

That Nerd Show

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



TEXAS FILMMAKER DOESN'T MAKE
THE SUPERHERO MOVIE WE WANT,
BUT THE ONE WE NEED

BY MARCUS BLAKE



"A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SQUAD LEADER"

ALIEN: FIRETEAM ELITE
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THE BATMAN

AND WHY HE IS STILL THE MOST ICONIC SUPERHERO!

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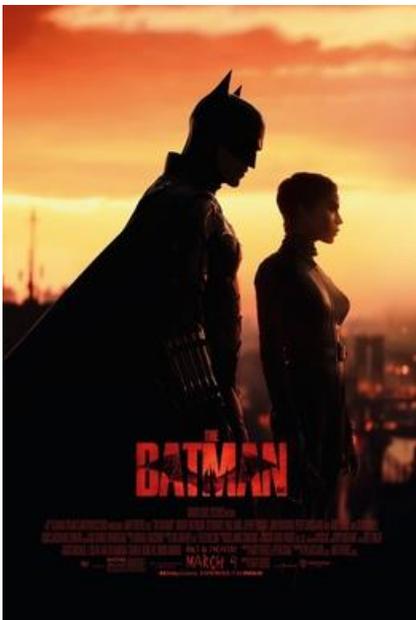




THE BATMAN

AND WHY HE IS STILL THE MOST ICONIC SUPERHERO

By Marcus Blake and Allison Costa



Even with so many new superhero movies, Batman is still the most iconic superhero! He may not be the most popular, but being iconic is something entirely different. Years ago, a poll was conducted to see who would be picked as the greatest superhero. Superman won and Batman came in second, but more stories have been done on Batman than any other superhero. More movies have been done about Batman and more series from live-action to animation, as well as more comic books and graphic novels. Everybody knows who Batman is and everybody knows his origin story, but why is he the most iconic? It's because we all want to be Batman! More people identify with Batman than they do with superheroes, because Batman is mortal, while other superheroes are more like gods and less

relatable. That's what Superman essentially is; he's a God on Earth. He's a modern-day manifestation of Jesus Christ sent here by his father to save humanity. But Batman is completely different, he's essentially a vigilante—out for vengeance and his own sense of morality. He lives in the shadows, he is often viewed as a bad guy, but even criminals fear him. He doesn't fight for truth, justice, and the American way. As Jim Gordon, played by Gary Oldman, said in the movie "The Dark Knight": "He may not be the hero that Gotham wants, but he is the hero Gotham needs!" He is the hero in the shadows, he is The Dark Knight and that's what we identify with more as human beings. It's also because he is a superhero without powers, and we all believe that we can be Batman if we had the right technology and all the money in the world!! Maybe it's not exactly that simple, but we tend to think it is. We can never be Superman or The Flash or Wonder Woman, because we do not have inherent superpowers. As a society we identify with superheroes that have no powers.

regards to all of his iconic villains. Batman has the greatest villains!! He deals with the true psychopaths that may not have superpowers but can wreak havoc on all superheroes. When we think of the greatest psychopathic villain, ask ten people and nine of them will tell you the Joker. When we interviewed Sam Jones a few years ago, the actor who played Flash Gordon in the 1980 Cult Film, we asked him if he could play any other superhero, who would he play. He simply said, "Batman, because he's not really a superhero, he's a detective and he's smarter than everyone else, that's his true power!"

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Furthermore, while the average Joe may know Superman's origin story, they know more about Batman, especially in

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In fact, Batman is the only superhero without powers to ever defeat Darkseid...he did it twice. When Bob Kane envisioned Batman, he wanted somebody like Zorro or The Shadow, he wasn't really thinking of originality when it came to his superhero. It was Bill Finger who gave him the mantra of "The Batman", he was the one who changed a dark red outfit to Black and made him "The Dark Knight". But why bats? Because bats are frightening, and misunderstood. They're not cute and they

don't put people at ease, even though they have great abilities and actually perform a service for the animal kingdom. They're nocturnal and live in the shadows and bring nothing but fear to most people...the perfect symbol for a vigilante! Sure, you can have the devil of Hell's kitchen, but a winged creature lurking in the dark is always scarier than something based on what may be a fictional type of villain. At least we know bats are real! But there's another aspect to Batman's power that intrigues us; his duality. Nobody suspects a rich billionaire, one of the most powerful men in the world, to dress up like a bat and go out at night to beat criminals to a pulp, as Morgan Freeman carefully explained in "The Dark Knight". It's the perfect alter ego and I do use that term because in a sense Batman is Bruce Wayne's real identity. He's only acting the part of a rich billionaire. Another fact that's pointed out in the Christopher Nolan movies when Rachel tells them that his true mask is Bruce Wayne.

Secret identities are important and there probably isn't a greater secret identity than a rich billionaire playboy. That's another thing that makes this character iconic. In fact, his secret identity is so good that it's been copied in other stories like the Green Arrow for example. Even Iron Man can essentially be the Marvel universe's version of Bruce Wayne and Batman! But one of the greatest iconic strengths of Batman is his ability to balance these two roles perfectly. It's one thing to be Batman at night, it's a hard job for sure, but it's just as hard to keep up appearances and run a company as well. So, when we ask the question, who is the best version of Batman, do we judge someone on solely being able to play a good Batman or to be a good Bruce Wayne and Batman? With a new version of Batman coming out starring Robert Pattinson, it's been fun to go back and ask this question. Believe it or not, there have been 12 actors who have played a live-action Batman including Kevin Conroy who is mostly known for Batman's voice and the Batman



animated series/movies and video games. Yes, he got to do a live-action Batman in The CW's Crisis on Infinite Earths episodes. There were Lewis Wilson and Robert Lowry who played Batman in two different serials back in the 1940s. Adam West in the 1960s series. For the movies, we've had Michael Keaton, Val Kilmer, George Clooney, Christian Bale, Ben Affleck, and now Robert Pattinson. David Mazouz also gets credited as Batman for the Gotham series that ran for five seasons on Fox. Even though the show is mostly about a young Bruce Wayne on his way to becoming Batman, we still get to see him wear the uniform in the last episode much like Tom Welling did who played Clark Kent and Superman in the Smallville series.



But of course, we can't forget Ian Glenn who plays Bruce Wayne in the HBO Max series Titans. Again, this is mostly about Bruce Wayne, but we do get to see him as Batman. Each actor has brought their own flair to the role and while nobody alive remembers the 1940s serials, most fans started with Adam West. One thing has been clear, each actor who has played Batman is a different version of the iconic superhero because this is DC so, of course, we have multiple universes and different Earths with different versions of Batman. That's kind of DC's way of allowing fans to like all versions of Batman because it isn't in the same universe or same timeline. You can have a different kind of origin story, different versions of villains, and maybe more importantly it turns the question "who is the best Batman and Bruce Wayne" on its head because it really isn't about who's the best, it's your favorite version of the character.

For those of us that were kids in the '80s and got to experience Tim Burton's Batman, Michael Keaton is our favorite with Jack Nicholson being the best version of the Joker. But that doesn't take away from the masterly crafted Christopher Nolan movies where we get to see the Batman at the beginning. A Batman who is in his prime, and then an aging Batman

in one glorious trilogy. Some comic book fans complain about the set of movies because it really isn't a comic book type of Batman. And maybe it's not, but it is just a different version and interpretation and brought so much to the genre as well.

In these films, the origin story is very much in line with Frank Miller's graphic novel about Batman at the beginning, which made the character more popular and also proved that we needed a darker character, hence why we got a darker version in the Tim Burton films. At the same time, people usually complain that George Clooney is the worst Batman. I don't know if he's the worst, but his version is certainly not very likable. Likewise, the "Batman and Robin" movie from 1997 is generally considered the worst Batman movie and rightly so. Unfortunately, Joel Schumacher who directed that movie as well as "Batman Forever", which starred Val Kilmer seemed to be trying to go back to the lighthearted comical 1960s Batman TV series. That's not Batman. He's not a slap-stick type of character. I'm sure most fans don't even realize that Batman actually killed people in the early comics.

From his inception in 1939 to about the end of World War II, Batman killed bad guys and he was fond of dropping them in acid... where have we seen that before! It was after World War II that Bob Kane and Bill Finger decided Batman shouldn't kill people and he should have a code because it was that moral code that separated him from the criminals. This theme has been played out time and time again in Batman movies and series. "The Dark Knight", with Christian Bale as Batman and Heath Ledger as the Joker, probably did it the best as the Joker is a character that is trying to turn a moral man into a killer and goading Batman into actually killing him. But now that we have a new Batman movie with Robert Pattinson, can we really ask the question who's the best anymore? Perhaps not, again, maybe it's looking at this latest movie and deciding if this is our favorite version.

We really started thinking about this particular question when there was so much controversy about Ben Affleck playing Batman in a movie leading up to the Justice League. His version of Batman was a guy who had been the cape crusader for 20 years and now is forced to confront the fact that there are other superheroes and they need to come together to fight bigger threats. However, Robin Pattinson's Batman is not necessarily an origin story, but a young Bruce Wayne still trying to figure it out and Matt Reeves tries to give us a Batman that's more in line with earlier comics of the character. But is it good enough compared to all the other versions

of Batman that we've had? That's a question that only the audience can decide.

Review by Marcus Blake

"The Batman is an exhilarating movie that takes the dark knight back to a noir detective style of storytelling like the comics old and puts it in a modern setting. With breathtaking visuals, it will slowly draw you in and keep you on the edge of your seat. But the film is too long and can't hold onto the narrative as in previous Batman films, and just doesn't measure up to previous stories of the iconic superhero"

Batman is such an iconic superhero that it's hard to make a great movie. We've had so many different versions of Batman through movies and even glimpses of him in TV shows that what we consider the "best" Batman will vary. But because DC Comics has multiple universes or different earths, we get to see different versions of Batman and because of that maybe it's not about finding the best Batman, but more about each audience finding what they like about each version. In the latest Batman movie, starring Robert Pattinson as the Dark Knight, there is certainly a lot to like about this person, but I won't go as far as to say that it's the best for my personal favorite. However, what impressed me about this movie more than anything is that it takes Batman back to his detective roots by giving us an old-school noir theme that we haven't even seen in the comics for many years. Yes, Batman is a superhero, but at his core, he is the ultimate detective using his superior knowledge and investigative skills to defeat villains and that is what Matt Reeves version of the Batman reminds fans about. That is what I most enjoyed about this film even if it isn't my favorite version.



What makes this film great is that it doesn't rely on ridiculous superpowers for

Batman to defeat any villain. Much like the Christopher Nolan movies, we see that Batman is still human and it's his fighting skills and custom weapons that almost make him invincible, but not quite. Like I said, he is at his very core a detective so Batman movies don't feel so much like a superhero movie as they do feel like a true-crime thriller. That's the feeling this movie gives us as Batman is trying to figure out who is killing politicians and ultimately meets the Riddler. Robin Pattinson makes a great Batman, he is dark and brooding and full of rage. We see Batman in year two of what he refers to as the Gotham Project. He's relatively new to being Batman and still doesn't know if he's making a difference.

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And since it's basically the beginning of Batman in Gotham City, we also get introduced to some of Batman's main villains like the Penguin and the main antagonist, The Riddler. For those who were worried about the casting, the casting is one of the strongest points of The Batman. Robert Pattinson is great as Batman. Nobody should judge his performance in the Twilight movies and think that he couldn't be a good Batman because all of the darkness and the rage that Batman carries with him is there in his performance. Colin Farrell does a pretty good job as the Penguin and he is for the most part unrecognizable. He plays the part as a waddling street thug that serves as the right-hand man to the mob. And I have to give credit where it's due to Zoe Kravitz, who plays a great Selena Kyle. She is sexy and fierce and also has the vulnerability that comes with the character and makes her likable even though she's a criminal. But if there is one standout performance in this movie, it is Paul Dano who plays the Riddler. He does not play the character as some criminal buffoon much like Jim Carrey did in Joel Schumacher movies. He is dark and creepy, with a sick sense of humor that's easily seen in his riddles.

We've never really gotten a true adaptation of the Riddler as he is seen in the comics and I think for the first time

we've gotten that with Paul Dano's performance. The Riddler is not a cheesy character and shouldn't be played like that. He's a psychopath more in line with Hannibal Lecter, who taunts his prey and sends them on a wild goose chase just for sport. And that's exactly the kind of Riddler you need in this kind of Batman movie where it feels more like an old-school noir detective film. The style of this film is fantastic and it provides the right kind of balance between a good detective story and a true comic book story. If there's a nexus between Christopher Nolan's Batman movies and Tim Burton's vision of Batman then it's this movie and it works brilliantly. A Batman story should always be dark because that's the essence of the character. A true Batman story takes place in the scourge or underbelly of society. Also, what really makes this movie stand out is seeing how Batman is introduced to all of these villains without having to do a whole new origin story for Batman which has been done time and time again. I appreciate "Batman Begins", it probably is the ultimate origin story of Bruce Wayne and Batman, but we don't need to rehash that. Having a story take place where you're in year two as Batman protecting Gotham is a perfect place to start and Robin Pattinson pulls it off nicely as a young man full of rage still trying to figure out how to be Batman and be the knight in shining armor that Gotham needs. I loved the style of this film and I love the casting, but even with all that, it still isn't the best Batman movie in my opinion. It has a lot going for it, but it also isn't as good as previous Batman films.

Here are the factors that really keeps *The Batman* from being the best Batman movie ever made. First of all, it's too long. We don't need a 3-hour Batman movie. If you wanted to make a series about how Batman was getting started, I'm all for that. A serialized Batman story is always good and the Animated Series back in the early '90s proves that. I completely understand that if you're going to have an old-school noir theme for the film that has a slow burn which, slowly brings the audience into the story, it can work, but if it takes you too long to get to the action and your audience gets bored, then you lose them. The action doesn't really start picking up until about halfway into the movie. We get glimpses of Batman in the first half, but it's like this slow walk up to the stage where all the action is going to happen. The last half of the movie is great, but it took too long to get to the parts of the movie that made it great. I honestly feel this movie could have been told in 150 minutes.

Secondly, as good as Robert Pattinson is playing Batman, he doesn't play a good Bruce Wayne. The best thing about the character is the duality of Batman and

Bruce Wayne. As the Dark Knight he has to be fearless and full of rage to take on criminals. But when he's Bruce Wayne he has to be the Playboy Billionaire who doesn't really understand the company he owns and parties with supermodels. Or he can be a shrewd businessman. But either way Bruce Wayne has to be the opposite of Batman so people can't figure out his alter ego. Robert Pattinson didn't display any of that. He played Bruce Wayne as if he was some depressed teenager exploring the goth scene. I'm not saying that Robert Pattinson can't play the right Bruce Wayne, but I do question the filmmakers if their instinct is to have a brooding and depressed Bruce Wayne that seems devoid of all emotion, you know like a teenager that hates everything in life.

I don't know if he's the perfect actor to play Batman and Bruce Wayne, maybe he is, but the filmmakers obviously didn't allow him to reach his full potential with this character. Another criticism is the fact that Batman seems way too chummy with everybody and doesn't mind letting people see him. That's not the character at all, he lives in the shadows. He moves like a bat. He's not going to show up and knock on the door of a mob-owned club dressed as Batman asking the doorman if he knows who he is. If Batman wants to get into a building, he's usually breaking into it without people knowing he's even been there. That was the one thing the Christopher Nolan movies got right and maybe it's because they explored the backstory of how Bruce was instructed by the League of Shadows. If you're Batman, the purpose of a true warrior is to not be seen...like a bat, you live in the shadows.

Despite these three main critiques, this version of Batman is good and worth seeing. It's a version that we have not seen on the big screen and only really read in comics. However, I don't think this is the best version of Batman. Having the noir feel in the film is great, but the filmmakers don't truly understand that your lead actor has to not only be good at playing Batman but also a believable Bruce Wayne. Christopher

Nolan and Tim Burton both understood that when creating their own version of Batman. As good as Robin Pattinson is as Batman, he is outshined by Paul Dano as the Riddler, especially in the end. Paul Dano's performance as the Riddler is what makes this film better than it should be. He is brilliant. He gives us a version of The Riddler that we have never seen before and makes this iconic villain even scarier than the Joker. I don't know if I would recommend seeing this movie in the theater, because 3 hours is a long time to watch a Batman movie, but it definitely should be watched more than once when it hits HBO Max. It is worth the price of a movie ticket, but there's a slow burn to the first half of the movie before the action picks up and this is where you should have a comfortable if you do see it in the theater.

I will say my review is a mixture of praise that Matt Reeves and Robert Pattinson craft a great version of The Batman and bring the character back to its detective roots. They make us see that Batman is not so much a superhero compared to the rest of the Justice League, but the world's greatest detective who uses his intellect to take down villains. But if this film has one more thing going for it, then it's the action sequences, which are fantastic and as good as any other Batman movie. While the Christopher Nolan Batman movies didn't feel like comic book movies, Matt Reeves takes a modern version of Batman and makes him a true comic book character in film, much like Tim Burton did in 1989 and that I can definitely get behind, even if this isn't my favorite Batman film. However, it is a good film and certainly worth seeing even if this wouldn't be the perfect Batman for the Justice League. I always thought Ben Affleck got a bad rap because he played not only a great Bruce Wayne, but a good Batman that can hold his own with the rest of the Justice League. However, if you want to see Batman as the lone avenger watching over the city that he loves, then this is one of the best Batman films ever made and I will certainly watch it again. You'll probably do the same.



Despite all the various opinions on who is the best version of Batman and Bruce Wayne, there's been one that's pretty much been universal. Any fan of Batman can agree that Kevin Conroy voicing the

character has been one of the best if not the best. The voice of Batman seems to be more recognizable than all of the actors who have worn the bat suit. The same goes for Mark Hamill as the Joker. It's hard not to mention Mark Hamill as the Joker when talking about the Kevin Conroy as Batman...the two are synonymous as the greatest voices behind two iconic characters. Mark Hamill doesn't take away from actors Heath Ledger or Jack Nicholson who have played the iconic villain, but the voice of the Joker has always been more frightening. And it may be hard for people to believe that Luke Skywalker can voice such a great villain and have it universally recognized as the scariest version of the Joker. That's the power of the voice. Ask yourself, when you read the comics, whose voices do you hear for Batman and the Joker! A reoccurring theme at That Nerd Show is how Anime can tell the best versions of the story. You can always do more when it comes to action in anime, but a good voice behind the character can make the character better. Looking back 30 years later, the Batman animated series that ran from 1992 to 1995 is actually very dark, there are more adult themes in that series than we care to admit, but it had some of the best Batman stories and of course, animated movies like Mask of the Phantasm are some of the best stories that we've had with Batman, even better than the live-action movies. It's hard to adapt a comic character and make him just as good as we find him on the page. Anime seems to bridge that gap because you can do more with it. We're not here to tell you who is the best Batman or who you think is the best version of the character, that's for every fan to decide for themselves. But if there is one overall aspect of the character that fans can agree on, Batman is always best when you take the character back to its roots. The Batman starring Robert Pattinson, may not be the best version, but one thing is for sure, the best part of that particular story is having Batman go back to his roots and be a detective more than a superhero. Perhaps that's the real question, is Batman a superhero or is he really just a vigilante who turns out to be the best detective in a great combat suit when it comes to fighting criminals. However, you see the character, there will always be different versions of Batman, some are good, some not so much, but for this latest version, whether you're a huge fan of the film or not, Matt Reeves and Robert Pattinson deserve at least a trilogy to see what they can do with the iconic character and maybe we're going to get our wish now that a sequel has been announced to *The Batman*.



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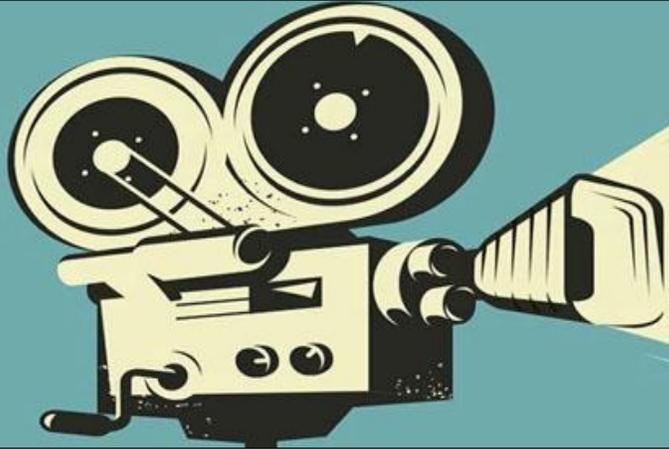


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FILM & TV NEWS

‘The Crow’: Bill Skarsgard Tapped to Play Eric Draven In New Reimagining from Rupert Sanders



In what marks some major momentum for the long-awaited reboot of *The Crow*, Bill Skarsgard, who played Pennywise the Clown in the *It* franchise, has been tapped to star as Eric Draven in a new reimagining of *The Crow*. Rupert Sanders will direct the pic with Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter FKA twigs also starring. The revenge thriller is written by Academy Award-nominated Zach Baylin and

is based on the original graphic novel of the beloved character that was created, written and illustrated by James O’Barr. “*The Crow* is beautiful, dark, poetic and sometimes disturbing,” says director Sanders. “It is a story of love, loss, grief and revenge. It is a great honor to revisit James O’Barr’s iconic comic and reimagine *The Crow* as a foreboding voice of today.”

The pic will be produced by Victor Hadida, Molly Hassell, John Jencks and Edward R. Pressman. Production companies are Hassell Free Productions, Electric Shadow Company, Davis Films, and Edward R. Pressman Film Corporation, in association with 30WEST. CAA Media Finance is handling the film’s domestic distribution rights. The pic a modern reimagining of the titular character, based on the graphic novel series by James O’Barr that was first published by Caliber Comics in 1989. Director Alex Proyas brought the story to the screen in

1994’s *The Crow*, which starred the late Brandon Lee, and became a cult classic. The original film and its sequels continue to be distributed around the world. *Reported by Deadline.com*

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‘For All Mankind’s Sonya Walger to Star In Horror-Thriller ‘New Life’

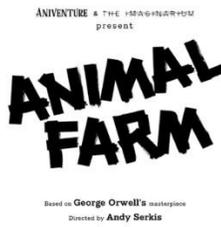


Sonya Walger (*For All Mankind*) has signed on to star alongside Hayley Erin (*Pretty Little Liars: The Perfectionists*) and Tony Amendola (*Annabelle*) in the horror-thriller, *New Life*. The film from writer-director John Rosman centers around a deadly cat and mouse game in the Pacific Northwest. Walger will play Elsa, a brilliant “fixer” assigned to capture a mysterious woman on the run. As the snare of the pursuit

tightens, Elsa must fight her own secret battle with ALS to stay on top of the explosive case, before it reaches an apocalyptic endgame. Justin Ross (*The Old Ways*, *The Mortuary Collection*) and Mike Marchlewski are serving as the pic’s producers. Walger is perhaps best known for her turn as astronaut Molly Cobb on the Apple TV+ series *For All Mankind*, which wrapped production on its third season late last year. She has also appeared in such series as *Get Shorty*, *The Catch*, *Power*, *Parenthood*, *In Treatment*, *Lost* and *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, among others. Additional film credits include *Clementine* and *Admission*. Walger also recently released the latest season of her podcast *Bookish*, in which guests such as William H. Macy and Damon Lindeloff discuss the five books most formative to their lives. *Reported by Deadline.com*



Andy Serkis Directing Animated Adaptation of George Orwell Classic 'Animal Farm' Penned by Nicholas Stoller



Andy Serkis (*Venom: Let There Be Carnage*) is directing an animated adaptation of George Orwell's classic novella *Animal Farm* for Aniventure and his company The Imaginarium. Production is underway at Cinesite, which is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary as a world leader in animation and VFX. The dystopian fable published in 1945 watches as a group of farm animals rebel against their human owner, in hopes of creating a society where they can be equal, free and happy. It was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 best English-language novels between 1923 to 2005, and won Orwell a Restrospective Hugo Award. It's previously been adapted for radio and the stage, with John Halas and Joy Batchelor mounting a film adaptation in 1954, and John Stephenson adapting it into a TNT TV movie in 1999.

Nicholas Stoller (*Storks, Captain Underpants*) adapted the screenplay for Serkis' long-gestating

film, previously set up at Netflix, which he will produce with Adam Nagle (*Paws of Fury: The Legend of Hank*), Dave Rosenbaum (*Hitpig*) and Imaginarium's Jonathan Cavendish (*Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle*). "The challenging journey to bring this extraordinary story to the screen has been finally rewarded by the opportunity to partner with the brilliant team at Aniventure and Cinesite," said Serkis. "Together we hope to make our version of Orwell's ever relevant masterpiece, emotionally powerful, humorous, and relatable for all ages. A tale not only for our times, but for generations to come." "Ever since 1945, when George Orwell first published *Animal Farm*, the story has remained relevant and a key instrument in understanding how the world works," added Nagle. "Andy has had a special talent for creating unique and memorable characters during his remarkable career and we're thrilled to be working with him, Jonathan and Cinesite to adapt *Animal Farm* for modern audiences."

