

# That Nerd Show



## WEEKLY NEWS



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Vol. I

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A MESSAGE  
FROM YOUR  
**SQUAD LEADER**  
"GAMING ADVICE"

# HOW THE MANDALORIAN SAVED DISNEY'S STAR WARS FRANCHISE!

BY MARCUS BLAKE AND BRENDAN SMITH

## "VIDEO GAMES OF 2020"



GAME OF THE YEAR  
AND OUR FAVORITE  
GAMES OF 2020



"THE LITTLE THINGS"  
MOVIE REVIEW

AND  
OTHER REVIEWS  
FROM OUR STAFF

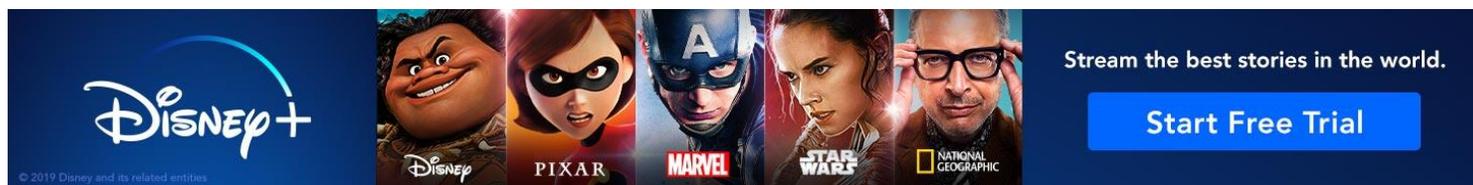
WHAT YOU SHOULD  
BINGE-WATCH



*Stephan Keller* 

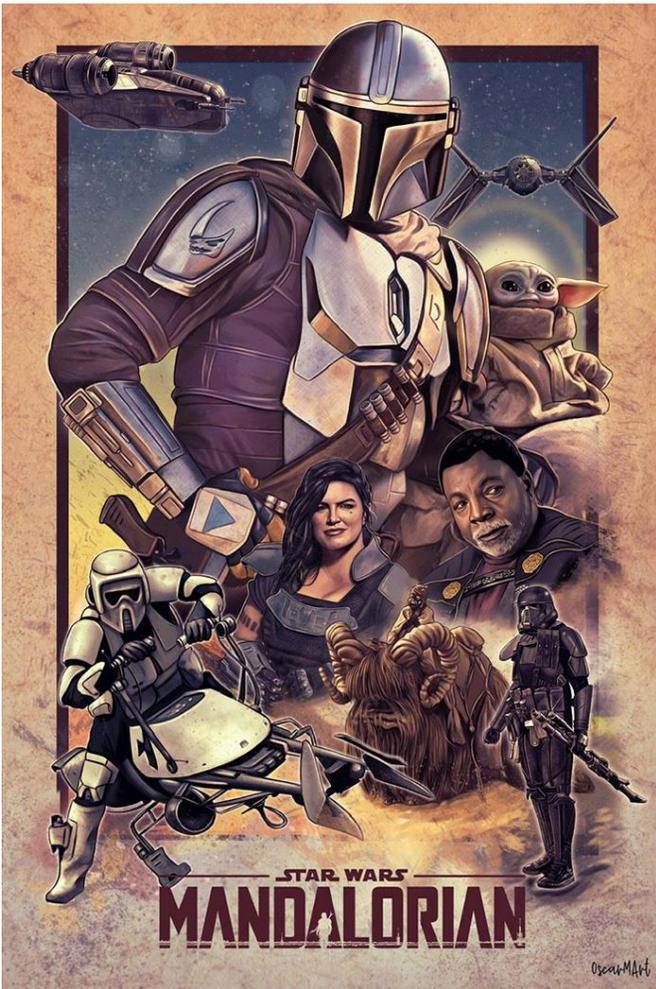
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# HOW *THE MANDALORIAN* SAVED DISNEY'S STAR WARS FRANCHISE!

by Marcus Blake and Brendan Smith



**IT'S** hard to imagine that Star Wars would need saving. After all, it is the greatest sci-fi franchise in film history, even more than Star Trek when it comes to sheer popularity. But Star Wars is it is not without its controversy. As great as the original Star Wars trilogy might be, especially for the reverence that fans have for it like it is the bible of science fiction, everything after has never quite measured up. And you can say that Star Wars has been on a downward spiral ever since George Lucas finished his first three movies. However, ever since Disney bought the franchise and made their own trilogy of movies, the controversy surrounding Star Wars has gotten worse to the point that something needed to save the franchise for the fans. So over forty years since the release of the first film, a little streaming show called The Mandalorian would cut through all the controversy and subpar storytelling to give Star Wars fans what they have always wanted since they first saw Star Wars. We got the same kind of story that made us fans fall in love with the franchise to begin with. Here's how it happened.

This downward spiral of the Star Wars Franchise didn't start with Disney. In fact, the blame lies with George Lucas, the master himself. And I think we can all agree that Star Wars has never been as good as it was between 1977 and 1983 where George Lucas made this incredible trilogy of films that we're not just fantastic spectacles of action and practical effects against the backdrop of space in a galaxy far, far away to which we had never seen before in a film and way ahead of its time. George Lucas did something else spectacular, he crafted this magnificent mythological story of heroes and sacrifice; a story of good versus evil sprinkled with redemption. The kind of story that we have probably not experienced since reading the Odyssey. And where George Lucas should have left it there, he just couldn't do it. He was never satisfied with his first three movies like we were. When the CGI capabilities were available, he

tinkered with the movies, trying to make them better, but somehow made them worse to the point that he altered aspects of the story like Han Solo not really shooting Greedo first while changing the roguish nature of the Solo character. It was kind of stupid really because all fans know that the better story is having someone like Han shoot first and ask questions later in some John Wayne like manner. The Special Edition trilogy looked good, but CGI didn't make the first three films any better.

However, George Lucas wasn't done with Star Wars. He had more stories to tell and so he decided to make the prequel trilogy, which was controversial at best and heavily divided the fans especially the ones who had been there since the beginning. The prequel trilogy was supposed to introduce Star Wars to a whole new generation and perhaps that was the one goal the trilogy accomplished, but the films left us unsatisfied. Sure, we can say that it was kind of cool to tell the story of Anakin Skywalker and how he fell to the dark side, but there were serious missteps by George Lucas when it came to telling this story and how to make the films. maybe it was because he was completely in control and didn't have anybody that could tell him no and save him from himself. Good editors and producers are the ones that push artists in the right direction helping them to find their very best when it comes to creativity, but also helping them to show restraint because sometimes less is more When telling a great story. The prequels relied too much on CGI and suffered from bad dialogue thus making Anakin Skywalker's journey to the dark side uneven and sometimes convoluted. The movies did have a lot of good action and great lightsaber duels, things that we weren't able to see enough of in the original trilogy, but that alone doesn't make a story great. The only thing that the prequels truly accomplished was leaving Star Wars fans bitter and yearning for movies that resembled more like the original trilogy. It's fair to say that we all wanted movies that made us feel the exact same way we felt when we saw the original trilogy, when the story could touch us emotionally and we felt connected to the same hero's tale. And nothing against the cast in the prequels because they did their best with what they had to work with. They gave us some entertaining films and you even have to feel sorry for George Lucas because nothing he does could really compare to what he did before. Perhaps he was a victim of his own genius when it came to the original trilogy. But not even George Lucas could sweep the controversy surrounding Star Wars under the rug. It was there and nothing could recapture the magic of making those first three Star Wars films.

In 2012 George Lucas would do the unthinkable. He sold Lucasfilm to Disney. Star Wars would become a Disney property just like Marvel and with the success of the Marvel movies up to that point, the first Avengers movie had already come out in theaters, it wasn't hard to believe that Disney could find the same success with Star Wars, a proven winner with a great fanbase because even if the movies were subpar, we still went to go see Star Wars because, after all, it's Star Wars and there isn't really anything that measures up. It didn't take Disney long to figure out that they needed to make more movies and after all the controversy surrounding the Star Wars Prequels they knew what they had to do, They did what George Lucas was already trying to do before he sold everything. Finally, episode 7, 8, and 9 were going to be made and with the help of George Lucas, they would get the band back together. Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, and even Harrison Ford would be back and reprise the roles that made them famous. This was big, it was like if the Beatles had gotten back together for a reunion tour. These beloved characters would shepherd a new generation in the Star Wars story. How could we not be excited as Star Wars fans...we were getting more movies and Disney had all the resources plus an all-star team to make these great films...the Star Wars films we deserved. But it didn't exactly happen that way. Even with super Star Wars fan and Steven Spielberg Guru, J.J. Abrams at the helm, fans complained that *The Force Awakens* was just a carbon copy of Episode 4: A New Hope. He and Lucas Film President even said that they wanted to make a safe movie for the fans. It was certainly that, but it didn't feel new or original, and this divided Star Wars fans even more. The worst part was we didn't get to see Luke Skywalker except for a minute or two at the end. On making *The Force Awakens*, J. J. Abrams, quoted. "That was a constant in the production of the movie: moments where we would all look around and realize what we were doing and gasp a little bit and then dive back in. When you're on the set of the Millennium Falcon or staring into the eyes of C3P0 giving direction, it's pretty easy to have that fanatic part of you bubble up. But our job was to be there to tell this story, not to be a fanboy." Sadly, no one had the courage to say that's exactly what he was doing just like no one could George Lucas "no" when he was making *The Phantom Menace* and we got Jar Jar Binks.



**With** Episode 8: *The Last Jedi*, we hoped that we would get the Luke Skywalker movie we had been wanting since 1983. Hope might have been too strong of a word. Fans mainly felt angry over how the story of Luke Skywalker was mistreated. *The Last Jedi* proved to be the most controversial film of the Star Wars franchise. Luke wasn't turned into the master Jedi we wanted him to be. We were told that the Jedi didn't matter. And the character of Rey was giving an origin story that didn't matter. We could go on and on about the problems with *The Last Jedi* and maybe it came down to two different directors having two different visions whereas we should have had one director creating the vision for all three of the Disney Trilogy. But it seemed like that older mythology we grew up with Star Wars and everything that we loved about our favorite characters was thrown right out the door so a director could have some bold new vision. We're not saying that *The Last Jedi* was an absolute terrible movie, but it certainly didn't fit with the greatness that we had come to expect in a Star Wars movie, especially something like *The Empire Strikes Back* which also was the middle part of a trilogy and is generally regarded as the best Star Wars movie ever made. When J. J. Abrams was asked what he thought of *The Last Jedi*, he said. "It's full of surprises and subversion and all sorts of bold choices." Then added. "On the other hand, it's a bit of a meta approach to the story. I don't think that people go to *Star Wars* to be told, 'This doesn't matter,'" Finally, Abrams balanced his statement by suggesting *The Last Jedi's* relationship to *The Rise of Skywalker* was crucial because overall it was "a story that needed a pendulum swing in one direction in order to swing in the other." This wasn't exactly the praise fans were looking for when it came to *The Last Jedi*.

It was clear that they had to do something different for the final film, *The Rise of Skywalker*. J.J. Abrams was brought back to cement his vision and fix plot holes from *The Last Jedi*. But it was another hit and miss. All *The Rise of Skywalker* ended up being was a five hour movie condensed into two and half hours that was hard to follow and couldn't give us a satisfying conclusion. It would take another article or even a book to explain all that went wrong with it. But who was to blame in all this? J.J. Abrams, the fan boy who just wanted to make a copy of what he loved about Star Wars in the same manner that *Superman Returns* was just a glorified fan film of the *Superman 1 and 2*. Was it Kathleen Kennedy whose apparent interference with creators and general disregard for the lore of Star Wars when it came to the editing of these films. She said during the press tour for *The Rise of Skywalker*, I think, knock on wood, that the fans are going to feel...listened to. I think that's always been an important thing to Lucasfilm, the fans are every bit as important to us as what any of us do. And I hope they feel that way with [*The Rise of Skywalker*]." But her words sounded more like hubris than understanding of what Star Wars fans really wanted in the Disney Trilogy. For instance, they couldn't even get Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher on screen together in these new films, missing a golden opportunity to give fans what we have always wanted since *Return of the Jedi*. Of course, we wanted to see these heroes fighting together again, but that was more wishful thinking in what we expected from Disney making new Star Wars films. At least they got *Rogue One* right.

With all this controversy surrounding Star Wars especially with Disney doing their own movies, there was something happening in the Star Wars universe that most fans weren't really paying attention to. It was flying under the radar so to speak It was the kind of storytelling that would pave the way to help save Disney's Star Wars Franchise. And this all started with Dave Filoni a true disciple of George Lucas. It started with the animated movie and then TV series of the *Clone Wars*, a series that told what was going on between Episode 2 and Episode 3. More importantly it gave us a new perspective on Anakin Skywalker from just seeing him as a whiny inexperienced

lovestruck teenager to the guy who would become Darth Vader within the course of two movies. Plus, introduced us to a plethora of new characters that we would grow to love in the Star Wars universe like Jedi Ahsoka Tano. Dave Filoni told these engaging stories that made us emotionally connected to the characters from the prequels more than the movies ever could. Sometimes that's why TV is better than an actual film where you can tell these bigger stories over a larger time. Making it easier to connect everything to a larger whole.



**Then** he did it again when he created the Star Wars Rebels series after Disney had purchased Lucasfilm. Disney was smart enough to keep him on and make him the creative director of all the animated series. While Kathleen Kennedy and JJ Abrams were so focused on the new Star Wars trilogy of movies, Dave Filoni was largely left alone to create his vision based on the blueprint that George Lucas gave him. And this served him well because Star Wars Rebels was one of the best series in the Star Wars universe. It gave us new heroes that we can identify with outside of the Skywalker saga while also connecting to the larger universe by having Ahsoka Tano in the series. And, while it was a brand new series with new heroes, it also connected us to the Skywalker saga by having

characters like Lando Calrissian and Leia Organa appear in one or two episodes as well as Obi Wan Kenobi. We got to see the Emperor and Darth Vader in the series and made Canon one of the greatest Star Wars villains in the expanded universe after so much of that had been changed when Disney took over Star Wars. Grand Admiral Thrawn became the main villain in the last two seasons. Between Star Wars The Clone Wars and Star Wars Rebels. Dave Filoni already had a great track record. Maybe that's because he was left alone to do his own thing or more importantly because he was mentored by George Lucas and consulted the master in how to tell these stories, which is something that JJ Abrams or Rian Johnson didn't really do until it was needed after all the controversy with The Force Awakens and The Last Jedi when they were making the Rise of Skywalker. While it was good that George Lucas was brought in to consult, it might have already been a little too late. Or again maybe the bigger issue was the interference by Kathleen Kennedy. Her interference with creators as we have found out over the last few years has been immense and what we all probably know by now is she doesn't really have a true understanding of Star Wars and didn't really want to listen to the creator himself when they abandoned his outlines for what episode 7, 8, and 9 should have been. It seems that she has wanted to have her own vision of Star Wars while being the artist who's never created anything in her life, and we all know how people like that tend to make great things!

However, it wasn't until Jon Favreau came on board and got his own project with Lucasfilm, that we would truly get the best Star Wars since the original trilogy, Star Wars Clone Wars and Star Wars Rebels are a close second. He was tasked with creating a live action Star Wars TV show for the new Disney + streaming service. George Lucas at one time wanted to do a live action TV series, but it never came to fruition and that mainly had to do with the cost of making each episode. It was something we were all on board with because really, up until now, the only Star Wars live action TV show we've had was the 1978 Holiday special, which should largely be forgotten because it's so horrible. Jon Favreau created The Mandalorian and with the help of Dave Filoni made this the best series we've ever gotten in the Star Wars universe and one that definitely should never be forgotten. Over the course of two seasons and 16 episodes, Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni have created something that not only connects Star Wars from the prequels to the original trilogy, but even to the era of the First Order. Rich and Roguish characters were created that we could become emotionally invested in while exploring a different side of the Star Wars universe that we really hadn't seen except in small bits here and there in the movies, but mostly books from the expanded universe that aren't necessarily canon anymore. It's tales from the Outer Rim and the fringes of the Star Wars universe or more like the wild west where anything goes than stories set within a civilized society. The Mandalorian is set during a different time that we've never really seen on the big screen, only five years after the fall of the empire and the movie Return of the Jedi. We get to see how people are surviving under the New Republic in the Outer Rim while dealing with the remnants of the empire that would later turn into the First Order and we get to see it through the eyes of a bounty hunter who's just trying to make a living, but who is an antihero much like Han Solo and ends up doing the right thing and sacrificing for a greater cause. Characters like this play very well in the Star Wars Universe and often are the most entertaining.

But how did Jon Favreau along with Dave Filoni make The Mandalorian such a success, a show that would become number one in the Nielsen ratings for a streaming show and wasn't from Netflix, while also becoming the most watched content on Disney +. Much like Dave Filoni, he talked to the man who created it all, George Lucas and became another disciple of the master himself. Jon said in an interview about George Lucas during the first season. "We had a long talk with each other. One thing he said to me was, 'remember, Jon, the real audience for all stories and all myths is the kids that are coming of age' because he's really a Joseph Campbell adherent." "We enjoy the stories as adults, but really, storytelling is about imparting the wisdom of the previous generations on to the children who are becoming adults, and giving them a context for how to behave and how to learn the lessons of the past without making the mistakes on their own "That's the hope; that you can teach them how to avoid all the hardship, but garner all the wisdom." At the end of the day Star Wars has always been a mythological story that shows the heroes path in many forms and the kind of the myth that we can all relate to. George Lucas always understood this better than anyone at LucasFilm so it's only natural that true disciples would understand it too. However, The Mandalorian seemed to be something more than any of the movies that came after Return of the Jedi, but why? Why was this story so much better than Disney's Star Wars movies?

