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Fist will change everything

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Upside Down
preview

LIFE FROM MARS

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writers go horror

INSIDE iZOMBIE

Cast and creators
talk Season 3

MAJOR ACCESS

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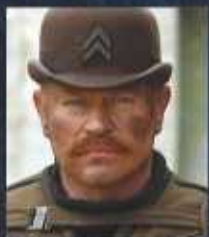
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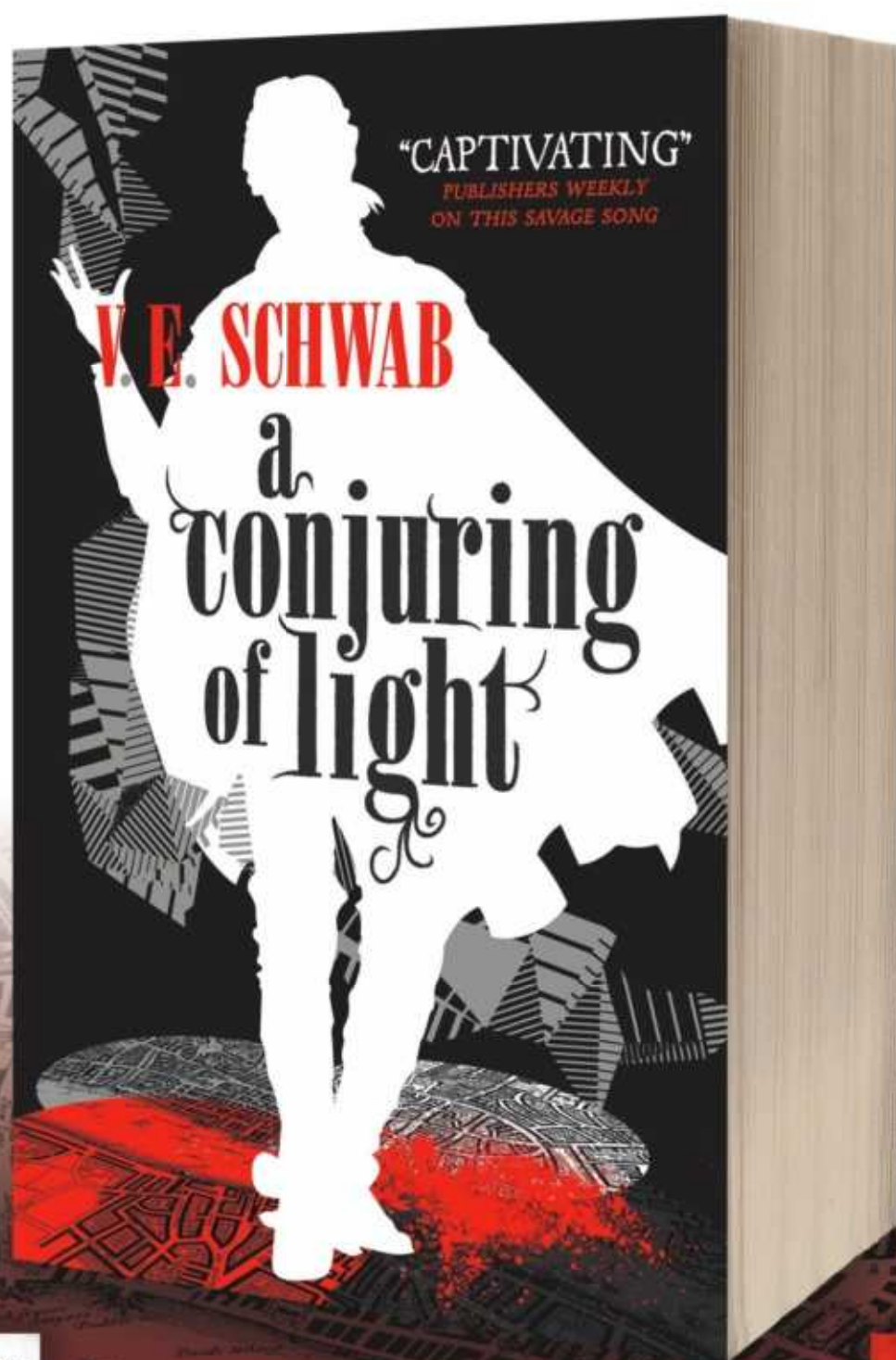
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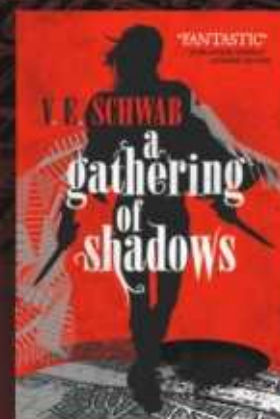
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KIRKUS ON *A DARKER SHADE OF MAGIC*



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Our genre has always found a way to address social and political concerns, and the artist's ability to confront important issues head-on feels more vital than ever in our current climate.

So it seems fitting that this issue sees a wide variety of near-future visions and front-page fears: Jordan Peele's social thriller *Get Out* is a chilling horror about what the writer-director calls America's "post-racial lie", *Deadpool* writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick tell us about finding inspiration for sci-fi horror *Life* in real-world science, and every time someone mentions hacking in the *Ghost In The Shell* trailer we get a bit itchy.

Speaking of *Ghost In The Shell*, Rupert Sanders' live-action remake of Mamoru Oshii's classic has been one of the most hotly-debated blockbusters in recent memory. We talk to the director and star Scarlett Johansson about their vision for the film, and we offer a list of our favourite anime movies to help you go beyond the classics.

Of course, it's not all political. This issue is

bursting with action, chills and brain recipes. We talk to the new generation of Power Rangers about channelling the *Breakfast Club* vibes, go behind the scenes of *Iron Fist* to find out what the fourth Defender is bringing to the table, talk to the *iZombie* team about our favourite undead show, and get under the skin of the best body horror of the year with *Raw*.

This issue's TimeWarp section is a similarly eclectic feast. We revisit the bewitching and beloved *Carnivale* with our Complete Guide, talk to Stephen Manley about working under Leonard Nimoy's direction in *Star Trek III*, and relive Arnie's battle with his greatest foe with *Predator*.

On a personal note, this is my first issue as Editor of SciFiNow and I'm thrilled to have the chance to keep bringing you the best in science fiction, fantasy and horror. It's a privilege.


Jonathan Hatfull
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT IT COMES AT NIGHT

We're suckers for a good poster, so Trey Edward Shults' *It Comes At Night* grabbed our attention with a vengeance. The indie horror stars Joel Edgerton, fast becoming one of our favourite actors, as a father trying to protect his family from an apocalyptic threat in their isolated home. When another family shows up, things get messy... The cast is excellent (including Riley Keough, Carmon Ego and Christopher Abbott) and the trailer managed to scare the crap out of us while revealing nothing. We can't wait.

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We peer into the Upside Down to see what's coming to Hawkins for Halloween.

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The *Battlestar* veteran on her new horror and what brought her back to sci-fi.

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We talk to the *Guardians* star about being a genre icon and *Avatar 2*.

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The stars tell us about cast bonding, Rita Replusa and *Breakfast Club* vibes.

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Ryan Reynolds in space? The *Deadpool* writers want to scare you.

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It's time to celebrate the best zombie show on TV. The creators and cast tell us how Season Three is going to shake things up.

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This French coming-of-age body horror has made people faint. It's also brilliant.

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Kong is back, but can he live up to his own marketing campaign?

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One last ride for Hugh Jackman's Wolverine...

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TIMEWARP

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SCARJO TALKS GHOST IN THE SHELL



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Your first look at the next issue of SciFiNow

MEET THE TEAM

Q. What was the very first anime film that you watched?



Jonathan Hatfull
Editor

A. Akira
My tiny little mind was blown when Neo-Tokyo EXPLODED.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer

A. Pokemon: The First Movie
I know I've seen it but I remember nothing.



Jon Wells
Art Editor

A. Laputa: Castle in the Sky
My first entry into the world of Ghibli!



Marcus Faint
Art Editor

A. Dragonball Z
Epic battles with arguably more epic hair.



Rachael Harper
Sub Editor

A. My Neighbour Totoro
I still have the theme song in my head! "Totoro... Totoro!"

SciFiNow THE HOTTEST NEWS FIRST

PORTAL

Your essential, trustworthy
and unrivalled guide to the
latest genre happenings



WORDS
JONATHAN
HATFULL

SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK

Stranger
Things 2
breaks
out of the
Upside Down...



The Battlestar icon talks her new horror and returning to sci-fi



Everything you need to know about Han's solo spin-off movie



Avatar 2, Guardians 2 and being green: we catch up with the genre star



Digging for clues about Stephen King's multiverse TV series

Yes, there were a lot of trailers at the Superbowl, but the one that we watched before even getting out of bed on that Monday morning? *Stranger Things* Season Two (sorry, Gaga). Production has been underway for a while now, as the second season started filming last November, but plot details have been kept in the kind of darkness you'd find in the scariest corners of the Upside Down. However, with the new teaser and new images from Netflix, some details have emerged...

BAD NEWS BYERS

Obviously, just because Will's back, that doesn't mean he's okay. We can expect Noah Schnapp's character to have a bigger part to play this year, as Joyce (Winona Ryder) tries to regain some sense of normality. She's doing that by dating a nerdy friend from school, played by genre favourite Sean Astin (*The Lord Of The Rings*, *The Goonies*), and we're going to hazard a guess that dating someone because you think they'll bring stability to your life will not work out well.

BURKE IS BACK?

One of the things we're most excited about is a starring role for everyone's favourite corporate asshole from *Aliens*, Paul Reiser. When Reiser was cast as Dr Owen, sent to clean up the terrible mess created by Dr Martin Brenner (Matthew Modine), we assumed that

he'd be playing a similar kind of slimy bad guy. However, it shouldn't be much of a surprise to learn that the Duffers are going to play with our expectations...

"We want people to have those debates like: 'Do you trust that guy or is he Burke?'" Ross Duffer told *EW*.

"Is he a good guy or a bad guy? To be honest, I've only read a few scripts so I still don't know and I'm not sure they know," added Reiser. "I think part of what they were tickled by was, to whatever extent people know me from *Aliens*, they're automatically going: 'Oh this guy is no good'. I don't know where they're going with it but it's a fun thing to play."

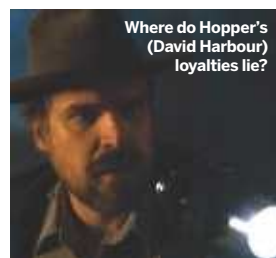
Leaving aside the idea that the Duffers may not know where the show's going (we're sure he's exaggerating...), the idea that Season Two is not as straightforward is appealing.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

What we do know is that Mike (Finn Wolfhard), Dustin (Gaten Matarazzo), Lucas (Caleb Laughlin) and Will have to deal with a new danger in the form of 17-year-old Billy (Dacre Montgomery). The Duffers have made no secret of their love for Stephen King, and one thing that the first season was missing was a bully to show us that people are just as scary as monsters. That's where Billy comes in.

His sister Max (Sadie Sink), on the other hand, is the opposite. She'll be a new addition to the team and the cause of some romantic rivalry between

"IT'S NOT CLEAR HOW MUCH OF WHAT WILL IS SEEING IS REALLY THERE"



Where do Hopper's (David Harbour) loyalties lie?

Dustin and Lucas. Max is described as "a tough, confident 13-year-old girl whose appearance, behaviour, and pursuits are more typical of boys than of girls in her era", and she never goes anywhere without her skateboard. She's also almost certainly the subject of the first episode title of Season Two: 'Madmax'.

HERE BE MONSTERS

Next to the *Ghostbusters* outfits, the most thrilling part of the teaser was the glimpse of a huge creature. However, Will's experiencing some kind of post-traumatic stress disorder and it's not clear how much of what he's seeing (red skies, monsters) is really there. Still, one thing that is real is Dustin's new pet monster, The Pollywog. Yes, we want to see what that looks like too.

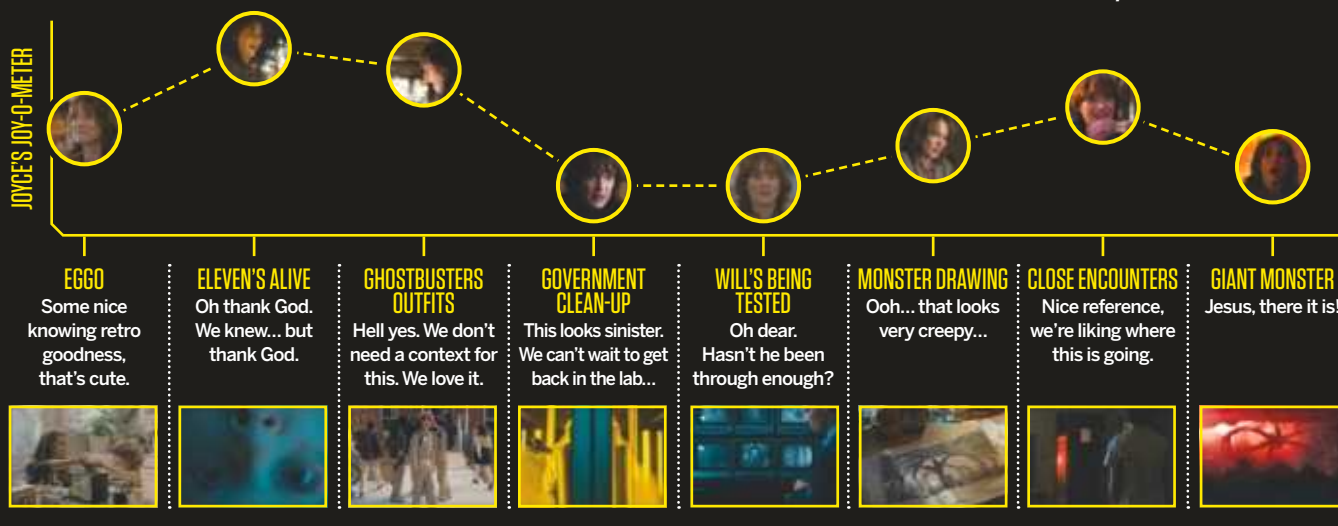
Stranger Things Season Two will be available on Netflix on 31 October.



Newcomer Max (Sadie Sink) will see that Hawkins is...unusual

STRANGER THINGS SUPERBOWL SPOT BREAKDOWN

Our reactions through the medium of Joyce's face





Death Race 2050 has that classic Roger Corman feel to it

AND AWAY THEY GO!

Manu Bennett fastens his seatbelt for Roger Corman's *Death Race 2050*

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

Death Race 2050 is colourful carnage with tongue impaled in cheek. It's *Wacky Racers* on steroids – and with more than a bit of subtext, considering that the film takes place in a 'United Corporations of America' featuring a bafflingly coiffed president that bears a resemblance to a certain leader of the free world.

When we spoke to star Manu Bennett – who follows in the track marks of David Carradine, Jason Statham and Luke Goss as crowd-pleasing competitor Frankenstein – he insists that the tone of this piece was aimed more at paying tribute to *Death Race 2000*. "This is about celebrating the Roger Corman original. It was built and stylised to be a reflection of that film, with a few tweaks that would make it a bit more modern: having Malcolm McDowell as the President was an added bonus."

Another plus point was the chance to work with Corman. "He's a

machine," remarks Bennett. "Getting to work with him is getting to work with a mentor. I was sitting with him talking about a movie I was involved with. He said: 'When I was making *Death Race 2000*, Sylvester Stallone was telling me about this boxing movie he was working on, so good luck to you!' It's moments like this that make you realise you're caught up in the magic of the Roger Corman momentum."

Filming took place in Lima, Peru – where the majority of the extras hailed from – which presented its own challenges, as Bennett closes with a welcome dose of toilet talk. "I drank 15 bottles of Gatorade during the day and never went to the toilet once, because I was sweating it all out!" Well, whatever it takes to win.

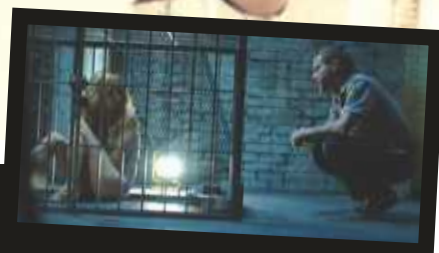


Death Race 2050 will be available on DVD and Blu-ray on 20 March from Universal Pictures.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Dominic Monaghan on his new horror

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



When Dominic Monaghan first read the script for horror-thriller *Pet* he knew he'd found a gem: "*Pet* was one of those scripts that comes around every so often and you realise that you have to do it," Monaghan says. "I've done films that have done well and I've done films that no one will ever see... but my whole career has been based on good scripts."

In the film, the *Lost and Lord Of The Rings* star plays Seth, a creepy guy working at an animal control centre who, by way of a series of poor choices, ends up keeping his high school crush Holly as a pet in a cage.

"Seth's one of those slightly uncomfortable characters that, when he meets someone, he hangs his life and future on that person," he continues. "It just turns

him into a weirdo. I mean, it's not hard to be a weirdo; you just have to not have a lot of friends and spend a lot of time on your own. That gets you halfway there."

As well as being a horror film, Monaghan also describes *Pet* as a love story. "It's Seth's version of love and Holly's version of love," he tells us, "but there's also darkly twisted black comedy, hopefully so people can have a laugh."

When it comes to horror, ghosts and ghouls have no affect on Monaghan: "The ones that get into my head are the ones where you think, 'I'm not too far away from that actually happening to me!' You know, I could be a creepy guy and meet a girl and make the wrong decisions..."



Pet is out on DVD on 13 March

BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

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GET OUT

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JORDAN PEELE

IN CINEMAS MARCH 17

GET OUT

There's not a lot to look at on the first poster for Jordan Peele's creepy horror *Get Out*, but it certainly gets the job done. That tagline ("Just because you're invited, doesn't mean you're welcome") is perfect, and the fact that star Daniel Kaluuya isn't making eye contact makes it that little bit more unsettling. It's a damn creepy poster for a damn creepy film.

WEIRDEST



KONG: SKULL ISLAND

We keep going on about how great the posters for *Kong: Skull Island* have been, but the award for 'weirdest *Kong: Skull Island* poster (and weirdest poster this month in general)' goes to this Japanese version. There's nothing about it that we don't adore, though, for all the right reasons. It's simply magnificent.



MOST ARTISTIC

RUNNER UP



LOGAN

Obviously bar the first trailer, this is the piece of *Logan* promotional material that has managed to get us hyped-up the most. Wolverine goes Seventies...

RUNNER UP



POWER RANGERS

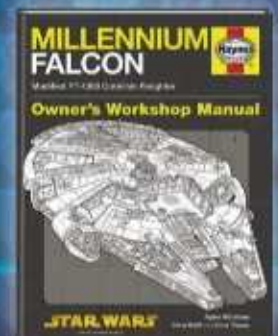
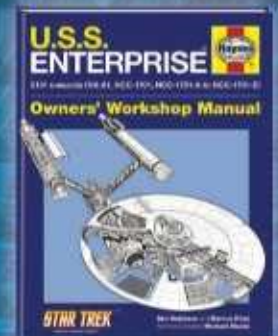
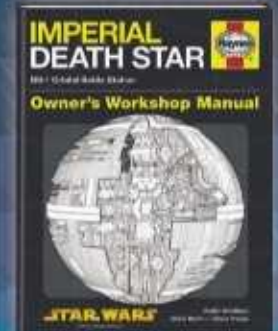
Tell us you were able to look at this *Power Rangers* poster without feeling an overwhelming sense of excitement and nostalgia. We don't believe you.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

This *Guardians Of The Galaxy* poster is kind of a funny one. You see, at a first glance, it's wonderful; the nostalgic cassette-inspired design, the retro colours and the fonts all scream personality. In fact, we would actually love this framed proudly on our wall... if it wasn't for that Baby Groot head badly photoshopped in the bottom left corner. Why ruin a great thing, *Guardians*? Why?



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FIVE THINGS WITH KATEE SACKHOFF

The star of *Don't Knock Twice* tells us about her new horror movie and returning to sci-fi

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 Not your average leading role

In *Don't Knock Twice*, Katee Sackhoff plays a recovering addict who's returned to England to reconnect with the daughter she gave up for adoption years ago. Unfortunately, said daughter is being hunted by an evil spirit. "While I didn't have anything in common with this person, I respected where she came from and who she was at the point in her life where the story kicks off," she explains. "I thought it was an interesting challenge, to try to make people understand that we may not all be proud of where we came from, but you can be proud of you're at."

2 An American actress in London

Although the film is set in London, Sackhoff is not doing an English accent, much to her disappointment. "I personally thought I was going to show up and do a British accent for it, which I was really excited about!" she laughs. "And then [director Caradog W James] and I talked and he was adamant that I didn't have a British accent. So I was like, 'Oh, come on, all the Brits play Americans, why can't I do it?' and he said, 'No, she disappeared and came back,' and it made sense."

3 Did somebody call for a Doctor?

Despite *Don't Knock Twice*'s London setting, the film's production took place in Cardiff, which Sackhoff took to right away. "I absolutely loved it, it was so beautiful and on the weekends it was rugby central!" she enthuses. "Which was quite funny, because dating a Kiwi you have to bleed All Blacks at all times, so I've learned rugby very quickly." Of course, Cardiff isn't just rugby central, it's also the home of a certain sci-fi icon. "Everyone was like, 'You should be the new Doctor Who!'" she laughs. "And I thought 'I could live in Cardiff for a while!'"

4 Wow them with the ending

Sackhoff will soon return to the US to shoot the final season of drama *Longmire*, which will be the second show she's worked on to be given a final season to wrap things up properly. "*Battlestar* was my fourth series and before that all my series got cancelled after one season or didn't even make it to one season," she remembers. "So by *Battlestar*, I was 21 years old and already old and jaded and thinking this shit wasn't going to work! I've been blessed in my career that the two series I've done that have run their full length both produced this family-like atmosphere."

5 Back to sci-fi

Sackhoff's next project will see return to the genre that made her an icon. "I'm doing movie called *Origin Unknown*," she enthuses. "It's the first proper sci-fi project I've done since *Battlestar*, because it's kind of hard to just do any sci-fi!" And much like her *Battlestar* role, it wasn't written with a woman in mind. "It was written for a 55-year-old man, so I felt like, 'Oh, I understand how to do this, I've done this before!'" she laughs. "It feels very comfortable for me to come into a science fiction project that was written for a man!"

Don't Knock Twice is in cinemas and on demand 31 March and on DVD 3 April

OSAMU TEZUKA'S

METROPOLIS

メトロポリス

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"IT WAS ABOUT DOING THE MOST GRUESOME THING POSSIBLE AS SUBTLY AS POSSIBLE"

Nicolas Pesce tell us about his chilling horror *The Eyes Of My Mother*

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

It's a funny thing, watching writer-director Nicolas Pesce's debut *The Eyes Of My Mother*. It's creepy, it's chilling, and it's pretty shocking in places. It's also beautifully made and, actually, incredibly restrained. Homaging the likes of *Psycho* and *The Night Of The Hunter*, Pesce uses old-fashioned techniques to rattle his audience.

"That's sort of the fun of it all for me – seeing where and when you can push buttons and how hard you can push," Pesce laughs. "It was about doing the most gruesome thing possible as subtly as possible and letting the audience do the work to scare themselves."

The film stars Kika Magalhaes as Francisca, a young woman who experiences a traumatic event that leaves her seeing the world a little differently, and doing some pretty shocking things...

"I wanted to explore a character

that was particularly dark and ask the audience to be with her and sympathise with her no matter how dark she may be," he explains. "No matter how much violence is in the film, it's really a film about loneliness and finding those real emotions that we can all connect to."

It's definitely a stylised film, and a gorgeous one at that, with stark black-and-white cinematography. "I've always been in love with Gothic American horror films from the Fifties and Sixties, all the Vincent Price and William Castle movies, Bette Davis, Joan Crawford..." he enthuses. "But I also wanted it to be an expression of how *she* sees the world. Her world is devoid of colour and warmth. I wanted to whisk you into a world that feels more like a Béla Tarr film than a torture porn movie."

The Eyes Of My Mother is in UK cinemas on 24 March.



© Magnet Releasing



The Eyes Of My Mother hints at more than it shows



Everyone is in for one hell of a bad night in *The Void*

THE MOUTH OF MADNESS

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

When you combine Carpenter and Lovecraft, you get *The Void*...

It was definitely our intention to make the kind of horror film that we aren't seeing anymore." We're talking to Jeremy Gillespie and Steven Kostanski about their intense, claustrophobic and gory horror *The Void*, which blends Carpenter-style tension and Lovecraftian fear to create a real treat for horror fans.

"We also wanted to make a horror movie that has a grander scope than most," adds Kostanski. "A movie that has that Lovecraftian dread that's beyond human comprehension."

This is bad news for the people trapped in an understaffed hospital in the middle of nowhere surrounded by masked cult members, and it gets worse when they realise it's not just the people outside they have to worry about...

"All our movies have similar arcs where they start out small and then they end as big and as crazy as possible," enthuses Kostanski. "As an audience member I love when a movie starts out one way and ends in a way that I could never have predicted. There's nothing scary about knowing what's happening in a movie and waiting for the



characters to catch up to you."

The word 'Lovecraftian' comes up again and again during the interview, and while we don't want to give away the film's surprises (and brilliant practical effects), it all started with one that got away: "I was working on a movie and on the floor above us, Guillermo del Toro was working on *At The Mountains Of Madness*," remembers Gillespie. "In an interview del Toro said: 'We're doing Lovecraftian creatures like nobody has ever seen before, and I couldn't help wondering what that would be like. Now we get lots of people coming up to us freaking out and saying it's the kind of movie they haven't seen in a long time.'"

The Void is released in UK cinemas on 31 March.

We've been treated to loads of brilliant trailers of late – here are four of the best...

TEASERS AND TRAILERS

WORDS
POPPY-JAY PALMER

TRANSFORMERS: THE LAST KNIGHT



1 Enemy

Things are sinister from the get-go, and Anthony Hopkins' narration doesn't help matters.



2 Poor Bumblebee

Bumblebee seems to be having a rough time – in fact, a lot of fans have their money on him dying.



3 Big Daddy

"Your world is dying, Optimus Prime. Do you seek redemption?" "My maker, I do." Goosebumps.



4 Fight to the death

Optimus Prime and Bumblebee fight it out. But why? A cue from *Transformers: The Movie* perhaps?

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2



1 Lock and stock

We feel it's pretty important to highlight the bit where Gamora shoots stuff with this machine gun.



2 He didn't use 'fricking'

Rocket Raccoon and Baby Groot join forces with *Vol. 1* antagonist Yondu.



3 Meet the new team

The Guardians' team is now bigger than ever. This shot has got us feeling things.



4 Drax tried, guys!

We're excited for more Drax. Groot was MVP in *Vol. 1*, but Drax could come out on top this time.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: SALAZAR'S REVENGE



1 The dead take command

Capitán Salazar's creepy-ass skeleton ship picks a fight with Queen Anne's Revenge.



2 O Capitán! My Capitán!

Our first proper look at Salazar confirms we really wouldn't want him peering over our shoulders...



3 Welcome, newbies

Skins' Kaya Scodelario makes her first appearance as astronomer Carina Smyth.



4 Turner back time

Will Turner has changed a lot since *At World's End*. He's now Davy Jones. And dead.

THE LEGO NINJAGO MOVIE



1 Family values

"The forces of good and evil are related..." Yep. This is story about a dad gone bad.



2 Dragon warrior

The only thing more awesome than a flying dragon is a flying dragon made of LEGO.



3 Secret ninjas

Jackie Chan's Sensei Wu has taken a solemn oath to form a secret ninja force.



4 Shark attack

Check out this flying LEGO shark! We wouldn't want to step on one of those with bare feet.

6 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT THE HAN SOLO ANTHOLOGY FILM

Han's past comes to light in the upcoming Star Wars prequel

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

IT DOESN'T HAVE A TITLE

We usually worry when a film with a release date just over a year away remains untitled, but as it's *Star Wars* we'll let it off the hook. Maybe it should be *Han Solo Strikes Back*. Actually, we're too excited to care what it's called.

ALDEN EHRENREICH AS HAN SOLO

He's not scruffy looking, and has no prior experience in nerf-herding (as far as we know), but we're confident that Ehrenreich will rock it as Han Solo. He's not as well known as others that were up for the role but that could help him *become* the character.



© Dan Doperalski

DONALD GLOVER AS LANDO

There's probably no one else on Earth that could have been cast as a young version of Lando Calrissian and inspired quite the same reaction as Donald Glover. There's something about him as a charismatic gambler, card player and scoundrel that just feels right.



© NASA/Bill Ingalls

THE DIRECTORS ARE RAD

The *LEGO Movie*'s Phil Lord and Chris Miller are stepping up to direct, which pretty much guarantees that the film will be a riot. Say goodbye to the sombre vibes of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. Lord and Miller will no doubt give Han his roguish sparkle.



© David Shankbone

THE CAST IS FAB

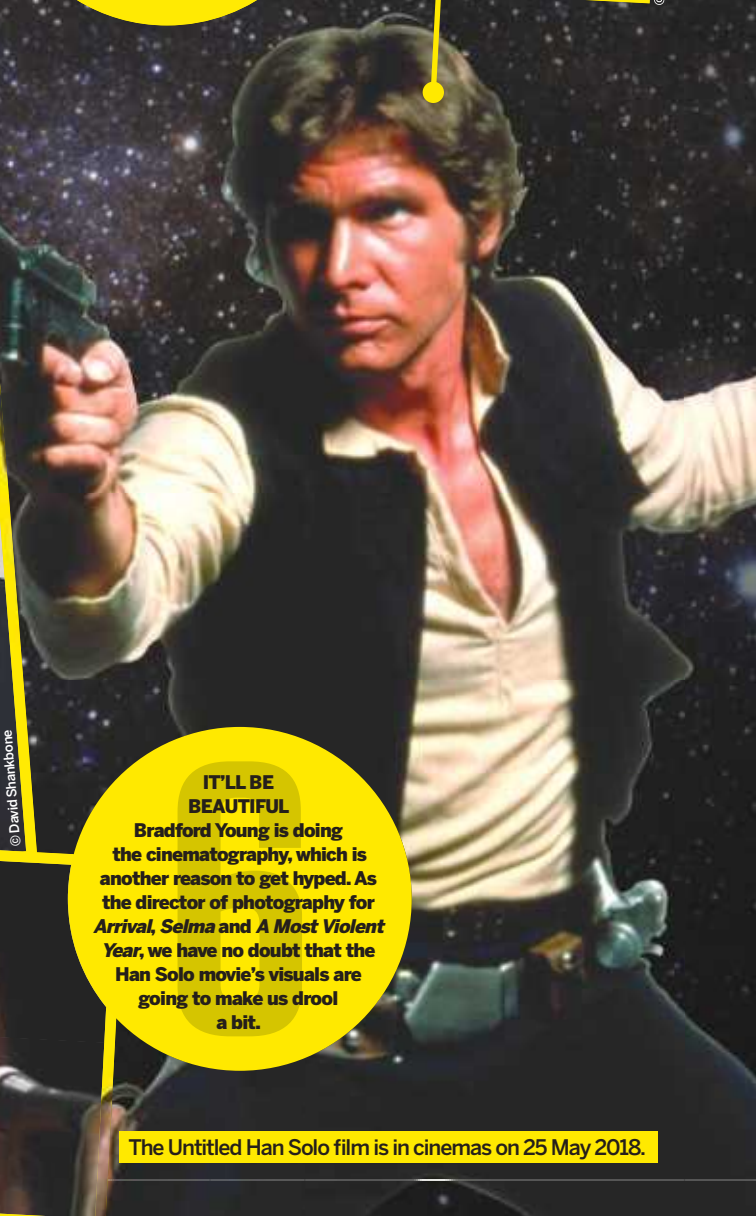
Though only six people have been cast in the film at the time of writing, the ensemble is already shaping out nicely. Joining Ehrenreich and Glover are Emilia Clark (*Game Of Thrones*), Woody Harrelson (*Zombieland*) and Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*).



© Ege Skidmore

IT'LL BE BEAUTIFUL

Bradford Young is doing the cinematography, which is another reason to get hyped. As the director of photography for *Arrival*, *Selma* and *A Most Violent Year*, we have no doubt that the Han Solo movie's visuals are going to make us drool a bit.



The Untitled Han Solo film is in cinemas on 25 May 2018.

Zoe Saldana will reprise her role as *Guardians*' Gamora before heading back to Pandora in *Avatar 2*



"IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN"

Zoe Saldana talks the *Avatar* sequels, *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, dick jokes and more... WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

At some point over the last decade or so, Zoe Saldana became something of a genre superstar. From Neytiri in *Avatar* to Gamora in *Guardians Of The Galaxy* to Uhura in *Star Trek*, Saldana is making her mark in the sci-fi universe.

After an almost ten-year break, the actress is soon set to return to the world of Pandora as Neytiri in one of the sequels to one of the highest-grossing films of all time. "It's going to be big," she says, "and I don't say big for the sake of saying it's going to be massive. [It's] very compelling."

Technology has changed a lot since *Avatar* was released in 2009, but the effects used in the film were still top of the range. Saldana says so much effort goes into creating a motion capture performance, and that effort is something that is often overlooked.

"[It was] a film that I trained five months for to put her together and it was a lot of work," she tells us. "So I know that by the time we get to deal with main press for *Avatar 2* I really want to take part in informing and educating people on what motion capture really is so that these

performances won't be overlooked again. We did everything... and the knowledge for the technology wasn't there in 2009."

For *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, however, she's just covered in paint. "Blue's much easier," she laughs. "Kermit is right, it's not easy being green. It sucks."

Saldana has to sit through

"IT'S JUST YOU, THE MOON AND YOUR MAKE-UP ARTIST, AND WE'RE ALL GRUMPY"

ZOE SALDANA

five hours of makeup, starting at 2:30am, to become Gamora.

