

# That Nerd Show



## WEEKLY NEWS



October 31 / November 7, 2021

Vol. 9

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



OUR FAVORITE  
HALLOWEEN  
MOVIES!



"Best Hockey Game I've Ever Played"

NHL 22 Review

by Marcus Blake



# EA / 2K

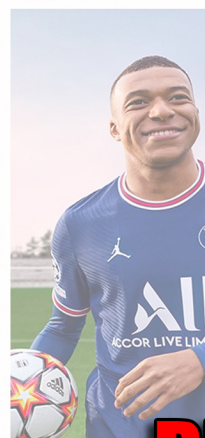
## THE FUTURE OF SPORTS GAMES

By Marcus Blake  
and K. Scott Cooper

## And Why They're Not Worth Full Price!



FEATURED COSPLAYER  
ERICA MUSE



REVIEWS

WHAT YOU SHOULD  
BINGE-WATCH

# IT'S IN THE GAME



TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET REBECCA FERGUSON OSCAR ISAAC JOSH BROLIN STELLAN SKARSGÅRD DAVE BAUTISTA STEPHEN MCKINLEY HENDERSON CHANG CHEN SHARON DUNCAN-BREWSTER WITH CHARLOTTE RAMPLING WITH JASON MOMOA WITH JAVIER BARDEM



I T B E G I N S

# DUNE

SEE IT IN THEATERS AND ON **HBOMAX**

OCTOBER 22

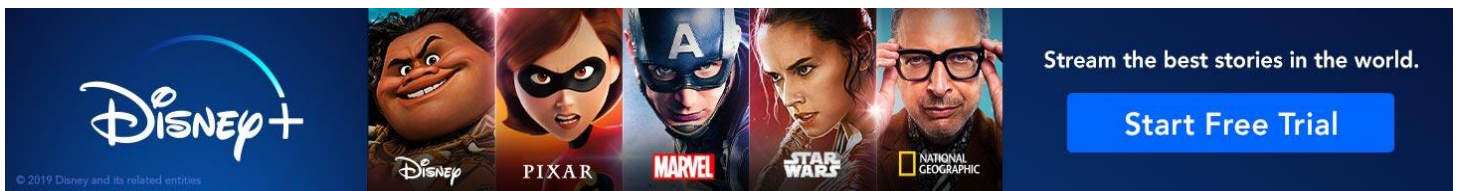
MDolby Cinema REALD 3D FILMED FOR IMAX  
AVAILABLE ON HBO MAX FOR 31 DAYS FROM THEATRICAL RELEASE

LEGENDARY PG-13

WINNER BROS.

# Table of Contents

EA/2K: The Future of Sports Games and Why They Are Not Full Price.	Pg. 4
<b>Film and TV News</b>	Pg. 13
Dune: Part 1 Review <i>by Julie Jones</i>	Pg. 18
No Time to Die Review <i>by Alex Moore</i>	Pg. 18
The Electrical Life of Louis Wain Review <i>by Chloe James</i>	Pg. 19
The Last Duel Review <i>by Alex Moore</i>	Pg. 20
Halloween Kills Review <i>by Chloe James</i>	Pg. 20
Hard Luck Love Song <i>by Marcus Blake</i>	Pg. 21
Army of Thieves Review <i>by Chloe James</i>	Pg. 22
Only Murders in The Building Review <i>by Allison Costa</i>	Pg. 26
<b>Gaming News</b>	Pg. 27
PlayStation Plus Free Games November 2021	Pg. 32
GAME RELEASES FOR NOVEMBER 2021	Pg. 33
Far Cry 6 Review Review <i>by Marcus Blake &amp; K. Scott Cooper</i>	Pg. 38
NHL 22 Review <i>by Marcus Blake</i>	Pg. 40
<b>The Nerd Opinion</b>	Pg. 42
Best Underrated Horror Movies to Watch on Halloween <i>by Alex Moore, Marcus Blake, K. Scott Cooper</i>	Pg. 44
A PG Halloween Movie Not Suited for Young Kids: Nightbooks Review <i>by Allison Costa</i>	Pg. 46
<b>Comic Book News</b>	Pg. 47
<b>Music Stuff</b>	Pg. 59
<b>Cosplay - Featured: Erica Muse</b>	Pg. 63
Erica Muse Cosplay and Interview	Pg. 64
<b>Science News</b>	Pg. 69
<b>Storytellers</b>	Pg. 75
HUBRIS <i>by Ellen Drebin</i>	Pg. 77
A Poem for Her (Poem) <i>by T. Gordan Mayhall</i>	Pg. 80
<b>Word Games</b>	Pg. 83
Horror Movie Crossword Puzzle	Pg. 85
Classifieds	Pg. 89



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# EA / 2K

## THE FUTURE OF SPORTS GAMES AND WHY THEY'RE NOT WORTH FULL PRICE!

By Marcus Blake and K. Scott Cooper

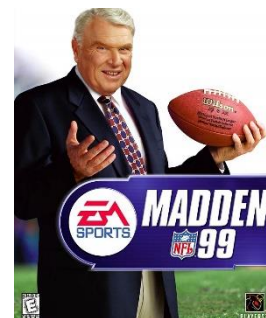


### IT'S IN THE GAME

*Sports Video Games* are the most popular form of video games in the world! It's true, they outsell First Person shooters and RPG's every time. If you can't be a professional athlete, then sports video games are the next best thing and they have only gotten better with each console generation. If you're a sports fan and you like to play video games, it's pretty much a foregone conclusion that since the first Inception of little boxes on a screen representing a football game for the Atari 2600 , you've been hooked on Sports video games even if your first foray into them might have started with Tecmo Bowl or John Madden football on the Sega Genesis in 1990, or maybe it was Madden 99 on the

first PlayStation. Of course, it could have been one of the first baseball, soccer, or hockey games on the original Nintendo. So, for the past 32 years, Electronic Arts has been the leading publisher of sports games. They have made extraordinary sports games ever since they published John Madden Football in 1988, improving on the game play with each generation of consoles. EA didn't just stop at football, it has also been the publisher of the NHL series since 1991 and the FIFA series since 1993. It also developed a basketball series with NBA Live in 1995. EA has been at it a long time and brought us a lot of wonderful sports games especially after getting the licenses from different professional sports leagues so that you can play as real players in real life stadiums. But year after year, we ask the question with each new version of a sports game, are they still worth the retail price when most of the time there aren't any major improvements. Most of the time it feels as if we are just

playing the same game we did the year before, only every few years EA and 2K make incredible changes to their sports games such as upgrades to game play and graphics. And if that's the case, why do they make us retail price for a sports video game every year? That's what we're here to examine and it isn't just EA or 2K, but other developers like the San Diego Studio that makes MLB The Show.



*We* start with Madden and some of the versions that are considered the best. Old school Gamers will say that Madden 99

was the defining moment in the franchise because it was the first time you had the franchise mode with realistic schedules, free agency, contract management, and drafting. It was a momentous achievement in

Madden and most hardcore players rate the game high because of the franchise mode and that's where most players really want to see major improvements every year besides the graphics and gameplay. Gameplay was great in Madden 1999 too. Madden 2002 was a great version because it was the first time it went to new consoles like the GameCube and the Xbox where the graphics and visuals improved tremendously. It's easy to say that games like Madden improve with each generation of console, there was certainly a difference between the Xbox and the Xbox 360 or PlayStation 1 and PlayStation 2 to PlayStation 3, the PS3 being a huge achievement because it had Blu-Ray capabilities which instantly improved graphics and to some degree gameplay.



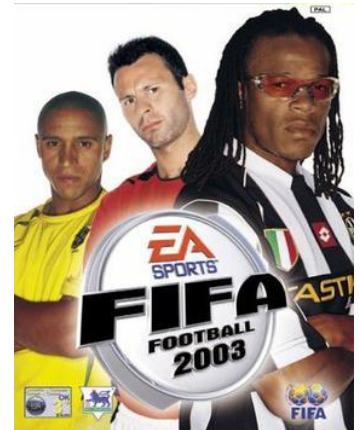
But it's Madden 18 and 19 that see the biggest improvements in the franchise because it's the first time that the Madden series went to the Frostbite engine developed by EA which gave Madden the most realistic gameplay and graphics. Essentially it was the most realistic football video game that we've ever gotten. Love or hate the Frostbite engine and how it's used in other video games, it astronomically improved the game play in Madden. Some people pick Madden 2004 as one of the better versions because it had the Owner Mode compared to franchise mode, which allowed players to increase season and ticket prices, renovate or build new stadiums, and even relocate a team. If you don't want to run a football

team in franchise mode, you can be the owner and still get all the financial aspects of running a football team in a video game. That version was definitely suited for those who don't really want to play, but like the management style. But it was Madden 18 that introduced the story mode of "The Longshot" which just morphed into the "Face of the Franchise" mode that we got in Madden 20. It's still a story mode, it's just played differently, but you take a "Tom Brady" like \ player who you think has no chance of being a success in the NFL or is drafted last and you make them a star. The "Face of the Franchise" mode took that long shot player and started them off as a backup quarterback in the college playoffs who went through the draft. If you put that on top of the most realistic playing football game we've ever had, then you have a great game that's worth \$60. But can we really say that about every version of Madden...No! Some versions are great and some are just the same as other versions of the game. However, there's a drawback to games like Madden because in 2005, 2K sports was launched and with it came ESPN NFL 2K5 which was very much on par with the Madden 2005 and much cheaper. Madden 2005 retailed at \$49.99. ESPN NFL 2K5 retailed at \$19.99, it was essentially the same game and more than half the price. 2K came on the scene and made the statement, "We can make the same quality game at a better price." It Challenged EA and changed the market value of football video games.

*FIFA* is the largest selling video game every year because it's truly an international game. You can play every team in every League throughout the world and then as we get close to the World Cup, there's

generally a World Cup mode for both the men's teams and the women's teams in that year's version. Although, you can always make a custom tournament and do the World Cup in every version of FIFA. We really didn't see major improvements in FIFA soccer until we arrived at the Xbox and PlayStation console generation. FIFA 2001, a highly regarded game, had the best graphics at the time and gameplay was great for a game made 20 years ago. One of the highest rated FIFA games is FIFA 2003, because not only did you have different levels of difficulty which brought in more players, it was the first version that truly focused on stadiums, the fans, and the overall experience, especially gameplay.

All of this coming 2 years after an already great version. But one could argue that it



would be over 5 years before another great FIFA game came out. The truth of the matter is it's harder to create the game play in a soccer game compared to other sports games, so the technology has to get better with newer consoles. The highest rated FIFA game is FIFA 10 because not only did it get a great manager mode with a lot of enhancements, the mode became more detailed, and EA put a tremendous amount of attention into the actual gameplay which made it more sleek and faster to play. EA doesn't go all out for its sports games year after year like FIFA, but in 2010

they made the greatest improvements on the FIFA franchise that they had since they first made a soccer video game. Later installments are rated high with Metacritic and most FIFA players agree that the last great FIFA game that had massive improvements especially gameplay was FIFA 18, although you could make a great case for FIFA 19 because fever finally got the Champions League license back and you could play the full Champions League mode which it's seriously been lacking for years. But the truth is we've pretty much been playing the same FIFA game the last few years except for new schedules and new kits for teams. FIFA 18 in FIFA 19 both were created with the Frostbite engine just like it and Madden and I gave us the most realistic gameplay in soccer then we've ever had. But after reviewing FIFA 22 to where the gameplay is certainly downgraded and career mode is the worst it's ever been, I almost feel like we should just go back to FIFA 18 or any of the other three versions that are just like it, which are FIFA 19, FIFA 20, and FIFA 21. It's also the first time that we didn't buy this game and just continued the career mode in last year's version because FIFA isn't worth buying this year.



*EA's NHL* series has been around since 1991 and like all their sports franchises they've made great improvements, but not every year. And honestly, it's the one sports franchise that EA doesn't put a lot of time in except maybe every 5 years or 10 in this case considering NHL 12 is still the highest rated game in the NHL franchise until now. We get it, hockey is not as popular of a sport compared to European and American football or basketball for that matter. but just to prove that it's not as popular of a video game series except the very "die hard" hockey fans that play it, NHL 1994 is still considered the second highest rated version because the changes they made to that game was monumental compared to the 1993 version. There are elements in the game that are still featured today in the NHL series. It was the first time that you had realistic arena music in the game, you could do one-timers, dekes, and it included a regular season, the best of 7 playoff series' and a shootout mode. Madden NFL didn't even have realistic season and playoff modes until 1999. But it was NHL 12 that made the biggest leaps in the NHL Franchise as being the most realistic hockey game at the time, you had the Winter Classic for the first time in the game, the physics to the game play we're about as realistic as you could get, and of course you had goalie fights, which had not been in the previous 5 versions Yes , there's been improved gameplay with each new generation of consoles especially when you went from the PlayStation 3 to the PlayStation 4. But it took 10 years to finally improve an NHL game and make it the most realistic and visually stunning hockey game that we've ever had. NHL 22 is the highest-rated hockey game that we've ever had since NHL 12 or

from our love of NHL 94 or Ice Hockey and Blades of Steel on the original Nintendo. This year we were happy to pay retail prices for the game because after many years of putting other sports games on the Frostbite engine, EA finally did it for NHL. Why did it take so long for EA to make major improvements in an NHL game, who knows, but I think the bigger question is, why should Gamers have to pay retail prices every year if it literally takes 10 years to greatly improve a franchise sports game and after two console generations later?



We played NHL 12 on the PS3 and the Xbox 360 and now here we are with the PlayStation 5 and the Xbox Series X! More thoughts on

EA's NHL 22, NHL game is good because compared to the others. it's much more smooth and quick to respond for someone that doesn't play sports games that often and it's not super helpful when you're "reflex" reacting to the crazy "shit" your much more sports-skilled friends throw at you. But the game logic doesn't make any sense and doesn't normally follow step in line with official rules or actual calls made by ruling officials in an actual NHL game, which can be very frustrating and can feel like a real "slap in the face" if you don't mainline sports games to have the skill to counterbalance that. It may not be a popular opinion, but EA needs to have a massive overall performed at the management level clear the focus is only on profits and the quickest way to accomplish it

and EA has shown they won't change unless forced to by fans and federal injunctions and that goes for their other sports franchises.



*We're not* going to rate the best versions of NBA Live because it's not worth it. We're not saying that the games can't be fun and they don't look good on new consoles, but if we're comparing this basketball series to NBA2K, EA lost a long time ago. While 2K sports has dabbled in other sports franchises like football and hockey, they've even made baseball games at one time, it seems that they put all their money into their basketball franchise, and it has paid dividends. NBA2K is a far more technical game and more of an immersive experience for those who like the sport of basketball whereas NBA Live is much more of a fun experience. if you really want to get right down to it...it would be like if we were still playing NBA Jam on the arcade just for the hell of it. It's fun to play with your friends, but it's not a true basketball game in the sense of everything that you can do from playing a full season or being the GM and dealing with all the technical aspects of basketball. Simply put

it's the Madden version of a Basketball, but it's easy to understand why EA doesn't put that much into the development of NBA Live, it's not their most popular sports game compared to FIFA or Madden and truth be told, NHL is a better franchise than NBA Live. EA stopped trying to compete 2 years ago when NBA Live 19 was the last version they released. NBA2K has won that war.



And they have made significant improvements to their franchise since their first version in 1999 for the Dreamcast with Allen Iverson on the cover. The highest rated NBA2K basketball game is still NBA2K 2 which came out on the PlayStation 2, Xbox (Original) and GameCube, and opened up the franchise for a wider audience. It was also the first to introduce realistic player abilities because taking shots at the right place on the court really mattered for specific players. It was also the birth of personalities in later installments and the game mode improved on the defensive side. If you look at the highest rated modern version of NBA2K it will be 2K17.... the last four versions of NBA2K don't even crack a top 10 list on Metacritic or game sites. In fact when we played NBA2K 21 , it literally was the same version as NBA2K 20 except they fixed the buggy defensive mode. Did we need

to pay full price for another version of the game when a simple update or patch could have fixed that problem? Of course not, and although we do like NBA2K 22, the only thing it really has going for it is it's the first version of NBA2K built for the PlayStation 5 and the Xbox Series X, so basically, we're just paying a game with improved graphics and faster gameplay.... that's like paying for a 3D film compared to the standard version of a film, when you're still getting the same story. It's not really worth the extra money or paying for some new version.



*Baseball* games have certainly gone through a lot of incarnations since we were playing square boxes on the Atari and for the most part the original Nintendo. RBI Baseball was fun back in the day! When looking at the two highest rated MLB the Show games believe it or not it's MLB the Show 10 and MLB The Show 11. You can honestly say that 2011 is probably the best version because it was the first time that it was an exclusive on the PlayStation and it was the perfect game for the PlayStation with the swing motion



controller to have the ability to do many of the things that real baseball players could do regarding gameplay. But the PlayStation controller was just better for a baseball game, still is. And it was the first time that you had a peer analog control system which allowed players to use the analog stick to hit, pitch, and field making the way we play the game more realistic. While 2K sports would continue to make baseball games for the next two years, this is where PlayStation ended up making the best version of a baseball game. And if we look at the truly modern era of baseball games for the Xbox one and PlayStation 4 all the way up to the PlayStation 5, MLB 19 is still rated the highest, whereas MLB the Show 20 never cracks anyone's top ten list because it didn't have any significant improvements from MLB the show 19. You can say the same thing about MLB the Show 21 and perhaps the biggest Improvement of that game is, it's the first time since 2K Sports made a baseball game that could be played on an Xbox. It was available on Xbox Game Pass, Day 1. We loved MLB the Show 19. The presentation was fantastic and it also had iconic modes like Franchise and Road to the Show, which were put back into the game. All around the gameplay was incredible and it looked stunning. But if we have to be brutally honest, MLB the Show 20 and 21 were virtually the same game.



After playing a full season in MLB the Show 21, we pretty much agreed, "Thank God it was on Game Pass and we didn't have to pay for it." Fun

game to play, but even better that we didn't have to pay for it and it was available on Game Pass!

### *What do all these sports games franchises have in common?*



There's a common trend among all the highest rated versions of the sports games...there's a significant number of years between them. Why, because sports games only truly get improved about every three or four years or maybe 10 years as we have seen with the NHL franchise. Most of the time, gaming developers like EA and 2K are just making the same versions of their highest rated versions. Then why should we keep paying full price every year for virtually the same game we bought the year before. It's time to call these gaming companies out for their business practices and making gamers pay full price for a version they already have. Looking back at our reviews of sports games over the past few years the most common thing we say is there aren't really any improvements from the year before. The one time that I truly praised Madden for being the best version that I've ever played was in 2018 when the game went to the Frostbite Engine and although we praised Madden 19 for a few things, we also acknowledge that it was the same game as Madden 18. There were some improvements to the Franchise mode in Madden 19, but the gameplay was exactly the same. The only thing new that we got was a new roster for our teams and a new

season. Isn't that something that can be done through DLC or maybe a season pass where I'm not paying the full retail price.

Other game franchises have a season pass that keeps you playing the game for a couple of years before they drop new content or a new game and what's great about a season pass, it's not as much money as you paid for the game itself. It's a fraction of the cost! Why are sports games the only type of video games that don't have a season pass for new content? If the only thing that updates from one version to the next in a sport except a new roster, a new season schedule, and new uniform, is that the kind of thing that should go into a season pass for a video game at, let's say, half the price you paid for the game itself. What sports gamer wouldn't be happy to pay a \$20 to \$30 season pass every year to play the same version of a sports game but with a new roster, a new season, and new uniforms, and maybe a few improvements to the game modes? That's what a Season Pass is for and show us gamers who would disagree. Here's something to consider. In 2017 Xbox launched its Game Pass where you could play a back catalogue of a hundred different games, it has vastly improved in 4 years with their exclusive content and some other games going to game pass on day one like MLB the Show 21. We have written about it multiple times and talked about it on podcasts how Xbox Game Pass is the best value in gaming and as Microsoft keeps buying up Studios like Bethesda, it keeps adding more and more to their Game Pass catalog. You have upwards of 200 games on there now. EA started a subscription service for their back catalogue of games in 2014 called EA play. You can pay \$30 a year for the

subscription or \$5 a month and the best part about the subscription is you get all the previous versions of their sports games. The current version usually hits their subscription service about four to five months after the game has been released. Sometime sooner! EA Play was a part of Xbox before they did their own Game Pass and then eventually it came to PlayStation in 2019. In fact, EA Play is now officially a part of the Ultimate Game Pass where you get everything for the low price of \$14.99 a month. If sports games don't improve that much from year to year, isn't it a better value just to have an EA Play subscription or an Xbox Ultimate Game Pass subscription where you get it for free?



**Wouldn't** a Subscription Service you're already paying for be a great place to get the new version of a sports game and instead of getting a one-time payment for a new game, you get constant revenue every month from gamers subscribing to your service! Do you think Microsoft is losing money every month by not making gamers for full retail on their Day 1 releases on Game Pass? According to reports, through 2021 Microsoft now has almost 30,000,000 subscribers to Game for a monthly revenue of almost \$450,000,000. Even EA only got a fraction of that, it would make all of their sports games profitable without having to charge full price. Every gamer subscribes to something if they have a console like PlayStation

Plus or Xbox game pass and before that Xbox Live. It was a way for gaming companies to make constant Revenue every month because some guy playing online required a subscription service and of course he allowed them to give away older games and still make money off of them. It's a good business practice to constantly bring in revenue on a current and back catalog of games. Wouldn't sports game developers find value in something like that when it comes to their new games and if gamers are already paying for the subscription service it makes them not feel cheated when we basically pay full price for the same version of the game we got last year.

**Perhaps** it's time to really consider the true value of a sports game and how to best maximize profits without cheating gamers by making them pay for the same version they played last year. It's understandable that if you make such improvements every four years on a video game that you would have to charge full price for that, but wouldn't a season pass type system work better for the other years or a subscription service. In all the years that we've been playing sports games the biggest improvements we've seen is when developers go to a new engine that improves the gameplay or graphics. When you've developed the sports game for the next generation of consoles, that doesn't happen every year. It's more like every 7 years. There has to be a better way to get the most out of new versions of sports games and not feel like gamers are getting screwed by overpaying for them when your lack of improvement in the current version that isn't worth full price! Nobody can deny the impact that Electronic Arts had on the sports Video Game World or the

competition from 2K Sports when it forced gaming developers to improve their games in the spirit of competition, that's capitalism at its best. That's the free market forcing companies to make better products like a Samsung Smartphone versus an iPhone. But if gaming companies still feel the need to charge gamers full price for games that are almost carbon copies of their previous versions, then at the end of the day doesn't that just make them "money grabbing whores" who don't really care about the consumers? Is it really a good business practice to put out below average games or ones that are just shitty to begin with because you know that people will buy them simply because it's the next game in the Franchise? We'll talk about Call of Duty in our next magazine issue? We pose a lot of questions about what the future should be for sports games. We may not agree on the details, but the one thing all gamers agree on is it could always be better and it shouldn't be about the bottom line with developers. It should be the happiness of your consumers and making the best product that you can. EA and 2K both declined to comment when our questions were posed if there was a better way to charge for their sports games and we expected that. But the questions we posed are for the consumers because we are the ones that buy the product.