First, let's talk about the attention to detail that Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni have when it comes to Star Wars and just to give you fair warning, there will be Spoilers in the rest of this article. They may be fanboys, but they are also good students of George Lucas and know how to throw just the right amount of stuff into a good story. Like for example we see familiar places such as the cantina in Mos Eisley where we all know is where Luke and Obi Wan Kenobi met Han Solo and Chewbacca and of course Han Solo shot Greedo first. It's a great callback as the Mandalorian will make deals there with another Bounty Hunter. Now season 1 didn't have as many Easter eggs as season 2. It's apparent that in season 2 they went all out with the story and how connected to the rest of the Star Wars universe...we'll get to that in a moment. Another great callback to a Star Wars world that we are familiar with is through the character Cara Dune, A former empire shocktrooper who has her own beef with the empire because she is from Alderann, which if you remember is the planet that was destroyed by the first death star and the home world of Princess Leia. This is important not just as a callback to a planet we are familiar with, but also as a driving force for her character and how she has not love for the empire. Another perfect example of this is through the character of Dr. Pershing who is trying to use the blood of the other main character in the Mandalorian series for cloning purposes and as we find out, worked at the cloning facilities in Kamino. Remember the planet Kamino in episode 2 where all the clone troopers were made as a copy Jango Fett. But probably the best thing that happened in the Mandalorian, besides introducing us to this great Bounty Hunter character was the introduction of what we commonly refer to as Baby Yoda, a child from the same species as Jedi master Yoda. Sure, we would learn his name in season 2, but he still just gonna be Baby Yoda. It's a cuter name anyway.



**Now**, why is this particular character important? For two reasons. First, it gives us another Jedi that survived Order 66 and a character that will apparently be very important down the road. Second, it gives our main protagonist a purpose other than just being a bounty Hunter because what Mando will end up doing is saving the child from the remnants of the empire who essentially just want to clone its blood and bring back a Sith Lord. It's strongly hinted that what they're doing will end up creating Supreme Leader Snoke. Star Wars has always closely followed the hero's path as defined by Joseph Campbell and usually great heroes are characters who don't know their true purpose until they are thrown into conflict. We know the basic template of a Jedi hero...Rey Palpatine or Skywalker whichever you prefer is for the most part of carbon copy of Luke Skywalker when it comes to the hero's path. but with the Baby Yoda character and the Mandalorian, it's something different. He basically takes it upon himself to rescue the child from the empire and to get it to its own kind, the Jedi, as we later find out. The greatness of this story isn't just some episodic series where he faces the challenge of the week, everything is leading to something bigger, every episode is one small chapter in a bigger story. And that story is the saving of the child by the Mandalorian, another form of the hero's path. Also, one more great Easter egg from season one was at the end of it when we see Moff Gideon wield the legendary Mandalorian Darksaber, A legendary

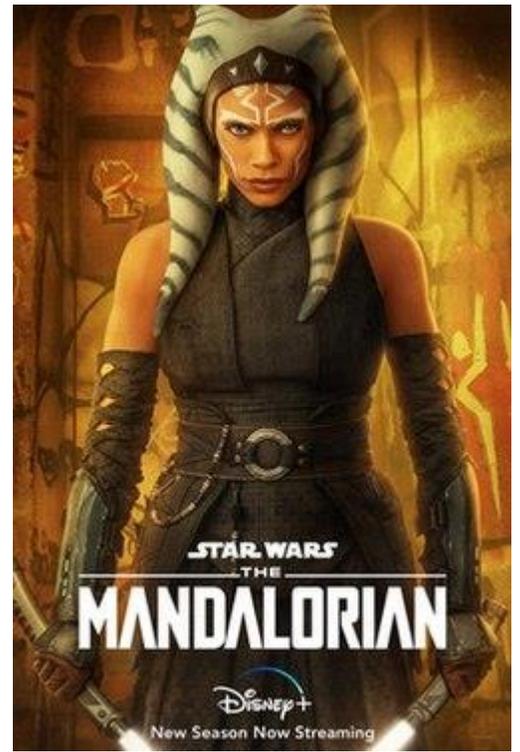
weapon that we saw not only in the clone wars series, but also in Star Wars Rebels, and by the end of season 2 we will know why it is truly important again...you a small easter egg that is part of a larger story or foreshadows to something important with Baby Yoda and Mando. Maybe Mando is the rightful ruler of Mandalore, but you will have to watch the series to find out.

Season 2 of the Mandalorian really couldn't have been more perfect when it came to every little thing building up to something bigger. We got to see this story connected to other characters we know from the Star Wars universe like the Mandalorian Princess Bo Katan, who was voiced by the Battlestar Galactica actress Katee Sackhoff in both the clone wars series and the rebels' series, but she finally got to do the live action version of the character in two episodes. Plus, we finally got to see the live action version of Jedi Ahsoka Tano played by Rosario Dawson. We get to find out what happened to her character after Star Wars Rebels and she is the character, not only is able to finally communicate with the child, but also help set it on its path to how it can connect to other Jedi. Now, while these are major connections to the Star Wars universe and great Easter eggs for season 2. It's also some of the little details that make a huge difference like we finally got to see a Krayt Dragon where in the past all we saw was the skeleton or only read about them in books. The other big connection to the Star Wars universe is we finally get to see what happened to Boba Fett after Return of the Jedi, where he survived the Sarlacc Pit. At the end episode 1 when we see him staring off at the Mandalorian, should give any Star Wars fan chills, but even more so when we get to episode 6 when Boba Fett reclaims his armor and takes up the cause to save the child. And speaking of that episode, another great easter egg is they go the planet of Tython. It is an ancient city with one of the first Jedi Temples and has been mentioned before in books. Just another example of paying attention to detail in the Star Wars universe and making part of the expanded universe canon.

However, there is one thing that the Mandalorian series was able to accomplish that the Disney Star Wars trilogy never did, give us the Luke Skywalker we had always wanted and desperately needed. Although, it was a CGI face on a stunt double, we even got Mark Hamill to come back and do the voice. It's not hard to argue that The Disney trilogy messed up in a lot of ways the character of Luke Skywalker by not having a single vision among the directors and while I can argue that we wouldn't be as bitter about how his character turned out if we'd actually got to see Luke Skywalker in his prime after Return of the Jedi, the simple truth is his character wasn't handled with great care. That is something that Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni rectified. When the child sits up on the rock in episode 6 and through the force calls out to a Jedi, there was only one Jedi that could truly answer and make the Mandalorian perfect. Of course, it would have to be Luke Skywalker, now a Jedi Master who is rebuilding the Jedi Order. It was the ultimate of cameos, arriving just in time to save Mando and his team from annihilation and destroying a powerful droid army, cutting through them like it was nothing with the full power of the

force. We have waited since 1983 to see Luke Skywalker be that badass. Sadly, this is something that the Disney trilogy could not do and although they may have tried a little bit in *The Last Jedi*, it just wasn't the same. I don't think anybody can argue that what Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni pulled off with that cameo the accumulation of everything that Star Wars fans have wanted to see with the original characters and that we should have gotten before now. But maybe it finally took these two fanboys and disciples of George Lucas to truly understand how to make a great Star Wars story in the vein of the original trilogy and give the fans exactly what they wanted. Honestly, it shouldn't have been that hard. There's lots of rumors that it was always Kathleen Kennedy trying to interfere with various Star Wars stories and maybe that's true. But one cameo and 4 minutes in the season 2 finale of the *Mandalorian* single handedly saved Disney's Star Wars more than any other series or movies they have made up to this point. Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni did this by understanding what makes a good Star Wars story and how it's rooted in myth while also listening to what the fans have always wanted without trying to make some bold new vision. New visions in storytelling may have its place within the Star Wars universe, but not really with the characters who have already been established.

Between the step-by-step building blocks in every episode leading to something bigger to all of the easter eggs from the Star Wars universe and finally to the greatest of cameos that any Star Wars fan could ask for, Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni have proven but you can still make great Star Wars stories by sticking to the template that George Lucas created over 40 years ago, by understanding how to tell these kinds of stories through the power of mythology. They did it with one single vision and kept it simple. At this point I think it's fair to say that the only thing Disney need to do is give Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni all the money they need and just let them create whatever they want within the Star Wars universe because it's probably going to be gold. And maybe Disney is finally recognizing that by greenlighting all the series' they're going to do on Disney +. Like an *Obi One Kenobi* series, the *Rangers of the Republic* series where will get to see characters like *Cara Dune* and how they bring justice on the Outer Rim. We are going to get to see the *book of Boba Fett Series*. And I think they finally understand how badly we need a *Luke Skywalker* series so we get to see and understand before he goes into exile. For the first time we could honestly say that the greatness of Star Wars doesn't reside in movies, but in the series' that they can create on Disney +, which will tell bigger stories that can't be told in two hour movies and won't be convoluted or just carbon copies of another Star Wars movie. As Star Wars fans, we have been left disappointed by the Disney trilogy, but our faith has been restored with the *Mandalorian* series. Sky's the limit with what Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni can do and we shouldn't need any more convincing after the Season 2 Finale of the *Mandalorian*. Let's be honest, we are excited that somebody at Disney has finally gotten it right when it comes to Star Wars! What they accomplished in two seasons was nothing short of magic, what else can we say other than Jon Favreau and Dave Filoni are one with the force and the force is with them!



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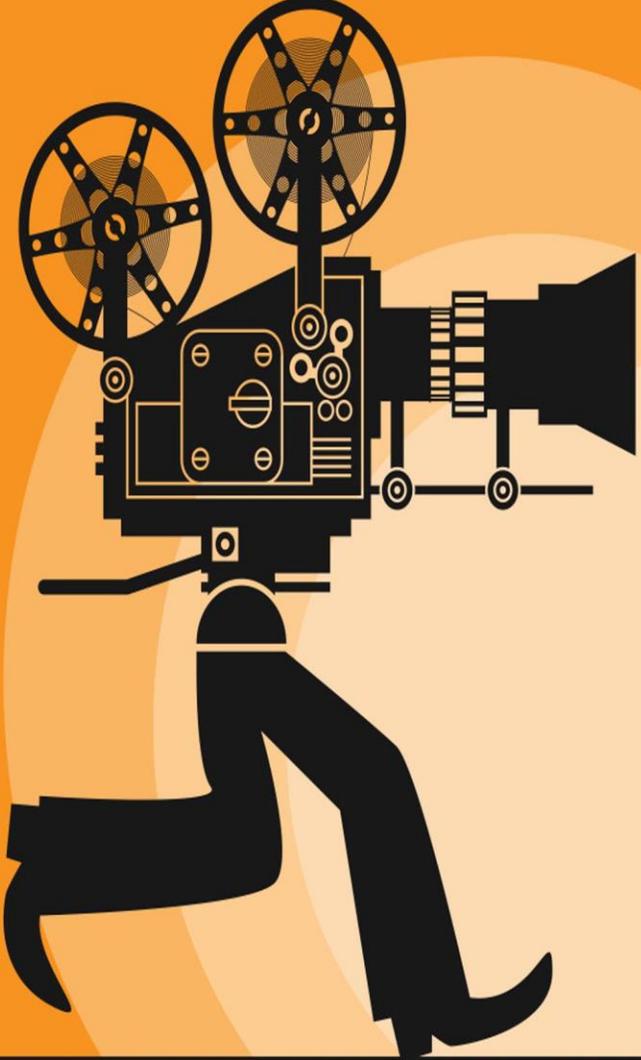


**MARVEL** STUDIOS

# WandaVision

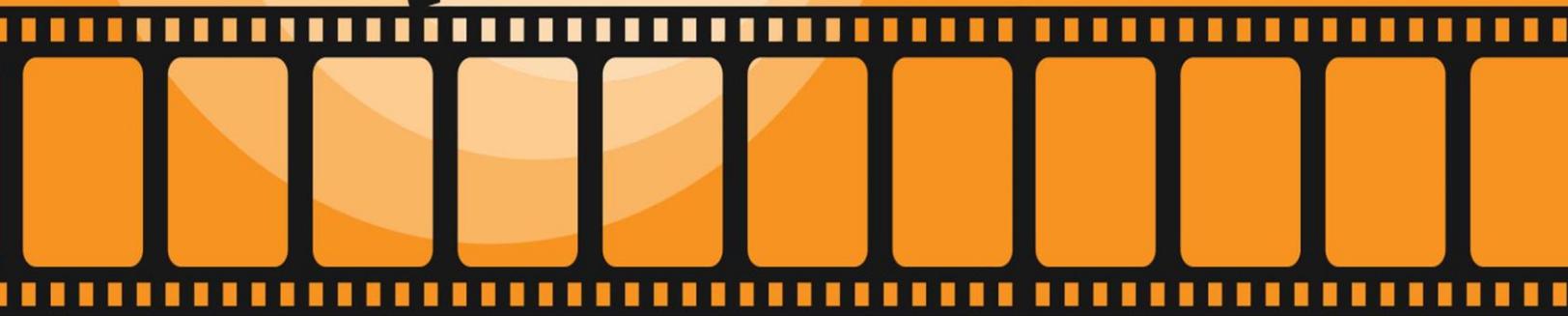


Original Series Streaming Jan. 15



# Film and

# TV



What's Happening This Week...



## Jason Clarke, Michelle Monaghan & Jai Courtney To Star In Action-Thriller 'Black Site' From 'John Wick' Producers

Reported by Deadline.com

**Jason Clarke** (*Zero Dark Thirty*), **Michelle Monaghan** (*Mission: Impossible*) and **Jai Courtney** (*The Suicide Squad*) are set to star in action-thriller *Black Site* from the producers of *John Wick*, *Hotel Mumbai* and *Bait*. *Black Site* centers on a group of officers based in a labyrinthine top-secret CIA black site who must fight for

their lives in a cat-and-mouse game against Hatchet, a brilliant and infamous high-value detainee. When Hatchet escapes, his mysterious and deadly agenda has far-reaching and dire consequences. Production is scheduled to get underway on the Gold Coast, Australia, in February 2021, with first-time filmmaker Sophia Banks aboard to direct Jinder Ho's script.

The feature is the first out the gate for Asbury Park Pictures, the joint venture between Basil Iwanyk's Thunder Road Films and Redbox Entertainment. Basil Iwanyk, Erica Lee and Mike Gabrawy produce for Asbury along with Todd Fellman for Story Bridge Films. Andrew C. Coles of The Mission Entertainment serves as executive producer. Jonathan Fuhrman, Asbury's co-president of production, will also executive produce as will Randy Simon.

*John Wick* and *Sicario* producers Iwanyk and Lee launched Asbury Park late last year and set industry vet Gabrawy (*Hotel Mumbai*) to run the action and thriller label. Rocket Science handles sales on the slate and has set output deals for Germany, Austria and Switzerland (Leonine), Spain (You Planet), Benelux (The Searchers), Greece, Turkey and The Middle East (Italia), Portugal (Lusomundo), Poland and Former Yugoslavia (Monolith), Taiwan (Moviecloud), South Africa (FilmFinity) and Israel (Forum). Additional deals for *Black Site* have been completed in Scandinavia (Scanbox), Australia (Madman) and Japan (Happinet).

Former fashion stylist Banks has made a string of commercials and shorts, including *Unregistered*, which premiered at Tribeca in 2019. Her follow-up, *Proxy*, is currently playing at festivals. Producer Erica Lee said of Banks: "We were huge fans of her shorts and have been looking for the right project to collaborate on. Sophia has a distinct visual approach and her take on *Black Site* blew us away."

## AMC Acquires Jared Harris & Cush Jumbo British Drama Series 'The Beast Must Die'

Reported by Deadline.com

**The Beast Must Die**, the British drama series starring Jared Harris and Cush Jumbo, is headed to the U.S. The series, which was originally commissioned by UK streamer BritBox, has been picked up by AMC Networks and will air on the cable company's flagship channel as well as its AMC+ service later this year. The drama, which is produced by New Regency Television International and Ridley Scott's Scott Free, wrapped filming in the UK in November after conducting 5,000 Covid tests on its 190-strong cast and crew and 700 extras during a 61-day shoot. The six-part revenge thriller is based on the novel by Nicholas Blake, the pen name of Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis, and written by Gaby Chiappe. It stars *Chernobyl* star Harris and *The Good Fight*'s Jumbo as well as Billy Howle (*The Serpent*), Nathaniel Parker (*The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*) and Geraldine James (*Downton Abbey*).

*The Beast Must Die* tells the story of a grieving mother who infiltrates the life of the man she believes killed her son. Directed by Dome Karukoski (*Tolkien*), it is produced by produced by Sarada McDermott (*Bridgerton*) with exec producers Ed Rubin and Emma Broughton for New Regency, Marina Brackenbury and David W. Zucker for Scott Free, Nathaniel Parker and Chiappe. Endeavor Content brokered the deal on behalf of New Regency and Scott Free.

"This series will be something special for AMC and our AMC+ subscribers. It continues a legacy of very successful relationships with the brilliant Jared Harris and our friends at Scott Free, and forges new producing partnerships with BritBox and New Regency Television," said Dan McDermott, president of original programming for AMC Networks. "*The Beast Must Die* honors the novel upon which it is based with a fantastic piece of television that cuts to the heart of grief, hate, revenge and allows us to ask questions about our own humanity in a remarkably engaging and suspenseful way."

