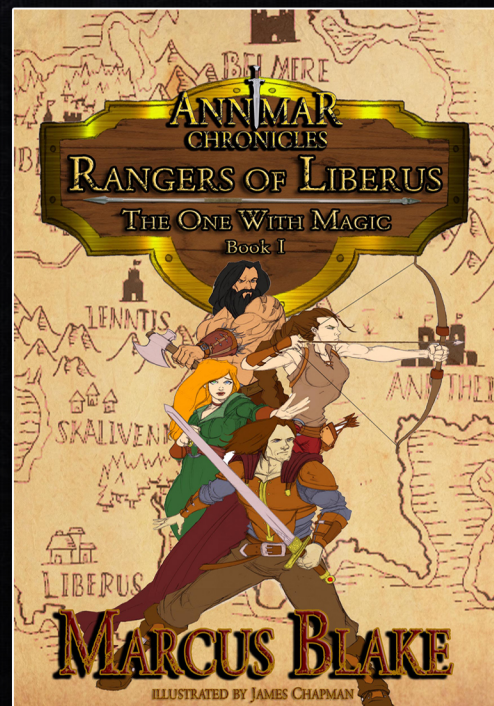
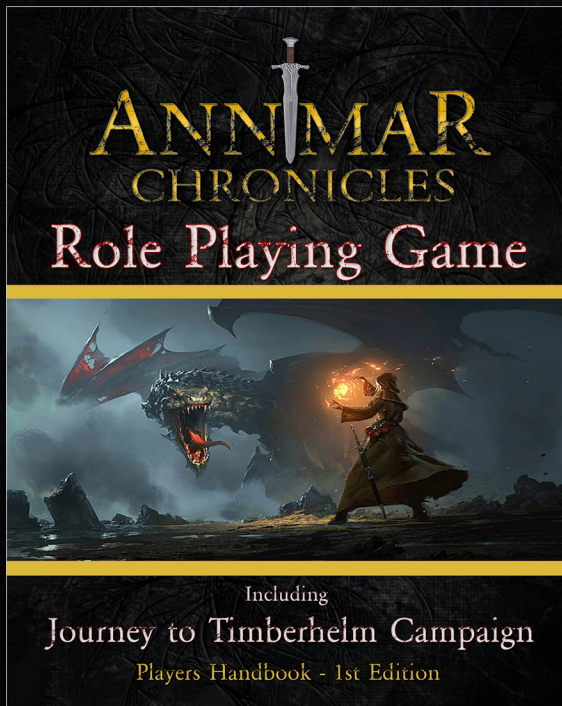
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