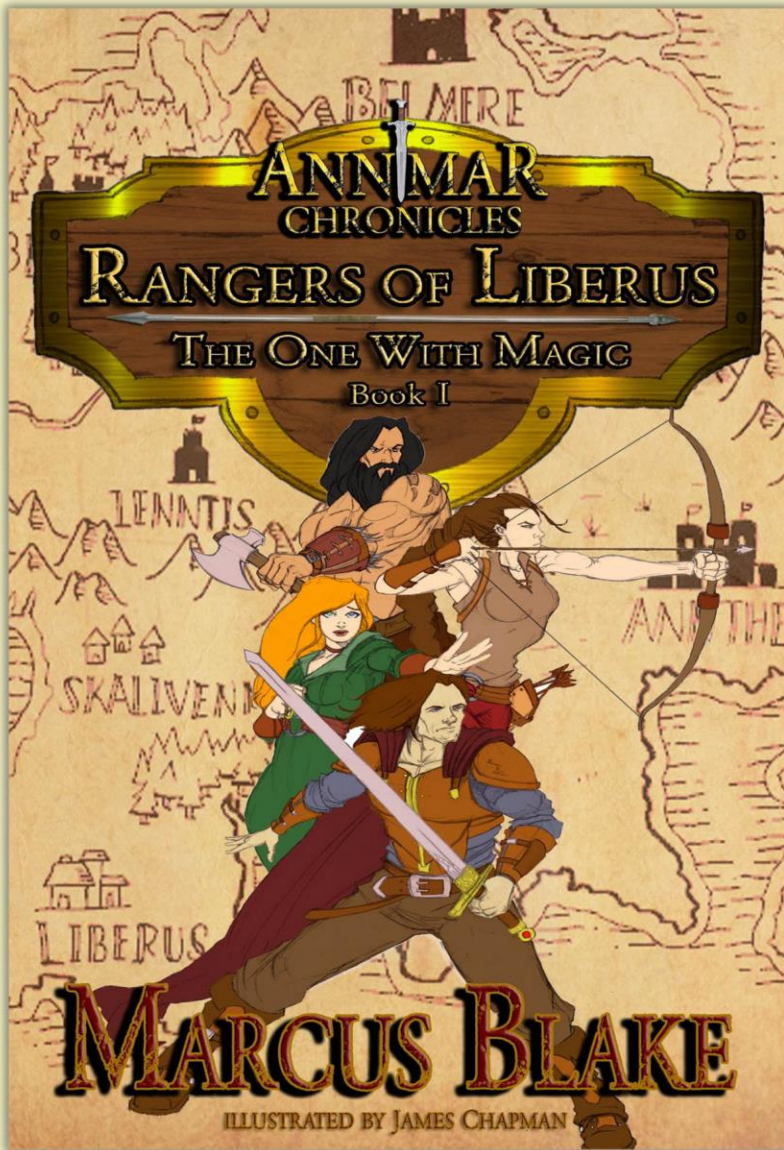
We should be happy with our purchase and if we're not then we can always revolt and never buy a product from that game developer again, hitting them in their pocketbook. We wonder what would happen if for one year nobody bought a new version of a sports game and continued to play last year's version, what kind of revolution would that be! Maybe EA and 2K Sports as well as the San Diego Studio should come up with a better way of buying their products and not gouging consumers with the same old tiresome product. We offer two solutions. Maybe gamers only pay the retail price every four years and the other years just pay for a Season Pass or DLC with new

content or release new games Day 1 on subscription services like Ultimate Game Pass or EA Play. The Improvement of yearly versions of sports games should be better! It must be better or the price should be better! Maybe there needs to be another gaming developer that makes sports games and does what 2K Sports did in 2005 by making the same football game at a cheaper price. Perhaps, that's the real future of sports games, honest and fair competition in the marketplace. And there is whole other debate we can have about Fighting Games and why we have not had a boxing game since 2009 or why EA keeps making the same UFC game every year...then again this EA making the same thing again and again while acting like its

new is kind of EA's forte. But if fair competition in the marketplace is not going to happen and companies like EA and 2K Sports and the San Diego Studio can't make significant changes in their sports games from year to year, there should be a revolt from consumers. We've offered solutions that most gamers will agree with and hopefully these companies will heed our advice in order to make the best product available at the best price. If not, then last year's version of Madden, NBA2K, NHL, and FIFA will do just fine, and we don't have to waste our money on the new version that's falsely packaged as something new! Give gamers a reason to pay full price and we will, but until then... *F@#k No!*



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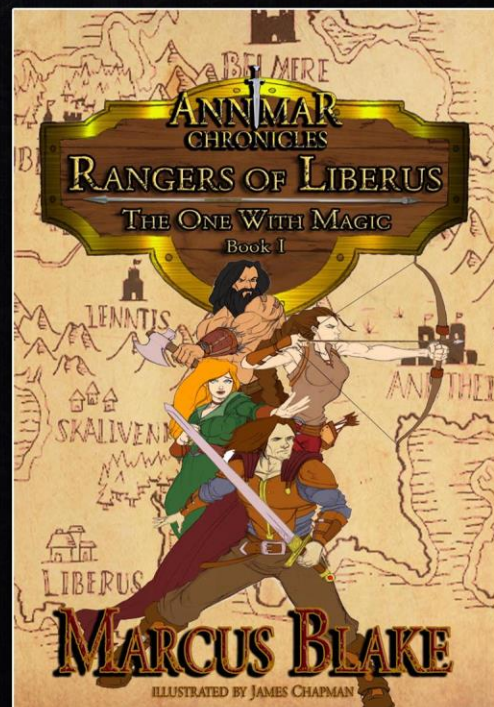
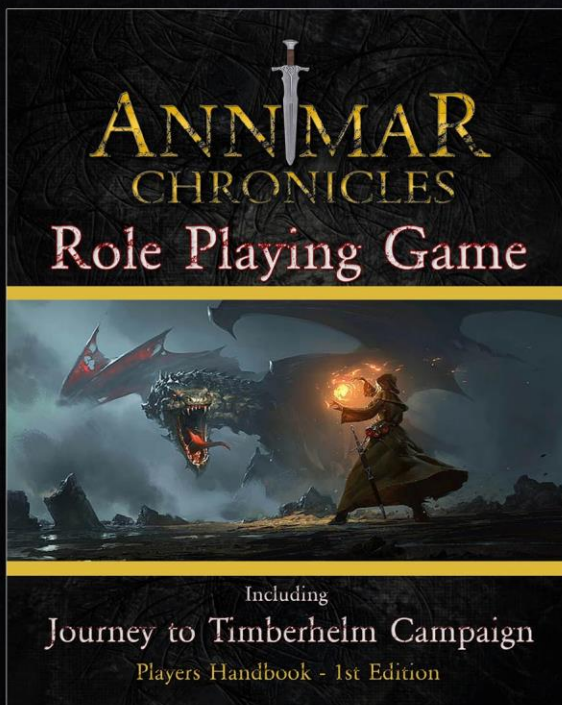
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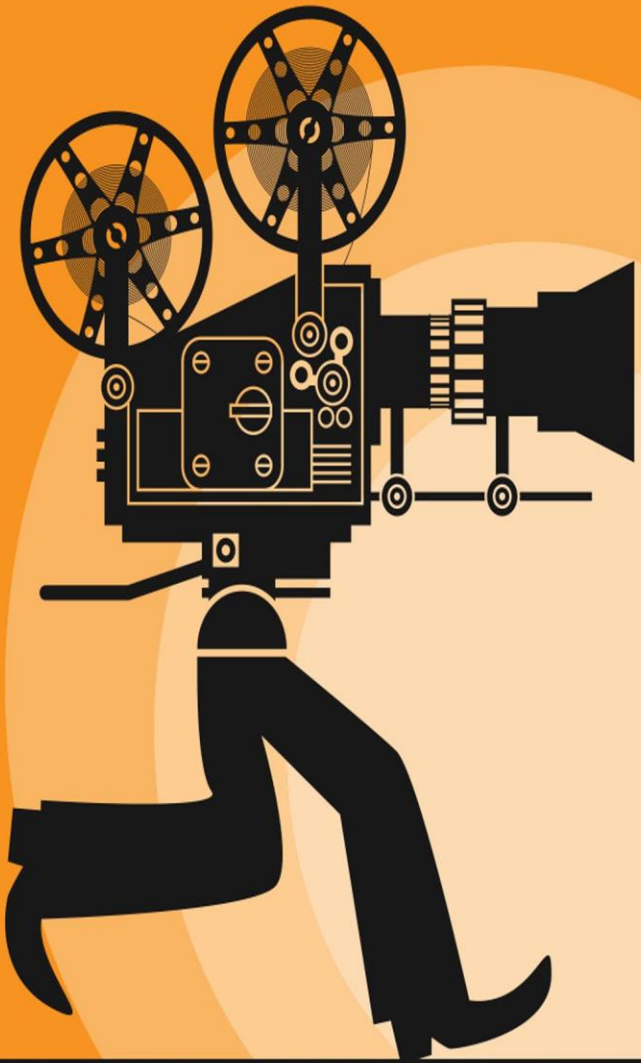
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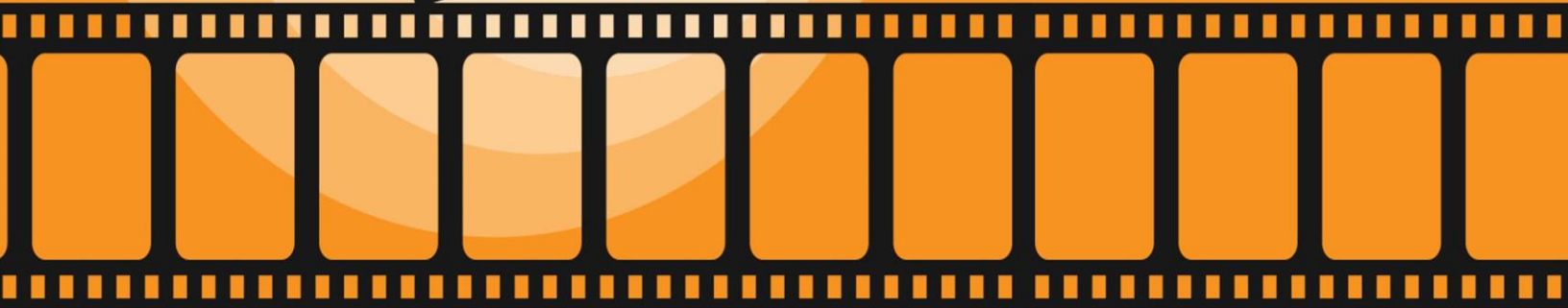
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# ‘Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 3’: Will Poulter To Play Adam Warlock In Next Installment Of Marvel Franchise



After teasing his appearance at the end of *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, Adam Warlock looks ready to join the [Marvel](#) Cinematic Universe in the next installment of the hit franchise. Sources tell Deadline that [Will Poulter](#) has landed the role of Warlock in Marvel’s anticipated sequel. James Gunn is returning to direct, with Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige

producing. Like with any Marvel film, details behind the plot are being kept under lock and key. Production is expected to start in November. The character was first teased in a post-credit scene of *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, when Ayesha, played by Elizabeth Debicki, unveils to her chambermaid the perfect Sovereign she has created to help destroy the Guardians once and for all. Ever since that scene, fans have waited patiently to see who would ultimately play that character, with their wishes now granted. Sources say Gunn and execs began their lengthy search for the person who would be playing Warlock at the end of August, with Poulter meeting along with several other actors for the coveted part.

As it is common with any major Marvel property, execs and Gunn took their time with



the role given how excited fans were when it was first teased. In the end, Poulter’s test was too good to pass up. Best known for roles in *The Revenant* and *Detroit*, Poulter has been busy on the TV front, most recently appearing in the acclaimed Amazon miniseries *The Underground Railroad*. He next can be seen in Hulu’s limited series *Dopesick*.

Reported by [Deadline.com](#)

# HBO Max Acquires Revelations Entertainment’s ‘The Killing Of Kenneth Chamberlain’ For Streaming



Following the Gravitas Ventures day and date theatrical release, HBO Max has picked up exclusive streaming rights to the award-winning, critically-acclaimed film *The Killing of Kenneth Chamberlain*. The movie will stream on Nov. 19, the ten-year anniversary of Kenneth Chamberlain, Sr.’s Death. The David Midell directed movie is based on the true events of an elderly African American veteran with bipolar disorder who is killed by the White Plains, NY police during a welfare check after his medical alert is accidentally activated. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances and the overly aggressive

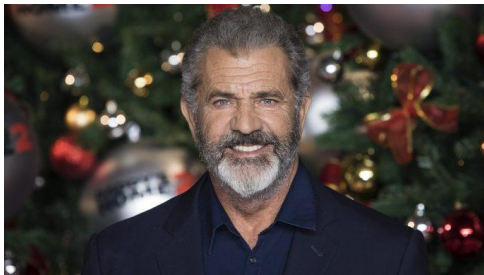
policing tactics that make the news on an all-too-frequent basis, the life of Kenneth Chamberlain Sr. ended at the hands of those who were sworn to “protect and serve.” Pic is produced by Midell and Enrico Natale of Redbird Entertainment, and executive produced by Lori McCreary, Morgan Freeman and Gary Lucchesi of Revelations Entertainment, along with Sharad Chib, Chris Paladino and Milan Chakraborty of Marginal MediaWorks. “Our goal all along has been to ask important questions about how our criminal justice system treats people of color, people in low-income areas, and people living with mental health challenges,” Midell says. “I always say it’s bigger than my dad,” Kenneth Chamberlain Jr. added. “It’s about all the lives that have been lost in this pandemic of killing black men, women and children. And I just hope that the film is... going to force a discussion.” Producing partners Freeman and McCreary were incensed that the film could not find distribution, and immediately offered to help by using Freeman’s voice and Revelations’

brand to help amplify the story. “We simply could not stand by and see this film ignored. Kenneth Chamberlain Sr.’s story, whose death in 2011 was largely ignored by the national media, deserves to be known by the world,” said Freeman and McCreary. The movie comes at an important time in the national conversation about systemic racism and is a searing example of law enforcement’s sometimes callous and cruel treatment of people of color, echoing recent high-profile incidents involving George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, among countless others. *The Killing of Kenneth Chamberlain* made its world premiere at the Austin Film Festival and won the Audience Award and the Narrative Jury Award there. At the Urbanworld Film Festival last year, it claimed the Jury Award for best US Narrative, and continued winning at festivals, and led to an independent Spirit Award Nomination for Midell in the Someone to Watch category.

Reported by [Deadline.com](#)



# Mel Gibson To Star In Action Thriller 'Hot Seat'



Mel Gibson is back in hero mode for *Hot Seat*, a thriller he'll star in with production to begin November 1 in New Mexico. The Lionsgate company Grindstone Entertainment will handle North America distribution, and Highland Film Group is handling

foreign sales. James Cullen Bressack will direct. He just helmed *Fortress* with Murray and Bruce Willis, which is in post. Randall Emmett and George Furla are producing with Bressack. The pic is based on a story by Leon Langford & Collin Watts. Gary Raskin and Alastair Burlingham will be exec producers and are co-financing. Lionsgate is releasing through Emmett and Furla's long term deal there. In *Hot Seat*, an ex-hacker is forced to break into high-level banking institutions by an anonymous man who planted a bomb under his chair at his office. Gibson plays the man who must try to penetrate the booby-trapped

building to get the young man off the hot seat. Emmett has been transitioning to director after his *Midnight in the Switchgrass* debut, and he is in post on *Wash Me in the River*, which stars Robert De Niro, John Malkovich and Jack Huston. Emmett and Furla were producers on *The Irishman*, *Silence* and *Lone Survivor*. "This is our third movie with Mel and we couldn't be happier to continue the relationship with such an iconic and exceptional artist," said Emmett and Furla.

Reported by Deadline.com



# Hope Davis, Michael Gandolfini, Liza Koshy & Others Round Out Cast Of Studiocanal & New Yorker Studios' 'CAT PERSON'



Hope Davis, Michael Gandolfini, Liza Koshy, Fred Melamed, Isaac Powell, Isabella Rossellini and Donald Elise Watkins have joined the cast of Susanna

Fogel's psychological thriller *Cat Person* for Studiocanal and New Yorker Studios. They will co-star opposite the previously announced Nicholas Braun, Emilia Jones and Geraldine Viswanathan. Production starts today. The pic is based on the short story by Kristen Roupenian, published in *The New Yorker* in 2017 to worldwide acclaim and was the year's most downloaded fiction published in magazine and one of the most widely read pieces of that year overall. The story follows the brief relationship between Margot (Jones), a 20-year-old sophomore

college student, and Robert (Braun), an older man who is a regular at the movie theater where Margot works. Fogel will direct, with Michelle Ashford penning the script. It will be produced by Jeremy Steckler and New Yorker Studios' Helen Estabrook. Fogel, Ashford, Daniel Hank and Gino Falsetto will executive produce. Studiocanal is fully financing and handling worldwide sales.

Reported by Deadline.com

# Marvel Movie Shifts: 'Doctor Strange 2' To Kick Off Summer 2022, 'Thor: Love And Thunder' Heads To July & More



As Disney/Marvel's *Eternals* is being aggressively buzzed to possibly open at \$100 million, and *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Marvel's co-production with Sony, to open even higher, Disney has just shifted its entire Marvel movie theatrical schedule for 2022 and beyond. Exhibition, no need to be alarmed: This has nothing to do with a change in distribution strategy for these films, I'm informed. There's no Disney+ theatrical day-and-date going on, nor are Disney execs immediately concerned about the future of the global marketplace. It's all on account of a domino effect going on with production and filmmakers. Some titles are contending with finishing scenarios while others are in production. This is how Disney is solving it, and when you come to think of it, most of the

dates were already reserved by the studio for Marvel fare; they're just moving titles from one slot to the next. Even better, the *Indiana Jones* sequel, which was sitting on the same release date as Warner Bros/DC's *Black Adam* next year (on July 29, 2022), now moves to June 30, 2023. That's Independence Day weekend, where Universal already has an untitled Illumination movie. Sam Raimi's *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* will now kick off summer 2022 on May 6 instead of opening on March 25, 2022. That will push Taika Waititi's *Thor: Love and Thunder* from that summer kickoff date to July 8, 2022. The only other movie opening against *Doctor Strange 2* on May 6 is Focus Features' *Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris*, starring Lesley Manville. No rival studio event films are currently dated against *Thor: Love & Thunder* on its new date. The moves will push *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* from Ryan Coogler off its date to November 11, 2022. The movie is currently shooting in Atlanta and will wrap sometime late next month. *Black Panther 2* on its new date is the weekend after Warner Bros/DC's *The Flash*, which just dropped a sneak peek during

the studio's DC FanDome over the weekend. Also opening in that preceding November 4-6 weekend is Paramount's Bee Gees feature and 20th Century Studios' untitled David O. Russell movie. *Black Panther 2* knocks *The Marvels* from filmmaker Nia DaCosta from November 11 next year to February 17, 2023. No other tentpoles are dated against it. This will then push *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* from that date to July 28, 2023. No competition for *Ant-Man 3* on its new date, either. Both *The Marvels* and *Ant-Man 3* are in production. The only Marvel movie sticking to its release date is *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, which is currently set to kick off summer 2023 on May 5. There's another untitled Marvel movie which Disney is moving from November 10, 2023 to November 3, 2023. Meanwhile, Disney has scrubbed a live-action title previously set for July 14, 2023 as well as an untitled Marvel movie on October 6, 2023. Also, an untitled 20th Century Studios movie dated on October 20, 2023 is no longer on the schedule.

Reported by Deadline.com

## 'BATGIRL': BRENDAN FRASER TO PLAY VILLAIN IN NEW WARNER BROS AND DC PIC STARRING LESLIE GRACE



Brendan Fraser is set to join Leslie Grace in Warner Bros and DC Films' *Batgirl*. Although not confirmed, sources believe Fraser would play the supervillain Firefly in the pic. Jacob Scipio also recently joined the cast, with Grace on board to play Barbara Gordon, aka Batgirl. *Bad Boys for Life* directors Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah are helming. The film will bow on HBO Max, marking one of the first major DC

properties to debut exclusively on the streamer. Christina Hodson penned the script with Kristin Burr producing. While plot details are under wraps, it is known that Barbara Gordon, the daughter of Commissioner Gordon, will be the character behind the cape in this version. Gordon is the most established version of the Batgirl character and was first introduced in 1961 as Betty Kane.



Fraser, the former *Mummy* star, has had quite the resurgence in 2021 that began with landing the lead role in Darren Aronofsky's next film *The Whale*. After wrapping production on that, Martin Scorsese cast him for a key role in his next film *Killers of the Flower Moon*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro. He was also recently seen in Steven Soderbergh's *No Sudden Move*.

Reported by Deadline.com

## "Dune: Part 1" Review by Julie Jones



While there aren't a lot of films I get excited about anymore, I know that I'm not alone in my excitement for a new Dune. There were a lot of attempts to bring the books to the big screen, but only a few are worth

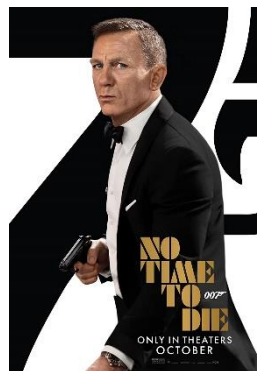
mentioning. Of course, this leaves the question of whether the film is worth the time and anticipation. If you have never read the book, Dune is a film that is set in a universe that shows us different planets, each with a Duke to oversee them. There are different families that rule under an Emperor and wielders of magic in different forms that guide and assist in the path they take to achieve their goals. Of course, you can't have a system like this without politics and families that thrive for gain. We follow Paul while he is groomed to be the next Duke and learn more about the politics of the empire they serve. This film is based on a series of books, but has also been made into a number of films previously. Some of which have gained a cult following and others that have failed miserably.

While there is a lot left to be desired in the film, I think this is because it is laying the groundwork for what comes next. As we have seen in Dune movies before, what happens before Paul joins the Fremen is mostly what you need to know about the outside world and the problems within it. So, while I think that the film is a tad lackluster, I understand why and that doesn't mean for Part 1, it's all that bad. I also understand that it's the fan in me that wants to see the rest of it and can't wait to see how it is portrayed. The acting in this film is pretty good. I thought Timothee Chalamet did a good job as Paul and Rebecca Ferguson gave Lady Jessica a strong adaptation. While I usually love Oscar Isaac, I thought he fell a little flat. I couldn't stand Zendaya, though I have never had high expectations of her as an actress. She tends to take moody and brooding to a caricature and it is pretty distracting. This film is no different. I understood that she was meant to be standoffish, but she was less of a guarded strong woman and more of a sulking teenager who didn't get a car for her birthday. Maybe she'll be better in Part 2

where we get to see more of her character. I did love Jason Momoa as Duncan Idaho and Josh Brolin as Gurney Halleck, but Jason's lack of facial hair was incredibly distracting. Fair warning ladies, if you think Jason Momoa is hot. Dave Bautista might have the look of Glossu Rabban, but his acting was distracting as well. He's been better in other films. The film direction was good, even though there was nothing new or innovative. I thought the style was strong and seamless, supporting the dialogue and storyline with good structure. The cinematography, again nothing new, was wonderful. There were so many artistic frames that I wasn't sure how they chose the poster or why there weren't more stills showcasing it. The aesthetics were perfect from a modern interpretation that isn't overdone. So many times we see sci-fi movies that exhibit aesthetic theory that almost seems over the top. This was a much sleeker and efficient interpretation and I thought it was perfect for a movie like this. The story isn't anything new, it is the same as previous films and the book is to thank for that. I did think that there were some parts that weren't in previous versions that were ok, but nothing that derived or added to the story. But I will have to watch the older versions and rewatch this one before I can decide how I feel about it. Overall, I thought it was good. It wasn't amazing, but it wasn't meant to be. It is the first part and this is where we learn, not where the magic happens. It is a good representation from what I can remember of the books, but I am not the huge fan some are. While it wasn't horrible, I do expect it will get better, and can't wait to see the next one! I give it an eight overall, but am expecting the next will be higher than that. It is definitely worth seeing, whether you think you will like it or not. Whether you see it now or wait to watch it before the next one, is another matter. I say watch it now and watch it again before the next! Remember that the more we support movies like this, the more of them we will get!

**Final Grade: 8/10 (Good)**

## No Time to Die Review by Alex Moore



*We all began* somewhere, did we not? For some who are close to me, but a few years older, it started significantly sooner. For example, when I once asked my uncle what his first James Bond

experience on the big screen was, he told me that it was 1983's "Octopussy." Despite the two of us being just six years apart in age, it was not 1989's "A License to Kill" that I saw first. Rather, some eight years later, it came to me in the form of "Tomorrow Never Dies." Certainly, there are specific moments from that movie which stand out, but overall, it was not bad a horrible first time, nor was "Octopussy" for others, I am sure.

However, I did not really begin to devote significant energy to the 007 films until the mid-2000s. I was an undergrad in college and I was looking for new experiences with the time extra time I had to kill. No, it did not begin with 2006's "Casino Royale (CR)," but I eventually made my way to it and from that point, there was no turning back. I had, indeed, become a full-fledged fan of the franchise. While the Daniel Craig era started out with a bang and something of a reboot, it continued onward with the uninspired "Quantum of Solace (QOS)" and shot back upward with "Skyfall." "Spectre" was not the same, steep decline as "QOS" was to "CR," but it was still a bit of a drop off. So, after years of delay, where would that leave us? The 25<sup>th</sup> entry is called "No Time to Die (NTTD)" and if you think that you have seen enough of a departure from the James Bond predecessors, get ready to rethink that, completely...

The opening segment goes about how you would expect any Bond film to start, although the first couple of Craig's movies did not start in the traditional fashion. Still, for this one, there was a slightly different variation: no blood dropping down over the gun barrel. This introductory sequence might be the lengthiest in the whole franchise, as well. It contained a couple of references to former 007 stories, most notably "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," but also "For Your Eyes Only." Those two movies had a link, as well, so it kind of makes sense. Above all else, we are reintroduced to the romance between James Bond and Madeleine Swann, played again by Lea Seydoux ("Oh Mercy!"). The new adversarial muscle, Primo, played by Dali Benssalah, also makes an appearance. Trust me, he gets quite annoying and goes out satisfactorily. Insert a famous James Bond one-liner.

One thing that makes "NTTD" unique is its level of backstory for characters not named James Bond. Madeleine has a history that makes her who she is in the present day and it includes a deep, dark secret that not even 007 knows about, right off. It helps to tie her persona along with that of Bond. In other words, they are "two of a kind;" they "move as one." Yes, that was a reference to another James Bond film.

Beyond all this, the backstory connects our new arch-villain; the classic, brainy villain, that is. Lyutsifer Safin, played by Rami Malek ("The Little Things"). If you like the classic villains of the 007 franchise, then he will suffice, but some might consider his performance bland. I did not, however. His dramatic delivery worked within the framework of the character he was trying to convey, in my view.

Pretty much all of the people you became familiar with in "Skyfall" and "Spectre" have returned to reprise their respective roles, including: Ben Whishaw ("Surge") as Q, Naomie Harris ("Venom: Let There Be Carnage") as Eve Money Penny, Christoph Waltz ("Rifkin's Festival") as Ernst Stavro Blofeld and Ralph Fiennes ("Doolittle") as M. Returning for the first time since "QOS" is Jeffrey Wright ("The Goldfinch") as Fenix Lighter. I might add that Jeffrey Wright has set a new record for personal appearances playing this character. I think it is well-deserved, to be perfectly honest.

Probably the most interesting new character, at least for the side of the team of protagonists, is the new 00 agent, named Nomi, who is played by Lashana Lynch ("Captain Marvel"). I enjoyed her performance because there was no major maneuver to point out that she is anything other than just whom she is in the role. That adds confidence to the character, which is just what the character should be. She got to drive a very cool car and I badly want those shades she was sporting while in that car, I do not mind saying.

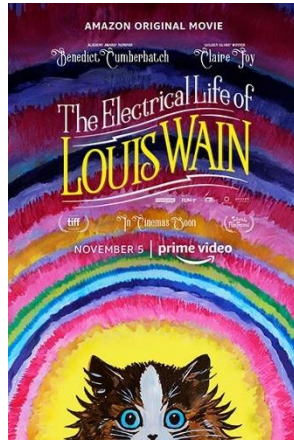
Allow me to compare and contrast this era closer to the previous one, "Die Another Day (DAD)." This is a far superior film, simply put. Both movies made a special attempt to make references and pay homage to other films within the franchise, but this execution did not feel forced. The story had much greater depth without taking itself too seriously. When "DAD" was released, it felt as though the franchise had run out of ideas, which is probably why we got a total reboot a few years later. The grittier nature of Craig's delivery, so reminiscent of that of Timothy Dalton is still preferential, but be aware that in the next rendition, we will likely get something campier and lighter. That might not be a bad thing. Sean Connery and Roger Moore did fine with that, after all.