"We are beyond thrilled that *The Beast Must Die* is going to be shown on AMC, and couldn't ask for a better television home in the U.S. that stands for bold, quality drama. We hope audiences will be drawn into this emotional thriller and can't wait for it to go out into the world," added Ed Rubin, Head of New Regency Television International.





## Jamie Dornan To Headline ‘The Tourist’ As HBO Max Boards Thriller Series; Danielle Macdonald, Hugo Weaving & Shalom Brune-Franklin Co-Star

Reported from Deadline.com

Jamie Dornan (*A Private War*) has been tapped as the lead of *The Tourist*, the six-episode limited series from *Fleabag* production company Two Brothers Pictures. HBO Max has come on board to co-produce and be the

US streaming home for the mystery thriller, which also has cast Danielle Macdonald (*Dumplin'*), Shalom Brune-Franklin (*Line of Duty*) and Hugo Weaving (*The Lord of The Rings*). Along with the WarnerMedia streamer, Germany's ZDF also has joined *The Tourist's* commissioning partners BBC One and Stan. The series, written by Two Brothers Pictures founders Harry and Jack Williams, will be filmed in Australia this year.

*The Tourist*, which is not related to the 2019 Angelina Jolie-Johnny Depp film, centers on a British man (Dornan) who finds himself in the glowing red heart of the Australian outback, being pursued by a vast tank truck trying to drive him off the road. An epic cat-and-mouse chase unfolds, and the man later wakes in hospital, hurt, but somehow alive. Except he has no idea who he is. With merciless figures from his past pursuing him, The Man's search for answers propels him through the vast and unforgiving outback. "The *Tourist* are some of the most exciting scripts I've ever read. I can't wait to go to Australia with such a talented group of people," said Dornan. Macdonald will play Helen Chambers, a fledgling Probationary Constable, and Brune-Franklin is set to play Luci, a waitress who's swept into The Man's journey for answers. Weaving plays Agent Lachlan Rogers, one of the most highly regarded detective inspectors in Australia, leading Major Crime for the state police. "We're hugely excited about this show. It's tonally breaking new ground for us and having Jamie Dornan on board is the icing on the Australian cake," said Harry and Jack Williams.

*The Tourist* is a Two Brothers Pictures (an All3Media company) production for the BBC, in association with Highview Productions, All3Media International, the South Australian Film Corporation, HBO Max, Stan and ZDF. The six-episode drama has been written by producers and screenwriters Harry and Jack Williams, who alongside Christopher Aird and Andrew Benson will serve as executive producers for Two Brothers Pictures and Tommy Bulfin for the BBC. Lisa Scott will produce and Chris Sweeney will executive produce and direct. International sales will be handled by global partner All3Media International. "Harry and Jack's talents are as vast as the Australian outback, and this thriller will leave viewers on the edge of their seat piecing together the puzzle," said Jeniffer Kim, SVP, International Originals, HBO Max. "We are delighted to have Jamie, Danielle, Hugo and Shalom join the cast for this compelling addition to our slate of international original series."

## Josh Hartnett Reteams With Guy Ritchie & Jason Statham For Miramax STX Thriller

Reported from Deadline.com

Josh Hartnett is set to star opposite Jason Statham, Cary Elwes and Aubrey Plaza in their latest Miramax/STX feature spy thriller which went by the title *Five Eyes*. The movie, which is temporarily untitled, reps the second collaboration between Hartnett and Ritchie after *Wrath of Man*, another Jason Statham-Ritchie combo which is set for release this year. Ritchie directs and is producing the film from a screenplay written by Ivan Atkinson and Marn Davies (*The Gentlemen*, *Wrath of Man*), with revisions by Ritchie. Atkinson will also produce. Bill Block is producing for Miramax, which is also fully financing the film, and STX acquired worldwide rights and will distribute directly in the US, UK and Ireland and in the rest of the world through its network of international distribution partners.

The feature follows MI6 guns-and-steel agent (Statham) who is recruited by a global intelligence agency to track down and stop the sale of a deadly new weapons technology that threatens to disrupt the world order. Reluctantly paired with CIA high-tech expert, Fortune sets off on a globe-trotting mission where he will have to use all of his charm, ingenuity and stealth to track down and infiltrate billionaire arms broker. The movie is currently shooting in Doha, Qatar, but then moves production to Turkey. Hartnett will be seen in the upcoming Raoul Peck *Exterminate all the Brutes* for HBO. He starred last year in the crime thriller *Most Wanted*, and his feature credits include *Pearl Harbor*, *Sin City*, *The Black Dahlia*, *Black Hawk Down*, *The Virgin Suicides*, and the Quibi comedy action series *Die Hart* starring Kevin Hart and John Travolta.



# Great Expectations in “The Little Things”



## Review by Alex Moore

**AS** far back as 1993's "The Pelican Brief," I can recall enjoying the work of Denzel Washington. Even for a movie with as low expectations as "The Equalizer," some seven or eight years ago, I was pleasantly surprised by not only his performance, but also how it translated to lifting the whole, entire film. Just as there are so few professional athletes, for example, who have the ability to seemingly carry a team to greatness, Mr. Denzel has that uncanny talent as an actor. However, everyone has an hourglass, as well, and the sand will not run forever, will it?

Let me take you back to 1993, again... Director, writer (and eventual producer) John Lee Hancock ("The Founder") has penned a new screenplay with the intention for Steven Spielberg to direct it. Spielberg passes on it, stating that the story is "too dark" and several, other big-named directors eventually follow suit. Hancock finally decides that it is time to just direct the movie, himself, and so the process begins. By the time it is completed, we have "The Little Things" ready for release, a mere 28 years later!

Hancock did not just sign Denzel ("The Equalizer 2") to the film. He also obtained Rami Malek ("No Time to Die"). Denzel is Joe Deacon, a deputy sheriff in California, and Rami is Jim Baxter, a detective in the same area. As you might have

guessed, the two of them are bound to work together on a significant case and, although, they start out on the wrong foot, so to speak, they eventually become inseparable. It is not only due to the close proximity of their work, but also because of what that work involves for both of them, down the road...

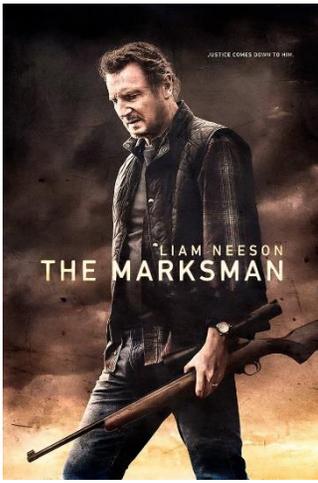
At the opening sequence of the movie, I could have sworn I was watching a suspense/horror film in the vein of "Jeepers Creepers" or "The Hitcher." Instead, it was all a big tease. I thought, then, that the real story would now begin, but that turned out to be a tease of sorts, as well. The only difference is that the opening was a few minutes and the second chapter was almost half of the total movie. If you feel as those you have seen this kind of film before, you are probably right. Could it be that 28 years of shelf life caused the premise to age poorly? Even so, there I more to any film than just originality. As I once heard a fictional basketball coach utter, "It is not what you do that matters, but how you do it!"

Deacon spends this portion of the movie contemplating past lives in connection to a current string of murders. He speaks to certain corpses as if he knows them, personally, and he watches them, presumably in the afterlife, approach his bedside in the middle of the night while he wrestles with bouts of insomnia. Meanwhile, Jim can be seen raising a daughter and having typical conversations with his wife from his suburban home. Could he be praying and meditating about the safety of his own family, while all these young women continue to disappear from existence around his neighborhood? Here is when the story really begins: Jared Leto ("The Outsider"), playing as Albert Sparma, enters into the story, equipped with all of the best lines inside the film, including a reference to his preference of pizza toppings, which I happen to agree with, strangely enough. Do I digress? No, not any further.

As one man says, "The devil is in the details." I could not have said it better myself when speaking about this film, or any other one, for that matter. You see, writing and directing are very valuable cogs when one is building a great machine (or a movie) to be presented to the public. Sometimes, it helps if the roles are occupied by two, separate individuals and sometimes it is better if the same person takes on double duty. To me, the fundamental issues with "The Little Things" have mostly to do with the directing and the writing because most of the performances seemed wooden or uninspired, aside from that of Jared, and the film carried on for far too long before it truly became interesting. Quantity seems to have taken the place of quality, recently. You can have both, but only quality can exist without the other one. I ought to practice what I preach, but that is just a generalized summation here.

"The Little Things" was an average movie for half of it and a good film for the other half. Therefore, it is "pretty good," despite the inclusion of three actors adding up to four Oscars on set! Think about that for a moment and ask yourself how this could have occurred. Going back to the sports analogy, what would you think about a team that recruited four championship stars, separately, added them all to one roster and the best they could come up with, in the field of play, was a decent record and an early playoff exit? Would you feel let down? How much blame would you place on them and how much would go toward the head coach (director)? I think I rest my case.

**It's a 6 / 10 (Adequate)**



# Liam Neeson Proves He's Still Able in "The Marksman"

Review by Marcus Blake

**The Marksman** is another in a long line of Liam Neeson action movies. But instead of him being a demolition expert, a martial arts expert, or some badass assassin, he is a rancher who was a former marine sniper. I once said that every Liam Neeson role since he did the movie *Taken* is basically a carbon copy of his character Brian Mills from that movie and I feel like this movie is no different. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not starting this review off by telling you it's a bad movie and you shouldn't see it. Actually, the opposite. Most of Liam Neeson's action movies are hit or miss even though they're entertaining. However, they're good one-timers. What would you expect if there are carbon copy of the

movie *Taken*, which I think we can all agree is a really good movie and Liam Neeson kicks butt in it. But *The Marksman* is a little bit different, it's a movie with heart and with a very subtle political message about immigration. And the one thing that I truly appreciated from this movie is that they didn't try to shove a political message down our throats. After all, good stories should be character-driven and not politically driven. So let me first say that Liam Neeson is great in this movie. Then again, he's always good in any movie he does because he's Liam Neeson. He's the type of actor that can carry a bad movie.

Now his American accent wasn't as good in this film compared to others because he's trying to have a southern accent since the story takes place in Arizona near the border, but that's just nitpicking and it really doesn't take away from the story. Katheryn Winnick is also good in this film, although I would have liked to have seen more of her because she has such a great onscreen presence woman. The heart of this movie is seen in the road trip film that it truly is. It's about the relationship of a former marine who patrols the border between Mexico and the US, and turns in illegal immigrants, but also decides to do the right thing and rescue a young boy who is being hunted by members of a drug cartel. The overall theme of this movie is would you be willing to do the right thing at all costs and at the risk of your own life. That's essentially what drives Liam Neeson's character. Sure, it's not an original theme and we've seen it plenty of times in movies, even other Liam Neeson movies, but it doesn't take away from how good *The Marksman* really is. The pacing is good. It's filled with a lot of good action as Liam Neeson shows off with his fighting skills, especially that as a marksman, hence the title. And the onscreen relationship he has with the young Hispanic boy that he's trying to get to Chicago is good. While the young actor does not have a whole lot of lines in the film, the scenes with him and Liam Neeson are good with just the right amount of emotion to make the audience feel connected to these two characters. I certainly enjoyed the film and would watch it again.

But like most films, it isn't perfect and it's not without its problems. I don't know if it's really necessary to try to humanize the drug cartel, to make us feel sympathetic for their cause, which they try to do at the end. Having the leader whine as he's dying that he didn't have a choice doesn't make us feel sympathy, you're the bad guy and you're hunting down a child. Just be the bad guy or there's no other reason to be anything else tell this story. I know films aren't necessarily supposed to be black and white, but sometimes they are and that's what really drives the story. You have a good guy and you have a bad guy and that's all you need. My biggest complaint is really the relationship with Katheryn Winnick's character, she's good in the film and you can definitely tell that there's a good relationship with Liam Neeson's character. The two actors definitely have good chemistry, but I still don't know what her relationship to Liam Neeson is except that he was married to her mother. Is she his daughter? Is she his stepdaughter? Where is the emotional connection between these two characters that makes me feel sympathy for either one of them, especially since Katheryn Winnick is playing a Border Patrol agent? She clearly loves him. They seem like family and she's willing to protect Liam Neeson's character as he's basically kidnapping the young boy from the Border Patrol in order to get him to Chicago, but if you're not going to clearly explain what their relationship is then why is it necessary to have her character in the film except that he knows someone who's willing to cover for him, which essentially could be any character among the Border Patrol agents in the movie. I think the relationship between these characters is important and should have been explored more whereas we don't really need a back story of the drug cartel. My last complaint is the ambiguous ending where we don't really know whether Liam Neeson's character dies or not. This is not some art film where we discuss the meaning of life at the end. I understand that the overall theme is about doing the right thing at all cost so it doesn't matter whether that character lives or dies as long as they complete their journey, but that doesn't need to be open-ended unless you're planning on doing a sequel and I don't think this film needs a sequel.

Overall, *The Marksman* is a good film and should definitely be seen even if only once. It is certainly one of the better Liam Neeson action movies. And I like the fact that it's a road trip movie so you get to explore the relationship a little bit more between Liam Neeson and the young boy. You get that father-son type of relationship between these two loss souls who need each other. While they could have done more with other characters like Katheryn Winnick's, it does not take away from *The Marksman* being an enjoyable film and Liam Neeson showing us once again that he is a badass. It's not gonna be the movie of the year and may only be a good Redbox rental, but *The Marksman* does not disappoint. Some of the best parts of the cinematography because with it being a road trip film, you certainly get to see lots of different landscapes that make up America. As John Ford taught us, the landscape can be its own character and is necessary to drive the story. I would agree about that regarding this film. *The Marksman* is another good Liam Neeson action movie that is worth paying for a good matinee or renting it. If you see it, I guarantee you won't be disappointed.

**It's a 7 / 10 (Okay)**

# The Majesty (and Mischief) of “The White Tiger”

Review by Alex Moore

Where were you in 2007? I wish I could say that I knew where I was at that time, but I can tell you where I was, from time to time, before that: the Fort Worth Zoo. Like most kids, I had my favorite animals to look at and admire. The birds and monkeys were interesting and funny, but more than anything else, I wanted to see the white tiger. I would sit by the looking glass along the side of its habitat, especially when it was resting just on the other side. Other kids would gather around behind me and whoop and holler. I would think to myself, “just leave us alone,” haha! There was something special about that animal and I am not alone in thinking that.

In fact, the white tiger seems to have special meaning across multiple cultures, near and far. It goes far beyond just the physical beauty of such an animal, as well.

Apparently, in Indian culture, the white tiger is spoken of as a reference to someone who comes along every so often and goes from rags to riches, in a manner of speaking. Can you imagine how?

“The White Tiger” takes place in the land of India during the year of 2007. Early on, we are exposed to the voice of our protagonist, Balram Halwai, played by Adarsh Gourav (“Mom”). It would seem that he is very limited in his level of knowledge and education, in general, but do not expect the movie to come straight out and tell you that. Just think about what you know to be the truth and imagine if you only knew half of that. Reserve any anger or frustration you might feel for someone who is not illiterate.

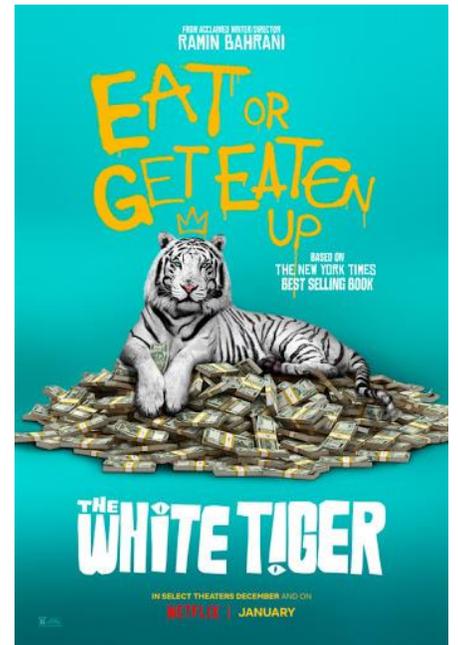
Balram, due to encouragement from certain influential people, has put himself in position to find the best possible master, so that he can up his level as a servant. Although I shudder to think about what the mentality might have been for slaves across this country some 150 years ago, it would seem that at some point we all learn to accept the world we are surrounded by and try to make the most of it. Indeed, what you perceive is all you really know. So who could blame anyone for having a “skewed” view of reality?

While “The White Tiger” does not shy away from the prospect of specific individuals favoring socialism over democracy, China over America, or browns over whites, one thing is made abundantly clear within the story: the cultural tropes concerning a caste system are, still, very much alive in parts of India and they may never fully dissipate. Think of this as a religious tradition, so well-engrained that it is just accepted as a part of life that one cannot help or control. This is where our hero’s real story begins...

Balram has come into the service of Ashok, played by Rajkummar Rao (“Chhalaang”) and his estranged wife, Pinky, played by Priyanka Chopra Jonas (“We Can Be Heroes”). Together, they aim to take full advantage of Balram’s skills and work ethic, while also attempting to break him of his ancient, traditional mindset. Try to imagine a scenario where you slowly begin to feel like an equal only to be rudely reminded that you are only as good as the loyalty you are willing to provide, even if that means lying for someone who has committed a terrible mistake and simply wants to avoid serious consequences for it. If you felt this type of betrayal and had no outlet to place it in, what would you be capable of doing? What if you tried to seek catharsis elsewhere, but it only served to make you feel worse? You see, everyone has a breaking point and whether that leads to something morally incorrect or not, in the end it is sometimes kill or be killed; survive or die; profit or fade out of existence.