Serkis is an Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated actor, filmmaker and performance capture trailblazer who has previously helmed features including *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*, *Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle* and *Breathe*, most recently appearing as Alfred in Matt Reeves' *The Batman*. Aniventure was established in 2014 to create original feature animated content with high production values. In the past eight years, the

company has acquired and created a wide range of content for development and production, with two films (*Riverdance*):



The Animated Adventure and *Paws of Fury: The Legend of Hank* complete and with distribution. Serkis and Cavendish's Imaginarium is a next-generation storytelling production company, whose sister company is the performance capture studio, Imaginarium Studios. Its TV shows include *Fungus the Bogeyman* for Sky, *Death and Nightingales* for BBC and the upcoming *Half Bad* for Netflix. Other films include *The Ritual* for Netflix, and Taika Waititi's upcoming *Next Goal Wins*, starring Michael Fassbender and Elisabeth Moss. Reported by Deadline.com

'Deadpool 3': Shawn Levy Tapped to Direct Sequel Reuniting with His 'Adam Project' Star Ryan Reynolds



Following the box office success of *Free Guy* and critical acclaim of *The Adam Project*, director Shawn Levy and Ryan Reynolds now are looking for the hat trick as Levy is now in negotiations to direct Marvel's *Deadpool 3*. Reynolds is set to star Rhett Reese, and Paul Wernick are penning the

script. Wendy Molyneux and Lizzie Molyneux-Logelin penned a previous draft. This marks the first *Deadpool* film where Marvel Studios will work hand and hand with Reynolds and Team Deadpool. Fans are sure to be excited at Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige's involvement after seeing how he helped to revamp the *Spider-Man* franchise after coming aboard on the creative effort for that franchise.

Levy and Reynolds have been on a hot streak, delivering two big hits in the past seven months with 20th Century's *Free Guy* and Netflix's *The Adam Project*. *Free Guy* became one of the surprise hits of 2021, grossing more than \$300 million at the global box office, with a sequel in development. *The Adam Project* bows this weekend and has already

earned some of the best reviews of both A-listers career. Reported by deadline.com

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Ben Affleck To Direct Nike Drama for Amazon, Skydance Sports; Will Star Alongside Matt Damon



Ben Affleck and Matt Damon are reteaming for a Nike drama that Affleck will direct for Amazon Studios, Skydance Sports and Mandalay Pictures. Deadline can confirm. The as-yet-untitled sports marketing film will tell the incredible story of how Sonny Vaccaro (Damon), a maverick sneaker salesman, led a fledgling running shoe company called Nike in its pursuit of the most transformative athlete in the history of sports: Michael Jordan. Affleck will portray Nike co-founder Phil Knight in the story surrounding Nike's longshot effort to sign Jordan to its shoe company in the mid-'80s, an endorsement that seemed impossible at the time but which would become the most significant relationship between an athletic brand and an athlete and launched the global, multibillion-dollar contemporary sneaker industry.

Sonny's relentless quest to sign Jordan to what was then the third-place shoe company takes him to Jordan's parents, and in particular his

powerful, dynamic mother, as well as to former coaches, advisors, friends and those close to Michael. Jordan himself is a giant mythic figure hovering above the movie and never seen, while Sonny tries to reach him by gaining access to those close to him and around him. Alex Convery wrote the original script, titled *Air Jordan*, which was named to the 2021 Black List of the best unproduced screenplays. Mandalay brought it to Skydance Sports president Jon Weinbach, who then secured Vaccaro's life rights. Affleck and Damon are doing a new pass on the script and will produce alongside Peter Guber and Jason Michael Berman of Mandalay Pictures.



While Affleck has never before directed Damon, the pair famously co-wrote and starred together in Gus Van Sant's 1997 film *Good Will Hunting*, which won them an Academy Award for Best

Original Screenplay. They also recently reteamed for Ridley Scott's film *The Last Duel*, starring there alongside Adam Driver, Jodie Comer and more. Affleck previously directed films including *Gone Baby Gone*, *The Town*, Best Picture Oscar winner *Argo* and *Live by Night*. He recently starred opposite Ana de Armas in the erotic thriller *Deep Water* and will next be seen in *The Flash* and Robert Rodriguez's thriller *Hypnotic*. Other upcoming films featuring Damon include Taika Waititi's *Thor: Love and Thunder* and Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*. Regularly featuring on the Black List, Convery has been behind such screenplays as *Bag Mag*, *Excelsior!* and *Wild Things*. Reported by *Deadline.com*

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Original 'Star Wars' Action-Adventure Video Game In The Works From Lucasfilm, Skydance New Media



Skydance New Media and Lucasfilm are teaming to develop a new *Star Wars* game. Revealed Tuesday by New Media's Amy Hennig, Skydance will work with Lucasfilm to develop and produce "a richly cinematic action-adventure game featuring an original story in the legendary *Star Wars* galaxy." News of the *Star Wars* project comes several months after

Skydance New Media unveiled the development of a Marvel game back in October.

"I've often described how seeing *Star Wars* in 1977 essentially rewired my 12-year-old brain, shaping my creative life and future indelibly," said Hennig, President of Skydance New Media. "I'm elated to be working with Lucasfilm Games again to tell interactive stories in this galaxy that I love."

Added Douglas Reilly, VP of Lucasfilm Games: "We couldn't be more thrilled to be working again with Amy. She and the Skydance New Media team have the talent and ambition to create a unique *Star Wars* adventure. Their vision for making inviting, cinematic interactive entertainment makes this collaboration very exciting. We're working hard with their team of experienced and talented developers, and we're

looking forward to sharing more with *Star Wars* fans when the time is right."

This is the second significant project announced for the game studio, which was formed by Hennig, known for her work on Naughty Dog titles *Uncharted* and *Jak and Daxter*, and veteran producer Julian Beak. Since launching in 2019 New Media has enlisted a team of developers with decades of experience in the action and adventure gaming worlds. The studio has also assembled a diverse team of creative consultants from the worlds of film, television and comics. While the in-development project marks Skydance New Media's second significant initiative, *Star Wars* has been in gaming for many years with the likes the *Lego Star Wars* franchise, *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* and *Star Wars Battlefront*, among others.



Oscars 2022: 'CODA' Wins Best Picture – Full Winners List

Best Picture

CODA
Philippe Rousselet, Fabrice Gianfermi and Patrick Wachsberger,
Producers

Actress in a Leading Role

Jessica Chastain
The Eyes of Tammy Faye

Actor in a Leading Role

Will Smith
King Richard

Directing

The Power of the Dog
Jane Campion

Music (Original Song)

"No Time To Die" from No Time to Die
Music and Lyric by Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell

Documentary Feature

Summer of Soul (...Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)
Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Joseph Patel, Robert Fyvolent and David
Dinerstein

Writing (Adapted Screenplay)

CODA
Screenplay by Siân Heder

Writing (Original Screenplay)

Belfast
Written by Kenneth Branagh

Costume Design

Cruella
Jenny Beavan

International Feature Film

Drive My Car (Japan)
A C&I Entertainment/Culture Entertainment/Bitters End Production

Actor in a Supporting Role

Troy Kotsur
CODA

Animated Feature Film

Encanto
Jared Bush, Byron Howard, Yvett Merino and Clark Spencer

Visual Effects

Dune
Paul Lambert, Tristan Myles, Brian Connor and Gerd Nefzer

Cinematography

Dune
Greig Fraser

Actress in a Supporting Role

Ariana DeBose
West Side Story

Makeup and Hairstyling

The Eyes of Tammy Faye
Linda Dowds, Stephanie Ingram and Justin Raleigh

Production Design

Dune
Production Design: Patrice Vermette; Set Decoration: Zsuzsanna Sipos

Film Editing

Dune
Joe Walker

Music (Original Score)

Dune
Hans Zimmer

Live Action Short Film

The Long Goodbye
Aneil Karia and Riz Ahmed

Animated Short Film

The Windshield Wiper
Alberto Mielgo and Leo Sanchez

Documentary Short Subject

The Queen of Basketball
Ben Proudfoot

Best Sound

Dune
Mac Ruth, Mark Mangini, Theo Green, Doug Hemphill and Ron Bartlett



MONTHLY MOVIE

★★ REVIEWS ★★

Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore Review by Chloe James



When is enough, enough? How do writers and studios know when to lay a series to rest before it starts becoming bad? The simple answer is, when it stops making money. In that way, we the audience are able to still have a say. Take the *Fantastic Beast* series as a big example of how this will play out with box offices sales in the next few weeks. The “Wizarding World” (aka, anything involving the Harry Potter universe) while massively popular since it’s conception, has been suffering as of late due to the unapologetically anti-trans views of its author J. K. Rowling. Many loyal fans, not wanting to monetarily support such views, have since jumped ship to other fantasy series. On top of that, the last film suffered from controversies surrounding some of its leading actors, as well as generally poor critical reception. While I would definitely argue that the latest installment, *Fantastic Beasts: Secrets*

of Dumbledore needed to be made (*Crimes of Grindelwald* left a slew of unanswered questions), this could very well be the last foreseeable entry to the series, depending on how it goes. No pressure or anything.

Picking up in 1932 — nearly five years since the last film took place, we find our adorable hero Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne) in China assisting the birth of a Qilin (a very rare magical creature who can read your soul and predict the future.) However, a group of baddies that we may recognize as Grindelwald’s underlings show up and kidnap the newborn beastie. In the meantime, our token muggle Jacob Kowalski (Dan Fogler) is still struggling with the heartbreak from his witch girlfriend Queenie (Alison Sudol) leaving him to join Grindelwald’s hate group. Grindelwald (Mads Mikkelsen) himself has been a quite busy plotting his takeover of the wizarding world, manipulating now allegedly Dumbledore Credence Barebone, (Ezra Miller), and continuing to sulk over Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law) dumping him years ago. To counter all of this, Albus himself has been busy putting together a ragtag team of wizards to stop Grindelwald’s nefarious plans with an unconventional plan of his own.

Ok, that totally caught you up and didn’t confuse you whatsoever, right? This may be a very divisive opinion, but as you can guess from the title of this review, I definitely think this film was an improvement over the last. I just found myself much more engaged with the story this time around, whereas last time there were times that I just felt restless. Even though *Secrets of Dumbledore* had more than it’s fair share of “slower” parts, they felt more like they were going somewhere than those in *Crimes of Grindelwald*.

Much like the *Harry Potter* series, (and most fantasy in general) we’re asked, nay, forced to keep up with yet more characters that are newly introduced to the franchise. Unlike *Harry Potter*, we don’t have a series of books to give us context for all of them. At least I can say many of the new characters have been interesting. My personal favorite of these is professor Eulalie Hicks (Jessica Williams), a

talented witch with a savage wit who joins Newt’s team to stop Grindelwald.



Unfortunately, as with any epic tale with loads and loads of characters, some previously important ones begin to fade in the background, or rarely get featured at all. This was especially notable with Tina Goldstein, who was indispensable in the first film as well as Newt’s hinted at love interest, who was absent from most of this film for...I’m not sure...reasons? Even Newt himself, who was previously THE main character of this series feels like he’s lost some of his purpose in this installment. Thankfully they wrote in the whole Qilin subplot in, giving him at least a reason to be there at all, albeit somewhat forced. I’m sure on everyone’s curious about how Mads Mikkelsen did as Grindelwald, replacing Johnny Depp who previously played the role. This is, no doubt, another divisive opinion, but I also think this casting to be an improvement. Scandals over his personal life aside, I do think Johnny Depp is a talented actor who can take on a variety of roles. But I think the role of Grindelwald required a certain subtlety that Mikkelsen seemed to capture better. The character was definitely approached differently on his end, and I appreciated his cold, yet still emotionally pained take on the wizard would-be super villain.

Of course, it’s a big budget Wizarding World film, so the visual effects were unsurprisingly

great, albeit nothing we haven't seen before. I did particularly like the design of the Qirín, but I have a weakness for cute mythical creatures as it is, and have always wanted to see an HD rendition of one of these in film. Once again, this being a period piece that takes place during the height of the "Art Deco" period, I adored the stylized set pieces and costumes. Problem is, I doubt your average *Harry Potter* fan would be as satisfied with period ascetics as I am.

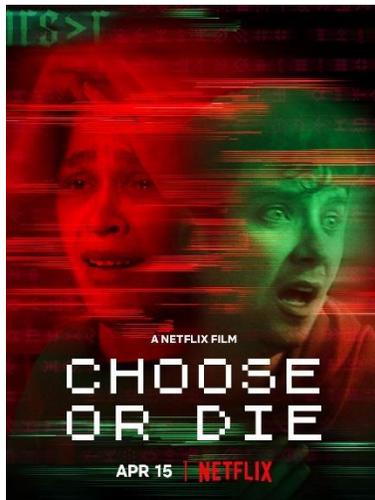
I think because of my unique stance as an enthusiastically casual fan of the Wizarding World, I'm able to generally enjoy this film (and series as a whole) for what it is. But looking at it from a perspective of hardcore Potterheads and newcomers alike, the *Fantastic Beasts* films are becoming a harder sell than ever. The knowledge to appreciate much of these films lies in supplementary material that really only the hardest Potterheads are willing to undertake. Yet childlike wonder, the very element that drew fans to begin with, continues to be notably missing with each film in the *Fantastic Beasts* series. Instead, we're given sad adults in a cruel world dealing with past trauma and current injustices. And that obviously isn't the whimsical escape most of us are looking for right now. While I would be at least satisfied with *Secrets of Dumbledore* being the last foreseeable *Fantastic Beasts* film as it solved most of the main issues brought up from the previous one, I'll still feel a bit sad. I wouldn't exactly call it "ending with a whimper", but I certainly wouldn't say it's "ending with a bang" either.

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

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Choose or Die (Netflix) Review by Alex Moore



When I was a kid, by age 7, video games were all I knew, to some degree. In particular, video games by and FOR Nintendo. However, I DO recall playing on a Sega Master System at least once, which predated the Genesis by a few years, and I knew one other kid that played video games via a computer system. What I recall about seeing that is it was nothing like the games I saw or played on Nintendo or Sega. It had a lot of text on the screen and it played at a much slower pace, by comparison.

Today, we gamers have no problem reading text, in the form of subtitles, although it is all heard by voice, like watching a movie. Needless to say, we have become quite spoiled to our technological advancements. Still, there are those of us who enjoy reliving our past experiences by either playing on the original hardware or trying out new games created in the same vein as those retro titles. I suppose it was just a matter of time before this was included into the narrative of a modern horror movie. Enter "Choose or Die."

Right off the bat, what makes this film unique is that it is actually a British movie. So, when you see the locations as the story unfolds, as an American, you are seeing something different from the norm, which can work to make the setting more unsettling, in my view.

This happens to be the feature-length, directorial debut of Toby Meakins. It stars Iola Evans as Kayla, a struggling college student, who could use a boost for her family, and she is joined for most of the film by Asa Butterfield ("Greed") as Isaac. He is a close friend to Kayla and likes programming video games, while enjoying the older ones, as well. Yes, there are other characters, but you rarely see or hear from them in the same breath. One other character of note is Eddie Marsan ("Charlotte") as Hal, but he is only prominently seen at the beginning and end of the story. I would add Joe Bolland as

Beck, who was effective, like Marsan, but also with limited screen time.

So, the story begins with a middle-aged man, fighting with his wife and son, who disappears into a room with his video games and embarks on a new adventure. With every choice he makes, the consequences intensify and the directions become more insistent. The results are horrific, but what became of this family? A few months later, a young woman is working a normal job by night and studying as a student by day. All she seems to have is her mother, who can barely take care of herself, and a friend who mostly keeps to himself with his games. He has heard about a game that someone completed and received a great reward, as a result. The icing on the cake, in both the movie world AND the real world, is getting Robert Englund, as himself, tied into the game. If you are being reminded of "Wes Craven's New Nightmare" or "Saw," you are not alone, but I, personally, was also reminded of a lesser-known horror film: "Brainscan." What can I say? Nothing is totally original anymore, is it?

Kayla, feeling desperate and, perhaps, bored, begins playing the game and right away the impact is severe. It starts with innocent people inside of a café. You have to see it to believe it. As she progresses further, people who are closer to her are affected; first her mother and then her best friend. Along the way, she is faced with her past and has to relive traumatic events and make scary decisions.

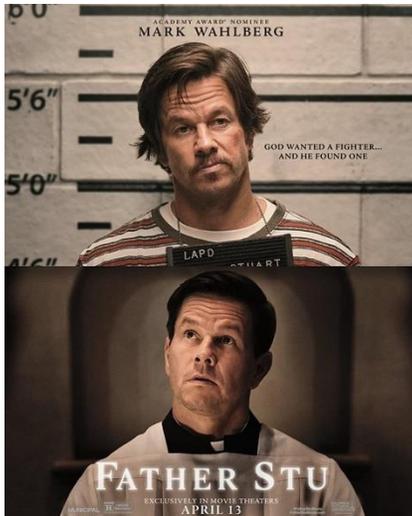
Eventually, this leads her to the family we saw at the start of the story. I cannot think of many more twisted families as of late, but was somewhat reminded of "Resident Evil 7," of all things. The final battle is nothing short of darkly comedic and is, certainly, memorable. In the end, Kayla encounters the creator of the game and is rewarded for her efforts. "Reality is cursed." If this is to be believed, then does this also mean that fantasy is gifted? That is the ultimate question Kayla has to answer. I think if any of us were in her shoes, we might have made the same decision, but who knows?

"Choose or Die," as I mentioned, is not particularly original and there are some holes in some of the story details, but it still feels new, in a way, and I enjoyed it for what it is. It is not necessarily a bad thing to be reminded of other, previous movies. On the contrary, if it is reminiscent of something you liked, it is anything but bad, in my view. There were some philosophical themes that got my attention and the story was wrapped up nicely, too. If you have an appreciation for creative and graphic death sequences, you will not be let down, either. Just do not expect this entry to reinvent the wheel. That wheel is well-lubricated already. Kudos to Mr. Meakins on what a consider a solid first effort for a feature-length debut.

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

Father Stu

Review by Marcus Blake



I love it when actors find a passion project because it's those kinds of films that turn out to be better than most of what we see in the theater today. They're better than the action movies that are devoid of any real plot or horror movies that are more bloody than suspenseful. The latest passion project by actor Mark Wahlberg is a movie titled *Father Stu*, about a former actor with a criminal past who ends up finding his calling we need to decide to become a priest. I know what you're thinking, that can't possibly be a real story, but as it turns out it is based on the life of Stuart Long. He was a former boxer from Montana who went to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career, got into a few scrapes with the law, and after a tragic motorcycle accident, actually becomes a priest. This movie is a heartwarming tale about a man who finds faith despite the tragic circumstances that happen to him; Stuart Long would die at the age of 50 from a degenerative muscle disorder. I wouldn't even characterize it as a Christian movie because it certainly isn't preachy like something you would find on "Pureflix." It's just an inspiring story about an everyday man with dreams who has them cut short but finds faith in the end, maybe not so much a Christian faith, but faith in humanity and that no matter what tragedy befalls us, we can all still make a difference. And, I admit, I really did enjoy this movie. I didn't think I would, but it's one of those films that pleasantly surprised me and probably because this in a lot of ways was a perfect role for Mark Wahlberg.

I've always enjoyed Mark Wahlberg movies, whether they're stupid comedies like *The Other Guys* or action movies like *Lone Survivor* or *Four Brothers*. He was great in *The Departed*. But his best movies have always been about men who in a lot of ways fell short of their potential only to rise up and become better than what they were. My favorite movie with

him is always going to be *The Fighter* in this movie does make a few references to *The Fighter*. What makes this movie worth watching is Mark Wahlberg's performance! It's almost as if this was the perfect story for him to tell and in a lot of ways mirrors his own life. He was once a young, cocky actor who had a few scrapes with the law, but found his own faith which is very evident in the life that he lives now, especially with his family. In a lot of ways, there are mirror images of him and Stuart Long. In my interview with Mark Wahlberg, one of the things that I mentioned is I saw this character a lot like the Apostle Paul, someone who was reckless and not a very good person until he had an epiphany from God, thus giving him a calling. This movie works well in the fact that you get to see all the early parts of *Father Stu*'s life. Plus, the performances by Jackie Weaver and Mel Gibson, who play his parents are outstanding. They definitely deserve awards. The movie has a lot of heart and a lot of comedy, to the backdrop of Americana especially with the soundtrack. The music is a mixture of classic rock and outlaw country, which perfectly exemplifies the beauty of the film. And the movie beautifully displays how flawed all these characters really are and their own journey to find faith. I don't necessarily characterize it as Christianity because, again, it's not being preachy. The characters in the film are trying to be better human beings and that kind of faith goes beyond believing in God, but more importantly believing in each other and how we can all change For the better I think that's the overall message of this film.

It's not a perfect film, certainly not a perfect 10. There are better films about how people can change. One of the films that I compare *Father Stu* to is *The Razor's Edge*, and I've always liked Bill Murray's the best. If I had to be overly critical, I almost feel like they spent too much time telling his backstory and not focusing so much on him becoming a priest. Maybe it's because Stuart Long wasn't a priest all that long and compared to his life as a boxer or an actor. But I would have liked to have seen equal amounts of time telling these stories. There's a lot of great stories of Stuart Long as a priest, especially when he went back to Montana and was essentially in a wheelchair

going to prisons and community centers, becoming one of the most popular priests in that area. He was an inspiration and there should have more stories about that told in the film. There are also a few characters that we don't get to tell their story as much as we should. I wish we had more of Teresa's story, the love interest of *Father Stu* before he became a priest. I just don't think the movie was as balanced as it could have been in telling all these great stories, especially that of Stuart's father played by Mel Gibson. In a lot of ways, maybe the story would have been better if it was a limited series of four to six episodes on a streaming channel. The film does leave you wanting to know more about Stuart Long and everybody involved. That is certainly one of its weaknesses, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't watch it. It's a good story told in two hours.

Overall, *Father Stu* is a heartwarming and funny movie that can give you a renewed sense of faith in people. It's hard not to feel inspired after watching this movie and perhaps it is the perfect movie to watch during Easter weekend. It is certainly one of Mark Wahlberg's top-five performances. Jackie Weaver and Mel Gibson deserve plenty of accolades for their brilliant performances. I thought this was one of Mel Gibson's best movies. Maybe in some ways, it's a sense of redemption for him for some of the crazy things he's done in real life. Even if you are not a Christian or a person of faith, this is just a good story with great performances. You can still be inspired by somebody like Stuart Long, a man who found a calling and made a difference despite the tragic circumstances surrounding his life. Yes, it feels like a Reader's Digest story, but we all need those from time to time. This is one of the best movies Mark Wahlberg could have done and we should be thankful that he brought the life of Stuart Long to the big screen. I highly recommend this film even if you only watch it once, but I can pretty much guarantee that you won't because it's the kind of movie that's worth watching more than once; if nothing else for the performances of its three stars. I also think it's a great movie to see in the theater, especially if you need a feel-good movie and we all need those from time to time.

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

Metal Lords (Netflix) Review by Alex Moore



Coming of age comes in all types of stories. They are not just limited to people in their teens, either, though that is the most common variation. They never get old because, at any time, there are those who can relate to the story. With award season over, for now, the movie world goes back to normal, sort of, but what is considered normal has changed. Nowadays, it is normal to have movies that are not shown on the big screen, but are still viewed and accessed by millions of viewers, thanks to Netflix. When I first began watching original films on Netflix, what I noticed is that they were typically very high in quality, but short on story, in terms of character development and emotional content. As time has gone by, things have begun to shift, in a positive way. The latest, in the realm of coming of age and straight to Netflix, for immediate streaming, is “Metal Lords.” It is brought to us by the producers of ‘Game of Thrones’ and the “Harold & Kumar” franchise. It is, also, written by D.B. Weiss, who took part in the aforementioned hit series. The direction duties were fulfilled by Peter Sollett (“Freeheld”).

The majority of our story is about a new, metal music duo, comprised of Jaeden Martell (“It Chapter Two”), as Kevin Schlieb, and Adrian Greensmith, as Hunter Sylvester. It appears, at least in the beginning, that Hunter is the true metalhead and Kevin is the novice, still cutting his teeth on the vibe. Kevin is, also, in marching band. Perhaps, he is trying to fit in by remaking himself into a real musician. While he is out and about with the rest of the marching band, he witnesses a tirade from an off-key clarinet player, Emily Spector, played by Isis Hainsworth (“Misbehaviour”). Sooner or later, she will play a significant factor in, not just the metal band, but the relationship between Kevin and Hunter.

As the friendship between Kevin and Hunter evolves, so does the romance between Kevin and Emily. The common theme seems to become the fragility of teenagers, based on upbringing and personal experiences. Kevin has the most normal life and Hunter and Emily have had to endure hardships, which have impacted them greatly. Maybe the intrigue of metal music has served as an escape from reality, for all of them.

As Kevin and Emily grow closer, Kevin and Hunter pull apart. Emily is getting stronger, but Hunter is falling apart. The common denominator, evidently, is Kevin. They have all been acting out in some shape or form, but what happens when those actions become more volatile? It all seemed fine and well when the three were acting in conjunction, but once any of them are left alone, things become more dangerous, especially for Hunter. As I mentioned before, the trio eventually comes together. I have to admit, the addition of a cello to a metal group is interesting and it, somehow, works. As likable as everyone was, the one I liked the most was Emily. The actress showed a certain vulnerability, which generated a great sense of sympathy. She reminded me a lot of an actress who was prominent from the ‘80s and ‘90s, Nancy Travis. The story did not always flow as well as it did in certain segments, but the primary actors were consistently easy to root for, even if they were not particularly original, considering the genre/sub-genre. That is the key. If you make a film with relatable characters, whom the audience can connect with, you will provide an enjoyable experience. I am glad that Netflix is progressing with stories like this one.