Who knows when we will get the 26<sup>th</sup> installment? Lord knows we've had a slow and drag-it-out pace for several years now. I was not into the fandom back when the movies were churning out nearly every other year, but I can imagine that it would make a good fan feel very spoiled. Frankly, I am grateful that James Bond still lives on in our

present day and is still slated to continue. Dare I say, I do not want things to change too dramatically, but even if they do, I will likely never lose interest in the character or the films, on the whole. I will always come back for more and I would expect that my fellow fans will, too. "No Time to Die" puts a very definitive marker on the backside of the Daniel Craig era. It was a good era and the future variants will have extremely large shoes to fill. I am ready to see that flesh out...

**Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)**

## **"The Electrical Life of Louis Wain"** Review by Chloe James



*Admittedly, I sometimes have a hard time sitting down to watch a biopic. Not that I don't love to learn about the lives of various interesting people throughout history. I really can't say what it is. Perhaps more often than*

*not, I want to watch something not based in reality, most likely to escape from my own. But if a biopic is not heavily based in reality, is it really worth watching? Another issue I have is...well let's face it. Interesting people throughout history usually have sad, difficult lives. It's either what drives them to become what they are, or is a result of their fame. And I, being a giant crybaby with most media, don't always feel like having a sob fest. So honestly, Amazon Studio's latest production, *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain*, already has a few things going against it for me. I'm also ashamed to say, I've never even heard of Louis Wain. Not wanting any spoilers about the events of his life right before I watched this film, I didn't look up anything about him beforehand either.*

It turns out that Louis Wain (Benedict Cumberbatch) was a Victorian artist best known for his charming anamorphic cat drawings. The film begins in Wain's early 20's when he was an up and coming (if not already highly eccentric) artist supporting his five sisters as the head of his household. When he meets his future wife Emily (Claire Foy) who as employed as a governess for his family, he quickly finds the inspiration for his lifelong favorite subject matter: cats.

Unfortunately, highly eccentric may be an understatement for Wain, as his unique worldview was not well accepted during his lifetime. The film was directed by Will Sharpe, a relative newcomer for feature length cinema.

You better believe that as soon as I finished watching this movie, I immediately went to Google Louis Wain to see how accurate this film got it. And while I'm no historian of any sort, it seems from what I've read, the film got most of the details about Wain's life fairly close. I guess that's the biggest clue that this was a successful biopic: going from knowing nothing about the subject matter before watching it, to actually taking the time to learn more afterwards.

A highly effective tool that my favorite biopics often use is making us, the audience, see the world from the perspective of the subject matter. While this is nothing new or revolutionary at this point, it's still appreciated, especially for films about people who would be otherwise hard to understand how they think. Without giving too much away, Wain was a man who DEFINITELY needed this approach for film made about him. Because he was an artist, some of the more beautiful moments of his life were represented absolutely gorgeous painting-like scenes. Yet because of his increasingly more questionable state of sanity, there was also a good dose of reality bending, and even somewhat disturbing moments. Even at it's most disturbing, however, there's an aesthetically pleasing quality to this picture that I really appreciate. After all, many biopics aren't exactly colorful or interesting on the eyes.

Benedict Cumberbatch's performance was once again brilliant, sadly almost predictably so. While I've loved him in everything I've ever seen him in, he really get's typecast as the misunderstood, neurodivergent genius at this point. I can at least say, his performance as Wain was certainly different from his other roles of that nature. As nuanced of an actor as he is, however, at the end of the day it's no longer anything new or revolutionary to see Cumberbatch like this. The rest of the cast was delightful, from Claire Foy's quirky performance as Wain's wife Emily, to his not-so-easy to handle five younger sisters. My Nick Cave inner fangirl screamed a little bit as he also plays a small cameo. As much as I felt hesitant in watching *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain*, I'm actually really thankful I did. As always, I'm glad to learn about someone's life, doubly so if that someone was an artist. But even more than that, it's refreshing to see a biopic that takes a few risks, and was not only informative, but

visually stimulating. Unfortunately, it didn't stop me from crying like a baby and hugging my cats afterwards, but I guess I can't have everything.

**Final Grade: 8/10 (Good)**

## The Last Duel

Review by Alex Moore



*It has been* awhile since I looked forward to an upcoming feature film at the movie theater. One reason for that is the fact that I rarely take a peek at any movie before I am about to see it. While that might sound like

a strange thing to do, when you are routinely seeing films primarily for the sake of writing a review, it does not matter nearly as much to know what you are about to see... aside from the title, so that you can check in at the proper table. However, I am not always able to see the movie in advance. When this occurs, seeing that film the old-fashioned way is where it is at. I just happened to be watching the latest 007 movie when I saw a slew of upcoming attractions. One, which really stood out, was the latest offering from world-renowned filmmaker, Ridley Scott. If you are not familiar with any of his work, please change that, if you can.

Scott has dabbled in a number of different types of movies, including: Science Fiction, Horror, Action and Drama, even Dark Comedy, but perhaps a sub-genre that has been overlooked, somewhat, amidst is film credentials, is that of true stories based on books. "The Last Duel" is the latest such example and it seemed perfect for a director like Scott before it was even conceived. The process has been an arduous one, beginning with the announcement of the movie adaptation of Eric Jager's book, back in 2015, and a stalled completion, dating back to 2019. The time for release is finally here, but is it worth the wait? The story begins in 1386, in the famed and legendary city of Paris, France, though we will only be here for a short time, throughout the film. Two men are about to begin a duel, but not just any duel; it is a duel to the death and they used to be not just good friends, but brothers in battle. So what happened between them?

On the one hand, we have Matt Damon ("Ford v Ferrari") as Sir Jean de Carrouges; a knight. On the other hand, there is Adam Driver ("Annette") as Jacques Le Gris, a fellow squire. Just nine years prior, they served together in the Caroline War. Count Pierre d'Alencon, played by Ben Affleck ("The Way Back"), is connected to the two of them, but they have very different relationships. Carrouges does not see eye-to-eye with the Count, but Gris is quite chummy with him and that goes a very long ways, as you will discover, on down the road. What it seems to come down to for Gris, in connection with Carrouges, is the loyalty between friends versus the rule of law, at least in the beginning. A few years later, Carrouges encounters a young lady of great distinction, albeit her ties are to a man that he also does not care for. Nevertheless, he becomes, at the very least, infatuated with Marguerite, played by Jodie Comer ("Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker"), and soon, the two are wed, by the Catholic Church. You will notice the great attention to detail carried out in the ceremonies. This becomes an important piece of the equation sometime later in the story.

Where things become dicey is a combination of things. One man takes land as an inheritance and the other feels that land was to belong to him. Then, an unspeakable act takes place between one man and the wife of the other and now, it is her word against his and the times are not kind to women, to say the least. So, when the dust settles, only one man shall remain standing, so to speak... or one man may fall, as well as his wife, as a result. Just try and figure out who the real hero is, in the end. It is not as simple as it might seem.

Beyond the great technical aspects of this film (the set designs, costumes and artistic direction, among other notable qualities) is the way in which the story is told. Instead of trying to tell each, prominent character's story in a linear fashion, the accounts are all told separately, so that we can see what the truth is, based on perspectives and intentions. Although, by the third chapter, everything starts to feel a bit repetitive, it begins in a distinctly different manner and it is vital to the whole film. Look for it within the title sequence, please, and take mental notes of the slight differences within the characters' expressions and words and emotions, for they all are key to the story, altogether.

"The Last Duel" has provided us with an important subject to (keep) exploring. It occurred at a time when so much was different, compared to the world around us today, yet some things have not changed

nearly as much as we may think. You might even notice yourself making assumptions before you have seen the whole story and realize why that can be such a critical mistake. In that fashion, this is a learning experience, which mostly unfolds without being too preachy or overly contentious, though it is not perfect, either. How much does that impact the overall experience? To me, not enough to discourage the movie from anyone who might be intrigued to view it. I did not feel offended or attacked. Rather, I felt enlightened, to a degree. If we do not see a certain amount of positive attention awarded to this movie as the year draws to a close, I will gladly and openly reconsider my initial thoughts, but for now, I rank this film as a very good effort and execution, elevated to greatness by the importance of the topics and themes. At the very least, it is well-crafted by a master of moviemaking and a phenomenal cast. That much cannot be denied or altered, as far as I am concerned.

**Final Grade: 9/10 (Great)**

## Halloween Kills

Review by Chloe James



*There is a feeling* you get around October. I can't really explain it. It's when that first bit of chill hits the air — a much welcome reprieve for anyone in the South who've been heat blasted for the past four months. It's when you see the sad shells of

now closed down establishments be converted into Halloween stores. It's when you see the bags of mixed fun sized candy on sale, (as you wonder to yourself: "I'm an adult dammit, what's stopping me from buying it and eating it myself?") Finally, combined with all this, it's the feeling I personally get after watching a good slasher film. It's a feeling of a simpler time, a type of nostalgia that cannot be described. One of the series that best represents the very essence of this feeling is *Halloween*, and I always feel it's going to be an especially great Halloween any year another entry in the series is released.

*Halloween Kills* starts almost as soon as it's predecessor ended, but not quite. It starts at a closer look at Deputy Hawkins (Will Patton) attempted murder near the end of the 2018 film which then takes us on a great

extended look at Haddonfield in 1978 that we didn't see in the original film. After the main credits, we progress. Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) is suffering from a stab wound in the stomach from Michael Myers and needs medical attention. Her daughter and granddaughter (Judy Greer and Andi Matichak, respectively) are mourning the death of Ray from the previous film. Tommy Doyle (portrayed by Anthony Michael Hall in this film) tells the town how he's grown up after being babysat by Laurie in the original film and surviving a Michael Myers attack because of her. All of this is setting up for a massively large bloodbath (the largest one in franchise history) and an almost bigger puddle of regret.

Like the 2018 film, *Halloween Kills* was directed by David Gordon Green (*Pineapple Express*, *Your Highness*) and written by the director and Danny McBride with Scott Teems (*Rectify*) replacing Jeff Fradley as co-writer from the previous film. Save for Jeff Fradley, almost everyone from the first sequel came back for the second. With the inclusion of adult Tommy Doyle; which as much as I love Anthony Michael Hall, I kinda wish they got Paul Rudd who played him in *The Curse of Michael Myers* to continue references; they definitely wanted to connect the fine character details of the 1978 Haddonfield while reminding audiences that this is a small town where most people don't leave. Even after a murderous rampage from a superhuman Shape. We also got some connections to *Halloween II* even though it was decanonized, and *Halloween III* which was never canon since it didn't have Michael Myers in it. In comparison to its most recent predecessor? I'd say *Halloween* (2018) is a better film in general, as it has decent character development for a slasher and some lovely sincerity. But as a *Halloween* movie, *Halloween Kills* felt much more on point. Despite this film having some rough dialogue and canned acting, it struck that nerve. It sent me back to my adolescent years, watching creature features on "Movie Macabre" hosted by Elvira or "MonsterVision" hosted by Joe Bob Briggs. I'm riding that halloween high while writing this. While the 2018 film had more heart and was probably a better film on the whole, this film felt more like a Halloween film. I don't necessarily mean that in connection with the *Halloween* franchise, I mean that it feels like that holiday. I can really understand with this movie why people go in hoards every year to see horror film after horror film, despite most of them being really nothing new. Like me, they are chasing that special feeling that only October, and some good ol' fashioned scares can bring.

Thankfully, *Halloween Kills* is exactly what we need.

**Final Grade: 7/10 (Okay)**

## Hard Luck Love Song

Review by Marcus Blake



### I don't know

I ever watched a movie that was simply based on a song, that is until now. But, I had the pleasure of watching an indie film called *Hard Luck Love Song* which is based on a

Todd Snyder song called *Just Like Old Times*. It's about a troubadour down on his luck who stumbles back into the life of the girl he's always loved. Sounds like a country song, doesn't it?

However, the title of the movie is perfect for this kind of love affair, and I think it's true of all people where you find that one great love and somehow you just stumble back into their lives time and time again. Maybe you can never truly be together except for short periods of time, but you always find your way back to each other. And maybe the only way you can perfectly explain that kind of story is through music. At first, I thought it was just some typical love story about finding the girl that got away, but I was wrong and all the happy for it. This movie is so much more than just a love story, but about two lost souls trying to find each other again and a world where life never truly worked out the way they thought, but they're one constant is always finding each other.

The story is about Jesse and Carla. Two sweethearts who grew up with each other and have been through hard times together. And never seems to truly work out for them, but they always find each other. He wants to be a musician living the life of a troubadour through the music he creates that he wishes was bigger than him and the legend he seems to make for himself. But he's really more of a pool Hustler just getting by from one dingy motel to the next. She's a bartender and a part-time sex worker just trying to make ends meet. Their life is wrapped up in all of the good times they once had and keep trying to have, while somehow trying to make it work for good. What I really love about this

movie is the music itself. I feel like the music is the main character and their lives are seen through the music or at least the music makes their lives seem more perfect than they really are. It almost feels like you are watching a music video that's more poetic and true about how life really is. It's a mixed bag of a good narrative and a music video, almost dreamlike if you will, but that's how it's supposed to be. This is what makes the story better. This movie can seem familiar if you have ever lived in the darker underbelly of American society while trying to make ends meet. But what truly drives this movie is the performances, especially that of Michael Dorman and Sophia Bush, the two leads that show off perfect chemistry on the screen. The best parts of this movie are their scenes together as they struggle with the good and the bad of their relationship well finding that raw honesty with each other that only Lovers can have. The music they make together adds another layer to the greatness of the film and then you throw in the pool hustling theme that will take you right back to the movie *The Hustler* and *The Color of Money*. These characters love, they fight, they make music, and they save each other in more ways than one. That's the beautiful side of this film.

I don't really have too many critiques. I feel like the pacing is very good, and this movie is told in a perfect amount of time. But as much as we connect to these two main characters, I feel like we're always wanting more. We want to know more about them and their history, it's natural. Their story is great, but I kind of wish for flashbacks to see how they arrived at this point in their lives. We get just enough to keep us curious through their conversations and the memories they share, but it's not as fulfilling because we don't get to see everything we should want from these two characters. Since the film is set over a couple of nights, we only really get a glimpse of who they are and that's annoying. Perhaps all we really need to know is who these characters are within the time frame of the film, but these two characters are too interesting and feel all too familiar, like we went to high school with them, we would know who they are if we ran into them at a gas station or a Walmart. I just feel like the film makes us want to know more about them, especially when he tells her (SPOILERS AHEAD) about his prison stint and she tells him how she became a sex worker. But like great poetry, this story is perfect within the time that it's being told, maybe knowing too much would ruin our connection to the characters. However, despite all that, I do honestly praise all of the performances from the main characters to RZA to Dermot Mulroney as the other pool Hustler or Eric

Roberts has the older suitor that we seem to know. It's like we've met that guy before some dingy bar that we've drunk at. It's not a perfect film and my critiques are only minor.

It's a wonderful film that film aficionados should see. If you are a music nut, especially that of country and folk and Americana then this is the perfect film for you because the music is outstanding. But like I said before, it's the performance is that truly makes this film and Michael Dorman and Sophia Bush knock it out of the park. Not a typical love story, but one that I'm sure we are all familiar with. That's this film's true connection to an audience, we all know these characters and we've all probably lived these lives in some way. So, if a film can connect to us as an audience through its familiarity, then that's a good thing. It may not be a film you watch over and over, but it's a film that will connect to you through the characters that seem familiar and the music that you just can't help but love. While I feel this movie can very much be an Austin Texas story, really, it's the story that can connect to any town that has a great music scene. I definitely recommend watching *Hard Luck Love Story*... You will not be disappointed!

**Final Grade: 8/10 (Good)**

## **Army of Thieves** Review by Chloe James



*You know one thing that I almost never dread? The idea of a spinoff. The problem with sequels or remakes is the expectations for whatever it's about are always too high. But a spinoff? The stakes are considerably less*

*high. I mean, sure, they can be great, like *Frasier* came from *Cheers*, or *Rosencrantz and**

*Guildestern Are Dead* from *Hamlet*. At worse? They're "meh" and you just forget about their existence and sleep soundly at night knowing you still love their original source material. Nothing really ruined because they were about a side character(s) anyway. The main characters and main plot are off in their own realm, and should only be mildly affected by whatever happens (while still distantly being referenced in the spinoff from time to time.) Also, you know how I said in my *Army of the Dead* review that I wished for a movie just about the character Dieter? Well, as they say, be careful what you wish for...as I unexpectedly have been gifted with *Army of Thieves*.

This spinoff prequel of sorts begins with our favorite safecracker from *Army of the Dead*, Ludwig Dieter (Matthias Schweighöfer), who currently goes by his real name Sebastian, speaking about the history of a set of 4 legendary and impossible to find safes with his adoring YouTube subscribers of zero. As he lives his mundane boring life, both his view count and comment section climbs to one with a mysterious person inviting him to a safe cracking contest in a warehouse in Berlin. Enter Gwendoline (Nathalie Emmanuel), a bank robber, pickpocket and jewel thief with a high respect for safes. She explains to Sebastian that she has found 3 of the 4 legendary safes and she needs his help to crack them. With the help of the hacker Korina (Ruby O. Fee), the getaway driver extraordinaire Rolph (Guz Khan) and the brute Brad Cage (Stuart Martin), the team sets out on their adventure to unlock the worlds hardest safes while being followed by Interpol's highest strung detective Delacroix (Jonathan Cohen) and his more subdued partner Beatrix (Noémie Nakai), Zack Snyder hands over the directorial reins to our leading man Matthias Schweighöfer, who blends action with comedy extremely well. Matthias brings in his own cinematographer Bernhard Jasper, who ties in together visual styling from *Army of the Dead* while being unique and separate. Han Zimmer composed a very Han Zimmer-y score for this film. One of my only complaints for this film is that it felt like it had to keep reminding the audience that it's

unmistakably a prequel to *Army of the Dead*. To be honest, I know it isn't technically wrong to do so. If it didn't have any news of zombie outbreaks or something like that, I might have forgotten 15 minutes in. While as I said, the film draws a few visual cues from *Army of the Dead*, truly one of its main charms is how very different it was. I don't like to throw around the word "quirky" too often and mean it to be a positive thing rather than just implying it's hipster bait, but *Army of Thieves* can be described as a quirky, almost cute heist film in the best way possible. 90% of this can be attributed to our leading man. One fatal flaw of many spinoffs is that the characters who are chosen to go off and have their own adventures just can't carry their own story. They were best left as side characters. One would think a German, socially awkward, genius safe cracker would definitely not be a great fit for the main character of his own film. But for me, he not only absolutely works, but feels like a breath of fresh air. Matthias is just so adorkable as Sebastian, I can't help but to cheer for him while wanting at the same time to give him a hug. Also of note, I'm so glad to see Nathalie Emmanuel in another role since *Game of Thrones*. Say what you will about the last few seasons of that show, but she was always one of my favorites as Missandei, and it's great to see her play an even stronger woman in this film. *Army of Thieves* perhaps doesn't achieve what annoying level of spinoff greatness in which it's actually better than the original source material. It is, however an absolutely worthy addition to the universe and completely enjoyable on it's own, proving that certain quirky side characters can actually do well as mains with the right writing. Now excuse me while I wish in print for more of my favorite side characters to get their own spinoff, because apparently I have that power now.

**Final Grade: 8/10 (Good)**



"A crime thriller wrapped inside a haunting love story wrapped inside a neo-noir western."  
- Peter's Pix

Michael Dorman Sophia Bush Dermot Mulroney Eric Roberts Brian Sacca Melora Walters and RZA

# HARD LUCK LOVE SONG

Based on the song "Just Like Old Times" by Todd Snider

a film by  
Justin Corsbie



DIME BOX ENTERTAINMENT "HARD LUCK LOVE SONG"  
MICHAEL DORMAN SOPHIA BUSH DERMOT MULRONEY ERIC ROBERTS BRIAN SACCA MELORA WALTERS AND RZA  
CASTING BY SUNDAY BOLING, CSA & MEG NORMAN, CSA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAS SHELTON EDITOR J DAVIS PRODUCED BY MARIE JACH COSTUME DESIGNER SELENIA RIOS MUSIC BY WILL & BROOKE BLAIR MUSIC SUPERVISOR DAN WILCOX  
PRODUCED BY ALLISON R. SMITH JUSTIN CORSBIE DOUGLAS MATEJKA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PETER J. SCALETAR CHRISTIAN MONTI COVERED BY JUSTIN CORSBIE & CRAIG UGORETZ WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JUSTIN CORSBIE  
DIME BOX ENTERTAINMENT #HardLuckLoveSong OCTOBER 15TH HardLuckLoveSong.com



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## 'TITANS' RENEWED FOR SEASON 4 AT HBO MAX



*Titans* is returning for a fourth season. The drama series, which follows a group of young superheroes, has been renewed

by HBO Max. It comes ahead of its third season finale, which airs on October 21 (see clip below). *Titans* launched on DC Universe and moved to HBO Max for its third season, which stars Brenton Thwaites, Anna Diop, Teagan Croft, Ryan Potter, Conor Leslie, Curran Walters and Joshua Orpin. It follows the young heroes as they come of age and find where they belong. In season three, circumstances draw them to Gotham City, where they reunite with old friends and face new threats. Joshua Orpin with Alan Ritchson, Minka Kelly, Damaris Lewis and Savannah Welch also feature. The news, revealed at the DC Fandome

event, comes after DC sibling series *Doom Patrol* was also picked up for a fourth season. *Titans* is produced by Weed Road Pictures and Berlanti Productions, in association with Warner Bros. Television. Based on the characters from DC, the series was developed by Akiva Goldsman, Geoff Johns & Greg Berlanti, with Goldsman, Johns, Berlanti, showrunner Greg Walker, Sarah Schechter and Richard Hatem serving as executive producers.

Reported by Deadline.com

## 'Doom Patrol' Renewed For Season 4 At HBO Max



*Doom Patrol* is sticking together. The superhero drama series has been renewed by HBO Max for a fourth season. The series, which is currently airing its third season, premiered exclusively on DC Universe in 2019, while HBO Max and DC Universe aired the second season and HBO Max took the

show on exclusively for its third run (watch a mid-season trailer below). The show follows a group of superheroes who all suffered a horrible accident that gave them superhuman abilities, but also left them scarred and disfigured. Part support group, part superhero team, the Doom Patrol is a band of superpowered freaks who fight for a world that wants nothing to do with them. In season three, the Doom Patrol is at a difficult crossroads and each member struggles to face who they are and who they want to be. And things get a whole lot more complicated when Madame Rouge arrives in a time machine with a very specific mission, if only she could remember it. Season three stars Brendan

Fraser, Matt Bomer, Diane Guerrero, April Bowlby, Joivan Wade, Timothy Dalton, Skye Roberts and Michelle Gomez. *Doom Patrol* is produced by Berlanti Productions in association with Warner Bros. Television with showrunner Jeremy Carver, Geoff Johns, Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter, Chris Dingess and Tamara Becher-Wilkinson serving as executive producers. The series is based on characters created for DC by Arnold Drake, Bob Haney and Bruno Premiani.

Reported by Deadline.com

# "Your Next Great Comedy on Hulu!"

## *Only Murders in the Building*

Review by Allison Costa



Having a prolific career in Hollywood truly makes you a legend. When we hear the names of Steve Martin and Martin Short, we both know that these

men are not only comedic geniuses but also that they have been able to keep their careers alive for decades by being smart in their role choices and their personal lives. The new show on Hulu, "Only Murders in the Building" is one of the cleverest new comedy dramas available right now. It's an interesting choice to have Selena Gomez play a main character alongside these Hollywood greats but somehow their chemistry just works! Even though most people might think it kind of creepy for a woman in her late 20's to befriend men in their 70's and have them be her "sleuth" partners, somehow it is totally believable for this fantastical cast.

The storytelling, comedic dialogue and far-fetched plot ideas only lend to the reality of this dynamic trio. In contrast to a lot of the 45minute-1hr dramas available, these episodes are short and succinct and action-packed! They are a great mix of

background story, comedy, drama, and poignant moments. The show is both funny and dramatic and sad all at once. Each of the main characters has their own origin story and the flashbacks and slow reveals are one of the best parts about the show. The wacky and diverse characters in the Arconia (the apartment building that is the setting of the show), epitomize people of New York and their vast quirkiness and diversity.

If you only have time to watch one new show this fall season, this should be your show! It has a little bit of everything for everyone. It would be a perfect 10 for me except for all of the swearing. I know the "F" word is typical for most New Yorkers, but I still don't love the language. Everything else is Amazing!

**Final Grade: 9/10 (Great)**

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**GAMING NEWS**



# TRANSFORMERS CHARACTERS TO FIGHT THE GODS IN HIT VIDEO GAME SMITE



This November, worlds will collide with the *TRANSFORMERS* x *SMITE* crossover event, Autobots and Decepticons from Hasbro's *TRANSFORMERS* franchise are coming to the battleground of the video game *SMITE*, created by Titan Forge Games and published by Hi-Rez.

They will face gods from ancient mythology such as Thor, Zeus, and Anubis. Deities beware: *TRANSFORMERS* 'bots are... More Than Meets The Eye. Players will get to battle as iconic and infamous robots Optimus Prime, Megatron, and Starscream as top-of-the-line god skins available with the *TRANSFORMERS* Battle Pass. In-game, Optimus Prime converts into a truck, Megatron into a tank and Starscream into a jet. Each *TRANSFORMERS* character will have two forms: one in the *SMITE* art style, the

other a rendering inspired by the *TRANSFORMERS* Generations toys, TV show and movie from the 80s, taking fans back in time. After purchase, players will progress through the *TRANSFORMERS* Battle Pass and unlock its rewards simply by playing online *SMITE* matches. In addition to the six *TRANSFORMERS* skins, fans will get dozens of thematic items designed jointly with Hasbro such as a ward skin depicting Kremzeek, a loading frame pitting Autobots against Decepticons, and Level-up effects coming straight from Cybertron.