Balram eventually sees an opportunity and acts on it. Those who are affected likely might have done the same thing, but does that really make any difference? “Rich men are born with opportunities they can waste...” If you were not rich, maybe you would come to a place where you value just one shot. It gave me great pause to think about that, personally. I have never seen myself as rich, yet I have been afforded numerous opportunities, so how poor can I really be?

For a moment or two, I wondered if “The White Tiger” is the best original offering I have seen from Netflix up to this point. Soon, I was rethinking this, only due to some apparent, sloppy story-telling late into the movie. Sometimes, in my estimation, style over substance is unnecessary. Having said that, I chose not to be bothered by some of the seemingly obvious takes on wealth and power and how one might come to achieve these things in a place like India. In the end, Balram has become something that we might not have expected when the film first began, but surely not every success story in this part of the world is like his... or is it? Once again, I shudder to think!



**It's a 7 / 10 (Okay)**

# Is Wonder Woman 1984 Really Worth Watching on HBO MAX?



## "Wonder Woman 1984" Feels Like a Throwback in So Many Ways by Chloe James

Well, my fellow nerds, are we tired of retro throwback media yet? I will admit, although I should be, I'm not quite there yet. It probably has something to do with the current year being so...bleh. I mean, right now, who wouldn't want to go back to a time that we could freely go out and hang out with friends and watch a superhero movie? I'm sure even some of the most critical of you would watch the Ryan Reynolds *Green Lantern* if it meant you got to go out and watch something...anything. Because of everything going on in the world right now, the film industry has been hit with delay after delay. This movie was originally going to be released on June 5th, but got pushed back. Thankfully, Warner Bros has made it so they won't be delaying any more films and releasing everything both in theaters and on HBO Max. While we benefit from this, it is most unfortunate for the filmmakers and actors, as it has cost them quite a bit in backend residuals. One of the first anticipated films that will come of this is *Wonder Woman 1984*, the sequel to my favorite DC film in the past decade.

After a lovely flashback to Diana's childhood in Themyscira, we are thrown right into the glory of the early 1980's. Diana (Gal Gadot) has long since settled into her life in the outside world as an art historian at the Smithsonian institute. Much like the first film, she is naturally gifted in everything she does whether it be her mundane human job, saving the day as her superhero alter-ego, or even gaining the (unwanted) attention of everyone around her. Unfortunately, her new work colleague, Barbara Minerva (Kristen Wiig) is not so fortunate as

she is painfully awkward and mostly ignored by everyone. When the Smithsonian acquires a mysterious ancient gem that can seemingly grant a single wish of whomever holds it, both women are granted what they desire most. Unfortunately, the gem was already targeted by failed oil baron and commercial personality Maxwell Lord (Pedro Pascal), whose greatest wish is to become the gem itself. Now Diana must deal with the chaos created by Lord's ambition to grant everyone on Earth's wish while trying to achieve ultimate power for himself.

If that sounds like a lot of plot description, well, it's a LOT of movie to go through. Director Patty Jenkins recently lamented over the seemingly rushed third act of the first *Wonder Woman* film. This time, with a running time of 2 hours 31 minutes, she should definitely have been able to develop the plot as much as she wanted to. Unfortunately, I'm not sure if it resulted in a good film. Instead of really developing the plot better, much of the extra length felt like it was artificially expanding the plot for no real benefit, much like a pair of 1980's shoulder pads. At the same time some aspects are not explained enough such as the mechanics of the wishing gem, or the ultimate fate of Minerva (which IS important if you are a fan of the comics.) While this film is pretty good at something I call "letting emotions breathe", it leaves out simple superhero mechanics such as how Diana can go from normal clothes to her full Wonder Woman regalia in a matter of seconds. Even Superman needs to be shown running off and changing from time to time.

Retro throwbacks have been the rage for a few years now, and while *Wonder Woman 1984* is certainly capitalizing on this trend, it does so in a way that feels different than most. Instead of going "Hey! Remember this music/movie/video game?", this movie more shouts to the audience "Hey! Remember what superhero films were like in the 80's and early 90's?" Despite the modern visual effects and the pretty costumes, I really did feel like I was watching a superhero film from 30-40 years ago. This was an era in which the villains were entertainingly hammy instead of menacing, the heroes were less brooding and more confident in their identities, and the audience is expected just to believe every magical element presented to them rather than have it explained logically. *Wonder Woman 1984* really hits all of these checkmarks. One of my favorite parts is Pedro Pascal's larger than life portrayal of Maxwell Lord. Honestly, I do miss the more humanly flawed villains like him. Also, it may not suit our modern sensibilities, but I actually kind of appreciate how "perfect" Diana is as a character. I know it's practically a sin these days to make someone verge that close to a "Mary Sue", but if anyone should be that awesome, why not have it be Wonder Woman?

While I was pleased with *Wonder Woman 1984* being an accurate retro throwback film without being patronizing, it committed just a few too many sins by modern movie standards for me to find it wonderful. Still, despite its flaws and overly long runtime, it remained an entertaining movie throughout. I would even say that it would have definitely been worth checking out in theaters if it were safe to do so. I can't say it alone is worth paying for a streaming service, but it certainly is worth a watch if you were going to pay for the service anyway.



*Donna Kirby*



# 'Peaky Blinders' to End With Now-Filming Season Six Story Will Continue "In Another Form"

**Steven Knight Says A Movie "Is Going To Happen"**

Reported from Deadline.com

The Shelby family is hanging it up, to a degree. BAFTA-winning period gangster saga *Peaky Blinders* is due to conclude after the upcoming sixth season, which has begun filming, producers said today. The news that Season 6 will be the last for the Birmingham clan is likely to be met with dismay by the rabid global fanbase, especially after Season 5 drew record numbers for BBC One. Still, after a long production delay due to Covid, there is solace that the team is back.

Created by Steven Knight and starring Cillian Murphy, the beloved drama first aired on BBC Two eight years ago before making the move to BBC One in 2019 with audiences of over 7M. Outside the UK, it airs on Netflix. Knight says, "*Peaky* is back and with a bang. After the enforced production delay due to the Covid pandemic, we find the family in extreme jeopardy and the stakes have never been higher. We believe this will be the best series of all and are sure that our amazing fans will love it. While the TV series will be coming to an end, the story will continue in another

form." Executive producer Caryn Mandabach added, "Along with our wonderful, supportive, partners at BBC and Netflix, we have been working diligently to ensure we can get *Peaky* safely back into production; the safety of our cast and crew is always our priority. Thank you to all the *Peaky* fans who have been so unwaveringly supportive and patient. Steve's scripts are incredible and mark the end of an epic story that has entranced audiences since it first started in 2013, but the world of *Peaky Blinders* will most definitely live on."

The sixth season is written by Knight, while Anthony Byrne returns as director having directed series five to great acclaim, and Nick Goding will produce. Executive producers are Caryn Mandabach, Steven Knight, Jamie Glazebrook, David Mason, Anthony Byrne and Cillian Murphy. Knight had previously expressed interest in wrapping the Cillian Murphy-led drama's TV run with a seventh season, but the pandemic threw a wrench into the works. Season 6 began filming on Monday, delayed a little less than a year by the pandemic. Details are still under wraps, although Knight has previously said that he was planting seeds in Season 5 to be picked up later on, one of which was "that fascism is afoot."

Executive producer Caryn Mandabach tells me, "This final season of our beloved *Peaky Blinders* is going to be the best one yet. Steve's uncanny ability to be prescient about world events is only matched by his ability to make Tommy Shelby the most indelible character of our times." Season 5 was the most-watched yet for the Shelby family as the series has gone from strength to strength since 2013. That last season kicked off with the financial crash of 1929 and with Murphy's Tommy Shelby an MP. When he's approached by real-life fascist firebrand Oswald Mosley (Sam Claflin) and his bold vision for Britain, Tommy realizes that his response will affect not just his family's future but that of the entire nation. The season also delved into Tommy's psyche and Knight over the years has said he would like to "rehabilitate" the character. His plan, he previously has told us, was to end the series at seven seasons with the start of WWII so that *Peaky* becomes a story about people between the wars.



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# The Perfect Nerd Show to Watch with the Whole Family

## “The Legend of Korra” Series Review

By Allison Costa



A sure sign that an animated series is quality is when it can be enjoyed by many different age groups, with many different levels of interpretations. Recently our family of 9, watched the series "The Legend of Korra" on Netflix. We had previously watched "The Avatar; the Last Airbender" and enjoyed it as well. Korra is the sequel to this series and takes place some 70 years after Avatar Aang's story. As much as we enjoyed "The Avatar", I think Korra was even more poignant with a lot of life lessons for what is happening in the world today. Children between the ages of 5-16 can enjoy this series, as well as adults. I would often get upset if my kids watched an episode without me!

There is so much intricate story-telling, action, life lessons and social commentary happening in this series. Everything from the division between those who have power over the elements, and those who do not, to the divisions and problems between the nations. It covers first loves and relationships, teaching and mentorship, finding the right alliances and opportunities, as well as betrayal and failure. Although the series concentrates a lot on Korra's personal growth as a person and as the Avatar, it also focuses on several other main characters as well as their growth and their relationships. In the Last Avatar series the main characters are younger, between the ages of 12-16. In the case of

Korra, we follow her and her friends from about the ages of 17-22 (Korra and Bolin are slightly younger than Asami and Mako). It is definitely a coming of age series, but also deals with a lot of hard-hitting political, economic and moral dilemmas. We see the characters shed the innocence and arrogance of their youth and become mature young adults who truly impact the world for the better.

In my opinion, an animated series that can teach children about the hard topics of love and loss, moral responsibility, hard work, selflessness, making bad decisions and the repercussions of those decisions and how to become a person who makes a difference is definitely worth the time! We had many family discussions about some of the episodes that we watched, including hard topics of tolerance and acceptance, power, greed, and accountability for our actions.

At the beginning of the series, I did not like Korra nearly as much as I had previously liked Aang. However, by the end of the series I feel like her character grows much more than Aang's did. Partially because of her age and that more years are covered. Even though there seem to be endless options for what to watch and stream these days, so much of what is out there is crap. Honestly. Especially as far as family shows are concerned. They are either inappropriate, boring or just poorly executed. Whenever we are able to find a quality show that appeals to many age groups its always a win in my book!

## It's a Perfect 10!

**Final Grade: 10 / 10 (Perfect)**

# GAMING NEWS



This week In Gaming...

# The Lord of the Rings: Gollum Coming Soon!



NACON and Daedalic Entertainment are forming a fellowship to publish and distribute the highly-anticipated game.

They are pleased to announce that they have signed a co-publishing and distribution agreement for the game *The Lord of the Rings™: Gollum™*. Developed for Xbox and PlayStation consoles, Nintendo Switch™ and PC, the game will be released in 2022. The two companies decided to join forces to ensure that the game will meet the expectations of fans of The Lord of the Rings

and fully leverage the power of the new generation of consoles. The universe will be faithfully represented thanks to **the partnership with Middle-earth Enterprises**, the company that holds the adaptation rights to the novel series by J.R.R. Tolkien. As soon as it was announced in spring 2019, the game generated an enormous amount of attention amongst players and fans, and achieved a high profile through the first video showcase last fall:

*The Lord of the Rings™: Gollum™* is a **story-driven action adventure**. Take on a perilous journey as Gollum, chasing the only thing that is precious to him. Climb, leap and sneak your way past dangers or into advantageous spots. Gollum is skillful and sly, but also torn by his split personality. It is up to you to decide whether the darker side of Gollum takes over or if there is a spark of reason left in what once was Sméagol.

**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 9 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. This new unified business unit strengthens NACON's position in the market and enables it to innovate by creating new unique competitive advantages.

**About Daedalic Entertainment:** Daedalic Entertainment publishes and develops high-quality games for all platforms. The company has a diverse line-up that ranges from classic adventures, RPGs, and strategy titles to multiplayer games. Its titles include Shadow Tactics: Blade of the Shogun, Barotrauma, Iratus: Lord of the Dead, Deponia, Unrailed and Ken Follett's The Pillars of the Earth. The Lord of the Rings: Gollum will be the first in a series of games set in Middle-earth that are being developed by Daedalic's award winning in-house development team. **About Middle-earth Enterprises:** Middle-earth Enterprises owns exclusive worldwide rights to motion picture, merchandising, stage and other rights in certain literary works of J.R.R. Tolkien including The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit. We have produced and licensed films, stage productions and merchandise based on these Tolkien works for more than forty years. Inspired by a deep appreciation for the fictional world created by J.R.R. Tolkien, Middle-earth Enterprises is dedicated to working with businesses providing quality products in accordance with best green business and sustainability practices including fair trade, equality in the workplace, and a commitment to protect our earth, its wondrous beauty and the viability of every living creature. The Saul Zaentz Company dba Middle-earth Enterprises has been producing and licensing films, merchandise and stage productions based on The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit for more than 40 years. With headquarters located in Berkeley, California, its website may be found at [www.middleearth.com](http://www.middleearth.com).



# Hideo Kojima Honored with New York Videogame Critics Circle's Andrew Yoon Legend Award in Advance of 10th Annual New York Game Awards Ceremony



The New York Videogame Critics Circle will honor world-renowned game creator Hideo Kojima, with its Andrew Yoon Legend Award in advance of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual New York Game Awards ceremony later this month. Hideo Kojima is awarded with the Legend Award tomorrow via Twitch and YouTube starting at 8pm ET. The Legend Award recognizes individuals and organizations that exhibit a significant, sustained body of work that shows exceptional achievement and innovation. Past recipients of the Legend award include Reggie Fils-Aimé, Jade Raymond, Richard Garriott, Todd Howard, Rockstar Games, Ralph Baer and earlier this month, Jerry Lawson, Brenda Romero and John Romero.

"There's no one like Hideo Kojima; he's proved that he's a legend among legends," said Reggie Fils-Aimé. "In the game industry that has always focused on franchises and marketing, Mr. Kojima has always been honest with us and himself. Yes, Mr. Kojima can market with the best of them, but he knows how to tell a unique, epic story as clearly and robustly as anyone, and he injects you with something brand new every time he releases a game." "I'm very thankful for the New York Game Awards Legend Award; it's a great honor," said Hideo Kojima. "The word "legend" does kind of suggest someone with one foot in the grave, but I'm not quite a legend yet, so I'll try my very best to live up to the award."

"In New York magazine, I wrote that Mr. Kojima's "intent is for players to find connection and relief through the experience" in *DEATH STRANDING*; but beyond human connection, his strong writing and thoughtful directing prove he's a true artist," said Harold Goldberg, founder and president of the New York Videogame Critics Circle.

Kojima is a writer, director and producer of some of the most celebrated video games; from *Metal Gear Solid* to *DEATH STRANDING*, Hideo Kojima's creations are critically acclaimed for their cinematic presentation, creativity and innovation. With this, he's regarded as one of the most influential game designers in the world, streaming of the Andrew Yoon Legend Award recipients lead up to the New York Game Awards 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary show on January 26; the previously ticketed and in-person-only event streams free for all to attend via Twitch and YouTube, with pre-show at 7:30pm ET and Awards starting at 8pm ET via Twitch and YouTube. The annual New York Game Awards, presented by the New York Videogame Critics Circle, goes global with a virtual-only event, allowing for a group of presenters and performers that's incomparable, including former Legend Award winners, performances by new and returning musical guests and a collection of industry greats. The Awards celebrate the NYVGCC's non-profit work in underserved communities, as well as the best games and game developers in the industry.



## Fahrenheit: 15th Anniversary Edition Out Now on PS4

*Relive the thrilling story of Lucas Kane in this classic interactive drama*

**Meridiem Games** is thrilled to announce that *Fahrenheit: 15th Anniversary Edition*, the classic story driven interactive drama from Quantic Dream, is out now on PlayStation®4 as a special retail boxed edition across Europe and Australia. Fans of classic story driven interactive dramas can now rediscover one of the first highly acclaimed titles from French developer and publisher Quantic Dream. The story of *Fahrenheit* follows Lucas Kane who finds himself hunted by police detectives Carla Valenti and Tyler Miles after fleeing the scene of a murder with no memory of what happened. What follows, is a thrilling, story driven adventure where your choices have a direct effect on how the story unfolds.

This special edition of **Fahrenheit: 15th Anniversary Edition** will include a **specially created case** and sleeve, a **sticker set**, high quality printed **artbook** and a **thank-you letter** written by the team at Quantic Dream. This boxed edition will retail for £24.99 GBP / €29.99 EUR / \$49.99 AUS (suggested retail price) and is available to purchase in specialist gaming stores across Europe and Australia now. For over two decades **Quantic Dream**, founded by industry visionary David Cage, is best known for their use of cutting-edge motion capture technology to create story driven interactive dramas including the critically acclaimed titles *Heavy Rain*<sup>™</sup>, *Beyond: Two Souls*<sup>™</sup> and *Detroit: Become Human*<sup>™</sup>.