"It's just you, the moon and your make-up artist, and we're all grumpy," she reveals.

Taking it all off at the end of the day is another matter entirely. "It's like you have to go through a process of putting more chemicals on top of what you already have on to melt away all that glue from

your face and then you have to put your face on a steam machine," she explains. "Then your nails are super green and dirty and then you have the green taste in your mouth and you blow your nose and green comes out. It just never ends."

It's not all bad though: "Whenever I'm around children, it's these movies that inspire them to be better... I visited kids that are struggling with terminal illnesses and their favourite movies are superhero movies because it just takes them away and it makes them feel different, so I feel super proud to be a part of them."

Saldana also gives a little teaser regarding what's in store for us in *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2*: "This film is definitely going to be just like the first one where you're going to laugh. There's going to be a lot of dick jokes because it's a film full of guys but it's also going to have a lot of moments that you're going to feel really connected with. I'm excited, and I don't mean to hate on the dick jokes. They're there. You're around boys; there's going to be dick jokes somewhere."

Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2 is in cinemas on 28 April 2017.

SALDANA FACE-OFF

Which Zoe Saldana genre character could kick your ass the hardest?

NEYTIRI (*Avatar*)

Physical strength:	90
Fighting technique:	80
Intelligence:	75
Shits given:	70



There's nothing Neytiri cares about more than her people, so if you threaten their safety you can expect a full-on one-Na'vi war.

GAMORA (*Guardians Of The Galaxy*)

Physical strength:	95
Fighting technique:	100
Intelligence:	40
Shits given:	0



First impressions suggest that Gamora is only in it for herself. But get on her good side, and she'll kill for you without hesitation.

UHURA (*Star Trek*)

Physical strength:	50
Fighting technique:	70
Intelligence:	100
Shits given:	65



What Uhura lacks in brawn she more than makes up for in brains. She has a way of making people talk, even when they don't want to.

ANAMARIA (*Pirates Of The Caribbean*)

Physical strength:	50
Fighting technique:	70
Intelligence:	100
Shits given:	65



Sometimes known as the 'delicate flower of the Caribbean', Anamaria is loyal until you screw her over. Then she'll mess you up.

KING OF CASTLE ROCK

A Stephen King TV series makes us a happy mag

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Well, Hulu got our attention with their mysterious trailer highlighting all the strange and terrifying things that have happened in Stephen King's town of Castle Rock, Maine, over the years. That's JJ Abrams for you.

Hulu announced that *Castle Rock* will be a ten episode series to film later this year, written by *Manhattan* duo Sam Shaw and Dustin

Thomason. However, it's still not exactly clear what kind of show it is. It's described as a "psychological horror", "an original suspense thriller" and "a first-of-its-kind reimagining." Which all sounds great... but what is it?

Whatever the story is, Hulu teases that it will "unite the entire King canon, while brushing up against some of his most iconic and beloved stories." Here's what to look out for...

Castle Rock will air on Hulu in the US. No UK date has been announced.



ANTIQUE STORES

You can't trust an antiques guy in Stephen King stories. You just can't. Either they're Richard Straker and they're preparing the ground for their vampire master, or they're Leland Gaunt and they're actually The Devil.



TERRIFYING GRAFFITI

Although it seems a little unlikely that Pennywise himself will appear, given that he technically lives in Derry and he's in a film from Warner Bros, that "PENNYWISE LIVES!" tag gets everywhere.



FAMOUS AUTHORS

Everyone knows King loves to write about writers, so look out for characters reading books by *Misery's* Paul Sheldon and *The Dark Half's* Thad Beaumont, not to mention Thad's murderous alter-ego George Stark.



LAW ENFORCEMENT NAME-DROPPING

Castle Rock's had two Sheriffs. George Bannerman appeared in *The Dead Zone*, while Alan Pangborn was key in *The Dark Half* and *Needful Things*. If they don't appear, you can bet someone will be taken away to Shawshank...



BANGARANG BEGINS

Hook star Dante Basco wants a Rufio spinoff film

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

We doubt many people had ever wondered what mohawked lost boy Rufio had been doing with his life before the events of *Hook*, but after the news that Rufio actor Dante Basco has been working on a prequel film with screenwriter Jonah Feingold, we haven't been able to stop thinking about it.

The prequel – which will be a short film called *Bangarang* – has far surpassed its minimum target of \$30,000 on Kickstarter, so it looks like it's actually officially happening.

The film is set to tell the story of Rufio before Neverland, back when he was a kid called Roofus growing up on the wrong side of the tracks in Los Angeles.

"It's about a new generation taking something from my generation and reinventing it," Basco explains in the Kickstarter video. "Some may call it an origin story, but ultimately for me it's seeing a character that's dear to my heart being reinvented in a new generation and being a part of this process to find a new Rufio out there, to introduce Rufio to the new generation."

"We're going to find out how he got the Mohawk," adds Feingold.

"How [he] became Rufio, how [he] got to Neverland... These are all questions we're going to answer, and we've reverse-engineered it from *Hook*."

The crew are planning an open casting call around LA to find the film's heroes. Obviously they need



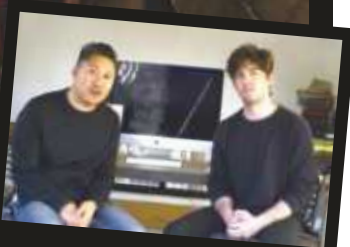
Dante Basco wants to pass the Rufio torch

a new Rufio, seeing as Basco is now 41 years old. But they also need to cast Rufio's pre-Neverland friends, which include "a Jamaican boy named Julani and a bright-eyed Latina force of nature named Ella."

"We want to make you guys something great, and nothing

less than the *Hook* community deserves," says Feingold.

You can follow *Bangarang's* progress and donate by searching Bangarang The Movie on Kickstarter.com.





Oldboy's Park Chan-Wook goes Gothic with *The Handmaiden*

Cult classic *Barbarella* gets a big-screen revival at BFI Flare



BFI FLARE: LONDON'S LGBT FILM FESTIVAL



Flare and LFF Cult Section programmer Michael Blyth tells us what's in store...

What should genre fans look out for at BFI Flare?

LGBTQ cinema is often centred around political issues and community experience in terms of content, so we see a lot of amazing dramas and documentaries in the festival. But if you just dig a bit deeper into this year's line-up you'll see plenty of exciting genre work in there too, like the almost unclassifiable Mexican curiosity *The Untamed* and Park Chan-Wook's *The Handmaiden*, a sexy and stylish adaptation of Sarah Water's novel *Fingersmith*.

Anyone familiar with Chan-Wook's films – like *Oldboy*, *Stoker* or *Snowpiercer* – can guess this is as far removed from your average period drama as is imaginable. Fans of retro cult classics might also be interested to know that we are bringing saucy sci-fi romp *Barbarella* to the big screen as part of our celebration of cinematic camp, while any friend of Dorothy has to check out *The Slippers*; a fun-filled doc about *The Wizard Of Oz* and those iconic ruby shoes.

What makes the festival so special?

The thing that stands out most is the atmosphere. There's something incredible that happens during the 11 days of the festival – something that transforms the entire space at BFI Southbank. It becomes a place for fun and celebration, for debate and politics, for difference and diversity. It's the fusion between the work we show and the people who come to enjoy it that makes it so special. I believe that anyone, young or old, straight or gay, could come to the festival and find something that speaks to them. For me, Flare is about diversity, but more importantly it's about inclusion. Everyone is welcome, and that's what makes it essential.

Do you feel genre cinema is a space where LGBTQ talent can thrive?

Definitely. Great genre cinema is all about playing with conventions, and I think that idea of playfulness, and that that desire to provoke and push

boundaries is an intrinsic part of queer filmmaking too.

Given the recent success of films like *Carol* and *Moonlight*, do you feel like the climate for LGBTQ films has changed, hopefully expanding the audience for festivals like Flare?

The climate has definitely changed, and the audiences are changing alongside it. The success of films like *Carol* and *Moonlight* is amazing, and important, but they remain an anomaly. People often ask if we still need queer festivals in a world where we can access LGBTQ-related content at the click of a button.

There are many answers to this question, all of which lead to a resounding, unqualified yes – the shared experience of watching queer cinema with your community, the chance to access work that might not otherwise find a platform, the need to support queer filmmaking voices and bring them together with audiences are all important. But this year – with the current state of UK and global politics, growing visibility of the far-right, threats to the rights that queer people have fought so hard for – BFI Flare, and festivals like it, feel more important than ever. The festival proves how film can be a tool for change, the very act of attending a film festival can be political. And that is what we need at the moment - change. And action!

BFI Flare runs from 16-26 March.



We can't wait to see the "almost unclassifiable" *The Untamed*

DAYS OF FUTURE NOW

Here are some upcoming UK conventions that you can't afford to miss...

Sci-Fi Scarborough

8-9 April
Grand Hall, Spa Complex,
Scarborough
scifiscarborough.co.uk
Price: £8-£25
With Sylvester McCoy, Sophie Aldred,
Garth David-Lloyd and Andrew Lee Potts.

Stoke Con Trent

9 April
Staffordshire University
stokekentrent.co.uk
Price: £8-£14
Staffordshire's biggest TV, film,
comic and memorabilia convention
just got even bigger for 2017.

Insomnia60

13-17 April
NEC, Birmingham
insomniagamingfestival.com
Price: £25-£99
If you're a gamer, you better get
yourself down to this year's
biggest UK gaming festival...

Edinburgh Comic Con

15-16 April
EICC, Edinburgh
heroconventions.com
Price: £8.50-£25
Attend panels, cosplay and chat
to like-minded super fans at
Edinburgh's geekiest meet-up.

Innominate – Eastercon

14-17 April
Hilton Birmingham Metropole,
The NEC
eastercon2017.uk
Price: 20-£80
Held every Easter since 1955, this
national sci-fi convention is a must.

Ox Con II

22-23 April
Examination Schools, Oxford
oxcon.xyz
Price: £10.50-£25
This two-day celebration of pop
culture, cosplay and sci-fi merges
creativity and intellectual debate.

Bristol Anime and Gaming Con

29-30 April
Bristol Future Inns
bristolanimecon.com
Price: £8-£12
Love gaming? And anime? Then
boy, does Bristol have the perfect
convention for you.

EM-Con

29-30 April
Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham
em-con.co.uk
Price: £10-£15
Special guests include Arthur Darvill,
Danny John-Jules, David Yost, Jamie
Bamber and Miriam Margolyes.



MEMORY BANK

Welcome to Memory Bank, where we delve into the archives of *SciFiNow*, pick an issue at random and reminisce as a very poorly disguised form of procrastination!

This month, we're looking at 2014's issue 96. It featured Peter Capaldi as the cover star ahead of the release of *Doctor Who* Series Eight, which is fitting seeing as Capaldi recently announced that he'll be hanging up the TARDIS keys for good following Series Ten. It'll be hard, as the Doctor has always been one of the actor's great loves: "*Doctor Who* is part of my upbringing in the Sixties with The Beatles, school milk and bronchitis," he said.

We also pitted all the previous Doctors against each other in an attempt to find out which incarnation was the most dangerous, because why not? We settled on Michael Jayston as the Valeyard (is that cheating? We don't think so), with John Hurt's War Doctor and Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor coming in tied second.

Elsewhere, we got fired up as we investigated why Hollywood action films seemed to have it out for women. We asked *Punisher: War Zone* director Lexi Alexander for her two cents on the matter: "If you look at real life there's unbelievable stories of women's courage, it's just that they don't go out in sexy outfits and kick five guys to the head." Three years later, it's still relevant.

In Time Warp, we looked back at *An American Werewolf In London* with star David Naughton: "People weren't ready for a horror film from the director of *The Blues Brothers*," he said. We wonder if we'll be ready for the remake that's in the pipeline...



ASH WILLIAMS

COSPLAYER: REDWOOD CREATIONS **FROM:** CWMBRAN **PHOTO:** GEEKBOT COSPLAY & PHOTOGRAPHY **TWITTER:** @REDWOODCREATE

THE CHARACTER

1 I remember watching the *Evil Dead* movies when I was younger and loving them so much. Ash was just amazing! Bruce Campbell's acting on top of the tonnes of bloody and crazy special effects had me completely mesmerised. He was the epitome of cool even in the face of danger and Bruce still is. I love horror movies so being able to bring this kick-ass cult classic character to life is awesome.

THE COSTUME

2 I wanted to try and make the costume as accurate as possible. So I watched the movie multiple times and searched a few forums to get all the items of clothing the right shade and style. I found a similar style shirt and trousers pretty easily and luckily I already owned the same type of boots. The weathering was the tricky part because I overdid it and ruined the first version of this costume.

THE DESIGN

3 Adapting this from the screen wasn't too hard; it mainly involved a lot of screenshotting scenes, so I could see where the blood placement and weathering was needed. That involved hours of taking sandpaper to joints and certain areas and then drowning it in blood. I also had to practice getting the placement of Ash's face scars perfect, as they're pretty essential to the look of the character.

THE ACCESSORIES

4 For the chainsaw hand, I went out and found the actual model of chainsaw from the movie and gutted it. I built the handles and wrist bolt myself with wood and metal work. It took many hours of blood, sweat and tears but I'm really proud of what I have achieved! The thing that inspired me to keep going was that once I put all of this finished costume on I knew I would feel amazing.

HOT TOPICS

Your most-read posts on SciFiNow.co.uk



SEASON 5 OF ORPHAN BLACK TO AIR IN JUNE

tinyurl.com/zzp56mp



TOP 12 LGBT GENRE TV ICONS THAT INSPIRE US

tinyurl.com/fjuzdz6



ALICE LOWE ON PREVENGE

tinyurl.com/zdwnpmz



HALLOWEEN DIRECTOR/WRITER CONFIRMED

tinyurl.com/zddadlv



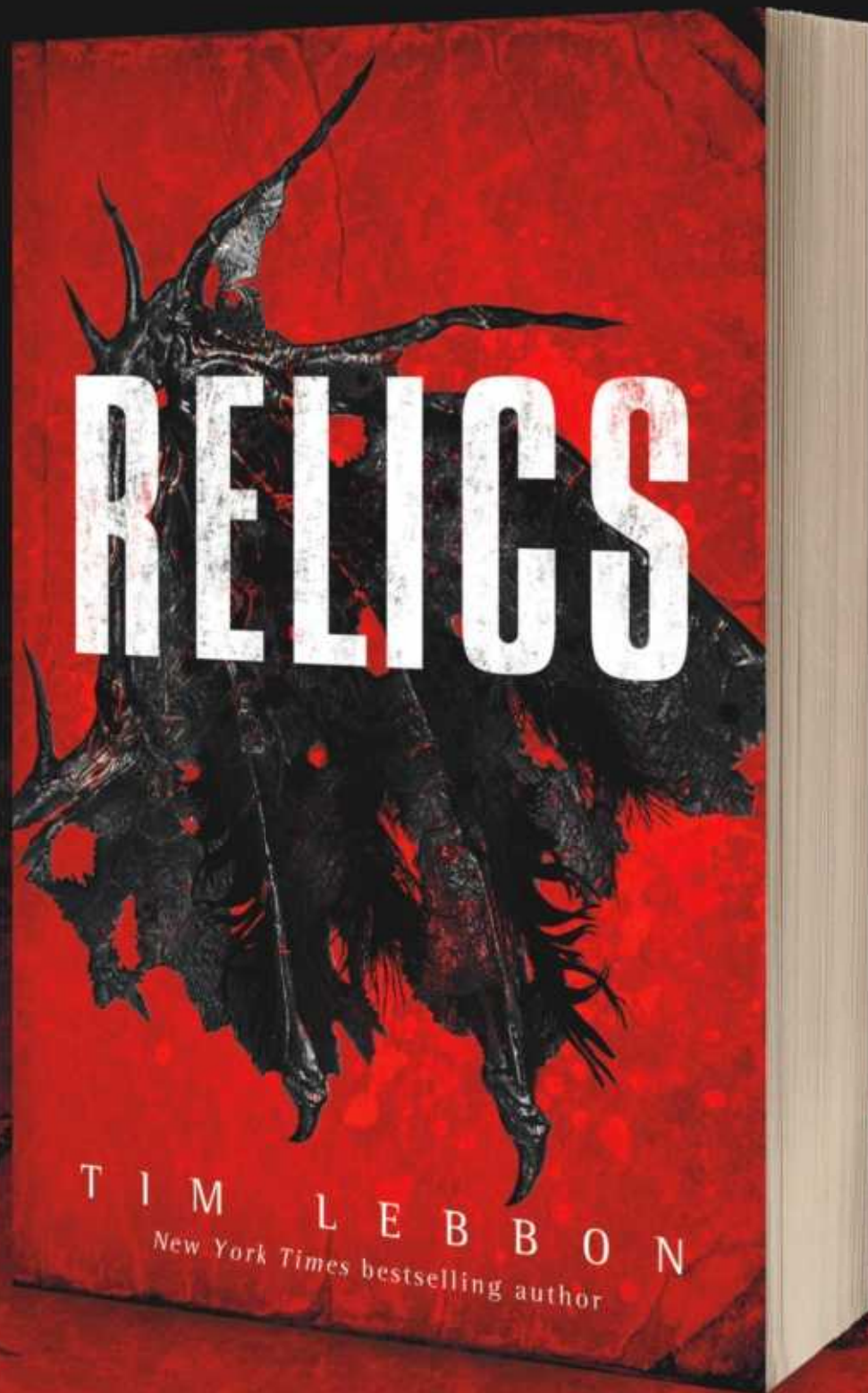
LUCIFER SEASON 3 GETS THE GO-AHEAD

tinyurl.com/zt2gmlb

“A DARKLY BEAUTIFUL GLIMPSE
INTO ANOTHER WORLD”

JAMES ROLLINS

Bestselling author of *The Bone Labyrinth*



SOME THINGS SHOULD REMAIN HIDDEN

OUT NOW TITANBOOKS.COM

THE NET IS

FANS OF THE ORIGINAL GHOST IN THE SHELL MANGA AND ANIME ARE SURE TO RECOGNISE THE EARLY SCENE IN THE AMERICAN LIVE ACTION FILM

adaptation, starring Scarlett Johansson. The Major stands atop a towering building, her muscled body wrapped in a skin-tight thermo-optic suit, before gracefully diving off the edge of the roof and tumbling acrobatically into the neon-flushed night. She then smashes through a high-storey window and, hand weapon drawn, unleashes hell. It is an iconic moment

that opens the 1995 anime, directed by Mamoru Oshii, and for Johansson and her director, Rupert Sanders, paying homage to this memorable moment was both scintillating and significant.

Indeed, when talking on the subject Johansson recalls walking past Sanders' monitors in the 'video village' on set in New Zealand where he would be poring over detailed storyboards and sketches, working on matching the scene right up until the moment it was shot. "You would see the cross-referencing— whether it was

that initial dive or the fight in the water," she says. "Some of the frames in our movie are lifted right off the anime because they are so iconic and exciting."

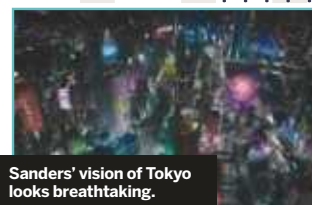
For Sanders, paying homage to the manga, the anime and the subsequent on-screen offshoots — such as the sequel *Innocence* or the TV series *Stand Alone Complex* — was a key component in his pitch to Steven Spielberg, who had acquired the rights for an English-language, live-action adaptation.

"Steven asked me what I'd do if I could make *Ghost In The Shell*," begins Sanders. "I said I wouldn't make a direct homage but that, as a fan, I would like keep it in the realm of the original anime. And, hopefully, mine could be another facet of the legacy."

"So much great sci-fi has spawned from that," he continues, "from [Masamune] Shirow's original manga through to the anime, through to *Stand Alone Complex* and also *Innocence*. I wanted to keep that as much as possible while making a big, international action film with, hopefully, emotional resonance and deeper questioning." ➤

SCARLETT JOHANSSON AND RUPERT SANDERS TELL US ABOUT TACKLING THIS YEAR'S MOST TALKED-ABOUT REMAKE: GHOST IN THE SHELL

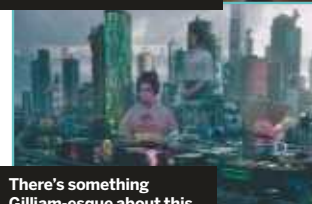
WORDS WILL LAWRENCE



Sanders' vision of Tokyo looks breathtaking.



The film will draw on the sequel and series too.



There's something Gilliam-esque about this.

VAST AND

GHOST IN THE SHELL

The Net Is Vast And Infinite

INFINITE

CAREFUL, NOW

How reimaginings can get into hot water...

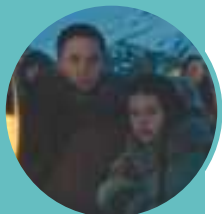
GHOST IN THE SHELL

With the casting of Scarlett Johansson in the role of the Major, *Ghost In The Shell* created a lot of controversy. Many believed that the role should have gone to a Japanese actress, and the film became part of a larger discussion about whitewashing Asian roles involving Marvel's *Doctor Strange* and *Iron Fist*. Johansson has stated that she would not have taken the role if it had been written as Japanese, telling *Marie Claire* that: "I certainly would never presume to play another race of a person. Diversity is important in Hollywood, and I would never want to feel like I was playing a character that was offensive. Also, having a franchise with a female protagonist driving it is such a rare opportunity."



THE LAST AIRBENDER

No one has happy memories of M Night Shyamalan's *The Last Airbender*, and it's such a shame because the animated series is an absolute joy. The film demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of what made the show so special, with some selective whitewashing and a waste of the incredible potential of Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko's incredible series. The crushing reviews didn't affect its box-office performance, but it stands as an important reminder that, if you're going to adapt a classic, you really should understand what makes it a classic.



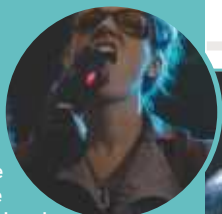
PAN

The controversy surrounding Joe Wright's new take on JM Barrie's classic story didn't seem to be as loud as some of the others on this list but, on the other hand, people may have just not been interested in seeing yet another *Peter Pan* movie. The main reason for the pre-release negativity was the casting of the definitely white Rooney Mara as the Native American Tiger Lily. Speaking to *CinemaBlend*, Mara said that Wright's explanation was that "they are natives of Neverland, a completely made-up place."



GHOSTBUSTERS

Here's one where the outrage wasn't justified. Paul Feig's excellent update of the Ivan Reitman classic was embroiled in a seemingly never-ending sea of online bile when it was announced that all four of the Ghostbusters would be played by women. The casting of four of the funniest women around didn't satisfy the haters, who stuck by their belief that busting, while it may make you feel good, is a job for men. Despite the film's lacklustre box-office performance, it's really good, and those of us who love it can take solace in the fact that the haters will never get to appreciate the sheer joy of Kate McKinnon's Dr Jillian Holtzmann.



➤ The narrative correlation between the original manga (first published in English in 1995), the original anime (released cinematically in the same year), and Sanders' film, is strong. Each tells the story of a counter-cyber-terrorist organisation called Section 9, and its female chief operative, Major Motoko Kusanagi, a cyborg who suffered a traumatic accident in childhood, resulting in a full-body prosthesis to house her 'cyberbrain'.

IN ALL THREE VERSIONS OF THE STORY, THE MAJOR HUNTS DOWN A CYBER-CRIMINAL WHO IS COMMITTING CRIMES BY PROXY THROUGH HACKING HUMANS WITH CYBERBRAINS. HE IS KNOWN INITIALLY AS THE PUPPET

Master, and he targets the workforce at Hanka Robotics. He's later revealed as an advanced artificial intelligence project that predates the Major.

Sanders and Johansson's version, however, does contain narrative alterations. "We couldn't remake the original anime, it's far too obtuse," says Sanders. "Story-wise, it just wouldn't have worked. We did need to show the Uzi suitcases, the roof dive, the invisibility, the thermo-optic suits, the courtyard water fight," he adds referencing some of the famous components of the Japanese

media offering. "But once you've harvested these, you think about how you want to integrate them into a new film. So, I had to take a few deviations, plot-wise."

Sanders' deviation incorporates a shift in the evolution of the main protagonist's inner-journey. In the 1995 anime, she is referred to as Kusanagi. Johansson's character, meanwhile, is known simply as the Major and it seems that her real name will be revealed as she learns more about the woman that she was once was. That revelation is key to Sanders and Johansson's narrative.

"When I first saw the anime film I thought it was esoteric, existential and free-flowing,"

says Johansson. "It was very poetic and it didn't initially strike me as something that could be adapted for live action."

"But it kept gnawing at me. You have this woman who has an idea of who she is, or who is told she is supposed to be, and then this feeling at the back of her mind, which is the person who she actually is. There is this ghost that literally and spiritually haunts her."

Major gets up close and personal with Michael Pitt's hacker villain.



GHOST IN THE SHELL

The Net Is Vast And Infinite

**"WE COULDN'T
REMAKE THE
ORIGINAL ANIME.
IT WOULDN'T HAVE
WORKED"**

RUPERT SANDERS

The Major is haunted by questions about her own identity.

Johansson and Sanders elected to approach her character's journey as a coming-of-age story. After all, she was just a child when she suffered her accident. At the outset, the Major operates very much as a cyborg with her programming governing her actions. However, when the cyber-terrorist — here known as Kuze and played by Michael Pitt — starts to connect with her, she experiences glitches in the programming and her real human self starts coming to the fore.

"She has these glitches but rather than suppress them, she becomes curious about them," says Johansson. "She then starts down a path of pursuing her curiosity and that's what opens up this Pandora's Box to who she really was."

WHAT SHE FEELS DURING THESE GLITCHES CONTRADICTS WHAT SHE HAS BEEN TOLD ABOUT HER PAST AND THIS IN TURN FUELS HER PERSONAL JOURNEY AS THE FILM UNFOLDS.



Japanese film legend Takeshi Kitano stars as the Major's boss Aramaki.

"As this self-awareness begins to surface, you get the sense that she's been through a shock with what has happened to her," the actress continues.

"These glitches have been suppressed. She has ignored them. But then she becomes curious about herself, and that starts to come in conjunction with the closeness she feels to Kuze. It awakens this primal part of her and she starts to see glitches of things she has either remembered, or things she wants, or things she's drawn to."

Kuze is instrumental in awakening the human within her. "At first she is hunting this terrorist who is killing people in Hanka Robotics," says Sanders, the early section of his plot mirroring the traditional narrative. "But as she progresses forward, trying to hunt him down, she is almost lured towards him and he is almost drawn towards her. They do something like a moth and a flame dance until they meet in the second act, which propels the rest of the story forward."

According to Sanders, it took a lot of guts to remain true to his vision for the story. The pressures of bringing a new take to an existing and beloved franchise are immense. "Until people have been on the inside, it's easy to think it's all simple and very glamorous," he says. "But it is 17 hours of work a day. It's brutal and there were a lot of night-shoots. You're dealing with someone else's money; it's like you have a mafia loan shark on your tail."

"Then you have the expectations of fans and the expectations of the business saying: 'Are we going to get our money back?' Across the board it's stressful. But you have to be singular when you are making a film on this scale. You have to plough forward and continue with your own vision."

His vision has been inspired by many factors, he notes, including those beyond the existing media: "I wanted it to create a new world, a parallel world ➤"

GHOST IN THE SHELL LEGACY

A brief history of Masamune Shirow's classic

1989 Shirow releases the *Ghost In The Shell* manga in Young Magazine. It runs until 1990, and is finally published in the UK by Dark Horse.



1995 Mamoru Oshii adapts *Ghost In The Shell* for film with writer Kazunori Ito. It's a huge success and it influences a legion of filmmakers.



1997 Shirow returns to the story and releases a sequel named *Ghost In The Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface*.



2002 *Ghost In The Shell* comes to TV with the anime series *Stand Alone Complex*. It runs for two seasons, with both being adapted into TV movies in 2005 and 2006 respectively.



2004 Oshii returns to the film with a sequel titled *Innocence*. It takes a manga storyline as a starting point and uses Batou as the lead, and while it's tough to follow, it's beautifully made.



2013 Anime OVA films *Ghost In The Shell: Arise* takes a new approach to the manga, with a younger Major and brand-new character designs. It is later split up into a TV series.



2015 *Ghost In The Shell: The New Movie* picks up from *Arise* and although the plot follows on, the Major looks a little more like her old self.



2017 After years in development, the American live-action film of *Ghost In The Shell* finally arrives.



Rupert Sanders is determined to make the fans of the original proud.

BIG MOVIE

Ghost In The Shell

Iconic moments from the anime, such as the opening, have been recreated.

and with what's already there you use what you need and discard the rest," he says.

The world we see in his *Ghost In The Shell* is a much more colourful future than we're used to seeing in film, says Johansson: "Rupert has created a city that you have never really seen before; it almost has this *Blade Runner* aesthetic. It is as though that aesthetic actually continued and was updated. I was fascinated with that because I assumed that this future would be cold and digital but it's not at all like that. It's unique and that vision is a real gift that Rupert has."

Creating this future was exhausting. "But I had a clear vision of how I wanted the world to look," says Sanders, "and how colourful it'd be, and how the holograms, and these big adverts in the city would be. I knew how the different languages would sound and what the Muslim women would look like, how you'd hear different languages throughout, and how we'd have an international cast."

ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF CASTING A BOX OFFICE SENSATION LIKE JOHANSSON, WHO HAS FANS ACROSS THE BOARD, IS THAT THE FILMMAKERS DID NOT NEED TO PACK THE SUPPORTING

cast with A-list names. Instead, Sanders could recruit powerful character actors like Michael Pitt, one of the most singular performers currently working in American film.

On *Ghost In The Shell*, for example, Pitt built a cocoon in a container on the studio back-lot with a punching bag, an over-flowing ashtray and mad rantings scrawled on the wall that reflected Kuze's inner demons: "Once he was in character he really became Kuze. That was it; you seriously couldn't break him out of it," says his director.

"Kuze has to make maximum impact. He is not in it from A to B. His presence and shadow looms throughout the film. He comes in and out but he needs to come in with a dynamic punch and Michael can do that."

Sanders was also able to cast the French actress Juliette Binoche, whose character was originally written as a male. "She is a cross between a mother figure and the chiropractor in *Jacob's Ladder*, the scientific mother who was part of the Major's creation," Sanders says. "Juliette did an amazing job bringing heart to the film, and she is another strong female lead."

Rounding out the supporting cast are the likes of Pilou Asbæk, who plays the pivotal character of Batou, the Major's closest colleague, and also Takeshi Kitano, the iconic filmmaker behind *Sonatine*, who plays her boss at Section 9, Aramaki. The most important piece of casting, however, was that of Johansson, who has proven her dramatic chops in films as diverse as *Lost in Translation* and

"RUPERT SANDERS HAS CREATED A CITY THAT YOU HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE"

SCARLETT JOHANSSON

Buried secrets will come to the surface as the case gets under her skin.

Sanders tells us that Pitt's preparation for the role of Kuze was pretty intense.

GHOST IN THE SHELL

The Net Is Vast And Infinite

Unlike the other characters, Aramaki's dialogue will be in Japanese.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, LIVE-ACTION

Ghost In The Shell isn't the only anime film set to be adapted for live-action.

AKIRA

STATUS: Unknown

A live-action version of *Akira* has been in development for years. At one point the rumour was that Leonardo Di Caprio and Joseph Gordon-Levitt would play Kaneda and Tetsuo. However, it finally took a step forward in June when *Star Trek Beyond*'s Justin Lin took over from Jaume Collet-Sera, and *Daredevil*'s Marco Ramirez Jr signed on to write. We still don't think it will happen though.

DEATH NOTE

STATUS: Post-production

The American version of *Death Note* got going after Shane Black developed it. *The Guest*'s Adam Wingard is behind the camera, while Nat Wolff will be playing the role of Light, who finds a notebook that will kill anyone whose name he writes in it. *Atlanta*'s Lakeith Stanfield is the man hunting him down, while Willem Dafoe voices the demon Ryuk. The movie almost didn't make it, but Netflix came in bring it to life.

ATTACK ON TITAN

STATUS: In development

It's still early days for this one. Warner Bros picked up the rights to the anime series and has given it to *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* producer David Heyman. There's no word on a director or writer yet, but we're intrigued to see how the story of giant humanoid monsters attacking a fortified town will look with the might of a big budget behind it. And to see if they cast any Japanese actors in the leads.

ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL

STATUS: Filming

After over a decade of talking about it, James Cameron handed over the directorial reins to Robert Rodriguez. Based on the manga by Yukito Kishiro, Cameron's script is still the basis for Rodriguez's movie, which will star *The Maze Runner*'s Rosa Salazar as the cyborg with no memories. Christoph Waltz will play the scientist who rescues her, while Jennifer Connelly is on villain duties.

Under the Skin, as well as showcasing her action with her work in the Marvel universe (where she plays Black Widow) and the recent sci-fi *Lucy*.

"Scarlett was in the gym every morning way before we all got to set and her body was really transformed into the Major," Sanders says of his leading lady. "When you see the shots from behind, her back is just rippling with muscle that is so reminiscent of the character in the anime. She had a team of martial arts and military trainers who she worked with every day."

Johansson needed to know that she could really take people down: "She got to a level physically and mentally where she carried that confidence," her director affirms. "It really shows in her performance. She is tough and when she is beating the shit out of someone it is quite frightening. She is able to pull a punch within about 3mm and that is quite a shocking thing to see."

For all her skills, the filmmakers did suffer the occasional mishap. In the 'water courtyard fight', for example, the stuntman standing in for Australian actor Daniel Henshall got a punch to the chin. Sanders recalls: "Scarlett was so in the rage — punch, punch, punch — that when we cut the stuntman was like: 'You almost knocked me out!' And she was like: 'Did I?'" She hadn't even realised.