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

**“A Spy Thriller Double
Feature with Chris Pine!”**

**All the Old Knives
and The Contractor
Reviews by Marcus Blake**



All the Old Knives - It’s an espionage double feature starring Chris Pine. That’s right, he has two espionage thrillers coming out within a week of one another, so for the purposes of this review we will look at both films. The first movie is *All the Old Knives* starting Chris Pine and Thandie Newton. This film is very much a slow burn and in a lot of ways feels like you’re watching *Tinker Taylor Soldiers Spy*. I admit, I did like the film even if it’s not the best spy film out there. It’s the kind of old-school espionage story where there’s not a lot of action but slowly draws you into the conspiracy at the heart of the story. This movie is about a rogue agent that has to be drawn out after an asset tells the CIA that one of their own has betrayed them. Chris Pine plays the character who has to find the truth. Classic espionage stories don’t really exist anymore, the best espionage stories always seem to take place during the Cold War, and even though intelligence gathering is still very prominent, it’s not like it used to be when America had one main adversary in the world. The best parts of this film are the performances and all the misdirection between the characters until we get to the truth. You won’t get a lot of action, but that also makes the story better. I grew up reading Cold War espionage novels from great authors like John le Carré, Robert Ludlum, and Ian Fleming. Their stories were not about shootouts and in a lot of ways weren’t always about secret assassinations. At the heart of these stories were always agents who were trying to find secret information that could stop a war or find a mole, or even turn an enemy agent. That’s why this story feels like a classic espionage novel because the main part of the film is the conversation between Chris pine’s character and Thandie Newton’s character, leaving you to question yourself, whether one of them betrayed their country during a terrorist plot years before. I found myself not wanting either one of them to be a mole, both characters are sympathetic, and I think that’s marked by their brilliant performances. I could have sworn that this movie was from the 1950s. But the best part of this movie and what makes it worth watching is

how their conversation is blended with flashbacks that help drive the story until you get to the end and are caught by surprise. The movie slowly draws you in. Everybody is great in this movie. However, what I do complain about is even though it is a slow burn and the use of flashbacks is meant to give the story more action, we get a lot of needless conversation that draws out the ending and it makes this movie longer than what it needs to be. You could have easily cut out 15 minutes and made this movie better. But it's also easy to ignore something like that when you have such great performances. And, I also have to complain that there isn't enough action. I know that goes against everything that makes this film good, but putting action at the right moment does drive a story, it gives it the perfect pace and for the most, the heart of the story is just a conversation between the two main characters. I don't necessarily mind cat-and-mouse games, it certainly works when it comes to heightening the intensity in the movie. However, there are times that this movie is a little too slow and takes a little too long to get to the point or even the misdirection that will keep you interested.

These are minor complaints. If you're looking for an action spy thriller, then this is not it. It is a classic espionage story where the characters play a cat-and-mouse game to uncover the truth behind the CIA's mole. If you know that going in, then you won't be so bored by the movie, and I could see how an audience would be bored with it if they're looking for action. This is definitely not a James Bond movie and it doesn't need to be. Great storytelling can be effective when you slowly draw out the story only to be surprised in the end. But as I said before, it is the performances of Chris Pine and Thandie Newton that make this movie worth watching. Chris Pine is absolutely believable as a CIA agent, unlike the very lackluster Jack Ryan movie he did years ago. You're sympathetic for the characters which can only be done if you have great performances. And the brilliant part of the story is there is no absolutely right answer in the end. If you're a fan of classic espionage then you will enjoy this film. If you'd like to Tinker Taylor Soldier Spy, you'll like this film, and you should definitely check it out on Amazon Prime.

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)



The Contractor - The second espionage thriller with Chris Pine is *The Contractor*. It's a high-octane thriller that reunites him with Ben Foster after they both had a great showing in the movie *Hell or High water*. *The Contractor* is far different than *All the old Knives*. If you're craving action in an espionage movie, then this is the Chris Pine Movie for you. The best way I can describe it is it's like Chris Pine decided to do a *Bourne Identity* movie. There's not much to the story, but you will get a lot of action and I'm not saying that's a bad thing. Chris Pine can definitely do an action role, he's certainly believable. I could see him as Jason Bourne if Matt Damon had never done the role. The story is about an army special forces soldier who is drummed out of the military and in order to make enough money to stop drowning in debt, he accepts a job with his best friend being a private contractor. Essentially, he goes to work for a private special forces firm and when a job goes sideways, the best way for the company to clean up its mess is to kill all those who did the job. I don't really consider this a spoiler because it's not hard to figure out what's going to happen.

First off, let's just get this out of the way. This is not a great movie, the best parts of the movie are the action scenes. And if you're looking for a repeat of the magic that Chris Pine had with Ben Foster from *Hell or High water*... Just go watch that movie again. Well, I don't want to make the comparison to *The Bourne Identity* too much, I honestly feel like that's what I was watching and if that's the story you're going to tell, isn't this story better told in a series. The movie starts out a little slow but once the action starts, we're off to the races until the very end and because the action moves so quickly, we don't get that much of a story. That's this movie's biggest downfall, it doesn't take the time to explore what could have been a great story on why Chris Pine's character is betrayed and how he's going to fix it in order to save his family. You can't tell this kind of story in 1 hour and 45 minutes and expect it to be that

good. This is the kind of story that needs six to eight episodes because there's so much more happening behind the scenes than just some rogue leader of a private special forces unit who has to clean up his mess when everything goes wrong. Kiefer Sutherland plays the leader of this outfit and I found myself wanting to know more about his character. Nothing is really explained about his character.

Great espionage thrillers take the time to tell all parts of a story, especially the backstory. An important part of storytelling is how your characters got to where they are at the beginning of your movie or your series. You can certainly tell that throughout flashbacks and that's one of the things they did in *All the Old Knives* really well. And unfortunately, there's only two good scenes in this movie that bring out the human element to the story or more specifically make you care about the characters. One is the scene where Chris Pine's character is talking to the Marine who just tried to kill him and finds out more about who is trying to kill him. And the other scene is with the character who runs the safe house when they're having dinner.



I enjoyed the action in this movie and Chris Pine was great at it, but to tell a great espionage thriller you have to have a proper amount of action and drama... The story can't be all action. There are moments when as the audience, we have to catch our breath. A slow burn to the investigation within your story is just as important as the action sequences and there has to be a good balance between those things. I feel like with *The Contractor* they just went for action and that's it. Like I said, it's like they wanted to make their own version of *The Bourne Identity*. But here's what does work in the film. The performances are great. Yes, we could have seen a lot more with Chris Pine's character and Ben Foster's character. All that could have been explored more if this had been a series, but they have great chemistry together and it is evident in this film. Kiefer Sutherland does make a great leader of a private special forces firm. It's not like the casting wasn't good, we just didn't get as much with the characters as we could have if this had been a series. Like for example, J.D. Pardo, who played the Marine has a short amount of screen time and he is an actor that has a great presence

on the screen and a lot of charisma. If you don't know what I'm talking about then go watch *Mayans MC*... It's almost a waste to have him in this film if you're not going to let him do anything except a few fight scenes.

The idea for this movie was great, but they failed to deliver, simple as that. It's okay for the action sequences, but the story seems familiar and there's not enough backstory to make us really care about what's going on. A good espionage thriller should make the audience have a vested interest in the story and sometimes that's why you need the slow burn as I mentioned before. But the thing with great ideas is to be more than just an idea... you gotta deliver with the story, or you just have a wasted film or series, and more importantly, a waste of a great cast. Writers and directors have to give the actors something to work with. This is one of those films where I wouldn't have minded a three-hour movie so it makes me wonder if this film was cut short by the studio and who's to blame for wasting such a great idea and making what is a "B" version of a story we've already seen. This isn't a movie that's worth renting on premium high demand for \$20 or even going to the theater to see. It may be worth a good rental just for the action, but sadly *The Contractor* doesn't live up to what it could have been!

Final Grade: 6/10 (Adequate)



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Sonic the Hedgehog 2 Review by Alex Moore



'Sonic the Hedgehog' has remained a mainstay in my life, silly as it may be. The gaming franchise introduced me to my personal love for Sega. As it happens, that particular game was not the original, but, rather, the sequel, which partnered the titular character with Tails. He is a fox. However, that particular character was often considered quite annoying, unless you controlled the character, itself. A couple of years after the first, direct sequel, there was something of a two-part follow-up. 'Sonic the Hedgehog 3' was such a massive game for the 16-bit era, it had to be dissected and presented into two, separate carts. The second half of that game was entitled 'Sonic & Knuckles.' What made it special was the inclusion of an echidna, Knuckles. He is something of a rival to Sonic, but equally playable as a character in that game. I say all this to make it known that both of these characters are included in the first, direct sequel of the original "Sonic the Hedgehog" movie, brought to all of us by the Sega Sammy Group, among other, joint production companies. What I recall about the first movie is that it was fun, but still highly flawed, in terms of certain details not making sense to the story and a few moments of chopping editing. The most important thing is that Jim Carrey was delightful as Dr. Robotnik and Sonic, himself, voiced by Ben Schwartz, was quite lovable.

Yes, the same, two actors have returned to the cast, along with James Marsden as Tom Wachowski and Tika Sumpter as Maddie Wachowski. The family is in Seattle and Sonic is traipsing around, late at night, as "blue justice" and "the hero the city deserves." Sonic is just as lovable as ever, though his role will be dialed down a bit, due to crowding from all the new characters in this film. Robotnik is just as funny, as well, and even gets to be on the creepy side, later on. Also returning is Natasha Rothwell as Rachel and she almost stole the show, I do not mind saying. Adam Pally came back to fulfill his role as Wade Whipple. He quips with plenty of '80s nostalgia.

You will not have to wait very long for the introduction of the two, new additions. Miles "Tails" Prower is voiced by Colleen O'Shaughnessey, who technically made an appearance in the first movie, though it was after the final credits had begun to roll. Thankfully, he is not nearly as annoying as he is in the video games. Knuckles, on the other hand, was voiced by Idris Elba ("The Suicide Squad"). I, honestly, has never really considered how this character might play out in a film, but how could Elba go wrong? He could not. I thoroughly enjoyed his performance. I just never imagined Knuckles as the all braun and no brain type of character he was portrayed as. Still, I liked it and why should not I? After all, I named by previous vehicle after him. May he Rest In Peace...

"Sonic the Hedgehog 2" is loaded with one-liners, poking fun at the various characters. Reminiscent of the most recent "Ghostbusters"

film, many of the jokes land well, but it becomes so much a part of the tone of the movie that it becomes tiresome at some point. What I thought was better, overall, was the backstory for the new characters. Everything made more sense, as a result. However, it seemed like there was not enough story to carry the film all on its own. By the time Sonic and Tails were competing in a dance-off, I was beginning to wonder if they had run out of ideas. Further down the line, the Wachowskis meet up with Rachel and her new fiancé, Randall, played by Shemar Moore ("Justice League Dark: Apokolips War"). They, basically, had their own little movie within the movie. Did I enjoy that? Yes, as did the rest of the audience, but why was it here? I thought this was Sonic's movie. He and his pals and adventures disappeared for awhile and this was a 122-minute film. Perhaps, with a little bit more tweaking to the editing of the story, it could have been a bit closer to 90 minutes, which is really all you need, especially for a family feature. I am really tempted to chalk this sequel up as an improvement, by comparison to the first movie. I liked all of the new references to the original games, which were largely missing before. If you grew up with the games, you will enjoy the surprises that's await. However, if you halted your playing experiences of the gaming franchise by the turn of the 21st century, as I did, you might not be looking forward to the next installment quite as much. Hopefully it will still be fun, even if it is still not "good."

Final Grade: 6/10 (Adequate)

The Duke Review by Marcus Blake



Another Great British comedy that you should check out! Starring Helen Mirren and Jim Broadbent, the film is called *The Duke*. It's about Kempton Bunton, a 60-year-old taxi driver who was accused of stealing Goya's *Portrait of the Duke of Wellington*. And I have

to say that this was a charming film that made me laugh and certainly appreciate the Great performances of Helen Mirren and Jim Broadbent. Honestly, have they ever made a bad film! British comedies like these are always great for American audiences because it's usually about something that we didn't know much about and in a lot of cases, can relate to. Kempton was a humorous character who was always fighting for the common man, he would get fired from jobs because he stood up to bosses who treated minorities poorly. He would protest the government for unnecessary taxes. One of the most popular British taxes was on the ability to watch the BBC, you had to have a license which would be the equivalent of NBC CBS, or ABC charging to watch their stations if you had a simple TV antenna... Sometimes we don't appreciate the fact that in other countries you had to pay to watch all TV and no TV station was completely free. But he became famous for the alleged crime of stealing a priceless painting and his trial brought shockwaves throughout British society in the 60s. He's the type of character that we can all appreciate because he fights for the rights of the working man.



I enjoyed this movie. It's not the best movie ever seen, but it's a heartwarming and charming film with great performances. The entire cast does a great job in telling this funny and inspiring story that happened 60 years ago. I would say that Jim Broadbent is perfect for this character if you've ever watched any old footage of Kempton Bunton... He gives a delightful performance that will keep you laughing all the way to the end of the film. Overall, the pacing is good and the film doesn't drag on. It's only about 90 minutes so you won't feel like you're sitting there too long watching this movie. The movie doesn't really need to be any longer than it is for you to know the basic story. And like most period films that are set in England, you will get a great history lesson of what it was like at that time, especially the political climate. In a lot of ways, it kind of reminds me of *Pirate Radio*. But the film isn't without its problems. Like all films that tell a true story, especially a historical one, there's only so much of the story that you can really tell within a 90 or 120-minute run time. There's obviously more to this story than what we've seen in the film. While I enjoyed the film immensely, it did leave me

wanting to know more. It left me with more questions about the main characters and the aftermath of what happened. Sometimes a documentary works better in telling the overall story. I wonder if a documentary about what happened would not have been better. But a documentary can't capture wonderful performances by great actors. The film's biggest flaw is not pacing or unlikable characters that can distract you from the overall story, it's that the film only centers on a small part of the overall story. I feel like as an audience we need to know more about these characters and how they got to the point where the painting was stolen. And we certainly want to know more about them after the trial, but the film only gives us a glimpse. If there's one thing that this film does very well, it will make you curious enough to go do research on the characters and the whole story... Maybe that's the point. After all, there's only so much story you can tell in 90 minutes so it's a bit of a catch-22. If it feels like a perfect 90-minute movie, it's only part of the story. Overall, it's a good film, made great by the performances of Helen Mirren and Jim Broadbent. They create such likable characters that you root for them throughout the film and you want to know more about the real characters in the story. As I said before, the film is charming, and it will keep you laughing. It's a nice distraction if you're having a bad week. But I do think that a documentary about the whole story would be better. Then again, I don't really want that because it can't capture the great performance of Jim Broadbent who brought the character of Kempton Bunton to life. It's definitely worth the price of a matinee at the theater with a nice glass of wine, but you certainly wouldn't be wasting your money if you rent it on demand for dinner and movie night. There are so films that are a waste of time, this one is not so I encourage you to check it out... You will not be disappointed, even if you only watch it once!

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

The Bad Guys Review by Allison Costa



Although in my heart I will always love classic animation movies, and in more recent years have become a Pixar fan (like almost everyone!), I love when I am pleasantly surprised by a cartoon that has both great animation, characters, witty banter, humor, and

a good message! And the new movie "The Bad Guys" had it all! That's right it did...maybe you should buy your tickets now!



The movie is based on a children's book and around 4 stereotypical bad guys—A wolf, a snake, a shark, and a piranha. The movie also added a Tarantula to this group (who is not in the novel and made her female. This helped tie in nicely with the other main character, who is also a female and former "bad guy"). The plot seems simple enough—this nefarious group of bad guys who have been robbing and committing crimes for years finally gets caught. Instead of going to jail, they manage to manipulate a deal where the "Good Citizen of the year", will help them to reform their behavior. Of course, we all know there is going to be a plot twist, but even though it's expected they still manage to do it with style and even incorporate messages about friendship and relationships that I feel are important for children to see. The action sequences are great and the animation has both 2D and 3D moments where things are layered so it's very visually pleasing as well. It isn't just a typical Pixar film. Everything works with the animations and makes the film better. And let's not count out the cast. The film has an amazing cast starting with Sam Rockwell and Awkwafina

My kids loved it from start to finish and I found that I wasn't bored or stuck thinking this was another trite political commentary (such as happened in "Ron's Gone Wrong"). It is definitely not on the same level as the recent animated musical "Encanto," but still holds its own for what it is—a funny, feel-good, action-packed story about a group of misfits turned good. There are definitely allusions to "Ocean's Eleven" for the grown-ups as well. Even the soundtrack is pretty great! I feel that young kids all the way to pre-teens and even teenagers would enjoy this film and have a good time. You can always wait until it is streaming, but it felt a little more exciting on the Big Screen!

Final Grade: 9/10 (Great)

TEXAS FILMMAKER DOESN'T MAKE THE SUPERHERO MOVIE WE WANT, BUT THE ONE WE NEED!

A Review of Green Ghost: and the Masters of the Stone

By Marcus Blake
FROM "THE MAVERICK OPINION"



When you get together with your friends and make a movie it should always be fun and it should come across in the film. That's what I saw when watching the Texas film, *Green Ghost and the Masters of the Stone*. Charlie Clark, an El Paso car dealer made a film about superheroes with a great Hispanic cast including Danny Trejo. Now I know what you're thinking, some car salesmen just up and made a movie, it can't be that good! Is it on the same level as a Marvel movie, no, but it doesn't have to be, to be a fun movie! That's why we go to the movies, we want to be entertained, we want to have fun. That's exactly what superhero movies are for, they're not meant to be *Citizen Kane* or *Schindler's List*. But not all superhero movies have to be on the same level as Marvel or DC, you can still make an independent superhero movie and it can be fun and entertaining. And it can certainly be worth watching! That's what this movie is. It was fun and I can't wait to watch it again. I think the best part about this movie is it doesn't take itself too seriously, it knows what it is and it's not trying to be an *Avengers* Movie or *Justice League*. The most brilliant part of this movie is the overdubbing and homage to Asian martial

arts movies that have bad dubbing. It feels like a martial arts movie from the '70s.

Who makes those kinds of movies anymore! As I watch the film, I honestly felt like Charlie Clark and people he knew in the film industry just got together and had fun making a movie with a lot of different tropes you see in superhero movies and martial arts movies. Too many times a film will try to be something that it's not. It'll try to be too serious when it should just be entertaining. Martial arts action movies aren't meant to be inspiring and give us great life lessons, we watch them for the action. The same thing with a superhero movie. So when you have a superhero film that is more of a satire about a superhero's origin story, you have to appreciate that kind of filmmaking. We know what we get with Marvel in DC, but a satire with lots of great action and cool special effects that would rival any Marvel movie, yes please, give me that kind of film just to be entertained.



These are the kinds of movies that turn out to be cult classics. The story is about a car salesman who learns that he is part of a bigger destiny, where he, along with family members have to save the world. He has secret powers and when the family unites, they use the power of a magic Stone to defeat darkness and stave off the Apocalypse. Yes, of course, we've heard this kind of story before, but that's not the point. What if you had a superhero who can't unlock his full potential unless he wears his Mexican wrestler outfit, hence the Green Ghost, which is brilliant! Sure, it's a little bit goofy, and of course, you have the drunken martial arts wise men, one of them played

by Danny Trejo. Yes, not original, but still funny, just like the machete movies.



My point is sometimes superhero movies take themselves too seriously and to make one that is more of a satire makes for a better film than half the stuff we see every year and review that's critics. What Charlie Clark is giving us is a fun goofy superhero movie that will keep us entertained and I will even admit that it is a better film than some of the Marvel origin stories. Not only did they put together a great Hispanic cast with Kuno Becker, Marko Zaror, Renée Victor, Sofia Pernas, Elpidia Carrillo, Pepe Serna, and Danny Trejo. *Green Ghost* is a well-put-together film that looks just as good as any superhero movie that we ever reviewed. Plus, it's nice to have a superhero film where you get a bit of an antihero. It's clear that this was a passion project by Charlie Clark and it's a good one. I like the film very much and even though it's not the best superhero movie ever made, it's a funny, goofy, satirical action movie that's just great entertainment. That's something I can't always say about a movie. It's one I think everybody should check out. It may not get a wide release in theaters, so what, it's definitely worth the rental, and I for one look forward to owning a copy on Blu-ray. It may not be the superhero movie we really wanted, but it's the one we need these days. I applaud the efforts of Charlie Clark and his crew in making a fun Texas superhero movie that gives moviegoers pure entertainment.

WE SUPPORT THE WORLD OF HARRY POTTER, NOT J.K. ROWLING!

DFW Host Club and The Secrets of Dumbledore

By Aclairic Ambroisio



Who knew that the DFW Host Club, a cosplay group that puts on events all over, well, DFW, would get their own owl? For those who are unaware, the DFW Host Club is based off the anime *Ouran Highschool Host Club*, which is about a group of rich kids who use their extensive wealth to put on events for their equally wealthy female classmates. However, one member is a scholarship student who winds up indebted to the club, who gets dragged along in their antics. We were invited to an early screening of the newest *Fantastic Beasts* installment, *Secrets of Dumbledore*. We were given a decent amount of tickets to attend as well, and thus made a contest to invite guests along as dates. We were happy to get a slew of people asking to join us.

However, there was a moment where we wondered if it would be okay to see the movie. If you know anything about J.K. Rowling and her intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community concerning transmen and transwomen, then you'd understand our concern. Our group is supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Would attending be saying we supported J.K. Rowling?

"Does the contract say we need to post about it in a positive light?" The agent we worked with said no. So, we decided to go. Mainly because we saw this as a great opportunity to make posts showing support. It's okay to have liked or still like Harry Potter. We wanted people to know that they could—but to be more wary of buying official merchandise and to support local artists instead, and to donate to charities that support trans rights.

Now, you might be wondering if that's true, after all, *Secrets of Dumbledore* must be in reference to his gay relationship with Grindelwald, right? Well, it was. But it was terrible. Not to say the movie was terrible. The movie was... well, all right. The costume design work was fabulous. And the fight scenes had very intricate graphics and the sets were also just, on par, as expected. But we already knew that Grindelwald was a bad guy.



I didn't need another movie telling me how bad a guy he was. And when we made it to the points where Dumbledore would mention that he was in love, or they were in love... I was expecting to see something. Perhaps a flashback of when he and Grindelwald were younger. Touching scenes or hell, one kiss. Just one kiss. This is 2022! Are we still scared of queer people kissing? I, dressed as Kyouya Ootori, sat beside my date as we shared some popcorn, watching the final showdown between Dumbledore and Grindelwald with a dissatisfied expression that locked my brows together. "Kiss!" I hissed loudly in the theater, and the Host Club giggled around me. We left the theater with the Warner Bros representative asking if we'd rate the movie. "Zero out of ten, not gay enough." The group joked. We're unsure if they marked down our not-so-serious but 100% serious statement.

You see, there's a thing called "queerbaiting", where media alludes to gay representation but then proceeds to cut back on it or make it a misunderstanding in the media's canon. *Secrets of Dumbledore* had a lot of potential for queer representation, but they failed to take it. Ah well. The DFW Host Club still had a great time! And really, that's all that matters. Make sure to support your local LGBTQ+ communities and charities, such as [The Trevor Project!](#)

'The Old Man': FX Sets June Premiere Date for Jeff Bridges Series



A new **FX** drama is returning **Jeff Bridges** to action for a seven-episode season that begins on Thursday, June 17 at 10 PM ET/PT on FX, with streaming available the next day on Hulu. FX's *The Old Man* will premiere with the first two episodes of its seven-episode season. The series will soon be available on Star+ in Latin

America and Disney+ under the Star banner in all other territories.

Based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Thomas Perry, *The Old Man* centers on "Dan Chase" (Bridges), who absconded from the CIA decades ago and has been living off the grid since. When an assassin arrives and tries to take Chase out, the old operative learns that to ensure his future he now must reconcile his past. With Dan Chase flushed out of hiding, the FBI's Assistant Director for Counterintelligence "Harold Harper" (John Lithgow) is called on to hunt him down because of his complicated past with the rogue fugitive. Working alongside Harper is his protégé "Angela Adams" (Alia Shawkat) and CIA Special Agent "Raymond Waters" (E.J. Bonilla).