*"There's something magical about having Optimus Prime save the day on the Battleground of the Gods,"* said Alex Cantatore, Hi-Rez VP of Brand. *"We've always said that SMITE is the ultimate crossover game, bringing all the world's myths together. Optimus Prime, Megatron, and Starscream just take that to another level."*

*"More than a few Titan Forge Games employees have their desks covered in the G1 TRANSFORMERS toys,"* said Travis Brown, Executive Producer of *SMITE*. *"It was really a labor of love to bring the TRANSFORMERS robots to life in SMITE, and the team really went above*

*and beyond - they've created all-new models, rigging, animations, and effects to really bring the TRANSFORMERS robots into the Battleground of the Gods."*

*SMITE*'s unique blend of third-person action combat and Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) strategy has attracted more than 35 million players to the Battleground of the Gods. *SMITE* features an ever-growing roster of 110+ Gods and Goddesses from pantheons around the world and throughout history, and is free to play on PC, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, and Nintendo Switch. In the past two years, Hi-Rez has become an expert on how to blend *SMITE*'s mythological universe and popular franchises with fidelity and love through crossovers with Netflix's *Stranger Things*, Nickelodeon's *Avatar* and *TMNT*, Rooster Teeth's *RWBY*, and electronic music label *Monstercat*.

The *TRANSFORMERS* Battle Pass will become available for purchase in *SMITE* next month.

## DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ HITS XBOX GAME PASS TODAY!



Xbox players are about to be hit with a Kamehameha of epic proportions as *DRAGON BALL FighterZ* officially makes its way onto Xbox Game Pass today for all Xbox players to enjoy!

This critically acclaimed fighting game has been a fan favorite and has been very competitive and popular in fighting game tournament circles. Now all the action, drama, and competition is coming to Xbox Game Pass and we're excited for more players to join the fray by taking Goku, Vegeta, Frieza, and other famous *DRAGON BALL Z* characters into battle!



# DEAD BY DAYLIGHT™ FANS TO DIVE DEEPER INTO K-POP UNIVERSE WITH TOME IX OF THE ARCHIVES



*Dead by Daylight's Tome IX of the Archives, CRESCENDO, is available today.* Only six months after *All-Kill* became the fastest-selling chapter of *Dead by Daylight*, CRESCENDO, the latest Tome in the Archives, takes players back into the K-pop universe. Available today, the new Archives puts the spotlight on Ji-Woon Hak (The Trickster) and Yun-Jin Lee's past. The team renewed their collaboration with K-pop superstar **Kevin Woo** as a Korean culture consultant. Tome IX also provides players with loads of time-limited rewards and new cosmetics, including outfit and charm additions to the Community Collection. "Our community really dived with us head-first into the K-pop universe, last March, with an enthusiasm that exceeded our expectations, explains Dave Richard, Creative Director, *Dead by Daylight*. That's why we decided to give fans more to discover from the Trickster and Yun-Jin Lee, even if these characters are still very recent."

## K-pop Sets the Beat Once Again

In order to ensure an accurate representation of the Korean culture and the K-pop phenomenon, the *Dead by Daylight* team once again sought the advice of singer **Kevin Woo**, famously known for being the main vocalist of K-pop idol group U-KISS. Among other features, the Korean American superstar was involved in making sure the music, the trailers, the artworks and the various assets pertaining to Tome IX were aligned with the musical culture he's been soaked in since he was fifteen. "I was delighted

to consult again on the release of the new Tome of the Archives. After the release of the *All-Kill* Chapter, I became a huge fan of *Dead by Daylight* and I was elated to get to see the new stories and cosmetics added to the game, says Kevin Woo. I enjoy getting to see the visuals before anyone else and it's always a pleasure to deliver deeper insight from a K-pop point of view. I want to thank *Dead by Daylight* for giving me the opportunity to work with their talented team in producing the anticipated expansion of the addictively horrifying game. I hope everyone dives in and has a blast playing!"

## Memories of Celebrity

With the ninth Tome of the Archives, fans set their sights on stardom as they make their way through new challenges and uncover the never-before-seen memories of The Trickster and Yun-Jin Lee. They come to witness that while touring in Brazil, an abduction on the eve of a violent storm forced The Trickster into a struggle for survival, while Yun-Jin Lee was frantically working to piece together the whereabouts - and intentions - of her missing artist.

## Collections and Charms Created by the Community

In the CRESCENDO Rift, players can earn over 60 cosmetic items through the Free and Premium tracks to be theirs forever, even once the Rift closes. Among other items are new outfits for The Trickster, Yun-Jin Lee and Feng Min. Fans can also earn outfits inspired by community winner designs and, for the first time, charms also inspired by community winner designs. More precisely, the winning inspirations were suggested by community members Chessa (Survivor charm), Cozaco (Killer charm), Dragonaer (new outfit for The Plague), and Selena Fay (new outfit for Élodie). These creations are a proud shout out to the 43 million-strong community that is part of the Fog around the world.

## More Treats for the Month of Halloween

As if this was not enough rewards, an in-game Halloween event, *The Midnight Grove*, will be taking place from October 21st to November 4th. Logging in during *The Midnight Grove* will give players a chance to celebrate the season surrounded by special themed hooks and generators, themed items available through the Bloodweb, spooky load screens, and a creepy Halloween lobby. Additionally, to make it easier than ever for players to spend Halloween with a controller in their hand and terror in your heart, the *Dead by Daylight* base game can be tried for free from October 21st to 25th on Steam, PS4, PS5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X|S as well as Stadia. Fans can also enjoy Halloween sales with up to 60% off on various contents and platforms starting October 19th. The new Tome also comes on the heels of *Dead by Daylight's* new DLC, *Hour of the Witch*, featuring a brand-new Survivor: Mikaela Reid. The new content, available since October 19th, can be tried for free from October 21st to 25th and purchased with up to 60% off on Steam, PS, Xbox, Switch and Stadia during the same period. Tome IX: CRESCENDO is available today on Nintendo Switch, PS4, PS5, Stadia, Steam, Windows Store, Xbox One as well as Xbox Series X|S.

## About Dead by Daylight

Created by Behaviour™ Interactive, *Dead by Daylight* is a multiplayer action horror game of hide and seek, set in a dark fantasy and drawing from all corners of horror, where each match is a different experience. *Dead by Daylight* boasts more than 43 million players both globally and across all platforms. On any given day, up to 1,5 million players step into the Fog, whether on PC, console, or mobile. Since its release in 2016, the game has become a place where cult classic horror survives and thrives, having welcomed legends from TV, movies, and video games. For more information, please visit [deadbydaylight.com](http://deadbydaylight.com).

## ELDEN RING CLOSED NETWORK TEST ANNOUNCED, RELEASE DATE ON FEB. 25, 2022



ELDEN RING, the grand fantasy Action-RPG developed by FromSoftware Inc. and produced by BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment Inc. will be playable in a Closed Network Test planned on November 12th. Selected fans will be

able to experience the opening hours of the long-awaited title to get a hands-on glimpse at what the full game will have to offer while assisting the development team in testing the games online servers ahead of its release date. The depth of the game and the degree of freedom in strategy exceeded the initial expectations, hence it has been decided to extend the development time for final adjustments thus moving the release date to February 25, 2022. The ELDEN

RING™ Closed Network Test will be playable throughout the weekend of November 12-15th for PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X|S during the following time periods:

- November 12: 12:00 to 15:00 CET
- November 13: 4:00 to 7:00 CET
- November 13: 20:00 to 23:00 CET
- November 14: 12:00 to 15:00 CET
- November 15: 4:00 to 7:00 CET

# CONAN EXILES: "PEOPLE OF THE DRAGON" DLC LAUNCHED BY FUNCOM

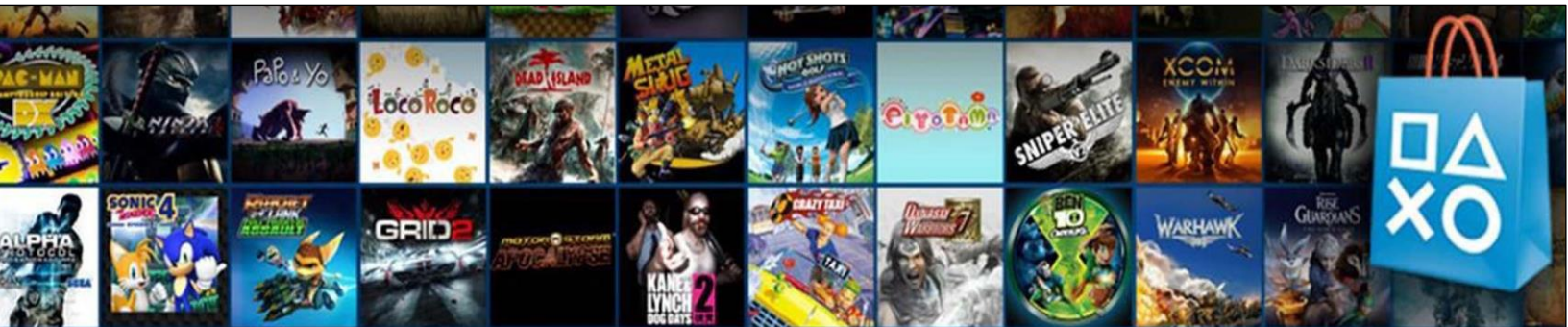


The latest DLC for Conan Exiles lets you build and fight for the glory of Nemedi, longtime archnemesis of Aquilonia. Raise gigantic Germanic themed castles, go to war beneath the feared dragon banner, and crush your enemies with a brand-new arsenal at your disposal.

Released today on PC, PlayStation and Xbox, *People of the Dragon Pack* introduces 110 new items ranging from medieval building pieces to weapons, armor and placeables. The newest *Conan Exiles* DLC is

themed around the proud kingdom of Nemedi, Aquilonia's longtime rival and neighbor to the east. While Nemedi is perhaps most famed for fostering the leading philosophers and historians in Hyboria, the old kingdom can also boast a powerful army and have held the Aquilonians at bay for millennia. The *People of the Dragon Pack* allows you to create your own version of a Nemedian stronghold, taking this history into account. Among the new placeables you will find journals, scrolls and a bookshelf, representing the learned women and men of Nemedi, whereas the new weapons and armor pieces allow you to charge into battle donning the fierce dragon emblem. And as a counterweight to the Roman inspired Aquilonian architecture, Nemedian building pieces have a distinct Germanic touch. Most of the new items are displayed in the brand-new *People of the Dragon Pack* trailer. All the new content in *People of the Dragon Pack* is exclusive to this DLC and adds a host of new visual options but does not give any in-game advantage in power. All the new items have

comparable stats to existing items. *Conan Exiles* is an open world survival game set in the savage lands of Conan the Barbarian. Launched in full on PC, Xbox, and PlayStation in 2018, it quickly became one of Funcom's best-selling and fastest-selling games and has since been continually updated with improvements and new content. The game's first massive expansion, *Isle of Siptah*, was launched earlier this year, and featured a vast new island to explore.



# PlayStation™ Now

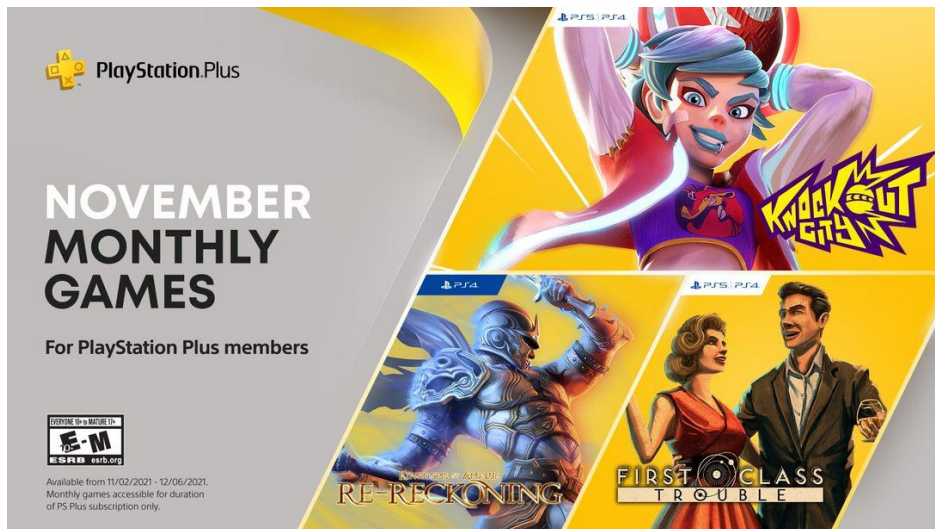


## Game Streaming Subscription





# PLAYSTATION PLUS GAMES FOR NOVEMBER: *KNOCKOUT CITY*, *FIRST CLASS TROUBLE*, *KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RE-RECKONING*



It's a bumper PlayStation Plus lineup this November, with six titles in total available to add to your game library starting Tuesday, November 2. Partake in an epic dodgeball tournament with *Knockout City*, play sleuth and spot imposters in social deduction game *First Class Trouble*, then wield weapons and battle monsters in the fantasy world of *Kingdoms of Amalur: Re-Reckoning*. And to celebrate PS VR's 5th anniversary, this month's PlayStation Plus lineup will include three bonus PS VR titles. Survive the horrors aboard a procedurally generated spaceship in *The Persistence*, tackle zombies in *The Walking Dead: Saints & Sinners* and showcase your sword skills in roguelike *Before The Fall*.

## **Knockout City | PS5 & PS4**

Team up and duke it out with rival crews in style as you settle the score with epic dodgeball battles online\*. Brace yourself for outrageous fun and intense competition in an all-new take on team-based multiplayer games. Customize your character and form a crew with friends to start your *Knockout City* takeover. Knock out opponents with trick shots and coordinated teamwork while dodging and catching balls flying across the map. No ball? No problem! You can literally ball up, roll into a teammate's hands, and become the ultimate weapon.

## **First Class Trouble\*\* | PS5 & PS4**

*First Class Trouble* is a social deduction party game where six people play together online\* aboard a luxury space cruiser. At the start of each game, four players will be randomly selected to be Residents, cooperatively trying to shut down a rogue A.I. at the heart of the ship. The other two players will be Personoids, who will lie, deceive, and do whatever it takes to stop them! Teamwork is the key to survival, but who can you trust?

## **Kingdoms of Amalur: Re-Reckoning | PS4**

From the minds of the bestselling author R.A. Salvatore, *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane, and *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* lead designer Ken Rolston, comes *Kingdoms of Amalur: Re-Reckoning*. Remastered with stunning visuals and refined gameplay *Re-Reckoning* delivers intense, customizable RPG combat inside a sprawling game world. Uncover the secrets of Amalur, from the vibrant city of Rathir to the vast region of Dalenarth to the grim dungeons of the Brigand Hall Caverns. Rescue a world torn apart by a vicious war and control the keys to immortality as the first warrior ever to be resurrected from the grips of death.

## **The Persistence | PS VR\*\*\***

*The Persistence* challenges you to survive aboard a doomed deep space colony starship in the year 2521. Stranded, malfunctioning, and caught in the inexorable pull of a black hole, "The Persistence" is overrun with a crew mutated into horrific & murderous aberrations. It's down to you, a clone of security officer Zimri Eder, to make your way deeper in the decks of *The Persistence* to repair the systems and prevent the ship from being torn apart. Gather resources, upgrade abilities and fabricate an arsenal of weapons in this brutal sci-fi horror roguelite.

## **The Walking Dead: Saints & Sinners – Standard Edition | PS VR\*\*\***

Face all the horrors that the living and the dead can offer in this new VR adventure in *The Walking Dead* universe. Travel through the ruins of walker infested New Orleans as you fight, sneak, scavenge, and survive each day unraveling a city wide mystery within the iconic quarters. Encounter desperate factions and lone survivors who could be friend or foe. Whether you help others or take what you want by force, every choice you make has consequences. What kind of survivor will you be for the people of NOLA?

# GAME RELEASES FOR NOVEMBER 2021

PRODUCT	COMPANY	FORMAT	RELEASE DATE
Conway: Disappearance at Dahlia View	Sold Out	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	02/11/2021
Giants Uprising	Varsav Games Studio	PC	02/11/2021 (Early access)
Tunche	LEAP Game Studios	NS, PC, PS4, XO	02/11/2021
Usurper: Soulbound	Caspian Interactive	PC	02/11/2021
World War Z	Solutions2Go	NS	02/11/2021
World War Z	Solutions2Go	NS	02/11/2021
Bloody Rally Show	Digerati	PS4	03/11/2021
Evercade VS	Evercade		03/11/2021
Bloody Rally Show	Digerati	NS	04/11/2021
Demon Turf	Playtonic Friends	NS, PS4, PS5, XSX	04/11/2021
Just Dance 2022	Ubisoft	NS, PS4, PS5, Stad, XO, XSX	04/11/2021
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM BATTLE OPERATION Code Fairy	Bandai Namco	PS4, PS5	04/11/2021
Recipe For Disaster	Kasedo Games	PC	04/11/2021 (Early access)
Spacelines from the Far Out	Skystone Games	PC, XO	04/11/2021
Stardrytch	Nils Kastens	PC	04/11/2021
Starsand	Toplitz Productions	PC	04/11/2021 (Early access)
To The Rescue!	Freedom Games	Mac, PC	04/11/2021
TramSim Munich	Aerosoft		04/11/2021
Bloody Rally Show	Digerati	XO	05/11/2021
Call of Duty: Vanguard	Activision	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	05/11/2021
Len's Island	Flow Studio	Mac, PC	05/11/2021 (Early access)
Let's Build a Zoo	No More Robots	PC	05/11/2021 (Closed beta)

<b>PRODUCT</b>	<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>RELEASE DATE</b>
<b>Stilstand</b>	Niila Games	NS, PS4	05/11/2021
<b>Blue Reflection: Second Light</b>	KOEI TECMO EUROPE LTD	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO	09/11/2021
<b>BLUE REFLECTION: Second Light</b>	KOEI TECMO	NS, PC, PS4	09/11/2021
<b>Death Becomes You</b>	Quill Studios	PC	09/11/2021
<b>Football Manager 2022</b>	SEGA	An, iOS, Mac, PC, XO	09/11/2021
<b>Football Manager 2022</b>	SEGA	PC	09/11/2021
<b>Football Manager 2022</b>	SEGA		09/11/2021
<b>Forza Horizon 5</b>	Microsoft	PC, XO, XSX	09/11/2021
<b>My Singing Monsters Playground</b>	Big Blue Bubble	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	09/11/2021
<b>Sparklite</b>	Merge Games	An, iOS	09/11/2021
<b>Captain Toonhead vs the Punks from Outer Space</b>	Teravision Games	Oculus Rift, PC, PSVR, Quest	11/11/2021
<b>Epic Chef</b>	Team17	NS, PC, PS4, XO	11/11/2021
<b>Interior Designer</b>	Microids	Mac, NS, PC, PS4, XO	11/11/2021
<b>Kainga: Seeds of Civilization</b>	Green Man Gaming Publishing		11/11/2021
<b>Pups &amp; Purrs Animal Hospital</b>	Aksys	NS	11/11/2021
<b>Shin Megami Tensei V</b>	Atlus	NS	11/11/2021
<b>STAR WARS: Knights of the Old Republic</b>	Aspyr Media	An, iOS, NS	11/11/2021
<b>SYNTHETIK 2</b>	Flow Fire Games		11/11/2021
<b>Game &amp; Watch: The Legend of Zelda</b>	Nintendo		12/11/2021
<b>Grow: Song of the Evertree</b>	505 Games	NS, PC, PS4, XO	16/11/2021
<b>Marsupilami: Hoobadventure</b>	Microids	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	16/11/2021
<b>Sherlock Holmes: Chapter One</b>	Frogwares	PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	16/11/2021
<b>The Last Stand: Aftermath</b>	Armor Games	PC, PS4, PS5, XSX	16/11/2021
<b>Creepy Tale 2</b>	Creepy Brothers	XO, XSX	17/11/2021

<b>PRODUCT</b>	<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>RELEASE DATE</b>
<b>Klang 2</b>	Ratalaika Games	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	17/11/2021
<b>BloodRayne 2: ReVamped</b>	Ziggurat Interactive	NS, PS4, XO	18/11/2021
<b>BloodRayne: ReVamped</b>	Ziggurat Interactive	NS, PS4, XO	18/11/2021
<b>Century: Age of Ashes</b>	Playwing		18/11/2021
<b>Planetary Control</b>	Kerberos Productions	PC	18/11/2021
<b>Space Moth: Lunar Edition</b>	Chorus Worldwide	NS, PC, PS4, XO	18/11/2021
<b>The Lady Afterwards</b>	Weather Factory	Tbl	18/11/2021
<b>LEGO Star Wars: Castaways</b>	Gameloft	iOS	19/11/2021
<b>Moncage</b>	X.D. Network Inc.	An, iOS, PC	19/11/2021
<b>NASCAR Heat Ultimate Edition+</b>	Motorsport Games	NS	19/11/2021
<b>Alpine - The Simulation Game</b>	Aerosoft	PC, PS4	23/11/2021
<b>Brewmaster</b>	Auroch Digital	PC	23/11/2021 (Alpha)
<b>FINAL FANTASY® XIV: Endwalker</b>	Square Enix	Mac, PC, PS4, PS5	23/11/2021
<b>Let's Sing 2022</b>	Ravenscourt	NS, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	23/11/2021
<b>Puppies &amp; Kittens</b>	Microids	Mac, NS, PC, PS4	23/11/2021
<b>Asterix &amp; Obelix: Slap them All!</b>	Microids	NS, PC, PS4, PS5, XO, XSX	25/11/2021
<b>DEEEER Simulator : Quite normal deer game</b>	Gibier Game	PC	25/11/2021
<b>Pandemic Train</b>	Triggerlabs	PC	25/11/2021

# FARCRY 6



**AVAILABLE NOW!**

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**DISCORD**



# FAR CRY 6 = CRAP!

**DON'T BE FOOLED...IT'S NOT THAT GOOD!**

**Review by K. Scott Cooper and Marcus Blake**



**K. Scott Cooper**

I would like to start this article by simply stating that I honest wish this review prevents you from buying this worthless pile of crap produced by Ubisoft, at least at full price. Buy it at a discount if you must! As I sit here trying to find redeeming qualities for this game short of the actors that worked for hours attempting to be a part of something that would seemingly be a lot of fun and a great way to be famous forever. I certainly hope this does not hurt to careers of Giancarlo Esposito and Anthony Gonzalez, which I high doubt because both of them are gifted in their trade. So, like everything it all starts with a story that had such great potential and then "shit the bed" the further it went along, from the beginning it is clear that this game is compliment of previous Ubisoft titles such as Assassins Creed, The Division, and Ghost Recon: Breakpoint. In the laziest of ways this game was cobbled together from the leftovers of Far Cry 5 and all the "ok" features of the previously mentioned games, which leaves you noticing

more of what you know and less of what you don't know about the game. This is the story's description to a letter and boasts an alternate ending that makes you wonder what the hell is going at Ubisoft. Also, it should make you worry for upcoming titles. So, I clearly will not be sparing any spoilers with this and don't really care!

The player picks between two versions of Dani Rojas a former army conscript turned runaway and soon after the savior of the country of Yara, which is being ruled by the evil dictator Anton Castillo, who is the son of the previous leader that was also violently overthrown. I know it doesn't make much sense, but it doesn't get better and I'm sparing you a lot of meaningless chore quests and missions that would be performed by teenagers and not able fighters. Filled with meaningless "sacrifices" being made by other rebel leaders, their families, a "fucking" rooster, and an old man that apparently fathered a third of Yara's population in the 70's. Just to have it all revealed that Anton is a big evil bad guy because he went from top of Daddy's bloody world to slave labor and because he has super rare cancer, everyone now gets a turn on the rack.



After Dani murders their way to the final face off, despite the struggles of their untrustworthy and worthless fellow rebels, the whole thing ends with Anton killing his son and heir Diego (who's role doesn't really make sense), then slits his own throat. Dani is then told they are the new leader of Yara to which they reply with a resounding "not my fucking problem" and leaves the country to chaos as now the other rebel leaders will just argue among themselves rather than

bringing about any real change for a country turned on its ass and shaken wildly. Oh, but wait there is more, the game never truly ends because now all the leftover "True Believers" of Anton are now Terrorist and constantly retake military hardpoint throughout Yara. Which means you the player bust your ass, only to have the game go surprise and now weekly takes away your progress over and over again in the attempt for replay hours at the very overt shift to micro transactions. This game is meant to be a political statement that isn't a political statement, if you don't believe me just hit the old google box and check for yourself, if there is a message here, I'm not sure I want to find it. Because that's right folks the alternate ending is Dani saying "fuck you" much early on that ends with Dani on a beach in Miami enjoying the sunshine and a drink as the news talks about everyone being murder by Anton.

The content of the game overall is Far Cry 5 with some patch work and some reskinning of cosmetic shit to get people to believe it's something different, same guns, same crap, hell they even flat out reused the dog Boomer from Far Cry 5 and gave it a slightly different name. I'm not kidding there is whole mission where this is pointed out and you only miss it if you didn't play any of the other Far Cry games. One of the bright spots to the game is the weapons being unique, but they are also crap, such as the modified CD Walkman that now throws CDs at lethal speed and force. I know, I know the joy of Far Cry is the crazy they throw at you, not this one. All the crazy in the game comes in the form of badly designed tropes or basesless sexual jabs that don't make sense to the context of the situation. Pair this with combat system design to force players into using the 15 various outfits featuring useless or slightly helpful buffs added to them, so much so that you will change an outfit three times in a single firefight, which already gives me bad predictions with the way this game will wrap itself up.

I see a lot of the season pass content dropping full of meaningless cosmetics and story line about more infighting because of conflicting lifestyle views among the various rebel factions and so something akin to hunting down the crazies of the former corrupt government, sprinkle in some patches for all the bugs and freezing the game has, and then they will add in a loadout feature in the end to make all the useless gear swapping take slightly less time.