If the film proves to be a big hit at the box office, Johansson will be back for a sequel and heading up her own franchise. "That is daunting because it is not totally obvious what the next chapter is for this character," Johansson tells us.

"It is also physically daunting. This film was extremely draining, physically, emotionally and professionally and it required an immense amount of discipline and thought.

"But, of course, the idea that this female-driven genre film could go on to have a sequel, and that it could be successful enough to demand a sequel, is very exciting," she concludes. "It would be a real victory in many ways. I am up for the challenge. I am a big girl. I can handle it. I think!"

Ghost In The Shell will be released on 31 March.

Johansson is open to a sequel if the film is a big enough success.

Pilou Asbaek stars as Major's badass partner and fan favourite Batou.



FEATURE
ANIME BEYOND AKIRA

ANIME

BEYOND

AKIRA

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

ARE YOU LOOKING TO BROADEN YOUR ANIME KNOWLEDGE? HERE ARE THE MOVIES YOU NEED TO SEE

IT'S A FAIRLY COMMON EXPERIENCE. SOMEONE LENDS YOU A COPY OF *AKIRA* AND YOUR MIND IS BLOWN. YOU WATCH *GHOST IN THE SHELL* FOR THE FIRST TIME AND YOU REALISE THAT HOLLYWOOD'S been cribbing from Mamoru Oshii for decades.

You spend the days after watching *Spirited Away* wondering why all children's films can't be as spellbinding and complex as the work Studio Ghibli produces.

Now it's time to take the next step. We have picked out a broad spectrum of movies for you that demonstrates the incredible range of wonders that Japanese anime has to offer, from fantasy classics to mecha-packed action to blood-soaked horror. Colin Odell and Michelle LeBlanc, authors of the *Studio Ghibli* and *Anime Kamera* books, are on hand to help explain what makes these movies so special...

THE SKY CRAWLERS (2008)

Director Mamoru Oshii is best known for *Ghost In The Shell*, and with good reason, but we recommend checking out this 2008 hit in which corporations put on aerial battles in order to keep the populace in check. This beautifully realised film was a festival smash and the flight sequences are truly amazing.

"*The Sky Crawlers* is a melancholy science fiction film set in an alternate world which is at war and where young pilots engage in crowd-pleasing dogfights broadcast by the media. The film combines CGI and cel-based animation techniques to great effect; the flight sequences look almost photorealistic in execution, providing a terrific contrast with the flat, cel-animated characterisation."



Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.



ROUJIN Z (1991)

Akira creator Katsuhiro Otomo wrote this near-future film in which technological advances have created a nuclear-powered hospital bed that is more aware than anyone realises. *Roujin Z* uses genre to deliver an affecting message about caring for the elderly.

"To help provide care for an ageing population scientists develop a technically advanced bed that can provide for their every need. However, it is actually an experimental robot and when an elderly man is confined to the bed, he symbiotically communicates with it and goes on a rampage. The film has an underlying commentary about how society treats its older citizens – something that is very relevant today – as well as mistrust of the government and technological military themes, amidst the enjoyable action."



Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.

BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE (2000)

Forget the terrible live-action remake, this is a stylish, visceral and deeply creepy piece of horror that does more in 45 minutes than the American version did in 91. Set in 1966, Hiroyuki Kitakubo's chiller follows a monster-killer who is undercover at a school at an American air base, and the creature designs and action set pieces are superb.

"She's cute, serious, ferocious and much older than her schoolgirl appearance suggests," enthuse Odell and LeBlanc. "Saya's mission is to kill demons called chiropterans, which she does with remarkable expertise in this short but intense feature."



Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.

SATOSHI KON

Few filmmakers have shown the kind of incredible ambition and skill in any cinematic medium as Satoshi Kon did. He passed away in 2010 at the tragically early age of 46, but he gave us two genre masterpieces in *Paprika* and *Perfect Blue*.

"Don't forget to check out Kon's other works as they are all worth watching," add Odell and LeBlanc. "*Tokyo Godfathers*, *Millennium Actress*, and his brilliant TV anime series *Paranoia Agent*, which is absorbing and occasionally terrifying."

MUST SEE PAPIKA (2006)

How to describe *Paprika*? It's easier to use adjectives to describe the impact rather than the plot, which involves the hunt for stolen technology that allows the user to enter people's dreams. This mind-bending journey builds to an incredible climax that fuses dreams (and nightmares) and reality, and was a huge influence on Christopher Nolan's *Inception*.

"The story is a perfect vehicle for Kon's stunning use of animation and raucous soundtrack and reflects his stream-of-consciousness approach to the subject matter as



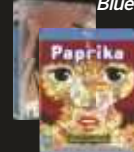
both the characters' and audiences' perception between reality and dream states become intertwined." Available on: Blu-ray from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

GO FURTHER

PERFECT BLUE (1997)

Kon's debut shows the beginnings of ideas and themes that he'd explore in great depth later, but the heart of *Perfect Blue* is the Hitchcockian/De Palma-esque horror of a increasingly paranoid young singer-turned-actress and the crazed fan stalking her. It's also far superior to *Black Swan* (which obviously cribbed from it, no matter what Aronofsky says).

"A distorted thriller, based on the novel by Yoshikazu Takeuchi, this contains many of the themes that would permeate Satoshi Kon's oeuvre. His films are intelligent and complex, occasionally puzzling and sometimes provocative and *Perfect Blue* encapsulates all those qualities."



Available on: Blu-ray from Anime Ltd.



NINJA SCROLL (1993)

Brutal, shocking and strange, *Ninja Scroll* is one for those who want a little more blood, guts and madness in their entertainment. Although it's frankly a little overly nasty at times, Yoshiaki Kawajiri's film is gripping, powerful stuff with some incredible sequences of action, magic and bloodshed as our roving ninja hero faces a series of supernatural villains on his journey to confront his nemesis.

"Yoshiaki Kawajiri's ninja anime, set in feudal Japan, may be violent and contains disturbing themes, but it's brilliantly constructed and its thoughtful use of plot and characterisation makes for powerful viewing."



Available on:
Blu-ray from Manga
Entertainment.

METROPOLIS (2001)

This recently got a high-definition upgrade thanks to Eureka Entertainment, allowing for Rintaro's incredible visuals to truly shine. It's inspired by Fritz Lang's classic, as Metropolis titan Duke Red loses control of the robot he's been building. This is a must-watch purely on a visual level, but there's substance there too.

"Metropolis offers a ripping adventure story based on the manga by 'God of Manga' Osamu Tezuka. The design and quality of the animation is superb and creates a thoroughly believable visual setting for what is actually a hugely enjoyable pulp sci-fi anime."



Available on: Blu-ray from
Eureka Entertainment.



TEKKONKINKREET (2006)

Tekkonkinkreet is set in the chaotic world of Treasure Town and follows two orphans named Kuro and Shiro who find themselves the only ones standing between their city and powerful figures who want to destroy it to create an amusement park. Directed by Michael Arias and based on the Manga by Taiyo Matsumoto, this delivers a richly detailed world that's frankly unforgettable.

"This story of a powerful friendship between two street kids who rule their neighbourhood, even taking on and defeating vicious yakuza, is sometimes surreal and sometimes shocking – a true oddity."



Available on: Blu-ray from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

MAMORU HOSADA

Hosada started out working on *Digimon* and *One Piece*, but since he broke out with *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* in 2006, he's consistently proven to be one of the medium's most interesting talents.

MUST SEE THE GIRL WHO LEAPT THROUGH TIME (2006) Teenager Makoto discovers an object that allows her to travel back in time. What starts as a way to fix small errors begins to have greater consequences as she realises the depth of her feelings towards her two friends Chiaki and Kousuke.

"A coming-of-age drama with a sci-fiction/fantasy twist that established Mamoru Hosoda as a talent to watch out for. He also directed *Summer Wars*, a sweet film about a budding relationship, again with a sci-fi element that also takes in politics, multiculturalism and family commitments." Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.



GO FURTHER

WOLF CHILDREN (2012) You should head for *Wolf Children* next. It's grounded, affecting, and it's one of his very best works.

"An unusual premise – a mother, who fell in love and married a wolf man, has to bring up her two half-wolf children alone after he dies – underpins a compassionate, thoughtful and occasionally heart-rending anime."

Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.



COWBOY BEBOP: THE MOVIE (2001)

The best place to start with *Cowboy Bebop* is the series, but if you're looking for a taste of this futuristic bounty hunter saga, this is a good jumping-on point, as Spike Spiegel and his team track down the bad guys behind a bombing. This is a huge amount of fun.

"Jazz pop violent space opera fun unfurls in the movie of the TV series that followed the adventures Spike Spiegel and his crew. It doesn't matter if you haven't seen the excellent TV anime, this is great as a standalone piece."



Available on: DVD from Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.



STUDIO GHIBLI— BEYOND MIYAZAKI

As *SciFiNow* readers, we're assuming that you're familiar with the best of Hayao Miyazaki's work, including *Princess Mononoke*, *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbour Totoro*. However, we can't let a feature like this go by without drawing your attention to some of the company's lesser-known works.

Laputa: Castle In The Sky is an incredible fantasy with two orphans, pirates and the authorities searching for a floating island. *Porco Rosso* finds an ace fighter pilot cursed with the body of a pig fighting pirates in post-World War 1 Mediterranean, while *Nausicaä: Valley Of The Wind* pitches a young princess into an environmental fable between the last remnants of humanity and giant

Dune-like insect creatures.

We should also particularly highlight the work of Isao Takahata, who made the delightful *Pom Poko*, the gorgeous *The Tale Of Princess Kaguya*, and the extraordinarily heartbreaking (although decidedly non-genre) *Grave Of The Fireflies*.

"Also," add Odell and Le Blanc, "Yoshifumi Kondo's *Whisper Of The Heart* is nothing short of utterly delightful."

Available on: Blu-ray from StudioCanal.



Studio Ghibli by Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc is available now from Kamera.



YOUR NAME (2016)

Last year's anime hit earns its place on this list due to the fact that it is one of the most beautifully affecting anime films in recent memory. Writer-director Makoto Shinkai's film begins as a light-hearted body swap movie, as small town teen Mitsuha and Tokyo high-schooler Taki can't seem to stop waking up in each other's bodies.

As time passes, the two grow closer and they realise that they mean more to each other than they thought, but the truth behind their situation will make meeting somewhat difficult.

Your Name deservedly ended up on a lot of best of 2016 lists and we can't recommend it highly enough.



It's a wonderfully rendered love story with real emotional depth.

Available on: Blu-ray from Anime Ltd on 30 October.

MACROSS PLUS: THE MOVIE (1994)

If you're looking for some magnificent machines, the world of *Macross* has got you covered. The series' universe is daunting for newcomers, but the film is a good place to start, offering a *Top Gun*-style story of two competitive pilots in the race to give the world its next fighter. Set in 2040, it's got aliens, evil AIs, a love-triangle, and tech that feels like a cross between *Pacific Rim* and *Transformers*.

It's not just about the tech, though, as there's some real emotional depth



too. However, fans will warn you that it doesn't reflect the scope to be found in the rest of the *Macross* universe, and you may want to start with

Macross: Do You Remember Love?



Available on: Blu-ray from Dynit.

"THE RACE THAT TAKES UP THE LAST HALF HOUR OF REDLINE IS AMAZING AND REFLECTS THE SEVEN YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS"

REDLINE (2009)

You want action? Look no further than Takeshi Koike's eye-popping directorial debut, in which racers from around the universe compete in the ultimate battle: *Redline*. Our hero must navigate shady government killers, bail bondsmen and, of course, other racers if he's going to win. The film is best known for its incredible visuals and with good reason: the race that takes up the last half hour of



the film is amazing and reflects the seven year development process.

Available on: Blu-ray from Manga Entertainment.



EVANGELION: 1.0 YOU ARE (NOT) ALONE (2007)

Like *Macross*, picking a starting point for *Evangelion* is something of a thankless task. In all honesty, you should go to the incredible *Neon Genesis Evangelion* anime TV series from 1995 if you want to get into this, but if you insist on starting with a film, the reboot franchise is a reasonable opening. *You Are (Not) Alone* essentially replays the first few episodes of the show, as young Shinji Ikari is coerced by his father to pilot the giant mecha Eva-01 in a fight against an invading angel. The *Rebuild* is currently three films down, with one film to go, so it's a good place to get a foothold.



Available on: DVD from Manga Entertainment.





RANGER DANGER

THE POWER RANGERS ARE BACK! WE TALK TO THE CAST ABOUT MORPHIN FOR A NEW GENERATION...

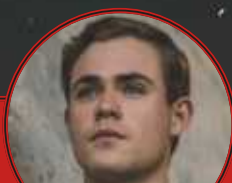
WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

IT FEELS LIKE POWER RANGERS HAS BEEN AROUND FOREVER. THE VERY FIRST SERIES, MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS, ONLY STARTED AIRING IN 1993. BUT THE

franchise feels older than time itself. That might be due to the fact that it has had about 38,950 separate series and tie-in films, each expanding on the last. But with Lionsgate's new film version, we're being sent back to the beginning.

The new *Power Rangers* is aiming to be a straight-up reboot, focusing on the lives of a bunch of misfit teens before they come together, find the Power Coins and become a group of unstoppable superheroes. It's being reimagined and updated for a new generation, as well as hitting all the right notes to entice the viewers who have been with the team from the start.

The Rangers are the same in their red, blue, black, pink and yellow armour, but the kids behind the masks are a different story. Jason (Dacre Montgomery), the Red Ranger, is a high school jock who



DACRE MONTGOMERY ON JASON

"When we first meet him he's perceived as being the high school jock, who doesn't give a toss about the underdog. I wanted to make him more sensitive, endearing and charming, and that is how he develops a relationship with each of the others. There's a lot of drama going on with his family – his dad's pushing him into a football career, but that all goes away and now he's putting all this pressure on him. How can I respond to make [fans think this isn't] just a mocked-up caricature of a high-school drop-out?"

wants to quit football, despite his parents' wishes. Billy (RJ Cyler), the Blue Ranger, is a loner who just wants his own group of friends. Zack (Ludi Lin), the Black Ranger, skips school while looking for quick adrenaline fixes. Kimberly (Naomi Scott), the Pink Ranger, is a queen bee who loses her path. And Trini (Becky G) the Yellow Ranger, has never really had friends and thinks she's better off because of it.

This version of *Power Rangers* has become the perfect example of a trailer going right. With remakes and revivals, there's always that sense of judgement lingering over everything. If you mess up, you can bet people are going to be in the comments sections a nanosecond later, giving you shit for attempting to big back the unbrinbackable.

The first trailer was fine, but the vibe was established in the second trailer, which landed in January. There was something about it that managed to make people feel like they were kids again,



NAOMI SCOTT ON KIMBERLY

"At the start, Kimberly is a queen bee. She's in a popular group but she's struggling with who she is and where she fits in. She feels as though she has a better perspective on things, rather than just being the popular girl. But she does something that she regrets and the other girls ostracise her. From that point, she has to figure out where her place is, and that's where she meets these other kids. She really wants to be friends with them. I think she's struggling between who she's expected to be and who she really is."

"NO MATTER HOW SERIOUS AND MATURE YOU FEEL YOU ARE, YOU GET A LITTLE BIT EXCITED!"

NAOMI SCOTT





BIG MOVIE

Power Rangers

Elizabeth Banks brings the villainy as Rita Repulsa and the cast tell us that we're in for a treat.



MEET RITA

Who's Rita Repulsa and what's she got against the Rangers?

FIRST APPEARANCE: 'Day Of The Dumpster' (Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Season One, episode one)

PORTRAYED BY: Barbara Goodson (voice, 1993-1998); Machiko Soga (live-action, 1992-1994, 2006); Carla Perez (live-action, 1994-1998); Julia Cortez (live-action, 1995 movie); Susan Brady (voice, 2006); Elizabeth Banks (live-action, 2017 movie)

HOMEWORLD: M51 Galaxy

STATUS: Mystic Mother

MAGICAL ABILITIES: Uses her wand to make monsters grow even bigger; uses magical rituals to control humans; creates her own Power Rangers using Power Coins; traps people in other dimensions; teleports at will.

Rita is always cooking up ways to defeat the Rangers. The remake is set to change Rita's origins, too – it's already been confirmed that the character is, in fact, the long lost Green Ranger.

getting hyped for *Power Rangers* in front of the TV on a Saturday morning, while working through a massive bowl of sugary cereal. It was simultaneously nostalgic and brand-new and won many people over within the first few seconds.

"Everybody was anxious to see the trailer, and there were a lot of haters online going: 'Where's the trailer? C'mon, get the trailer out! The movie's almost out and the trailer still isn't out!'" says Lin. "Even the night before the trailer was released I was looking at all these comments from the fans. I don't want people to worry, right? I know a lot of people have a lot of childhood memories and they don't want it ruined, so I understand why they were worried. And then the next day the trailer came out, and all those negative comments turned positive! I think, at the end of the day, don't worry about it. Everything is going to be fine!"

"It's pretty crazy," adds Scott. "It's one of those things that, no matter how cool you think you are,



"IT'S JUST ALL ABOUT US, MEETING AND HOW WE WORK TOGETHER. IT'S LIKE THE BREAKFAST CLUB"

DACRE MONTGOMERY



LUDI LIN ON ZACK

"Zack is a hyperactive, thrill-seeking adrenaline junkie. He goes out and does all these crazy things that other kids can't really keep up with, and that's why he's a bit of an outsider. He's not at school a lot; he's always chasing the adrenaline rush and running away from his demons. He has all these issues that he can't really deal with and he needs other distractions. He doesn't realise that he's going about it the wrong way, being the lone wolf. But he finds this crew, this wolf pack that he belongs to, and he begins to be able to solve his problems."

you still get a little bit hyped when you watch it! No matter how serious and mature that you feel you are, just watching that trailer, especially if you've grown up connected to *Power Rangers* in any way, you get a little bit excited. It was just unapologetic and in-your-face, and I thought it was brilliant."

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT STOOD OUT MOST TO THE MAJORITY OF VIEWERS WAS, OF COURSE, ELIZABETH BANKS AS POWER RANGERS' VILLAINOUS mainstay Rita Repulsa. She's another thing that has been reimagined, but in a good way; the cast reckon we're all in for a treat.

"Elizabeth is incredible," says Becky G. "The decisions she made for her character were so bold and fun and different, and she brings this kind of odd, creepy beauty to Rita Repulsa. This is the hottest we've ever seen Rita! It's incredible, everything from the cosmetics to the acting. Elizabeth kills it."

If anything, Cyler might be a little too excited. "She just takes Rita and makes her this – I won't



The actors tell us that the bond they shared filming is reflected on screen.



There's an emphasis on making these characters real and relatable.



Rita is here to break up those feel-good *Breakfast Club* vibes.

RJ CYLER ON BILLY

"You can expect some crazy good love. Billy's still this wholehearted character. Billy has never been a weak link; he's just always been passive and he doesn't like confrontation. If anything, he'd rather make a friend than hurt somebody, and it's the same thing with my rendition of Billy. It's cool. You can also expect a new way of fighting. They definitely changed up the fighting style for Billy because Billy has always been the passive aggressive person with the same fighting style as Jackie Chan, in a 'make you fight yourself' type way."

even say just character! It's more like Elizabeth turned her into this entity!" he says. "You can't explain what it is or who it is anymore. It's like you could never explain what Rita was, even in the older renditions of *Power Rangers*. Elizabeth, her version of it, is so interesting just to watch. It's crazy. The way she brings the character to life is so creepy but it's so attractive and it's scary; it's everything that Rita is, times ten. She really rocked this role. She was perfect for it! There's nobody else on earth who could have done what Elizabeth has done. I'm rooting for her! I am Team Elizabeth Banks."

LIKE THE RANGERS, THE CAST HAS GROWN INTO SOMETHING OF A MAKESHIFT FAMILY WHILE THEY'VE BEEN FILMING. "IT'S LIKE WORKING with your siblings," Cyler tells us. "I can't see myself working with anybody else on this project because they are that close to me. I wouldn't want another Red Ranger, or Blue or Black or Pink or Yellow. This is my Ranger family."

"We're like best friends!" Montgomery adds. "When we do press it's like being on school camp. I love them all. They all come from different backgrounds and have so much to offer in cultural diversity, their experiences, their acting... I mean, every day I went on set feeling like I needed to act like a sponge to soak all of this up because they have so much to offer that I can learn from! Some of them had more experience than me, so there was constantly an avenue to ask some questions about their experiences and how they do things. It was an amazing experience, and as a result the friendship that ends up developing on screen is exactly what also happened off screen."

The night the cast arrived in Vancouver to film and met each other for the first time, the five of them went to Cyler's house for a private

impromptu table read. "In that night, reading through the script, we went through every emotion imaginable," enthuses Lin. "We were laughing our asses off, we were crying, we were getting angry at parts of the film, and that was just the most fun ever!"

"It was tough, physically and mentally, with long, long hours," says Scott, "and when you're working with people in close proximity for that length of time you do become a bit of a family. A lot of people say that, but we did become really close."

Action is a staple when it comes to *Power Rangers*, but according to its lead actors the latest film is so much more than that. Charting the origins of the teens' powers, it's a coming-of-age story, and a drama, and a comedy. It's everything rolled into one...

"It's an everything movie," adds Becky G. "It doesn't just have action and the whole sci-fi vibe; it also has heart, a lot of heart. It's a character movie that's establishing the Rangers in a new way that people haven't got to see before. It also has a lot of comedy, oh my goodness! I'm going to take my entire family, from my little baby cousins to my grandparents, to go and watch it!"

"It's just all about us, and five different storylines, and us meeting and us discovering something, how we process that and how we work together,"

Montgomery tells us. "It's like *The Breakfast Club*. Until the last quarter of the film, it's just a drama [and] the subject is universal. I think that's why our demographic is so huge. It's so beautifully crafted in that way. I feel really fortunate to have been a part of that journey, and we shot almost chronologically, so to go on that journey with everybody was amazing." ☁

Power Rangers is in cinemas from 23 March.



BECKY G ON TRINI

"Trini is pretty badass! She's strong, but when you first meet her she's not aware of her own strength just yet. She's used to being a loner and she just owns that. She has this vibe of 'I know who I am, and I don't need anybody else,' but really she's never had the chance to have any real friends because she's always been moving for her parents' jobs. When she meets the other Rangers and they go through this adventure, she experiences this tug of war of, 'Should I become their friend? Or should I leave because I'm not good at making friends?'"



N O

DEADPOOL WRITERS RHETT REESE AND PAUL WERNICK
TELL US ABOUT WANTING TO SCARE THE HELL OUT OF
YOU WITH SCI-FI HORROR LIFE

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

C A N

Y O U S

A man in a space suit is shown from the chest up, holding a flashlight that illuminates his face and the surrounding dark space. The background is dark and textured, suggesting an underwater or space environment. The title 'NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM' is overlaid in large, bold, white letters.

NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE RETURNING TO A MORE OPTIMISTIC ERA OF SPACE-SET SCI-FI. STAR TREK IS ON THE BIG SCREEN AND SOON TO BE ON THE TELLY, AND WE GET a new *Star Wars* every Christmas. But there's always something darker lurking in this genre, in the dark corners of space. The fear that something, somewhere out there, is just waiting for us to look in the wrong place.

In *Life*, that something is a biological sample found on Mars; a single-celled organism that is brought to the International Space Station to be examined by a team of scientists and astronauts. Unfortunately for that team, which includes Jake Gyllenhaal, Rebecca Ferguson and Ryan Reynolds, this organism is not docile.

"It was [Skydance CEO] David Ellison's idea," explains Rhett Reese. "He, as we all did, loved the movie *Alien* when he was growing up, and he loved the idea of a sample of life being brought back from Mars on to the International Space Station for study."

"One of the images that David pitched to us is this idea of looking down through the Cupola window at Earth," adds Paul Wernick. "Being so close to your home and yet not being able to return. That was a haunting image for us, and it really stoked a creative fire. We love original sci-fi and there is a dearth of original fare out there. This was our chance to flex that muscle and delve into horror and space in a real way."

Reese and Wernick are a hot property right now. A few years ago, they were best known for writing *Zombieland*, but the success of *Deadpool* has launched them into the stratosphere. While both movies contain their fair share of gore, they're both comedies, and *Life* certainly is not.

"Absolutely, yeah!" enthuses Reese. "In this case, horror comes first. I'm somebody who grew up on Stephen King. I've always had a warped and active imagination and I know what it's like to be scared, I had a lot of anxiety issues growing up, panic attacks as an adult, so the idea of trying to induce that in an audience is pretty exciting."

"You just want to share your misery with the whole world!" interjects Wernick.

"Yeah, I do!" laughs Reese. "I wanna traumatise them! There are some scenes in this movie where

your skin just wants to crawl off your body and that is something that is entertaining to me."

Inevitably, if you're going to make a film about a group of people in space being picked off by a hostile organism, you're going to be compared to *Alien*, and the writers tell us that they were well aware of the need to keep a certain distance between their film and the Ridley Scott classic.

"Our goal is always to be fresh and original and we love the idea of grounding this so it could happen today or tomorrow," explains Wernick. "A lot of people have and will draw comparisons to *Alien* but God bless it, you know, let's hope we can be as great as *Alien*! We want to tap into the reality of space and bring the horrors. This movie draws similarities to *Zombieland* in that it's a dysfunctional family up in space. You have six people that are drawn together for the simple circumstances of their job and their duty to the world, but how do they react when adversity hits them?"

THERE ARE SCENES IN THIS MOVIE WHERE YOUR SKIN JUST WANTS TO CRAWL OFF YOUR BODY

RHETT REESE



The A-list cast includes Jake Gyllenhaal and *M15*'s Rebecca Ferguson.



Writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick are hard at work on *Deadpool 2*.



WARNING: BIOHAZARD

Always read the label first



XENOMORPH, LV426

Sample: Egg

Origin: Crashed spaceship, LV426

Species: Unknown

Instructions: Handle this with extreme caution. Eggs will open if approached and will unleash the monster within. Said monster will latch on to your face, impregnating you with an alien creature that will gestate and burst through your chest and kill everyone around you, so for God's sake, be careful.



ALIEN DNA

Sample: Alien DNA

Origin: Transmission from outer space via SETI

Species: Unknown

Instructions: Do not, we repeat, do not open any more transmissions from this sender. They tricked us with a renewable fuel formula before sending us their DNA code, which some moron spliced with human DNA to create a species that trawled LA looking to procreate.



SPACE VAMPIRES

Sample: Naked humanoid aliens

Origin: Spaceship in Halley's Comet

Species: Unknown

Instructions: Here's a lesson: Don't bring back humanoid creatures you find naked in clear containers inside asteroids, especially if they're surrounded by fossilised bats. This one turned out to be a seductive space vampire, draining people's life-force and nearly destroying the whole world.



REPLICATING PARASITE

Sample: Frozen spaceship, Antarctica

Origin: Another world

Instructions: Warning: Do not touch. At all. And do not trust anyone who has been anywhere near this sample. Also, do not turn your back on anyone. If someone has been in contact with this, they may already be a part of it. They will look like themselves, sure, but they're not. Trust us. They're part of that... thing.



PODS

Sample: New flowers, San Francisco

Origin: Outer space

Species: Unknown

Instructions: Wear gloves and goggles around this sample. Friends and family of people who have come into contact with this new flora and fauna have said that they have been acting rather strangely and not like themselves at all. Oh, one more thing to note: Don't fall asleep.

Jonathan Strange...star
Ariyon Bakare makes a
terrifying discovery.



**“HORROR FANS
ARE GOING TO BE
TREATED TO A TRUE
A-LIST EXPERIENCE”**

RHETT REESE

➤ That idea of grounding it in reality was Reese and Wernick's key to unlocking the film. This isn't some deep space outpost research facility, and it's not set in some kind of post-Earth far-flung future. It's the International Space Station, and the setting is tomorrow: "A lot of stuff in the movie is ripped from the headlines," enthuses Reese. "I won't give anything away but one of the deaths of the crew was taken from a true story that very nearly happened to an astronaut. Those kinds of things, that research, made it grounded for us."

"We are sampling soil from Mars and bringing it back to Earth and studying it," adds Wernick. "So, yes, we really wanted to tap into this idea that it can actually happen."

Helping to provide that anchor in reality is the excellent cast. As previously mentioned, the film is led by Gyllenhaal, Ferguson and Reynolds, who you wouldn't typically expect to find in a horror movie (well, maybe Reynolds, he does like a genre movie). Genre favourite Hiroyuki Sanada (*The Wolverine*) makes his second doomed trip into space after Danny Boyle's *Sunshine*, and the international cast is rounded out by Ariyon Bakare (*Jonathan Strange And Mr Norell*) and Olga Dihovichnaya (*Twilight Portrait, Welcome Home*).

"If you look at the landscape of horror, it tends to be done very cheaply," Reese tells us. "It tends to be done with great actors but not necessarily household names, so I don't think that we ever hoped for a cast like this. We really lucked into it and I think it was by virtue of the script, the director and the studio. We also came in with some credibility and we convinced some really top folks to do it. Horror fans are going to be treated to a true A-list experience."

That A-list experience goes beyond the cast to the production values, with filming taking place at Shepperton Studios. "Our movie looks like a \$150 million movie but it's not," enthuses Wernick. "They made this movie at a price and it was a very contained set; we built two full sections of the space station on set at Shepperton, and we were able to bounce back and forth. Skydance and all the visual effects guys have really come together and created a world. It's not *Passengers* in that it didn't cost \$200 million to make

but may look like it did!"

The man at the helm of this ship is Swedish director Daniel Espinosa, who broke out with his 2010 hit *Easy Money* before cementing his Hollywood status with Denzel Washington/Ryan Reynolds thriller *Safe House*. This is his first step into sci-fi and horror, but Wernick tells us that he was a perfect fit for this grounded take on the genre.

"He's been wonderful, he's very collaborative and respectful of the script and the actors love him. Most of the questions he asked were in regards to back story," he explains. "And that's not necessarily going to be explored on camera as much as it is by the actors' performances as they were thinking about their roles and the characters. This was our first experience working with Daniel and hopefully the first of many."

While it may be their first time working with Espinosa, *Life* is the second collaboration between Wernick, Reese and Reynolds, and they've got *Deadpool 2* in the works.

"Well... a lot of people have their muses, their romantic partner, and Ryan Reynolds is our muse now," grins Reese. "He is the voice in our heads as we sit down to work at the keyboard."

"He's also our dream romantic partner, so it works," laughs Wernick.

"He doesn't know that yet but we're plotting!" Reese laughs. "The whole task in Hollywood is to find people to work with who are kind and good, but who also elevate whatever you bring to them, to bring



out the best in you, and Ryan is just the poster child for that. He takes everything he touches and makes it better and makes you look better. You're on a genius hunt and Ryan Reynolds is one of the very few geniuses that we've ever met."

Genius or not, Reynolds and his fellow castmates are not in for an easy ride, judging by that trailer, which closes with Gyllenhaal reading *Goodnight Moon* over scenes of escalating chaos and carnage.

"I read that book to my children growing up, and I liked that idea of *Goodnight Moon* set on a coffin in space as they're looking down on Earth from space!" Wernick tells us.

"I hope that's not the version you are telling your kid!" laughs Reese. ☞

Life is in cinemas 24 March.

"IT ISN'T ANYTHING LIKE ANY OF THE OTHER ALIENS THAT WE'VE SEEN."

Dr Adam Rutherford on designing *Life*'s creature

Part of rooting *Life* in the real world was creating an alien that was based in real biology, which is where geneticist Dr Adam Rutherford came in...

How did the filmmakers describe what your role would be?

What they wanted was for the science to be interesting, which is different from the science being super-accurate, because it's a film, obviously. I'm a geneticist and evolutionary biologist, and when I read the script it was very obvious to me that there were a couple of real world bits of biology that I was very interested in with the behaviour of the alien. We talked about what the alien was going to be like and I started talking with the effects team, creating its own life story, how it gets from being a thing attached to a rock on Mars to being something altogether more developed and aggressive.

It must be a lot of fun getting to hypothesise a whole creature!

Yeah, it's great fun. It's been a real professional high for me. You're working with super smart people who really get the science but at the same time their responsibility is to tell a ripping yarn and a genre movie. So the premise isn't something that exists in the real world but we wanted to make it as real-world as possible whilst maintaining the horror of it, and also the sense of realism. I think it isn't anything like any of the other aliens that we've seen on screen, and that vision of it is all because of the underlying biology that we spent a long time thinking about.

Is it ever difficult to put the entertainment part over the science?

I'm a bit more relaxed about the dominance of the narrative. It isn't a thing that exists as far as we know, but that doesn't mean that you can't make it scientifically interesting and rooted in real-world biology even in a very extreme form. We spent a long time looking at the behaviour of various organisms and just rounding those up to 11, then combining them into something to get the behaviour that the script needed. The way it moves, the way it's structured, the way it is a single-celled organism that has multiplied into this multi-cellular organism – there's loads of biology going on in there which doesn't detract from the fact that it's doing the thing that aliens do, which is eat, feed and try to survive. It's basically like playing evolutionary biology for the lols, which is great for someone like me!



The crew of the ISS is a very long way from home.



MUST-SEE TV

Iron Fist



“IRON FIST BRINGS IN A BIT OF THE KUNG FU MOVIE STYLE TO THE DEFENDERS THAT YOU DON'T SEE IN THE OTHERS”

SCOTT BUCK

MANHATTAN'S GREATEST

WITH THE DEFENDERS ON THE HORIZON, IT'S TIME FOR **IRON FIST** TO COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS. SHOWRUNNER SCOTT BUCK, HEAD OF MARVEL TV JEPH LOEB AND ACTOR FINN JONES TALK KUNG FU FIGHTING, CROSSOVERS AND BRINGING DANNY RAND TO LIFE...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

NETFLIX HAS BEEN BUSY. IN JUST UNDER TWO YEARS, THE STREAMING SERVICE HAS SOMEHOW MANAGED TO ADD WHAT IS EFFECTIVELY A WHOLE NEW universe on to the end of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which was huge already. And spanning across two seasons of *Daredevil*, and one each of *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, and the upcoming *Iron Fist*, there's no stopping it. Especially when there's also a super-powered team-up as big and awesome as the *Defenders* series on the cards very soon.