When Chase proves to be more difficult to apprehend than the authorities expected, "Julian Carson" (Gbenga Akinnagbe), a highly trained special ops contractor, is sent to pursue him. While on the run, Chase rents a room from "Zoe McDonald" (Amy Brenneman) who draws on reserves she never knew she had in order to survive the day when she learns the truth about her new tenant. Bill Heck, Leem Lubany, and Pej Vahdat also star in the drama series. Teleplay and created for television by Jonathan E. Steinberg & Robert Levine, *The Old Man* is executive produced by Warren Littlefield, Steinberg, Dan Shotz, Levine, Jeff Bridges, David Schiff and Jon Watts, who also directed the first two episodes. The series is produced by 20th Television in association with The Littlefield Company. Reported by [Deadline.com](#)



'Casper' Live-Action TV Series in Works at Peacock From 'The Ghost Bride's Kai Yu Wu



Casper the Friendly Ghost is coming back to television in a brand new incarnation reminiscent of *Riverdale's* darker interpretation of the Archie comics. Peacock is developing *Casper*, a live-action, horror/adventure series, which reimagines the origin of Casper in a coming-of-age story that explores what it means to be alive. Set in high school, *Casper* is written/executive produced

by *The Ghost Bride* head writer Kai Yu Wu. In it, when a new family arrives in the small town of Eternal Falls, Casper finds himself entangled in a mystery uncovering dark secrets that have been buried for over 100 years. *Casper* is produced by UCP, a division of Universal Studio Group, and DreamWorks Animation.

Casper originated as an affable translucent ghost featured in a slew of animated movies by Famous Studios released between 1945 and 1959. That's when the character was acquired by Harvey Comics, which had published Casper comics since 1952. Since then, Casper has headlined a slew of comic books, five animated television series, *Matty's Funday Funnies*, *The New Casper Cartoon Show*, *Casper and the Angels*, *The Spooktacular New Adventures of Casper* and *Casper's Scare School*, as well as Universal Pictures' 1995 live-action

feature *Casper*. In 2001, Harvey Entertainment was acquired by Classic Media. In 2012, Classic Media was bought by DreamWorks Animation, which in turn was acquired by Universal Pictures parent NBCUniversal in 2016.

Like was the case in the 1995 movie, which starred Malachi Pearson, who voiced the title character, Christina Ricci and Bill Pullman, the new live-action *Casper* series is expected to feature CGI effects. Wu serves as an executive producer on drama *AZNBBGRL*, which was recently picked up to pilot by Freeform. She previously was developer/head writer on another supernatural series, Netflix's *The Ghost Bride*, and serves as co-executive producer on the upcoming Disney+ series, *American Born Chinese*. Writing credits also include The CW's *The Flash* and NBC's *Hannibal*. Reported by [Deadline.com](#)



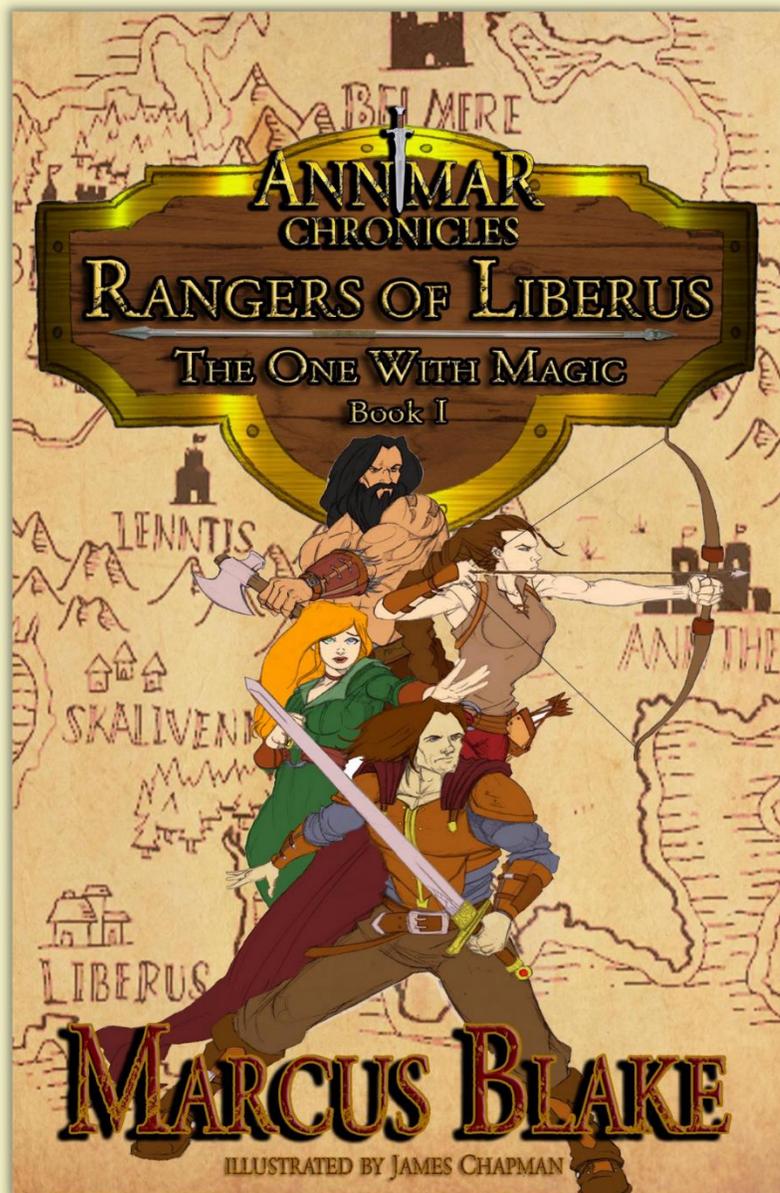


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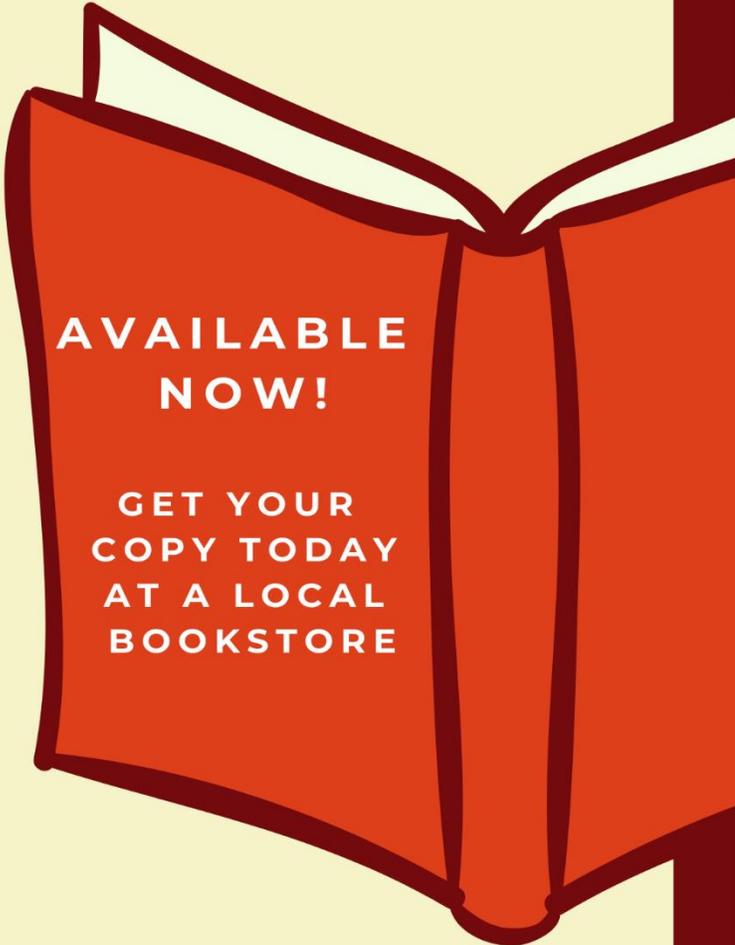
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WHAT YOU SHOULD BINGE-WATCH

Outer Range: Season 1

Review by Marcus Blake



The Twilight zone meets the old west! What if you took the show *Yellowstone*, added the *Twilight Zone*, and mixed it in with a little *X-Files*... You would come up with the show *Outer Range*. That's not an insult, that's just the best way that I can describe this show. Some fans won't get it, but fans of Sci-Fi, you definitely want to check out the new Amazon drama. Starring Josh Brolin, Lilly Taylor, and Imogen Poots, the show takes us to the last of the American frontier where nothing is quite what it seems when a mysterious hole opens up on a rancher's land. And yes, you will feel like you're in the *Twilight zone* at times. This show might feel like a western, but it very much is a Sci-Fi show bringing the audience the mysteries of time and space. It's a slow burn as you unravel the mystery, but mixed in with great drama, just when you think you have it figured out, another mystery unfolds. The first season

does leave you with a lot more questions than it does answers and that's not a complaint, but great sci-fi leaves more mysteries than answers. It's the unknown that drives those kinds of stories and makes them worth watching. However, I would say that for fans of *Yellowstone* who are looking for a similar show on Amazon, this is not it. Outward appearances would make you think that this is a show like *Yellowstone*, but far from it.

First, let me say that I do like the show, and I think fans of sci-fi should definitely check it out, but it is one that I feel fans will have to watch more than once. There's a lot to unpack. There are lots of questions but mixed with good performances from Josh Brolin and Imogen Poots. The story really takes off when a rancher just trying to survive finds a mysterious hole that gives off more life-changing mysteries than he would probably care to know. The main characters are the Abbott Family, and they are already dealing with heartache, then a mysterious figure shows up played by Imogen Poots who seems drawn to the land. You won't really find out why until the last episode. It is one of the few mysteries that are solved. But this show is a slow Burn and little by little it builds up to one hell of a ride in the last episode. It's only eight episodes in the first season and in a lot of ways that's kind of perfect. While at times I found the show to be a little slow, please realize that every little thing is connected to something else and keeps building for the audience to understand the mysteries surrounding this hole, which is the heart of the story. Josh Brolin is magnificent in *Outer Range*. It's hard to know whether he's a bad guy or simply just a guy trying to protect his family, but no matter what you feel sympathetic towards his character. And I have to applaud the performance of Imogen Poots. Her character may be the most serious of them all and while you look at her as kind of an enemy disrupting the life of the simple people, her character too is sympathetic and it's hard to pick which side or the other as her character goes head-to-head with Josh Brolin's. I do like the pacing because you get this great family story, again, they're just trying to survive and you're dealing with this mysterious thing that nobody can explain on the land while also dealing with a so-called

murder. There's many layers to the story and often at times, you feel like the hole, which is supposed to be at the center of the whole thing, takes a back seat to all of the other little stories going on. It's kind of brilliant.



As much as I liked this show, it's not without its problems. It is a Sci-Fi show, but sometimes you feel like it's trying to be something else. This show could have easily been a murder mystery thriller without any sci-fi elements. Sometimes that part of the story is distracting as the characters are trying to figure out what's going on with the whole especially when you're dealing with visions of the future. And let's face it by the fifth episode all the way to the end, you're wondering if this story is in another time or dimension. Yes, that's brilliant for the *Twilight zone* or the *Outer Limits*, but this is where I am confused when the show is trying to be something it may not be. I won't give away any spoilers. When it comes to the whole mystery of the first season, everybody should experience that and have the same bewilderment I did. That's not a bad thing, it does make us yearn for season two which I hope we get because there are too many unanswered questions. I like the fact that more shows are going to 6 to 8 episodes even 10 episode seasons. We've proven that you can tell a great story over this length. I also feel like the slow Burn is a little much by the time you get to the last half of the show. I do warn watchers that it will take a few episodes to get into it before you start unlocking a lot of the mysteries that will keep you going until the end. That's not

necessarily a bad thing, but it's hard to keep an audience vested especially when you can't binge-watch the entire season. That's really Amazon's biggest downfall with this show is only getting to watch two episodes at a time. My recommendation is to wait for it to be done and just binge-watch all eight episodes over a weekend. Outer Range is strange and intense, leaving you wanting more. The first season does a good enough job to create an overall mystery that will keep you coming back because your curiosity demands it. I stand by my analogy that it's Yellowstone meets The Twilight Zone and this is what makes the show Good. It's not a perfect sci-fi and the writers do a good enough job to give you a linear story with a slow Burn over eight episodes instead of drawing out everything of 20 like you're watching a season of Lost. Amazon has always been known for great drama and sci-fi. Man in the High Castle is one of the best original Amazon shows, Outer Range may not be as good, but it is worth checking out. Josh Brolin, Lily Taylor, and Imogen Poots have standout performances that will make you want to watch the next episode. 8 episodes were perfect because of there had been any more without any answers, this show wouldn't have been as good, but unfortunately, it is a show that you will want to binge all at once and that's the biggest problem with Outer Range. For fans of The X-Files, this is a modern X-Files type of story that is certainly better than the last two seasons of The X-Files. For fans of sci-fi, I highly recommend Outer Range and hope they get a season 2 because that would certainly do the first season of disservice

Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)

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Very British Scandal: Season 2 Review

Review by Danielle Butler



Another season of a Very British Scandal! Claire Foy plays the beautiful and alluring Margaret Sweeney who wins the heart of Ian Campbell, the 11th Duke of Argyll. The story unfolds how the passionate flames that sparked their love become the tumultuous downfall of their marriage. This is story is one of the biggest scandals of the 60s and a story of revenge for the "dirty duchess." This season was fabulous! I didn't know if I would like it, but, I couldn't get enough it.

Unfortunately, what the short mini-series does not tell you is how Margaret Sweeney formally Margaret Whigham became the Margaret Campbell we see on-screen during their divorce scandals. She was a popular high society woman catching the eyes of the most eligible bachelors in London. She eventually married a wealthy American, Charles Sweeney, and had three children with him. Their 1933 wedding was widely reported in the press; the couple divorced in 1947. The mini-series begins with the Duke of Argyll meeting Margaret on a train and married quickly after. Their 12-year marriage was far from a happy and comfortable. The Duke battled several addictions including alcohol, prescription pills, and gambling and was cold and abusive. There were reports from both of his previous wives of physical and emotional abuse.

To the public, Margaret is promiscuous adulterous with numerous infidelities. What we see is her being strong willed, her outrage and wit, her audacity to take matters into her own hands and not submit to the power of a husband of high stature in a time when a woman was supposed to be a 'good girl' and 'submissive

wife.' Her various male friends testifying in their relationship was strictly platonic. True to real life, we see in the mini-series, the Duke ransacking her home, stealing her diary, personal documents, and letters to use against her in court.

Coincidentally, he also found pornographic photos of a man with the Duchess that she claims is the Duke himself. The case grew media and public attention with these photos know as 'revenge porn' and around 90 men were summoned in the search for the "headless man" in the photographs. Margaret claimed her husband slept with her father's wife which she was advised against her counsel but after her father died and the fact that she believed he married her for money and gambled it away she was ready to fight for herself in court. Spoiler alert (!) if you don't already, sadly the court did not allow Margaret to give her side of the story threatening imprisonment which furthered the slander of her name and reputation. She was called out for lying about the Duke's son being his and defamation of their mother, the Duke's ex-wife, Jane. The judgment took hours painting Margaret as a floozy and ruining her reputation. To quote the court Margaret is, "a completely promiscuous woman whose sexual appetite could only be satisfied with a number of men." She was later known as the "dirty duchess."

The cruelty of the media changed how cases are held to ensure both sides of the story are heard which created a huge media frenzy and public humiliation for the Duchess.

The performances are what make this series remarkable. Claire Foy did an excellent job of portraying the wide array of emotions Margaret that the Duchess of Argyll went through during her 12-year marriage. She represented how multifaceted, stoic, and intricate Margaret was. Claire Foy is charming and paints quite a picture of the woman whose name was dragged through the mug. We do not see much about Margaret's near-fatal fall down a lift shaft as famously noted in 1943. However, it was mentioned in the series. The was a very intriguing story filled with layers of complicated truths you'll want to see. I was hooked and you will be too.

Final Grade: 9/10 (Great)



Hardy Boys: Season 2

Review Allison Costa



In a surprise twist of date, the “Hardy Boys” series is quickly becoming a new favorite teenage mystery/drama of mine. When the CW originally debuted the new series of “Nancy Drew,” I was so excited! If you grew up reading Nancy Drew, then you were probably pretty excited too! But they lost me as a viewer in the very first episode when they decided to make Nancy Drew a promiscuous delinquent and focus the show entirely around creepy supernatural encounters. I guess with the absence of their former fan-favorite “Supernatural” this was the direction they chose. Which was a bummer when I had been hoping for some classic sleuthing either set decades back or brought into today’s society—either model would have been okay. But they chose to deviate completely from the original Nancy Drew so that their version and the one in novels share nothing more than a name.

So, a while later when Hulu dropped the premiere of “The Hardy Boys”, I was not super excited again. It came without a lot of fanfare or expectations, and I worried it might be like it’s counterpart if Nancy Drew but, I decided to give it a try anyway. The first season was pretty good—it’s a period piece so it was nice to see that they stuck with that and added a few supernatural elements, but not so much as to ruin the show. The acting was decent and I was curious about what the future held.

Fast forward to the second season of “The Hardy Boys” recently being dropped and I am definitely ready to recommend this show! It has elements of early Riverdale (before the show got too trashy and ridiculous), while also carrying on the tradition of small-town detectives, honor, and mystery. There are a few anachronisms as far as societal norms of the time, but I think this is the platform’s way of bringing the show into a space where it is still a

period piece but also cognizant of what today’s society is like, so I can see how many young viewers would appreciate that.

The actors are more comfortable this season and you can really see them coming into their roles. They don’t have the same dynamics as the “Stranger Things” gang just yet but getting closer to that kind of camaraderie. There are decent bad guys. Great twists in the episode plots. There are plenty of feel-good moments along with a lot of suspense and drama. While the CW typically reigns supreme when it comes to teenage drama shows, Hulu is definitely holding its own with “The Hardy Boys”. I feel it’s far superior in its writing and characters than the Nancy Drew remake. Check it out and see for yourself! You won’t be disappointed.

Final Grade: 9/10 (Great)

The Last Bus: Season 1

Review Allison Costa



I had high hopes for the new British teen drama/sci-fi show, “The Last Bus”. Even the first 2 episodes kept up the intrigue and were

promising! I expected it to be great!! Sadly, it all went downhill from there. Even though the premise is promising—eccentric tech-billionaire/philanthropist decides he will solve humanity’s problems by designing drones that eradicate people! That’s truly the only promising thing about the entire show. The plot goes nowhere, and the main cast of characters starts out as quirky and endearing, and then they quickly become irritating and stereotypical. I’m not sure if they don’t have a lot of acting experience or if the directors just told them to “over-act” their characters or what, but it honestly gets painful to watch. I wish that wasn’t true

The series begins with the billionaire inviting chosen teenagers and people from different countries around the world to come and listen to his new invention pitch. However, his diatribe turns into an ambush almost instantly and his machines simply start killing everyone. Well, they more dissolve them into oblivion. There is a core group of ragtag teenagers who somehow manage to survive and get back to their bus—which is ridiculous in its own right because they have zero skills other than pure luck. Their teacher sacrifices himself so they can arrive safely but then they don’t really know where to go. They manage to drive back to their hometown only to discover that all of the people are gone. It’s unclear whether everyone has been dissolved there as well or simply evacuated. For some unknown reason, they decide their high school is the best place for them to hide out? I feel like the writers and producers of those series both tried to go for something altogether new and inventive while at the same time pulling elements from 80’s high school coming of age movies, and it just didn’t go together like they thought it would.

In comparing this series with something like “Stranger Things” you can see how quickly it falls flat and is both dull and cheesy at the same time. The technology is both far-fetched and lame and although the drones are supposed to be “menacing”, it just never quite clicks. To top it off, the main nerd of the group forms a bond with one of the rogue drones and they try to throw in an A.I. component as well.

Robert Sheehan, from “The Umbrella Academy” is probably the only shunting light of the show. And the last couple of episodes improve slightly as he comes back, but that’s truly it. Perhaps if they had a truly amazing cast, better acting, better writing, better directing, and more believable sub-plots with more danger, it could have been something. So basically, a whole new show. As it is, there really aren’t any redeeming characteristics to speak of I am sad to say. Despite all the hype and the articles before release saying to “put this show at the top of your list”, if you are looking for an edgy-new-coming of age teen drama—Keep looking. Because this surely isn’t it.

Final Grade: 4/10 (Below Average)





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GAMING NEWS

SNK'S NEW HIT TITLE THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV TO JOIN EVOLUTION CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES (EVO) 2022



SNK's newest hit title THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV to be part of the EVO 2022, the largest fighting game tournament in the world this August

SNK Corporation is delighted to announce that it's latest hit title THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV, will be joining the impressive line-up at this

year's Evolution Championship Series (EVO) 2022. The largest fighting game tournament in the world, EVO 2022 is officially back in an offline capacity this year and welcoming fans to its iconic home in Las Vegas with a combination of new and returning fighting games on August 5-7 at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV will feature alongside eight other iconic titles, **Chief Producer Yasuyuki Oda at SNK said:** "We're so delighted to be a part of this year's EVO tournament with THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV. We've had great success with the game since its launch last month and can't wait to let the game shine in the largest and longest-running fighting game tournament in the world! EVO has such a great history, celebrating some of the best fighting game titles and players on the planet, and

it's really great to be able to be a part of that." Registration is open now and fans can purchase tickets at evo.gg. Hotel rooms will be available at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. For those who want to watch, tournaments will be streamed live for the entirety of the event. **About THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV**

Since its debut in 1994, the KOF fighting game series has been driving the world to new heights of excitement with its appealing characters and unique game system. Six years have passed since the last title in the series, and now KOF XV surpasses all of its predecessors in terms of graphics, systems, and online experience! EVO 2022 MEDIA ASSET:

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"OUTRIDERS WORLDSLAYER" NEW CAMPAIGN, NEW FEATURES, NEW ENDGAME COMING 6/30



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<https://sqex.link/WorldslayerSpotlightESRB> *OUTRIDERS WORLDSLAYER* is a brutal 1-3

player co-op looter shooter set in an original, dark sci-fi universe, where you create will your own Outrider from one of four powerful classes. Begin with the original *OUTRIDERS* campaign or use the all-new Level 30 Boost to jump straight into the *WORLDSLAYER* content with a fully geared up Outrider and journey across the diverse and deadly planet of Enoch. Face off against the most deadly Altered ever encountered, Ereshkigal, in humanity's last fight for survival. Beyond her, even greater horrors exist in the ultimate endgame experience, taking place in the ancient ruins of Tarya Gratar. Combining aggressive gunplay with violent powers and an arsenal of increasingly twisted customisable weaponry and gear-sets, *OUTRIDERS WORLDSLAYER* offers countless hours of visceral gameplay from one of the finest shooter developers in the industry – People Can Fly. "We can't wait for players to experience *WORLDSLAYER*. In addition to a

whole new story, we've introduced a number of new features that really expands and improves on everything players loved about the original game," said Bartek Kmita, Creative Director at People Can Fly. "*WORLDSLAYER* includes nearly a hundred new legendary items, higher gear level caps, Apocalypse tier difficulty, Apocalypse gear, and new ways to progress your Outrider with the all-new PAX tree and Ascension levels. Not to mention the Trial of Tarya Gratar, a new endgame experience that's different from anything we've done in *OUTRIDERS* before". *OUTRIDERS WORLDSLAYER* will be available on PlayStation®5, PlayStation®4, Xbox Series X|S, Xbox One, PC Steam, Epic and Windows Store, Google Stadia and Nvidia GeForce Now on June 30th, 2022.

Existing *OUTRIDERS* owners can purchase the *WORLDSLAYER* Upgrade to access *WORLDSLAYER* content.

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We're bringing together PlayStation Plus and PlayStation Now in an all-new PlayStation Plus subscription service that provides more choice to customers across three membership tiers globally. Our focus is on providing high-quality, curated content with a diverse portfolio of games*. Below is an overview of the three membership tiers:

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- United Kingdom: £13.49 monthly / £39.99 quarterly / £99.99 yearly
- Japan: ¥1,550 – monthly / ¥4,300 – quarterly / ¥10,250 yearly

PlayStation Plus Deluxe (Select Markets) For markets without cloud streaming, PlayStation Plus Deluxe will be offered at a lower price compared to Premium, and includes a catalog of beloved classic games from the original PlayStation, PS2 and PSP generations to download and play, along with time-limited game trials. Benefits from Essential and Extra tiers are also included. Local pricing will vary by market.

The new Extra and Premium tiers represent a major evolution for PlayStation Plus. With these tiers, our key focus is to ensure that the hundreds of games we offer will include the best quality content that sets us apart. At launch, we plan to include titles such as Death Stranding, God of War, Marvel's Spider-Man, Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Mortal

Kombat 11, and Returnal. We're working closely with our imaginative developers from PlayStation Studios and third-party partners to include some of the best gaming experiences available with a library that will be regularly refreshed. More details to come on the games we'll have on our new PlayStation Plus service. When the new PlayStation Plus service launches, PlayStation Now will transition into the new PlayStation Plus offering and will no longer be available as a standalone service. PlayStation Now customers will migrate over to PlayStation Plus Premium with no increase to their current subscription fees at launch. As this is a massive launch effort, we're rolling out the new PlayStation Plus offering in a phased regional approach. In the June timeframe, we'll begin with an initial launch in several markets in Asia, followed by North America, Europe and the rest of the world where PlayStation Plus is offered. We aim to have most PlayStation Network territories live with our new



PlayStation Plus game subscription service by the end of the first half of 2022. We also plan to expand our cloud streaming benefit to additional markets, and will provide more details at a later date. Building upon more than 25 years of expertise in gaming innovation, this change to our subscription services highlights our continued efforts to evolve our network services business to match our customer's preferences. With the all-new PlayStation Plus, we're focused on delivering a compelling game subscription service with curated content from our exclusive PlayStation Studios team and our third-party partners. The newly enhanced PlayStation Plus will enable our fans to discover and engage with more content than ever before, and deepen their connection with the PlayStation community through shared experiences. We're providing an early look at our new PlayStation Plus subscription service today, and we'll plan to share more information with you as we get closer to launch. Stay tuned

NACON UNVEILS “HELL IS US”, THE NEW GAME FROM ROGUE FACTOR



NACON is pleased to announce *Hell is Us*, a new and major project from development studio **Rogue Factor**. The creative director on the project is **Jonathan Jacques-Belletête**, renown for his work on *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* and more recently *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy* before joining the team. Having been in development for several years, *Hell is Us* is the studio's most ambitious project to date. *Hell is Us* is a third-person action-adventure game set in a semi-open world where the main character sets out to learn more about his past in a country ravaged by civil war. The almost total self-sufficiency of the country hides a dark secret: the recent appearance of supernatural creatures resembling ancient headstones and monuments

in the region. The citizens call this phenomenon “the Calamity”. Armed with weapons specially forged to fight these monsters, the protagonist must learn how to defeat them and use his equipment wisely.