In closing if you are like me and once enjoyed Far Cry, this will become the coffin nail to your hopes and dreams for future Far Cry games to come. It is with my saddest and heaviest of hearts that I score this game a 3 out of 10 and leave you with these final words. Any review that praises this pile of crap is doing so because one of two reasons, either they were paid to right such sweet words for such bitter vomit or they are two young to have played previous Fry Cry games and have no clue as to how clearly recycled this is, to quote Matthew Gault of *Vice*, "*Honestly, I can't play this shit anymore. I just can't do it.*"

*Final Grade: 3 / 10*

### **Marcus Blake**

Far Cry 6! Haven't I played this game before? It seems very familiar and not because it's a Far Cry game, the map and the terrain feel very familiar. That's my first impression of Far Cry 6. It's almost as if I have played this same map in Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands or even Ghost Recon breakpoint... has Ubisoft lost all originality to where their recycling maps from other games? I'm not saying that this is a bad game, unfortunately, it just isn't very good... there has certainly been better Far Cry games. And I know it's hard to top the greatness of Far Cry 5, honestly, I didn't expect them to, but I was at least hoping for a better than average Far Cry game and that's not what we got. I was excited to play Far Cry 6 because Giancarlo Esposito always plays a great villain and I like the Revolutionary feel of this game. But it's like "I've been there and done that" when trying to liberate the island of Yara. There isn't anything new or really unique about this Far Cry game so I feel like Ubisoft isn't even really trying to be new. I guess some of the

weapons are kind of new when you're having to put them together like a true Guerilla Soldier. I mean it's kind of fun having a flamethrower and you certainly have to use it to kill the big "Baddies," but it's only fun for so long.



The truth is the more hours I put into this game, I just wanted to go back and play Far Cry 5, which I played through a couple of times because the antagonist is so much better even if the ending is not that great. The antagonist in Far Cry 6 should be good, I mean toppling an evil dictator should be fun, but it's not quite as good as taken down a religious zealot cult leader in America. Maybe it's because the Homegrown villains are always better. And while I will not spoil the ending, it's not like you actually get to take down the dictator. If you get to the end, you'll know what I mean. It's true that not all of the Far Cry games have been great, Far Cry 4 was a little lackluster, but then you get something like Far Cry 5 that really does hit close to home especially in this day and age so maybe it's because the story is more relatable. But I think the real problem with Far Cry 6 is you could literally take everything from Far Cry 5 drop it in a tropical climate and it feels exactly the same with how you will do everything. Now on the one hand, I do love the fact that I can drive around in a tank and blow things up. Plus, taking over battleships is kind of fun, but other than that there wasn't anything different about this game, that we haven't seen other Far Cry games or for that matter, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands... I felt like my strategy was exactly the same for both games. That's just boring!

There's a lot to be said when it comes to getting your money's worth when you play an open world game and get to do lots of missions to complete the game. When

we talked about the value of a game you want to be able to get your money's worth and put lots of hours into it. At least Ubisoft did that with the last few Assassin's Creed games making them worth \$60. The Problem with putting a lot of hours into Far Cry 6 is I've already done this with other Far Cry games so the biggest weakness is the familiarity. I feel like Ubisoft at one time gave us new and unique content even when they had a sequel. Assassin's Creed Origins was a big departure from what we were used to with the Assassin's Creed series and then they added a familiar game with Assassin's Creed Odyssey, but still gave us something unique and a huge open world that made the game worth playing. The Division game and its sequel are the same thing and they improved upon the first game with The Division 2 while giving players a unique map. But eventually things become too familiar. As much as I like Assassin's Creed Valhalla, it pretty much feels exactly the same as Origins and Odyssey, just with a new map. With the Far Cry series, Far Cry 5 was unique enough and relatable enough because of the setting since we've never had anything set in the United States and it made it a great game, but with Far Cry 6, it just feels like I'm getting a game that's a combination of the Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon games and even Far Cry 4. Gamers want a unique experience along with a good story and unfortunately Far Cry 6 doesn't deliver that. Maybe Ubisoft doesn't have any original ideas anymore when it comes to the Far Cry series. It seems that way with Far Cry 6. It's a fun game if you like the series and just want another open-world to play in, but if you played the series, after a few hours you will feel like that you've played this game before, especially if you play other Ubisoft shooters. Giancarlo Esposito's performance is great, but it's not enough to save this game and make it worth buying it at retail. Wait until it's on sale. I'm still messing around with this game here and there, but I'm also glad that I had lots of Trade Credit at GameStop and don't feel like I really wasted my own money with it. It's sad that I say this about Far Cry 6. The truth hurts sometimes. At least Far Cry 5 will never let me down!

*Final Grade: 5 / 10*

***That Nerd Show Final Grade: 4 / 10 (Below Average)***



# NHL 22

***The Best Hockey Game We've Ever Played...Finally!***

Review by Marcus Blake



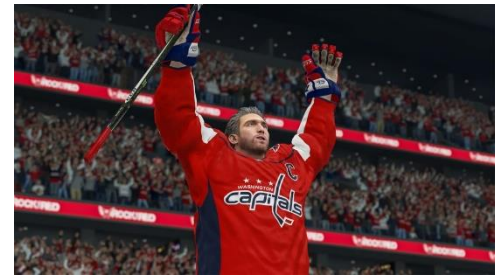
I have played the best hockey game ever made! It's true NHL 22 is the greatest hockey game ever made and I don't think I have been as excited to play a hockey game since I got Ice Hockey on the original Nintendo. With vast improvements in gameplay and the way the game looks after having gone to the Frostbite Engine, NHL 22 is the best hockey game that we have ever had even the ones we might be too nostalgic for like Blades of Steel! I'm not saying that it's absolutely perfect, I certainly have some harsh critiques of the game, but as much as I love playing a hockey video game and it may seem that I'm a little biased, I can honestly say that this is the best hockey game that gamers have ever played. EA has outdone themselves. Most of the other sports games by EA didn't get that many improvements and while Madden and FIFA were actually made for the next generation of consoles last year, NHL was the last game for them to make major improvements, but NHL 22 is the first hockey video game made for the PlayStation 5 and the Xbox Series X,

and not only is it an absolutely gorgeous like you're in a real hockey game, but the gameplay is the most realistic we've ever gotten. That's a bit of a double-edged sword because I'm having to relearn how to play this game since I can't rely on the video game to make me look like a star, but I also love it.

When it comes to the various modes in NHL, nothing has really changed from last year's version. You still have the full season and the playoff modes and you still have the world of CHL.

The Franchise Mode is virtually the same except they did make some improvements in how you run your team. It seems that EA made a lot of major improvements on the franchise modes of all their sports games and while the changes in NHL are not as significant as let's say Madden, for those that like being the GM and running an NHL franchise, it's not as lacking this year. I am not the type of gamer who likes to do all the things a GM is supposed to do, I just want to play, but I do like the fact that you have to worry about team chemistry and changing up your lines to give your team the best impact. And it's also nice to have to pay attention to trades and bringing up players from the minor league affiliates. I don't know if the NHL franchise mode will ever be as good as let's say Madden because it's not as popular of a sports game, but it's definitely improved. We're going to get to the biggest changes in NHL, in a little bit, but I want to focus on online play. The "online versus" mode has always been kind of a crapshoot whether you're playing some random person or playing a friend. I do see an improvement in matchmaking which is a good thing because nobody wants to play online and get slaughtered by someone who's way out of your league.... you should be able to match with players who are on the same skill level. But in the few online games that That Nerd Show's squad leader, K. Scott Cooper, and I played, we found "online play" to be a lot smoother and to have better gameplay. The games were more competitive, and I think a lot of that has to do with improving the

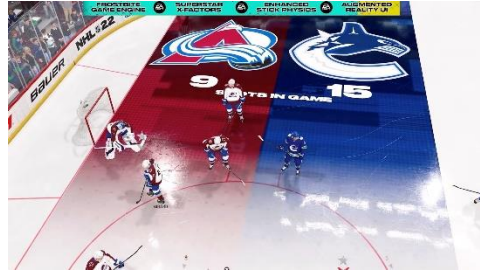
different game modes whether you're using Buttons or Skill Stick. You're always at the mercy of your internet connection when playing online, but we had some fantastic games where our internet connections didn't have any factor and it seemed that we were able to complete plays a lot better than we have in other versions. It's not perfect and some of my critiques of this game certainly we're visible in the online play, but it was the best experience that we've ever had playing online in NHL. That is partly due to, going to Frostbite Engine. EA is actually putting the effort into improving the gameplay of NHL that had been lacking because it's not as popular as FIFA or Madden or NBA Live.



So where are the biggest improvements in the NHL! It's definitely gameplay. Of course, the presentation is a lot better because the game looks more realistic, especially with how the play on the ice is presented and when you score a goal. I love the fact that the red light is easier to see when you score a goal as well as the sounds of the buzzer come through a lot better. But also in order to make the game more realistic, there's actually more shadows off the ice and it doesn't seem so clean which is not really realistic as you're getting towards the end of a period before the ice needs to be cleaned so I praise EA for making this game look more realistic and finally catching up with games like Madden and FIFA. However, the most significant improvements really comes down to gameplay. NHL's a little bit more of a grind and you cannot rely on the video game doing things for you as much. A lot of things that I could do very well in other versions which really aren't very realistic to how

hockey is played, but it's how you do it in a video game, doesn't really work the same way. I can't make the same shots I used to in other versions because shots like that really aren't that realistic hockey. The goalies are a lot better and you're not going to beat them as easily even on a rookie level. You have to have better strategy and make sure that your players are in position to grab rebounds in quickly to two men or they're in the proper place to actually do a crossover. But one of the things that I noticed is you really do have to work harder to draw the defense closer to a player who has the puck so you can get another player into position and quickly feed him a pass where he might have a chance of beating the goalie with a shot. I've always been pretty good at backhands and faking out the goalie and other versions, not so much in NHL 22, I'm not going to score as many goals as I have in the past, but I'll have more assists. In past versions of NHL, it has been more individualistic when it comes to scoring whereas in this year's version you have to rely more on team play. It's a big adjustment if you've been playing the NHL franchise for twenty years. If you have a created player like I do, you may not be a "scoring machine" that you once were, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. But the biggest change in gameplay is passing. In past versions, it was always easy to thread passes into tight spots, not anymore because that's not how real hockey really works. No matter how good a player may be, he may not always be able to control the puck from a pass that he received. Passes also bounce off of the boards a lot more which is also very realistic. Anytime that I play NHL, I rely on speed when it comes to offense because the faster team usually wins, but that isn't necessarily the case in this year's version when you are having to stop for a split second to control a puck that's been passed to you. It is an incredible grind at times and because of the sensitivity with the new Xbox and PlayStation controllers, you have to be precise when using the left joystick to direct where your pass says so it does make crossovers a lot harder and it makes it easier for the other team to intercept your pass. This will be a huge adjustment for NHL players, but again, you may have to change your strategy and how you play this video game. Personally, I like the fact that it is more realistic and a little bit more of a grind, but it is also a video game so you want to be able to do things that you wouldn't normally be able to do in real life. I encourage players to go to the tutorials a little bit before you really start playing, I didn't do that and kept the same settings that I had from last year's

version and got slaughtered in my first two games. If you're used to playing on Pro or All-Star level, it's going to be a lot harder with those two modes and it will take some major adjustments. Pro players who are used to adjusting the sliders just a little bit to give them a slight edge, but still make the game competitive may have to drop down to Semi-Pro to have that same feeling in NHL 22. I love what EA did with the game, I'm just saying that it's a grind and your strategy will have to change when it comes to gameplay.



I do think NHL is almost perfect, like I said, it's the best hockey game we've ever gotten yeah, but there are still some major critiques that I have when it comes to making hockey video game. First, Pro-Level shouldn't be so hard that you can't seem to do anything or you're having to adjust a slider so much just to give you an edge that it makes you wonder if you should be playing on that level at all. I've normally had speed and acceleration adjusted about three numbers above the CPU, I'm having to almost triple that just to have a chance of getting past defensemen. And it's even more infuriating when it's harder to score because the goalies are so good that even with acceleration, you can't even get enough steps to even be able to beat the goalie on a backhand. What are the new additions when it comes to sliders is actually adjusting the speed of when you skate backwards to match the speed of when you skateboard or your NPC's... you may not want to do this, but trust me, you will have to do at least something maintain a competitive edge. You should really have to do that, but it's necessary when you have made a video game that's more realistic than any other hockey game before it. One of my biggest gripes is with all the improvements in NHL, developers still don't understand how hockey is played and how the penalties work. I have been called for so many ridiculous penalties and I don't even get a replay this year of what caused the penalty. They just call a penalty and that's it. I've always liked the replay to see for sure if the CPU is correct. You just have to take their

word for it and again, they don't really understand how penalties work. If this game will not call a cross-check on a player who has position and is about to shoot the puck in front of the goalie, a penalty shot, then why have penalty shots at all in this game. The opposing team can't slap their stick in the back of a player who's about to shoot and is right in front of the goalie, that's a textbook "penalty shot" and it never gets called in NHL. Also, why can't anybody the developers understand the difference between boarding, interference, slashing, cross-checking, and give out the correct penalty time between 2 minutes and 5 minutes. It's almost as if the algorithm in the game spins a wheel and just guesses at the penalties. If the developers truly don't know what the penalties are, then watch the first 10 minutes of Slap Shot where the Frenchman is explaining how hockey penalties work. Needless to say, NHL and EA still has a lot of work to do when calling the correct penalties. Just once I'd like to get through a game where a simple "poke check" on a guy may who just loses his balance a little bit, but not fall, is not called tripping and I get a penalty. But on the one hand, I learn to play this game a lot better when I'm down a man. A lot more penalties will be assessed in NHL and you can't turn that off like in past versions. Maybe that can be fixed with a patch or something. But for NHL 23, get a developer or consultant who understands the game of hockey when it comes to the penalties... that's how you can improve the next version in a major way.

Overall NHL 22 is fantastic. It's not perfect and you will get frustrated at times, but it's the most realistic hockey game we've ever had. And it's been long overdue to go to the Frostbite Engine because the game is gorgeous. It's the most improved sports game with EA this year, and for me definitely "sports game of the year." For fans of the franchise, it'll be the best hockey game you've ever played and for newcomers, it's definitely it'll be the best hockey game you've ever played and for the newcomers, it's the hockey game that will make you a fan of this franchise. Plus, if you have a PlayStation 5 or Xbox Series X, this will make you feel like you are in a real-life hockey game. You can't get better than that, except if you can be on the ice yourself. It's the NHL video game that we have been waiting on for a while and it's what Madden should have always been.

**Final Grade: 9/10 (Fantastic)**

The

**NERD**

Opinion



# XBOX

## SERIES X

**IN STORES NOW!**



# HALLOWEEN MOVIES

## Our Pics for Great, But Underrated Movies to Watch on Halloween!

### Creepshow

The Ultimate Triforce in Horror!

By Alex Moore



1982 happens to be the year in which I was born, but that is not all that it was. Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert famously agreed that it was one of the best years in cinematic history. Yes, I have seen the footage; it is official! So what makes a particular year so great for film? Well, one way would be to take a gander at the overall scores of the movies one has reviewed and see how it stacks up to other years, prior or since. However, there is another way: how many of the films were truly memorable? I could mention the usual titles, such as "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" or "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan" or "Poltergeist," but there is still one that has stood the test of time, for me. In certain circles, it is a classic in its own right... "Creepshow." At the top of the list is the role of director, filled by the legendary George Romero, but take a look at the screenwriter credit. It is none other than Stephen King, another legend of the

genre of horror. In this case, it was the first he wrote that was not based on one of his novels. Rather, it was lifted from some short stories that he wrote, which were influenced by horror comics from the 1950s. The list for "Creepshow" continues, though. Providing his talents in special effects and makeup is Tom Savini. With that, you have an incredible nucleus; dare I say, it is a "triforce" of the horror genre. At this time in history, moviemakers were toying with the idea of making scary films funnier. Just a year before, "An American Werewolf in London" had tried this very thing and succeeded, mightily. These projects were ahead of their time, in a fashion. By the time 1996 had rolled around, "Scream" was ushered into the mainstream and did so using a very similar approach. By then, it had become wholly acceptable.

Another important detail that truly makes "Creepshow" stand out is the fact that it is an anthology. Today, it is not so original, but in 1982, it was different. The concept of weaving several stories into one, with the only connecting steps being a few cuts of animation, was risky for the big screen, yet it worked. Since then, there have been many horror flicks that have done the same thing and I am not sure if they could have done it as successfully without "Creepshow." Even specific television shows were greatly influenced by it, including 'Tales From the Crypt.' When was the last time that you watched a horror film which was over two hours long and the vast majority of its cast were not stupid teenagers, as well? Furthermore, the cast credentials listed for "Creepshow" almost read like a who's who of future Academy Award-nominees and TV legends.

Today, it would be unthinkable, in my view. Somehow, this project pulled it off and everyone took part in a respectable manner, or so it appears,

throughout. I will never forget the evening I sat down and first watched "Creepshow." I was at an age in which my thirst for the genre was seemingly unquenchable and this one was more unforgettable than anything I had ever seen before. A Monet like that is bound to never happen again, but maybe it has and I am in denial. What can I say? Nostalgia is a powerful drug. However, it also makes me hopeful for another experience just like that fateful Halloween night in 1995. So, give it a try. It is "The most fun you'll ever have being scared!"

### THE OMEN

"The Antichrist is the Scariest Monster of Them All"

By Marcus Blake



There's a lot of great Halloween movies. The Halloween movies where Michael Myers constantly hunts down his sister are always classics, but for me there's always a small handful of Halloween movies that may be a little out of the ordinary. However, they always scare me. The Omen starring Gregory Peck and Lee Remick is one of my all-time favorites.

Yes, there is a remake and it really isn't that bad, but it's also not really that good and it certainly can't beat the original. The Omen doesn't have a lot of blood and guts. It's not like *The Nightmare on Elm Street* or the Halloween movies which can be considered slasher films. It's definitely not as gory as *The Hills Have Eyes*. The Omen is scary for all the right reasons, it's a religious fear. It's the fear of absolute evil and its attempt to take over the world because the premise of the movie is about an ambassador who adopts the Antichrist.

After his wife loses a baby in childbirth and passes out, he attempts to fake her out by adopting a child and not really looking into where the job came from. When mysterious deaths start happening around the child as he grows up and the child feels ill when he goes near a church, they start to figure out that everything is not what it seems. It's the kind of horror film that doesn't need blood to be scary because you really don't need a lot of blood when it comes to the ultimate fear and what is more scary than the Antichrist especially, if you've grown up in a very Christian household. I'm not saying that I'm very religious and believe in that sort of thing, but I love the movie for what it is. It's much more of a Hitchcockian horror film because little by little it draws you into dealing with what you fear the most. Don't get me wrong, I love horror films with lots of blood, but sometimes suspense can make you more afraid. But what really makes the Omen a fantastic movie is that it draws you into the struggle of Gregory Peck's character or he's faced with the ultimate choice, do you ignore the warning signs for the innocence of your child or do you make the ultimate sacrifice and kill the Antichrist who just happens to be a child making that much more traumatic. Like I said if Hitchcock had made a horror film, I figure this is what he would have done, although I guess you could argue *The Birds* is a horror film.

Also what makes this film really interesting is Gregory Peck being in a horror film because essentially you have him playing and Atticus Finch like character that's moral and honorable except for he adopted the Antichrist and now has to make a choice. My favorite thing about this film despite all the creepiness is you really don't want to believe that the child is the Antichrist,

they don't really tell you that he is until you get to the end of the film. They mystery keeps building! It's a child and as the audience we don't want to believe it, how can an innocent child be the Antichrist. Various people, especially the priests in the film who keep warning Gregory Peck's character, right up until the end we think they're wrong or at least we want to believe they're wrong. This film doesn't need blood and gore or lots of slashing. It doesn't need to be the Texas Chainsaw Massacre or a George Romero movie, the greatest fear in this film is not wanting to believe what we already know to be true, the child is the main antagonist. Plus, it has one of the greatest endings ever and if you've never seen it this is a spoiler! Gregory Peck's character decides that he is going to kill the child upon an altar in a church and as soon as he is about to stab the child with some sacred dagger, the scene fades to black and you hear gunshots. Then the next thing you see is a funeral with the child kind of smirking. When I review movies, I always talk about pacing because it's very important and I always felt like the pacing was perfect in this film as it slowly draws you in and little by little and makes you more afraid of what's going to happen. Maybe it's not a traditional horror film, but it's just a scary and the performances are fantastic. Also, it's a great one for nerds because Patrick Troughton plays the priest who warns him about the Antichrist and all nerds should know who he is because he played the second Doctor in *Doctor Who*. Yes, the Halloween movies are great and *Nightmare on Elm Street* is fantastic, but as I said before, *The Omen* is scary for all the right reasons!

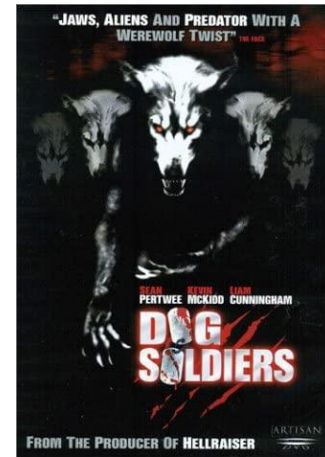
## **DOG SOLDIERS**

**"An Underrated Werewolf Film"**

**By K. Scott Cooper**

Directed by Neil Marshall, Starring Sean Pertwee, Kevin McKidd, Emma Cleasby, Liam Cunningham, Darren Morfitt, Chris Robson, Leslie Simpson, Thomas Lockyer, Craig Conway, Tina Landini. Yep! you guessed it, that is pretty much the whole and cast and this filmed had a budget of 4.6 million American or 2.3 million English pounds.

Now don't let that throw you from this amazing werewolf flick, the cast is small and the filming location even smaller.



**Dog Soldiers** follows a small platoon of British Army regulars on what is a seemingly normal training exercise,

shit goes sideways and this rough around the edges group is in for the fight of their lives inside a rural farming cottage. This film blends great writing, action, quick wit, and military humor into an amazing blood soaked bullet feast that never gives you a moment to relax and I know some of you are about to say "But Scott they are actors pretending to be military, how do they make it work?" the answer is simple they put the actors through boot camp and Sean Pertwee said "I am your boss and you will listen to me." plus most of this cast is very familiar with making action films and it shows. The werewolves look great and the visual effects are on point without being over the top. Its difficult to talk about much more of the film in detail with out giving spoilers, but I can tell you this is not like *Underworld* in any shape or form, but does keep in with the basic lore of werewolves.

Think the suspense of *Silver Bullet* with a well written simple action story line and good use of simple plot devices and at moments you feel like you are watching an English take on *Predator*, if the jungle was England. This film has so many great elements, not to mention all the various nods of the hat to class horror films such as *Evil Dead*. So find yourself some munchies and grab yourself a copy of this amazing horror film, because you don't you are sadder than an RSPCA commercial

# “A PG Halloween Movie Not Suited for Young Kids”

## Nightbooks Review

By Allison Costa



Each year Netflix premieres new movies for each holiday season, starting with Halloween. Usually, our family looks forward to these movies for Family Movie Night. Last year Netflix debuted "A Babysitter's Guide to Monster Hunting". It was pretty silly and funny, a few spooky moments but all in all fine for the entire family to watch. It was rated PG. This year Netflix decided to premiere the movie "Nightbooks", also rated PG. The protagonist is only 11-12 years old and the trailer looked a little spooky but not too bad. Good family fun, right?

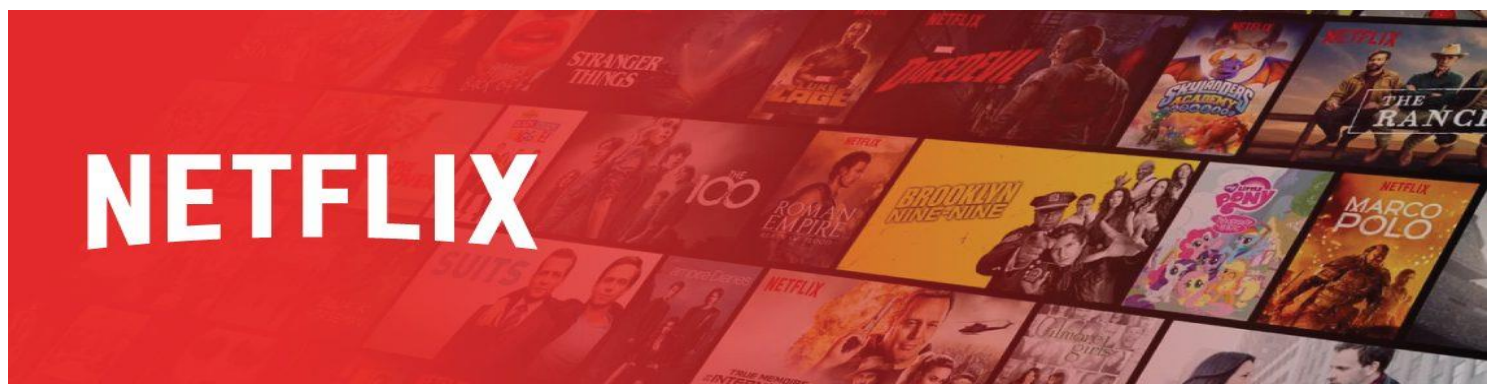
Wrong. We have 7 kids ranging in age from 2-16. Now the toddler doesn't really care but my other 6 children, ages 7-16 we usually try to stick with movies that the younger ones can watch but that aren't boring for the older kids either--so we stick with the PG rating. Only kids ages 13 and older can watch movies that are rated PG-13. Nightbooks was rated PG so we tried it out.