But how do you make your fourth and final superhero, in this case martial artist Danny Rand – also known as Iron Fist, stand out from the crowd when everyone is busy getting hyped for the epic superhero collaboration that's waiting over the horizon? We speak to *Iron Fist* showrunner Scott Buck and Head of Marvel Television Jeph Loeb about what to expect from Netflix's mysterious new Defender, and how he's set to make waves in New York.

"We always begin with the person, not the powers," Loeb says of the *Defenders*' empire. He found

Danny Rand's story particularly compelling. As a rich kid living in the financial district of New York, Rand had everything taken away from him when his parents died and he became lost on the other side of the world. Believed to be dead, Rand causes some raised eyebrows when he shows up in New York 15 years later, very much not.

"He reappears with stories that sound like he's crazy, and all he's trying to do is get someone to believe in him," Loeb continues. "It's a story about a young man who, to find a way to get someone to believe in him, needs to believe in himself first. We think that is a universal story. Even though Danny Rand is a billionaire, which makes him not even part of the one percent, he's vulnerable and likeable, particularly in the way that Finn Jones plays him. But, make no mistake about it, he's also dangerous and we hope you'll fall in love with him the way we have."

"Danny is different from the other Defenders in that *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage* are all very dark, haunted characters," adds Buck. ➤





MUST-SEE TV

Iron Fist

ESSENTIAL IRON FIST

Danny Rand stories you should read before watching the series



MARVEL PREMIERE #15-16

Writer: Roy Thomas
Penciller: Gil Kane
Inker: Dick Giordano
Colourist: Glynis Wein

Letters: LP Gregory
Iron Fist made his first entrance in the Marvel Premiere Vol. 1 story *The Fury Of Iron Fist!*, in May 1974. We meet Danny Rand in the realm of K'un-Lun, where he has just finished demonstrating his fighting skills before his master Yu-Ti and his Dragon Kings.



IRON FIST #1-7

Writer: Chris Claremont
Penciller: John Byrne
Inker: Al McWilliams

Colourist: Janice Cohen
Letters: Dave Hunt
Danny Rand's first solo adventure commences in this seven-issue arc, in which he infiltrates Stark Industries and teams up with Misty Knight to rescue Colleen Wing. Predictably, Iron Man ends up showing up, and Rand and Stark fight it out.



IMMORTAL IRON FIST VOL. 2: THE SEVEN CAPITAL CITIES OF HEAVEN

Writers: Ed Brubaker,

Matt Fraction
Artists: Kano, David Aja, Tonci Zonjic
Of all the *Iron Fist* comics, *The Seven Capital Cities Of Heaven* is the one you need to read the most urgently. *Iron Fist* returns to K'un-Lun to kick ass in a tournament against the Seven Capital Cities of Heaven. With so much action and high stakes, this is a nail-biter.



IRON FIST/WOLVERINE #1-4 THE RETURN OF K'UN-LUN

Writer: Jay Faerber
Penciller: Jamal Igle

Inker: Rich Perrotta
Colourist: Liquid!
Letters: Richard Starkings, Troy Peteri
After Misty Knight is captured by evil organisation The Hand, *Iron Fist*'s only rescue plan is following them to Tokyo and teaming up with Wolverine. Can the unlikely duo stop the city of K'un-Lun coming down to Earth?

➤ "They're also older, they're in their thirties, so that's who they're going to be. But when we meet Danny Rand, he's still young. He's in his twenties and despite everything that's happened, he's still optimistic, which is that no matter what happens somehow everything is going to be all right, even if past evidence doesn't suggest so. He's a more hopeful, lighter and youthful character than the others."

When we first meet Danny in episode one, he's wandering around Wall Street with bare feet, a backpack and a smile on his face, trying to find someone to chat to and help him out. In short, he's immediately more approachable than characters like Jessica Jones, who walk around with chips on their shoulders. As a character, Rand is also more relatable.

"With *Daredevil*," says Loeb, "he's already become a vigilante, and in the case of Jessica Jones, her world has already been turned upside-down, and with Luke Cage, he's already a bulletproof man trying to decide what role he's going to play in life. Danny comes into our world and is immediately judged by the way people look at him, and who hasn't had that happen to them in some way? He has to prove who he is to everyone and you immediately get drawn into the story. He feels more human in a way, but when he kicks ass it's a lot of fun."

Loeb and Buck agree that Danny's relatable character mostly comes from the way actor Finn Jones plays him. "All of those *Defenders* characters are complex," says Loeb. "What Finn is able to do almost effortlessly is be vulnerable and yet strong, be funny and yet serious, be accessible and yet very dangerous. Being able to balance the extremes of that character, who may well have some kind of mental disorder, and carry all of that and make it someone who we still

care about is remarkable. We knew it from the moment Finn walked in and we were very lucky to have him join."

Like all Netflix's *Defenders* shows, *Iron Fist* is wheeling out a multi-layered foe and this one's set to rival *Daredevil*'s Kingpin, *Jessica Jones*' Purple Man and *Luke Cage*'s Cottonmouth. But corporate villain Harold Meachum, played by David Wenham, may not be all he seems.

"That's sort of the question we like: is he a villain or isn't he?" says Buck. "That's part of the mystery of the show. We try to play him as real and as grounded as possible and that's the fun of doing these shows for Netflix. We can create real characters, so he's not a one-dimensional villain. He's someone that we actually feel for at times because he's complex with human needs."

"What makes each of our stories as compelling as we hope they are is that the main character is the hero of the story, but then the so-called villain, from his point of view, thinks that he is the hero of the story," Loeb explains. "From [Kingpin's] point of view, he was just trying to help New York, and there's a man running around in a mask that's trying to stop him doing that! Which one is wrong? We approach every story from the point of view that the villain is the hero of his own story, and that the hero of our story is actually the villain of his. So what Harold is trying to do, in many ways, is heroic. It's just, as we'll find out, his methods may be something that you'd want to call into question."

Similarly, *Iron Fist* is set to bring its own unique flavour to the Marvel Cinematic Universe and, more specifically, to the world of the *Defenders*. "We bring in a bit of the Kung Fu-style movie to *Defenders* that we don't see in the others," Buck tells us. ➤



Danny may be a more cheerful Defender but he can still throw down.



FINN JONES IS DANNY RAND

The Game Of Thrones star
talks taking on Iron Fist

How familiar were you with *Iron Fist* and the *Defenders* when you joined the show?

I knew of Netflix's *Daredevil* and *Jessica Jones* but never came across the comics before. Growing up in the UK I don't think the US comic book culture really translates as much for kids. Upon reading the character description in the audition breakdown I was immediately hooked. There was something about Danny's inner power and optimism that struck me straight away.

Why does Danny Rand stand out from the other *Defenders*?

He's the youngest and certainly the most vulnerable, but despite his traumatic past he has an optimism and naivety that isn't usually displayed in superheroes. He's flawed and nowhere near perfect. He's driven and headstrong. I admire those attributes, especially as they all conflict with each other – to me, it's what makes Danny real.

What unique flavour does *Iron Fist* bring to the MCU?

I find his inner, more spiritual super powers a nice break from the usual smash and thump superheroes we're used to. However, what we see with our version of Danny is that he is a character *trying* to behave centred and disciplined. After all, he is mortal, and a 25-year-old mortal at that... he has a way to go yet.

What has been the highlight while working with Charlie Cox, Krysten Ritter and Mike Colter on *The Defenders*?

The greatest highlight is how well we all get on with each other – I can't remember the last time I laughed so much with a group of people. There is a natural dynamic and energy created between us, and it's been a joy all of us working together.

“HE'S THE MOST
VULNERABLE OF THE
DEFENDERS BUT HE
HAS AN OPTIMISM”
FINN JONES



MUST-SEE TV

Iron Fist

The style of martial arts in Iron Fist adds something unique.

DANNY RAND HAS TO PROVE WHO HE IS...HE FEELS MORE HUMAN IN A WAY
JEPH LOEB



➤ “It’s a different character that has a slightly lighter, less gritty tone.”

Loeb reckons *Iron Fist* has three things that make it stand out from its sister shows: “One is that we’re telling a story about a hero that’s a bit younger than the rest,” he says. “And so in many ways he’s got an enthusiasm that is incredibly infectious, but also quite naïve. He hasn’t got the same cynicism as Jessica Jones or Matt Murdock. Two, there’s incredible action and adventure that lives in the world of martial arts, and we’ve tried our best to pay homage to an incredible kind of filmmaking. And three, it’s a story of a man who’s trying to prove himself, not only to the world but to himself, without a family and without anyone to really help define who he is. He hopes he can find himself.”

Like Danny Rand, the show needs to define itself if it is going to stand a chance of not being overshadowed by the anticipation leading up to the long-awaited team-up series, *The Defenders*. Loeb says Marvel begins every television series, whether it’s on Netflix, ABC or FX, the same way it approaches its comic book lines.

“There’s a motto that we go by in the comic books, which is for someone,

every comic is their first comic,” he tells us. “It’s the same way with television. We have to assume, or rather we hope, that a lot of the audience for *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones* and *Luke Cage* are coming to see *Iron Fist*. But we also have to think about an audience that hasn’t seen any of those other shows.

“We need to tell something that’s very accessible, but at the same time something that feels like it’s part of something larger so that you do have the hunger to be able to go: ‘How can I learn more about the Marvel universe?’ The good thing about Netflix is *Daredevil* seasons One and Two and *Jessica Jones* and *Luke Cage* are also on! So, after you finish the 13 hours of *Iron Fist*, there is plenty more for you to watch before you see the *Defenders*.”

Marvel has become well-known for weaving its properties together, and the studios’ TV series are no exception. Bringing the likes of Rosario Dawson as Claire Temple, who first appeared in a main role in *Daredevil* Season One and then into *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage* and *Iron Fist* helps to build anticipation for *The Defenders* by reminding the audience that everything is connected. But Rosario Dawson isn’t the only thing

all of the shows have in common...

“More importantly, we have New York City, which we consider to be our fifth Defender,” Loeb tells us. “Our story is about New York and the people that live there, and how each of those worlds are different. Danny takes us to a place where we have never really been in our story land, which is that one percent – that world of Park Avenue and that Wall Street world of high finance. Then he immediately counter-cultures it with Colleen Wing’s (Jessica Henwick) world, and what that world is in Chinatown, a whole other district of Manhattan that becomes another part of that character of the show.”

With *The Defenders* on the horizon, Loeb gives us a little teaser regarding what to expect: “I know it sounds cliché but expect the unexpected,” he says. “*Defenders* has always been Marvel’s greatest non-team. These are four very distinct, very well-drawn characters that have to find a way of working together for a very short amount of time with no guarantee that they aren’t going to just kill each other.” ☞

Iron Fist is available to stream on Netflix from 17 March.

DEFENDERS ASSEMBLE

What's next from Marvel and Netflix? Here's what we know about the future of Hell's Kitchen's heroes...



The Defenders

ETA: Summer 2017

Confirmed cast: Charlie Cox, Krysten Ritter, Mike Colter, Finn Jones, Sigourney Weaver

Showrunner: Douglas Petrie, Marco Ramirez

Body: Not much is known about the imminent *Defenders*, except that our heroes will be battling Sigourney Weaver's powerful Alexandra. There's also a wealth of confirmed returning characters, from Elektra (Elodie Yung) and Stick (Scott Glenn) to Misty Knight (Simone Missick), Trish Walker (Rachael Taylor) and Colleen Wing (Jessica Henwick). Oh, and Rosario Dawson will be back as Claire Temple obviously.



The Punisher

ETA: 2017 TBC

Confirmed cast: Jon Bernthal, Ben Barnes, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Amber Rose Reval

Showrunner: Steve Lightfoot

Body: We absolutely cannot wait for Jon Bernthal's Frank Castle to get his own solo run. *Westworld*'s Ben Barnes will continue to stretch his villainous muscles as classic villain Jigsaw, and *Girls* star Ebon Moss-Bachrach will be playing Frank's loyal hardware supplier Micro. Following the bond they formed in *Daredevil*, Karen Page (Deborah Ann Woll) will also play a key role in the series.

AND BEYOND



Jessica Jones Season 2

ETA: 2018

A second season was confirmed for the PI back in January last year but it's been on the back burner due to Jessica's *Defenders* duties. We won't get it until next year at the earliest. With Kilgrave out of the picture, who will step in as the antagonist?



Daredevil Season 3

ETA: 2018

Much like *Jessica Jones*, the Devil of Hell's Kitchen definitely has another season on the way but it has not started rolling yet. Although there are still plenty of ninjas out there and Vincent D'Onofrio's Kingpin is still around, surely it's time they gave us Bullseye.



Luke Cage Season 2

ETA: TBC

After completely breaking Netflix on its debut, it is absolutely no surprise that everyone wants more Luke Cage, and an official order was given in December. It remains to be seen where it will come in the packed schedule though.

ON THE HORIZON

Some of the classic Defenders are waiting for their call-up



The Sub-Mariner

One of the founding members of *The Defenders*, we're still yet to see a live-action Namor (although there are some rumours that it won't be too long before we do).



Valkyrie

How long can it be before we get a bit of Asgard on the streets of New York? She combines super strength with financial backing, although it should be noted that she can be a little bit unpredictable...



Nighthawk

Kyle Richmond's character arc could add variety to the line-up, as a spoiled kid former supervillain turned hero. Nighthawk was originally part of the Squadron Sinister before he saw the error of his ways.



Gargoyle

Gargoyle is possibly a little too fantastical for this group. Isaac Christians is an elderly WW1 veteran who made an ill-advised pact with some hellspawn that resulted in his soul being transferred to a gargoyle's body.



The Son Of Satan

I they need some Ghost Rider-esque devilishness, Daimon Hellstrom is your man. He's literally the son of Satan with a lot of dark magic gifts to battle the forces of darkness.



BIG MOVIE
Get Out

GET OUT



JORDAN PEELE AND DANIEL KALUUYA TELL US ABOUT CHALLENGING THE "POST-RACIAL LIE" AND SCARING THE CRAP OUT OF YOU WITH GET OUT

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

GET OUT OPENS WITH A YOUNG BLACK MAN WALKING DOWN THE STREET IN A CLEARLY AFFLUENT SUBURB AT NIGHT. AS HE WALKS, TALKING ON HIS PHONE, a car passes him, then turns around to follow him, and we hear the tinkling of 'Run Rabbit Run'... Jordan Peele's directorial debut is a horror film that lets you know what it's about from the start. As the story begins, with successful black photographer Chris (Daniel Kaluuya) going with his white girlfriend Rose (Allison Williams) to meet her parents at their country home, *Get Out* addresses issues of race and racism head-on in a chilling genre setting.

"It's interesting because when I first wrote the film we were in this era, which I've been describing as the post-racial lie era, in America," says Peele. "We had a black President and the whole conversation of race was kind of hushed up. 'If you speak of the devil he shall appear' – the notion that the conversation about racism is perpetuating it. Now we live in a time when racial tensions are clear, and so I think the movie will feel more welcome now, because people are engaged with the topic and the use of genre in this conversation will add some fun to a topic that's no fun at all. This is a film where you can escape from it all and focus on the genre and the popcorn and you can yell at the screen, but you can also use it as a reference point in conversation."

Peele is best known as one half of the comedy double act *Key And Peele*, and the fact that *Get Out* is so sharp, witty and creepy should come as no surprise to anyone who's watched the sketch show. Rising star Daniel Kaluuya may be familiar to viewers from his roles in films like *Sicario*, but he's a veteran of British genre TV too (*The Fades*, *Black Mirror*), and he tells us that he recognised that same sense of daring in this script.

The film's conversations crackle with tension.



"It reminded me of how I felt when I read *Psychoville*," he enthuses. "'Can you say this? Can you do this?' It was about a subject that I've lived and it felt important to me, that all my friends will feel like they belong if they watch a film like this. I found that really rewarding, to have a chance to be a part of it."

The film gets going when Chris and Rose arrive at her family home and meet her parents Dean and Missy, played by Bradley Whitford and Catherine Keener. Dean is all smiles, referring to Chris as "my man" and telling him how he would have voted for Obama for a third time if he could. Missy is reserved, though keen to use hypnosis to cure Chris of his nicotine cravings. When Rose's brother (Caleb Landry Jones) arrives, the awkwardness is taken up a notch.

"Even before it was a racial movie it was based around the idea that you can get scares, thrills, suspense and intrigue within dialogue itself," explains Peele. "One of my biggest touchstones is *The Stepford Wives*. With a satirical edge it plays on the reality of how humans behave, and I realised that this is an opportunity to talk about race in a film."

As the references to race become more direct, Chris tries to navigate the situation. Does he address the racist statement? Will he, as the title encourages him to do, get out, or will he put up with it for the sake of not upsetting anyone?

"I've been to that party and had those conversations about people pretending to be okay with this," adds Kaluuya.

“
I WANTED
CHRIS TO BE A
CHARACTER
THAT BLACK
PEOPLE WOULD
ROOT FOR
DANIEL KALUUYA

"Sometimes you have to be on your best behaviour. You want to say something but you can't because you just go: 'Listen guys, I'm black and it's just different.' And sometimes people go: 'Oh, I don't see colour.' I think that's bullshit. What do you mean you can't see colour? There's nuances in every culture and people aren't understanding that. But sometimes you go, 'Cool, there's a time and place.'

"And if you address it, you don't know how that other person will react," he continues. "They'll maybe get their back up or they will accuse you of being a racist, so you just have to tread that line. I always say, if someone says the word 'nigger' it just fucks you. It fucks you because every way you react is the wrong way. They put that onto you. If you go crazy, you're the angry guy. If you stay silent, you're passive and a coward. If you fucking challenge him then you're a complication or you're aggressive. Everything you do is the wrong thing in their eyes, so it's tough navigating that as a black person in Western society where people are pretending to be post-racial because of Obama and it's not what's happened."

Although Kaluuya's star has been steadily for a while now, this feels like his breakout role, and Peele tells us that he knew he was perfect from the start. "He's so good," he enthuses. "I think the important quality he has is this familial vibe. You feel like he represents you, like maybe he's a friend or a brother, but also he feels extremely perceptive in the



BIG MOVIE

Get Out



➤ moment, and intelligent. It was very important to me that this character is someone that you feel is not making the dumb decision, that this was meant to be a movie to cater to anyone that ever wants to yell at the screen in a movie theatre when a protagonist does some stupid shit."

It's also an incredibly confident film for a first-time director, and Kaluuya tells us that absolutely came through on set as well as on screen. "[Peele's] just so open to your ideas and your outlook," he says. "Because there was stuff that I wasn't comfortable with and he'd be like, 'Yeah, I get it. I wanted Chris to be a character that black people would root for, to be frank, and if he wasn't, I think the film would fail. And so in a lot of those situations I think Chris had to react in a certain way in order for black people to think they'd do the same thing. That's what he really helped me on, and if something didn't feel right, he was willing to chuck things away and start again. I trusted him, that's the most important thing, so when there were moments when he had to go:

“

THE GENRE

SERIOUSLY LACKS

REPRESENTATION

OF OUR SKIN AND

PERSPECTIVE

JORDAN PEELE

”

'You have to trust me,' I just said, 'OK, cool, I do.'"

As well as raising these issues and putting these conversations on screen, *Get Out* also offers us a perspective that we very rarely get in horror. Simply put, there are a very small number of genre films with black leads and a very small number of genre films from black filmmakers. "That was one of the realisations that helped me understand that this could fill a missing gap in the genre and the conversation," remembers Peele. "I think one of the central themes of this film on a satirical level is that black people are really loyal horror fans and we go to the theatre, we yell at the screen, and yet the genre seriously lacks representation of our skin, but also our perspective and experience. So the sunken place in this movie, which is sort of a state of mind, is very much a metaphor for us being in these darkened theatres yelling at these screens but we can't affect it and there's a marginalisation there."

Get Out is absolutely a success

both as a genre film and as something that will get people talking, and it's very exciting to hear that Peele has every intention of sticking around. "It's my favourite genre," he tells us. "I've got about four other movies I want to do in the social thriller category so this is in some ways the beginning of the rest of my career, I think."

"A lot of times there's stuff you want to say, and bad storytelling is: 'Here's four,' while good storytelling is: 'Here's two plus two,'" says Kaluuya. "That's what genre does, like *Black Mirror* or *The Fades* or *Psychoville* or *Get Out* – it's using the genre to say something that's relevant and then the audience pieces it together. Because when you come to it, it's more rewarding, you own that information. And what's great about *Get Out* is that people are watching it and owning it, and thinking about things. It's a rewarding way of saying something and that's what Jordan does." ✎

Get Out is released in cinemas on 17 March.



Jordan Peele makes his directorial debut.



Are Chris' fears real or simply imagined?



Everyone is very excited to meet Chris...

BE OUR GUEST... Seriously, make other plans



THE INVITATION

"We'd love to have you over for dinner for some catching up, and a explanation about why you haven't seen us for a while. We've got a video for you to watch, but we promise it's not a cult thing! And if you want to leave early, that's totally fine. Of course you can. Love, Eden and David."



THE LOVED ONES

"Dear Brent, do you want to go to the prom with me? You could come by my house first for dinner and for some pictures – my dad's a really good photographer. Just pay no attention to Bright Eyes and promise you will never, ever leave me. Love, Lola."



HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL

"Frederick and Annabelle Loren request the pleasure of your company for a night of chills and thrills at our haunted house party. That's right, the house is haunted, and if you can stay the night, you'll win \$10,000 in cold hard cash. Of course, you'll have to survive the night..."



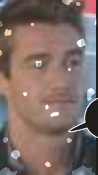
YOU'RE NEXT

"Hey, just a reminder that our wedding anniversary party will be going ahead as scheduled. Feel free to bring partners. And please make sure you keep the bickering to a minimum. We don't want any fighting to ruin such a nice occasion. Love, mom and dad."



THE WICKER MAN

"To whom it may concern, we wish to report a missing girl. Young Rowan Morrison has vanished and we require a policeman to be sent from the mainland to find her. A good Christian man would be ideal, preferably one who understands the true nature of sacrifice."



MUST-SEE TV

iZombie

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROB THOMAS AND
DIANE RUGGIERO-WRIGHT
AND STAR RAHUL KOHLI TALK
iZOMBIE'S THIRD SEASON, AND WHY THE CULT
SHOW TOOK SO LONG TO HIT NETFLIX UK...**

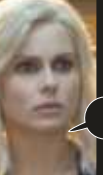
IF YOU DON'T ALREADY WATCH *IZOMBIE*, YOU SHOULD PROBABLY GET ON THAT. THE WAY WE SEE IT IS: YOU EITHER HAVEN'T SEEN *IZOMBIE* OR YOU ARE OBSESSED WITH IT.

Set in Seattle, the show follows former medical resident Liv Moore (the marvellous Rose McIver), who starts working as a coroner's assistant after she's attacked by a zombie and ultimately turns into one. Liv needs to eat brains in order to retain her humanity, and in doing so she experiences flashbacks from the lives of the people she eats. Naturally, she decides to use her newfound power to help solve murder cases with the Seattle PD.

The show started airing on The CW in the US in 2015. But 32 episodes later and there was still no sign of a UK broadcaster picking it up, until both seasons dropped on Netflix last spring with virtually no warning. So how come it took so long for *iZombie* to bag itself a permanent home in the UK?

iZombie is a bit of everything: it's got a horror/supernatural element, but it's also a police procedural with a case-of-the-week to crack every episode, and it's a fast-paced comedy. And then it's also sometimes a romance, an action thriller and a drama. According to executive producers Rob Thomas and Diane Ruggiero-Wright (who developed the show from the Vertigo comic series), the mismatch of genres is difficult to market.

"The thing we use as a template is *Buffy*," explains Thomas. "It's a show that has some gore and monster genre stuff going around, and it's got some detective police work going on, and then on top of all that we're trying to be funny. We don't want to have the rhythm of a sitcom, but we want it to be clever and witty with quotable dialogue. We don't quite feel like the other CW superhero shows. I'm a huge fan of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, and sometimes I feel ➤



MUST-SEE TV

iZombie

➤ that the dialogue in our show is very much like that. I mean, we want to be clever and funny but they're breaking into song, and we have monsters eating brains."

Ruggiero-Wright insists that the show's fantastic cast goes a long way when it comes to drawing in new viewers. "I think our cast is just really phenomenal, and there's someone for everyone in it," she says. "I think people love everyone, but then they also definitely have their person that they latch onto. They have such affection for Ravi, or they want to be best friends with Babineaux, or they want to date Major, and everyone secretly loves Blaine."

If they didn't have the actors, she reckons *iZombie* would be a really hard sell. "We are all like, we're doing a zombie show, but she's a cute zombie and she eats brains and solves murders. People are like: 'Yeah, good luck with that...'" she laughs. "But then you see it and Rose is so compelling and so funny and so endearing that you get sucked into her journey and you want her to be okay, and you want her to succeed and find love and not have the guy she dates die!"

"I think we occupy our own space," continues Thomas. "When I did *Veronica Mars*, if someone told me



David Anders is gleefully wicked as scheming zombie Blaine.

"WE WANT TO BE CLEVER AND FUNNY AND WE HAVE MONSTERS EATING BRAINS."
ROB THOMAS

there was a new teenage private eye show, I don't know that I would have rushed to see it. It's the same thing with *iZombie*. Getting people to experience it is sometimes the hard part!"

RAHUL KOHLI, WHO PLAYS THE FAN FAVOURITE HUMAN, MEDICAL EXAMINER DR RAVI CHAKRABARTI, IS THANKFUL FOR THE SHOW'S loyal fandom. "It's not the biggest out there, we're definitely one of the smaller shows in terms of fan base, but what they lack in size they make up for in loyalty," he says. "I've been pretty proactive with interacting with [our fans]. But at the same time I think there's also a shared frustration. I think that we on the creative side and the fanbase are all sort of connected, as we feel that the show is slightly overlooked in a lot of ways. And I think that's also brought us closer together. We feel like a little army, we're the small show that could. We share that loyalty and that bond with our fans."

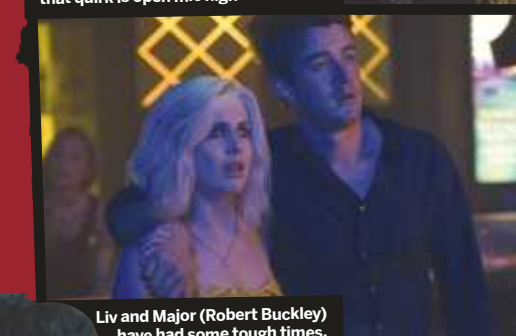
A lot of the frustration Kohli feels comes from trying to figure out how to make the show bigger. "How do we get this out to a bigger audience?" he asks us. "How do we get more people watching it? Three years down the



Clive, Liv and Ravi: the best crime-solving trio on TV. Yeah, we said it.



Every brain has its quirks. Sometimes that quirk is open mic night.



Liv and Major (Robert Buckley) have had some tough times.

The relationship between Liv (Rose McElver) and Ravi (Rahul Kohli) gives the show its heart as well as humour.





line and we still haven't really figured it out! I have a sneaking suspicion that we're going to be one of those shows where it finishes when it finishes and we go about our lives and move onto different projects, and then there's this resurgence. People will go: 'Oh, did you know there was this show on TV a few years ago?' and then they demand that we come back and make another season or make a film."

SEASON TWO ENDED ON A BOMBHELL, WITH THE ARRIVAL OF ZOMBIE-RUN CORPORATION FILLMORE GRAVES, WHICH AIMS TO MAKE SEATTLE A zombie salvation. Now that we know there are more than just a handful of zombies out there, Season Three is set to make a big departure from what we're used to.

"The first two seasons were mapped out with a pretty clear bad guy doing nefarious things and they both ended with big showdowns in the season finales," explains Thomas. "Fillmore Graves is a very different thing to either Meat Cute or Max Rager. Fillmore Graves are proposing that they believe at some point in the not-too-distant future, humans are going to discover zombies and the contention is that when that day comes humans will just wipe them out. They are preparing for that day, and they are suggesting that they will not go gently into the night. It forces all of our characters to figure out where they stand in that spectrum."

"This season doesn't end in a big shoot-out. I think it plays to more conspiracy theory ideas, trying to figure out who is good and who is bad and who you want to lead you into the next stage. That's how we're spending Season Three."

From Fillmore Graves, we've only really met Vivian Stoll (Andrea Savage) so far, who closed the season by asking Liv and co if they were with her or against her. She has the making of a great villain. But Ruggiero-Wright confesses that

I LOVE YOU

Reasons to fall in love with *iZombie*

THE CHARACTERS

From Liv and medical examiner Ravi Chakrabarti to brain-dealing zombie Blaine DeBeers and power-crazed billionaire Vaughn Du Clark, there's not a single character that you won't love a little in some way. *iZombie's* characterisation is off the chain, and will be the reason you stick around.



CULINARY INSPIRATION

As a zombie with manners, Liv doesn't hunt people down and devour their brains. She sneaks them from the morgue she works at and cooks up chunks on the sly. Favourites include brain noodles, brain hot pockets and brain scrambled eggs.

ROSE MCIVER'S SKILLS

Each time Liv eats someone's brain, she takes on their personality traits and interests. That means that Rose McIver basically plays about 32 subtly different characters throughout the show's first two seasons. She's utterly mesmerising, and keeps every episode feeling fresh and exciting.



THE AMAZING INTRO

iZombie's intro might well be the best on TV right now. With gorgeous art from *iZombie's* comic book artist Michael Allred and a couple of bars from 'Stop, I'm Already Dead' by Deadboy and the Elephantmen playing, it's actually really hard not to head-bang along with it.



How will Clive's discovery of Liv's secret alter the crime-solving duo?

they didn't really fancy having a Big Bad this year.

"We had such a delicious Big Bad with Vaughn Du Clark [the glorious Steven Weber]," she says, "and we thought it might be good to have someone where you're like: 'Well, I kind of see your point...' I think with Vivian, she's not really a crazy person. She's not a self-absorbed lunatic. She doesn't want to rule the world or have as much money and power as possible. She's a person who kind of has a point about protecting her people."

Another big Season Two shocker was the fact that Liv's detective partner Clive Babineaux (Malcolm Goodwin) now knows she's a zombie after spending the first two seasons in the dark. One of the things both Thomas and Ruggiero-Wright were worried about was losing his hilarious reactions whenever Liv starts acting a little out of character after munching on a brain.

"The thing that we discovered in Season Three is that it still plays," adds Thomas. "It plays even when he knows why she's behaving the way she is. It still puts them in funny situations. I do think that it makes them closer. You know, he gave up a romantic relationship that meant quite a bit to him to preserve the secret of zombies in Seattle, and I do think that has bonded them even more than they were before."

Season Three is also set to give us a deeper look at the stoic detective's origins. "One of the things that I really couldn't be

happier about with Season Three is that we get to know a bit more about Clive," says Ruggiero-Wright. "Fans will definitely learn a lot more about how Clive became Clive and what makes him tick. There is a lot of mystery, and emotional investment for our main characters. The stakes are a lot higher, what with Clive being in the know and there being this whole new run of zombies."

Though *iZombie* has a lot of great elements to it, the diverse and well-rounded characters will always be the main selling point. "You want everyone to be someone that you don't want to die. You don't want anyone to be expendable, so that when you say: 'Tonight, someone dies on *iZombie*,' everyone will be like: 'Nooooo!'"

To be fair, most of the characters that die come back as zombies anyway, but the point still stands. ☞

iZombie Seasons 1-2 are available now on Netflix. Season 3 will air later this year.

After a brief identity crisis in Season Two, what's Blaine up to now?



PREY

MEAT

RAW IS THE FIERCEST HORROR YOU'LL SEE IN 2017. WE TALK TO WRITER-DIRECTOR JULIA DUCOURNAU ABOUT HER INCREDIBLE COMING OF AGE TALE



THE FIRST WEEK OF UNIVERSITY IS A FRANTIC, FEVERED TIME. YOU'RE AWAY FROM HOME, NEW PEOPLE SURROUND YOU,

there's pressure, booze, drugs, and a cornucopia of new experiences. It's the perfect setting for a body horror movie, and Julia Ducournau's *Raw* is one of the most powerful genre debuts we've seen in years.

It stars Garance Marillier as Justine, a precocious 16-year-old vegetarian who has gained a place at a prestigious veterinary school. The campus is in the middle of nowhere and the hazing is non-stop, and it's not long before Justine is forced into a situation where she has to eat meat for the first time. Shortly afterwards, she starts going through some terrifying changes and experiencing some gruesome urges...

"I really did not feel like I was writing a teen movie or a social drama or a family drama, or a horror movie," explains Ducournau. "My movie is all this and none of this at the same time." With reports of audience members fainting at festival screenings, it's a combination that's obviously having an impact. "It's clearly calculated," she smiles. "Of course, it's very satisfying when it works."

NEW EXPERIENCES

Justine is thrust into a world of peer pressure and experimentation almost immediately, and she quickly begins to evolve from the person we meet at the start of the film. Adolescence has been a classic element of body horror in films like *Ginger Snaps* and *Excision*, but Ducournau tells us that this wasn't a deliberate choice. "I didn't think about it like I wanted to make a coming-of-age thing," she explains. "I wanted just to make my movie and I have my grammar, which goes from comedy to

drama to body horror, it's a bit of a mix of all this. So eventually I knew it would be a coming-of-age story, just because my character is 16 and it's on a campus, so that part of the story developed by itself. But my main concern was to make the audience relate to a character that commits an act that they would qualify as inhuman and understand this act and understand what she's going through at this moment, and fear for her, and feel for her. That was the main challenge of the movie."