Hell is Us is a game in a new genre, one where players explore environments to find information all by themselves. “Our goal with *Hell is Us* is to bring back true adventure and exploration,” said Jonathan Jacques-Belletête, Creative Director on the project. “There’s no need for a detailed quest log or precise waypoint on the map: we want players to feel the thrill of adventure, guided by their feelings and instincts.”

“We are delighted to be able to finally announce this game,” said Alain Falc, CEO of NACON. “As a publisher, we always want to offer games with original ideas that will appeal to as many people as possible. The first game from Rogue Factor since we acquired it is also one of our most ambitious projects, and we can’t wait to reveal more about it in the coming months.”

Developed in Unreal Engine 5, *Hell is Us* will be available in 2023 on PC, PlayStation®5 and Xbox Series X|S.

About NACON

NACON is a company of the BIGBEN Group founded in 2019 to optimize its know-how through strong synergies in the video game market. By bringing together its 16 development studios, the publishing of AA video games, the design and distribution of premium gaming devices, NACON focuses 20 years of expertise at the service of players. <https://www.nacongaming.com/>

About Rogue Factor

Rogue Factor is a Canadian video game development studio, founded in 2013 in Montreal. Its mission is to deliver captivating, mature and memorable video game experiences, made for a passionate and experienced audience in search of unique and complex flavors. Rogue Factor is now working on its next flagship title, *Hell is Us*, an ambitious new IP featuring highly distinctive design and aesthetics, which promises to leave no one indifferent. <https://rogue-factor.com/>



“OXIDE ROOM 104” – WILDSPHERE AND PERP GAMES ANNOUNCE PHYSICAL RELEASE FOR THE TERRIFYING HORROR GAME



Publisher Perp Games and Developer WildSphere, are delighted to announce they are partnering to bring a physical version of the body-horror game **Oxide Room 104** to PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 and Switch consoles, Summer 2022. Inspired by escape room mechanics, Oxide Room 104 is a terrifying single player, horror game based inside an old motel. Kidnapped and imprisoned, under the mercy of a ruthless Doctor, you must try to escape the perilous situation and avoid a hideous creature stalking you. You wake up in the bathtub of a motel room, naked, wounded and with no memory of what happened. From this point,

everything you do will lead you to one of four different endings. Three of them are not good at all...

Features

- A hideous creature stalking you at every turn and waiting for your mistakes.
- It is a single player game whose mechanics are based on real-time actions and decision-making. Taking the right decisions is crucial to survive.
- There are many combinations of actions that will affect the chances of escaping or dying.
- Every time you, the main character, die you wake up again in the bathtub, but things in the motel have changed; some options/items are not available, there are new ones, and others are simply not the same..

“One of the first games I played when I was young was *Alone in the Dark*. From that moment on I always dreamed of creating my own horror video game. With each new game I played, *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill*... it went from a dream to almost a challenge in my life. Now, I can release *Oxide Room 104*. It’s more than a new game, it’s part of me. I hope players enjoy it as much as I enjoyed creating it.” says Michael. D. at WildSphere.

“**Oxide Room 104** is inspired by some of the most famous horror film franchises, and it shows. Trying to escape an old motel whilst being stalked by an evil presence is terrifying enough. But wait until you meet the Doctor. Spoiler – you don’t want to meet the Doctor. We are thrilled to be bringing **Oxide Room 104** to PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 and Nintendo Switch,” says Mickey Torode, VP, Perp Games.

SQUARE ENIX AND DISNEY ANNOUNCE DEVELOPMENT OF “KINGDOM HEARTS IV”



20th Anniversary Event Unveils Next Entry in the Award-Winning Game Series that Kicks Off the “Lost Master Arc” in addition to a Brand-New Mobile Game

As part of the 20th anniversary celebration of the KINGDOM HEARTS franchise, SQUARE ENIX® and Disney announced that ***KINGDOM HEARTS IV***, the newest installment in the beloved RPG series, is in early development, and also revealed a brand-new mobile game, ***KINGDOM HEARTS Missing-Link***. In the announcement trailer, Sora makes a triumphant return with an updated look at the beginning of an epic new storyline titled the “Lost Master Arc.” Beginning with Sora facing off in a boss battle against a giant enemy, players are introduced to the Quadratum, a large, expansive city set in a gorgeous, realistic world unlike anything ever seen before in the KINGDOM HEARTS series. Fans will be excited to see the return of Sora’s well-known companions Donald and Goofy, in addition to the first appearance of Strelitzia, a mysterious new character who appears before Sora in this strange new setting. Fans can also look forward to ***KINGDOM HEARTS Missing-Link***, an all-new game for iOS and Android devices, which allows players to embark on adventures from

the realm of Scala ad Caelum into the real world. Players will be able to engage in exhilarating battles against the Heartless and discover a new, original story. A closed beta test is planned for 2022*. “We’re thrilled to celebrate the series’ 20th anniversary with the announcement of two new KINGDOM HEARTS titles,” said KINGDOM HEARTS series Brand Manager, Ichiro Hazama. “We’d like to thank the fans for all of their support over the years, and we can’t wait for them to experience all that’s to come for Sora.”



“Sora is an original Disney video game hero like no other, beloved by our team, and fans across the world. We’ve been honored to work with Tetsuya Nomura and his team for two

decades to introduce these original stories of discovery, courage, and friendship,” said Nana Gadd, Director, Walt Disney Games. “This glimpse into Sora’s next adventure is just the beginning – we can’t wait to show more when the time is right.”

Additionally, the KINGDOM HEARTS team announced that the highly anticipated final chapter of ***KINGDOM HEARTS DARK ROAD*** will be released in August 2022 as a free update to the ***KINGDOM HEARTS Union χ Dark Road*** app. SQUARE ENIX and Disney hosted the ***KINGDOM HEARTS 20th Anniversary*** event in Tokyo, Japan where together with fans, they celebrated the past 20 years of the beloved franchise and provided a first look at what’s to come next. The event also featured a live music performance, a showcase of stained-glass artworks and on-stage appearances from Series Director, Tetsuya Nomura, series’ composer, Yoko Shimomura, and other development members. Fans can enjoy photos from the event on the official social channels and look forward to a recording of the event which will be shared at a later date.

Lastly, there is a variety of anniversary themed merchandise available for pre-order through the official SQUARE ENIX Store. For more information, please visit: <https://sqex.link/5n9x>



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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR SQUAD LEADER!

By K. Scott Cooper

ALIENS: FIRETEAM ELITE AND WHY IT'S THE BEST MULTIPLAYER YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING RIGHT NOW

By K. Scott Cooper



What is the haps Gang, it is I your fearless Squad Leader has returned from my grungy little depression hole with some news for you! So, if you are like me and grew up when the Alien and Aliens were still relative new films you will understand why this game is the “Bug Hunt” you have been waiting for. Yes, more so than that Colonial Marine crap we don’t talk about or the busted AvP game that was well, Busted! So, strap in and watch the ceilings, we are diving into this head first!

So I just want to start off by doing what a normally do and keep things spoil free as I can, but I wanted to address the rocky road that has been the release of this game. When Alien: Fireteam Elite dropped in 2021 it was a late year release in August and was not meet well as the servers were garbage and match making was a joke, not the kind of joke that is funny. More like the kind of joke your drunk sexually frustrated spinster Aunt tells around the Holidays, yeah it wasn’t pretty and that gave it some very well deserved low marks with the console community. Now with that being sad Cold Iron Studios has done well to acknowledge these mistakes and has launched a horde of patches and fixes to improve the game and have continued to listen to their fan-base regarding gaming issues, such as the adding of PC to Console Crossplay, and continued free content

being released as the game travels its first year. So here is to hoping that we see true crossplay with console to console as well as PC, which doesn’t need to make you worry because as it stands now there is no PvP and the game doesn’t need it. Now on to the good stuff Gang! Lets, start off by saying for once a video game follows the cannon universe surrounding the setting of the game and I mean in a big, big way. The game makes every relevant tie in there is to connect to all the franchise films of this series and hints at more amazing things to come. Now the storyline for this game is very simple, you are part of a Colonial Marine fireteam sent to handle a situation involving everyone’s favorite bad guy Weyland – Yutani and all the F*#ked up stuff they do in the name of greed. Which honestly sits nicely in today’s current global struggles with Mega Corps, I have always felt that this will somehow be our future. Aside from my quick political blurb, the storyline keeps you on your toes as you fight

hints at all sorts of amazing stuff that I hope we will see further down the road as releases more content. I hope it isn’t an early push for a sequel as they still have a lot of hurdles to address before that point is even viable. Now before I get ahead of myself, I want to discuss the replay value of this game and clearly spell out that this is not a solo player designed game, it is possible and doable, just extremely difficult and less fun.



The campaign is a quickish one I the grand scheme of things, but that is where things get interesting. Playing one mission with some randoms and then going back to play with friends is a very different experience, not just because of the various loadouts and weapons offered in the game. But its never the same run through twice and the game offers challenge cards to spice things up by adding specific world altering conditions to the level as you go through and replay the game. Such as one card the gives you 3x experience and credits, but it amps up the baddies to overdrive right off the bat and keeps them coming like a fountain of “You Gunna Die!!!”. Yes, this game does have after release cosmetic packs and you know me I am huge a fan of that stuff. However, after playing the game and seeing the potential of the game I bought the Deluxe game upgrade that was offered at release which acts like a year one season pass, gave me more loot than I knew



Xenomorphes and Synthetics as you unravel the hidden mysteries of LV-895. Now the game

what to do with and none of it changed the way the game is played. No broken Xp or Weapon Xp boosts or silly credit boosts that other games run as their bread and butter, plus even if that isn't your thing 90% of the weapons and cosmetics can be discovered by finding hidden loot boxes as you play missions, trust me they make a very specific sound and they are bright orange. They want you to find and use this stuff, the same is said for the lore intel they hide throughout the various missions, they want you to explore and find every little corner they mapped. All of this ties into well that this game uses sound cues as alerts or warnings to objects or baddies hiding around the corner, this is super important and I something I love for immersion reasons. So, if you are that jerk off that doesn't turn down his TV, has bothersome kids in the background, or think you are the gaming worlds shit DJ this is not the game for you. This is a game for Pros and those who have the skills needed for a wonderful teamwork-based survival nightmare that we can all love and enjoy.



Now I know it doesn't seem like this game could get any better, its a decent price for a base game, great storyline and fun content. Cold Iron studios did you one better, not only can you go through and replay the campaign 200 different ways they have two current additional game modes that are unlocked after you defeat the storyline on any difficulty, Horde Mode which is exactly as it sounds, were your Fireteam survives and kills as long as it can and Point Defense were your fire team defends specific objective points from ever more difficult wave after wave. Point Defense being a play mode the released as free post release content and they are planning another mode if not two that will be released later this year of 2022, along with more weapons and cosmetics for everyone. This is a

game that my gaming friends and I have been hitting hard lately, which makes you think about what if you get burnt out on it? You can very easily if you play alone or have a really bad squad, but with everything I have mentioned before it makes getting burnt out that much more difficult when the very point of the game is replay over and over. Comparing this to Back 4 Blood or something along similar lines of play, Alien: Fireteam Elite wins out because it is very simple and very refreshing, a simple throwback done right in a modern release. So, if you haven't picked up this game, you need to! It is free on Game Pass if you want to try it first, but I recommend this as a buy and feel that this game has beat out and will continue beating any other multiplayer release of this year. As everyone watches to see the fate of Activision and has felt the cold sting as Call of Duty has further declined over the years and Halo now following closely behind, Alien: Fireteam Elite gives something of worth and value that will keep your friends buggin you to hunt. So, stay safe, stay classy, and stay crazy!

A collage of EA game covers including Madden NFL 17, Madden NFL 18, Madden NFL 20, FIFA 18, FIFA 19, FIFA 21, Apex Legends, Battlefield 1, Battlefield 4, Battlefield 5, Titanfall, Sims 4, and others. The Xbox Game Pass logo is prominently displayed in green on the left, and the EA logo is in pink on the right. The word 'Play' is written in large pink letters. At the bottom, the text 'Together for one low monthly price!' is written in a yellow, cursive font.



STAR WARS

THE SKYWALKER SAGA

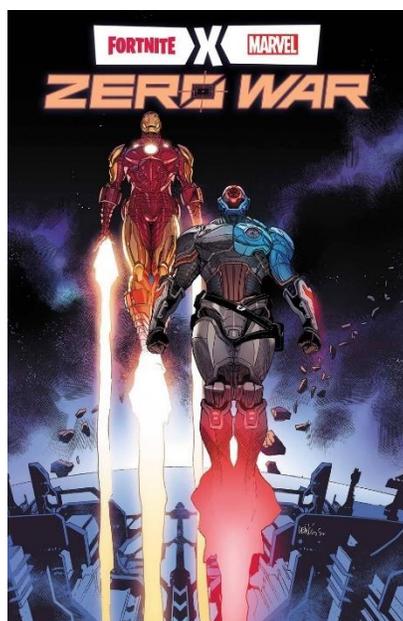


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Iron Man and The Foundation Team Up for a Vital Mission in New 'Fortnite X Marvel: Zero War' #2 Cover



The highly-anticipated limited series **FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR** kicks off in June and right now, fans can get their first look at the covers to issue #2 and learn more about the exclusive access to in-game content that will be available with each issue!

The five-part comic saga will be written by longtime Marvel writer Christos Gage and Epic Games' Chief Creative Officer Donald Mustard and feature art

by Sergio Dávila. The comic's story follows the inhabitants on the Island, who are locked in what seems to be a never-ending war, and only one thing has the potential to turn the tide: a crystallized fragment of the Zero Point that was cast into the Marvel Universe.



As previously announced, each first-print issue of FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #1-5 will contain a code redeemable for a Marvel-themed digital cosmetic in *Fortnite*. Readers of the series will be the first to access these digital cosmetics, which will be exclusive to comic fans for a

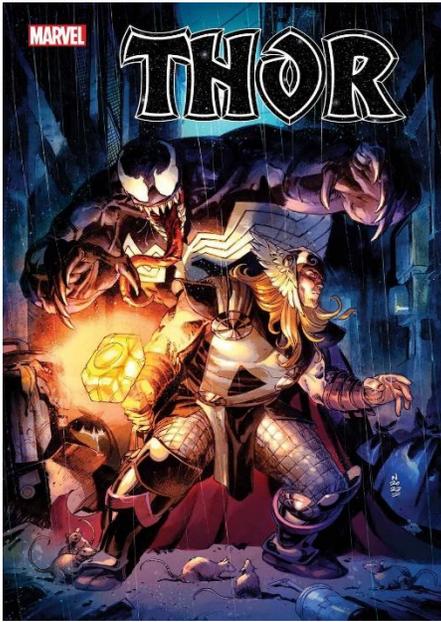
limited time before they become available for purchase in the Fortnite Item Shop. Not only that, select in-game items will ONLY be available with the redeemable codes from the FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR first-print comics.

Here's what Marvel and Fortnite fans can look forward to downloading in the coming months:

- FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #1 – **Outfit**
- FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #2 – **Wrap**
- FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #3 – **Pickaxe**
- FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #4 – **Spray**
- FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #5 – **Loading Screen**
- Plus any fan who redeems all five codes will receive a bonus Outfit!

Arriving in July, **FORTNITE X MARVEL: ZERO WAR #2** will continue the hunt for the Zero Shard. Spider-Man and his allies are led to the outskirts of Wakanda – but no one said getting in would be easy! Meanwhile, Iron Man and The Foundation launch a daring mission into the unknown and stumble upon a game-changing revelation.

Donny Cates Brings Venom to Asgard for a Team-Up of Kings in 'Thor' #27



Two kings of the Marvel Universe will battle alongside each other to combat a new threat to Earth this July! Thor, King of Asgard, and Eddie Brock, the symbiote's King in Black, will set aside any personal differences and join forces in an upcoming arc of Donny Cates and Nic Klein's acclaimed THOR series. Beginning in **THOR #27**, the two-part saga will be Cates' grand reunion with Venom, the character he redefined in his historic VENOM run that came to an end last year. Now delivering that same treatment to Thor, Cates' latest thunderous arc will continue to revolutionize the Thor mythos and raise the stakes for what's been building up since issue #1.

And Venom won't be the only guest star! Superstar artist Salvador Larroca will be drawing this thrilling two-parter, with regular series artist Nic Klein set to return for THOR #29.

"We're so thrilled to have the legendary Salvador Larroca join us as a guest artist

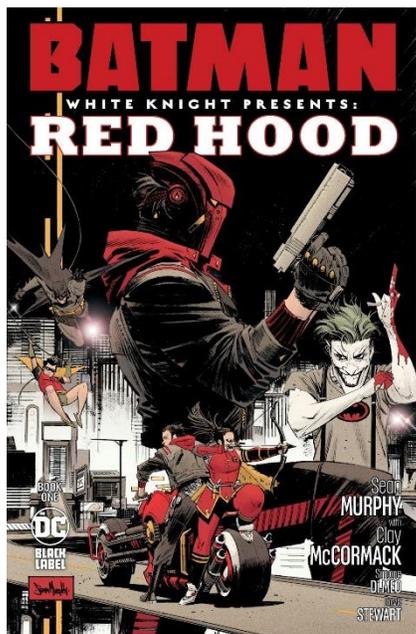
for this story!" said editor Wil Moss. "Donny thought he'd told all the Venom stories he had to tell, but the amazing world building that Ram V, Al Ewing and Bryan Hitch have been doing in their brilliant VENOM series gave Donny an idea for a story that brings the world of Thor and the world of Venom together in a really fresh, exciting way." Don't miss this royal teamup of two of Cates' signature heroes! Check out Klein's cover below and pick up THOR #27 when it hits stands in July!



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The World of Batman: White Knight continues to expand in the exciting new miniseries, **Batman: White Knight Presents: Red Hood!**



The world of Batman: White Knight continues to expand in the exciting new miniseries, **Batman: White Knight Presents: Red Hood!** With things heating up in Neo-Gotham, Jason Todd revisits his post-Robin past to find the one ally he believes will help him turn the tide in the battle against Derek Powers. The first of two issues, co-written by Sean Murphy and Clay McCormack (Bloody Hel) with art by Simone Di Meo (Future State: Harley Quinn) and colors by Dave Stewart (Batman), will be available at local comic shops on July 26.

“People have been asking me for years about Jason Todd in the White Knight universe,” said Sean Murphy. “We are trying to reinvent Jason into the Beyond timeline, while also honoring what made him so compelling for readers in the first place. In Batman: White Knight Presents: Red Hood, there’s definitely a grudge between Jason and Grayson and Batman’s two oldest sons will have to find ways to put their differences behind them in order to save Bruce.” “It’s a thrill for me to help shape the White Knight universe alongside two masters like Sean and Simone,” said Clay McCormack. “Jason’s road is very rough, no matter the universe, and we definitely put him through the ringer here. He’s a hot head with a Batman-sized chip on his shoulder, so

giving him an apprentice who has a much sunnier outlook on Batman creates a frustrating contrast for Jason, and plenty of fun for the reader.”



relentless force for justice in the city...Red Hood! With nobody to answer to, he walks the dangerous line between hero and villain. That is until he meets Gan, a local girl from East Backport who needs his help to save her neighborhood from a super-criminal terrorizing its citizens. And she’s willing to fight alongside him, whatever it takes!

“Working with Sean and Clay is really inspiring, and working with two professionals like them can only help to improve my work,” said Simone Di Meo. “Creating a new Robin is something really exciting to work on, the emotionality of making choices and the relationship with Jason. I can’t wait for fans to be able to see it.”

“Bruce Wayne is Batman.” Four words that saved Jason’s life and destroyed his future forever. Banished by his mentor and damaged by The Joker, the former Robin is left to become something different, something stronger, a



Batman: White Knight Presents: Red Hood #1 will be available at local comic shops on July 26. The first of two issues features a main cover by Sean Murphy, an open to order and 1:50 gold foil variant by Oliver Coipel and a 1:25 variant by Simone Di Meo.

BATMAN: WHITE KNIGHT PRESENTS: RED HOOD #1

Written by SEAN MURPHY and CLAY McCORMACK

Art by SIMONE DI MEO

Cover by SEAN MURPHY

Colors by DAVE STEWART

Variant cover by OLIVIER COIPEL

1:25 variant cover by SIMONE DI MEO

1:50 variant cover by OLIVIER COIPEL

\$4.99 US | 32 pages | 1 of 2 | (All covers card stock)

ON SALE 7/26/22

Fans can get caught up on the [Batman: White Knight Universe](#) with their [DC UNIVERSE INFINITE](#) subscription. Available to all paid subscribers in US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is *Batman: White Knight*, *Batman: Curse of the White Knight*, *Batman: White Knight Presents Harley Quinn* and *Batman: White Knight Presents Von Freeze*. The first issue of *Batman: Beyond the White Knight* recently went back to the [printers](#) and the second issue will be available on April 26.

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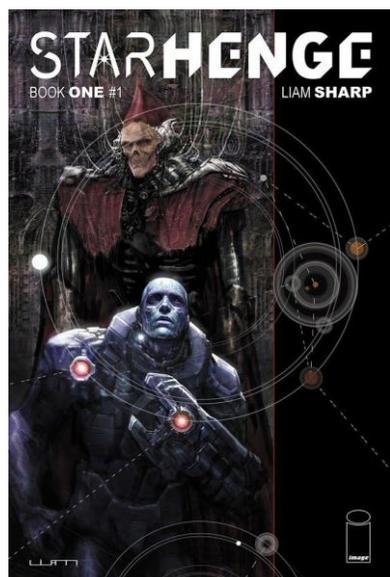
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A TIME-TRAVELING MERLIN IS UP AGAINST HILLER ROBOTS IN FORTHCOMING STARHENGE SERIES OUT THIS JULY



5th-century Britain to prevent monstrous time-traveling killer robots from robbing the universe of magic, and Amber Weaver's lively present-day narrative reveals how she becomes drawn into a war across time. *The Terminator* meets *The Green Knight* in this sprawling 30-page first chapter inspired by the Arthurian legend and infused with sci-fi action. *Starhenge, Book One: The Dragon & the Boar #1* will be available at [comic book shops](#) on Wednesday, July 6:

Cover A by Sharp - [Diamond Code MAY220015](#)

Cover B by Sharp - [Diamond Code MAY220016](#)

Cover C by Chris Weston - [Diamond Code MAY220017](#)

Cover D by Ben Templesmith - [Diamond Code MAY220018](#)

Cover E by Christian Ward - [Diamond Code MAY220019](#)

Cover F by Ryan Brown - [Diamond Code MAY220020](#)

Cover G by Matylda McCormack-Sharp - [Diamond Code MAY220021](#)

Cover H by Mike Perkins - [Diamond Code MAY220022](#)

Starhenge, Book One: The Dragon & the Boar #1 will also be available for purchase across many digital platforms, including Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, and Google Play.