# IGNITE THE SPARK WITH MAGIC: LEGENDS –Releasing on PC, PlayStation, Xbox in 2021 | PC OPEN BETA ON MARCH 23

*First Look at Deckbuilding Revealed for  
Magic: The Gathering-Based Action RPG:*

Perfect World Entertainment Inc., a leading publisher of online games, and Cryptic Studios announced *Magic: Legends* will enter **PC Open Beta on March 23, 2021**. Soon players will experience the thrill of becoming a Planeswalker in the free-to-play, persistent world, action RPG based on Wizards of the Coast’s iconic strategy card game, Magic: The Gathering. Over the last year, the development team at Cryptic Studios has been working closely with Closed Alpha testers to ensure that the game’s signature spell-slinging combat feels powerful and that the Multiverse stays true to that of the original card game. Starting on March 23, millions of players from around the world will be able to explore the Magic Multiverse, as *Magic: Legends* begins Open Beta on Arc Games. The game will make its official launch on PC, Xbox One and PlayStation®4 later this year. “The new year ushers in a new era for *Magic: Legends*,” said **Yoon Im, CEO of Perfect World Entertainment**. “The chorus of gamers eager to join *Magic: Legends*’ beta has been both exciting and humbling to us all. We are thrilled to finally announce that both Magic and ARPG fans will get to explore the Magic: The Gathering world we’ve brought to life and ignite their Spark this Spring.”

“It’s hard to believe we’re finally opening the gates to the Multiverse to all gamers and Magic fans,” said **Stephen Ricossa, executive producer of Magic: Legends at Cryptic Studios**. “Over the last year, the development team has been working non-stop to bring this legendary card game to life. We want to take a moment to thank everyone who participated in our Closed Alpha tests for providing the feedback we needed to help evolve *Magic: Legends* into what it is today.”

Fans of Magic: The Gathering can attest to the fact that spell casting is the heart and soul of the game, and *Magic: Legends* is no different. At launch, the ARPG will offer 175 mana-based spells inspired by the original card game, plus 50 artifacts, 165 pieces of equipment, four planes and five regions. Players will explore diverse planes in the Multiverse to collect these spells and strategically construct and pilot different decks to control the chaos of the battlefield. Planeswalkers can also collect various artifacts and spell pages to modify and upgrade spells and their effects. Following ample feedback from Closed Alpha testers, *Magic: Legends* is also implementing an equipment system to capstone powerful, player-built loadouts. Check out the video below to get a first look at deckbuilding for *Magic: Legends*: **Magic: Legends** is a free-to-play, persistent world, hack’n’cast online Action RPG based on Wizards of the Coast’s iconic trading card game, Magic: The Gathering. Ancient forces move in the darkness, requiring players to assume the role of a Planeswalker, powerful spellcasters who can travel between worlds. While exploring different planes, players will collect mana-based spells and strategically build out the perfect deck of balanced attacks to control the chaos of the battlefield and save the Multiverse from its greatest threat yet. Developed by Cryptic Studios and published by Perfect World Entertainment, *Magic: Legends* will release on PC, Xbox One, and PlayStation®4 in 2021. For additional details, visit [PlayMagicLegends.com](http://PlayMagicLegends.com). © 2021 Wizards of the Coast LLC. All Rights Reserved. *Magic: Legends* and its logo are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast LLC.

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE SQUAD LEADER

## It is All in Your Head: How to Be a Good Squad Leader!

By K. Scott Cooper



one, or want to know how to find a good team this is your biggest filter. So, let us start with some things you should avoid doing or if you are doing, F'ing stop it!

### 1) Don't Be a Jerk!

No one wants to be in a squad with a bossy jerk that talks down to people who simply don't know. – I hate it when you play a game and the higher player speak to you as if you are a newborn. Listen Billy I get that you have dropped a nut and half in this game, but cool your jets before you light something up. New players need to have the time to grow and get a feeling for the game in a fluid and steady way. This doesn't mean take a hands-off approach to helping newer players or your friends. Simply relate to them some of the mistakes you made early on and things you wished you put into practice sooner, sounds super general and vague right?! That's because it is and can be used in any game, silly goose.

### 2) Know the Game You're Playing

Know the game the game you're playing, but that there is not one way of play. Nothing makes me hotter under the collar than when some goon insults your lack of a playstyle, class, or loadout. Do you want to be sad and alone for the rest of your life? Didn't think, so don't tell people that there's one way to play. If you let your buddy find a flow that works for them in the beginning, use it as a steppingstone and work with them over time to improve their gameplay skills unless the game only has one way of doing thing and well than just remember to keep your Zen as you work with your team.

### 3) Prepare the Alter Before the Sacrifice

Quickest way to make your mates hate everything about you and your very seed is to throw them in the deep end to drown. Sometimes a baptism by blood is understandable if you want to set the stage for the challenge that will be the game ahead, but avoid making it a stomp in. If you're like me and have character loads higher than your friends, it may already be daunting for them starting out and making them feel like dead weight, which is referred to as a "mood killer" or a "soft off" and are to be avoided at all cost. This means play on lower settings and focus your playstyle for long term goals This allows you to keeping working your character and allowing your mates to gain some ground. Then switch your focus back when you are playing alone.

This is where I leave off for today nerds and give you plenty of time to digest the tasty wisdom, I just served up hot and fresh, there is more to come on this topic and more topics to come. Including, training tips, code of the gamer, and how to find the funky freshness in you. Got a personal question that this Squad Leader can answer, drop us a line and we will sort you out. Until then... Stay Safe, Stay Crazy, and Stay Easy.

# Looking Back at the Best Games of 2020



#1

## 2020 GAME OF THE YEAR

Every so often we get one groundbreaking video game that defines a new era in gaming and is something that we haven't seen before. It doesn't happen every year and unfortunately the Game of the Year isn't always that kind of game. But as lackluster as 2020 was for video games we did get that groundbreaking game that is not only great for PlayStation 4 but the new era of consoles such as the PlayStation 5. For us at That Nerd Show that game is Ghost of Tshushima. It is a true samurai game with a fantastic story that rivals any Akira Kurosawa move. Finally, we Have the closest thing to a Seven Samurai story that we've ever seen in a video game. and for those that like RPGs it doesn't get any better than having an eastern story with fantastic lore and a mixture of honor and revenge within the story. You would think this was an Elder Scrolls game. The reason it is game of the year at That Nerd Show is it embodies all of the elements that we look for in a great game. It has the finest level of storytelling that you

can ever find in a video game. The graphics are a quality that we haven't seen in a while and are perfect for the next generation of consoles. The gameplay, especially the combat is some of the best that we have ever experienced and even though the gameplay may have its difficulties and you do have to learn the moves without relying on some easy level to get you through like a straight hack and slash type of video game, it's not hard to learn. Once you do, the level of story mixed with action doesn't get any better. For a long time gamers have sought to get ha great RPG set in the Far East that isn't a modern day tale. We've wanted the seven samurai type of story for a long time and finally we got one. But there is one thing that truly makes this game fantastic and worthy of being game of the year. There is no right way to play the story. The story is determined by the choices you make to show mercy or to seek revenge and follow a Bushido code. It is one of those stories that truly shows the duality of humanity that we only experience in real life. We often say here at That Nerd Show that the best stories are the ones that you play and Ghost of Tshushima embodies that saying more than any game that we have played since the beginning of this outlet. Although some of our past game of the year winners such as Horizon Zero Dawn or God of War 4 and even the first Last of Us game, there is something more poetic an emotional with this story. Perhaps it's because we have yearned for it for so long in a video game. Every great RPG that deals with Knights going on quests are always great games, The Elder Scrolls games have proving that, but a true samurai game, that's something extra special. And we finally got one that would rival the storytelling of any Elder Scrolls game or Dragon's Age, and pretty much any other exclusive PlayStation game so that is why Ghosts of Tshushma without any doubt is our Game of the Year.

#2

## 2020 MULTIPLAYER OF THE YEAR

We are suckers for Star Wars games. As nerds we've been playing Star Wars video games ever since they decided to make an Atari arcade game of the Death Star run in 1983. Now while we've had our problems with Star Wars games and we still can't quite forgive EA for the battlefront game that came out in 2015 that was never truly complete and they charged us full price for it, the last three games have been good. So it's no wonder that their latest entry Star Wars: Squadrons would end up in our top 10 list and also be our multiplayer game of the year. We can go all the way back for our love of flying an X-Wing or some other kind of Star Wars ship ever since that beautiful Atari arcade game in 1983, but I think it's really X-Wing vs. Tie-Fighter that truly made us fall in love with a flying Star Wars game. Squadrons is everything we could want especially a Star Wars flying game



with superior graphics and maneuverability. While it could have just easily been a great DLC game for Star Wars Battlefront 2 and sometimes it does feel like that, the multiplayer aspects we're truly phenomenal where we can have superior dogfights with X-wings and Tie Fighters as well as other ships in the Star Wars universe. But that wasn't the only thing we got with this game, we got a small story to go with it that while short was fun as hell. Short Campaigns can be great too. It's true that we will miss the days of LAN parties and playing X-Wing vs. Tie fighter on our PC's, but after 20 years we finally get a game that equals the fun that we had back then and it's the perfect game to form a squad and fly throughout a Galaxy Far Far away. It's not a perfect game and the cross platform, which is a good idea on the surface does cause some problems when playing PC players who seem to have a better advantage, it's still one of the best multiplayer games that we've played in a long time and it's the best Star Wars flying game we've had on consoles. If you like playing Star Wars games then this is a must have.



### #3

Cyberpunk 2077 maybe a game that has sparked a bit of controversy because it's not a game that can be played on older generation consoles, but we didn't judge how good this game is based on that. We reviewed this game by playing it on an Xbox Series X in all its full glory. A huge sci-fi dystopian type world that put you into a mixture of Grand Theft Auto, Borderlands, and Mass Effect, this is was one of the best games of the year and after eight years in development, we finally get to have a huge open-world game and the type of world that we've never really seen before. Between the main storyline and all the side missions, there are endless hours of fun whether you're committing crimes, being a gun for hire, taking down scores or rescuing prostitutes, and more importantly, helping to take down an evil Corporation like you're in the world of Blade Runner, this is truly a groundbreaking game in one of the best open-world games to come around in a while. If they had waited to release

this next year when everybody had a chance to play it on a new console this could very easily be game of the year and while it's not perfect and some of the bugs had to be worked out which is common for a lot of video games being able to immerse yourself in this futuristic dystopian world like you're in the movie Johnny Mnemonic is truly fantastic. We feel like we've been waiting for this game ever since The Xbox One and PlayStation 4 was created, but it came just in time for the new PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X. And let's not forget how you have a character played by Keanu Reeves who is essentially your conscience as if he's John Wick hooked up to the Matrix while you navigate the world in the game. This was the perfect video game for Keanu Reeves to be involved in. A futuristic dystopian open world is the perfect kind of game for those who like to play RPGs and you don't have to worry about jumping from planet to planet as if you're playing Destiny, which is not that fun anymore. There's plenty of action in night city and it's surrounding neighbors. The only downside to cyberpunk 2077 is it has to be played on a new console or really good gaming PC to get the full affect, older consoles just won't work but it is still worthy to be one of our top 10 games of the year.

### #4

Animal Crossing: New Horizons has been the big hit of Nintendo Switch in 2020. Nintendo finally got around to making an updated version for its new console like they have with most of their games since the release of the Nintendo Switch. And if you're a fan of this game it's everything you can imagine with better graphics and superior play on Nintendo that will give you endless hours of enjoyment especially with friends. Not much is really changed in Animal Crossings, if you've played it before it's very familiar. but It's truly the superior version of the game for the next generation of consoles. there's a certain tranquility when playing this game whether you're playing by yourself or with friends. You can say that Animal Crossings can be your own little utopia, because there's always something to do and you can have a good time with friends. It's not a game for everyone but truly a staple of the Nintendo catalog that needed to be part of the Nintendo Switch family. this is a game that definitely belongs in our top 10 games of the year considering how many of our staff have spent endless hours in the game. And let's not forget like most Nintendo games it's a cross-generational came where you don't have to be a kid to enjoy it but it's also a great game to play with your kids. That's something that Nintendo has always done well when it comes to making games...after all, we never get tired of Super Mario Brothers.





#5

Crash Bandicoot 4, it finally came out this year for a new generation of consoles and if you're a fan of this series, which has been a staple for PlayStation for over 20 years then this is a must-have. Developed by Naughty Dog as an exclusive for PlayStation this is just another installment in the series with the adventures of Crash Bandicoot. It's just a fun game in the series that is very familiar, but one of the funnest games that we've played this year. It's the same kind of game that we've played for a generation with more mazes, a chance for points. Crash bandicoot 4 is for the PlayStation what Super Mario Odyssey was for the Nintendo switch. the 4K graphics make this a fun adventure for the new consoles and will return you to your childhood reminding you of why you love the game ever since you played the first one. Of course this ended up in our top 10 games of the year and it's a great one to introduce to your kids that you don't have to buy a Nintendo Switch to play.

#6

Some games are just meant to be remastered for the new consoles. And that's pretty much any game of the Resident Evil Series, but Capcom has taken his step further and not just remastering a game, but remaking some of their best games with a different take on the story so you get the advantage of having something that was already great remastered with better graphics, but also remade with a different take on the story. Resident Evil 3 still follows the story of Jill Valentine and Carlos Oliviera as they tried to escape the zombie apocalypse but are also being hunted by a zombie bioweapon. It's always been one of the best horror survival games ever made but to remake with a bit of a change to the story and 4K graphics for new consoles. These games are always meant to be played in high definition. The remastered edition probably would have done just fine, but remasters don't end up in our top 10 list when you can remake a game and give us a different perspective on what is already great and that just makes it even more special. The remake of Resident Evil 2 was one of our best games last year, I think they might have been able to top themselves with Resident Evil 3. This version of the game is superior in every way not only from the graphics, but the gameplay as well. it's definitely a little bit more challenging when you're dealing with ultra-sensitive sounds that can awaken zombies to come after you while also still being haunted by the bioweapon. We look at Resident Evil 3 as not just getting a fresh coat of paint for new console, but giving us a whole new experience with an already beloved game and making the horror survival aspect of it even better. It was one of the best rated games of 2020 so it deserves to be one of our top 10 games of the year.



#7

## 2020 SHOOTER OF THE YEAR

**Doom** is one of those historic franchises when it comes to a first-person shooter. The first network first-person shooter that you could play with your friends on PC, this franchise already has a long storied history, but I love the fact that they keep making these games for new generations of consoles. it was cool that they made a new game back in 2016 with the best graphics that we've ever seen in a Doom game, but Bethesda studios was set on making this game better with each new generation of console. More blood, more gore, more ultraviolence, and it keeps getting better and better. Plus adding a battle mode so that players could be online and networked

together just like in the old days is cool as well because doom is always been one of the Premier multiplayer games out there. I would honestly say that this is a better game than the one that came out in 2016 and is easily our shooter of the year. each version gets better and gets more challenging and when it comes to blood and gore in a video game, nobody does it better than the doom franchise. While this game came out before the release of the Xbox Series X and the PlayStation 5, they made a game that would work perfectly on the new consoles and make the graphics even better. The new consoles just enhance all the gore and violence that we love about this franchise and when you're looking for a good shooter just to kill monsters, demons and zombie like creatures, look no further than the Doom franchise. we generally regard the Resident Evil series as one of the best horror survival series ever made in video games, that may be true, but we honestly have to say that Doom is right up there. This was a perfect edition two are top 10 games of the year.

#8

After 26 years we finally got a new Streets of Rage game. The side-scrolling beat 'em up game created by SEGA and originally started as an arcade game. Sure, the developers could have made a 3D version just like it was some kind of beat 'em up RPG game, but they know what the fans like and they made same 2D side scrolling action that we've always loved about Streets of Rage, but with superior graphics. It still makes you feel like a kid when you play this game if you grew up with the franchise, it still has its challenges and learning how to time everything properly to get through the levels especially dealing with the big bosses. maybe there wasn't any reason to make a fourth treet of rage came because this is a game that really does live in the past. However, any game that is made purely for our nostalgia for old games is worth playing because sometimes the best games we ever played were the ones when we were a kid at the arcade or on an 8 and 16 bit graphic console. I mean, be honest what was the first game you played when you got one of the Sega Genesis flashback consoles, of course it was Streets of Rage.

Just like Crash Bandicoot this game is purely made for those who grew up with the franchise and as a way to introduce a younger generation to the best games that were ever made. There may not be anything particularly special about this game except for the fact that it's made purely from nostalgia, but that's okay because sometimes those are the best games that are made. Did we love this game? Duh, of course we did, and that's why it's one of our top 10 games of the year. it was reasonably priced and even better, yet it ended up on Xbox Game Pass. Streets of Rage four was made for the inner fan boy and girl in each one of us and we're glad it was made.