SIBLING RIVALRY

Although she's away from her parents for the first time, Justine isn't alone. Her older sister Alexia (Ella Rumpf) is also attending the school, but their relationship is a complicated, often brutal one. "The thing that's great about siblings is that you can love each other and then you can hate like crazy and then you can love again," Ducournau enthuses. "And in between these moments you don't have to explain anything. Why it goes from love to hate or anything, it's just like that. There is this blood bond that doesn't need any explanation. I thought it was very interesting to tackle and it would give a lot of depth to my movie, to make it also about the dividing of a cell. They have to grow apart in order to keep on living in a way, and to become other, especially for Justine to become a real adult."

A FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

Much as the first weeks of university are a whirlwind of experiences and emotions, *Raw* is a fascinating mix of influences and tones. There's Cronenbergian body horror, some affecting family drama, and some moments of brilliant dark comedy. "It was the biggest challenge of the writing; balancing the three genres and finding

the right way to use each one as a catharsis," says Ducournau. "Because all of them work as catharsis. The relief through laughter, the relief through tears and the relief through fright. So yeah, it took a lot of time. It was very interesting to work on this even if it was hard. But there was no other way. David Cronenberg is definitely a big influence for me because I felt very much alive and the first time I saw his movies he left me a lot to think about. The way he approaches the body is something I can really relate to, with this unyielding fatality that is almost scientific."

A STAR IS BORN

A film like *Raw* simply does not work without a great lead performance and Garance Marillier is incredible as Justine. When the film begins she is bookish and reserved, but as her body changes and her instincts are unleashed, she becomes something very different indeed. "I had no problem [casting] because Garance is in all my movies," smiles Ducournau. "We are very close and she's such a great actress. One thing that I love about her is that the level is already super high when you start the rehearsal, and also we know each other very well so it makes it easier for us to trust each other and to communicate. Even when we clash, it's over in two seconds. We're very temperamental, both of us, but we have a very unique way of working together in the sense that I don't need many words with her. We work a lot around the body or with key words, we just talk before the shoot."

SHOOTING THE ANIMALS

With its veterinary school setting, there's a lot of body horror and anatomy that isn't human. One of the most striking sequences involves a horse being tranquillised, which the film crew shot for real. "It was very thrilling!" enthuses Ducournau. "It was great, I really loved it. There are real veterinarians in the shot and of course they didn't put it to sleep just for us. This horse had to go into surgery so we put two cameras in and I knew what I wanted to film because I had seen it before, and we did it in one shot. And what's great about animals is that you have this tension. It's very beautiful to watch but you have this tension because you don't know how they're going to react and if they're going to do exactly what you want them to do. Especially these kinds of animals and especially when they're anaesthetised. So it was very interesting for everyone." ☞

Raw is released in cinemas on 7 April.



Garance Marillier delivers a stunning break-out performance as Justine.

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

DANGEROUS A

AMC'S GENRE-BENDING MARTIAL ARTS SHOW INTO THE BADLANDS IS SET 500 YEARS IN THE FUTURE AFTER AN UNSPECIFIED APOCALYPTIC EVENT. SCIFINOW JOINED THE CAST AND CREW ON SET FOR A GLIMPSE INTO THE SHOW'S SECOND SEASON AND A POSSIBLE VISION OF LIFE IN 2517

WORDS MATTHEW TURNER

THE FIRST SEASON OF AMC'S INTO THE BADLANDS PACKED AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF DETAIL INTO ITS SIX-EPIISODE RUN,

establishing a post-apocalyptic feudal society ruled by seven Barons, whose sword-wielding Clippers (soldiers) keep the peace. With the show shifting its shooting base from New Orleans to Dublin for the second season, we were only too pleased to be invited onto the set.

Season One took place in a small handful of locations, primarily the territories of rival Barons Quinn (Marton Csokas) and The Widow (Emily Beecham). In *Game of Thrones* terms, that's a bit like only setting scenes in Winterfell and King's Landing. It's clear, then, that the show is expanding for the second season, something that co-star Aramis Knight (who plays apprentice Clipper M.K.) excitedly confirms: "You'll see different landscapes beyond the Fort and the Lodge and the Badlands. You'll see outside of the Badlands which I think was a big question mark for viewers in the first season."

The decision to expand the territories has given the creative team free rein to develop the look of the show, which includes a detailed understanding of its post-apocalyptic setting. Production

designer Stephen Daly elaborates when we sit down with him: "What we've said is that we're 500 years into the mid-21st century. There's been some sort of ecological disaster and war, so the population has dwindled and the sea levels have risen. So the US is now much smaller. In the show, many hundreds of years ago, a wall was built between the States and Mexico, and inside that wall is what we call the Badlands, which is quite a lush, verdant area that runs mainly from Colorado to Kentucky."

The mention of the wall begs the obvious question – is the post-apocalyptic landscape of *Into the Badlands* the direct result of President Trump? Daly laughs, ruefully: "[The wall was] something that they thought up for this season and I think it was kind of a sly joke when Miles and Al [showrunners Miles Millar and Alfred Gough] came up with the idea, which was about a year ago. Little did they know! Although, in the script, the Mexicans built the wall because they wanted to keep the Americans out..."

One thing that sticks out about the show right from the start, is how vibrant and colourful it is, in stark contrast to other post-apocalyptic TV worlds, which usually have more of a grey palette. Daly, ➤

Y S

➤ who has a background in comic illustration, is keen to discuss the show's influences in that regard: "Miles and Al have a clear idea of what they want. We talked about it being colourful and not a traditional sci-fi. We don't want to do *Mad Max*. We don't want it to be too genre-specific because this was all directly from them, from the word go. They always wanted the show to be a nod to the colourful world of Japanese comic books and Sixties Japanese martial arts movies, like *A Touch of Zen*."

"When you look at a film like that, you see there are always pops of colour," he continues. "There's always a big red banner and there are colours that are not natural. We try to do that subtly, to add those to sets and locations, so when we're out on location, there might just be a broken piece of the 20th century sitting there for no reason, whether it's a phone box or a vending machine. That's all very important to us in the storytelling."

Into the Badlands' vision of a post-apocalyptic future is unique and intriguing, particularly in terms of the available technology – the opening shot of Season One has Sunny riding a motorbike, for example, yet there's no electronics. Set decorator Philip Murphy elaborates further when we sit down for an interview: "Miles was very clear on the creative path that we take, that it is a 'used' future. Whatever the cataclysmic event that happened 500 years ago, it's no longer relevant because society has reformed. Whilst there isn't as sophisticated technology as you'd imagine, the people in this time are still inventive. It's a sort of steampunk, used future. I suppose the idea of the used future comes from *Star Wars* – the technology they have is quite advanced but it's all dusty and mucky."

However, the props in *Into the Badlands* have a secondary function, in that they provide clues to the world the show is set in, something that's different to other TV dramas. Murphy concurs: "Absolutely, yes. They're the compasses and everything has to be just right. They have to be unique to the show and they have to bring weight and quality. There's a time for props to speak and tell the audience things."

Pressed for further details about the direction of the show, Murphy reveals that Season Two will indeed have a more futuristic touch, citing the example of a particular set that viewers will see in



Daniel Wu says the fake blood budget is "very high."

the opening episode: "It's a collapsed city. If you can imagine, it's a very large excavation like an open cast mine. Like you might see in Namibia. It was about ten hectares or 20 acres. With that we had physical dressing in the foreground of large military trucks and in the back there will be VFX superimposing the collapsed city. You'll see people going in and out, mining in and out of the collapsed blocks and recovering items that could be recyclable or have a high value. I think, for the audience, that could be a scary possibility that the future could look like that. It's a look at

a city 500 years into a future that's gone wrong."

As for the fates of the characters, plot details are being kept under wraps, though we do discover that Tilda (Ally Ioannides) has

graduated to the position of Regent (head Clipper) to The Widow and that a mysterious monastery will play a key part in MK's arc for the season. However, the news that has everyone on set buzzing is that Britain's own Nick Frost will be joining the show as Bajie, a character described as "a schemer with questionable morals", who finds himself allied with Wu's character, Sunny. Wu himself is particularly effusive about Frost's fighting skills when we catch him between takes: "Have you seen *Cuban Fury*? That guy has moves!"

Elaborating further on the martial arts element of the show, Wu has some clear ideas about the genre's evolving place in mainstream entertainment: "I think there's always been an interest in the genre as a niche – there was the Shaw Brothers' stuff, then the Jackie Chan stuff, and then *Rush Hour*. So, there's always



been that audience, but it's not been a major mainstream audience. I think what AMC wanted to do with *Into the Badlands* was similar to what it did with *The Walking Dead*, to take that niche audience and make it mainstream."

With that, SciFiNow's *Badlands* tour sadly comes to an end as Wu is called back onto set for a spot of ass-kicking that involves him punching someone clean across a room. For our part, we're left marvelling at the sheer amount of detail that goes into every episode and champing at the bit for Season Two. ➤

Season One of *Into the Badlands* is available on Amazon Prime. Season Two premieres 19 March.

IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY

Lead actor Daniel Wu on fight scenes, blood budgets and his role as executive producer

How much input do you have into the script and the storylines?

As an executive producer, I am more in charge of the fight unit stuff. So, when they're writing the scripts, and talking about fights, then I contribute ideas.

So the writers basically go, 'a fight happens' and leave it there?

They try their best, but they're not martial artists, so the descriptions are not 100% there. So we fill in the gaps. We look at the dramatic beats in the fight, to make sure we hit those, and then the details of how the fight evolves is up to us and the fight unit.

Into the Badlands is quite violent compared to other shows. There's a lot of blood...

That's just part of the genre. If you watch the Asian-style martial arts films, there's a lot of that stuff going on. It can be cool to see blood spurting around all over the place, if you do it artistically – that's part of the fun of the show, and part of the action. Our blood budget is very high! We spend a lot of money spurting blood around, you see guys carrying gallons of blood around all over the place.

Is this your dream job?

Well, I've done martial arts my whole life and one of my biggest inspirations is Jackie Chan, who eventually became my manager for 11 years. Before I got into the business, my only dream was: 'Maybe one day I could be in Jackie Chan movies, and he'd kick me down a flight of stairs.' That was my dream!

SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

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KONG: SKULL ISLAND 62

"IF YOUR MAIN COMPLAINT ABOUT GODZILLA WAS 'NOT ENOUGH GODZILLA', THEN KONG: SKULL ISLAND MAY BE YOUR REMEDY."



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AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR OR FIVE...

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see now!

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FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12A

Director

Jordan Vogt-Roberts

Screenwriter

Dan Gilroy, John Gatins,
Derek Connolly

Cast

Tom Hiddleston, Samuel L.
Jackson, Brie Larson, John
Goodman, John C Reilly

Distributor

Warner Brothers

Running Time

120 mins



KONG: SKULL ISLAND

It was a monster mash

There's a lot riding on the King Of The Apes' return, but if anyone can shoulder the weight of a shared universe, it's Kong, right? Well, yes and no. *Skull Island* is strange; a genre hybrid that wants to bridge the gap between adventure romp and gritty allegory about Western military practice. It's not subtle, but when it works, it does have a certain power.

It's certainly a different approach to the one Gareth Edwards took with his slow-burn *Godzilla* reboot. This is all-action right from the start, with the first big set-piece taking place about 20 minutes in, and it's not shy about showing off its title character. Indeed, it's not shy about anything, with a lovely assortment of beautifully designed nightmare creatures (and adorable giant buffalo). If your main complaint about *Godzilla* was "Not enough *Godzilla*," then *Kong: Skull Island* may be your remedy. However, those hoping for more nuance and character development will be left wanting.

The Vietnam war is over, and the clock is ticking for Bill Randa (John Goodman) and Houston Brooks (Corey Hawkins) to get to an untouched island rich with potential for scientific discovery before the Russians do. Recruiting Colonel Packard (Samuel L. Jackson) and his unit, they head to Skull Island with a group of scientists, ex-SAS mercenary James Conrad (Tom Hiddleston) and anti-war photographer Mason Weaver (Brie Larson) in tow. But there's a reason why no one ever comes back from Skull Island...

The opening scene with the American choppers colliding with the island's King is jarring and relentless, with the arrogant bomb-dropping invaders being torn from the sky by a gigantic ape (Toby Kebbell's delivery of:



"Is that a monkey?" is wonderful).

However, the brutality feels out of place, and that becomes more of a problem as the film progresses. Yes, the important cautionary element is present but there's a real nastiness to some of the deaths that feels more like it comes from a desire to be gritty and dark than anything else.

Which wouldn't be a problem if the script backed it up. Faced with a large ensemble cast, a lot of monsters and what feels like some heavy editing, the film boils characters down to one-liners. Jackson's unhinged Captain Ahab is good fun, but Hiddleston's tracker is so pointless you forget that he's in the film when he's not on screen. Larson does the best with the little she's given, but most of the rest of

the cast are just monster food.

Thankfully, there's a hell of a scene-stealing turn from John C Reilly as a pilot who crashed on the island during World War II and has been living there ever since. Not only does he bring some much needed humour to the film, but the quality of the writing seems to be elevated whenever he's around.

There are plenty of high points in *Kong: Skull Island*. The creatures look brilliant, the action is thrilling, and did we mention John C Reilly? Crucially, Kong, played by Terry Notary, is the best of the bunch, a ferocious but mournful creature with real emotion.

Although it doesn't reach the heights of Edwards' *Godzilla*, *Kong: Skull Island* works hard to bring us something new, and it delivers a few impressive punches. If the MonsterVerse is going to continue, however, it's going to have to work harder on its humans.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Pacific Rim
Guillermo del Toro channels his love of monsters into a gleeful, charming blockbuster.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Godzilla – Gojira returns in 2019 in *King Of The Monsters*. *Krampus*' Michael Dougherty directs the sequel, which will star *Stranger Things*' Millie Bobby Brown and Kyle Chandler.

Kong – Assuming he doesn't show up in *Godzilla 2*, Kong will next appear for the big show in *Godzilla Vs Kong* in 2020.

And the rest – Legendary Pictures has the rights to all your favourite kaiju, including Mothra, Rodan and King Ghidorah. At this point we have no idea when they'll be introduced, but it wouldn't be beyond the realms of possibility for at least one to appear in *Godzilla 2* given that they may not be well-known enough to headline their own movies. At present, *Godzilla Vs Kong* is the last movie on the MonsterVerse slate.



GET OUT

Family plot

Details 15 // 103 mins // 17 March **Director** Jordan Peele **Screenwriter** Jordan Peele **Cast** Daniel Kaluuya, Allison Williams, Bradley Whitford, Catherine Keener, Lil Rel Howery **Distributor** Universal Pictures International



If you know Jordan Peele's work, it's because he's made you laugh, but with *Get Out*, the writer and star of *Key*

And Peele and *Keanu* shows that he's more than capable of taking you right to the edge of your seat.

Peele's directorial debut is both nail-biting genre cinema and a chilling piece of social commentary. Racial tension runs high throughout, as acclaimed photographer Chris (Daniel Kaluuya) navigates a seemingly affable but increasingly worrying situation.

The setting is the secluded estate of Chris' girlfriend Rose's (Allison Williams) wealthy family. She assures Chris that her family isn't racist, that her father Dean (Bradley Whitford) would have voted for Obama for a third time if he could, and that he will definitely bring that up. But as Chris meets Dean, Rose's mother Missy (Catherine Keener) and brother (Caleb Landry Jones), there seems to be something underneath the smiles. When guests arrive for the annual party, things threaten to come to a head...

Many of *Get Out*'s surprises have been given away by the marketing, but the fears on display here are not diluted by the fact that we know something bad is on the way. There are situations that we know all too well from crimes seen on the front pages of newspapers (a black man walking alone at night through an



affluent suburb, an encounter with a casually racist highway patrolman), but it's the conversations with Rose's family that get under your skin.

With excellent performances from his cast (Kaluuya is absolutely superb and Whitford is gleefully unreadable), Peele creates an incredible sense of unease as Chris tries to curb his instinct to get out in the face of what could be blind racial stereotyping or what might be something far more sinister. He shows great confidence as he plays with horror conventions and takes some pretty big genre swings.

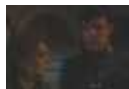
This feels more relevant than ever in our current political climate, and *Get Out* doesn't only deliver an important, powerful message, it shows us a point of view that we too rarely see in genre cinema. This is an excellent horror with something vital to say.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

The People Under The Stairs
Wes Craven's underrated horror is a sharp piece of social commentary



RAW

Well done

Details 18 // 99 mins // 7 April **Director** Julia Ducournau **Screenwriter** Julia Ducournau **Cast** Garance Marillier, Ella Rumpf, Rabah Nait Oufella, Laurent Lucas, Joana Preiss **Distributor** Universal



First-time writer/director Julia Ducournau stirs Cronenbergian body horror into an intense

coming-of-age story to create a ferocious, witty and powerful movie. It's no wonder that *Raw* kicked up such a fuss at the festivals it's played at (including the obligatory fainting audience member): it's the best film of its kind since *Ginger Snaps*.

Teenager Justine (Garance Marillier) is dropped off at a prestigious veterinarian school by her parents (Laurence Lucas, Joana Preiss) and left to fend for herself. The campus is isolated and daunting, the hazing rituals are intense and her sister (Ella Rumpf) has no time to show her the ropes. When she's forced to break her vegetarianism for an initiation ritual, Justine's body begins to go through painful changes, and she develops an unstoppable appetite for meat. Satisfying that appetite isn't going to be pretty...

The hype surrounding *Raw* caused by that fainting audience

member is misleading. It's a superb piece of horror but, with the exception of a couple of moments that you might have to watch through your fingers, this isn't too difficult on the stomach. The rawness of the film comes from Justine's emotional experience as she's forced through this gruelling, confusing journey that shakes her loose from her childhood moorings.

Ducournau beautifully conjures the frenzied first weeks of university with all its pressures and possibilities for exploration. Like all great body horror, it's gruesome and scary but it's also thrilling. Marillier is brilliant as the increasingly impulsive Justine, able to turn the switch from teenager to ravenous creature at a moment's notice, and she's backed up by Rumpf's excellent performance as her older sister.

Although the Cronenberg influence is clear, Ducournau has made something that is its own beast. It's savage but heartfelt, gruesome but funny, and as Justine is forced to find her own way through this nightmare, it's moving too. This is essential viewing for genre fans.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...

Ginger Snaps
When Ginger is bitten by a werewolf, she starts going through some changes...



THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE

It's Batman Vs Superman but funny

Details PG // 104 mins // Out now **Director** Chris McKay **Screenwriter** Seth Grahame-Smith, Chris McKenna, Erik Sommers, Jared Stern
Cast Will Arnett, Zach Galifianakis, Ralph Fiennes, Rosario Dawson, Michael Cera
Distributor Warner Brothers



Chris McKay and his team of writers have done a marvellous job at delivering *The LEGO Movie's* same

zippy energy of a child excitedly playing with their toys in a film that turns the tropes of a romantic comedy into a love story between hero and villain, with the obnoxious and arrogant Batman (voiced by the brilliant Will Arnett) forced to overcome his greatest fear in order to save his beloved Gotham City.

The Joker (Zach Galifianakis) is sick and tired of Batman not admitting his true feelings about how much he hates him, and when The Joker confronts Batman about it, in keeping with his loner status, the Bat refuses to take part in any kind of relationship. Utterly dejected, Joker (with a glorious cartoon boohoo face) comes up with a cunning plan involving the Phantom Zone to force him to fess up.

Meanwhile the narrative focuses in on Batman in his downtime, and the sequences in which Batman is alone in his mansion possess all the charm of those playful *Adam And Joe* sketches where they reimagined highly acclaimed films with their action figures. Batman humming to himself while he microwaves his lobster is particularly hilarious.

Bruce Wayne also accidentally adopts plucky orphan Dick Grayson

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(aka Robin, played sweetly by Michael Cera). The designers are tasked with visually summoning the spirits of the many incarnations of Batman and do so with vivid flair. At Gordon's ceremony, for instance, they gracefully nod to the carnivalesque ambience of Burton's caped crusader and throughout the film they pay a lot of care and attention to the changing personas of the character over the years.

This spin-off is packed full of belly-laughs for both adults and kids and loads of amusing references to the DC Universe (along with some good-humoured digs at Marvel) for comic fans. Though it doesn't feature a song to rival *The Lego Movie's* 'Everything Is Awesome,' it does play off the same knowing humour that won us over first time around.

Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Lego Movie
Chris Pratt stars as a construction worker who realises the evils of consumerism.



THE SPACE BETWEEN US

Is there love on Mars?

Details PG // 120 mins // Out Now **Director** Peter Chelsom
Screenwriter Allan Loeb, Stewart Schill, Richard Barton Lewis **Cast** Asa Butterfield, Britt Robertson, Gary Oldman, Carla Gugino **Distributor** Entertainment Film



Asa Butterfield stars as Gardner, the first person born on Mars, and we meet him as a teenager

rebelling against his red, dusty surroundings and torturing his robot Centaur (voiced by director Peter Chelsom) for classified information.

Gardner lives on a site developed by a company run by Nathaniel (Gary Oldman), who we first meet 16 years earlier at an unconvincing press conference for his life on Mars project.

Gardner spends his time moping about watching Wim Wenders' *Wings Of Desire* and talking online with Earth girl Tulsa, who he's fallen in love with. Hopefully, the mention of *Wings Of Desire* will point viewers in the direction of a more complex exploration of the human condition than the bland YA romantic comedy screenwriter Allan Loeb delivers here...

The Space Between Us is more akin to *The Fault in Our*

Stars than emotionally stirring sci-fi such as *Starman* (which is clearly an influence). It doesn't even satisfy with its potential fish-out-of-water humour.

On his journey to meet Tulsa, Gardner asks a few random people the profound question: "What's your favourite thing about Earth?" and of course gets to marvel at the wonder of rainfall that the human race stupidly shields itself from. He's also dressed in 1950s attire to make him that bit weirder to the other teenagers he encounters.

The film is very on the nose, from the clichéd love story to its very predictable outcome but, thankfully, the two young lead actors do a good job with the corny dialogue.

Butterfield (*Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children*) is endearing enough and Britt Robertson (*Tomorrowland*) plays off his bewilderment with a tough girl routine that keeps her in charge. A teen audience may like the starry-eyed romance but this space adventure is disappointingly formulaic.

Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



D.A.R.Y.L.
An unsuspecting family adopts a young boy who turns out to be a military robot.

FILM INFO

Released
Out now

Certificate
15

Director
James Mangold

Screenwriters
Michael Green, Scott Frank, James Mangold

Cast
Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Dafne Keen, Boyd Holbrook, Richard E Grant, Stephen Merchant

Distributor
20th Century Fox

Running Time
137 mins



LOGAN

Berserker, aged

A lot of studio films and comic book movies need to be a success to guarantee sequels and shared universes. *Logan* needed to be excellent because it had the chance to be a fitting farewell, an R-rated swan song for a character that has earned one, and a more personal take on the end of everything. It could be that rare thing in comic book movies: a great final chapter.

Logan has a raw emotional power that the bulk of comic book films don't feel the need for. While other *X-Men* films are bursting with characters and timelines, this is stripped down to the bare essentials: three characters on the run who are torn between remembering a better time and wanting to forget how they lost it.

It's 2040, mutants are nearly extinct, and the Wolverine is no longer healing like he used to. He's also a full-blown alcoholic, and drives a limo to pay for the black market drugs he takes across the border to Mexico. There, he and Caliban (Stephen Merchant) care for Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart), whose deteriorating mental state leads to potentially catastrophic seizures.

Trouble comes with cyborg mercenary Donald Pierce (Boyd

Holbrook) who's tracking a young girl named Laura (Dafne Keen). Turns out, Laura's a lot like the Wolverine, and after a terrifying display of her powers, she, Logan and Charles are racing across the country with Pierce and his Reavers close behind.

After spending the last few *X-Men* films wondering who's going to get to say "fuck", it's a bit jarring to hear Jackman drop them so freely, and even more so to see him brutally dispatch a gang of thugs in the first sequence, no matter how prepared we were for swearing and gore. However, while the action sequences shock, there's depth beyond the dismemberment.

Logan is at its best when it forces its three leads to talk to one another (or not, in the case of Laura), and Jackman and Stewart clearly relish the opportunity to explore their roles in depth. The father-son relationship is given room to breathe over the 140 minute running time and it's incredibly affecting. Stewart is as flawless as you'd expect, finding the tragedy and humour in the man who no longer has a filter but is still desperate for Logan to be the good man. Logan, meanwhile, is waiting for a time when it's okay for him to die. Jackman taps into the darkest elements of the character but never loses the humanity, and if this is his last outing, he's gone out with a perfect, heart-breaking portrayal.

Then there's Laura. Keen is both terrifying and thrilling to watch as she carves a bloody swathe through the Reavers, and she gives as good as she gets in emotionally intense scenes



with her veteran co-stars, completing this broken family perfectly.

Somewhat inevitably given the tone, the issues come from the more comic-book-y elements, which we won't go into here for fear of spoilers. It's also worth noting that Richard E Grant's villainous Zander Rice could do with more bite, and Mangold can't always resist using a hammer when a lighter touch would do, especially in the second half. However, none of these problems are serious enough to even slightly derail the film.

We're hesitant to describe *Logan* as 'grown-up' because, really, what does that mean? However, the raw emotions in the film pack as hard a punch as the Berserker rage and the f-bombs. It's a gritty, violent and moving take on a character that clearly loves its comic book origins but puts many of those constraints and tropes to one side to great effect. If this really is the last time we see the Wolverine, we're thrilled that he's gone out with such a bang.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Rover

Guy Pearce just wants his car back in David Michod's bleak and brilliant post-apocalyptic film.



JUST HOW R-RATED IS IT?

Very. It's not *Deadpool*-levels of gross but there are a lot of severed heads, limbs and bits. Plus Wolverine's wounds are pretty damn gruesome, and everybody's dropping f-bombs left and right.

WHY ARE MUTANTS SO RARE?

There haven't been any new mutants born for years, and there are few left. Something very, very bad has happened.

WHO ARE THE BAD GUYS?

There's Donald Pierce (Narcos star Boyd Holbrook), a mercenary with a creepy robot hand (fingertips still attached), who's the one out there on the road hunting Logan. He works for evil scientist Zander Rice, played by Richard E Grant.

IS STEPHEN MERCHANT IN THIS?

He is indeed, playing sunlight-averse Caliban. It's a good performance from the comedy star, who plays it straight and brings some wounded sensitivity to the character.



A CURE FOR WELLNESS

Eye-watering treatment

Details 15 // 146 mins // Out now **Director** Gore Verbinski
Screenwriter Justin Haythe **Cast** Dane DeHaan, Jason Isaacs, Mia Goth, Ivo Nandi, Adrian Schiller, Celia Imrie **Distributor** 20th Century Fox



To say that there's a moment in Gore Verbinski's *A Cure For Wellness* when you realise that

it's not the film you thought it was is accurate, but an understatement. *The Pirates Of The Caribbean* filmmaker is making the most of his return to the horror genre and, in doing so, crams this beautifully stylish chiller so full of references to his favourite movies that it creates a kind of genre turducken. It's knowingly ridiculous, overstuffed and highly enjoyable.

Dane DeHaan plays Lockhart, a ruthless city trader who is sent to an Alpine health spa to retrieve a board member who seems to have lost his mind. A car accident leaves him in the care of Dr Volmer (Jason Isaacs), who urges him to relax and drink lots of the local water.

Something's not right, though, and as Lockhart hunts for his quarry he begins to wonder if there might be something to the old stories about the place...

A Cure For Wellness starts



as a stylised satire, with the shimmering glass expanse of New York's business district housing twisted workaholics. Once the nicotine gum-chewing, sleep-deprived Lockhart pitches up at the clinic, Verbinski stirs more varied influences into his social satire and doesn't stop.

There's Hammer Horror, *Shutter Island*, *Eyes Without A Face*, *The Shining*, *Possession*, *The Ninth Configuration*, *Suspiria*, at least two Vincent Price movies, and some *Silent Hill* to the mazes, mind-games and grisly shocks. That means subtlety sails out of the window and it becomes daft, but it makes for an entertaining and gleefully horrid tale that somehow doesn't drag during its two-and-a-half-hour running time.

DeHaan is perfectly cast as the sickly, relentless Lockhart, while Isaacs plays his sinister doctor with just the right blend of joviality and reserved menace.

Somewhere in *A Cure For Wellness* is a more restrained, sharper film, but there's no guarantee it would be as much fun as this overblown oddity.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Crimson Peak
Guillermo del Toro's gorgeous Gothic romance is really all you need.

THE GREAT WALL

Monsters vs Matt Damon

Details 12A // 103 mins // Out now **Directors** Zhang Yimou **Screenwriters** Carlo Bernard, Doug Miro, Tony Gilroy **Cast** Matt Damon, Jing Tian, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe, Andy Lau **Distributor** Universal Pictures International



While we medieval

Europeans were still warding off the common cold by wearing chicken feet

on a necklace, China had built The Great Wall. But, as this film would have us believe, they weren't keeping out northern invaders – they were defending the world from a race of monstrous lizards.

Matt Damon and Pedro Pascal are a couple of European mercenaries on the hunt for gunpowder when they stumble across the Great Wall under attack from the lizards. The film has to be commended for leaping straight into the action, and within 15 minutes you're watching an extended and visually impressive siege (this is the most expensive Chinese movie ever made).

The Great Wall is being defended by a Power Rangers-esque army, colour-coded by their special skills. And one of the commanders of those corps is – gasp! – a woman! Luckily Commander Lin (Jing Tian) is genuinely there for her military prowess rather than to be a love interest for the male, western lead.

Thanks to director Zhang Yimou, the film looks incredible. The CGI is impressive and the Great Wall has all manner of fun defences (ranging from the practical to the simply ridiculous), and the sets and costumes are gorgeous.

But while the film might look good, it's basically a disaster. Matt



Damon, normally known for his integrity, seems like he's reading all of his dialogue from massive placards. Attempts at humour are forced and embarrassing and the only reason Willem Dafoe is there at all is to explain why some of the Chinese characters speak English.

This is a story told in broad brushstrokes, and it suffers from the clash of Chinese and Hollywood storytelling methods. Were the whole thing a Chinese enterprise, without trying to appeal to a Western audience too, it could have embraced the OTT Chinese style more and it would have worked much better.

Instead, what we're left with is something that tries to please two very different audiences, but will probably annoy both. But at least it sticks to the action and keeps the running time short.

Abigail Chandler

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Marco Polo
If you want your Chinese history to be more accurate, then this will fill in some blanks.





RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER

Goodbye, Alice

Details 15 // 106 mins // Out now **Director** Paul WS Anderson
Screenwriter Paul WS Anderson **Cast** Milla Jovovich, Iain Glen, Ali Larter, Shawn Roberts, Ruby Rose **Distributor** Sony Pictures



The Resident Evil movies don't enjoy the best critical reputation, and there is a good reason for

that. That being said, if you've got any enjoyment out of the previous five films at all, then you should definitely catch *The Final Chapter* on the big screen.

There is a real sense that Paul WS Anderson is determined to end his series with a bang, and he does. It's still an overblown, cheesy pick-n-mix of homages/lifts, one-liners and slow-motion fight sequences, but there's an energy and invention here that's been lacking in the past.

There's barely any world left at this point, but Umbrella's killer AI The Red Queen (Ever Anderson) tells Alice (Milla Jovovich) that there is an antivirus that could fix everything. The catch is that it's back in the Raccoon City underground facility The Hive, and that she's only got 48 hours. Can Alice get to it in time and dodge the villainous, apparently-not-dead Dr Isaacs (Iain Glen)?

After five films, Anderson

knows what fans want to see. There's the *Mad Max*-style apocalyptic cities, several 'Alice vs huge monster' set-pieces, and a subterranean lair filled with ghouls and traps, including the return of the franchise's high point: the laser grid.

The script is patchy but Jovovich has always given Alice a grim conviction and wit to go with the ass-kicking, and the film is helped by the return of Iain Glen as Dr Isaacs. It's just as well that he chews the scenery with such conviction because the rest of the cast (including Ali Larter's returning Claire Redfield and Ruby Rose) don't make much of an impact.

To call *The Final Chapter* the best *Resident Evil* since the original is damning it with faint praise, but the B-movie thrills on offer here are solid. The action, the fights, the jump scares... they're all entertaining, and there's a long-serving genre heroine who's finally allowed some evolution and a bit of closure. It's flawed, sure, but if you're looking for some genre fun, this will get the job done.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Event Horizon
 Paul WS Anderson's best film has a lot more horror, but just as much evil snarling.

RINGS

Turn it off

Details 15 // 102 mins // Out now **Directors** F Javier Gutiérrez
Screenwriters David Loucka, Jacob Estes, Akiva Goldsman
Cast Matilda Lutz, Alex Roe, Johnny Galecki, Vincent D'Onofrio, Bonnie Morgan
Distributor Paramount



Following a long spell on the shelf and several release dates, the most disappointing thing about F Javier

Gutiérrez's *Rings* is how dull it is, in spite of some interesting ideas.

Julia (Matilda Lutz) packs her devoted boyfriend Holt (Alex Roe) off to college with pledges of daily Skype calls. She's alarmed when he cuts off all contact, and even more so when a classmate calls her frantically looking for him. She heads off to find her missing beau, only to discover that a professor has been studying the Samara tape with predictably devastating results.

Rings kicks off with a heavily-trailed set-piece that is so giddily absurd that it's hard to tell whether it's brilliant or awful, but it's a misrepresentation of the rest of the film, which gets increasingly plodding and dour as it goes on.