Advance praise for *Starhenge*:

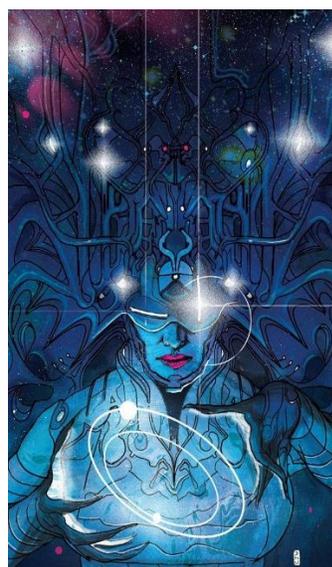
"A star-spanning saga of ancient magic and deep science, vividly told by a modern master of the comics medium."
—**Dave Gibbons**

"One of the great artists of our time at the top of his game. Absolutely epic."
—**Tom King**

"The kind of 'epic' you crave—both noun and adjective. And even that doesn't quite capture Liam Sharp's astonishing scope and vision. There's magic in these pages."
—**Kelly Sue DeConnick**

"Jaw-dropping and epic and massive and totally a Liam Sharp book, but not any kind of Liam Sharp we've ever seen before or maybe even expected? Liam is breaking out all kinds of moves and modes that people who know him—from, like, Green Lantern or whatever—will never see coming. This is a gorgeous and incredible and MASSIVE swing for the stars that declares his ambitions have taken him to some exciting and undiscovered territories... Bravo, congrats, cheers, and exhale—this is glorious."
—**Matt Fraction**

Revered creator Liam Sharp cuts loose in the upcoming visually stunning masterpiece titled, *Starhenge, Book One: The Dragon & the Boar*. This six issue fantasy/sci-fi series will launch from Image Comics in July. "I've wanted to do my own Image comic for 30 years. I've wanted to do a Merlin comic for even longer than that!" said Sharp. "This is a culmination of so many dreams and ambitions of mine finally being realized, and that makes it the most exciting and personal comic project I have ever done. I can't wait to see it on the shelves!" In *Starhenge*, a future Merlin travels to





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2022

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**FOLLOW
ME**

Silk



-ABOUT LEXA COSPLAY-

Lexa Cosplay is a stay-at-home mom of 2. Displaying her nerdy side, she cosplays in my free time because it's fun for and a temporary escape from the chaos that is everyday life. She cosplayed for about 8 years now. Lexa Cosplay's kids are actually starting to get into it with me as well, which she loves, making cosplay a family affair. She is a huge fan of the Spiderman Universe, especially the character, Silk.

-INTERVIEW -

1. How did you get into cosplay?

I got into cosplay because I've always been into comic books & attended my first comic con a while ago, after seeing cosplayers & the fun they were having i decided to try it myself!

2. Who is your favorite character to cosplay and why?

My favorite character to cosplay is a toss-up. I love Silk from the Spiderman series, but I also adore Shigaraki from MHA!

Shigaraki

3. What tips do you have on making a costume?

Tips on making costumes, I'd have to say study the character, get a feel for them so you know them thru & thru. I relate closely to characters I cosplay, so I know how to pose for photos & what pieces to make from what materials.

4. What is your favorite memory of being a cosplayer?

My favorite memory in cosplay would have to be when we attended a library opening, a group of small children crowded around me & hugged me & I got down in the spidey pose with them for pictures! It was so much fun & I adore watching children get excited to see their favorite characters brought to life by cosplayers

5. What advice do you have for fans getting into cosplay?

Any advice I can give would be, don't let anyone tell you who you can or cannot cosplay. Cosplay is for everyone. If you like a character, go for it! Make or even buy the cosplay, who cares as long as you're happy in it!

6. If you could have a weapon or superpower to fight the forces of evil, what would you choose?

As far as if I could have a superpower to fight evil? Ha! Well given I mostly cosplay villains I'm not sure what I'd choose. Something like Nightcrawlers teleportation would be pretty cool tho!

CARNAGE GWEN STACY



SUBZERO / MORTAL KOMBAT

DAVE
EVANS
COSPLAY

FOLLOW
ME



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cosplay_dave

-ABOUT DAVE EVANS COSPLAY-

David Evans is a cosplayer from Fort Worth, TX who has dreams and aspirations to be a special FX designer. He and his partner Jason Smith produce designs in their shop and spend a number of months creating a character. David Evans is a father of five and has impacted his family with this form of art. David's wife, and children all cosplay and visit cons every year to have fun with other cosplayers and display work in the future. David would like to attend school to venture in the world of video production and someday show his designs in the movie industry.

-INTERVIEW -

1. How did you get into cosplay?

Ever since I was a kid, I always wanted to build my own costumes. I remember being eight, asking my mom if she could sew a Power Ranger suit up for me. She rarely had time because she was always working hard so I never got that suit. I fell in love and admired other cosplayers and the incredible work they produced. I began researching materials and the steps it took to create these masterpieces I saw on Youtube. I instantly became addicted to this form of art and the immense amount of creativity it takes.

2. Who is your favorite character to cosplay and why?

(Laughing) So far my favorite character to cosplay is Subzero. Once again this is another costume that I have always wanted to cosplay. It was the 1995 Mortal Kombat film that peaked my interest for this build, not to mention it was one of my father's favorite characters in the game next to Lui Kang. I like cosplaying this character the most because it is a reminder of the times I spent with my father before he passed away, so I also gained an emotional connection with this character the most.

3. What tips do you have on making a costume?

Before you create a costume, you must stay committed to the build no matter how long it takes. There are specific techniques to creating a costume. First off before my kids go into my shop, they must know the safety rules we are using chemicals that may be harmful if used incorrectly so always safety first. Some builds consist of specific cuts undercuts inner and outer cuts. When applying these cuts make sure you have a sharp blade trust me it makes a world of difference. When you put your designs together the best glue to use is traditionally Barge Contact Cement Glue, and once again I urge you to use this glue in a well, ventilated area and with a mask dedicated to these types of fumes. The smell is gnarly (Laugh). I use Pastidip to coat my designs. This way is popular with me because of the fact that if your design cracks after being bent apply a heat gun to the area and it goes back to being smooth. This is great with after con maintenance to keep those builds looking fresh and new.

4. What is your favorite memory of being a cosplayer?

It was Fan Expo and my family's first convention. Just the look on my kiddos faces when they saw their favorite characters in real time. When my daughter met Harley Quinn or when my son saw Batman walking around and asked me, who was Deadshot, to fight Batman gives an awesome experience to the imagination of my son. One of my favorite times was when I cosplayed in Paris, TX for a dear friend Ashley Waggoner, who was throwing a benefit for military veterans. The Tug of War fight between heroes and villains was fun at that event. Every amazing cosplayer including my son Jaque, who was Ash Ketchum from Fort Worth Town, was in the Paris, TX Newspaper. What a wonderful memory that I will hold forever.

5. What advice do you have for fans getting into cosplay?

Stay committed even when it becomes overwhelming and almost seems hopeless to complete a build. Remember practice does make perfect and you can achieve anything you put your mind to. Also just have fun, cosplay is for everybody, no matter your body type, race, or gender. This is for people who always wanted to be the hero that they were meant to be. Or..... the villain that they always wanted to portray.

6. If you could have a weapon or superpower to fight the forces of evil, what would you choose?

This.... is a very difficult question. I guess I'd want the power to control the weather. Believe it or not a lot of benefits come with this perk. Enormous possibilities can be altered like hydrogen, oxygen, and other chemical properties. It is very difficult to fight something that is manipulated chemically. I don't know being able to defeat evil on a molecular level seems pretty bad ass to me.

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Music News



Doja Cat to Cover Elvis Presley Hit for New Album



The 26-year-old rapper is reportedly set to release a cover of iconic song 'Hound Dog' and join a host of other current stars as part of an album celebrating the late King of Rock n Roll's back catalogue to coincide with upcoming biopic 'Elvis.' A source said: "It's hugely controversial. Elvis fans are diehard and see any tampering as sacrilege, but Warner Bros wanted to bring his music to a new audience. He is one of the most successful musicians of all time, but this album will help introduce his music to a new generation of kids."

Other stars reportedly set to join the 'Woman' hitmaker on the soundtrack include Swae Lee, who one half of the hip hop duo Rae Sremmurd and is known for having collaborated with Madonna on her 'Madame X' album. The insider went on to explain that the aim behind the album - which is set to be released in summer 2022 - will help "bring Elvis's music to the masses

again" in a similar vein to the hype around Freddie Mercury biopic 'Bohemian Rhapsody.' The source told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre Column: "The hope is that the record, along with the film, will help bring his music back to the masses again and kickstart a huge increase on streaming services — which is what happened with Queen music when the Freddie Mercury biopic 'Bohemian Rhapsody' came out."

'Elvis' is directed by Baz Luhrmann and stars Austin Butler as the late rock and roll icon - who died of a heart attack in 1977 aged 42 - as well as Academy Award winner Tom Hanks as his manager Colonel Tom Parker. The biopic - which was shot in Australia in 2020 - is set to premiere next month at the Cannes Film Festival before being released in cinemas on June 24. *From music-news.com*

The Clash Announce 'Combat Rock / The People's Hall' Special Edition



Originally released in May 1982, 'Combat Rock' is the final album from The Clash of Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon. Featuring two of the band's most well-known songs, 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go' and 'Rock The Casbah', plus favourites 'Straight To Hell' and 'Know Your Rights', it is both their biggest selling album and highest charting set in both the UK and US.

Now comes a special edition of the album, titled 'Combat Rock / The People's Hall', which will be released on May 20th. It couples the album with an additional 12-tracks compiled by The Clash. Having returned to London following their pivotal 17-show residency at New York's Bond's Casino in 1981, the band rehearsed and recorded at The People's Hall in the squatted Republic of Frestonia near Latimer Road in London and from there they embarked on a tour of the East and South East Asia, during which the album sleeve image was captured by Pennie Smith in Thailand. The tracks on 'The People's Hall' chart the period from what was their last single Radio Clash right up to the release of Combat Rock, including unheard, rare and early versions of tracks.

The disc highlights a new version of 'Know Your Rights' which was recorded at The People's Hall on the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio, and the previously unreleased instrumental 'He Who Dares Or Is Tired'. Other notable tracks include 'Futura 2000', an unreleased original mix of 'The Escapades of Futura 2000', Mikey Dread's 'Radio One', and the outtakes 'The Fulham Connection', previously known as 'The Beautiful People Are Ugly Too' as well as 'Idle in Kangaroo Court'. 'Combat Rock' is indicative of The Clash's constant evolution and was influenced in part by the relatively recent end of the Vietnam War, particularly on 'Sean Flynn',

inspired by the disappearance of the photojournalist and film star's son. The band's curiosity and range is illustrated by the many styles and voices here, notably poet Allen Ginsberg's apocalyptic spoken word on 'Ghetto Defendant' and graffiti artist Futura's rap on 'Overpowered By Funk'. The Clash's influence on punk, post-punk and indie rock is well documented and 'Combat Rock' specifically continues to inspire waves of rediscovery from new audiences, most notably with the use of 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go' as a prominent plot device in the first season of the Netflix smash 'Stranger Things'. Meanwhile, 'Straight To Hell' remains instantly recognizable having been used in 'Paper Planes' by M.I.A.

'Combat Rock / The People's Hall' is now available to pre-order [HERE](#). It will be released on double-CD, triple-vinyl and digital formats.

From music-news.com

National Album Day Returns



National Album Day will return on Saturday 15th October and this year will take as its theme Debut Albums, following themes set in previous years including Women in Music and the 80s. Now in its 5th year, National Album Day aims to shine a light on the art form of the album, celebrating the creativity and artistry that goes into making an album. The Debut Albums theme will look to showcase a broad range of first album releases across multiple genres and decades – from debut recordings that have gone on to become classics to those that are perhaps only now being fully appreciated or which, years later, merit reappraisal. National Album Day is presented in association with official audio partner Bowers & Wilkins and official broadcast partner BBC Sounds and will celebrate the artists behind these significant and influential bodies of work. Artist ambassadors, product and releases, events and other activities will be announced in due course alongside further updates. Since its launch in 2018, National Album Day has been supported by a diverse range of artists and musicians including Kylie Minogue, Joy Crookes, Sharleen Spiteri, Ray BLK, Lewis Capaldi, Mark Ronson, La Roux, Elbow, Paloma Faith, Blossoms, Alice Cooper, Novelist, Tom Odell, Mahalia, Toyah Willcox and Jazzie B

among others.

Typically benefitting from a week-long build up, NAD has hosted a variety of activities including events with album platform Classic Album Sundays, The Record Club, Tape Notes and Tim's Twitter Listening Party as well as in-store artist appearances, record store promotions, and two Network Rail exhibitions in major cities across the UK.

National Album Day is organised jointly by the BPI – the association of UK independent and major labels (BRIT Awards and Mercury Prize) – and ERA, the digital entertainment and retail association (Record Store Day). The event is supported across broadcast partner the BBC with highlights available to listen to on BBC Sounds, along with the UK's recorded music community including AIM, PPL and other trade associations, independent and specialist retailers and online and digital/streaming services.

Goeff Taylor, Chief Executive BPI, and Kim Bayley, Chief Executive ERA, the organizations behind National Album Day, said jointly: "Artists love telling their stories through the artform of the album and fans love to listen, but in a world where there is more streaming of individual songs, we take the appeal of the album format for granted. National Album Day is about celebrating the continuing vitality and cultural relevance of the long player, in particular with the next generation of fans, and we invite everyone who loves the format to join in and enjoy this year's National Album Day." Renowned audio brand, Bowers & Wilkins, continues its support for National Album Day as official audio partner. Built on a passion for music, Bowers & Wilkins has been on an unrelenting pursuit of the highest quality listening experiences for music fans for over 60 years, always delivering sound that remains true to how the artist intended their album to be heard.

Giles Pocock, Vice-President, Brand Marketing, Bowers & Wilkins said: "The debut album is an important milestone for any artist and remains such a pure form of storytelling. Everything from the track order and artwork, through to the arrangements and choice of recording studio can feel like a big decision. We are pleased to continue our support for National Album Day, helping to celebrate those truly great debut albums that made their own rules and brought something truly unique into the world." Keep track of the National Album Day website for more news and how to get involved over the coming months. *From Music-News.com*

Julian Lennon to release 7th studio album and announces first

two songs



Grammy nominated singer-songwriter, Julian Lennon announces 2 new songs today from his 7th studio album JUDE, released later this year. 'Every Little Moment' and 'Freedom' are available to pre-save on all streaming platforms ahead of their release on April 8th via BMG.

The album title JUDE is a nod to the legendary song 'Hey Jude,' by The Beatles, written by Paul McCartney to comfort 5-year-old Julian following his parents' separation. Originally written as "Hey Jules," McCartney changed 'Jules' to 'Jude' because he thought it sounded better in the song. The tune became one of the band's most successful tracks, topping the charts for 19 weeks after its release and remains a crowd-favorite in McCartney's live shows today. Even though he talks of having a love/hate relationship with the song, because it's a reminder of an unhappy time in his life, he's thankful for the support expressed through the lyrics, and over the years, the song has become part of his personal identity. "Many of these songs have been in the works for several years, so it almost feels like a coming-of-age album," said Lennon. With great respect for the overwhelming significance of the song written for me, the title JUDE conveys the very real journey of my life that these tracks represent."

Julian Lennon and Justin Clayton share production on the forthcoming album JUDE. *From Music-News*



Jennifer Lopez's Halftime Documentary to open Tribeca Festival



Jennifer Lopez's documentary about her Super Bowl Halftime Show performance is to open the 2022 Tribeca Festival. The superstar co-

headlined the spectacle alongside Shakira in February 2020, with the show featuring guest appearances from Bad Bunny, J Balvin, and Lopez's daughter Emme. On Wednesday, organisers of the film festival announced that the Netflix project, titled Halftime, will premiere at the United Palace in Washington Heights on 8 June. "It's an honour to be selected for the opening night of Tribeca, and so fitting to be celebrating this critical milestone in Jennifer's life and career just miles from where she grew up!" said director Amanda Micheli. "To have the opportunity to share this film on the big screen with a New York audience is a dream come true."

Micheli promised fans that the film offers an "intimate peek" into the singer's life, and also sees her reflect on her milestones and evolution as an artist. "Powerful storytelling - whether in music, film, or games - encourages us to fight for universal values that bind humanity together. Halftime, featuring Jennifer Lopez, reminds us of that," added Tribeca Festival co-founder Robert De Niro. "The Tribeca Festival is eager to bring

audiences from all over the world together to honour the importance of purpose-driven creative expression." Halftime will debut on Netflix on 14 June. From Music-News.com



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MUSINGS ABOUT "PRINCE" BY CHAD WOMACK

Another Year.... Another Tear!

April 20, 2016

A day like any other day...

I had burned the midnight oil the night b4, living out of a suitcase in a hotel room, excited about attending the press night for "Wicked" at Fair Park Music Hall the following evening. Seeing that this was a musical I'd been waiting YEARS 2 attend, I was full of anticipation and having trouble sleeping, so I took to scrolling through Facebook to pass the time. Word had just gotten out on various social media platforms in the wee hours that iconic pro wrestler Chyna had been found dead of an apparent overdose and the story spread to mainstream media shortly thereafter. I felt awful for her and her family as I'd always been an admirer of hers as I was a longtime wrestling fan and considered her a trailblazer in her industry. I finally started feeling drowsy around 3am and conked out with CNN playing in the background.



April 21, 2016

The day EVERYTHING changed

I awoke around 11 am 2 the sound of my phone buzzing since I always had my ringer turned down and saw that it was a colleague of mine that was WAY into pro wrestling, so I pretty much assumed that he was calling to let me know about Chyna, even though I had read all about it several hours earlier. When I answered, he immediately began telling me how sorry he was, offering his condolences and asking if I was ok. I'm thinking, "Dude...I LIKED Chyna...but I'm not apopleptic about her passing" so I asked him what he was talking about. He got eerily silent...then said "Oh GOD....PLEASE don't tell me I have to be the one to tell u this!!!" At that moment I started

panicking and finally took a closer look at my phone. I was shocked as I realized that I had DOZENS of missed calls and text messages from the last HOUR or so, and my heart sank as I realized that there was no way this was about Chyna. All he could muster was...."Just put it on CNN...I'm SO sorry man!" The TV had shut itself in the dead of night...so with my hands trembling, I picked up the remote and hit the power button. As the shocking news blared from the banner scrolling at the bottom of the screen...I felt my knees give out and managed to mumble..."I gotta let u go man" as my throat locked up....not believing what I was seeing and hearing.

I wasn't thinking about "Wicked" anymore

All I knew now, was THE pop-culture music icon of my life was dead at the age of 57!!!

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Prince and his music taught me things that nobody else could.

Prince and his music gave me confidence and swagger that would NEVER have existed otherwise.

Prince and his music was a gift to the entire world...but it meant something unique and special to each and every one of us.

We owe it to HIM and OURSELVES to never forget what he gave us and to NEVER take it for gran

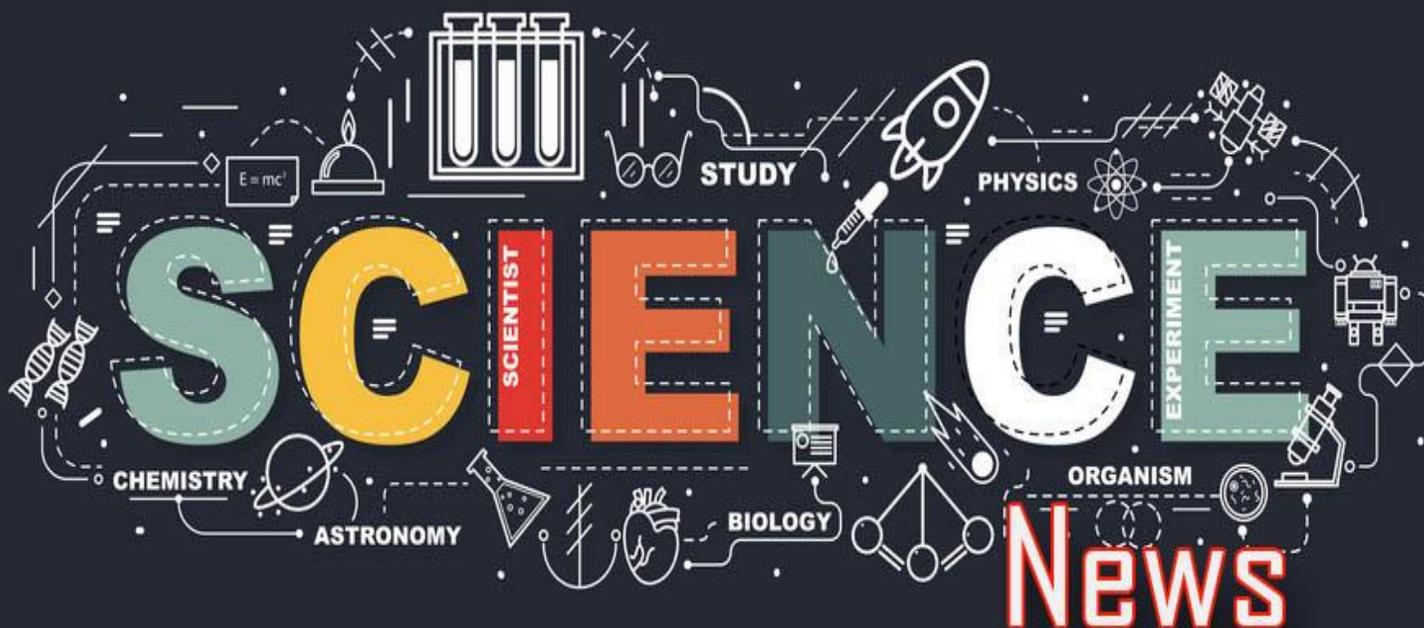
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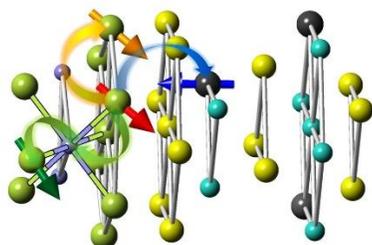
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Scientists Find 'Knob' to Control Magnetic Behavior in Quantum Material



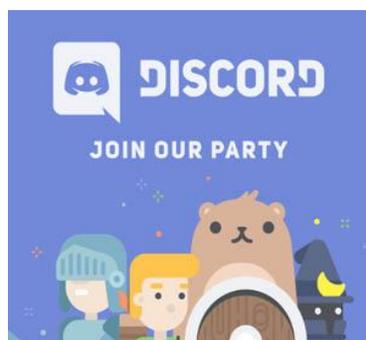
Magnetism, one of the oldest technologies known to humans, is at the forefront of new-age materials that could enable next-generation lossless electronics and quantum computers. Researchers led by Penn State and the university of California, San Diego have discovered a new 'knob' to control the magnetic behavior of one promising quantum material, and the findings could pave the way toward novel, efficient and ultra-fast devices.

"The unique quantum mechanical make-up of this material -- manganese bismuth telluride -- allows it to carry lossless electrical currents, something of tremendous technological interest," said Hari Padmanabhan, who led the research as a graduate student at Penn State. "What makes this material especially intriguing is that this behavior is deeply connected to its magnetic properties. So, a knob to control magnetism in this material could also efficiently control these lossless currents."

Manganese bismuth telluride, a 2D material made of atomically thin stacked layers, is an example of a topological insulator, exotic materials that simultaneously can be insulators and conductors of electricity, the scientists said. Importantly, because this material is also magnetic, the currents conducted around its edges could be lossless, meaning they do not lose energy in the form of heat. Finding a way to tune the weak magnetic bonds between the layers of the material could unlock these functions.

Tiny vibrations of atoms, or phonons, in the material may be one way to achieve this, the scientists reported April 8 in the journal *Nature Communications*.

"Phonons are tiny atomic wiggles -- atoms dancing together in various patterns, present in all materials," Padmanabhan said. "We show that these atomic wiggles can potentially function as a knob to tune the magnetic bonding between the atomic layers in manganese bismuth telluride."



The scientists at Penn State studied the material using a technique called magneto-optical spectroscopy -- shooting a laser onto a sample of the material and measuring the color and intensity of the reflected light, which carries information on the atomic vibrations. The team

observed how the vibrations changed as they altered the temperature and magnetic field.

As they altered the magnetic field, the scientists observed changes in the intensity of the phonons. This effect is due to the phonons influencing the weak inter-layer magnetic bonding, the scientists said.

"Using temperature and magnetic field to vary the magnetic structure of the material -- much like using a refrigerator magnet to magnetize a needle compass -- we found that the phonon intensities were strongly correlated with the magnetic structure," said Maxwell Poore, graduate student at UC San Diego, and co-author of the study. "Pairing these findings with theoretical calculations, we inferred that these atomic vibrations modify the magnetic bonding across layers of this material."

Scientists at UC San Diego conducted experiments to track these atomic vibrations in real time. The phonons oscillate faster than a trillion times a second, many times faster than modern computer chips, the scientists said. A 3.5 gigahertz computer processor, for example, operates at a frequency of 3.5 billion times per second.

"What was beautiful about this result was that we studied the material using different complementary experimental methods at different institutions and they all remarkably converged to the same picture," said Peter Kim, graduate student at UC San Diego, and co-author of the paper.

Further research is needed to directly use the magnetic knob, the scientists said. But if that can be achieved, it could lead to ultra-fast devices that can efficiently and reversibly control lossless currents.

"A major challenge in making faster, more powerful electronic processors is that they heat up," said Venkatraman Gopalan, professor of materials science and engineering and physics at Penn State, Padmanabhan's former adviser, and co-author of the paper. "Heating wastes energy."

If we could find efficient ways to control materials that host lossless currents, that would potentially allow us to deploy them in future energy-efficient electronic devices."

Other Penn State researchers were Vladimir Stoica, associate research professor, Huaiyu "Hugo" Wang, graduate student, and Maxwell Wetherington, staff scientist, Materials Research Institute and Department of Materials Science and Engineering; and Seng Huat Lee, assistant research professor, and Zhiqiang Mao, professor, 2D Crystal Consortium and Department of Physics. Also contributing were James Rondinelli, professor, Danilo Puggioni, research assistant professor, Mingqiang Gu, postdoctoral scholar, and Nathan Koocher, graduate student, Northwestern University; Xijie Wang, Xiaozhe Shen, and Alexander Reid, staff scientists, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory; Richard Averitt, professor, University of California, San Diego; Richard Schaller, staff scientist, Argonne National Laboratory; and Aaron Lindenberg, associate professor, Stanford University. The U.S. Department of Energy, National Science Foundation and Army Research Office provided funding for this research.