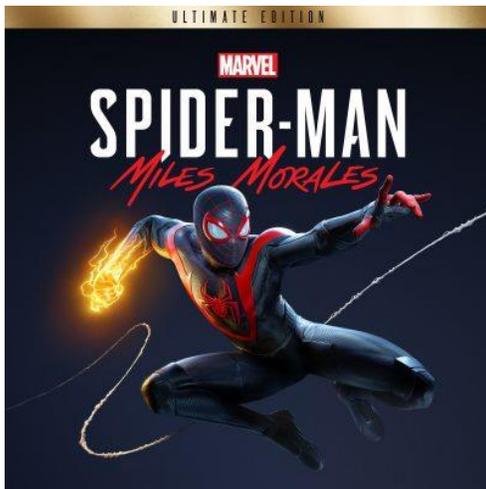
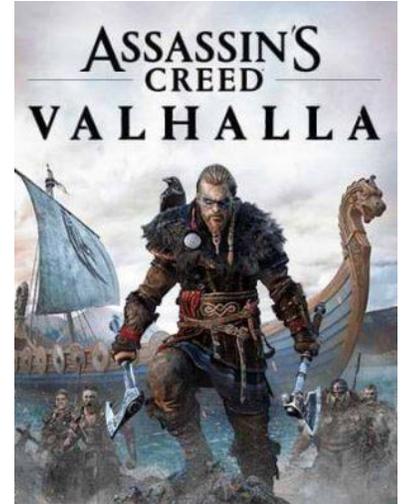
#9

Final Fantasy 7 this year was another one of those great remakes. Not just a remastered edition of one of the best Final Fantasy games, but a reimagining of the story with the graphics we've always wanted. Because let's be honest getting to play a Final Fantasy game in 4K HD is the pinnacle of a gaming experience. You get to return to the Cyberpunk world of Midgar and play the character Cloud Strife all over again as he joins an ecoterrorist group called Avalanche. It's true that the game feels very familiar, But it also feels different because it's a reimagining of the story. This has been one of the best remakes ever and the 4K graphics are just absolutely superior to anything that we've seen. Also, a great remake to play on the next generation consoles. We were more amazed at the graphics and the movie like quality of this game when we downloaded it and started playing earlier this year that it just blew us away of how gorgeous it was and how enhanced the gameplay became with the remake. It was a great game on PlayStation and PlayStation 2, but if you've never gotten into the Final Fantasy series, then this is the game that will do it for you. This was the game that

is meant to be played on a 4K TV. normally we look for new and original games, but when the best games of the year turned out to be remakes of classic games because they've been reimagined, then you have to put that game in your top 10 games of the year. And Final Fantasy 7 is worth the retail price. For fans of the series, you should definitely play it and if you're interested in getting into the Final Fantasy series, this is the game to start with. Definitely, one of the best games of 2020!

## #10 - 1

We had two games time for our number 10 spot so we're going to tell you about these two games that both belong in our top 10 games of the year. The first one is Assassin's Creed Valhalla. It is the 12th major title in the franchise and this time it takes us to the Middle Ages with the rise of Viking invasions and what is now modern-day England. It may not be the best title in the Assassin's Creed franchise, but it is definitely one of the better games made over the last decade. And it's a game truly made for the next generation consoles. While it could be said that it feels way too familiar and we've seen this particular time period in RPG's before, it doesn't make Assassin's Creed Valhalla any less good. It was one of the better games of 2020 with a huge open world the brings the Assassin's Creed style of gaming to life. While all the same tactics of an Assassin's Creed game are there it can also be a great battle or hack and slash game at the same time and who doesn't love killing enemies with a Viking ax. The superior graphics that were enhanced by the Xbox series X and the PlayStation 5 made it a movie quality game that was worth playing. And it is definitely worth the price because you will put in the same amount of hours into this Assassin's Creed game as you would Assassin's Creed origins or Assassin's Creed Odyssey. What made this particular Assassin's Creed game good is the fact that you will get to help reshape a medieval Europe as a Viking and forge your own path the same way you did with your character in ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire in the previous two additions to the franchise. while this game is not good enough to compete for game of the year, it is one of the top 10 games of 2020.



## #10 - 2

The other game that tied our number 10 spot was Marvel's Spiderman: Miles Morales. It is the sequel to the hit Spiderman game from 2018 that turned out to be one of the better games of that year. This is also one of the first titles to be available for the PlayStation 5. With incredible graphics in movie like quality, this game was fun adding the other Spiderman miles Morales to the universe especially when he is fighting side by side Peter Parker made for a great game. the biggest downfall of the Miles Morales Spiderman game is the fact that its campaign was very short compared to the other Spiderman game so to make this game worth buying at a full retail price you could get the other Spiderman game with enhanced graphics for the PlayStation 5 on the same disk. This game felt more like a DLC game for Spiderman, but it didn't make it any less fun and it was still one of the better games of 2020. Superhero games can be hit or miss but the Spiderman game of 2018 and now the Miles Morales game have proven that these are some of the best ever made when you're fighting villains and web slinging throughout New York City. The gameplay was enhanced a little bit compared to the first Spiderman game and it helped that this game was made for the new PlayStation, which made it even better along with the other Spiderman game that's available on the disc. The story itself is something that we would all love to see as a Spiderman movie and Maybe Marvel Studios will give us that. But for now, they gave us a great Spiderman game with a great story and you get to play two of the most beloved spiderman's in the Spider-Verse. This game could have been better if it had a bigger campaign and unfortunately, it's not worth the \$60 or \$70 that they were charging at retail, but if you happen to get it on sale during the Holidays that it's definitely worth playing. But the game was good enough to tie for our last spot in our top 10 games of the year and it does make for a great PlayStation exclusive especially for the PlayStation 5.

# The Top 5 Multiplayer Games Played by Young Gamers in 2020 and Can be Played in 2021

By Hayden Costa

Have you ever wondered what are the top multiplayer games for teenagers. Well, here at That Nerd Show, we are going to tell you the latest multiplayer games that young gamers have been playing through 2020. These are the top 5 Games that teenagers play...

## #1



**Among Us** is a fun multiplayer game that was actually released in 2018. For only \$5 on Steam and Nintendo Switch, and for free on mobile you get a surprisingly enjoyable game. Among us has 3 different maps (4 in 2021) each with different and fun mechanics. The premise of the game is that you have 4-10 people and among the players 1,2, or 3 of the players are imposters and have the ability to kill or sabotage the other players. The other players walk around the map trying to complete tasks to win the game. Each game is drastically different from the last since the imposters will always change and so can the tasks. Imposters being able to sabotage the parts of the ships really allows things to be shaken up, one of the things imposters can

sabotage is lights, and it makes all the crewmates not be able to see anything leading to some great plays. In the middle of the map there is an emergency button and this is the best part of the multiplayer experience. This calls everyone to the discussion and makes you debate the facts and try to figure out who the imposter is. You need to use your brain and try to call out other people, there are tons of different ways to find the imposter out or just sometimes straight up guessing. At the end of the time limit the discussion will be over, and you can vote on who to kick hoping they are the imposter, and to win crewmates have to either kill all imposters or complete all tasks, and imposters have to kill everyone. There isn't any downsides to playing among us except for the card swiping task. It's a very fun game to play with friends (and a great way to lose friend ships).

## #2

**Minecraft** is a classic game that captured everyone's hearts over a decade ago. The game revolves around the crafting and allows you to mine and collect materials to create things. The items in the game are boundless allowing you to make the recipes and create all sorts of different scenarios. Multiplayer play is one of the best parts of being able to play Minecraft. First off you can go into the preset servers and play with other people online in different game modes my favorite being sky wars, you can also create a world to jump on with friends or a realm where anyone can be on at any time. The amount of possibilities are endless in the game where you can land in a number of funny scenarios with your friends whether its knocking them into lava, trapping them in a pit, both of you running away from mobs or killing each other for attacking the others dog. Mods are something else you can add to Minecraft and buy from the store! Adding new textures, items, and many more things. I would say the only downside to Minecraft is that with consoles only having bedrock and computers/laptops/and PCs having Java it can sometimes be hard to play with friends or wait with updates. With so many ways to play each time you jump on will be a new and exciting adventure and a good laugh with friends, the sky is the limit (literally you can only build 256 blocks high).



### #3



Fortnite was released in 2017 and has become one of the most popular games in the world. Epic games have become so famous spreading to merch and many platforms like twitch on YouTube. Fortnite is a third-person shooter game with a mechanic called building. This allows you to stop bullets and such from hitting you. This allows for some crazy strategies playing with friends. The gameplay with friends is really entertaining and voice chat makes it all that much better. The friendly appearance of the game makes it even easier to pick up for people. Dropping into a match for squads or doubles you are always in for a good time. Whether it's for a good clip or a funny moment Fortnite is always fun. Friends are a great way to change

things up and the fact the Fortnite is always getting consistent updates almost every month, balance changes, new skins and even new guns and game modes. This makes it so that the game doesn't ever get stale or feel too similar. Building with friends is always fun to do. The major downside of this game from a new player's perspective is all the very "talented" people that try hard in the lobbies and each game you'll play. Other than, Fortnite is always a blast.

### #4

**Rocket League** is an indie game that was developed all the way back in 2015, and the fact that now it is still as popular as it is a testament to the gameplay and formula that make Rocket League so much fun to play with others. The basic premise of the game is that there are monster trucks in a soccer arena and the goal is to get the ball..... into the goal! With it being on so many consoles and free on most makes it easy to pick up and play with anyone. The formula is so simple yet so intriguing, lobbies with friends can lead to some great experiences and clips. The cars a blast to control, and they feel great once you get used to controls, you can customize your car and make it look the way you want. Like most of the games on the list the fun comes from not just the gameplay, but what you can do with friends and how you interact. Since the game has been out so long there isn't any downsides that I think affect the game. Other than having to pay for some skins which is fine because the game is free. Rocket League is an amazing game to play so just sit down and vibe with some friends.



### #5



A beloved game and series starting back in 1999 and creating this masterpiece in 2018 Masahiro Sakurai created Super Smash Bros ultimate an amazing game that is beloved by many. A party Game with over 70 characters there is almost nothing to dislike about the game. The main game mode is called Smash where you and up to EIGHT other friends can grab a controller and play and up to 4 online. The immense amount of rule sets and characters are so much fun to play and enjoy. You can play with lives, a time limit, HP and to mix things up to pick from the 100 plus stages to play on and add random items in. The game feels very smooth and runs at 60fps when the switch is docked. This is just a very limited view of the game seeing how many options you can use.

Super Smash Bros ultimate also added spirits which you can create teams with to add buffs to your character. You can also play different game modes like Squad Strike where each of you different lives are different characters and another mode where rule sets can add handicaps or start you with items. The story mode is how you get spirits and a pretty good time with friends. The biggest downside of smash is the online mode. The netcode of the game isn't very good at making games laggy and hard to play. Offline with a group of friends, Smash is one of the most enjoyable multiplayer games to play.

# CYBERPUNK 2077

## A BETTER GAME THAN WHAT YOU'VE HEARD!

BY BETH CURRIER



**You** may be asking yourself, why should I play Cyberpunk 2077 with all of its issues since it's release date? So, this game did not have the most stellar launch, that's common knowledge. However, they have taken great steps to improve the game over the last two months. I have been playing Cyberpunk on an Xbox One, not a console it was designed for. At the beginning, it absolutely drove me up the wall how often the game would freeze and crash. I could tell the game had a lot to offer though, and when it wasn't glitching out it was really fun so I shouldered on through all the crashes. Relatively quickly, several updates were released and my game began to crash less and less. I was soon able to truly enjoy the game the way it was designed and boy oh boy does this game have a myriad of

things to enjoy. Night City is massive and there are so many things to do it truly is one of the best open world games out there especially as a futuristic game that we've never seen on this scale before. It's groundbreaking indeed despite being overshadowed by bugs and subpar graphics on older consoles.

This is a game that is built on side quests. Yes, there is the main story but it only takes about 30 hours to complete the main story and there is easily over 100 hours of gameplay. The side quests range from short and sweet (stopping a random crime on the side of the road) to longer and more in depth (character quests i.e., Panam, Judy, etc.). All of them are different and enjoyable in their own way. You can stealth everything, go in guns blazing everywhere, or a combo. Sometimes its fun to run in and just absolutely wreck everyone and everything in a two-block radius (you will usually get more money from fixers if you go stealth though, especially if they've asked you to do so). Its important to pay attention to the danger level when it comes to missions, the highest danger level you should attempt is "Moderate". If you attempt "High" or "Very High" and you are discovered, you will very quickly get obliterated by the enemies. The danger level of quests does change as you level up and get more armor and better rated weapons. Weapons and armor are rated worst to best as, Common - Uncommon - Rare - Epic - Legendary.

There are so many different weapons in this game, not including any cyberware which I'll get to later. I am way more partial to guns than melee weapons so I don't have a lot to say about the katanas or machetes. The guns in this game though, wow, there are so many guns. Some guns are garbage and they're only as good as the crafting materials you can get from dismantling. Other guns are absolutely phenomenal, you just need to know where to look. I have watched a lot of the available tips videos in order to find some great weapons and armor. Here are a few of my favorites:

**Comrade's Hammer:** This Tech Revolver is the definition of OP. This gun is one of several "Iconic" weapons. It's magazine only holds one shot at a time, so every time you fire you have to reload but honestly that's all you need. One bullet from this gun is all it takes to absolutely decimate your enemies. If you're close enough it literally blasts them into a bunch of unrecognizable pieces. This weapon can be found as a crafting spec off a dead enemy and it crafts as an Epic weapon which can be upgraded into Legendary.

**Overture:** This is my favorite gun to use in stealth. This gun usually has a high headshot multiplier, anywhere from 2-4. If you use the muzzle that only reduces damage by 15% and has a damage multiplier of 2.5 from stealth, a single headshot from this gun will take out any enemy.

**Skippy:** This is by far the weirdest gun you can find. It has a little animated bullet as an interface and it will randomly talk to you. Regardless of the oddities, this gun can be extremely powerful and deadly. This is a smart pistol so it automatically homes in on targets. It has a headshot multiplier of 2.70 and it scales itself to the level of the user so as you get better so does your gun. There is one little thing you have to do for the best stats when it comes to this gun. When you initially find this gun, it will ask you to choose between two modes: Puppy-Loving Pacifist (targets limbs only) and Stone Cold Killer (targets headshot only). You should always choose Puppy-Loving Pacifist, because after you have killed 50 people with Skippy the gun will switch to the mode you didn't pick and lock those settings permanently.



There are so many guns in this game it would take a full dissertation to really get into them all. I don't really use melee weapons because I use my cyberware for close combat. The cyberware in this game has a multitude of possibilities. You can go through the entire game and never install a piece of cyberware, you can install something in every part of your body, or anything in between. For the arms, and what I use for close combat, I have the Mantis Blades. One of the best things is that these don't take up a weapon slot, so you can still have three guns. You can do a lot of damage by slashing or you can charge them up and hurl yourself at an enemy and essentially skewer them on your blades. It is also relatively easy to find a legendary pair. It does take up the arm slot of your cyberware but you can always change it out when you need to. The slight downside of cyberware (but really not that big of a deal) is that you can't equip and unequip whenever you want through inventory. You have to go to a ripperdoc in game to change any cyberware, but there are plenty of them throughout the map so you usually don't have to travel far. Just like the weapons, there are so many aspects of the cyberware. Going over every part would take hours. One thing that is important, whether or not you want your character to be a netrunner, is to have a good sized cyberdeck. Your cyberdeck is what dictates the amount of RAM you have when performing quickhacks. If you do enough side jobs early on, it's not that expensive to purchase a legendary cyberdeck from a ripperdoc.

Aside from the gameplay bugs, that are not as common on PC and latest generation consoles, this game has a massive world and an incredible attention to detail within it. It is one of those games that you can play again and create a completely different character and play through in a totally different way. Unlike games like Mass Effect, where you can play different ways but ultimately, you'll experience the same ending. Depending on how you play Cyberpunk 2077 there are at least 7 different ending options, and they differ quite drastically. So, you really can play this game more than once and play totally different games within the same world. That makes the replay value of Cyberpunk 2077 is very high. Even with the bugs and glitches (which are actively being fixed), a gameplay that can have over 100 hours and be played in so many different ways it is definitely worth the money in the end.

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# How to Get Fit When You're a Gamer!

## Start 2021 Off Right

By: Violet Ravotti



If you're a gamer and spend a lot of time playing whether it's on PC, PlayStation, Xbox or the Nintendo Switch, how do you stay in shape? How do you stay fit without going to a gym and from the comfort of your home? Ring Fit Adventure for Nintendo Switch! It quickly and unexpectedly became one of my favorite workout games. I found it very exceptionally easy to get addicted to and motivated into working out with this vibrant, play at your own pace but challenge yourself levels. The Ring in your journey regularly supports you with humorous pep talk with exclamations such as, "Your sweat is so shiny and beautiful!" and "Your muscles seem so happy!" from time to time. The structure within the game encourages consistency as you battle various small bosses through exercise choices and goals. Getting ready to brace yourself for the looming, buff fitness dragon, Dragaux are worthwhile goals to aim for at the end of each level. It keeps you coming back day after day to see your progress as the thrill of completing your objectives rises you higher in level.

The Ring feels like a steering wheel to drive you towards your workout goals as you jog in place and complete various missions to complete levels, which goes up to 100. Ring is helpful and provides guidance on correct form and breathing properly. Recommended minimum workout sessions are anywhere from 10 to 20

minutes a session but you can continue for longer. Sometimes you're gathering ingredients for smoothie recipes or completing various tasks that take you on a workout gathering items for other characters.

This game is revolutionary by putting a fun twist on exercise and engaging through the lenses of a virtual RPG videogame. There are multiple workout categories to finetune your areas of focus that include: arms, legs, stomach and yoga. Ring is always seeking to recognize and acknowledge all your workout efforts and that can be quite validating even when your muscles are sore and you may want to give up, but you don't want to because the excitement of the race may stir up your competitive streak.

Definitely a super favorite game of mine due to its clever wordplay, extensive workouts that never fail to be engaging and sweat-inducing. Exercising is more attractive to pursue with playful journey of this game and every level is something to be proud of. If your New Year's Resolution involved working the out, this is an effective way to stick to your fitness goals or create a new fitness habit.

Shed some pounds with these fast-paced workouts that are an ideal way to spice up your typical workout routine, especially since it can be challenging to head to the gym during pandemic times. It's been known that it sometimes takes 30 days to form a habit. I personally started seeing results within weeks and was able to shed some pounds due to working out daily. I've been so satisfied with this game that I've suggested it to friends searching for motivation to work out. Our health is our wealth so why not try something new today. Try this game - make working out a fun and easy way to jump into a regular workout routine and obtain that serotonin bliss you deserve!