It truly should have been rated PG-13 for both theme and violence. The movie is about a young boy who is teased for his love of the occult and the supernatural. After no one shows up at his birthday party because all of the kids think he is a "creepshow", he leaves his family's apartment and goes wandering the halls. After seeing an apartment with an open door where the movie "Lost Boys" is playing and a piece of pie is on the table, he decides to go inside to console himself and he gets trapped. Trapped in a magical apartment with a witch who needs to be told a scary story every night that she hasn't heard before. There is one other girl trapped there as well, all of the other children have been turned into statues. The young boy and girl team up to try and overcome the witch only to learn that she too was once upon a time a prisoner to another witch who was the original witch in the Hansel and Gretel fairy-tale. Although the witch in

the apartment is scary, the witch from the original fairy-tale is even scarier. Thankfully our 7yr old never watched the movie and our 9 and 10 year olds did not have nightmares, although they were scared and several of the scenes were NOT appropriate for children under the age of 13.

As the world becomes more tolerant of what our children can watch, our standards have become more lax. Had the movie been rated PG-13, our family would not have watched it with the younger children. As it is, we had to skip some scenes that were too violent and gruesome. It was a good reminder that with so much new content on streaming services that is geared towards "children" it's a good idea to always preview new shows before showing them to your children. The movie itself is just okay. A lot of holes in the plot, and not great acting or storyline. It has a few good moments but overall is kind of a trite story that is not super believable and doesn't flow well. I feel it could have been done much better based on the popularity of the books and the use of Krysten Ritter as one of the main characters. You are better off re-watching some family Halloween classics or their release from last year.

**Final Grade: 6/10 (Adequate)**





# COMIC BOOK NEWS





# THE WALKING DEAD DLX #27, FRIDAY #1 AND GRRL SCOUTS: STONE GHOST #1 JOIN LINEUP OF EXCITING LOCAL COMIC SHOP DAY 2021 TITLES

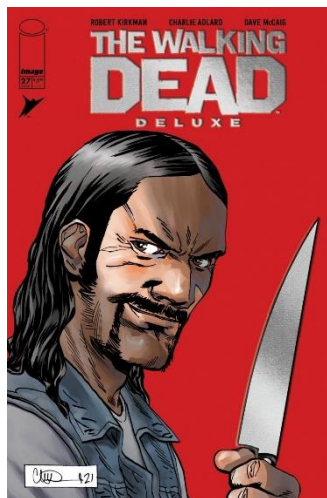


Image Comics is pleased to announce three exciting Local Comic Shop Day editions to join the lineup of releases for next month's celebration of the Direct Market comic shops: *The Walking Dead Deluxe* #27, *Friday* #1, and *Grrl Scouts: Stone Ghost* #1. These three special LCS D editions will not be reprinted – so don't miss out and be sure to support your local

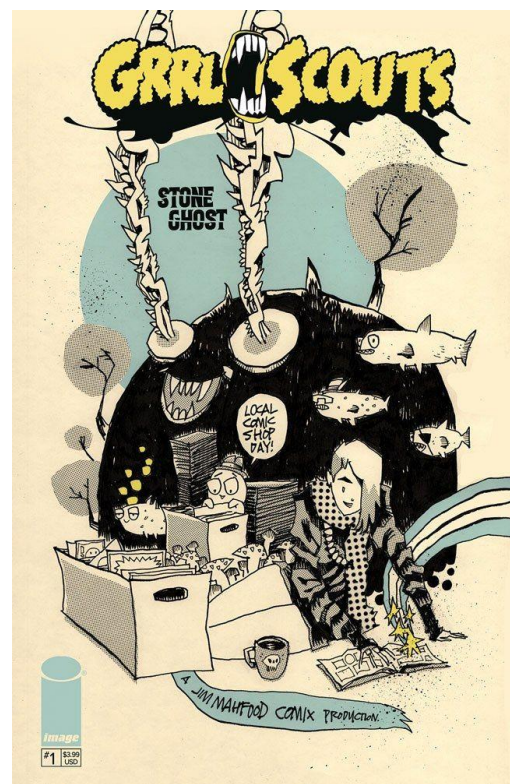
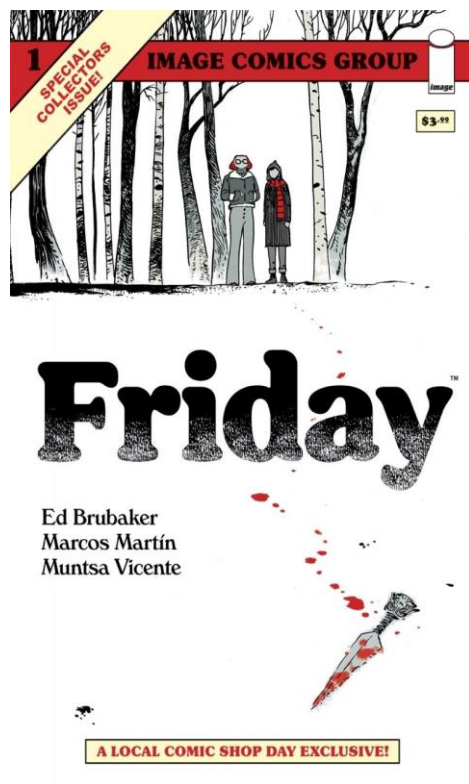
comic shop on Wednesday, November 24 (and every day!) – and visit the [Local Comic Shop Day website](#) for more information about the event.

Robert Kirkman, Charlie Adlard, and Dave McCaig's *The Walking Dead Deluxe* #27 Local Comic Shop Day edition (Diamond Code AUG219266) will feature a foil treatment on the cover logo. This is a key issue in the series that readers won't want to miss out on – Welcome to Woodbury, home to the series' most heinous villain... The Governor.

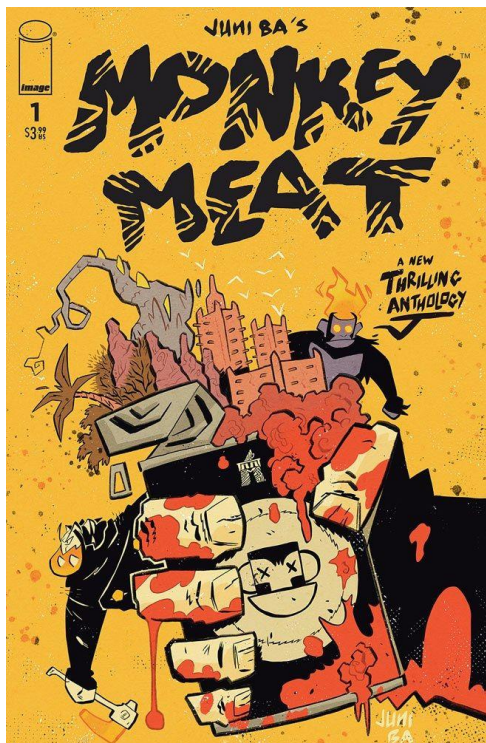
Ed Brubaker and Marcos Martín's *Friday* #1 Local Comics Shop Day edition (Diamond Code AUG219265) presents the first issue of the genre-defying, post-YA masterpiece by award winning creators. Friday Fitzhugh spent her childhood solving crimes and digging up occult secrets with her best friend Lancelot Jones, the smartest boy in the world. But that was the past. Now

she's in college, starting a new life on her own – or so she thought. When Friday comes home for the holidays, she's immediately pulled back into Lance's orbit and finds that something very strange and dangerous is happening in their little New England town... This is literally the Christmas vacation from Hell, and they may not survive to see the New Year.

Jim Mahfood's *Grrl Scouts: Stone Ghost* #1 Local Comic Shop Day edition (Diamond Code AUG219267) will feature a new cover by Mahfood. This new miniseries sees Mahfood's return to his creator-owned GRRL SCOUTS universe. Join Dio, Turtleneck Jones, and Gordi as they face off against the sinister and unpredictable evil of The Teeth! Hilarious, over-the-top, psychedelic adventure will ensue, you guys! Packed from cover to cover (no ads!) with completely unique and eye-poppin' Mahfood art, including bonus comics and behind-the-scenes fun!



# UPCOMING MINISERIES MONKEY MEAT A CHEEKY SATIRE FOR FANS OF "ICE CREAM MAN & CHEW"



Fan-favorite *Djeliya* creator Juni Ba introduces a new fantasy universe in an upcoming miniseries of connected one-shot stories, *Monkey Meat*. This five-issue, action-packed romp will launch from Image Comics in January 2022. The Monkey Meat Company made its fortune selling cans of processed meat all around the world. Using that money to fuel their wacky experiments, they turned their native island into a magical hyper-capitalist hellscape where even demons have to pay rent! "*Monkey Meat* is a passion project born of wanting for us all to poke fun at how dystopian the world is," said Ba. "It's fun

and colorful but most of all aims to be cathartic, and bring you great cartooning!" Follow the lives of the creatures of Monkey Meat Island in this series best described as the storytelling style of W. Maxwell Prince and Martin Morazzo's *Ice Cream Man* meets the satire of Jonathan Layman and Rob Guillory's *Chew*. *Monkey Meat* #1 (Diamond Code [NOV210056](#)) will be available at [comic book shops](#) on Wednesday, January 5. *Monkey Meat* #1 will also be available for purchase across many digital platforms, including Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, and Google Play.



# EMBARK ON A VISUALLY STUNNING, FANTASTICAL NEW ADVENTURE IN FORTHCOMING “*BOLERO*” THIS JANUARY



An all-new sci-fi/romance begins in the upcoming *Bolero* by rising stars Wyatt Kennedy and Luana Vecchio. This visually-stunning five issue miniseries will launch from Image Comics in January

2022. “Page by page, Wyatt and I put our whole love and passion for comics into this miniseries to convey the strong sense of loneliness and despair that many feel after the end of a relationship,” said Vecchio. “Running away might often seem like the simplest solution, but there is no simple solution when dealing with pain” Kennedy added: “I sincerely can’t thank Image enough for giving us the chance to tell this story. I’ve lived with it and these characters for nearly six years, and no one besides the tremendously talented Luana Vecchio could have imbued this with such soul and joy and kept me from rewriting it for the 87th time.” A woman running away from a broken heart discovers a mother-key into parallel universes. The rules are: The key can work on any door. The mother will only let you visit 53 universes. Do not ask to speak to the mother.

Never hop more than 53 times. *Sex Criminals* meets *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in this fantastical, emotional journey featuring a beautifully diverse cast of characters.

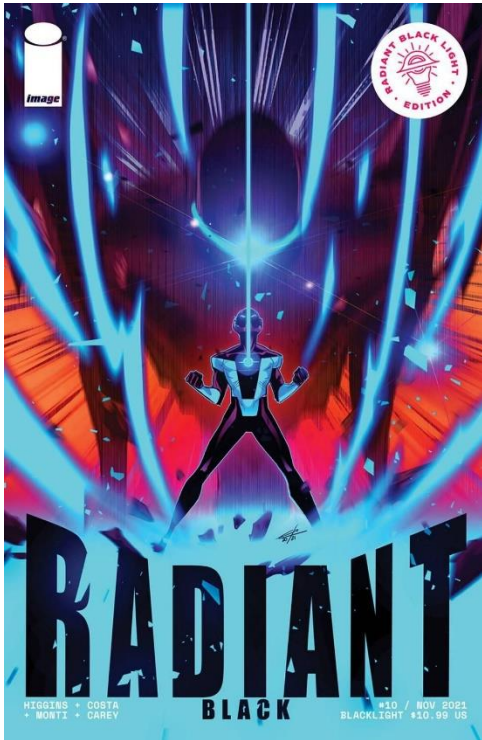
*Bolero #1* will be available at [comic book shops](#) on Wednesday, January 12:

- Cover A by Vecchio - Diamond Code [NOV210047](#)
- Cover B by Jim Mahfood - Diamond Code [NOV210048](#)
- Cover C by Maria Llovet - Diamond Code [NOV210049](#)

*Bolero #1* will also be available for purchase across many digital platforms, including Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, and Google Play



# SHINY NEW PREVIEW PAGES FROM “RADIANT BLACK #10’S” BLACKLIGHT EDITION REVEALED



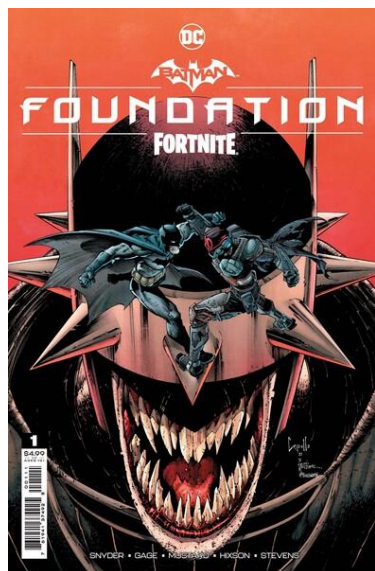
Bestselling series *Radiant Black* by Kyle Higgins and Marcelo Costa will add a gleam of the fantastic to issue #10 of the series with a special Blacklight Edition treatment. Image Comics is pleased to reveal an early look at the issue – which is set to hit shelves this November – ahead of its release.

Printed with blacklight-reactive fluorescent inks – and exclusively recolored for this purpose by the excellent Igor Monti – these pages will cast the story in a whole new light and will never be reprinted. “There’ve been a number of blacklight covers over the years, but very few entire issues made with fluorescent inks. The story in *Radiant Black #10* finds Marshall trapped in Existence, one of the

existentially weirdest domains you’ve ever seen,” said Higgins. “Marcelo, Igor, Becca and I wanted this issue to be heavily experiential, to take readers on the same overwhelming journey as Marshall. The blacklight edition is the ultimate way to experience Existence.” Welcome to Existence. In *Radiant Black #10*, Marshall finds himself trapped in an unimaginable infinity beyond space and time. But how? And why? Can he make it out? And what is Catalyst? *Radiant Black #10* Blacklight Edition (Diamond Code SEP210065) will be available at comic book shops on Wednesday, November 24.



# DC REVEALS NEW DETAILS ON *BATMAN/FORTNITE: FOUNDATION #1!*



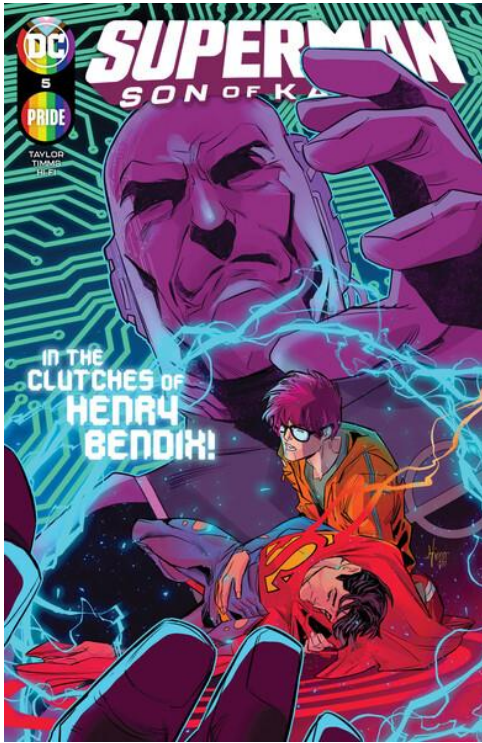
*Available in Comic Shops and Internationally Tuesday, October 26*  
*Print Comic Book Includes Bonus Code for The Batman Who Laughs Player Outfit and Exclusive Themed Fortnite Loading Screen*  
*Exclusive DC/Fortnite Fan Gear Available from Extra Butter NY*

DC Publisher and Chief Creative Officer Jim Lee announced today that DC and Epic Games are teaming up again to combine the worlds of Fortnite and the World's Greatest Super Heroes. Lee confirmed that *Batman/Fortnite: Foundation #1*, arrives at participating comic shops on Tuesday, October 26. This 48-page one-shot also releases day and date in nine international territories: Argentina, Brazil, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Poland, and Spain. Each physical copy of the comic includes a bonus code to download a special Batman Who Laughs player Outfit and exclusive Batman Who Laughs-themed Fortnite Loading Screen. The Batman Who Laughs Outfit will also be available for purchase in the in-game Fortnite Item Shop on the book's release date. *Batman/Fortnite: Foundation #1* follows the successful and critically acclaimed *Batman/Fortnite: Zero Point* series where, upon arriving on the Fortnite Island, an amnesiac Batman battles unknown enemies and must use all his detective skills to solve the

mystery of the Zero Point to find his way home. *Batman/Fortnite: Foundation #1* is co-written by Epic Games Chief Creative Officer Donald Mustard, *Batman/Fortnite: Zero Point* writer Christos Gage and acclaimed *Batman* and *Dark Nights Metal/Dark Nights Death Metal* writer Scott Snyder. Art is provided by Joshua Hixson (pencils and inks), Roman Stevens (colors) and AndWorld Design (letters). Snyder's longtime collaborator, artist Greg Capullo, teams up with Jonathan Glapion and Matt Hollingsworth for the main cover, with variant covers provided by Alex Garner, plus a premium variant cover by Epic Games CCO Donald Mustard (check local stores for availability). Returning to Gotham City after the events of *Zero Point*, Batman is faced with a new mystery and a new arrival. The Foundation, an enigmatic figure from the Fortnite Island, emerges from the depths of Gotham Harbor, and the Dark Knight wants to investigate what he is doing in his city.



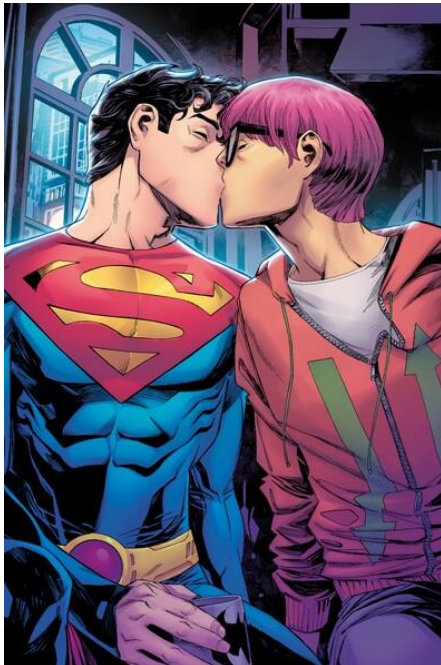
# Jon Kent Finds His Identity in “*Superman: Son of Kal-El #5*”



*Earth's New Superman Comes out as Bisexual*

On November 9th the life of Jon Kent, the Superman of Earth and son of Clark Kent and Lois Lane, takes a bold new direction. "I've always said everyone needs heroes and everyone deserves to see themselves in their heroes and I'm very grateful DC and Warner Bros. share this idea," said writer Tom Taylor. "Superman's symbol has always stood for hope, for truth and for justice. Today, that symbol represents something more. Today, more people can see themselves in the most powerful superhero in comics." Just like his father before him, Jon Kent has fallen for a reporter. After initially striking up a friendship with reporter Jay Nakamura, he and Jon become romantically involved in the pages of SUPERMAN: SON OF KAL-EL #5 from writer Tom Taylor (DARK KNIGHTS OF STEEL) and artist John Timms (HARLEY QUINN). Following a scene where Superman mentally and physically burns out from trying to save everyone that he can, Jay is there to care for the Man of Steel. "I'm incredibly honored to

be working beside Tom on the SUPERMAN: SON OF KAL-EL series showing Jon Kent tackling his complex modern life, while also saving the world from its greatest threats, villains and menaces," said artist John Timms. "We couldn't be prouder to tell this important story from Tom Taylor and John Timms," said DC Chief Creative Officer and Publisher Jim Lee. "We talk a lot about the power of the DC Multiverse in our storytelling and this is another incredible example. We can have Jon Kent exploring his identity in the comics as well as Jon Kent learning the secrets of his family on TV on *Superman & Lois*. They coexist in their own worlds and times, and our fans get to enjoy both simultaneously." SUPERMAN: SON OF KAL-EL takes place in the main continuity of the DC Multiverse. For more information on the Multiverse, visit [dccomics.com](http://dccomics.com).



# Peter Milligan and Michael Allred Reunite to Debut an 'X-Cellent' New Marvel Super Hero Team



The original 'X-Statix' creative team returns in 'X-Cellent' #1 this February!

It's finally here! This February, writer Peter Milligan, artist Michael Allred, and color

artist Laura Allred make their long-awaited return to their iconic X-STATIX saga in X-CELLENT #1! Back in the 2000s, X-STATIX stunned readers with its unique spin on Marvel super heroics and off-beat characters. Now, this hit series is back along with the original creative team for more comic book brilliance overflowing with wit, charm, and high-octane thrills! Get ready for more adventures of X-STATIX starring your favorite heroes from the classic series along with a brand-new team of rivals that will take this one-of-a-kind series to a fresh and exciting new future. They were loved by their adoring fans. They were reviled by the harsh press. They lived, they loved, they fought and they died...a lot—all for the sake of fame. They were the X-Statix, a team of mutant celebrities fighting for a brighter world and an even brighter spotlight! But they're old news now, because there's a new

mutant team that will live harder, love harder, fight harder and die a whole lot harder than those has-beens! Meet...THE X-CELLENT! "I'm thoroughly X-Statix to be working with Mike and Laura Allred again," Milligan said. "And it's been truly X-CELLENT to discover that we've lost none of our alchemical fizz in conjuring up this new comic, this new title, this new beginning: The X-CELLENT!"

"The ol' gang is back together again! Working with Peter Milligan is always a party," Michael added. "The future is looking brighter for 2022 as we get to show the world how we've been playing with our X-Statix Marvel mutants and their new adversaries, THE X-CELLENT! LOVE these characters! Everyone come play with us!" *Don't miss the triumphant comeback of X-STATIX when X-CELLENT #1 arrives in February!*





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# MUSIC STUFF





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## Duran Duran are Working on a Hollywood biopic.



The British new wave band are in talks to make a movie about their remarkable career, with band members Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes and John and Roger Taylor all

involved in negotiations. The film will chart the group's formation in the late 1970s and their success during the following decade. It will also document the reunion of the band's most successful line-up in 2001. Roger, who played drums in the 'Hungry Like the Wolf' band, revealed that the group want rising stars to portray them in the film. He told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "It's something that is under discussion. It is being discussed and we've had different scripts and ideas put forward. "We haven't quite decided on the right one yet. But there are things in development so we will see

where they go. We would love to do something like that and I think something will happen in the next few years." Roger continued: "I would want a really good Hollywood actor to play me." "It would have to be someone who's on the cusp of their career, who's got the right look, the right vibe and that's going to take some time to find I think." he proposed Duran Duran biopic follows the success of the films 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Rocketman - about Freddie Mercury and Sir Elton John respectively.

## Elvis Costello to Release New Album in January



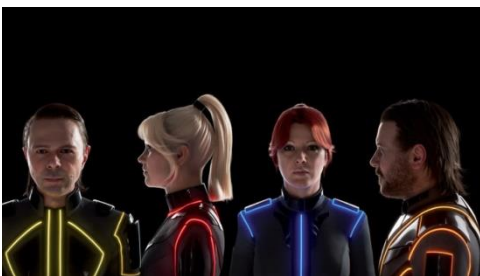
Elvis Costello will release his new album, 'The Boy Named If', in January. The 67-year-old musician and his band, The Imposters, are set to release their new record on January 14

next year, and is preceded by the release of Elvis' new single, 'Magnificent Hurt', which

dropped on Wednesday (27.10.21). Elvis said of his new record: "The full title of this record is 'The Boy Named If (And Other Children's Stories).' 'If,' is a nickname for your imaginary friend; your secret self, the one who knows everything you deny, the one you blame for the shattered crockery and the hearts you break, even your own. "You can hear more about this 'Boy' in a song of the same name." The album has been produced Elvis in collaboration with Sebastian Krysz, and has been billed as a collection of thirteen snapshots that take listeners on a journey from "boyhood" to being told to "stop acting like a child". Elvis explained: "[The album] takes us from the

last days of a bewildered boyhood to that mortifying moment when you are told to stop acting like a child - which for most men (and perhaps a few gals too) can be any time in the next fifty years." The record comes from EMI, with Capitol Records as the release partner in the US. It will be available on vinyl, compact disc and cassette formats or as a download and on streaming services. And Elvis hopes his new record will help people feel "a little less lonely". He said in a press release: "Whatever you take out of these tales, I wrote them for you and to make the life of these songs a little less lonely, if you should care to dive in a little deeper."

## 'This is it': ABBA Will retire After Comeback Album



ABBA will retire after their comeback album. The Swedish pop icons - Agnetha Faltskog, 71, Bjorn Ulvaeus, 76, Benny Andersson, 74, and 75-year-old Anni-Frid Lyngstad - will bow out following the release of their upcoming record, 'Voyage', which features their first new music in almost 40 years ('I Still Have Faith In You' and 'Don't Shut Me

Down'). Benny told The Guardian newspaper: "I never said myself that ABBA was never going to happen again. But I can tell you now: this is it." He added: "This is it. It's got be, y'know." Bjorn agreed: "Yeah." Following the release of the LP on November 5, fans of the 'Dancing Queen' hitmakers have the 'ABBA Voyage' concert experience to look forward to, which will open on May 27, 2022, at the ABBA Arena, a state-of-the-art 3,000 capacity arena located at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London. ABBA will be performing digitally as 'Abbatars' with a live 10-piece band, and Bjorn recently insisted this type of concert means the run could go on forever as they aren't physically required to take to the stage. He said: "Abbatars never tire. They can do 10 shows a day. No private jets. No riders.

No worries about voices." The 'Thank You For The Music' hitmakers have teamed up with an 850-strong team from Industrial Light & Magic - the company founded by George Lucas - to create digital versions of themselves for the concert, using months of motion-capture and performance techniques. Agnetha had previously admitted their future was "uncertain" due to their "minor ailments" and not getting any younger. She said: "I don't really dare to say ... We're a bit older now and have our minor ailments. We struggle on. But I don't dare say, because it's a bit uncertain." "At the moment we feel happy that we got this together and let's hope everything goes well in London at the premiere over there."