Early Human Habitats Linked to Past Climate Shifts



A study published in *Nature* by an international team of scientists provides clear evidence for a link between astronomically-driven climate change and human evolution. By

combining the most extensive database of well-dated fossil remains and archeological artefacts with an unprecedented new supercomputer model simulating earth's climate history of the past 2 million years, the team of experts in climate modeling, anthropology and ecology was able to determine under which environmental conditions archaic humans likely lived. The impact of climate change on human evolution has long been suspected, but has been difficult to demonstrate due to the paucity of climate records near human fossil-bearing sites. To bypass this problem, the team instead investigated what the climate in their computer simulation was like at the times and places humans lived, according to the archeological record. This revealed the preferred environmental conditions of different groups of hominins [1]. From there, the team looked for all the places and times those conditions occurred in the model, creating time-evolving maps of potential hominin habitats.

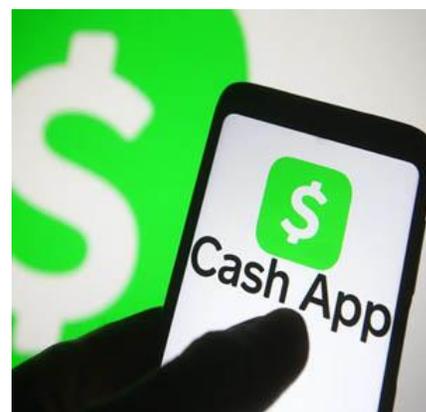


"Even though different groups of archaic humans preferred different climatic environments, their habitats all responded to climate shifts caused by astronomical changes in earth's axis wobble, tilt, and orbital eccentricity with timescales ranging from 21 to 400 thousand years," said Axel Timmermann, lead author of the study and Director of the IBS Center for Climate Physics (ICCP) at Pusan National University in South Korea.

To test the robustness of the link between climate and human habitats, the scientists repeated their analysis, but with ages of the fossils shuffled like a deck of cards. If the past evolution of climatic variables did not impact where and when humans lived, then both methods would result in the same habitats. However, the researchers found significant differences in the habitat patterns for the three most recent hominin groups (*Homo sapiens*, *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo heidelbergensis*) when using the shuffled and the realistic fossil ages. "This result implies that at least during the past 500 thousand years the real sequence of past climate change, including glacial cycles, played a central role in determining where different hominin groups lived and where their remains have been found," said Prof. Timmermann.

"The next question we set out to address was whether the habitats of the different human species overlapped in space and time. Past contact zones provide crucial information on potential species successions and admixture," said Prof. Pasquale Raia from the Università di Napoli Federico II, Naples, Italy, who together with his research team compiled the dataset of human fossils and archeological artefacts used in this study. From the contact zone analysis, the researchers then derived a hominin family tree, according to which Neanderthals and likely Denisovans derived from the Eurasian clade of *Homo heidelbergensis* around 500-400 thousand years ago, whereas *Homo sapiens*' roots can be traced back to Southern African populations of late *Homo heidelbergensis* around 300 thousand years ago.

"Our climate-based reconstruction of hominin lineages is quite similar to recent estimates obtained from either genetic data or the analysis of morphological differences in human fossils, which increases our confidence in the results," remarks Dr. Jiaoyang Ruan, co-author of the study and postdoctoral research fellow at the IBS Center for Climate Physics. The new study was made possible by using one of South Korea's fastest supercomputers named Aleph. Located at the headquarters of the Institute for Basic Science in Daejeon, Aleph ran non-stop for over 6 months to complete the longest comprehensive climate model simulation to date. "The model generated 500 Terabytes of data, enough to fill up several hundred hard disks," said Dr. Kyung-Sook Yun, a researcher at the IBS Center for Climate Physics who conducted the experiments. "It is the first continuous simulation with a state-of-the-art climate model that covers earth's environmental history of the last 2 million years, representing climate responses to the waxing and waning of ice-sheets, changes in past greenhouse gas concentrations, as well as the marked transition in the frequency of glacial cycles around 1 million years ago," adds Dr. Yun.



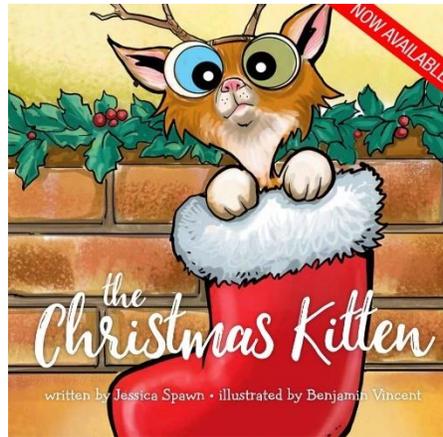
"So far, the paleoanthropological community has not utilized the full potential of such continuous paleoclimate model simulations. Our study clearly illustrates the

value of well-validated climate models to address fundamental questions on our human origins," says Prof. Christoph Zollikofer from the University of Zurich, Switzerland and co-author of the study. Going beyond the question of early human habitats, and times and places of human species' origins, the research team further addressed how humans may have adapted to varying food resources over the past 2 million years. "When we looked at the data for the five major hominin groups, we discovered an interesting pattern. Early African hominins around 2-1 million years ago preferred stable climatic conditions. This constrained them to relatively narrow habitable corridors. Following a major climatic transition about 800 thousand year ago, a group known under the umbrella term *Homo heidelbergensis* adapted to a much wider range of available food resources, which enabled them to become global wanderers, reaching remote regions in Europe and eastern Asia," said Elke Zeller, PhD student at Pusan National University and co-author of the study. "Our study documents that climate played a fundamental role in the evolution of our genus *Homo*. We are who we are because we have managed to adapt over millennia to slow shifts in the past climate," says Prof. Axel Timmermann.

[1] This study considers the following hominin species: *Homo sapiens*, *Homo neanderthalensis*, *Homo heidelbergensis* (including African and Eurasian populations), *Homo erectus* and early African *Homo* (including *Homo ergaster* and *Homo habilis*).



New research documents for the first time the pollution of public water supplies caused by shale gas development, commonly known as fracking, and its negative impact of infant health. These findings call for closer environmental regulation of the industry, as levels of chemicals found in drinking water often fall below regulatory thresholds. "In this study, we provide evidence that public drinking water quality has been compromised by shale gas development," said Elaine Hill, Ph.D., an associate professor with the University of Rochester Departments of Public Health Sciences, Economics and Obstetrics & Gynecology. "Our findings indicate that drilling near an infant's public water source yields poorer birth outcomes and more fracking-related contaminants in public drinking water."



The new paper, which appears in the *Journal of Health Economics*, is co-authored by Hill and Lala Ma, Ph.D., with the University of Kentucky. Hill's previous research was the first to link shale gas development to drinking water quality and has examined the association between shale gas development and reproductive health, and the subsequent impact on later educational attainment, higher risk of childhood asthma exacerbation, higher risk of heart attacks, and opioid deaths. Her research brings an important perspective to the policy discussion about fracking which has often emphasized the immediate job creation and economic benefits, without fully understanding the long-term environmental and health consequences for communities in which drilling occurs.

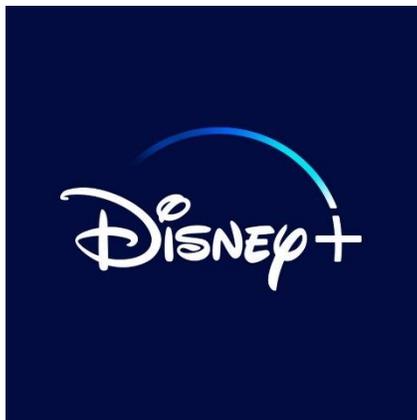
This new study is a complex examination of the geographic expansion of shale gas drilling in

Pennsylvania from 2006 to 2015, during which more than 19,000 wells were established in the state. Hill and Ma mapped the location of each new well in relation to groundwater sources that supply public drinking water, and linked this information maternal residences served by those water systems on birth records, and U.S. Geological Service groundwater contamination measures. This data set allowed the two to pinpoint infant health outcomes -- specifically preterm birth and low birth weight -- before, during, and after drilling activity. Preterm birth and low birth weight are associated with a range of negative outcomes, including higher risk for developing behavioral and social-emotional problems, and learning difficulties.

Other studies have shown elevated levels of chemicals associated with fracking in surface water, however, these levels often tend to be below federal guidelines, are not monitored closely, and even if detected do not rise to levels that trigger remediation. The new study indicates that fracking-related chemicals -- including dangerous volatile organic compounds -- are making their way into groundwater that feeds municipal water systems, and that the potential for contamination is greatest during the pre-production period when a new well is established. With only 29 out of more than 1,100 shale gas contaminants regulated in drinking water, the results suggest that the true contamination level is higher. The study specifically finds that every new well drilled within one kilometer of a public drinking water source was associated with an 11-13 percent increase in the incidence of preterm births and low birth weight in infants exposed during gestation.

"These findings indicate large social costs of water pollution generated by an emerging industry with little environmental regulation," said Hill. "Our research reveals that fracking increases regulated contaminants found in drinking water, but not enough to trigger regulatory violations. This adds to a growing body of research that supports the re-evaluation of existing drinking water policies and possibly the regulation of the shale gas industry."

The research was supported with funding from the University of Rochester Medical Center Department of Environmental Sciences and the National Institutes of Health (DP5OD021338).



Study Links Fracking, Drinking Water Pollution, and Infant Health



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Rotating Blue Laser Light Reveals Unimagined Dynamics in Living Cells



When cities transform into a colorful world of lights as darkness falls, it's often only possible to estimate their contours, which depending on the perspective can draw the attention to key details or trivia. In fluorescence microscopy, biological cells are marked with fluorescent dyes and excited to luminesce in specific areas by optical switches- like a city at night. However, this light is usually too faint for small, rapid objects, or even goes out after a while. This is known as "fluorescence bleaching." Now, a new approach developed by

Prof. Dr. Alexander Rohrbach and his team in the Laboratory for Bio- and Nano-Photonics at the University of Freiburg has found a way to make the smallest objects clearly visible without fluorescence. In this way, cellular structures or virus-sized particles can be observed 100 to 1,000 times longer, ten to 100-times faster and with almost doubled resolution than with fluorescence microscopy. While fluorescence microscopy records what you might call "night-time images" of structures, ROCS microscopy takes "day-time images" -- opposites that can complement each other excellently. Rohrbach and his colleagues describe various applications of the technology in the latest issue of *Nature Communications*.

Blue laser directed illuminates object at oblique angle

The technology they use is known as 'Rotating Coherent Scattering' (ROCS) and uses a rapidly-rotating blue laser beam. "We are exploiting several physical phenomena familiar from everyday life," explains Rohrbach, "First, small objects like molecules, viruses or cell structures scatter -- or distribute -- blue light the most, which is known from the air molecules in the atmosphere and that we perceive as blue sky." Small objects scatter and direct roughly ten-times more blue than red light particles to the camera and thereby transmit valuable information.

Secondly, ROCS targets a blue laser at a highly oblique angle on the biological objects, because this markedly increases contrast and resolution. This is familiar to us already as well: if you hold a wine glass at an angle to the light it's far easier to spot dirt or fingerprints. Thirdly, the scientists illuminate the object successively from each direction with the oblique laser beam, because illumination from only one direction would produce a lot of artifacts.

100 images per second of living cells

The Freiburg physicist and engineers from the Department of Microsystems Engineering (IMTEK) rotate the oblique laser beam a hundred times per second around the object and thereby produce 100 images per second. "So in ten minutes we already have 60,000 images of living cells, which turn out to be far more dynamic than previously thought," says Rohrbach. Dynamic analyses like this demand

enormous computing power to process just one minute of visual material, however. Therefore, a variety of computer algorithms and analytical processes first had to be developed so that the data could be properly interpreted.

Together with his colleague Dr. Felix Jünger and in cooperation with various Freiburg research groups, Rohrbach was able to demonstrate the capacity of the microscope using various cell systems: "Our primary aim wasn't to generate pretty pictures or films of the unexpectedly high dynamic of cells -- we wanted to gain new biological insights." For instance, the ROCS technology enabled them to observe how mast cells open small pores in just a few milliseconds when stimulated, in order to eject spherical granules at an inexplicably high force and speed. The granules contain the transmitter histamine, which can subsequently lead to allergic reactions.

Observing the binding behavior of virus-sized particles

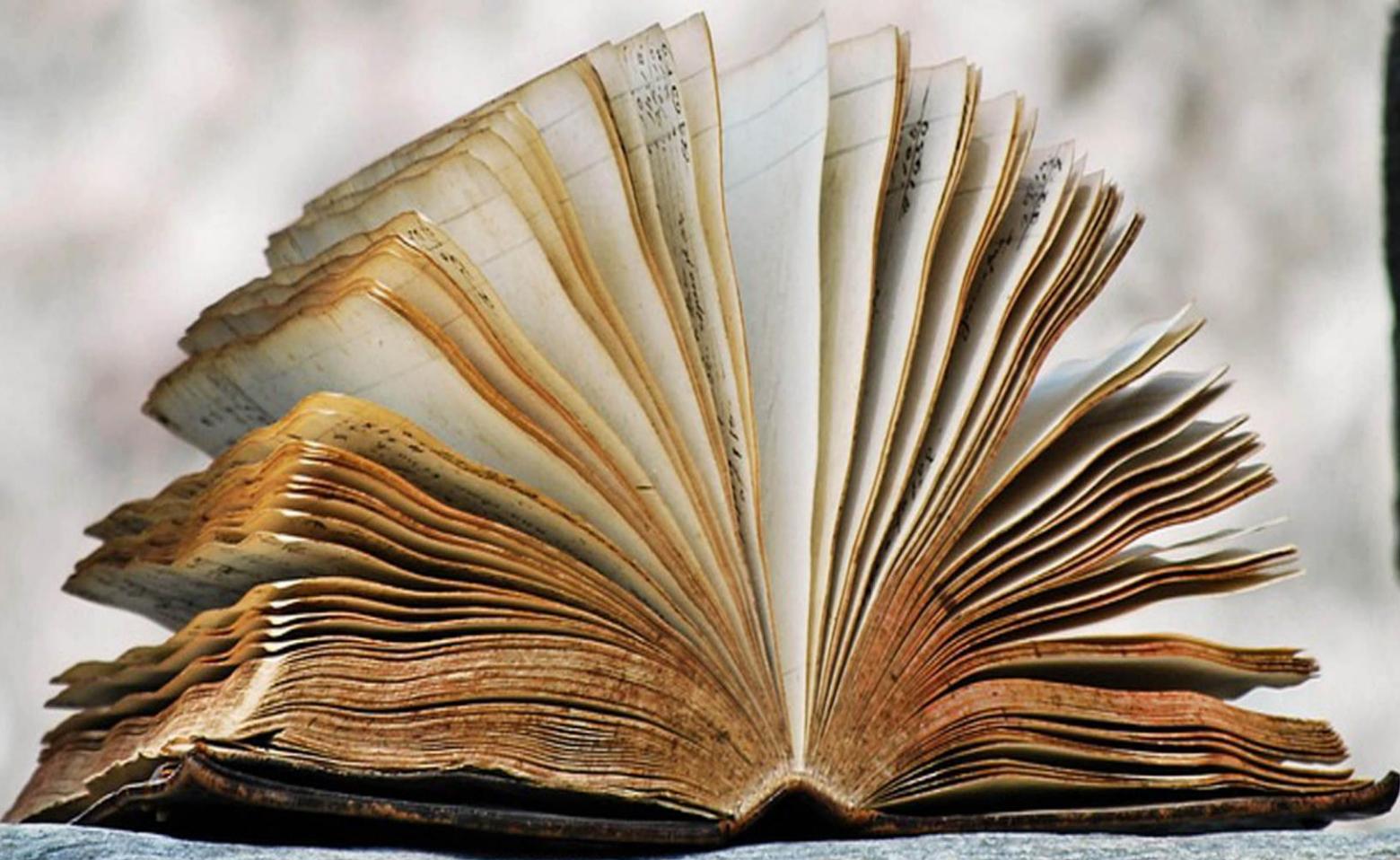
In another series of experiments, the researchers were able to observe how tiny virus-sized particles dance in incredible speed around the rugged surface of scavenger cells, taking several tries to find a binding point on the cell. These observations served as pretests for currently running studies about the binding behavior of coronaviruses. In addition, the ROCS technology has been used within the collaborative research cluster CRC 1425 about the formation of scars in cardiac lesions. Fibroblasts, that is scar tissue cells, form 100 nanometers thin tubes, so-called nano-tubes, which are 1,000-times thinner than a hair. By this new technology Jünger and Rohrbach were able to discover that these tubes vibrate thermally on a milliseconds scale, but this motion wanes over time. According to mathematical analyses of activity, this indicates a mechanical stiffening of the nano-tubes.

In other experiments the scientists were finally able to observe over many thousands of images how filopodia -- the "fingers" of scavenger cells -- search their environment for prey using a complex dither movement and how filopodia can alter their cytoskeleton at previously unknown speeds.

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A DENIZEN OF THE SHALLOWS

By Sydney Costa

Light, golden as the finest ink, shone straight into my eyes. I squeezed my eyes shut and rolled over, hoping it would go away. It didn't. Instead, it followed me and kept trying to blind me. I groaned. "Okay, okay, you win. Just get out of my face," I told it.

I opened one eye just enough to be able to see my cot, snatched one of the coral puffs off of it and threw it at Poki, who was emitting the light from her fin. She dodged, of course, but I didn't care.

"Aka, come on. You're going to drown in morning tide if you don't hurry up."

"It'd be better than getting rid of crabraptors."

Poki leapt onto my cot and picked her way around my hair in the elegant, light manner of eelcats. She sat down on my face and began licking her paw. "You're not shoeing raptors today. Iwan has something else in mind."

I sat up suddenly, making Poki panic and fall off. "Wait, really? He said that?"

Poki glared at me, angry I'd made her fall. She tried to regain her composure. "Yes. He did. But your room's going to flood before you get there if you don't hurry. And I doubt he'll want to tell you when you're not dressed."

"Oh, right." I grabbed the coral puffs and my seaweed quilt off my cot and put them in their compartment. Then, I folded the cot up into the wall, laid down my mat on the floor, and flipped the shelves into their spots so the walls were smooth. I inspected my room, making sure it was ready for morning tide. Once I was sure nothing would be ruined, I grabbed my best wetsuit and pulled it on over my swimsuit. Poki was watching, and I needed to be fast anyway. Once I had it on, I ran my hands through my hair to make sure it looked okay and rushed up the stairs for breakfast.

Iwan was at the steam vent, cooking fruit for breakfast. He heard me coming and turned his head. "Oh, hey, Aka. Go sit down for breakfast; it'll be ready soon."

I nodded and sat down at the table. I could barely contain my excitement. *Today could be the day! Today I could finally--*

"Here you go, Aka," Iwan said, handing me a plate of fruit. He set down his and Poki's as well and sat down. He started eating, but I waited, eager to hear the news I hoped for. About halfway through breakfast, I couldn't take it. "Aren't you going to tell me something?"

"What would I tell you? Oh, right." He set down his fork. "You aren't shoeing crabraptors today."

"I told him that," Poki said.

"But did you tell him what he's doing instead?"

"Uh, no."

Iwan turned to me. "You're coming squidfishing with me today."

I grinned hugely. "Yes! When do we leave?"

He ate his last bite of fruit. "Right now, but only if your room is ready for morning tide and you've eaten breakfast."

I remembered my still-full plate. "Oh, right!" I shoved it all into my mouth in four bites, then put my plate and fork in the cleaner.

"Ready?" Iwan asked. I nodded eagerly in response. "Good. If you're early, squid wash up on land and you can just pick them up."

"Really?" I asked excitedly.

"No. But something else cool happens. Come on!"

I was about to follow but stopped myself. "Wait, who's going to deal with the crabs?"

Iwan smirked. "Poki will."

Poki was aghast. "Me? Hunt for crabs?" She said indignantly.

Iwan gave a smug smile. "Yup. Let's go, Aka." He grabbed his bag and we crossed the threshold, leaving behind our house and a flabbergasted Poki.

We strode across the beach, quickly passing my crab-hunting spot. After a few minutes of walking, Iwan stopped at a cove surrounded by jagged rocks and steep cliffs. In front of us, a shallow but wide river that seemed to leak out of the cliffs behind us fed into the ocean.

"Why are we stopping here?" I questioned.

"This is my squid fishing spot."

"You don't go out in the water?"

"Not this early. Too many octopuses. And you *never* go out when there are a lot of octopuses in the water," he warned.

I was confused. “Aren’t cuttlefish the dangerous ones?”

Iwan chuckled. “No. I’ll explain the difference in a moment. But first, I want to show you something. Look at the horizon.”

“Is this the cool thing that happens when you’re early?”

Iwan nodded and held a finger to his lips, signaling me to be quiet. I stopped talking and looked out at the sea. We both watched in awe as the sun rose, its rosegold light glinting off the pristine, almost crystalline surface of water. Suddenly, its smoothness was ruptured by a jet of foam that shot into the air, making me jump. It then collapsed on itself and sunk into the water, making a liquid crater.

It swirled, refracting the sunlight in every direction as it became a whirlpool. Deeper and deeper it spun, an endless cycle of water and light, until it stopped abruptly. Then it burst into a giant wave full of squid, the newly risen sun’s light glimmering on it. The wave rose to a great height before it crested and came toward us. I thought we were surely going to drown or be crushed by it, but Iwan stayed calm as ever.

The wave never had the chance to touch us. By the time it reached the shore, it was no more than a gentle swell. It washed onto the beach, the squid inside it swimming into the river.

“*That’s* what I wanted to show you. Gorgeous, huh?” Iwan remarked. I nodded, still half in a daze from witnessing the spectacular phenomenon.

“Well, we’d better get to work. Watch and learn.” He set down his bag and brought out a few tools. Grabbing one of them, a metal rod with a hook on one end and a soft grip on the other, he put some bait on the end. He used a small, thin knife to cut a slit in it, then placed the baited end of the tool in the water.

Iwan waved the stick around in the water so the bait looked like a wounded fish. A blocky, chubby green and black squid was the first to notice it. It swam impatiently towards the bait, its red eye alight with greed. Just before it could get the bait, Iwan jerked the tool away, and in the blink of an eye, snatched the squid out of the water and sealed it in a water-filled bag I hadn’t noticed earlier.

“Wait, how’d you do that? And why didn’t you kill the squid?” I asked, baffled.

Iwan smiled knowingly. “We don’t kill the squids, Iwan. We take them home. Then, we keep them in a special tank where they produce their special magical ink for us to sell and use.”

“But then why do you go fishing every day if you just keep them?”

“Squids don’t live very long; only about a day. Then they dissipate into extra ink, which makes it a lot easier. And besides, I still need to collect fruit for meals, don’t I?”

I was somewhat disappointed with the answer. “Oh. I thought you killed them for meat or did something else.”

Iwan shrugged. “Sorry to delude you. But about your other question,” he handed me the tool, “squidfishing is best if you learn through doing. Try to catch one.”

“Do I need to get a special kind?” I said.

“No, but rarer is always better. I can tell which ones are rarer, but for you it doesn’t really matter. If you have to know, though, the one I just caught is called a bloodfish squid. Its ink is crimson, like blood. Now, try it.”

I glanced at the bait and decided to go for it. I waved it in the water, just like I’d seen Iwan do, and readied myself to grab it. A yellow squid with eyes that protruded from its head like a crab approached the bait curiously. I bounced eagerly, excited to catch my first squid.

The squid lunged for the bait, and I yanked it away and grabbed the squid. I pulled it out of the water triumphantly. “What’s this one called?” I asked Iwan.

“A yellow slipsquid,” he replied.

“Why’s it called--” I never got the chance to finish. Squid ink splattered all over my face, and the squid writhed and wriggled its way out of my hands. I tried to get a hold on it, but it was too slippery. The slipsquid squirmed out of my hands and swam away before I could catch it.

I wiped the ink off my face and groaned. “Why didn’t you tell me about that?”

“I told you, the best way to learn to squidfish is by doing. Even failing. Do you want to know what you did wrong?”

I grumbled.

“You grabbed it by its mantle when you should’ve grabbed the gills. That paralyzes it long enough for you to put it in the bag. Try again.”

I scoffed at him but tried again anyway. I started to put the bait in the water, then realized the slipsquid had somehow eaten the bait as it got away.

“Do you have any more bait?” I asked sheepishly.

Iwan nodded and handed another piece to me. It was slimy and squishy between my fingers. I grabbed his knife and, without *too* much trouble, slit the bait. I impaled it on the hook and attempted once again to catch a squid.

This time, it was a smooth, grayish-tan, box-like squid that came to try its luck. I located its gills and got ready to grab them.

Iwan's eyebrows lowered in concern, then shot up in alarm. "Aka, don't--"

"I know, I know, grab it by its gills, not its mantle. I'm not deaf," I said, ignoring him. I watched as the squid dove for the bait, and I took it away and grabbed the squid. "Told you I could do--" I yelled in pain as the squid's skin erupted in a mess of needles and let it go in surprise. I was too busy staring at the four quills stuck in my hand to care about the squid getting away or the tears welling up in my eyes.