This game is more affordable than hiring a personal trainer and an exceptional diversion during times you're quarantining at home. The Ring Fit Adventure can be purchased for about \$80 from most major retailers.



# GAME RELEASES FOR FEBRUARY 2021

VIDEO GAME	COMPANY	FORMAT	RELEASE DATE
<a href="#">Space Farmers 2</a>	Bumpkin Brothers	PC	01/02/2021
<a href="#">The Captain is Dead</a>	Thunderbox Entertainment	Lin, Mac, PC	01/02/2021
<a href="#">Valheim</a>	Coffee Stain Studios	Lin, PC	02/02/2021 (Early access)
<a href="#">Habroxia 2</a>	eastasiasoft	NS, PC, PS4, XO	03/02/2021
<a href="#">Conarium</a>	Iceberg Interactive	NS	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Football Cup 2021</a>	7LEVELS	NS	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Haven</a>	The Game Bakers	NS, PC, PS4	04/02/2021
<a href="#">NUTS</a>	Noodlecake Studios	iOS, NS, PC	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Odysseus Kosmos and his Robot Quest</a>	HeroCraft	NS	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Skyforge</a>	MY.GAMES	NS	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Werewolf: The Apocalypse - Earthblood</a>	Nacon	PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	04/02/2021
<a href="#">Arrog</a>	Nakana.io	PS4, PS5	05/02/2021
<a href="#">Kinetic Edge</a>	SeaCorp	PC	05/02/2021
<a href="#">Nioh 2 - The Complete Edition</a>	KOEI TECMO EUROPE LTD	PC	05/02/2021

VIDEO GAME	COMPANY	FORMAT	RELEASE DATE
<a href="#">Nioh 2 Complete Edition</a>	KOEI TECMO	PC	05/02/2021
<a href="#">YS IX: Monstrum Nox</a>	NIS America	PS4	05/02/2021
<a href="#">Cat Colony Crisis</a>	Devil's Cider Games	An, iOS, PC	09/02/2021
<a href="#">Hero-U: Rogue to Redemption</a>	Transolar	NS	09/02/2021
<a href="#">Reset Earth</a>	United Nations Ozone Secretariat	An, iOS	10/02/2021
<a href="#">The Last Shot</a>	Crytivo	PC	10/02/2021
<a href="#">Aground</a>	Fancy Fish Games	NS, PS4, Web, XO	11/02/2021
<a href="#">Death Crown</a>	Badland Publishing	NS, PS4, XO	11/02/2021
<a href="#">Little Nightmares II</a>	Bandai Namco	NS, PC, PS4, XO	11/02/2021
<a href="#">Potentia</a>	Wily Pumpkin	PC	11/02/2021
<a href="#">Ultimate ADOM: Caverns of Chaos</a>	Assemble Entertainment	Lin, Mac, PC	11/02/2021
<a href="#">Gal*Gun Returns</a>	PQube	NS, PC, XO	12/02/2021
<a href="#">Good Night, Knight</a>	No Gravity Games	PC	16/02/2021 (Early access)
<a href="#">30XX</a>	Batterystaple Games	PC	17/02/2021 (Early access)
<a href="#">Learning Factory</a>	Luden.io	PC	18/02/2021 (Early access)

VIDEO GAME	COMPANY	FORMAT	RELEASE DATE
Rustler	Games Operators	PC	18/02/2021 (Early access)
Silence Channel	Lexip Games	PC	18/02/2021
Far Cry 6	Ubisoft	PC, PS4, PS5, Stad, XO, XSX	21/02/2021
Curse of the Dead Gods	Focus Home Interactive	PC	23/02/2021
Persona 5 Strikers	ATLUS	NS, PS4	23/02/2021
Taxi Chaos	Lion Castle	NS, PS4, XO	23/02/2021
Code: Realize ~Wintertide Miracles~	Aksys	NS	25/02/2021
Ghosts 'n Goblins Resurrection	Capcom	NS	25/02/2021
Hellpoint	tinyBuildGAMES	NS	25/02/2021
Lust from Beyond	Movie Games	PC	25/02/2021
Riders Republic	Ubisoft	PC, PS4, PS5, Stad, XO, XSX	25/02/2021
Wing of Darkness	UNTIES	NS, PC, PS4	25/02/2021
Pixel Puzzles Illustrations & Anime	Kiss Publishing Limited (KPL)	PC	26/02/2021
Almost My Floor	Potata Company	PC	Feb 2021
Azur Lane: Crosswave	Idea Factory	NS	Feb 2021

VIDEO GAME	COMPANY	FORMAT	RELEASE DATE
Capcom Arcade Stadium	Capcom	NS	Feb 2021
DOTORI	CFK	NS, PC	Feb 2021
Gem Wizards Tactics	Keith Burgun Games	PC	Feb 2021
Glam	Three Legged Egg	NS, PC	Feb 2021
Guardian of Lore	Round2Games	PC	Feb 2021
Scarlet Hood and the Wicked Wood	Headup	Lin, Mac, PC	Feb 2021 (Early access)



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**INTERD**

Opinion

# Representation Doesn't Make your Comic Book Great...the Story Does!

By Julie Jones



**In** more recent years we have seen a more unified voice asking for representation in comics. While I understand the desire to see yourself in a superhero, I also think there is something to be said about how it is delivered.

I don't care about seeing representation. If I see a character I like I don't think that I would like them more if they had a vagina. I don't read a storyline and wish it was a person of color. I just wonder what I would do in that situation and hope the character comes out better than I would. I can identify with a character, regardless of gender, race or sexual orientation. That being said, I think that people who would like to be represented should be able to have that also. There is something beautiful in a child that gets excited that they see themselves in someone they love. Here is my problem with what we have gotten so far: don't force it to fit where it doesn't. Don't take an established

character and force it to become something you can parade as an exhibition of how aware and positive you are. Don't take something that is established and loved and change it so you can be the cool kid in class. Don't take a comic that is falling off and revamp it to try to win a new audience, I don't want your leftovers. Here is what I want: the real shit. Give me a great storyline that gives representation with quality components. Of course, I want to read about the Dora Milaje and a lesbian couple within it. I want to see them truly in love with each other. I want to see them being badass. I WANT to see two women of color happily in love in a relationship and that doesn't have to be a showcase. Of course, I want to see an overweight superhero that is able to be as good as any other hero.

I don't need representation, but I would be happy to see it. I don't need to be pandered to because of my genitalia, but I am always happy to see strong female characters. I don't need an Asian hero, but it would be cool to see a strong storyline with someone who looked like me. But, don't give me the recycled bullshit. Give me the good stuff and make it real. Give me genuine representation or keep it and I'll just keep reading *Fatale* over and over.





# XBOX

## SERIES X

**IN STORES NOW!**



# How to Raise Proper Nerd Children!

By Allison Costa



**Nerd  
Moms  
Get  
it  
Done**

**You** may think to yourself that motherhood means that you have to "grow up" and can no longer be a nerd, but that is simply not true! I remember back when I was in college and I found a small, vintage comic bookstore where I could request my comic books every month and they would keep them in a special box for me. As a female, and especially as a former dancer and cheerleader, let's just say that I was not this store's typical kind of client. I learned then and there just how important it is to push back on stereotypes.

Again, when I got my Masters Degree as a mother of 3 children under the age of 3, I decided to push the boundaries and focus on writing my thesis about Super Heroes and the Hero's Journey. It definitely wasn't a traditional topic, but "nerd" lifestyle is so much deeper and more meaningful than people realize. Becoming a mother, I simply knew I had to teach my children the value of real nerd culture. I wanted them to appreciate all of the characters, stories and culture that helped define my childhood and many of my adult moments as well.

Proper nerd children can learn to love all things fantasy, sci-fi and super-hero based as you share it within your home! Having 7 children (4boys and 3 girls), I can tell you that all of them, regardless of age, love and appreciate most things nerd-related. We have introduced them to beloved tv shows, movies and books from the time they were little. Always starting with the classics and NOT just what was popular and trendy. Because truly to appreciate movies like the latest Marvel and DC releases, you need to go all the ways back to when Michael Keaton played Batman and watch the characters journey over the years.

Nerd culture and lifestyle is NOT dorky, it is NOT uncool, and it is definitely a great way to teach children to reach for their dreams, envision a better life and always believe in the good. In a time in the world where there is so much fear, hate, ignorance and worry, what better model to look to than that of superheroes and demi-gods? People with incredible power both physically and morally to change the world for the better??

If there was ever a time to raise kiddos with a strong love and knowledge of nerd culture, it is definitely now. They need to believe in a better world. They need to have the escape of fantasy and dreams. They need to believe the impossible and the fantastic can still happen, so they can mold a better future for all of us.



Larisa Koshkina



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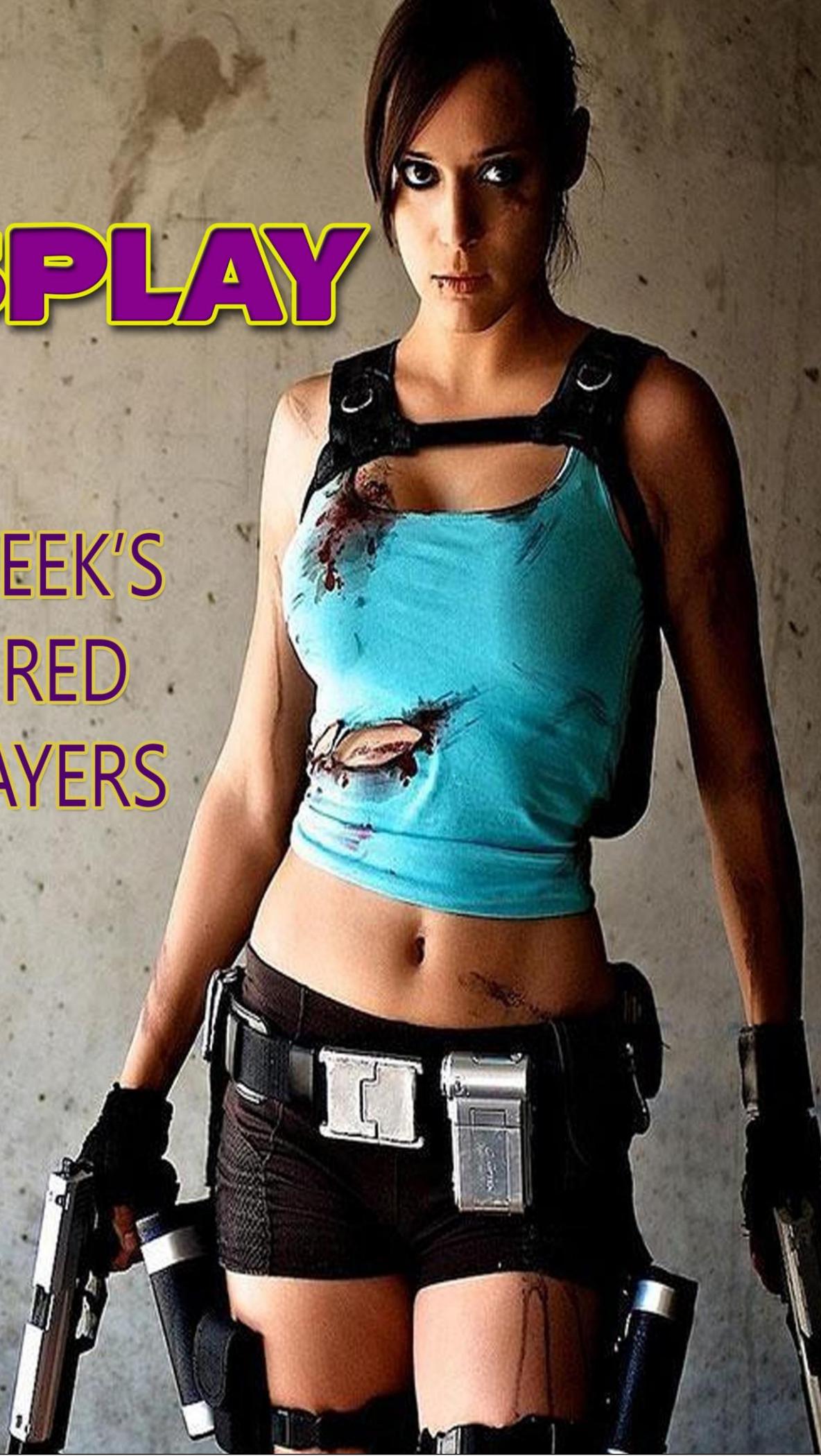
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# COSPLAY

THIS WEEK'S  
FEATURED  
COSPLAYERS





**Cuppy Cosplay**

**Momo Yaoyorozu**  
from My Hero Academia



@CuppyCosplay



**ABOUT CUPPY:** She was born and raised nerd. When she was shown Tim Burton's 1989 Batman, she fell deep down the rabbit hole. Cuppy didn't think her family expected her to get so heavily into comic books, anime, and video games. Her mom said. "Hey it's not drugs." Cuppy always loved dressing up for Halloween, and when she was opened up to the world of cosplay in college, she was so excited because she could dress up as more than one character a year. Cuppy majored in fine arts and humanities. Always having been creative, cosplay was another outlet for being creative. She loved the escapism of cosplay because real life is boring, honestly, and not fulfilling. Cuppy feels confident and at her best when cosplaying characters from all kinds of worlds and

universes. Follow Cuppy Cosplay @cuppycosplay on Instagram, TikTok, Onlyfans, and Patreon. Top Image: Tae Takemi from Persona 5. Bottom Image: Nino from The Quintessential Quintuplets.

## -INTERVIEW-

**How did you get into cosplay?** I was introduced to cosplay when I joined the anime club my freshman year of college. The college had the biggest anime club in the US that they held their own convention. My first cosplay ever was Edward Elric from Full Metal Alchemist, and I did win that costume contest surprisingly.

**Who is your favorite character to cosplay as and why?** Honestly, my favorite character to cosplay is Tae Takemi from Persona 5. She is such an independent and powerful woman. She knows what she wants and is a very intellectual woman. Also I love the fact that she is in touch with her sensual side or whatever you want to call it. I feel my best as Tae or Momo from My Hero Academia. I feel my most feminine as those two characters.

**What tips do you have on making a costume?** My advice is to look up YouTube vids and don't hesitate to use what you have. It's not bad to start out with premade things and to break them apart to learn how the outfits were put together. Start simple and work your way up.

**What is your favorite memory of being a cosplayer?** I will never forget cosplaying as Edward Elric and meeting the voice of Maes Hughes, Sonny Straight. I had printed out a bunch of transmutation circles and asked if I could transmute him and he placed the transmutation circle on his shirt. He was a good sport about it.

**What advice do you have for fans getting into cosplay?** Look up tutorials online and YouTube. Don't hesitate to message other cosplayers. The cosplay community is very positive and supporting of each other usually. Also just jump into it. Don't hesitate. Go for your dreams and take the step by trying and getting into it. Try not to get discouraged or compare yourself to the professionals. It takes time to improve and work your way up.

**If you could have a weapon or superpower to fight the forces of evil, what would you choose?** Honestly I would love to use the force. There is so much you can do with it. I would love a lightsaber with the force. Can you guess if I would be a Jedi or Sith? :-p



***THE MILANO PILOT***

**Peter Jason Quill/Star-Lord  
“Guardians of the Galaxy”**



Ko-fi

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Sheriff Jim Hopper - Stranger Things

## ***ABOUT THE MILANO PILOT***

I'm Daniel and I live and breathe characters and cosplay. I got into it when I was in high school. My goal in life is to make people laugh, smile, and get excited about what they love! If you need any help with deciding a cosplay/ where to get specific pieces or anything at all- I'm here to help! 2021 Goal is to be able to visit children in hospitals as my characters. Any donations are greatly appreciated.

Follow The Milano Pilot on **Tik-Tok, Instagram, and Ko-Fi**

Check out My Podcast at [www.nextweeksisue.buzzsprout.com](http://www.nextweeksisue.buzzsprout.com)

## ***- INTERVIEW -***

**How did you get into cosplay?** I got into cosplay because I saw Chris Pratt portray Star-Lord in a way that was very relatable to me he loves old music, is a moron, sings and more... And I just connected with him. Because of this character he inspired me to lose 125 pounds and go visit children in hospitals as the character. Still today he is my favorite and I just love the fact that fictional characters can make such an impact on us.

**Who is your favorite character to cosplay and why?** Star-Lord. I see a lot of myself in him and his story has taught me that there's a world out there much larger than myself and that we can always do something to help better it.

**What tips do you have on making a costume?** Do a lot of research. It helps when I take screenshots of the character up close and their costume so that I can find the best pieces possible. A wonderful place to look for parts is Etsy.

**What is your favorite memory of being a cosplayer?** Meeting Stan-Lee at Fan Expo. I showed him my flyer for my organization and I'll never forget what he said to me.... "SEE, YOU are the real heroes who go out and do this. I'm just the pretty face that helps sell the movies!" "You are a real STAR-LORD!" and that's just stuck with me ever since.

**What advice do you have for fans getting into cosplay?** Do it because of what the character means to you, not because someone says you look like them. When you emotionally connect to a fictional character- there is a lot to be said about it. You found another personality that helps you see a better, more positive version of yourself. I think that's where my passion drives from.

**If you could have a weapon or superpower to fight the forces of evil, what would you choose?** Easily transformation and or superior intellect. To be able to become anything would be phenomenal. Not to mention, it gives you more abilities than just ONE power.