This is particularly irritating because there are flashes of potential. There's a much better film to be made with Johnny Galecki's morally ambiguous biology professor Gabriel and his ill-advised research programme (reminiscent of the much more entertaining *Sadako Vs Kayako*), which feels at the very least like the foundation for a fun, schlocky B-movie and potentially for something intriguing.

However, by the halfway point *Rings* has gone straight back to the mystery formula as Julia heads



back to where it all began... again. Gutiérrez and cinematographer Sharone Meir find some nice imagery in the creepy waterlogged town as Julia goes on her treasure hunt but it's all slow, especially given that we've been here before.

The performances are mostly fine. An early conversation between Julia and Holt about Orpheus and Eurydice establishes that she is going to be the one doing the rescuing, but Lutz doesn't get much to work with beyond that. It's a decent lead performance, however, and the supporting work from Galecki and Vincent D'Onofrio (a blind local who's got the skinny on what happened to Samara after she died) is solid.

However, it's far too long, it doesn't follow through on any of its interesting ideas, it's never scary and, most unforgivably, it's boring.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare
Freddy's Dead goes back to Freddy's childhood and has some fun ideas.



TOWER OF LONDON

I can smile, and torture while I smile

Details 12 // 80 mins // 1962 // **Released** Out now **Director** Roger Corman
Cast Vincent Price, Michael Pate, Joan Freeman **Distributor** Arrow Video



Any fans of Roger Corman and Vincent Price's Edgar Allan Poe movies should definitely seek out this hugely

entertaining, if not particularly accurate, take on *Richard III*. The duo (along with writers Leo Gordon, F Amos Powell and Robert E Kent) tackle Shakespeare with the same sense of ghoulish Gothic fun as their Poe adaptations, throwing in torture, ghosts and unfortunate maidens who make the mistake of getting in Vincent Price's way.

Price is, of course, Richard of Gloucester, who wastes no time in cutting his bloody path to the throne. In the way are his brother, Clarence (Charles Macaulay), the two young princes and an assortment of courtly figures. Together with his equally fiendish partner-in-crime Ratcliffe (Michael Pate), Richard poisons, tortures, strangles and schemes.

However, the ghosts of those he's killed won't leave him alone...

Tower Of London is a lot of fun, from the moment Clarence exclaims: "For God's sake!" as Richard plunges a knife into his back within ten minutes of the film's opening. Price is having a blast but there is some level of restraint, as the veteran thespian is clearly enjoying having a go at one of theatre's greatest villains.

It's also worth noting that it doesn't feel the need to stick to *Richard III*, as there's a dose of *Macbeth* stirred in to help make it a real horror. The ghosts do work nicely, however, and they feel like they belong more than the torture sequences, with poor lady-in-waiting Mistress Shore put on the rack and Buckingham tormented by a rat. It's a shame it lacks the lush colours of the Poe movies, but it's a worthy addition to any fan's collection.

The extras include a commentary by Leo Gordon's daughter, Tara,



Price biographer, David Del Valle, an archive interview with Corman's brother and producer, Gene, and an interview with Corman himself, who discusses the challenges of making Shakespeare on a budget and bemoans the need for black-and-white cinematography.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Masque Of The Red Death
Corman's finest Poe adaptation is brilliant and Price is on top form.

DEATH RACE 2050

Road kill

Details 15 // 93mins // 2016 // **Released** 20 March
Director GJ Echternkamp **Cast** Manu Bennett, Marci Miller, Burt Grinstead, Malcolm McDowell **Distributor** Universal Pictures



It feels lazy to describe *Death Race 2050* as 'timely', but this conclusion is hard to avoid – especially when one of its lead characters (a shouty Malcolm McDowell) is forever honking out televised soundbites about how great America is.

With Roger Corman back in the DR producer's chair for the first time since 1975's original *Death Race 2000*, it feels authentically unlike the spin-offs that came before it. Everything is hyper-ridiculous – contestant names include Jed Perfectus and Tammy the Terrorist – and imbued with a layer of subtext notably absent from today's big-budget blockbusters. Class inequality, media manipulation, living life through a screen – you name it,



Corman has something to say about it.

Saying that, to get the most enjoyment out of *Death Race 2050*, you have to accept it for what it is: a ludicrous, excessively stylised orgy of mayhem, backed up by performances that range in quality from admirably committed to consistently confounding. It's not big, but it is clever. Kind of.

Steve Wright

★★★★★

OUIJA: ORIGIN OF EVIL

The talking dead

Details 15 // 99 mins // 2016 // **Released** Out now
Director Mike Flanagan **Cast** Elizabeth Reaser, Annalise Basso, Henry Thomas
Distributor Universal Pictures



Revisiting the scene of the crime doesn't usually stand out as a masterplan, but with Mike Flanagan at the helm of *Ouija: Origin Of Evil*, the memory of the 2014 original has been wiped. You don't even need to have seen it to make sense of this one.

Flanagan has proven himself to be adept at shrouding his stories with a slow-burning feeling of dread via the excellent *Oculus* and *Hush*, and he repeats the trick here, dialling back the theatrics for a more intimate tale that combines home-invasion horror with good old-fashioned *Exorcist*-style paranoia. Essentially, it does what *Lights Out* recently attempted in its portrayal of

a family under siege from the demons of its past, only to better effect.

Ultimately, *Origin Of Evil* falls short of must-watch status due to a lazy final-third twist and unnecessary final coda – if it had just finished ten minutes earlier then it would be all the better for it. Still, the final product is more accomplished than what we were anticipating.

Steve Wright

★★★★★



ARRIVAL

Hello, aliens

Details 12 // 116 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 20 March
Director Denis Villeneuve **Cast** Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Forest Whitaker **Distributor** E1 Entertainment



When aliens invade Earth, how would we understand them?

That's the basic premise of *Arrival*. Amy Adams stars as linguist Louise, who is called upon when alien ships appear in various locations all over the world. Jeremy Renner's physicist Ian is also asked to help, though we're not sure what use he is in decoding the aliens' language apart from agreeing with Louise's methods.

Arrival seems to be a relatively realistic depiction of how Earth would react if something like this happened. The different countries all have their own methods (including just blowing them up), but Louise resolutely tries to communicate with them, which offers a fascinating insight into the study of languages.



Must see now!

When the twist is revealed, it offers excitement and a relish that is unexpected. Something you would have thought of as fact throughout the film gets jogged, and leaves you questioning whether Louise knowingly changes the future...

It's a masterfully told story full of layers you may not have expected from an alien invasion film, and a must-see contender for the awards season.

Steve Wright
★★★★★

I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER

Good neighbours

Details 15 // 104 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now
Directors Billy O'Brien **Cast** Max Records, Christopher Lloyd, Laura Fraser, Karl Geary **Distributor** Bulldog Film Distribution



Coming across as a mix of *Let The Right One In* and *Fargo*, *I Am Not A*

Serial Killer ticks all the boxes in the slasher-killer rulebook: the small-town location, the troubled protagonist (Max Records, setting out his stall far from *Where The Wild Things Are*) and a series of crimes that escalate in their brutality.

Where director Billy O'Brien excels is in allowing this to gradually crack the mould before shattering it altogether. Such is the ambiguity with Records' character that you're never sure whether to root for him or be wary of him, with this pervasive sense of unease ensuring that everything

remains suitably gripping. Even when there's a major fork in the road by way of a sudden twist, nothing is derailed.

Couple this with a set of perfectly honed performances (Christopher Lloyd is especially brilliant – creepy, vulnerable and grandfatherly all at once), and you have an endearingly accessible chiller.

Steve Wright
★★★★★



Must see now!

KING KONG VS GODZILLA/KING KONG ESCAPES

Ape escapades

Details PG // 98/104 mins // 1962/1967 // **Released** Out now **Director** Ishiro Honda **Cast** Tadao Takashima, Kenji Sahara, Yu Fujiki / Rhodes Reason, Mie Hama, Linda Miller **Distributor** Universal



With *Kong: Skull*

Island in cinemas, Universal has seen this as the opportune moment to re-release what

are chronologically the third and fourth movies featuring the gigantic ape. That they're dated is to be expected, but are they still worth your time?

In the case of *King Kong Vs Godzilla* (★★★★★), the answer is yes. With *Godzilla* studio Toho at the helm, the tone is infinitely more silly – stop-motion effects are traded for the man-in-a-suit-kicking-around-model-towns approach – and perfectly suited to the ridiculousness

of the central conceit, in which a series of implausible circumstances cause the two monsters to come to blows. This is what you will be watching it for – the human characters are only memorable for causing the mess in the first place.

While there are passing references to director Ishiro Honda's original *Godzilla*, not a lot of attention is paid to Kong's continuity (there's no explanation of why he's alive, nor why electricity makes him more powerful). Regardless, it's doubtful that you're watching it for the prospect of a delicately constructed shared cinematic universe either – you're here for the big monster mash-up, and in this regard it



definitely doesn't disappoint.

The same can't be said for *King Kong Escapes* (★★★★★) – a bizarre undertaking on every level. Notable for featuring one of film's most ridiculous villains ever in the form of Eisei Amamoto's Dr Who (his actual name), Kong is unambiguously fighting for the side of good here as he squares up to his robotic counterpart, Mechani-Kong. Yep, this is out-and-out Toho.

By the end, it's clear that this is actually an attempt to remake Merian C Cooper's original: there's

a dinosaur fight, a female for Kong to fall in love with in the form of Linda Miller's Lt Susan Watson, and a climatic skyscraper-set battle; the Tokyo Tower the ersatz Empire State Building. It's an adequate enough replication, but shorn of its emotional undercurrent and heartbreaking ending, it's less than half the film.

Steve Wright

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Monster Squad
Brings together the universe's most legendary boogeymen

BEYOND THE GATES

Don't sit too close to the screen

Details 15 // 84mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Jackson Stewart **Cast** Graham Skipper, Chase Williamson, Brea Grant, Barbara Crampton **Distributor** Precision Pictures



If the concept of "a horror *Jumanji*" doesn't immediately grab you, then rest assured that there's plenty to love

about *Beyond The Gates* beyond its high concept. The feature debut from Jackson Stewart has a lot of Eighties nostalgia, but there's a well-written and well-acted family drama taking place alongside the schlocky fun.

Graham Skipper (*The Mind's Eye*, *Almost Human*) and Chase Williamson (*John Dies At The End*, *The Guest*) play Gordon and John, two semi-estranged brothers who reunite to clear out their dad's video store after he goes missing. When they find VHS adventure game *Beyond The Gates*, the two decide to play, and unleash a spirit that won't stop until it's game over.

There's something endearing about *Beyond The Gates*. It's a

heartfelt love-letter to a niche area of interest that calls on influences as varied as Stuart Gordon, Joe Dante and yes, *Jumanji*. Skipper and Williamson are great as the two brothers whose differences don't mask an obvious affection. Their early scenes together are particularly good as the awkwardness of a long time apart begins to crumble. There's a strong performance from Brea Grant as Gordon's supportive, but not submissive, partner Margot, and we'd be at fault if we didn't mention Jesse Merlin's creepy shop owner.

Stewart uses his big effects moments sparingly (although they're effective and explosive when they arrive) instead going for a growing air of creepiness. He's helped by a great turn from Barbara Crampton as the game's mistress and an on-point soundtrack by Wojciech Golczewski.

Those hoping for something



Must see now!



showier may be disappointed by how much of the action is kept on our side of the gates, but the characters are just as important. This is an entertaining horror that plays out like Dante's *The Hole* for grown-ups (we mean that as a compliment). We're excited to see what Stewart does next.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Beyond
Barbara Crampton, Jeffrey Combs and Ken Foree face interdimensional forces.

SEOUL STATION

The night before

Details 15 // 92 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 3 April **Director** Yeon Sang-ho **Cast** Shim Eun-kyung, Ryu Seung-ryong, Lee Joon **Distributor** Studiocanal



Yeon Sang-ho's Train To Busan was, pardon the expression, a

runaway hit, but anyone expecting the same blend of thrills and heart in this animated prequel may be somewhat surprised.

Seoul Station, which tells the story of the night before the train leaves, is a lot closer to the filmmaker's previous film *King Of Pigs* in terms of tone.

As the zombie outbreak begins, the focus tightens on a small group stranded in a police station as the undead close in – a runaway girl named Hye-Sun (Shim Eun-kyung), her boyfriend who's been trying to pimp her out and her furious father. There are no adorable kids here, no self-sacrificing grannies, just the grim



underbelly of a city at night and a horde of ravenous monsters who want to tear them apart

There is some entertaining zombie action to be had, although it's patchy, but the bleakness of Yeon Sang-ho's vision may put off some who were drawn to *Train To Busan* for its thrills. On the other hand, those who missed that downbeat edge will definitely find much to appreciate here.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

SHUT IN

Parent trap

Details 15 // 92 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 10 April **Director** Farren Blackburn **Cast** Naomi Watts, Charlie Heaton, Jacob Tremblay, Oliver Platt **Distributor** Arrow Films



Naomi Watts returns to the horror genre in this frankly dull chiller.

She plays Dr Rachel Portman, a child therapist still grieving after an accident claimed the life of her husband and left her son (*Stranger Things'* Charlie Heaton) in a catatonic paralysed state. A runaway patient (*Room* star Jacob Tremblay) coincides with a series of eerily real nightmares. Is Rachel losing her mind or is someone stalking her?

The script by Christina Hodson was featured on the 2013 Black List but it essentially strands Watts in a series of repetitive dream sequences, Skype calls with her colleague (the ever-watchable Oliver Platt), and increasingly dull scenes supposed to create

tension. Director Farren Blackburn (who made *Hammer Of The Gods* and has worked on several Netflix Marvel shows) uses the pristine snowbound landscape to good effect but despite his best efforts there's no sense of menace or dread. A disappointing twist occurs too early, and the final 20 minutes drag towards an inevitable conclusion. Watts' performance is fine but there's not enough here to recommend it.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★



SUN CHOKE

Janie's just trying to get well

Details 15 // 83 mins // 2015 // **SHUDDER** // **Released** Out now **Director** Ben Cresciman **Cast** Sarah Hagan, Barbara Crampton, Sara Malakul Lane **Distributor** Shudder



We were stunned by Ben Cresciman's unnerving chiller at FrightFest in 2015, and we're so pleased that it's finally available to see in the UK courtesy of Shudder.

Sarah Hagan (*Freaks And Geeks*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*) plays Janie, who lives with the apparently well-intentioned Irma (Barbara Crampton). Together, they're working to overcome an unnamed mental disorder that Janie is suffering from. It's hard work, and often unpleasant. Just what is Janie trying to recover from? What happens if she doesn't?

For its first half, *Sun Choke* is confined to the bright, airy, but cold LA home where Janie and Irma spend their time. Hagan is brilliantly cast as Janie, as the film uses the innocent face that worked so well in her roles as a goody-two-shoes for an entirely

different purpose. She wins us over quickly, especially as it becomes clear that Irma's motives may not be entirely benevolent, but she gives us plenty of hints that Irma's right to be scared of what Janie is capable of. She's well supported by Crampton, who brings a brittle iciness to Irma.

As Janie 'improves,' she begins to venture out of her house and becomes fixated on Savannah (Sara Malakul Lane). Hagan plays Janie's deterioration beautifully, as Cresciman keeps a firm grip on the film's pace, slowly revealing what exactly Janie might be looking for.

Sun Choke teases out clues, and revelations at a deliberate speed. Films paying homage to Kubrick are hardly uncommon, but few are as striking as this. We're plunged into a fractured mind. Sudden sharp shocks are contrasted with beautiful cinematography, moments



Sci-Fi Now
Must see now!

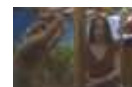


of giddy freedom are followed by punishment, and it's powerful stuff. It all builds to a strong finale that offers as many questions as it does answers, and as the credits roll you will want to watch it again. This is confident and accomplished horror that needs to be seen.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



May
Angela Bettis is superb in Lucky McKee's study of loneliness.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Movie Magic

Details 12 // 133 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** 27 March **Director** David Yates **Cast** Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Alison Sudol, Dan Fogler **Distributor** Warner Home Video



J.K. Rowling expands the *Harry Potter* universe with her debut

screenplay in a spin-off that delivers marvellous action and stars Eddie Redmayne as Newt, an awkward caregiver to curious creatures. Set in Twenties New York, Rowling and director David Yates do a fine job at introducing endearing new characters while still maintaining a heady pace.

Newt is joined by a Polish baker and two witches to hunt for beasts that have escaped from his seemingly bottomless suitcase. Meanwhile something



ghostly prowls the streets causing mass destruction.

An increase in anti-witch sentiment provides decent commentary on a society built on intolerance with plenty of ill feeling towards the magic community, despite the rather messy visuals of the finale.

Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★

Sci-Fi Now
Must see now!

PET

When Seth met Holly

Details 18 // 94 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Charles Torrens **Cast** Dominic Monaghan, Ksenia Solo, Jennette McCurdy, Nathan Parsons **Distributor** Signature Entertainment



At a first glance, Seth (Dominic Monaghan) is just a regular guy working a regular job at an animal control centre. But it quickly turns out that he's actually kind of creepy, and his job is kind of creepy too.

After bumping into his old school crush Holly (Ksenia Solo) on a bus and attempting to ask her out, Seth develops an unhealthy interest and starts stalking her on social media and showing up in the café where she works. Ultimately, he decides to keep her as a pet in a cage under the animal control centre, but that idea ends up presenting a whole other range of problems.

Pet isn't predictable, and that's mainly because it's so

bizarre. Unexpected plot turns leave you both wondering if you've missed something and wanting to find out more. It's like screenwriter Jeremy Slater sat down with a cocktail one night and started working on the script with no idea where he wanted it to go. The result isn't bad though, and it definitely keeps you guessing.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★★





THE VOID

The other side of the door

Details 18 // 90 mins // 2016 // DVD // Released 24 April

Director Jeremy Gillespie, Steven Kostanski Cast Aaron Poole, Kathleen Munroe, Kenneth Welsh, Art Hindle Distributor Signature Entertainment



We see so many people paying homage to John Carpenter's slasher movies at the moment, so it's

nice to see a film that nods to his *Apocalypse* trilogy and his love of HP Lovecraft too. The two biggest touchstones for Jeremy Gillespie and Steven Kostanski's *The Void* seem to be *Assault On Precinct 13* and *Prince Of Darkness*, and while that's an ambitious mix, they pull it off.

A man flees from a farmhouse pursued by two killers and runs into cop Daniel Carter (Aaron Poole), who takes him to the local hospital. No sooner is the man squared away than a terrifying transformation begins in some of the few doctors, nurses and patients. Things get worse when a group of armed figures in masks arrive, but they don't want to get in. They want to keep Carter and his friends from getting out...

Gillespie and Kostanski (two members of Canadian filmmaking troupe Astron-6, who gave us *Manborg*) take their material very

seriously indeed. From the arresting opening through to the gruesome finale, they keep things moving at a deliberate pace punctuated with some excellent practical effects that become increasingly nightmarish as the film goes on.

However, it's not all about the monsters. As is only right and proper for a Lovecraft tribute, there are characters driven mad by their desire to know too much, and there's the inevitable uneasy truce between cops and crooks that you'd find in a lot of John Carpenter. Poole proves to be a very capable lead, Kathleen Munroe is solid as the doctor who also happens to be his ex, and there's a nice cameo from horror veteran Art Hindle (*Black Christmas*, *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*) as a no-bullshit cop. Best of the lot, though, is the great Kenneth Welsh (*Twin Peaks* Season Two's big bad Windom Earle) as Dr Richard Powell.

The pacing and gloomy atmosphere may put off those who came for the poster's promise of tentacle monsters, but *The Void* is a creepy, tense and gory tribute to the horror master that offers invention and wit beyond homage. Check it out.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Last Shift

A cop in an abandoned precinct realises that the spirits of a Satanic cult haven't gone anywhere.



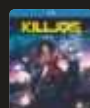
Season Two

KILLJOYS

Not as much fun

Details 12 // 427 mins // 2015 // DVD // Released 17 April

Creator Michelle Lovretta Cast Hannah John-Kamen, Aaron Ashmore, Luke Macfarlane, Rob Stewart, Sarah Power Distributor Universal Pictures



Killjoys' cracking first season was a refreshingly unfettered mix of

slick violence, humour and intrigue. What really made it work, though, were the well-rounded central characters who were more than stereotypical action heroes. Over the season, the writers did a brilliant job of showing that beneath their macho exteriors, Dutch (Hannah John-Kamen) and the Jaqobi brothers, John and D'avin (Aaron Ashmore and Luke Macfarlane), have vulnerabilities that make them very relatable.

These virtues are also evident in the early episodes of Season Two, which starts by tying up loose ends left by the first season's finale. D'avin is trapped on Arkyn while Dutch and Johnny start their investigation into how and why the former's psychotic childhood mentor, Khlyen (Rob Stewart), is making RAC agents invincible by pumping them full of green goo. Meanwhile, back on Westerley the Company has taken a page

out of Donald Trump's book by building a wall around Old Town, albeit one that's designed to keep people in.

Pascal Langdon is splendidly smarmy as the Company official sent to oversee this project until he meets his match in Pawter Simms (Sarah Power). Simms gets to spread her wings this season and initially it looks as if Pree (Thom Allison) will also get an expanded role on the back of some surprising revelations about his past. Ultimately, however, those don't go anywhere and it's a let-down when Old Town's barman goes back to being a bit-part player.

Khlyen is also underused and doesn't interact anywhere near enough with Lucy's crew this time. Moreover, in attempting to make the character more sympathetic, the writers have deprived Khlyen of the cold menace that made him such a compelling villain in season one. That, alone, might explain why this season is short of the kind of shocking surprises. As a result, it's entertaining but not as dynamic as its predecessor.

Michael Simpson

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Expanse

One of the few series to successfully expand on its source material.



Season One

SANTA CLARITA DIET

She's got the munchies

Details 15 // 300 mins // **NETFLIX** // Out now **Creators** Victor Fresco
Cast Drew Barrymore, Timothy Olyphant, Liv Hewson, Skyler Gisondo, Mary Elizabeth Ellis **Distributor** Netflix



There is something appealing about the idea of Drew Barrymore eating people, and suburban

horror comedy *Santa Clarita Diet* understands that. The new show from Victor Fresco (creator of the brilliant *Better Off Ted*) stirs zombies into its *Desperate Housewives* setting, and while it doesn't always end up as funny as it should, it has its moments.

Sheila (Barrymore) and Joel Hammond (Timothy Olyphant) are husband-and-wife real estate agents with a bright teenage daughter Abby (Liv Hewson). Their normal life is interrupted when Sheila throws up a huge amount of vomit, stops bleeding when cut and no longer has a heartbeat. She's a zombie, but can the situation be reversed? And can they keep her fed?

The hybrid that *Santa Clarita Diet* is going for is old-fashioned family sitcom and gross-out horror comedy, and when it works, it works. The husband-and-wife murder attempts and

Joel's foul-mouthed freak-outs are hilarious. There are a couple of nicely gruesome moments, and Hewson is excellent as Abby.

However, there are long stretches without any laughs at all. Fresco's commitment to the heart-warming family element means that the show doesn't go as dark as it perhaps should (with a couple of exceptions), and there's a lack of plot beyond getting Sheila people to eat and finding an ancient zombie manual. There's also the miscast pairing of Olyphant and Barrymore, whose energies never really match.

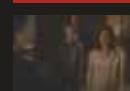
Luckily, there are plenty of redeeming features, particularly with the supporting cast. Skyler Gisondo is endearing, and Mary Elizabeth Ellis (*It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*), Natalie Morales (*Parks And Recreation*), Richard T Jones (*American Horror Story*) and Ricardo Chavira (*Desperate Housewives*) provide very strong support.

Although it's rarely hilarious, it's fun and there is a lot of potential. Let's hope the second season digs a little deeper.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Being Human
A werewolf, a vampire and a ghost share a house in Bristol in this excellent BBC series.

THE MAGICIANS Mothman Prophecies

Details TBA // 572 mins // **DVD** // Out now **Creator** Sera Gamble, John McNamara **Cast** Jason Ralph, Stella Maeve, Olivia Taylor Dudley, Arjun Gupta, Hale Appleman **Distributor** Universal Pictures Home Entertainment



Although it unashamedly draws inspiration from *Harry Potter*, Syfy's *The Magicians* is a quirky,

risqué mix of fantasy and college soap opera that is squarely aimed at adults. At its centre is Brakebills College for Magical Pedagogy, an upscale American Hogwarts that is every bit the den of iniquity that parents fear university will be. Many of its students are more interested in sex, drugs and booze than mastering their spellbinding talents.

The series follows two main characters – Quentin Coldwater (Jason Ralph), a depressed loner who's obsessed with a series of children's fantasy novels, and his BFF Julia Wicker (Stella Maeve) – who are both on track to attend an Ivy League university when they are diverted to Brakebills just in time for the entrance exam. Although they're both magically gifted, only Quentin gets in. Yet he doesn't seem any happier about that outcome than Julia, who flunks her exam and spends most of this season trying to prove that she shouldn't have.

Quentin and Julia fit the stereotype of spoiled middle-class brats. They are evidently affluent and talented but are so perpetually joyless that it's hard to care about their fates. *The Magicians'* other main characters aren't very likeable, either. Penny (Arjun Gupta) spends so much time being annoyed with



other students that he becomes annoying himself. Meanwhile, inseparable socialites Eliot (Hale Appleman) and Margo (Summer Bishil) barely do anything except admire themselves. That's too bad because Appleman is a charismatic actor and head of the class in every scene he's in.

On the plus side, the underlying story about a childish fantasy realm that has been corrupted by adult perversions is a neat twist on tropes established by classics such as *The Chronicles Of Narnia*. Moreover, the mature tone is set early on by a chilling main villain whose identity is concealed behind an eclipse of moths. The bloody cliffhanger finale is worth the wait, too, and sets up a potentially intriguing second season.

Michael Simpson

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Once Upon A Time
After six seasons, this mix of fairy tale fantasy and American small town drama is still inventive.



Season One



Season One

SEE NOW
Must see now!

SHADOWHUNTERS

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger

Details 15 // 440 mins // **NETFLIX** // Out now **Creator** Ed Decter
Cast Katherine McNamara, Dominic Sherwood, Alberto Rosende, Matthew Daddario, Emeraude Toubia, Isaiah Mustafa, Harry Shum Jr **Distributor** Netflix



If you cared about *Shadowhunters* Season One enough to stick around for Season Two, you're

in for a treat. Everything you loved about the first season – the characters, the fight sequences, Malec – are still here, but there's more of it, and it's better.

After last year's cliffhanger involving Jace (Sherwood) being taken through a portal of indeterminate destination by his father Valentine (Alan Van Sprang), the new season jumps right in with Clary (McNamara) and the rest of the Shadowhunters desperately trying to get him back.

Season Two brings a lot in terms of character development. Izzy (Toubia) gets pushed to the limit while trying to join an Iron Sisters pilgrimage, Simon (Rosende) continues to try and balance vampirism and his crush on Clary, and we learn about the start of Alec (Daddario) and Jace's parabatai bond and see how it continues to strengthen.



The show is still incredibly cheesy, but that's part of its charm. When it comes to *Shadowhunters*, the more cheese the better. The richest cheese is delivered in episode six, 'Iron Sister'; while most of the other characters brood, Magnus (Shum Jr) and Alec's storyline is just the pair of them hanging out in a bar and discussing their relationship. It's glorious.

Through both seasons, *Shadowhunters'* special effects have been weirdly good for a show like this. Fantasy TV series – especially of the young adult variety – often leave you cringing at how poorly executed things look. Though obviously not as impressive as those of big budget Hollywood epics, the effects are still enough to get excited about. The case applies doubly in episode five, 'Dust And Shadows', in which Clary faces a demon that looks like it dropped in from a high budget horror film.

If you made it far enough to want to hit 'next episode' after reaching the Season One finale, you're likely in it for the long run. What lies ahead only gets better.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Magicians
Quentin is shown a new world when he enrolls at Brakebills for magician training.

THE EXORCIST Will the power of Christ compel you to watch?

Details 18 // 427 mins // **amazon** // Out now **Creator** Jeremy Slater
Cast Ben Daniels, Geena Davis, Alfonso Herrera, Alan Ruck **Distributor** Fox/Syfy



Fair play to Jeremy Slater. He had the cojones to bring *The Exorcist* to network television when

nobody else was willing. Even Slater hummed and hawed at Fox's proposal, before deciding the best way forward was to make a sequel to the 1973 masterpiece and ignore the other movies in the canon.

Set in modern-day Chicago, the series is unfortunately packed with lame-o reboot-style references (presumably thrown in to appease studio executives who wanted to have their *Exorcist* cake and eat it). The frequent nods to William Friedkin's movie are cheesy, irksome and sometimes utterly laughable. One character's introduction recreates Father Merrin's famous arrival to the MacNeil residence. But wait! Come back! When Slater is doing his own thing, the show is riveting, surprisingly inventive and expands upon the mythology in a way you won't see coming. Basically, it's a grower.

Angela Rance (Geena Davis) thinks her daughter Casey (Hannah Kasulka) is possessed by a malevolent spirit. When she pleads with local priest, Father Tomas (Alfonso Herrera), to perform an exorcism, his first reaction is to act alarmed that somebody can even say the word without laughing. Tomas is more concerned with his dwindling congregation and the naughty thoughts he's having about



a married woman (with whom he's having an illicit on-off affair). Before you can say "Roman Ritual," the projectile vomit is flying, twists are revealed and all hell breaks loose.

Slater should be praised, too, for creating rich characters with private burdens and secret sorrows. Davis arguably gets the toughest role to pull off, but the standout cast member is Ben Daniels as Father Marcus, a bad boy priest whose maverick sensibility and attitude in the face of evil goes: "Come on then, you bastard, let's have it!" Yet for all the charm and swagger, his backstory is revealed as harrowing and deeply moving.

Thanks to its ace cast, gripping cosmic-horror vibe and exciting conspiracy plot, *The Exorcist* TV show is no dud.

Martyn Conterio

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

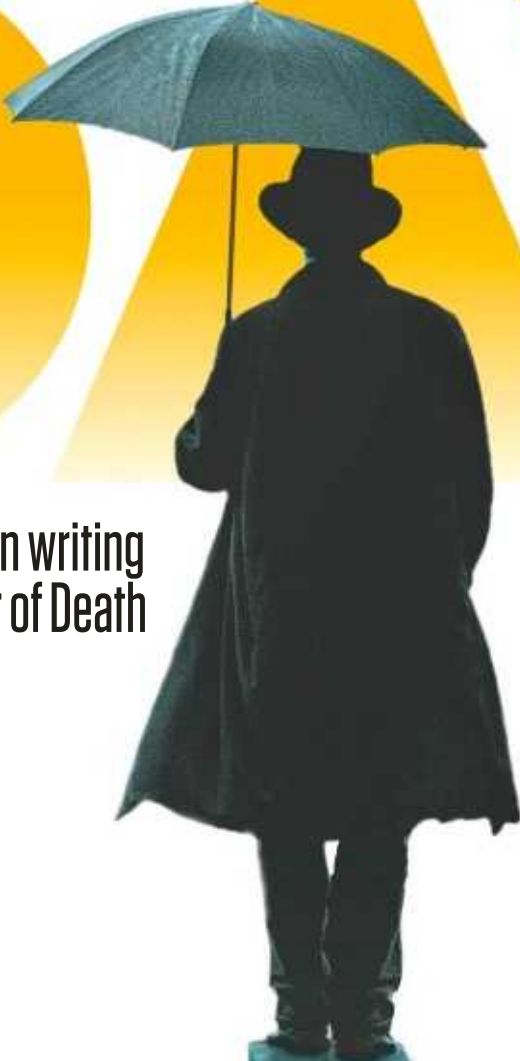


The Exorcist III
William Peter Blatty wrote and directed the creepy threequel and it's highly underrated.



Season One

THE END OF THE DAY



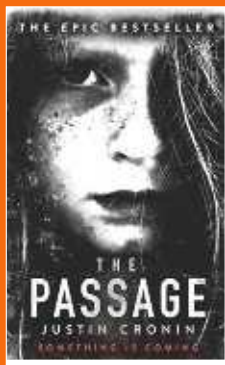
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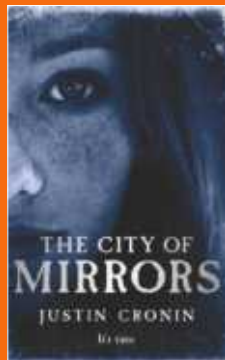
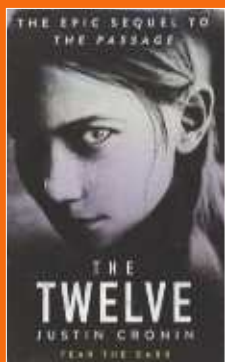
The Passage Trilogy

Author: Justin Cronin
Published: 2010-16
Publisher: Orion

The story begins when a top-secret experiment that was aimed at prolonging human life results in a viral outbreak that quickly and ruthlessly engulfs the entire American continent.

The stage is then set for an exhilarating story that spans thousands of years as mankind attempts to survive its increasingly dire circumstances.

However, hope then appears in the form of young Amy, the apparently ageless original test subject who might just hold the key to defeating the 'virals' once and for all...



Need to Read The Passage Trilogy

Soon to be seen on the small screen, discover how Justin Cronin made vampires terrifying again... WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

Some books are easy to sum up – 'post-apocalyptic', 'fantasy epic', 'science fiction' and 'rites of passage' are all commonly used labels, equally adept at denoting exactly what the book they are attached to is about.

Justin Cronin's *The Passage* trilogy – comprising the eponymous first novel, and followed up by *The Twelve* and *City Of Mirrors* – has been classified by every one of the aforementioned antonyms at some point, although the catalyst for Cronin's original inception for the book is far more simple; a conversation with his daughter Iris, who suggested he write a book about a girl who saves the world.