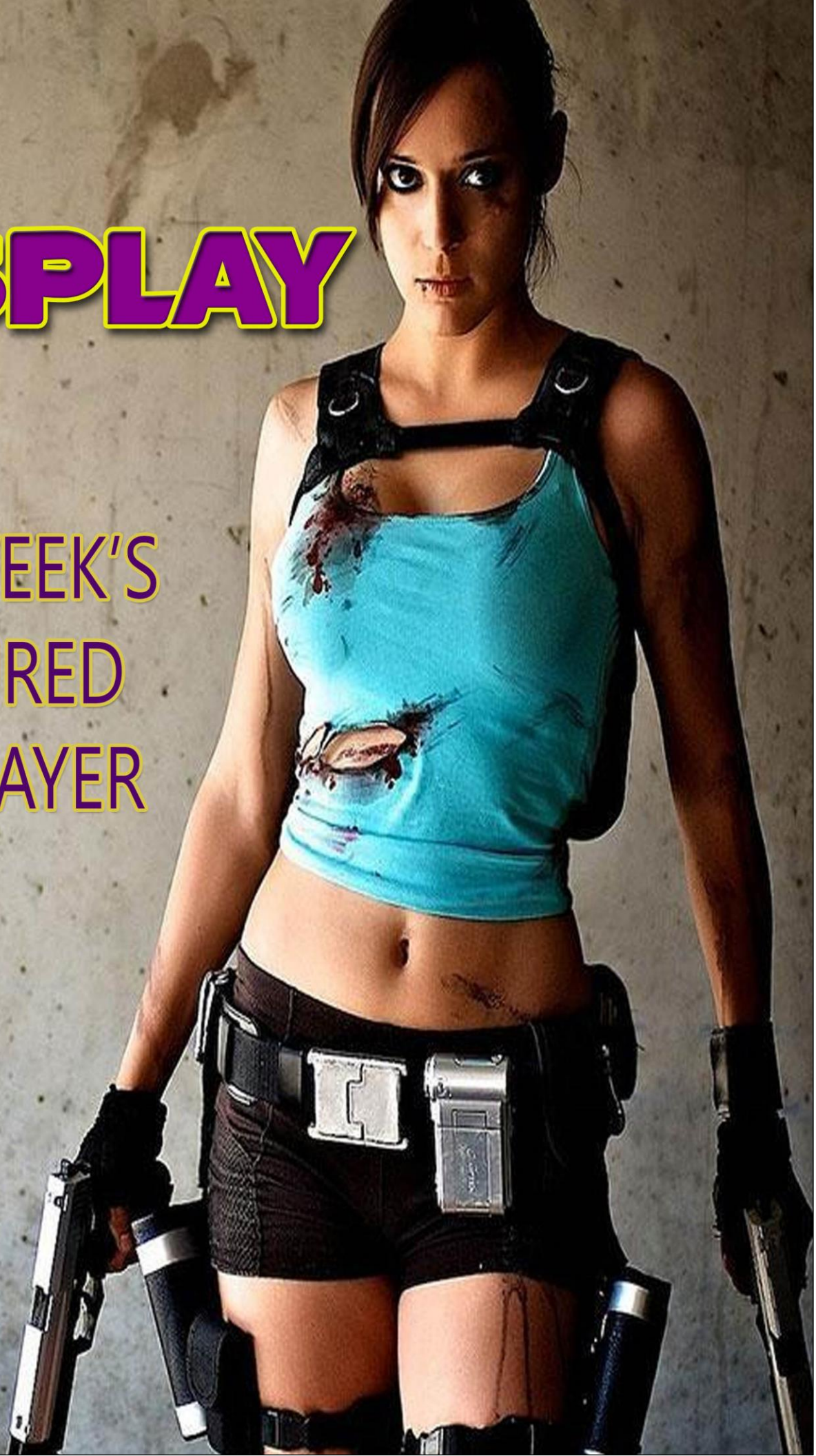
# HALO INFINITE



DECEMBER 8, 2021

# COSPLAY

THIS WEEK'S  
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COSPLAYER





# Erica Muse Cosplay

R O X A S  
STUDIO



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POKÉMON: GODDESS FLAREON

# -ABOUT ERICA MUSE -



*Hunger Games: Katniss Everdeen*

*Erica Muse* is best known for her acting and costuming. She began making costumes in 2005 and acting on stage in 2007. She feels these passions grew, in part, due to being bullied in school. "No one bullied me when I was out of school making costumes, modeling, acting, or performing, because we all had similar dreams!" Her first time on a production set was in 2008 as a tornado victim for F-5, followed by providing wardrobe for Wraith in 2012. After a realization in 2018, she turned her passions towards voice acting, landing her first voice acting role in 2019 as Evelyn in *The Lottery*. She can now be heard in anime, video games, podcasts, web series, and other projects, and be spotted in several films, shows, music videos, and commercials.

At just 8-years-old, she fell in love with costumes while watching her father make his own for Halloween. She began sewing with him at age 12, and begged her mother to let her go to AnimeFest simply because she knew her brother had worn a costume to it. In 2006, she attended her first anime convention as a Lisa Frank inspired neko. Not only was she allowed to wear just about anything, people even appreciated it. After having a school uniform her entire life, conventions quickly became her favorite place to be. Erica attended a private grade school where she had been in choir since age 5, but transferred to a public school and joined theatre in high school after seeing her first musical *West Side Story*. She found a new passion through acting, which led her to joining some groups online and doing background work on sets. Summer after graduation, she was awarded Best Supporting Actress by the Irving Community Theater for her performance as Bethany in *I Wished I Had Waited*. She then shifted her focus to college, waitressing her way through two semesters before taking a

bartending class. The instructor was a videographer looking for extras for music videos. Among them, she appeared in videos with Rhymin' N' Stealin' where she became friends with Josh Martin. She graduated in 2012 juggling jobs to make ends meet while pursuing modeling and acting. Two years later, her father was struck by a truck on his motorcycle. She accepted a full-time position with a company and took care of him until he recovered.

In 2017, Erica was asked to guest at a convention as a cosplayer for the first time. This was a path she had not previously considered, but happily pursued. While guesting at conventions, she crossed paths with Josh Martin again and discovered he was the voice of Majin Buu from the *Dragon Ball* franchise. She suddenly realized she could be a voice for anime, video games, and cartoons like the ones she grew up with. He referred her to Chris Rager's class, where she was advised to attend improvisation classes due to her time away from formal acting. She graduated from John Casablancas Center in 2018 and gained agency representation. While she enjoys every field in the entertainment industry, her dream is to voice characters in anime, video games, and cartoons. "I believe people rely on these mediums to make them laugh, learn, or cry, and share those times with friends and family. I want to be a part of that!" In pursuit, she has attended workshops at OkraTron 5000, StarMan Studios, Sonny Strait Studios, and countless convention panels by Funimation and Gearbox talent. She became a full-time talent working in commercials, voice-over, print, and film in February of 2020.



*Poison Ivy*

# - INTERVIEW -



*Halo: Cortana*

## How did you get into cosplay?

Halloween wasn't just my father and I's favorite holiday. It was my parents' anniversary and my brother's birthday. I have been making costumes since my father taught me in 2005, and cosplaying since going to my first convention with anime club in 2006 and falling in love with the idea of wearing a costume more than once a year. (Fun Fact: My very first convention in 2006 was Anime Fest and, after seeing a bunch of people outside my mom's attached office building dressed in awesome goth clothes, I just wore all of my goth clothes <that I usually got judged for wearing> with a guitar purse my mom got me. I was accidentally dressed just like Misa Amane from Death Note and people kept telling me, realizing I was not familiar with the show, to sign their Death Notes. I felt like a celebrity and have cosplayed ever since. I know now I was killing myself by signing them, which is pretty funny, but you can't make me stop dressing up!) In 2017 I was asked to guest at a convention as a creator for the first time and there was no looking back. I have since been hosted at over a dozen different conventions, run my own panels, and judged cosplay competitions as Scarlet Muse Cosplay. In 2018, I attended 34 conventions and began contributions to Heroic Inner Kids for charity. From running panels and judging competitions to communicating with guests, I am just happy to be involved with so many wonderful events. This has really helped me to progress in the industry and learn quickly. As a happy owner of over 300 costumes, I am always making and acquiring more. Some are bought and altered, some are handmade, and some I just made the accessories for. These decisions are made based on time, cost, and expectations. I aim to keep the cosplay industry positive and inviting to everyone because when I was young it was very much my escape. You can wear or be anyone you want for a couple of days without worrying about what anyone thinks. We are all looking for friends and have our own "interesting" going on. So, if anything, the more interesting, the better. Always

remember "Too many people have opinions on things they know nothing about. And the more ignorant they are, the more opinions they have." -Thomas Hildern

## Who is your favorite character to cosplay and why?

So far I think I had the most fun running around as a gender bent couple Prince Eric and Ariel. I had way too much fun pretending to be a guy all day and hearing my partners ridiculous responses pretending to be Ariel. Lately we've done a lot more cosplay for comedy's sake. Belle will always have a special place in my heart though since it was our first cosplay together and entire families get so excited and interact so well with her. I just love the spark in kids' eyes when we interact with them as Beast and Belle and I encourage them to read more.

## What tips do you have on making a costume?

That's a super loaded question, because it really just depends on what you're making. Your medium and plan of attack can change entirely from one build to the next. Pattern making for anything from foam to fabrics is generally the hardest part for me. Lots of trial and error for the base pattern. So, I highly recommend checking online (Etsy) for patterns to what you are making and walkthroughs (YouTube) for making them. If not Etsy and YouTube, then saran wrap and duct tape yourself, draw it on, then cut it off. Great walkthroughs for this on YouTube too.

## What is your favorite memory of being a cosplayer?

I was in line at Marvelous Nerd Year's Eve to get Jason Mewes autograph dress as Red Sonja and Kevin Zorbo tapped my shoulder and gave me an autographed picture of him as Kull the Conqueror, compliment my cosplay and clearly joking said to check out the codpiece. Meanwhile I felt someone touching my shoulder again. Turned and saw stickers of Mewes on my cape followed by Jason Mewes saying I got Mewes juiced! The entire chain of events was just epic. I was both star struck and laughing so hard I was crying. My cheeks were sore for hours!

## What advice do you have for fans getting into cosplay?

Cosplay characters because you want to, not just because of popularity. You never know which ones will catch on and be something people really wanted to see the way you did it. You don't have to make your cosplay. Yes you will feel accomplished and proud of making it, but if that isn't your thing, it's also about having fun with others who enjoy the same fandom. So wear whatever you decide to wear loud and proud! No I'm not saying you have to literally be loud, especially if you want to be in character and that just isn't, but be confident and own your decisions.

## What is the best part of being a voice actor?

For me, it's knowing the characters I helped bring to life will inspire people or help them through hard times! Big or small roles, they played a part!

## Who has been your favorite to voice?

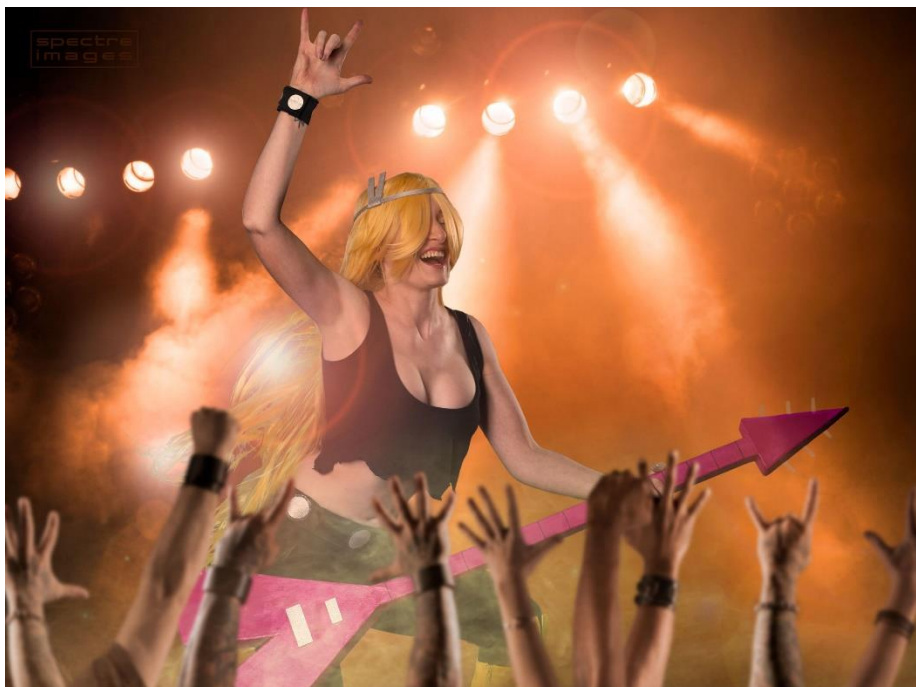
So far, Gwyn for Selaco. A new video game on the Doom engine set to release next year.

## What advice do you have for someone getting into voice acting?

Check this out and this will guide you in the right direction. <https://ericamuse.com/i-want-to-voice-act/>

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

Knowledge. Knowledge of how to make anything I may need, of what anyone is thinking, and of the future. This would create money, power, and a force to be reckoned with.



*Dexter's Laboratory: Justice Friends: Valhallen*

# Beauty and the Beast: Belle



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# Strange Radio Waves Emerge from the Direction of the Galactic Center



Astronomers have discovered unusual signals coming from the direction of the Milky Way's Center. The radio waves fit no currently understood pattern of variable radio source and could suggest a new class of stellar object.

"The strangest property of this new signal is that it has a very high polarisation. This means its light oscillates in only one direction, but that direction rotates with time," said Ziteng Wang, lead author of the new study and a PhD student in the School of Physics at the University of Sydney. "The brightness of the object also varies dramatically, by a factor of 100, and the signal switches on and off apparently at random. We've never seen anything like it." Many types of star emit variable light across the electromagnetic spectrum. With tremendous advances in radio astronomy, the study of variable or transient objects in radio waves is a huge field of study helping us to reveal the secrets of the Universe. Pulsars, supernovae, flaring stars and fast radio bursts are all types of astronomical objects whose brightness varies. "At first we thought it could be a pulsar -- a very dense type of spinning dead star -- or else a type of star that emits huge

solar flares. But the signals from this new source don't match what we expect from these types of celestial objects," Mr Wang said. The discovery of the object has been published today in the *Astrophysical Journal*. Mr Wang and an international team, including scientists from Australia's national science agency CSIRO, Germany, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Spain and France discovered the object using the CSIRO's ASKAP radio telescope in Western Australia. Follow-up observations were with the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory's MeerKAT telescope. Mr Wang's PhD supervisor is Professor Tara Murphy also from the Sydney Institute for Astronomy and the School of Physics. Professor Murphy said: "We have been surveying the sky with ASKAP to find unusual new objects with a project known as Variables and Slow Transients (VAST), throughout 2020 and 2021. "Looking towards the centre of the Galaxy, we found ASKAP J173608.2-321635, named after its coordinates. This object was unique in that it started out invisible, became bright, faded away and then reappeared. This behaviour was extraordinary." After detecting six radio signals from the source over nine months in 2020, the astronomers tried to find the object in visual light. They found nothing. They turned to the Parkes radio telescope and again failed to detect the source. Professor Murphy said: "We then tried the more sensitive MeerKAT radio telescope in South Africa. Because the signal was intermittent, we observed it for 15 minutes every few weeks, hoping that we would see it again. "Luckily, the signal returned, but we found that the behaviour of the source was dramatically different -- the source

disappeared in a single day, even though it had lasted for weeks in our previous ASKAP observations."

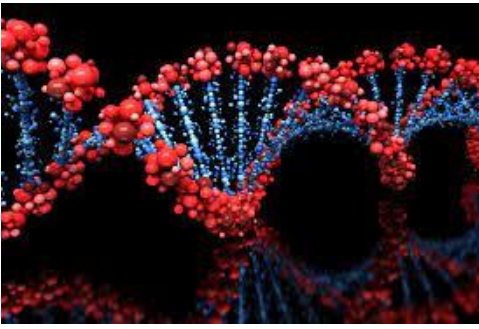


However, this further discovery did not reveal much more about the secrets of this transient radio source. Mr Wang's co-supervisor, Professor David Kaplan from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, said: "The information we do have has some parallels with another emerging class of mysterious objects known as Galactic Centre Radio Transients, including one dubbed the 'cosmic burper'. "While our new object, ASKAP J173608.2-321635, does share some properties with GCRTs there are also differences. And we don't really understand those sources, anyway, so this adds to the mystery." The scientists plan to keep a close eye on the object to look for more clues as to what it might be. "Within the next decade, the transcontinental Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope will come online. It will be able to make sensitive maps of the sky every day," Professor Murphy said. "We expect the power of this telescope will help us solve mysteries such as this latest discovery, but it will also open vast new swathes of the cosmos to exploration in the radio spectrum."

Video showing an artist's impression of signals from space: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J\\_eGd9Ps9fE&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_eGd9Ps9fE&t=5s)



# What Makes Us Human? The Answer May be Found in Overlooked DNA



Our DNA is very similar to that of the chimpanzee, which in evolutionary terms is our closest living relative. Stem cell researchers at Lund University in Sweden have now found a previously overlooked part of our DNA, so-called non-coded DNA, that appears to contribute to a difference which, despite all our similarities, may explain why our brains work differently. The study is published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell*.

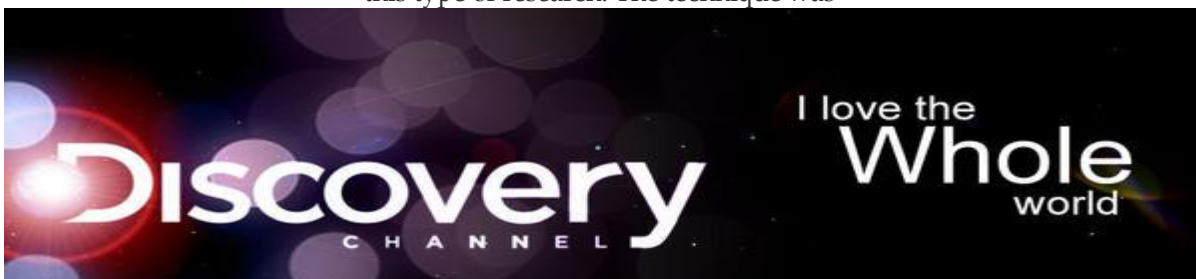
The chimpanzee is our closest living relative in evolutionary terms and research suggests our kinship derives from a common ancestor. About five to six million years ago, our evolutionary paths separated, leading to the chimpanzee of today, and *Homo Sapiens*, humankind in the 21st century. In a new study, stem cell researchers at Lund examined what it is in our DNA that makes human and chimpanzee brains different -- and they have found answers. "Instead of studying living humans and chimpanzees, we used stem cells grown in a lab. The stem cells were reprogrammed from skin cells by our partners in Germany, the USA and Japan. Then we examined the stem cells

that we had developed into brain cells," explains Johan Jakobsson, professor of neuroscience at Lund University, who led the study. Using the stem cells, the researchers specifically grew brain cells from humans and chimpanzees and compared the two cell types. The researchers then found that humans and chimpanzees use a part of their DNA in different ways, which appears to play a considerable role in the development of our brains. "The part of our DNA identified as different was unexpected. It was a so-called structural variant of DNA that were previously called "junk DNA," a long repetitive DNA string which has long been deemed to have no function. Previously, researchers have looked for answers in the part of the DNA where the protein-producing genes are -- which only makes up about two per cent of our entire DNA -- and examined the proteins themselves to find examples of differences." The new findings thus indicate that the differences appear to lie outside the protein-coding genes in what has been labelled as "junk DNA," which was thought to have no function and which constitutes the majority of our DNA. "This suggests that the basis for the human brain's evolution are genetic mechanisms that are probably a lot more complex than previously thought, as it was supposed that the answer was in those two per cent of the genetic DNA. Our results indicate that what has been significant for the brain's development is instead perhaps hidden in the overlooked 98 per cent, which appears to be important. This is a surprising finding." The stem cell technique used by the researchers in Lund is revolutionary and has enabled this type of research. The technique was

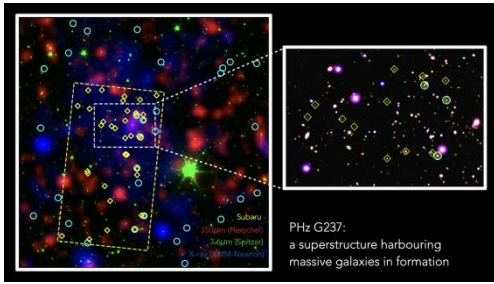
recognized by the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. It was the Japanese researcher Shinya Yamanaka who discovered that specialized cells can be reprogrammed and developed into all types of body tissue. And in the Lund researchers' case, into brain cells. Without this technique, it would not have been possible to study the differences between humans and chimpanzees using ethically defensible methods. Why did the researchers want to investigate the difference between humans and chimpanzees? "I believe that the brain is the key to understanding what it is that makes humans human.



How did it come about that humans can use their brain in such a way that they can build societies, educate their children and develop advanced technology? It is fascinating!" Johan Jakobsson believes that in the future the new findings may also contribute to genetically-based answers to questions about psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, a disorder that appears to be unique to humans. "But there is a long way to go before we reach that point, as instead of carrying out further research on the two per cent of coded DNA, we may now be forced to delve deeper into all 100 per cent -- a considerably more complicated task for research," he concludes.



# Astronomers Discover Massive Galaxy 'Shipyard' in the Distant Universe

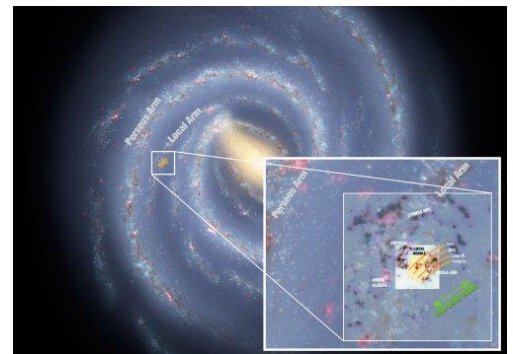


Even galaxies don't like to be alone. While astronomers have known for a while that galaxies tend to congregate in groups and clusters, the process of going from formation to friend groups has remained an open question in cosmology.

In a paper published in the *Astronomy & Astrophysics* Journal, an international team of astronomers reports the discovery of a group of objects that appear to be an emerging accumulation of galaxies in the making -- known as a protocluster "This discovery is an important step toward reaching our ultimate goal: understanding the assembly of galaxy clusters, the most massive structures that exist in the universe," said **Brenda Frye**, an associate professor of astronomy at the University of Arizona's Steward Observatory and a co-author of the study. The Milky Way, home to our solar system, belongs to a galaxy cluster known as the Local Group, which in turn is a part of the Virgo supercluster. But what did a supercluster such as Virgo look like 11 billion years ago? "We still know very little about protoclusters, in part because they are so faint, too faint to be detected by optical light," Frye said. "At the same time, they are known to radiate brightly in other wavelengths such as the sub-millimeter." Initially discovered by the European Space Agency's Planck telescope as part of an all-sky survey, the protocluster described in the new paper showed up prominently in the far-infrared region of the electromagnetic spectrum. Sifting through a sample of more than 2,000 structures that could be in the process of becoming clusters, researchers came across a protocluster designated as PHz G237.01+42.50, or G237 for short. The observations looked promising, but to confirm its identity required follow-up

observations with other telescopes. Led by Mari Polletta at the National Institute for Astrophysics in Milan, Italy, the team conducted observations using the combined power of the Large Binocular Telescope in Arizona, which is managed by UArizona, and the Subaru Telescope in Japan. The team identified 63 galaxies belonging to the G237 protocluster. The original discovery was published in a previous paper, and follow-up observations were also obtained using archival data, the Herschel Space Observatory and the Spitzer Space Telescope. "You can think of galaxy protoclusters such as G237 as a galaxy shipyard in which massive galaxies are being assembled, only this structure existed at a time when the universe was 3 billion years old," Frye said. "At the same time, the genealogy may be closer than you think. Because the universe is homogeneous and the same in all directions, we think that the Milky Way may have docked at a protocluster node similar to G237 when it was very young." At first, observations of G237 implied a total star formation rate that was unrealistically high, and the team struggled to make sense of the data. The G237 protocluster seemed to be forming stars at a rate of 10,000 times that of the Milky Way. At that rate, the protocluster would be expected to rapidly use up its stellar fuel and subsequently settle down into a complex system similar to the Virgo supercluster. "Each of the 63 galaxies discovered so far in G237 was like a star factory in overdrive," Frye said. "It's as if the galaxies were working on overtime to assemble stars. The rate of production was unsustainable. At such a pace, the supply chains are expected to break in the near future, and in a way that permanently shuts down the galaxy shipyard." Such high yields could only be maintained by a continuous injection of fuel, which for stars is hydrogen gas. Frye said that would require an efficient and unbroken supply chain that drew in unreasonably large amounts of fresh gas to fuel the star-forming factories. "We don't know where that gas was coming from," she said. Later, the team discovered that some of what it was seeing came from galaxies unrelated to the protocluster, but even after the irrelevant observations were removed, the total star formation rate remained high, at least 1,000 solar masses

per year, according to Polletta. In comparison, the Milky Way produces about one solar mass each year. "The picture we have pieced together now is that of a successful galaxy shipyard, which is working at high efficiency to assemble galaxies and the stars within them and has an energy supply that is more sustainable," Frye said. All galaxies in the universe are part of a giant structure that resembles a three-dimensional spider web shape called the cosmic web. The filaments of the cosmic web intersect at the nodes, which equate to the galaxy shipyards in the analogy. "We believe that the filaments mediate the transfer of hydrogen gas from the diffuse medium of intergalactic space onto these hungry, newly forming protocluster structures in the nodes," Frye said. Pointing to future research, Polletta said:



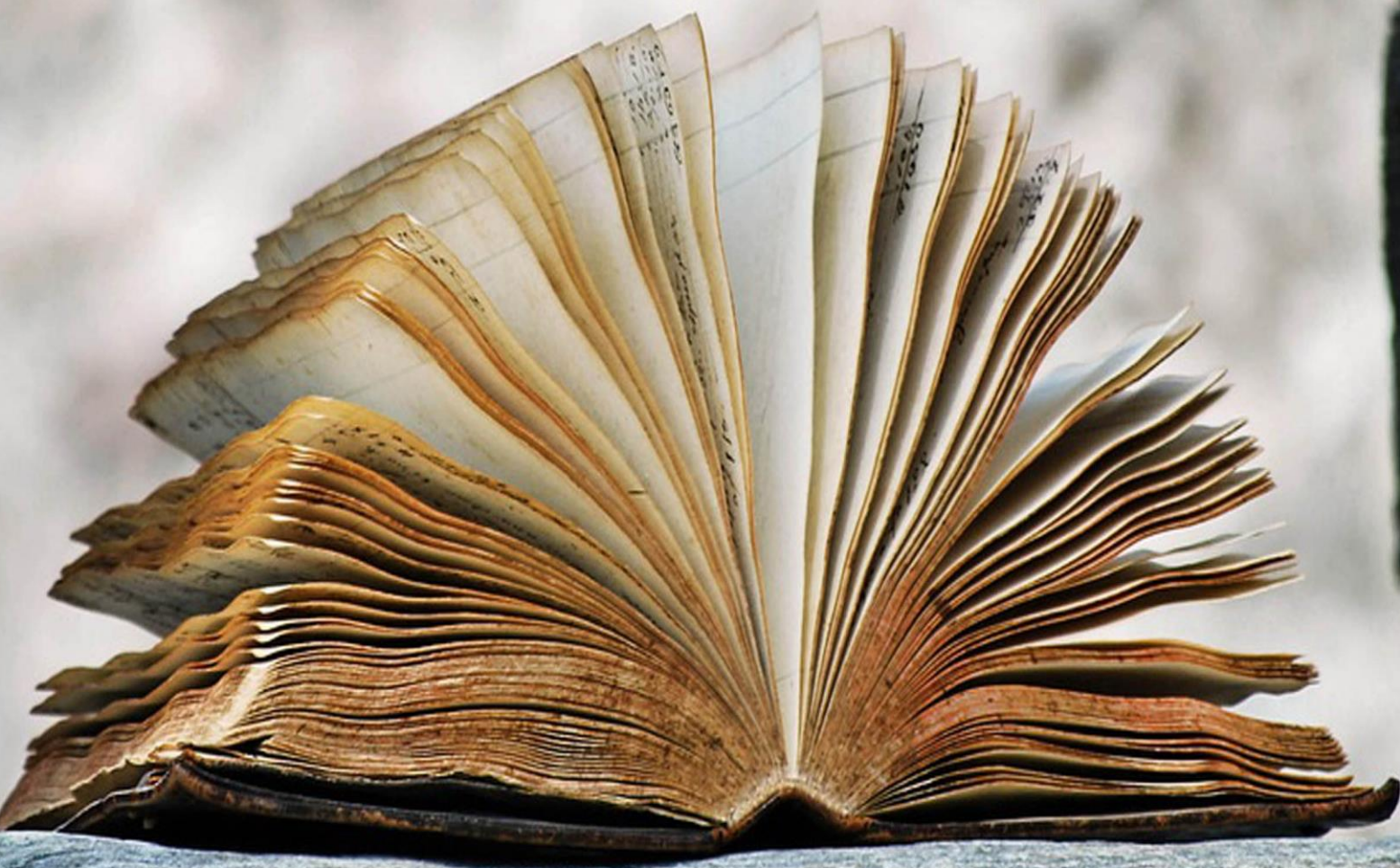
"We are in the process of analyzing more observations on this and other Planck protoclusters with the goal of tracing the gas that gives birth to these newly forming stars and feeds the supermassive black holes, to determine its origin and explain the observed extraordinary activity." Frye said she is looking forward to combining data from the Large Binocular Telescope with observations from NASA's the James Webb Space Telescope, to be launched in December. "Protoclusters offer an opportunity to investigate key questions in astronomy that only this new observatory can answer," she said, "such as what mechanisms drive the prodigious star formation, and when will the hydrogen supply run out, forcing this galaxy shipyard to close its doors and turn into a supercluster similar to the one our Milky Way is in?"



FRESHLY BREWED  
**STARBUCKS**



# Storytellers





# HUBRIS

By Ellen Drebin

*What* is the price of fame? How far would you bend your ethics to hold onto the power that fame entails? What follows is the story of two men who found out.

A receptionist covering the front desk for a resort area physician turned to her boss and asked, "Am I the only one seeing double?"

"What do you mean?"

"That patient you just saw... you didn't notice how much he looked like the guy who was in yesterday?"

"Which one?"

She fiddles with the computer in front of her. "Tom Bradford."

"You think Bradford looks like Edward Wong?"

"A dead ringer, boss. Good looking guys and they're the same age. I checked."

"Watch out with the sleuthing, Lisa. Their files are confidential."

"Okay, I will from now on. But I already looked. They're from completely different places....but they were here to see you with the same complaint."

"Interesting."

"Could you ask them if they're adopted?"

"Bradford and Wong? No way"

She sighs. "Okay, boss. My Dad always said I was too nosy."

As soon as he's gone back to his office, she calls her best friend. "Hey, Stacy, what's your take on this? You know how strong I've always been on facial recognition."

"True. You're amazing in that regard."

"Yeah, wish it were a marketable skill. Anyway, there are two guys coming in to this office who are identical. They're the same age but they come from different places."

"Let it go, Lis. Don't be a jerk... like when you fixed your cousin up with a guy who had just mistreated her on Tinder."

"Well, I scheduled their follow-up visits for the same day and time."

"Holy smoke If being a busy body is a crime, you're the prime example."

The next time Tom Bradford comes to the office, Lisa delays him at her desk ...until Edward Wong walks in. They gape at each other.

Edward Wong is more reticent but Tom Bradford blurts out, "May I ask your name?"

"Edward Wong. And yours?"

"Tom Bradford. I'm an engineer from Seattle."

"I'm an engineer from Vancouver."

"Were you born there?"

"No, in China."

For a few moments, there's silence as the mental wheels spin. Both men are extremely bright but it's Ed Wong who has the background to get suspicious first. He asks Tom, "Do you know both of your parents?"

"Only my late Dad. He was career military."

"Was he ever stationed in China?"

"Yes. A long time ago."

"About when you were born?"

Growing pale, Tom nods.

"The one child policy."

"Why do you bring that up?"

"Because I don't know my father."

"What are you getting at?"

"It's pure speculation, of course, but could we have been twins?"

"Holy smoke"

The two bright men, with life experiences that are world's apart, both suddenly sense that certain unspoken mysterious holes in their lives may finally becoming filled in. Tentatively, they reach out and shake hands.

"Nice to meet you," Tom says inadequately.

"Same here," Ed replies, bowing slightly.

The following day, Tom meets with his father's estate lawyer, Eli Green, and asks, "Did my Dad ever tell you anything about having another son?"

Eli looks at him curiously. "No, but he did insist on some rather oblique wording in his will that I couldn't fathom. Why do you ask?"

"I met a man yesterday who looks just like me...I mean really identical."

"Where?"

"At a doctor's office. This other guy and I are nothing alike, I'm sure, because he was raised in China. He was likely poor and he may have been faced with prejudice against Amerasians."

Eli's face is impassive. "What's your conjecture?"

"My lookalike thought that, If my father fell in love with his mother...a Chinese national... they could have freaked out about the one child policy when she had twins."

"So... your Dad could have brought you here. What did your father ever tell you about your mother?"

"He was evasive...got very military whenever I brought it up. Said he loved her very much but that a political situation made the relationship impossible... so we just had to deal with it. We were two guys on our own."

"Interesting. So what do you want from me, Tom?"

"To sort out the legal ramifications. My father's years in the defense industry after his retirement from the military were profitable."

"That's true."

"How does this new development affect his estate?"

Eli ponders the precedents involved for a few minutes. He looks at Tom. "What would mean more to you.... money or having a brother?"

"I think having a brother. I was so lonely growing up." Then, in a completely unexpected change of subject, Tom asks, "Do you think my eyes look Asian?"

"Perhaps a bit more than your father's. Your hair is certainly darker. But I've always thought you were both unusually handsome men." Eli's glances up. "Does this other man have kids?"

Tom's hand flies to his forehead. "Geez, I have no idea. Why?"

"Well, it could be important. Say he's got eight kids. The way your Dad

worded the will, "I bequeath to my heirs equally," his estate would have to be split ten ways."

"Holy shit " They stare at each other. Then, laughing, Tom takes a tube from his pocket and jokes, "Could I borrow some of your spit to send in for the DNA test?"

"Hey, seriously, raised as an only child, you have been a bit spoiled."

"But I want to get to know my brother."

And so a modern fairy tale began. The initial period of getting acquainted was euphoric. Both men felt a sense of connection that they had never had with any friend before. There was a spring in their steps as they experienced boundless energy. The special communication said to exist between twins soon developed. They could predict each other's reactions. Life was good.

Before a year had passed, Tom talked Ed into relocating to Seattle. Engineers with different specialties, they decided to use their joint inheritance to fund a start-up that would combine Tom's skill in robotics with Ed's in the fast-moving field of

artificial intelligence. Both raced to work each morning with excitement and a feeling of new possibilities. They decided to produce AI-powered, robotic valets for doing household chores, solving problems and even offering companionship.

Start-ups in Japan were doing similarly creative things. But theirs was an immediate hit. Tom's wife, a marketing/PR pro with great connections, introduced it as no more threatening than a beloved pet... and equally good for one's safety and mental health.

Success suited the brothers well and they learned fast. Before long, both were living in breathtaking homes, driving high end cars, dining often in five star restaurants and becoming generous philanthropists. Magazines loved doing covers of the two photogenic twins who were impossible to tell apart.

Within a few years, talk began among political backers that one of them should run for public office. They decided it should be Tom as he was native born. They soon announced his candidacy and the campaign attracted generous donations.

Tom was so well-known and personable that he seemed unbeatable, An attractive young groupie came to work in his campaign office and, before long, started to flirt with him. A few times when they were alone there, she came on to him. It may not have been his idea but she was fresh-faced and young and worshipped him. One night,

they moved to his private office in back and nature took its course. He tried to keep from getting too involved... until she told him she was pregnant and demanded that he leave his wife and marry her. When he refused, she grabbed her coat and

told him she was heading to the newspaper office across the river to spill the beans.

Days later, a supermarket tabloid prints a photo that appears to show a scuffle with Tom pushing her off the bridge.. . whether by intent or accident. Someone in the vicinity at the time caught the moment on his cell phone camera. Cable T.V. shows and late night comics are on it endlessly and mercilessly. They now can't seem to get enough of humiliating and taking down a star whom they had previously helped make.

Tom is devastated. Ambition and the lust for power have taken hold of him. He is like Icarus flying too close to the sun. From the even tempered, modest engineer he had once been, he has become a wealthy, entitled celebrity. He is now addicted to stardom. He has tasted fame and he can't let go.

Racking his brain, he sees only one possible way to still win and preserve his place in the limelight. So, that very day, he creates anonymous bots that insist the photo was actually of Ed.

An outraged Ed rushes over the following morning while Tom is still in the shower. When Tom saunters into the room without a care in the world, Ed asks, "Where does this end? 'Confucius say, 'When anger erupts, consider the consequences.'"

"I have," Tom replies confidently. "You've got to take the long view here. No jury could convict either of us 'beyond a shadow of a doubt.' I'm certain you're safe."

"But you're not," Ed says. "Your mother would be ashamed of you and, in your hubris, you've overlooked the superior, investigative skills of artificial intelligence."

"What are you talking about?"

"AI has already analyzed the data on your Fiitbit."

"How the hell could you get your hands on that?"

"I had your personal valet fetch it for me and I transmitted the data to the police. You underestimated how great our product is, Tom."



# A Poem for Her

By

T. Gordon Mayhall

In the silence of her beauty  
I consider it my chivalrous duty  
To learn every curve of her face  
To know every bit of her grace  
To know why she screams at night  
And the pain she keeps out of sight  
To know why she sings out loud  
And she drifts in the clouds  
Why she sits around to find life funny  
And how she has no real care for money  
How I can lose her myself in her smile  
And stare at her for quite a while  
To hear her sweet lingering voice  
To learn why she made that choice  
To look through her eyes and see  
Exactly what she sees in me.



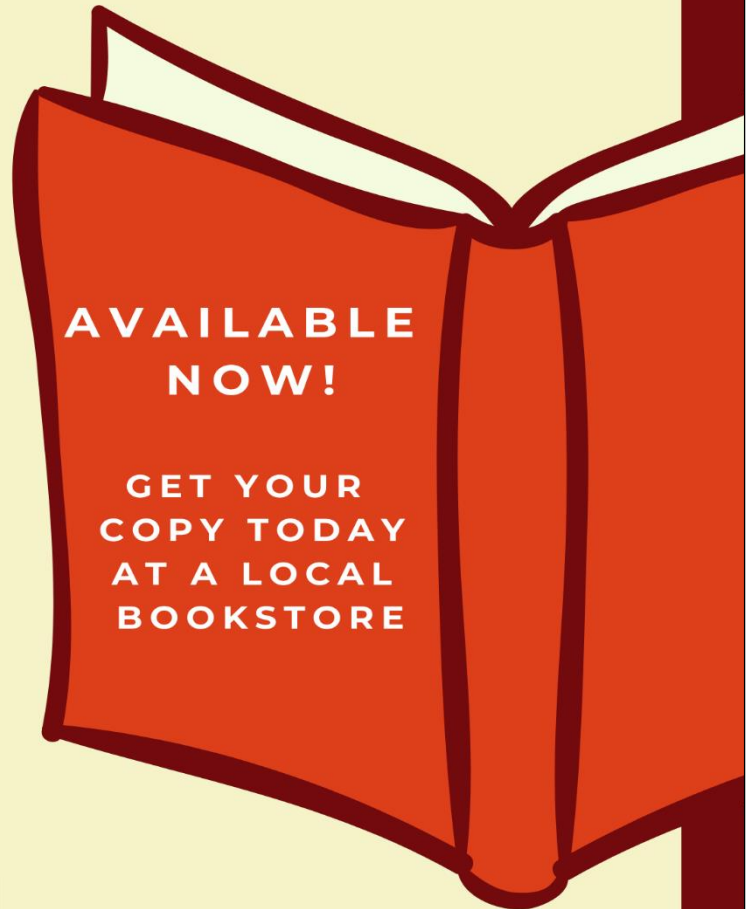
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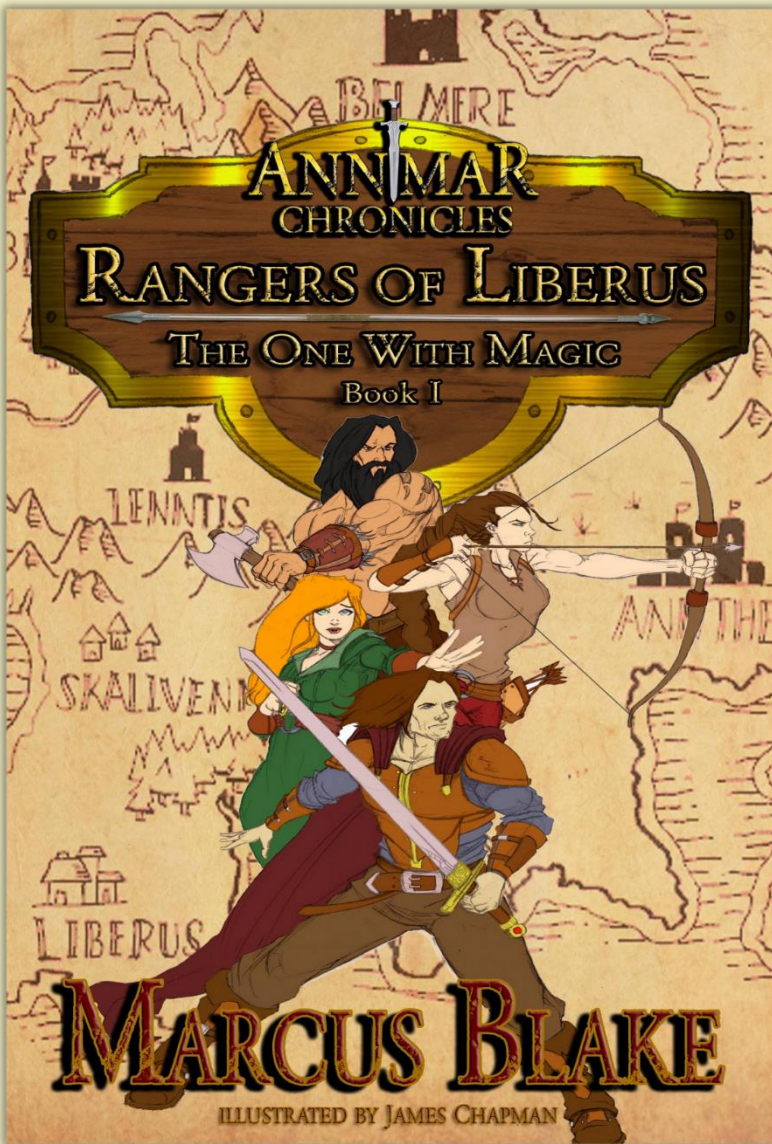
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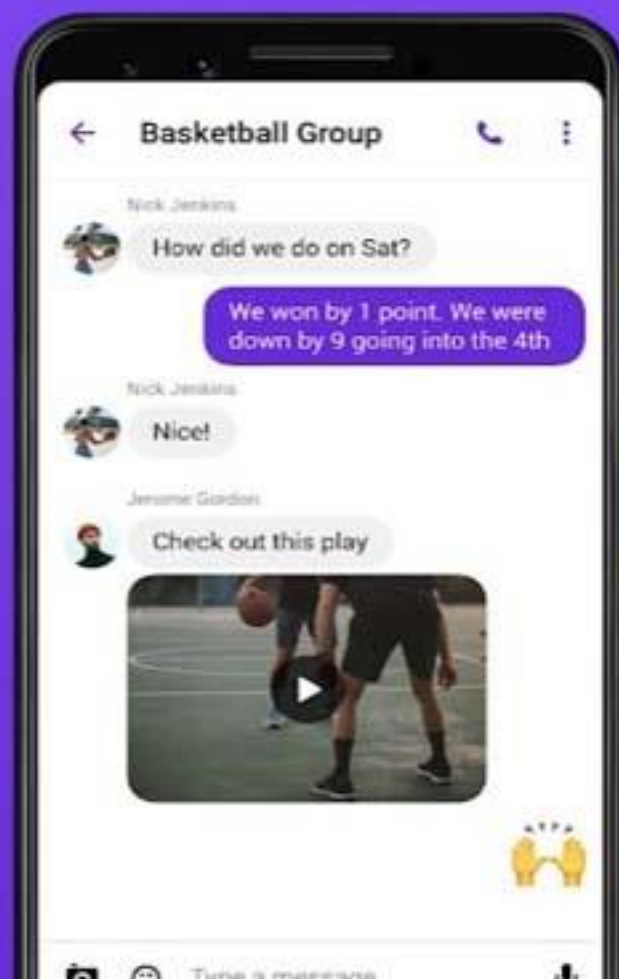
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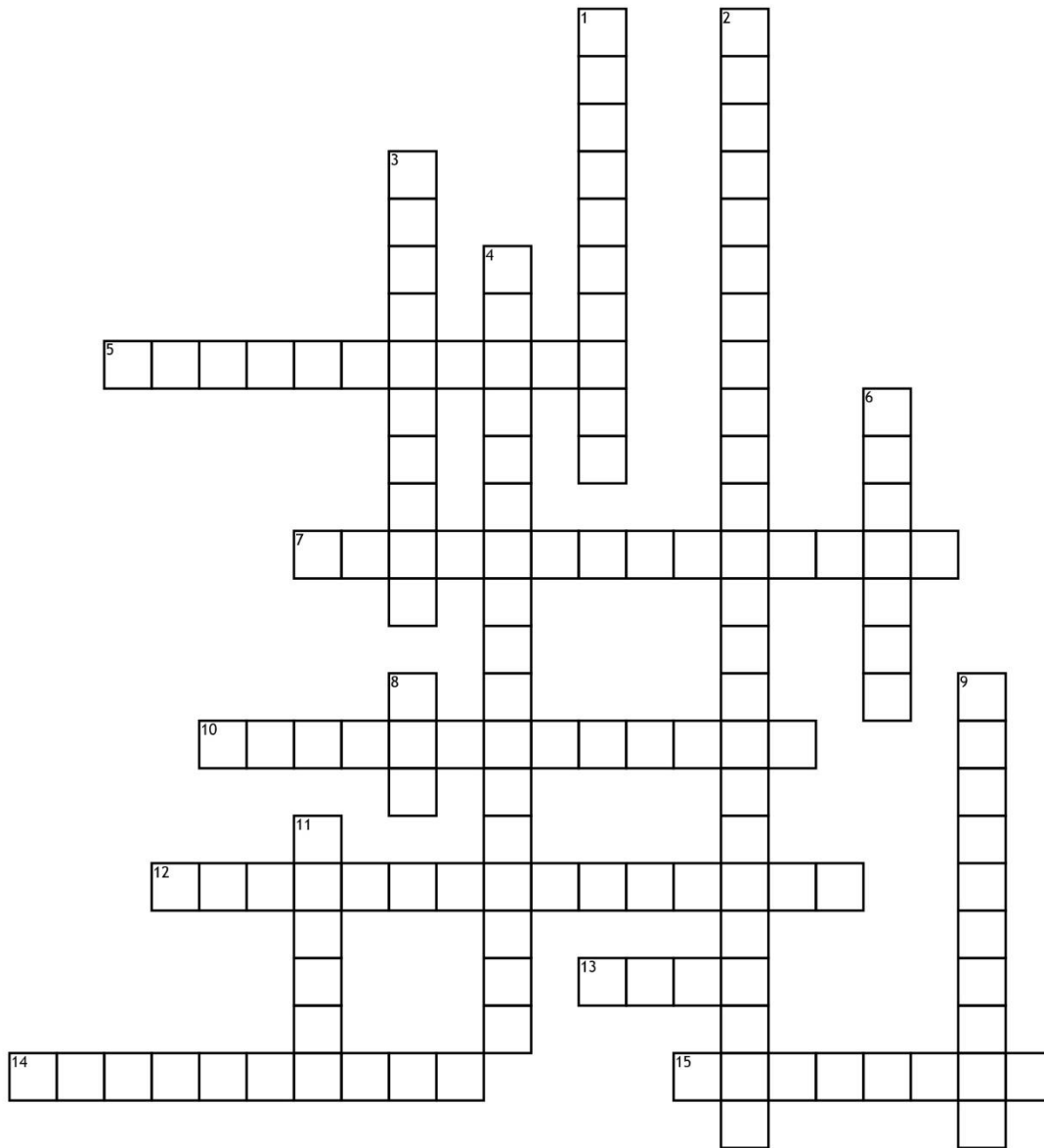
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## Across

5. This movie will have you climbing walls and is a head turner  
 7. Star an old unforgettable creepy truck  
 10. The star wore the mask but didnt play the sport

12. A brother and sister driving home through isolated countryside for spring break

13. A great white shark terrorizes people

14. Here's Johnny!!

15. Nothing sweet about this man

## Down

1. Mother and son opens a Motel

2. FreddyKrueger

3. Head full of Pins

4. cult of children believe everyone over the age of 18 must be killed.

6. Trucker handle was Candycane

8. Several people meet their fate in this movie

9. An evil doll

11. Evil lurking parentless child

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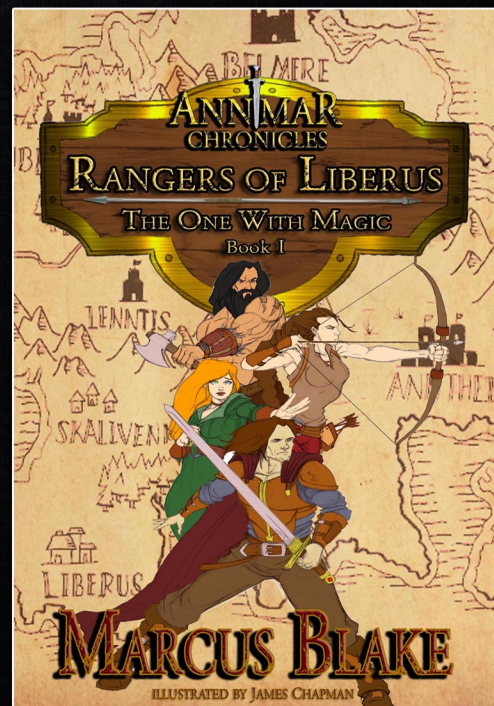
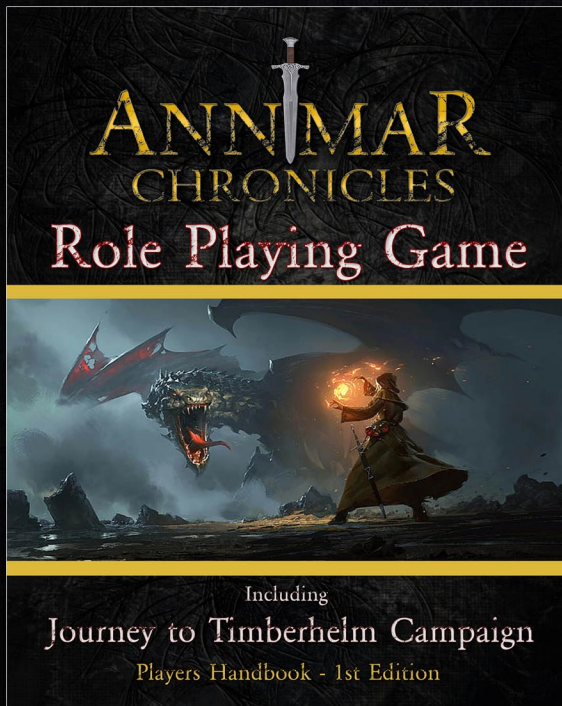
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