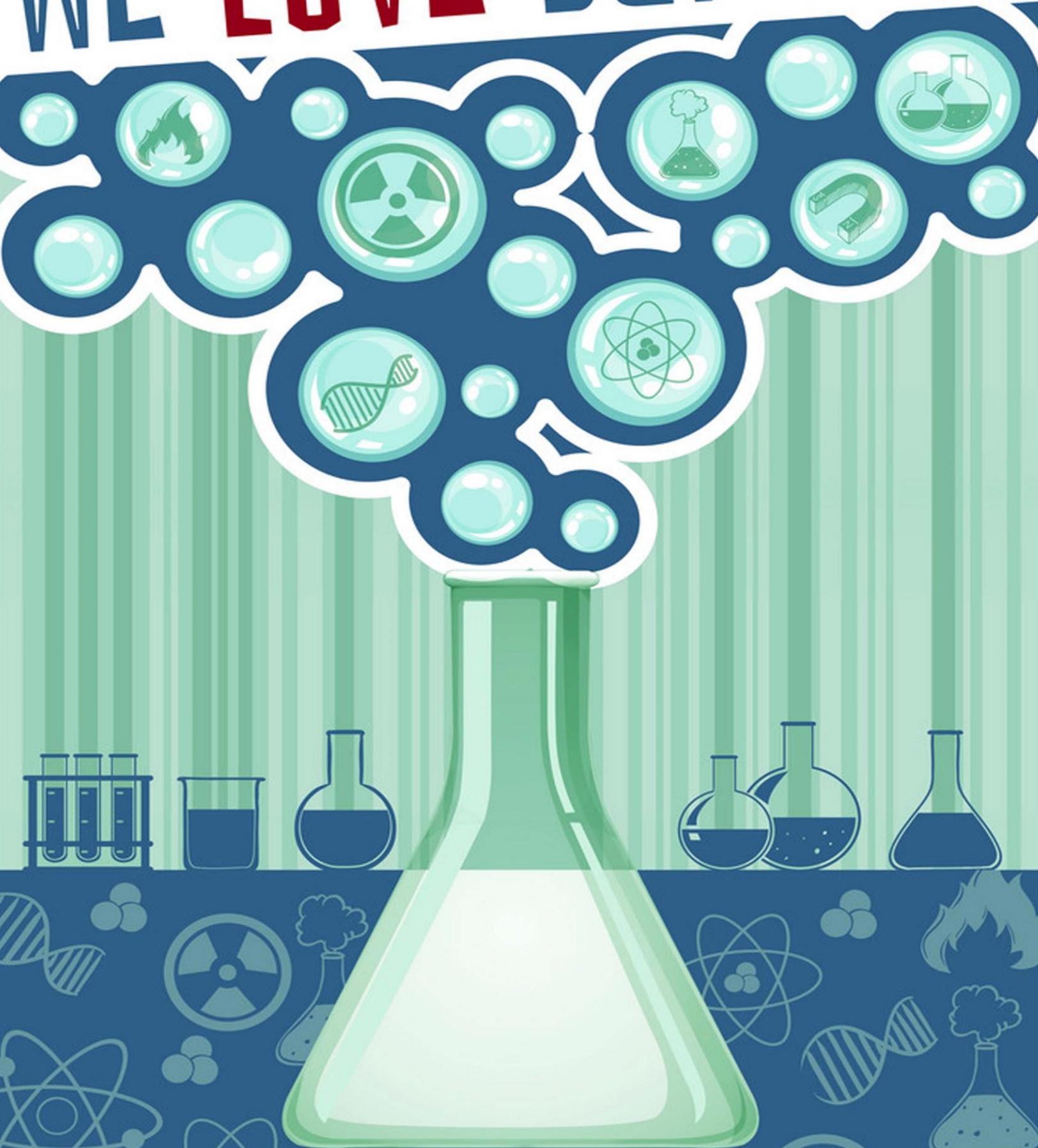


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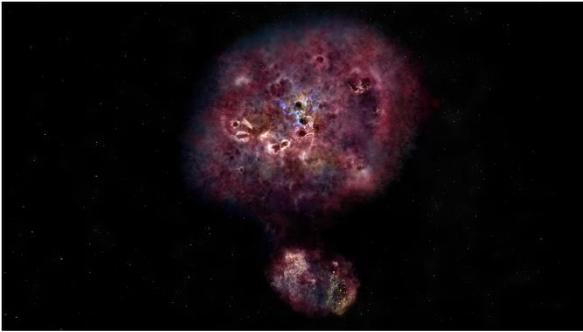
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WE LOVE SCIENCE



# ALMA Captures Distant Colliding Galaxy

## Dying Out as it Loses the Ability to Form Stars



**Galaxies** begin to "die" when they stop forming stars, but until now astronomers had never clearly glimpsed the start of this process in a far-away galaxy. Using the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), in which the European Southern Observatory (ESO) is a partner, astronomers have seen a galaxy ejecting nearly half of its star-forming gas. This ejection is happening at a startling rate, equivalent to 10,000 Suns-worth of gas a year -- the galaxy is rapidly losing its fuel to make new stars. The team believes that this spectacular gas loss was triggered by a collision with another galaxy, which could lead astronomers to rethink how galaxies stop bringing new stars to life.

"This is the first time we have observed a typical massive star-forming galaxy in the distant Universe about to 'die' because of a massive cold gas ejection," says Annagrazia Puglisi, lead researcher on the new study, from the Durham University, UK, and the Saclay Nuclear Research Centre (CEA-Saclay), France. The galaxy, ID2299, is distant enough that its light takes some 9 billion years to reach us; we see it when the Universe was just 4.5 billion years old. The gas ejection is happening at a rate equivalent to 10,000 Suns per year, and is removing an astonishing 46% of the total cold gas from ID2299. Because the galaxy is also forming stars very rapidly, hundreds of times faster than our Milky Way, the remaining gas will be quickly consumed, shutting down ID2299 in just a few tens of million years. The event responsible for the spectacular gas loss, the team believes, is a collision between two galaxies, which eventually merged to form ID2299. The elusive clue that pointed the scientists towards this scenario was the association of the ejected gas with a "tidal tail." Tidal tails are elongated streams of stars and gas extending into interstellar space that result when two galaxies merge, and they are usually too faint to see in distant galaxies. However, the team managed to observe the relatively bright feature just as it was launching into space, and were able to identify it as a tidal tail.

Most astronomers believe that winds caused by star formation and the activity of black holes at the centres of massive galaxies are responsible for launching star-forming material into space, thus ending galaxies' ability to make new stars. However, the new study published today in *Nature Astronomy* suggests that galactic mergers can also be responsible for ejecting star-forming fuel into space. "Our study suggests that gas ejections can be produced by mergers and that winds and tidal tails can appear very similar," says study co-author Emanuele Daddi of CEA-Saclay. Because of this, some of the teams that previously identified winds from distant galaxies could in fact have been observing tidal tails ejecting gas from them. "This might lead us to revise our understanding of how galaxies 'die'," Daddi adds.

Puglisi agrees about the significance of the team's finding, saying: "I was thrilled to discover such an exceptional galaxy! I was eager to learn more about this weird object because I was convinced that there was some important lesson to be learned about how distant galaxies evolve." This surprising discovery was made by chance, while the team were inspecting a survey of galaxies made with ALMA (<https://www.eso.org/public/teles-instr/alma/>), designed to study the properties of cold gas in more than 100 far-away galaxies. ID2299 had been observed by ALMA for only a few minutes, but the powerful observatory, located in northern Chile, allowed the team to collect enough data to detect the galaxy and its ejection tail.

"ALMA has shed new light on the mechanisms that can halt the formation of stars in distant galaxies. Witnessing such a massive disruption event adds an important piece to the complex puzzle of galaxy evolution," says Chiara Circosta, a researcher at the University College London, UK, who also contributed to the research.

In the future, the team could use ALMA to make higher-resolution and deeper observations of this galaxy, enabling them to better understand the dynamics of the ejected gas. Observations with the future ESO's Extremely Large Telescope could allow the team to explore the connections between the stars and gas in ID2299, shedding new light on how galaxies evolve. This research was presented in the paper "A titanic interstellar medium ejection from a massive starburst galaxy at  $z=1.4$ " to appear in *Nature Astronomy*.

The team is composed of A. Puglisi (Centre for Extragalactic Astronomy, Durham University, UK and CEA, IRFU, DAp, AIM, Université Paris-Saclay, Université Paris Diderot, Sorbonne Paris Cité, CNRS, France [CEA]), E. Daddi (CEA), M. Brusa (Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia, Università di Bologna, Italy and INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Bologna, Italy), F. Bournaud (CEA), J. Fensch (Univ. Lyon, ENS de Lyon, Univ. Lyon 1, CNRS, Centre de Recherche Astrophysique de Lyon, France), D. Liu (Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, Germany), I. Delvecchio (CEA), A. Calabrò (INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Roma, Italy), C. Circosta (Department of Physics & Astronomy, University College London, UK), F. Valentino (Cosmic Dawn Center at the Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen and DTU-Space, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark), M. Perna (Centro de Astrobiología (CAB, CSIC-INTA), Departamento de Astrofísica, Spain and INAF-Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, Italy), S. Jin (Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias and Universidad de La Laguna, Dpto. Astrofísica, Spain), A. Enia (Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia, Università di Padova, Italy [Padova]), C. Mancini (Padova) and G. Rodighiero (Padova and INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Padova, Italy).



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# Astronomers Discover First Cloudless, Jupiter-like Planet

**Astronomers** at the Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian have detected the first Jupiter-like planet without clouds or haze in its observable atmosphere. The findings were published this month in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

Named WASP-62b, the gas giant was first detected in 2012 through the Wide Angle Search for Planets (WASP) South survey. Its atmosphere, however, had never been closely studied until now. "For my thesis, I have been working on exoplanet characterization," says Munazza Alam, a graduate student at the Center for Astrophysics who led the study. "I take discovered planets and I follow up on them to characterize their atmospheres." Known as a "hot Jupiter," WASP-62b is 575 light years away and about half the mass of our solar system's Jupiter. However, unlike our Jupiter, which takes nearly 12

years to orbit the sun, WASP-62b completes a rotation around its star in just four-and-a-half days. This proximity to the star makes it extremely hot, hence the name "hot Jupiter." Using the Hubble Space Telescope, Alam recorded data and observations of the planet using spectroscopy, the study of electromagnetic radiation to help detect chemical elements. Alam specifically monitored WASP-62b as it swept in front of its host star three times, making visible light observations, which can detect the presence of sodium and potassium in a planet's atmosphere.

"I'll admit that at first I wasn't too excited about this planet," Alam says. "But once I started to take a look at the data, I got excited." While there was no evidence of potassium, sodium's presence was strikingly clear. The team was able to view the full sodium absorption lines in their data, or its complete fingerprint. Clouds or haze in the atmosphere would obscure the complete signature of sodium, Alam explains, and astronomers usually can only make out small hints of its presence.

"This is smoking gun evidence that we are seeing a clear atmosphere," she says.

Cloud-free planets are exceedingly rare; astronomers estimate that less than 7 percent of exoplanets have clear atmospheres, according to recent research. For example, the first and only other known exoplanet with a clear atmosphere was discovered in 2018. Named WASP-96b, it is classified as a hot Saturn. Astronomers believe studying exoplanets with cloudless atmospheres can lead to a better understanding of how they were formed. Their rarity "suggests something else is going on or they formed in a different way than most planets," Alam says. Clear atmospheres also make it easier to study the chemical composition of planets, which can help identify what a planet is made of. With the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope later this year, the team hopes to have new opportunities to study and better understand WASP-62b. The telescope's improved technologies, like higher resolution and better precision, should help them probe the atmosphere even closer to search for the presence of more elements, such as silicon.



## discovery+



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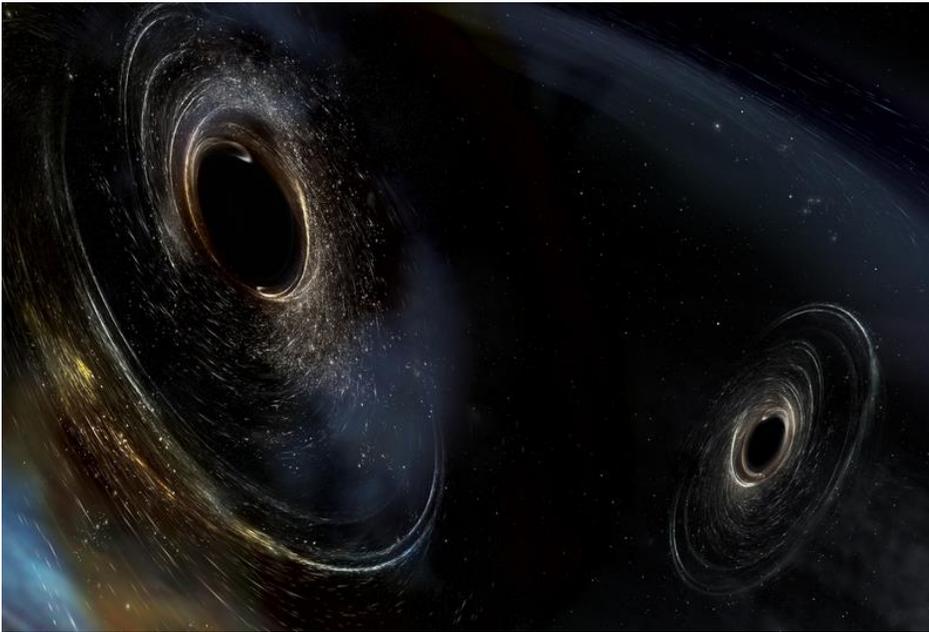
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# Primordial Black Holes and the Search for Dark Matter from the Multiverse



**The Kavli Institute** for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (Kavli IPMU) is home to many interdisciplinary projects which benefit from the synergy of a wide range of expertise available at the institute. One such project is the study of black holes that could have formed in the early universe, before stars and galaxies were born. Such primordial black holes (PBHs) could account for all or part of dark matter, be responsible for some of the observed gravitational waves signals, and seed supermassive black holes found in the center of our Galaxy and other galaxies. They could also play a role in the synthesis of heavy elements when they collide with neutron stars and destroy them, releasing neutron-rich material. In particular, there is an exciting possibility that the mysterious dark matter, which accounts for most of the matter in the universe, is composed of primordial black holes. The 2020 Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to a theorist, Roger Penrose, and two astronomers, Reinhard Genzel

and Andrea Ghez, for their discoveries that confirmed the existence of black holes. Since black holes are known to exist in nature, they make a very appealing candidate for dark matter.

The recent progress in fundamental theory, astrophysics, and astronomical observations in search of PBHs has been made by an international team of particle physicists, cosmologists and astronomers, including Kavli IPMU members Alexander Kusenko, Misa o Sasaki, Sunao Sugiyama, Masahiro Takada and Volodymyr Takhistov.

To learn more about primordial black holes, the research team looked at the early universe for clues. The early universe was so dense that any positive density fluctuation of more than 50 percent would create a black hole. However, cosmological perturbations that seeded galaxies are known to be much smaller. Nevertheless, a number of processes in the early universe could have created the right conditions for the black holes to form. One exciting possibility is that primordial black holes could form from the "baby universes" created during inflation, a period of rapid expansion that is believed to be responsible for seeding the structures we observe today, such as galaxies and clusters of galaxies. During inflation, baby universes can branch off of our universe. A small baby (or "daughter") universe would eventually collapse, but the large amount of energy released in the small volume causes a black hole to form.

An even more peculiar fate awaits a bigger baby universe. If it is bigger than some critical size, Einstein's theory of gravity allows the baby universe to exist in a state that appears different to an observer on the inside and the outside. An internal observer sees it as an expanding universe, while an outside observer (such as us) sees it as a black hole. In either case, the big and the small baby universes are seen by us as primordial black holes, which conceal the underlying structure of multiple universes behind their "event horizons." The event horizon is a boundary below which everything, even light, is trapped and cannot escape the black hole.

In their paper, the team described a novel scenario for PBH formation and showed that the black holes from the "multiverse" scenario can be found using the Hyper Suprime-Cam (HSC) of the 8.2m Subaru Telescope, a gigantic digital camera -- the management of which Kavli IPMU has played a crucial role -- near the 4,200 meter summit of Mt. Mauna Kea in Hawaii. Their work is an exciting extension of the HSC search of PBH that Masahiro Takada, a Principal Investigator at the Kavli IPMU, and his team are pursuing. The HSC team has recently reported leading constraints on the existence of PBHs in Niikura, Takada et. al. (*Nature Astronomy* 3, 524-534 (2019))

Why was the HSC indispensable in this research? The HSC has a unique capability to image the entire Andromeda galaxy every few minutes. If a black hole passes through the line of sight to one of the stars, the black hole's gravity bends the light rays and makes the star appear brighter than before for a short period of time. The duration of the star's brightening tells the astronomers the mass of the black hole. With HSC observations, one can simultaneously observe one hundred million stars, casting a wide net for primordial black holes that may be crossing one of the lines of sight.

The first HSC observations have already reported a very intriguing candidate event consistent with a PBH from the "multiverse," with a black hole mass comparable to the mass of the Moon. Encouraged by this first sign, and guided by the new theoretical understanding, the team is conducting a new round of observations to extend the search and to provide a definitive test of whether PBHs from the multiverse scenario can account for all dark matter.



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# Storytellers

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This Week's Story...

# A DENIZEN OF THE SHALLOWS

## PART 1

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 shooin' 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 shooin' 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 yelped 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.

To be continued...

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