And really, that's what it is. Amy – abandoned by her mother at a nunnery – is handpicked by a shady government agency to be the test subject (due to her absence of known familial ties) in an experiment aimed at prolonging human life. Already held in captivity is patient zero Fanning, who contracted the virus on an ill-fated expedition to Bolivia, along with a dozen Death Row inmates – known as 'The Twelve' (including among their number the innocent Carter), who have all been infected with Fanning's virus, and are thus showing signs of heightened strength, sensitivity to light, and a thirst for blood. Sound familiar?

Yes, Cronin brings back vampires, although these aren't the suave, debonair night-walkers you've come to a cordial acquaintance with of late. These 'virals', as they come to be known by, are utterly terrifying monsters, as they prove to devastating effect upon their inevitable escape. As the Twelve develop psychic abilities, they use their newfound powers to effectively destroy humanity as we know it, turning many into watered-down versions of themselves. Civilisation is destroyed, and we enter the post-apocalypse proper.

Abruptly, the second act shifts 93 years to a walled-off community, populated by the descendants of survivors of the original outbreak. Living on borrowed time afforded to them by the high-wattage lights that keep the virals at bay, the return of Amy changes



immediately clear, it isn't long before their inclusion makes sense.

All throughout this, characters reappear and disappear, and again it is to Cronin's credit that so many stick in the memory. From the formidable Alicia, tech-genius Michael and heroic Peter, to committed guardian Brad Wolgast, his tragic ex-wife Lila and the gruesome Horace Guilder, everyone is ascribed sufficient narrative time to tell their stories throughout the multiple narrative strands – a complex balancing act that again, the author pulls off.

Despite its critical acclaim, wider

“JUSTIN CRONIN'S DAUGHTER IRIS SUGGESTED HE WRITE A BOOK ABOUT A GIRL WHO SAVES THE WORLD”

things, with the story continuing to evolve as the narrative progresses.

We won't say anymore about actual plot points at this stage, both due to wanting to avoid spoilers, and because, well, there is just way too much going on to do adequate justice to in a retelling.

From beginning to end, the action spans a millennium – indeed, as retrospective sections interspersed throughout the narrative from the 'University of New South Wales, Indo-Australian Republic' make clear, there is no 'will they, won't they' aspect to Cronin's story. We know that humanity will survive, although what form this takes is the central question.

As the story progresses into *The Twelve* and *City Of Mirrors*, even more narratives are introduced, segueing into the action and pushing previously introduced characters centre stage. In other novels, such abrupt introductions would prove to be problematic, but such is the level of thought and planning that has gone into the world that Cronin has created, this is never the case. Everything fits perfectly, and even if the new chapters' relevance isn't

recognition in the form of a televised version of the book had yet proved to be elusive – until now. Recently, it was confirmed that Fox would be bringing *The Passage* to the small screen, with legendary director Ridley Scott executive-producing alongside Liz Heldens and *Cloverfield* director Matt Reeves, who will helm the pilot episode. How exactly they will do this remains to be seen – its large size and complex structure make the prospect a daunting one, but as the likes of *Game Of Thrones* and *Preacher* have proved, where there's a will, there's a way.

And boy, are we glad that there's a willingness for this to happen. With the level of ambition on show and love for the genre that has seen it receive deserved comparisons to classics like Stephen King's *The Stand* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, *The Passage* is yet another modern classic-in-waiting. We suspect that it won't have to do so for too long.

The Passage, *The Twelve* and *City Of Mirrors* by Justin Cronin are available to buy now, published by Orion.



The vampires are closer to *I Am Legend*'s monsters than *True Blood*'s.

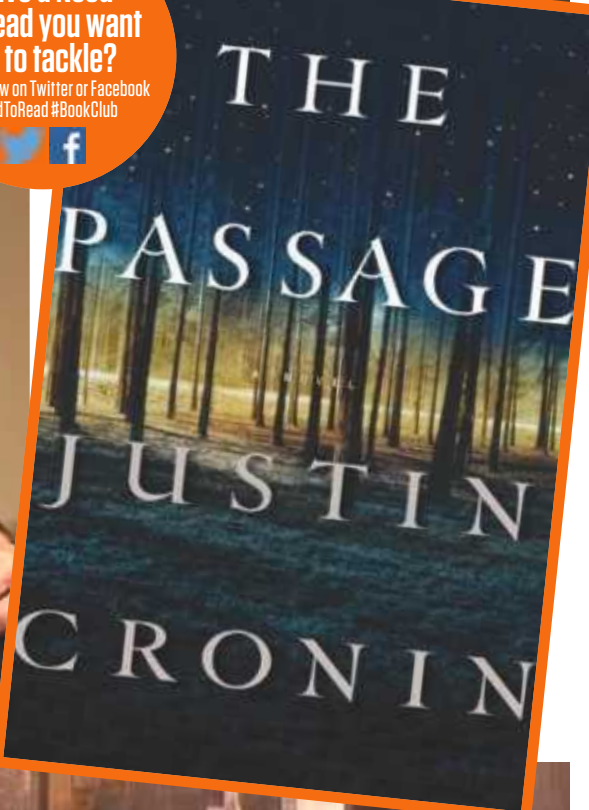
Have a Need
To Read you want
us to tackle?

Let us know on Twitter or Facebook
#NeedToRead #BookClub



© Gage Skidmore

The great Ridley Scott is producing
the TV series based on *The Passage*.



We've all seen the post-apocalypse
but Cronin offers something new.

Ending the world

Venture further into the end



I Am Legend (1954)

In many ways, *The Passage* is a modern-day update of Richard Matheson's novel, which depicts Robert Neville's daily life as he attempts to evade a city full of vampires. The aforementioned enemies are all the more sinister for their apparent lack of menace, and the ending is truly unforgettable.



Swan Song (1987)

There are plenty of similarities between the two, from the entirely man-assisted destruction of the world, to the emergence of young Sue Wanda Prescott – aka Swan – as a messiah figure. Ushering in the apocalypse on a grand scale, this book puts the 'things can get better' maxim to the ultimate test.



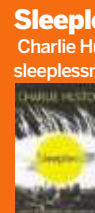
The Strain (2009)

Those of you who have seen FX's adaptation of Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's fantastic vampire trilogy will know what a little of what to expect, but you should check out the book, which sees New York come under attack by a race of bloodsuckers known as 'strigoi'.



Ill Wind (1995)

Kevin J. Anderson's damn near at his best in *Ill Wind*, which depicts an attempt to reduce the impact of a disastrous oil spill by releasing a load of oil-consuming microbes into the sea, which only has the effect of dissolving all the plastic in the world.



Sleepless (2010)

Charlie Huston's story of a sleeplessness epidemic turns the US into a war zone, creating a similar landscape to Cronin's desolated America.

Authors On Authors Say you want a revolution



Award-winning SF writer Charles Stross takes us through the defining themes of Iain M. Banks' work, and why his new novel, *Empire Games*, is dedicated to late novelist

If anyone ever writes a history of Scottish science fiction - or a history of British SF since 1980 - one name is inevitably going to come up: the late, great Iain Banks, author of some 30 books, including the *Culture* series of space operas and several bestselling mainstream novels. Iain was not the bestselling Scottish SF/F author (that accolade inarguably belongs to J. K. Rowling), but coming in second place behind a global media phenomenon is still doing pretty well: and I think Iain's writing might actually have a greater long-term impact than *Harry Potter*.

Born in 1954, Iain came-of-age during the turbulent Seventies, against a background of the end of Empire and industrial unrest, oil shocks and Cold War. The swinging Sixties were the background to his teenage years; the reactionary clampdown that gave rise to protest movements and punk the refrain to his early twenties, the time during which serious authors get to grips with their craft. Angry at the injustices he saw on every side, Iain engaged with the political left – not as a supporter of the grey authoritarian parties of the Eastern Bloc, but as a utopian dreamer who wanted a better world where humans could be free from hierarchy and exploitation.

Authors live in the present, along with everyone else. Even when we're writing far-future space operas, we're influenced by what's going on in the world around us. And current affairs show up reflected darkly in the stories we tell.

The Eighties were the decade of Thatcherism, of brutal curbs on civil rights, the rise of the AIDS epidemic, of terrifying nuclear confrontation, privatisation at home and the last British imperial war of the century. In dark times, everybody needs hope to guide them and a righteous anger to keep them going. And Iain put these into his writing.

Iain had already made a name for



© Ray Charles Friedman

Iain M Banks' work reflects the time in which he was writing.



Banks' Culture novels painted a brighter possible future.



“IAIN M BANKS BLEW THE DOORS OFF THE FIELD OF SPACE OPERA”

The Culture novels by Iain M Banks are available from Orbit.



Empire Games author Charles Stross.

himself as an author of gothic-tinged Scottish literary fiction with a strongly science-fictional flavour, in books such as *The Wasp Factory*, *Walking on Glass*, and *The Bridge*, when in 1987 he struck out into pure SF territory in *Consider Phlebas*, a wide-scale novel of interstellar warfare in a setting which wouldn't have seemed out of place as a *Star Wars* me-too movie.

Iain blew the doors off the previously-moribund field of space opera. He was never a simple writer, and everything he wrote could be read on multiple levels. In *Consider Phlebas* he presented a radical critique of the unthinking authoritarianism prevalent in the genre. Where *Star Wars* has an oppressive interstellar empire, aristocracies, a tolerated slave trade, and nobles wielding

magic-like powers as their birthright, Iain chose to make his Culture a no-holds-barred utopia in which money was seen as a symptom of poverty, and compassion rather than control was the engine of foreign policy (most explicitly signaled in *The Player of Games*). The Culture had no kings, no jails, no slaves, and no executioners. It was a vision of a hopeful future, a high-tech interstellar polity you might actually want to live in, rather than fleeing in horror.

At a time when most of his peers reflected the dismal nuclear doomsday gloom of the era in their work, Iain tried to paint a picture of a better universe, where petty-minded tyrants could be held accountable for their crimes, and great powers meddled to mitigate suffering rather than causing it.

My latest novel, *Empire Games*, came out in January. It's not space opera: it's a near-future thriller set in a myriad of parallel universes, some of which reflect our current problems, with the global rise of right-wing extremism and oppressive state surveillance. But however bad it gets, there are alternatives: dystopian tyranny is not inevitable, and we need hope and anger to get us through these dark times.

Which is why, if you look in the front of my book, you'll see it has a dedication: 'For Iain M. Banks, who painted a picture of a better way'. ☺

EMPIRE GAMES by Charles Stross is out now, published by TOR. Join in the #EmpireGames conversation with @CStross and @UKTor.



Must-read... The Wasp Factory

"I first came across the work of Iain Banks in 1985 while browsing in a bookstore. I ran across an odd paperback with the most astonishing collection of reviews I'd ever seen: it was the words "a work of unparalleled depravity" (from the book reviewer for the *Irish Times*) that sold me on *The Wasp Factory*. I could just tell it was going to be either very good or very bad, but nothing in-between.

"*The Wasp Factory* turned out to be a splendid excursion into Scottish Gothic gloom, with a science-fictional sensibility — its protagonist Frank seems quite abhuman, and the weird rituals, isolated setting, and bizarre events are distinctly alienating — that put Iain straight to the top of my buy-on-sight list."



Your Five Most Anticipated Sequels

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Everville

"Waiting for Clive Barker to return to the art trilogy after *Everville*. Existence and dream warping magic

adventure #BookClub"
@ParsonsFiction



2. Wayfarers Book Three

"Waiting for Becky Chambers' next. A beautiful, imaginative

voice. #BookClub" @A_Susan

"A WORTHY FOLLOW-UP TO A STUNNING FIRST NOVEL."



3. Assassin's Fate

"Assassin's Fate by @robinhobb – my favourite characters, my favourite books #BookClub"

@sennydreadful



4. Iron Gold

"Because @Pierce_Brown could make even a shopping list mesmerising. #BookClub" @RedHelldiver



5. The Devil's Paintbox

"The Devil's Paintbox by @RobinJarvis1963 #BookClub" @JoshWinning

Details Author: B Catling Publisher: Coronet Price: £20 Released: 9 March

THE ERSTWHILE

Back to the jungle

Anyone who made the journey into B Catling's *The Vorrh* won't be forgetting it in a hurry. It was a mad, fantastical stew of a fantasy novel, teeming with a host of strange characters, creatures and spirits. Given the size and density of the book, it was also a slightly intimidating prospect, but those who found it hard going should be assured that this follow-up is a somewhat easier read.

Which doesn't mean to say that it's any less rich. The surviving characters (and a couple who didn't make it through *The Vorrh* alive) are still dealing with events and forces beyond human understanding. However there's something of a streamlining with this book, with a tighter focus on a

smaller number of key figures and a more comprehensible timeline.

The title refers to the mysterious spirit creatures living in *The Vorrh* who are beginning to find a way to manifest physically. In fact, some are living in Twenties Europe, which is where retired German professor Hector Schumann comes in. When his ailing body is healed after an encounter with one of these creatures, he is dispatched to London to interview an asylum inmate with the same characteristics.

Meanwhile in Essenwald, Ghertrude finally gives birth to her child, attended to by the Bakelite robot creatures that have always lived

underground. Her best friend Cyrena continues to live with the Cyclops Ishmael, but their relationship has grown strained. With a second (non-seeing) eye sewn into his face, Ishmael is sullenly yearning for a greater purpose, which may be provided by a request to guide an expedition into *The Vorrh*.

Add a potentially evil miracle child found in the earth by a hermit and raised by a terrified priest, a vengeful hunter given new life by consuming rotting brains and a prologue featuring William Blake, and you have a worthy follow-up to a stunning first novel.

Catling's primary focus is the Erstwhile – the angels expelled from Heaven for failing to guard the Garden of Eden. Nicholas, the Erstwhile living in London, is fascinating and affecting as he attempts to explain himself and his past to Schumann, himself an exile due to the rise of anti-Semitic forces in Germany.

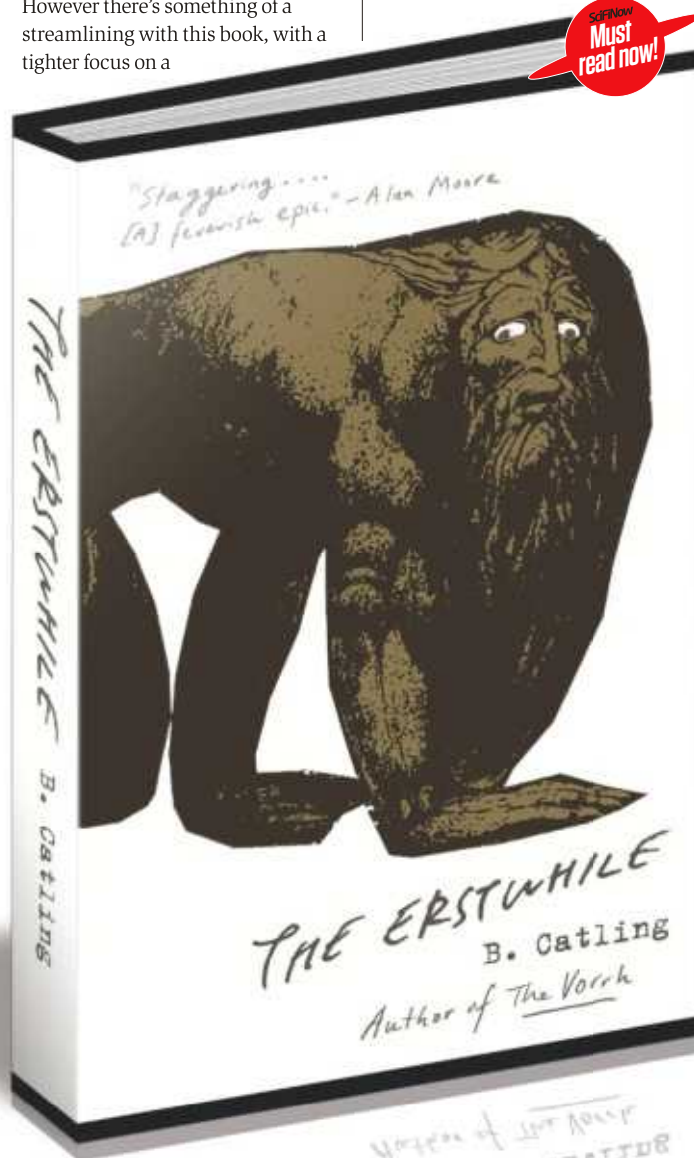
There's less straightforward horror here than in *The Vorrh*, but the description of two less well-adjusted Erstwhile creatures is powerfully nightmarish, as is their predilection for literally returning to the earth whenever they can. It's worth noting, too, that Catling continues to punish his characters for their transgressions with impressive severity.

As the second book in the trilogy, there are still plenty of unanswered questions, but there's no sense of wheel-spinning. This continues to be a fascinating world to get lost in, from the damp back-streets of London and the corridors of Bedlam to the rigid hierarchies of Essenwald and the pitch-black depths of *The Vorrh*. If the first novel was about colonialists being confronted with how little they belong in this place, *The Erstwhile* finds its characters realising that there may not be anywhere in the world for them at all.

Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Annihilation
Jeff Vandermeer
Scientists exploring a mysterious jungle-like area find madness in this brilliant novel.





Details Author: Suzie Wilde Publisher: Unbound Price: £16.99 Released: 23 March

THE BOOK OF BERA **Brave new worlds**

You'll probably think you've got this book's number in the first two chapters. After losing her mother, young Bera is struggling to find her place in the world, dealing with her developing magical powers as well as fending off boys with unreciprocated crushes. Despite the ancient Nordic setting, *The Book Of Bera* looks set to walk a well-trodden YA path. And then everything changes.



"BARELY A PAGE GOES BY WITHOUT SOME NEW DANGER RAISING ITS HEAD, AND WILDE'S PROSE HAS A PALPABLE WEIGHT."

Suddenly, there's bloodshed and horror as Bera's best friend is murdered and she's sold off to the master of his killer. Turns out this isn't your basic magical girl story after all. Still reeling and desperate for revenge, Bera is set adrift in a society that doesn't understand her, but will come to rely on her. Suzie Wilde's sprawling Viking epic moves fast, as Bera is pushed into one role after another, from orphan to wife and stepmother to leader, and its complex mythology demands that the reader just accept its skerns and scrying without much explanation.

That's not a complaint, though. While some characters and relationships seem underdeveloped, with more than one major revelation skimmed over too quickly, it's easy enough to let the breakneck pace carry you with it. And, well, Viking

life was hard, so maybe it's no surprise Bera is a creature of action rather than introspection. Barely a page goes by without some new danger raising its head, and Wilde's prose has a palpable weight, as she conjures both the sheer physical misery of existing in a failing Viking settlement and the joy of steering a longship through the waves.

The final chapters veer back into familiar territory, as Bera discovers her true power and faces her demons, but after all that struggle, it's a well-earned happy ending.

Sarah Dobbs

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Bloodline
Katy Moran
Essa finds himself orphaned and stuck between two kingdoms at war in this Dark Age YA fantasy novel.

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"Been re-reading the Chronicles of Narnia since new year and in the final stages of The Last Battle, really enjoying it! #BookClub"
@OffshoreMeteor



"Just finishing the amazing 11.22.63 by @StephenKing & moving onto The Vagrant by @runpetwrite one I've been waiting ages to read. #BookClub"
@Tim_M_Matthews



"Sirens by Joseph Knox and Norse Gods by @neilhimsel #BookClub"
@RJCM0811



"Reading Harry Potter and The Prisoner Of Azkaban great read so far. #BookClub"
@Philbooty



"General Practice Omnibus by the late James White. Part of his Hospital Ship series. Old school SciFi. #BookClub"
@johntheboy



"Just starting reading @gavingsmith's The Hangman's Daughter, not far in, but liking the concept already. #BookClub"
@Cascararogue



"Enjoying the Cthulhu Casebooks: Sherlock Holmes & The Shadwell Shadows, a great blend of Holmes & Lovecraftian themes #BookClub"
@paul_bowler



"I just finished Behind Her Eyes by Sarah Pinborough and I can't talk to anyone about it. #BookClub"
@jestansfield

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook



Details Author: Hari Kunzru Publisher: Hamish Hamilton Price: £14.99 Released: 6 April

WHITE TEARS **Ghosts of the blues**

Hari Kunzru delves into the vinyl collection of a young jazz and blues enthusiast with a deft hand, presenting the true horrors of blinkered power with a gravely disturbing story that digs deep under the skin.

On leaving university two men from very different backgrounds start a music company specialising in analogue production. Rich white boy Carter funds the business while his shy friend Seth rides on his coattails. Carter has long been appropriating black culture and, with his musical hobby now a career, he yearns to own every rare record he can. His obsession takes a dangerous turn after hearing an old blues song. The two men are soon haunted by the cursed song that demands to set right wrongs and give a voice to lost tales.

Often brutal and graphic but also chilling and nuanced, Kunzru renders the reader powerless by swirling up provocative ideas concerning race and withholding information until breaking point.

The final pages leave you aghast with sorrow and frustration at the consequences of a system designed to repress and break the black population in the US. Kunzru raises similar concerns about mass incarceration that Ava DuVernay did in her recent documentary *13th*, delivering a smart statement on what it really means to be controlled.

With *White Tears* Kunzru has written a surreal modern horror that picks apart the roots of ownership and its repercussions.

Katherine McLaughlin

★★★★★

Must read now!



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Invisible Man
Ralph Ellison
Ralph Ellison's masterpiece about an African American man whose colour renders him invisible.



60 SECONDS WITH

© Kristine Cofsky



NICHOLAS EAMES

How would you describe *Kings Of The Wyld*?

Kings of the Wyld is a fast-paced, funny and occasionally poignant story of five ex-mercenaries reuniting to rescue the daughter of their leader, Gabriel. The setting is a subtle(ish) allegory for the golden age of rock-and-roll, where mercenary 'bands' achieved the notoriety of rock stars. Although it toys with a lot of classic fantasy tropes (hopeless quests, magic swords, villain-infested forests) it turns a few on their head as well.

Have you always been drawn to this kind of fantasy story?

No, I grew up reading intricately plotted epics from Martin, Erikson and Jordan, and my favourite author is the eloquent Guy Gavriel Kay. Recently, however, I've been drawn to books like *Ready Player One* and *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, which I found interesting and fun.

What goes into creating a great band of rogues?

In this case: humour, heart and history. The 'band' in my book were once the greatest mercenaries in the world, and I tried to infuse each with a sense not only of who they are now, but of what they once were – and, in some cases, what they aspire to be. Ultimately, the relationships between them matter most. Characters that love are characters worth loving.

Finally, if you could pick one band of rogues to join, which would you choose?

The crew of the Normandy in *Mass Effect*. Conflicted scientists, contemplative assassins, attractive aliens... what's not to like?

Kings Of The Wyld is available now from Orbit Books.



Details Author: David Hair Publisher: Jo Fletcher Books Price: £30 Released: Out Now

EMPRESS OF THE FALL Building bigger worlds

An unsteady new empress in the West and a ruined nation in the East are both threatened by forces unknown – a shadowy group of masked figures with their own grudges to settle and a desire to see their world fall into chaos...

Fantasy epics such as David Hair's *Empress Of The Fall* often succeed or fail on the strength of their world-building; it has to be a landscape that readers not only understand, but also want to spend their time in.

This book resides in the same world as David Hair's *Moontide Quartet*. It is accessible for new readers, but it does mean that there is a great deal of history waiting to catch up on. There are political machinations, questions of royal lineage, an influential religion, and a long history of conflict. The first half of the book is very dense and, unfortunately at times, a little bit confusing. However,

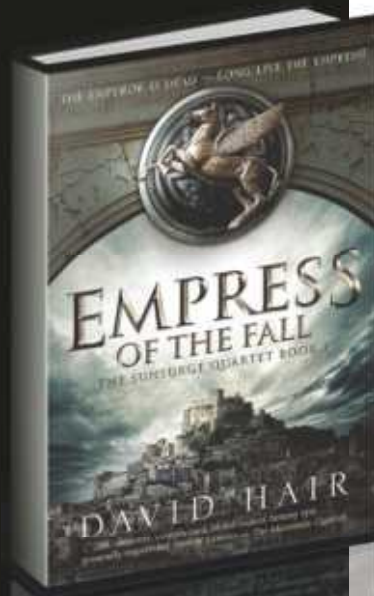
the attention paid to such details begins to pay off spectacularly in the second half of the book as the plot speeds readily into action and the consequences of early decisions begin to emerge.

Vibrant and memorable characters are littered across the landscape and the Lantric masks in particular are a great piece of detail, allowing a glimpse into the arts and culture of Urte, but also used by the nefarious conspirators to retain anonymity. Some identities are revealed, others remain mysterious, but it adds an extra investigative dimension to the tale.

It may be a bit daunting for the casual reader but for anyone looking for a new sprawling fantasy epic to sink their teeth into, and with time to do so, *Empress of the Fall* is an ultimately satisfying journey into a fascinating and chaotic landscape.

Becky Lea

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Assassin's Apprentice
Robin Hobb
A royal bastard finds himself training to be an assassin as the throne finds itself threatened.



Details Author: Ashley Poston Publisher: Quirk Books Price: £8.99 Released: Out Now

GEEKERELLA Fangirl Fairy Tale

When a well-loved fairy tale is treated to a brave reinvention, one can almost hear the dial on the cringe-o-meter twitching in fear. For movie-makers, bunging in the latest hot young thing as the star is excitement

enough, but from a literary angle the reader really needs a new hook to make it worth the effort.

The globally adored *Cinderella* story has been reworked and modernised umpteen times. But have you ever imagined that Cinders would turn out to be a massive sci-fi fangirl? Well, Ashley Poston did and called her Geekerella.

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away a low budget, late night tv show called *Starfield* was born. Cut to present day and the Hollywood big wigs are cashing in on the cult status and making a movie based on it. With teen soap star Darien Freeman cast in the lead role, devoted fangirl Elle is furious and, not believing him worthy, she takes to the internet to vent her rage. Her step sisters (obviously wicked) totally disagree and will stop at nothing to reach the Excelsicon convention to meet their idol and win tickets to the Cosplay Ball.

Now, while the numerous links to

the Cinderella story are very much in your face, the actual narrative is rather addictive. Told from Elle and Darian's perspective in alternating chapters, we are treated to both Cinderella and Prince Charming's take on events.

The Prince as a heavily-controlled film star is a great comparison and Elle's fairy godmother (owner of a vegan food cart called The Magic Pumpkin), as in all good versions of the tale, steals the show.

Anyone who has ever loved a show enough to spend hard-earned cash on itchy replica outfits of questionable quality will be Googling the next cosplay event after reading this rather straightforward but very entertaining homage.

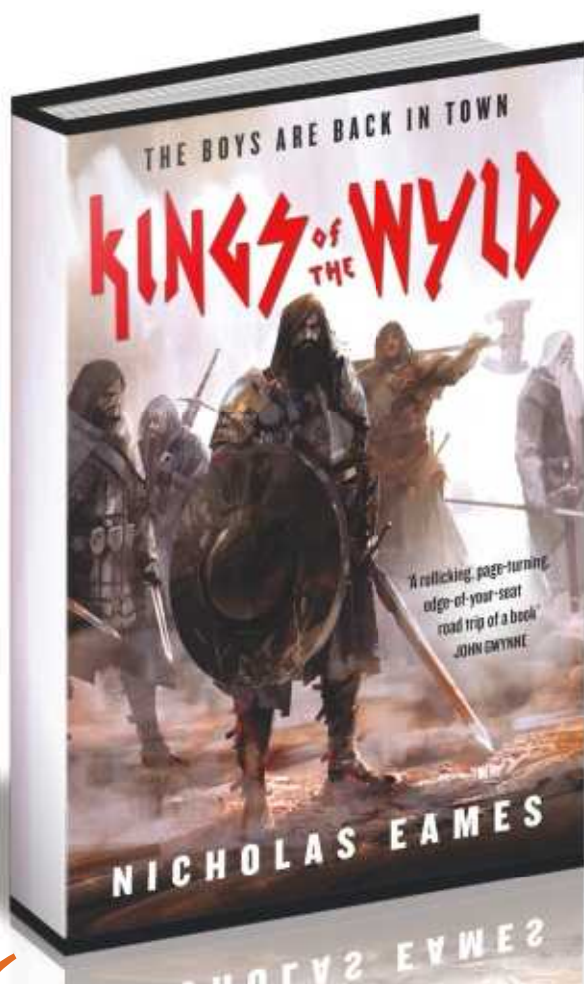
Claire Nicholls

★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Charm
Sarah Pinborough
Forget what you think you know about *Cinderella*, this is an honest fairy tale with a very different twist.





Details Author: Nicholas Eames Publisher: Orbit
Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

KINGS OF THE WYLD

Lordi of the Rings

Many heavy metal bands take their names and stylistic cues from Viking tales. However, there's probably never been a Viking tale that's been as obviously inspired by heavy metal as *Kings of the Wyld*.

To start, every name on the fantasy world map could easily be the name of a Norwegian death metal band. And that sensation endures even as the story itself takes off.

Clay Cooper (such a rocker name) is the old frontman (see) of a band (see!) of mercenaries, who have long since disbanded, each going their way. Clay has settled down, gotten married and started a family. But, unsurprisingly, he is coaxed into helping a former bandmate (honestly) rescue his daughter from a besieged city, for one last tour (yes, it's laid on thick). So begins a loud, bloody and expletive-filled journey through well-known fantasy tropes, but an inventively crafted world of rogues, influenced as much by Western outlaws and Germanic tales as it is by Viking culture (and hair metal).

In his first novel, Eames displays a strong humorous touch and is able to inject pace with ease. What is lacking, however, is control. On one side, it's control with style. For example, the story is rife with hard rock references – there's even a 'battle of the bands' – but their lack of subtlety grows old well before the end, and distracts from the main story. On the other, the utter wyld (sorry) abandon with which Eames crafts his rogue gallery is entertaining, but leads to a cluttered and confusing final showdown, in which it seems every fantasy beast ever conceived makes an appearance.

Kings of the Wyld is a pitchy debut (we're so sorry) by Eames, but one that shows immense promise and should entertain genre fans.

Erlingur Einarsson

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Guns of the Dawn
Adrian Tchaikovsky
Buckle down in a dark but pace-filled magical fantasy about warlocks, violent heroines and fates of nations.

“EVERY NAME ON THE FANTASY WORLD MAP COULD BE THE NAME OF A NORWEGIAN DEATH METAL BAND”

Details Author: Cassandra Khaw Publisher: Abbadon Books Price: £9.99 Released: Out Now

RUPERT WONG AND THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Bring your appetite

Cassandra Khaw returns to cannibal chef Rupert Wong with an even funnier, more imaginative and yes, even gorier sophomore novel. Thanks to some wheeling and dealing that saved him in the first novel, Rupert is sent to London to work with Greek deities. They've all got their own quirks, which Rupert will have to adjust to, like betting on human life and reading the future in the viscera of still-living people.

Naturally, Rupert becomes tangled up in something big and he'll have to combine his culinary prowess and quick thinking if he wants to make it out alive again.

If you enjoyed *Rupert Wong, Cannibal Chef* then *The Ends Of The Earth* is a treat. Khaw tackles a bigger story with great skill and humour, packing a rich world into

a pretty short tale. There's a lot of Neil Gaiman in Khaw's frequently funny approach to very human gods, although their monstrosity is far more pronounced. Indeed, as mentioned, the novel is soaked in gore. As for Rupert himself, he's still great fun to spend time with.

This is not for everyone, but if you like the idea of your urban fantasy beginning with a cooking competition where the chefs are preparing people, you owe it to yourself to get into this series.

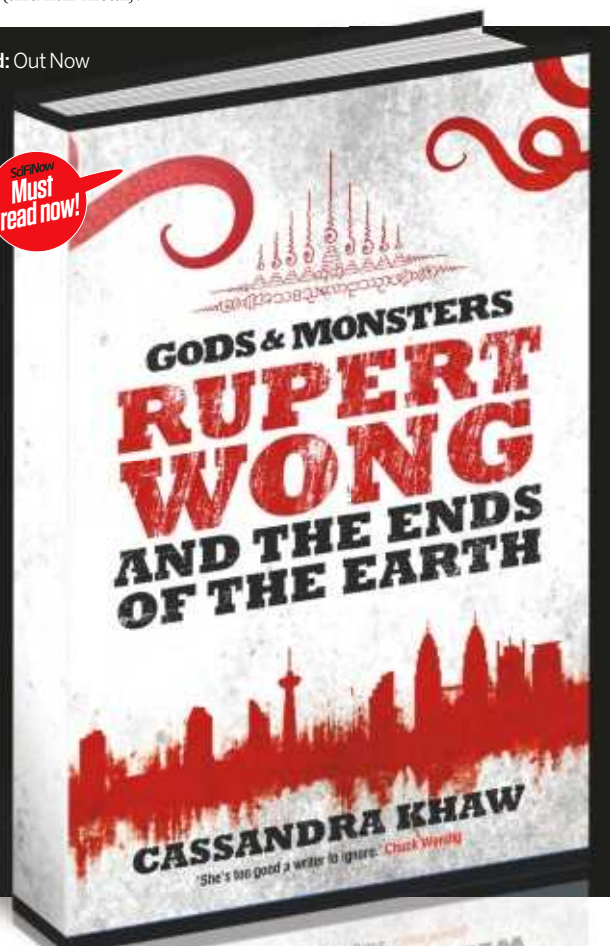
Jonathan Hatfull

★★★★★



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
John Dies At The End
David Wong
Gore, humour and weirdness abound in David Wong's brilliantly odd novel.

SciFiNow
Must read now!