"Oh, Aka," Iwan said. "Come here." He hugged me close and took out the spines gently as he explained. "I was trying to warn you. That was a spikethorn squid. It looks easy to catch, but as soon as you grab it, it releases quills to keep itself safe. I should've told you beforehand." He plucked the final needle from my hand.

"These aren't poisonous, but I'm going to go grab you some ointment and bandages from the house, just in case. Wait here, don't do anything with that hand, and don't try to catch another squid, okay, bro?"

I nodded and used my uninjured hand to wipe the tears from my eyes. Iwan got up and packed the squidfishing tools in the bag before setting it on a rock next to me and leaving for the house.

I sat there for a minute, watching the squids swim through the river. I eventually grew tired of that and stood up to explore the beach a little. I walked down to the shore and looked at the waves crashing on the rocks next to the cove.

Then one of the rocks moved.

I jumped and rubbed my eyes, not sure if it had been a trick of the light or not. I squinted, just to make sure. Once again, the rock wiggled, then disappeared into the water. Now nervous and sort of fearing for my life, I stepped back from the waterline, just in case.

Curiosity soon overtook reason, however, and I cautiously approached the spot where the rock had been (at a reasonable distance, of course) and looked into the water. I jumped back once I saw what was lurking there and looked around, hoping Iwan was nearby.

"Uh, Iwan? Iwan!" I shouted, then yelled a little quieter for fear that the beast could hear me. "Iwan! Please, come here, you..." I trailed off and looked up at the massive red sea serpent that now loomed above me.

"You have to see this," I finished breathlessly.

The serpent reared its scaly head, towering above me. It roared...weakly? Then, almost lethargically, it slumped over, half-closing its eyes. I watched it fall towards me, petrified. I was going to be crushed by its massive weight.

"Aka, watch out!" Iwan suddenly yelled, tackling me out of the way just in time. The leviathan landed with an enormous *thud* on the sand.

"Are you okay? You could've gotten badly hurt!" he said concerned. "You have to be more careful."

I brushed him off. "I'm fine," I said, a little shaken. I tried to conceal it so Iwan wouldn't worry. "What is that thing?"

Iwan squinted up at it. "I don't know. We'd better get out of here for a bit in case it wakes up."

"What about squid fishing? Or the serpent?"

"We'll be fine if we miss one day of--wait, you're worried about that..that *thing*?"

"Of course! It must be hurt somehow! We have to help it!"

Iwan frowned at it, confused. "It'll eat you in one bite if you try that." He looked down at the small amount of medical supplies he was holding. "Besides, I don't think I can help it with whatever's wrong while using these supplies. Look how big it is."

"Please?" I begged.

Iwan shook his head. "It's tough. It'll be alright. Come on, let's get you bandaged up."

I pulled my hand away when he tried to wrap it up. "No."

"What?"

"I'm going to go help it." I made my way towards the dragon cautiously, not quite sure *how* exactly I could help it. I decided that I needed to know what was wrong first. I crept closer, trying my best to not frighten it.

"Aka, stop!" Iwan whisper-shouted. He started to run quietly after me, but the serpent hissed loudly as soon as he got close.

Spooked, Iwan stepped back and tried in vain to get me to come back. "Get back here!" he said, trying to stay quiet but still get my attention.

I ignored him and got closer. The creature had yet to growl at me, so that was a good sign. I made my way around the side of its face and discovered the problem.

"Oh, no. You poor snake," I said, gazing at the crown embedded on its head. It seemed to be draining the dragon's energy somehow, in the same way Iwan had described...

“Iwan! You drain ink from the squids, right?” I said to him somewhat louder than I’d intended to.

Confused, Iwan half-nodded. “Technically, I drain the ink from the water.”

“Well, I think this crown is draining the serpent’s energy, like how you drain ink.”

Iwan was absolutely baffled at this point. “What crown?”

“Come here and see.”

“I can’t; it’ll get mad.”

“Try it anyway. I’ll keep it calm,” I assured him. I tentatively reached my hand out to pet the creature. It didn’t resist. Instead, it closed its eyes and let me stroke it gently. Seeing this, Iwan cautiously took a step towards it. Nothing happened. So he tiptoed all the way over to where I was standing.

“Oh, wow. I see what you mean,” he admitted. I nodded solemnly.

He rubbed his temples. “I did not expect this today,” he muttered under his breath. He sighed. “Alright, fine. Here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to take off the crown, and you’re going to stand all the way over there in case something happens. Okay?”

I shook my head. “No, I want to stay and help. It was my idea.”

“But you--!” He cut himself off and groaned instead. “Fine. You help me pry it off.”

And so we did. After a lot of pushing, pulling, and hurt fingers, we managed to wedge one of Iwan’s tools underneath the rim of the crown and use leverage to get the crown off. It flew through the air and landed with a *thump* on the ground nearby. Relieved, Iwan and I sat down on the serpent’s head, glad we’d finally completed our task.

Iwan stood up and stretched. “Okay, I think it’s about time we head home. It’s getting late.”

I looked up at the sun, which was fairly far from setting but had long since passed halfway. “Oh, come on! It’s only afternoon! Why can’t we fish until evening?”

Iwan ruffled my hair, getting it even messier than it already was. “Well, the squid were probably all scared away by this thing anyway. I’m tired, and I think you’ve had enough life-threatening experiences for today. Let’s go.”

I sighed. “Okay, I’m--”

The serpent began to move underneath us, stopping me short. It raised its head slowly. Sensing that we were going to fall off, Iwan dropped down and hugged his arms around me and the crest on the dragon’s head.

The creature rose to its full height, its scales glinting gorgeously in the mid-afternoon light. Looking at it, I finally realized what a majestic, beautiful beast it was. I was glad to have helped such an amazing animal.

The serpent growled happily, lowered its head so it was streamlined, and surged forward.

“Hold on!” Iwan shouted, breathless, terrified, and ecstatic all at the same time.

And so I did.

The ride must’ve only lasted a few minutes, but it felt like hours. I was soaring through the sky and on its back at the same time. It was the closest thing to flying aside from swimming. The exhilarating rush of riding on its back was unforgettably surreal. We made giant waves as the dragon seemed to fly forward in its own special way.

For once, Iwan was laughing.

I’d seen him smile, chuckle, and be happy before, but had never heard him truly laugh like he did. It was pure joy personified, and it was infectious. Despite the small bit of fear I felt, I started to laugh and enjoy the ride even more.

And just like that, it was over all too fast. The dragon had somehow known where our house was and stopped right in front of it. It stooped over and let us hop off.

I could’ve sworn it smiled and waved as it dove back into the water, its sleek red tail disappearing under the surface. After the magical ride, we walked inside, almost in a daze.

“So, how was your fishing trip?” Poki asked, hopping down from the table.

Iwan and I shared a glance.

“It was just your average fishing trip,” he replied casually.

“Yeah,” I agreed. “But it was almost...magical.”

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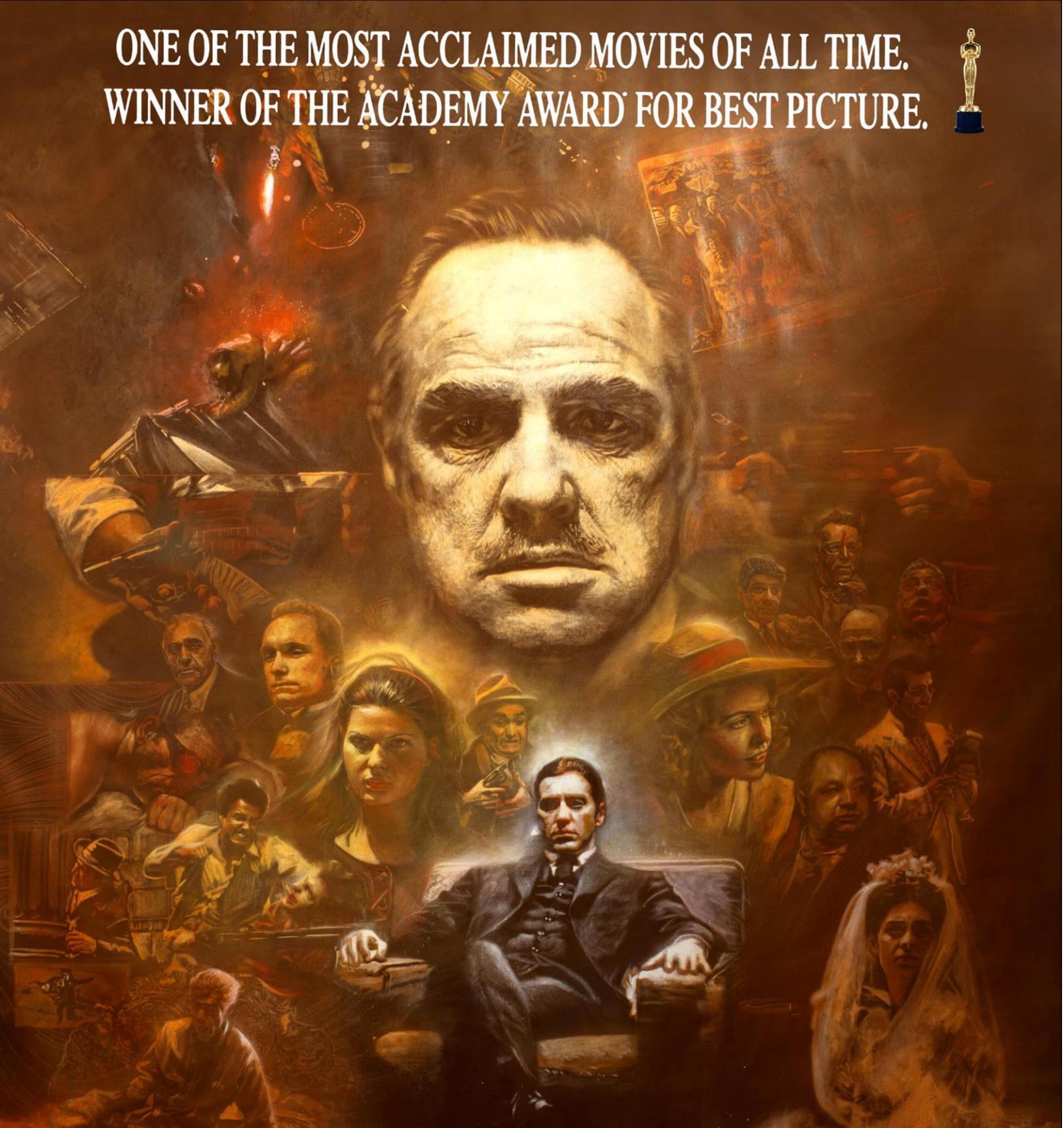
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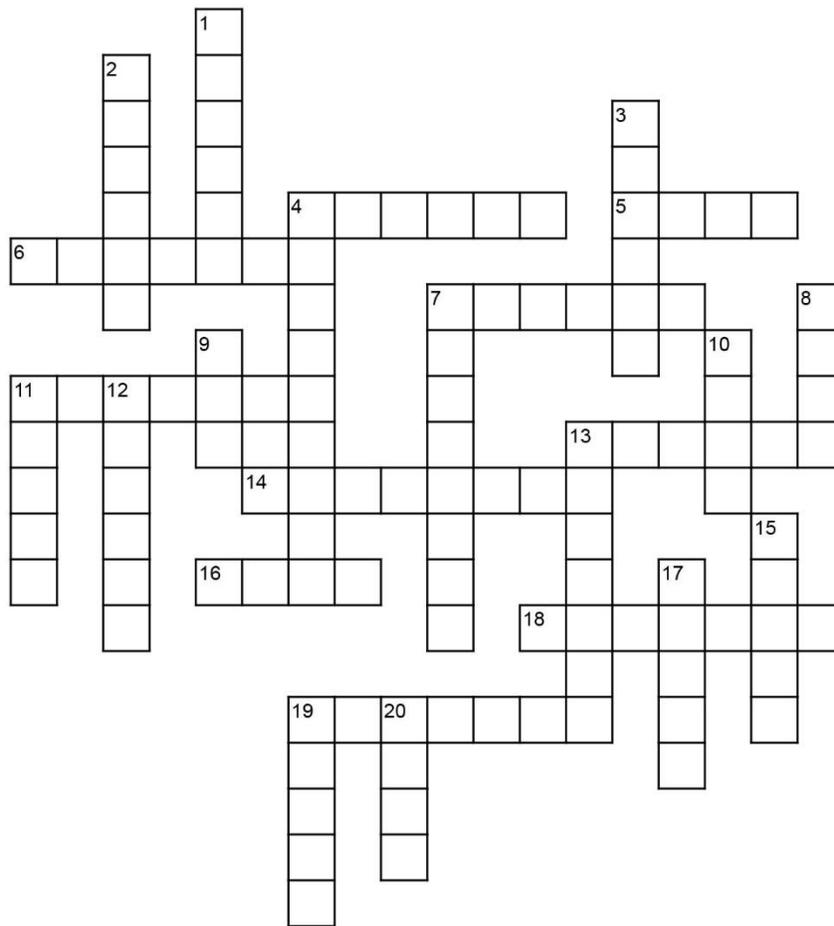
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The Godfather



Across

- 4 Salvatore 'Sal' ____, Corleone caporegime
- 5 Don ____ Corleone, family patriarch
- 6 ____ Corleone, mother
- 7 John ____ (played xx)
- 11 Francis Ford ____ (director)
- 13 Marlon ____ (played xx in The Godfather)
- 14 Peter ____, Corleone caporegime with a fondness for cannoli
- 16 James ____ (played xx)
- 18 ____ Corleone, takes over from xx Vito xx
- 19 One of the Five Families

Down

- 1 Constanza '____' Corleone/Rizzi
- 2 Robert ____ (played xx in The Godfather Part II)
- 3 Robert ____ (played xx)
- 4 One of the Five Families
- 7 One of the Five Families
- 8 Mario ____ (co-writer and original novelist)
- 9 ____ Hagen, adopted son, lawyer and consigliere to the family
- 10 Morgana ____ (played xx)
- 11 One of the Five Families
- 12 Al ____ (played xx)
- 13 One of the Five Families
- 15 Frederico '____' Corleone
- 17 Talia ____ (played xx)
- 19 Santino '____' Corleone



The Godfather



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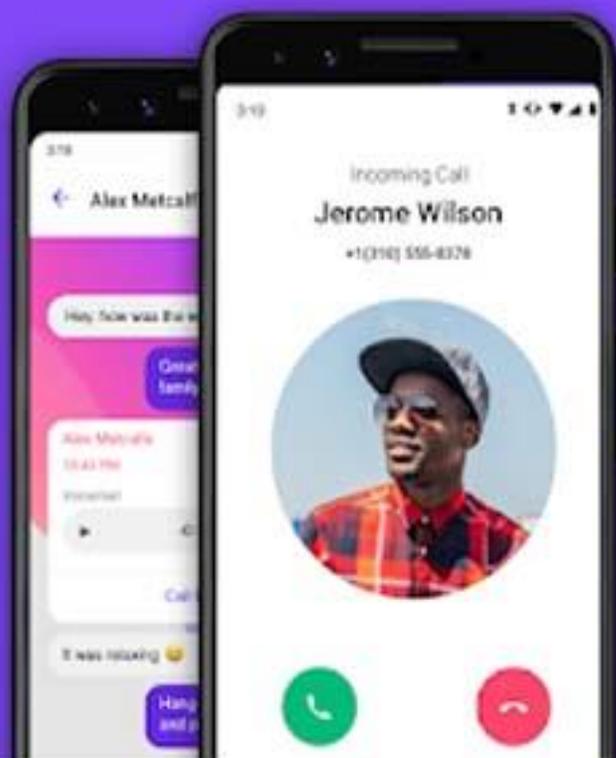
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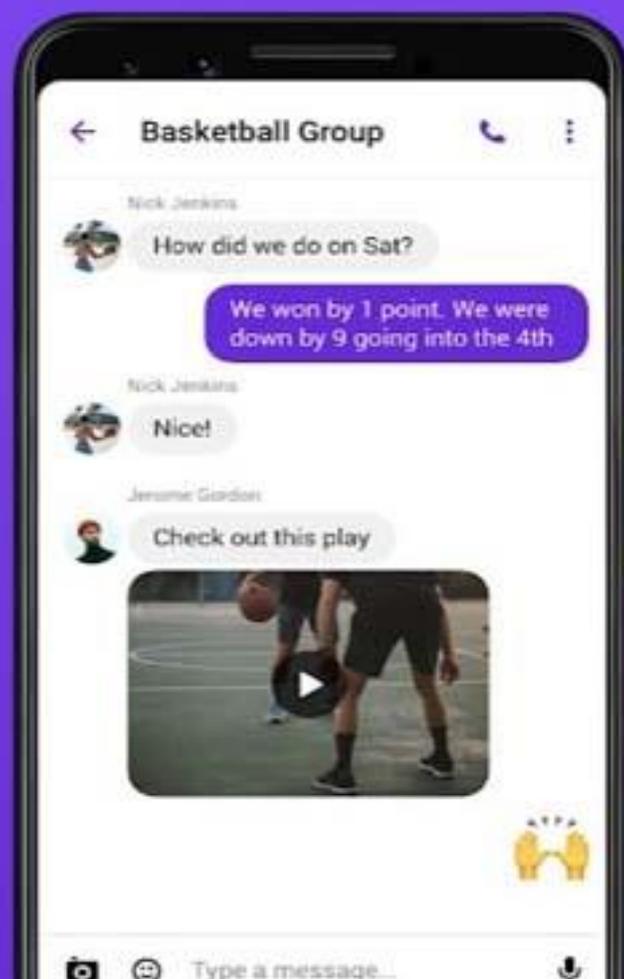
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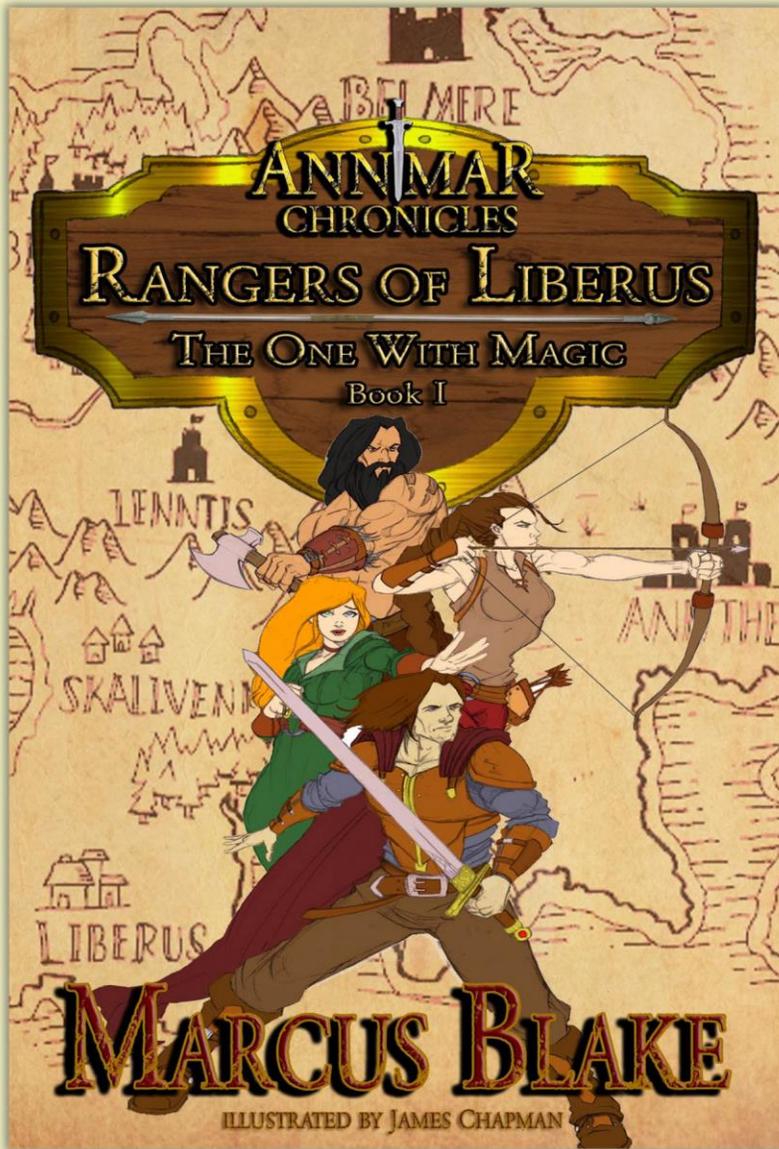
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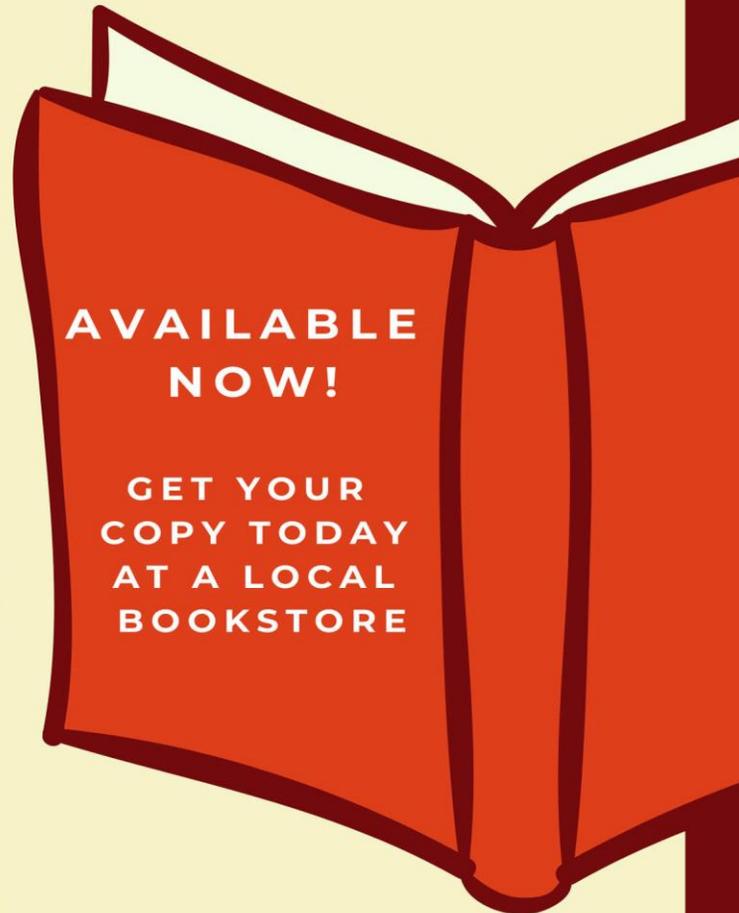
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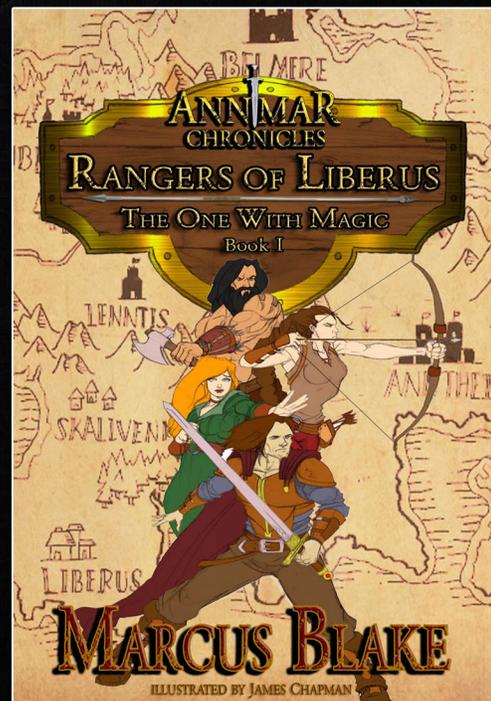
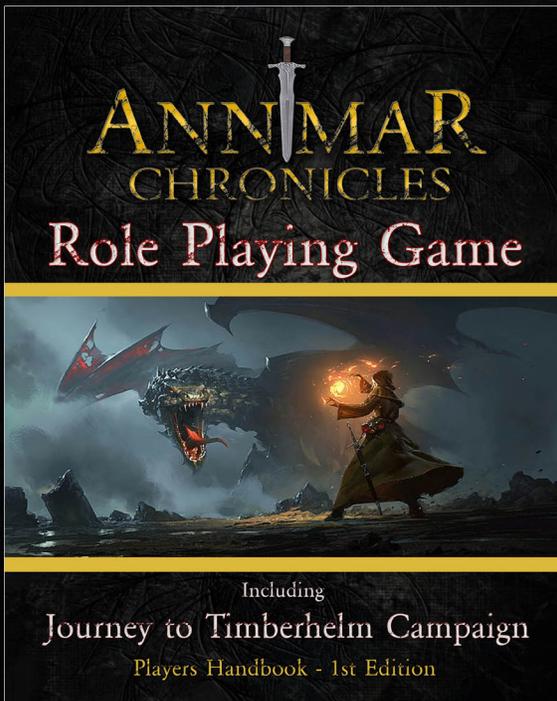
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