The Harbinger of Death

Claire North talks about giving Death a human helper and using fantasy to tackle social issues in *The End Of The Day* WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Under the pseudonym of Claire North, Catherine Webb has emerged as one of our finest genre writers. She's given us *The First Fifteen Lives Of Harry August*, *Touch*, *The Gameshouse* novellas and *The Sudden Appearance Of Hope*. Her latest, *The End Of The Day*, might just be her best yet.

Charlie is the Harbinger Of Death. His job takes him around the world to meet interesting people while keeping in touch with his central office in Milton Keynes. Sometimes he's sent to witness the death of a concept. He sees the march of climate change at the North Pole, witnesses the expulsion of a family from their London home and travels to warzones. It can be a terrifying world, and Charlie is just an ordinary bloke...

How did the novel start?

It always started with the Harbinger of Death, the idea of that job. Charlie emerged as a character from the importance of having someone who a) wasn't evil and b) didn't fall into the obvious narrative trap of being: "I know this person must die, I shall save them despite fate!" because neither option interested me. Thus the necessities of the plot required someone who could both find the good in his job, and regard it as important, while remaining humble enough to not think he was above it all and empowered to screw around with God-like abandonment.

Was the social component always key? That idea that the deaths Charlie is honouring are often something greater?

I think so. It made for a more interesting and flexible premise. Charlie's job became about Death choosing to honour people who either Death regarded with esteem – those who had perhaps drunk whiskey with Death while the bombs fell, the medics who greeted Death when their supplies ran

out, or who walked with Death across the desert – or to honour ideas. To go and pay a living respect to a changing world, and the idea that things will never be the same again. It opened up the story and lifted the narrative from the danger of being one of grief.

Is there something liberating about addressing issues like climate change in a genre story?

I suspect genre allows you to touch on these things in a different way. Take climate change – it's an idea almost too big and scary to humanise. We struggle to express or emotionally relate to things that take 20 years to happen. I've grown used to the idea that the snowmen I made at Christmas when I was a child no longer happen. I haven't made a snowman for years, but the slow pace of change... the sense of disconnect from that reality... makes it hard to write about or express.

Perhaps genre permits a lightness of touch, or even an expansion of ideas, that might not otherwise be available. SF in particular has always been talking about big ideas through the medium of the 'what if?' question, looking ahead, or to the past, to paint a picture of 'what if?' these things are the case. It makes stories from ideas, uses imagination to make issues into something emotionally relatable.

Was it important to make Charlie a very human character?

Very much so. He needs to be human, but more importantly he needs to be humane. It's easy, particularly in SF, to de-value the mundane. We surround ourselves with tales of princes and space-adventurers and we tell, out of necessity and drama, their tales of adventure, and innocently or not, the janitor on the second floor and the girl who grows the potatoes are only of note if it turns out that they're also

sorcerer supremes. But our 'ordinary' lives are things of wonder too. We build worlds around us that express our identity, from the clothes we wear to the friends we keep, and that expression is unique and important. 'Ordinary' is as important as escapism and heroism, and wonder is too. Charlie felt like someone for whom ordinary needed to matter.

Where did those snatches of conversation come from?

My deep and passionate authorial inspiration and... no, it was almost entirely eavesdropping. Sometimes verbatim, sometimes a compression of ideas and general sentiments. It felt important to have words that were true to people – and when you separate out the things people say into single lines, it can feel like it's reductive, but it can also be full of character and truth. I find humanity inspiring and interesting. Often a pain in the backside but even at the worst of times, the worst behaviours tend to come from a place of fear, or anxiety, or insecurity, and beneath all that noise is something extraordinary. How miraculous that there is this species which is so complex as to feel insecure in its own identity! How incredible that we have the imaginations to build so many prisons for ourselves, and yet no matter who we think we are, truth always seeps into language.

I find listening to people wonderful. I love the tricks of language and the depth of character that can be revealed in even the shortest sentence. I like hearing all the feeling beneath the trivial gumpf, and even the most trivial is usually soggy in feeling. I have yet to meet anyone who I regard as shallow; we hide secrets that we are fearful of, truths about ourselves, beneath the most trivial sounds, but the truth is still there.

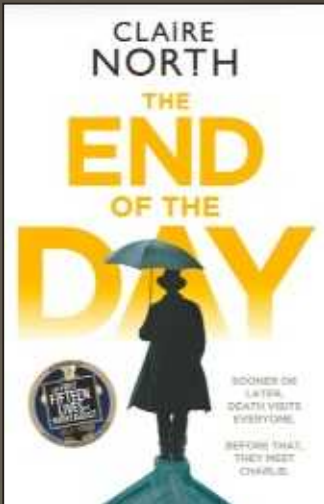
The End Of The Day by Claire North is published from Orbit on 6 April.

The Greatest Grim Reaper

Claire North on why Terry Pratchett's Death is king.

"Terry Pratchett still takes the win. This may not necessarily be because his portrayal of Death – which is genius – is the best portrayal, but it's the portrayal that defined my childhood years, and my God it's so good. From the skeletal Grim Reaper through to one of the greatest, most fully-defined and oddly humane characters in the Disc, it's just so damn good. Truly a way of showing Death that does proper honour to life, while being hilarious at the same time."





“OUR ORDINARY
LIVES ARE FULL
OF WONDER...AS
IMPORTANT AS
HEROISM.”



BOOK CLUB

Gallery

Gallery

Not so supervillains

Taking a look back at some of comics' best worst bad guys

Not every big bad can be a Magneto, a Kingpin or a Joker. Sometimes, creators roll the dice on some fairly unconvincing evildoers, and many of them have been lost to the mists of time, unceremoniously shoved aside in favour of more genuinely terrifying, ingenious threats. However, with Jon Morris' new book *The Legion Of Regrettable Supervillains*, these characters are being given the spotlight they deserve. From a swarm of Nazi bees to a fellow who hurls poisonous bricks, there's a legion of so-bad-they're-good bad guys waiting to be rediscovered, and here's a selection of some of the best of the collection. Send in the less-than-stellar supervillains...

Black Tarantula ►

"I go to spread evil and wickedness among you . . . while I am around, devilry and cunning will remain on Earth!"

Enemy of: Princesses, villagers

Created by: Unknown

Debuted in: Feature Presentation #5 (Fox Publications, April 1950)

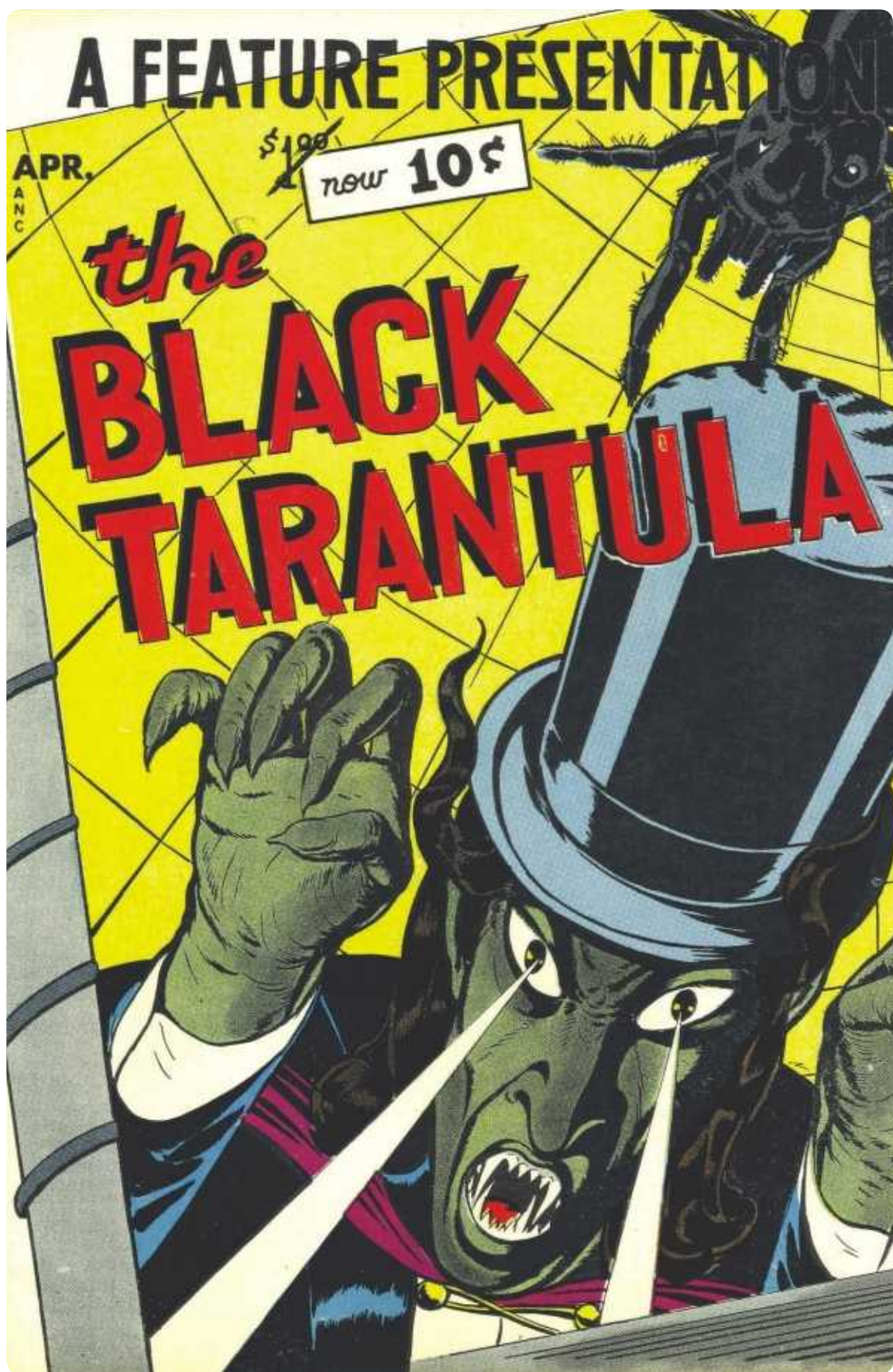
Favourite hiding place: Behind a beautiful bunch of ripe bananas

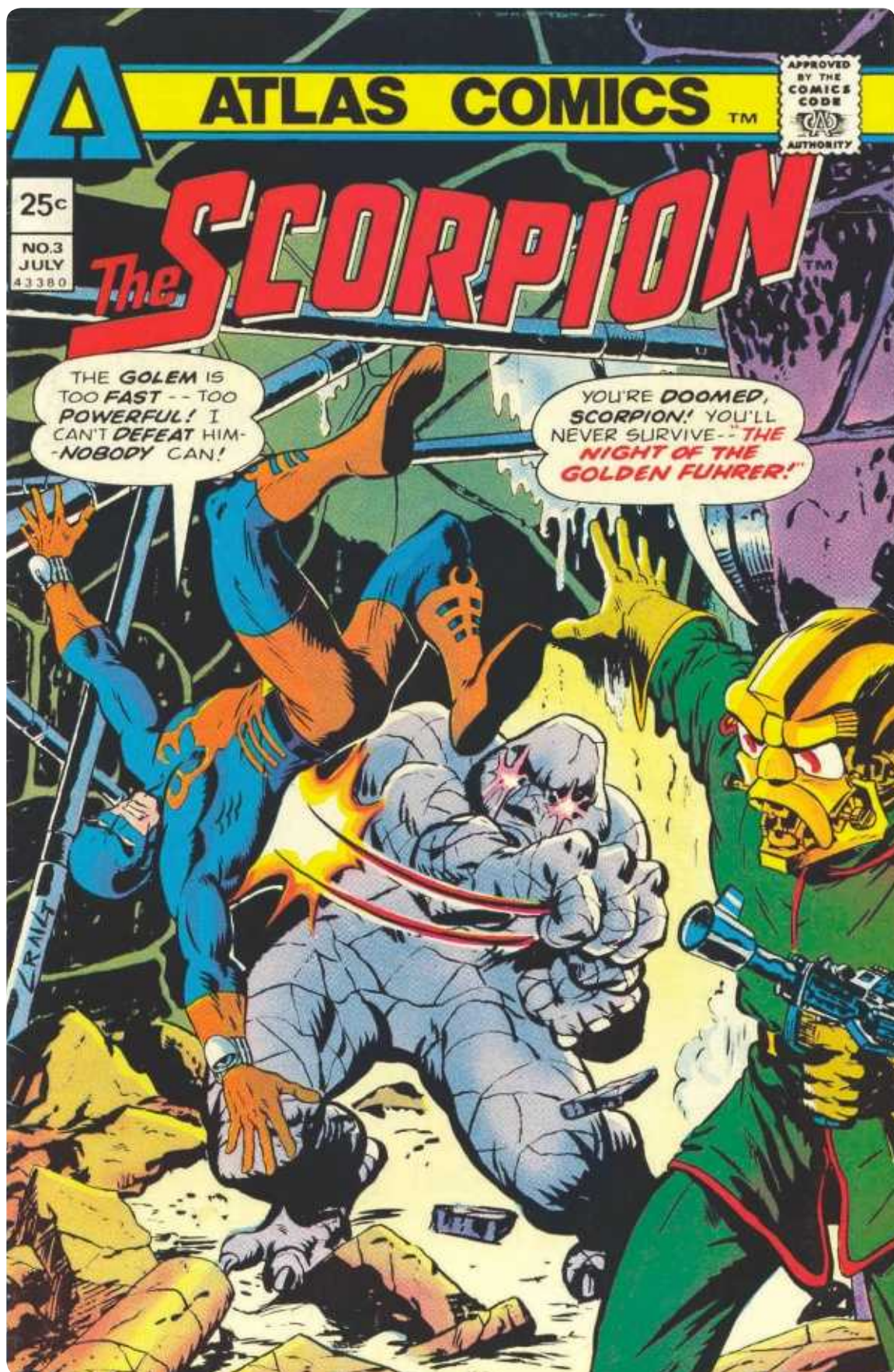
"This Black Tarantula, since the story mentions others, has lived for almost a thousand years when his tale begins. Hanging out above his own grave, he's delighted to direct our attention to his tombstone. It reads: 'Zoraster Rorret' with the dates '1101-[blank]'. Gasp! 'I laugh', explains Count Rorret, a gaping grin splitting his ghastly green face, 'because there is no date of my death! How can there be, when I have eternal life? I'm dead, yet never will I die!'

The Black Tarantula is entombed... for a while, anyway. In our century, he's free to follow his insidious plans of acquiring undead slaves and amassing power. Or he would have if he'd made it to a second issue. Perhaps if he waits nine hundred years, the spidery count will get another shot."

© 1950 by Fox Publications

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Cat Girl

"Gaze upon me in wonder!"

Enemy of: The Jaguar
Created by: Robert Bernstein and John Rosenberger
Debuted in: Adventures of the Jaguar #4 (Archie Comics, January 1962)
Favourite luxury car: Take a guess

"Immortal and worshipped by all feline creatures great and small since the age of the pharaohs, Cat Girl made a profound impression on the ancient world. Theoretically, both the myth of the Sphinx and the famous structure that bears its name were based upon her (despite that, she doesn't possess a lion's body – artistic license, one supposes).

Cat Girl has the power to command cats and other feline creatures, as well as to fly and perform feats of tremendous strength, plus a handful of other abilities that pop up as needed. Also in her arsenal: a very specific but effective ability to command the stone monuments of the so-called Valley of the Sphinxes, a recently discovered site where a half dozen smaller replicas of the larger construction lie around, awaiting their mistress' orders.

But for all that, Cat Girl finds herself powerless before the wiles of the Jaguar. Imbued with powers basically equal to those of Cat Girl, the valorous Jaguar has the benefit of being 'the world's most attractive bachelor', as the text repeatedly tells us. What's a Cat Girl to do?"

© 1962 by Archie Comics



Mother Goose

Enemy of: The Hangman
Created by: Bill Woolfolk and Harry Lucey
Debuted in: Pep Comics #30 (MLJ Comics, August 1942)
Favourite kind of fairy tale: Grim

"Nursery rhymes and fairy tales are fertile ground for creating truly terrifying villains. These stories often involve murder, theft, kidnapping, dismemberment, wicked stepmothers, and evil spirits – all sorts of prime material for goons and creeps.

Take, for example, Mother Goose, a frightening fairy tale-inspired killer who makes short work of three brothers in a single night... Pursued by the Hangman and seeing no way to avoid capture, Mother Goose hastily swallows poison and dies. Her demise is a shame because the nepotocidal uncle will never have the chance to become the version of the character depicted on the story's introductory page. That Mother Goose is the knife-wielding leader of a gang of weird villains which includes an egg-headed Humpty Dumpty, a top-coat-bedecked Jack Sprat, and a hissing goose!"

© 1942 by MLJ Comics



Mr Pointer

"Mr. Pointer is very real ... let that comfort you ... as you fall dead!"

Enemy of: Captain Triumph
Created by: Reed Crandall and an uncredited writer
Debuted in: Crack Comics #6 (Quality Comics, July 1949)
Deadliest attack: Pulling his finger

"It's impolite to point. But for one exceptionally rude supervillain of the 1940s, it was not only impolite – it was deadly!"

The murderous Mr Pointer was verbally boorish. According to his introduction, he told people to 'drop dead.' Even worse... they did! At least he possessed a degree of modesty: the villain remained largely invisible in his debut except for his jutting finger and gloved hand. Little was known about him that couldn't be detected through a voluminous, all-covering overcoat."

© 1949 by Quality Comics



Golden Fuhrer

"You're doomed, Scorpion! You'll never survive – the Night of the Golden Fuhrer!"

Enemy of: The Scorpion
Created by: Gabriel Levy and Jim Craig
Debuted in: The Scorpion #3 (Atlas Comics, July 1975)
No relation to: The Golden Girls

"Who is the Golden Fuhrer? Where did he come from? And why does he have a weird golden head? These burning questions are never answered during his brief but busy existence.

What we do know about the Golden Fuhrer are his plans. Helming a neo-Nazi movement in the heart of Manhattan, this gold-plated tin tyrant seeks supernatural powers to help him conquer the world.

The G.F. and his personal army have managed to purloin and preserve the corpses of Germany's top wartime military commanders and stacked them like canned vegetables deep beneath the World Trade Centre. His plan is to magically resurrect them... well, not all of them. As you might guess from his name, Golden Fuhrer plans to install himself as the top swasticat. Who knew that the reanimation of Nazi corpses could be such a good career opportunity?"

© 1975 by Atlas Comics



The Legion Of Regrettable Supervillains

by Jon Morris will be published by Quirk Books on 28 March

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The **Millennium Falcon** gets the "Haynes" treatment! This is a "Haynes Manual" based on the Millennium Falcon, the iconic spaceship piloted by Han Solo and Chewbacca in the original trilogy of "Star Wars" films. Using brand-new, full-colour cutaways, together with other art and photographs, this manual provides the most thorough technical description of the Millennium Falcon available, making it essential reading for all "Star Wars" fans.

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CARNIVÀLE

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CARNIVALE

WE GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF HBO'S CRUELLY SHORT-LIVED BUT UNFORGETTABLE CULT CLASSIC. IT WAS WEIRD, IT WAS WONDERFUL, AND IT WAS DANGEROUS... HERE ARE THE SECRETS OF CARNIVALE

WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER

Before there was *Game of Thrones* – hell, even before there was *True Blood* – HBO already had a grubby, grounded fantasy show under its belt, but for some reason *Carnivale* is rarely mentioned in lists of HBO's greatest shows. Which is a shame, because *Carnivale* thoroughly deserves its place not only on that list, but on lists of the greatest television shows on any broadcaster, ever.

Carnivale is, admittedly, a tricky show to define. It's a historical drama, set in Depression-era America, which centres on a carnival crew making its way through the Dust Bowl. But it is also a political tale about a Californian preacher dealing with the corrupting nature of power.

Oh, and it's an epic fantasy showdown between magical avatars of light and dark, destined to do mysterious battle without ever really knowing why. Its hard-to-pin-down nature is one of the reasons its loyal fanbase loves it – as well as being one of the reasons HBO struggled to effectively promote it, eventually leading to its cancellation after two seasons in 2006.

"BEFORE THE BEGINNING..."

Daniel Knauf, the creator of *Carnivale*, had wanted to tell an epic fantasy story for some time, he just needed to find the right hooks to hang it on, and a carnival was one of those hooks. "Carnivals haven't really been done to death and they're really very much a common experience, I'd venture to say in all cultures," Knauf tells us. "The experience of a carnival is not only universal, it's also one that changes

as you pass the stages of life. And so I thought, 'Wow, this is really fertile ground,' and as a writer you're always searching for that little untiled patch of soil."

The next step was deciding the era he wanted to set the show in. "The United States is a very young country and so we haven't had that much in our culture that's creaky enough to mythologise... The period between the two World Wars was a really interesting time in American history. We could have very easily gone either way as far as how our country is. I mean, Mussolini was *Time Magazine* Man of the Year back then... I think it was really morally a very ambiguous time."

Knauf's bold ideas and strong script meant that actors were keen to come on board. Clancy Brown, who played Brother Justin, the

morally struggling avatar of the dark, credits the script for drawing him in: "Dan's script was just so compelling, it was a world that was so well-written and had so much potential, it was the right mix of history and mystery and spiritualism and superstition... My imagination ran wild with it. There's not a lot of scripts that you get where your curiosity's piqued and your imagination starts working overtime."

"AND TOGETHER, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, TOGETHER WE SHALL BUILD A SHINING TEMPLE!"

Compared to some mystery shows that seem to be winging it as they go along (*cough* *Lost* *cough*), *Carnivale* is remarkably well planned-out, with hints seeded in as early as episode one that don't pay off until Season Two. But ➤



Clea DuVall stars as Sofie, whose journey takes her on an increasingly dark path.



Brother Justin (Clancy Brown) and Iris Crowe (Amy Madigan) hold court.

"BROTHER JUSTIN WAS SORT OF DARTH VADER IN THE FIRST DRAFT AND THAT DIDN'T WORK AT ALL"

DANIEL KNAUF

➤ the show wasn't completely set in stone. The historically accurate cooch-dancing Dreifuss family didn't come on board until the second version of the pilot and the opening narration was originally supposed to be delivered by Gabriel (Brian Turk), not Michael J Anderson's Samson. Knauf says he changed his mind about that as soon as he cast Anderson: "You put that man on a set and he just oozes this whole tragic and humorous beauty."

But the big change was to Brother Justin, the 'villain' of the show, who was altered significantly from the original pilot. "Brother Justin was [originally] much further along in his journey than we ended up putting him," Knauf says. "We reset him a little further back, where

he was sort of stumbling upon what he is. He already pretty much knew what he was, he was sort of Darth Vader in the first draft and it [didn't] work at all."

This retooled Brother Justin is what drew Clancy Brown in. "It's not compelling just to have some crazy preacher that's bent on bringing Armageddon upon the world, it's much better if that preacher thinks he's doing God's work, and you can make the argument that he is, that he's the instrument of some sort of purification that has to happen. And that's his rationalisation." Surprisingly, Bruce Campbell was also considered for the role of Justin. "That would have been a very different kind of Brother Justin," Knauf understates.

Those intensely layered characters are what drew everyone involved in. "A carnival barker who pimps out his wife and kids?" Toby Huss, who played Stumpy Dreifuss, jokes. "That's good stuff."

Diane Salinger, who played catatonic psychic Apollonia, admits to being knocked for six by her audition, in which she had to come out of her catatonic state to tell her daughter Sofie that she should have killed her in the womb. "I turned to Dan and the other executive producer and I said: 'Well, I take it I hate my daughter?'" ➤



Diane Salinger tells us Apollonia loves her daughter.



The part of Samson was expanded once the great Michael J Anderson was cast.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IN SEASON THREE AND BEYOND?

Daniel Knauf famously had the essential bare bones of the show sketched out from the very beginning, and had a six-season plan building up to the first Atomic bomb test, the 'false sun exploding over Trinity' that was mentioned in Samson's opening monologue to the first episode.

So if *Carnivale* had continued, what would have happened? "When we come back in Season Three the players have all been situated in very different places and the cast of our carnival has been put in the wind," Knauf says. "We find Ben and Samson together and Jonesy's playing professional baseball and Stumpy and Rita-Sue are struggling with their alligator farm. But it becomes important to Ben to pull everybody back together.

"Brother Justin is in a wheelchair and he's weakened and he's sort of like a Lear character. There's a war going on between Sofie and Iris – this battle to run the church as a very popular radio ministry. So all the characters were reset and we're teetering on the brink of World War Two. Brother Justin will get up and he will deliver a fire and brimstone sermon on the radio and then he will basically have to spend the rest of the week recovering. So it continues..."

Religious doesn't mean demon-free...



➤ and Dan said: 'No, you really love her.' And I thought that was extraordinary... I was absolutely intrigued."

"LET'S SHAKE SOME DUST!"

The cast diligently undertook preparations for filming. Toby Huss turned to photos of the period for his research. "We were lucky, there's a lot of photography and especially American photography around that time. It was documented pretty well, the Dust Bowl and the hardships and the pain, to the point where you could find the year where men... got rid of their suspenders and started wearing belts."

Amanda Aday, who played cooch show dancer Dora Mae Dreifuss, had a different type of research to undergo. She had to take dance classes with co-stars Cynthia Ettinger and Carla Gallo, who played Rita Sue and Libby Dreifuss: "We learned the dance but we also looked at each other and realised we're not actually playing professional dancers. At the end of the day we're still just strippers at an old-time carnival travelling side-show, let's not make it too professional or too clean. Keep it simple and to the beat, but keep with the moves as they were during the time period."

Aday was also impressed by the other ways in which the show adhered to the time period. "I wouldn't be considered a sex symbol on most TV shows, but... they really wanted to embrace the reality of the time by having Cynthia and myself on there, as well as Carla, and really showing that and living true to the time. I thought that was wonderful."

Diane Salinger prepared for the part of



"MOST OF THE DIRT AND THE GRIME AND THE SHIT WAS PRETTY REAL"

TOBY HUSS

BABYLON

When *Carnivale* showed its teeth

The Season One two-parter 'Babylon' marked the moment that *Carnivale* really embraced the darkness of its mythology. Essentially a standalone story about a ghost town, it has repercussions for the rest of the two seasons.

It was an especially challenging episode to shoot for Amanda Aday, who played Dora Mae Dreifuss, the tragic victim of Babylon. "Obviously for me at the time I think I was 20 when we actually filmed it, definitely my first time on camera having any kind of nudity, so I was very nervous about it at first. But... I didn't feel that it was exploitative or nudity for the sake of nudity."

In one especially memorable scene, the ghost of Dora Mae is seen at a window, naked, trapped forever with the ghosts who abused and murdered her. "When it came time to do that window scene where I was literally just out there in the open cold, if you will, amongst the whole cast and crew and everybody, I think part of the fear you see in Dora's eyes is also Amanda's fear... [But] when I shot that scene, when I saw the final outcome of that one shot up in the window I thought it was perfect. Not exploitative at all. Heartbreaking."

That heartbreak was played out for another season and half by Toby Huss, as Dora Mae's grieving father Stumpy, unable to show his grief in an era that didn't allow men to show their feelings. Stumpy finally released that grief with a single violent outburst in Season Two: "That's how a man like that would grieve. It wouldn't be done in a direct and healthy way, it would just come out when it came out. And maybe that ultimately is a pretty healthy way to deal with it."



Amanda Aday as Dora Mae Dreifuss, who finds the darkness in Babylon.



Ben Hawkins (Nick Stahl) digs for truth.



Clancy Brown tells us Justin's delusion of goodness is what drew him to the role.

CARNIVALE

COMPLETE GUIDE



The Dreifuss family is one of the troupe's big attractions.

Apollonia by visiting psychiatric hospitals and care homes. She found her inspiration in a facility that cared for dementia sufferers. "There was a woman in a wheelchair who had her hands curled up and her head was leaning to one side and her mouth was open, and she didn't blink and she was dazed... I thought 'Oh my God, this is the woman.' And so I based the physicality completely on this woman."

But preparing for the roles didn't prepare them for the challenges of shooting. For a show set in the Dust Bowl, it was going to be pretty intense. "It was really hot and dirty and insufferable sometimes on set, it was pretty rough," Toby Huss says, good-humouredly. "[Y]ou'd sweat, and the dust would get in your sweat and in your eyes and get all over your clothes and your hair... So most of the dirt and the grime and the shit was pretty real."

At night, though, it was a different story. "It was freezing cold," Amanda Aday remembers. "We were shooting out in the high desert, if memory serves, in February and March, so I remember being up on the bally wearing that fringe skirt and that silk bra basically and it was maybe 40 degrees out, with 30 mile-an-hour winds. Absolutely frigid."

But filming certainly wasn't all about challenges. John Carroll Lynch, who played Brother Justin's right-hand man Varlyn Stroud, tells us: "If you ever have the chance to go at a door with a fire axe, don't pass it up. It is a blast. I also loved a line while I was doing that. The hotel desk clerk says, 'But it's already open'. That is Varlyn in a nut shell."

"IT IS YOUR PLACE, BEN HAWKINS; IT CANNOT BE ESCAPED. IT CAN ONLY BE ACCEPTED"

Despite the rich supporting cast, the show essentially revolves around two opposing figures: Ben Hawkins, travelling with the carnival, and Brother Justin. Unlike most shows, these two mystical enemies don't actually meet – except in a dream-state – until the final episode. They're not your average protagonist and antagonist – in fact, they are both the protagonist of their own stories.

"They don't really hate each other, it's all a conflict of fear," Clancy Brown explains. "It's a relationship based in fear, I'm afraid of him, he's afraid of me and neither of us know why, we just know that we should be afraid of each other. That was some deep and confusing stuff, and really true in a lot of ways... There was no real animosity between us, it was just he was a Republican and I'm a Democrat, or I'm a Republican and he's Democrat, we are opposing forces, that's just the way it is, and one of us has to overcome. It was never really a personal thing."

It was the ambiguity of it all that Brown clearly enjoyed the most: "What was one fighting for and what was the other fighting for? Was the avatar of light the avatar of the new age of technology or was he the avatar ➤



A carnival's a hard sell in Dustbowl-era America, even for Samson.



Cynthia Ettinger as the canny Rita Sue.



of magic?" Knauf was equally interested in the ambiguity of Justin; a man who genuinely wants to do good, but seems tragically pre-destined to be bad. "He's trying hard, but he's swimming upstream, and at the end of the day the current always wins. And finally he gives in to it. He thinks: 'God created me too and he created me this way and there's a reason I'm this way, so here I go.' But he knows what he's doing is wrong. He's not twisting it or justifying it."

"THE CLOCK IS TICKING, BROTHERS AND SISTERS..."

Sadly, the show didn't have the time to explore everything Daniel Knauf and the cast were keen to get stuck into. Clancy Brown for one would have liked to explore Justin and Iris' backstory further ("They're both Russian for crying out loud! Who the hell expected that?!") as well as the Justin/Iris/Sofie dynamic. He also liked Varlyn Stroud's deal: "I'd have loved to have him go out and just commit more crazy stuff like maybe having him capture the Lindbergh baby," Brown laughs.

Knauf, for his part, was disappointed to lose characters like Gecko and the twins, all of whom were lost to cost-cutting between seasons One and Two. "With the network, they were like, 'These people have eight or nine lines, how do we justify keeping them on the payroll?' and so you're going, 'Yeah, but they're going to be really important in Season Four!'. But then they're: 'We're not even sure if we want to do Season Two, okay?'"

While Knauf is philosophical about struggles with the network, some of the cast are less so. Clancy Brown admits that Justin's rapid descent into scythe-wielding maniac in the Season Two finale "pissed [him] off", and he blames it on pressure from the network. "This was an argument that I always got into with the executive producers," he says. "Not the writers, necessarily, and not Dan really, but they always wanted a guy with a black hat, and I said this is far more interesting if you don't know who the black hat is and far more interesting if the person you're identifying, Justin, doesn't think he's a black hat. And I would have to go round and round and round about this with a couple of the executive producers. Non-creative producers especially... Non-creative executives are not creative for a reason," he adds, laughing.

Knauf, on the other hand, has nothing but gratitude to HBO. "I can't imagine anyone greenlighting [*Carnivale*] even today. HBO was very bold to put it on. People are like: 'Damn HBO, it cancelled the show, curses, what a stupid thing' and but I'm just thinking at least HBO greenlit it! The only thing is HBO was kind of drunk on the success of *The Sopranos* and they expected those kind of numbers and we just couldn't meet that kind of expectation, it was too high a benchmark for a genre show."

Back then, HBO had very little experience

with 'genre'. "HBO at the time didn't know how to market it," Knauf says. "They were doing all contemporary shows for the most part, and this was such an odd duck, we were really very much the red-headed stepchild, it was such a weird show. They never really had a handle on it, from a marketing standpoint. I remember the first year I called them up and said, 'What are we going to be doing at Comic Con?' And the person at [HBO's PR and marketing agency] said 'What's Comic Con?'"

Toby Huss reckons that there just wasn't the infrastructure to support *Carnivale* back in 2003. "I think with the power of social media, if we started three or four years ago the show would still be going on right now. I think people would find it easier... it was a few years ahead of its time I think."

"WHEN IT COMES TO LIVING, DYING IS THE EASY PART"

Knauf has often said that, given the opportunity, he would love to return to the world of *Carnivale*. "The characters are right there. I could start writing the show tomorrow and it would be like it was never off the air. They all still live inside me." That said, he's wary about returning to a show that would be competing with its own fond memory. "It would be a little daunting, because I would wonder

if I would just disappoint people by finishing it. In a way, by being unfinished, it's got a certain degree of perfection. Maybe I can't duplicate it if I actually finished it."

He is, however, looking into the possibility of finishing the story as a series of books; something the fans would definitely be on board with. "It seems like there's more people who love it now than when it was on the air, and that's always a good thing. It's not something that went away," Knauf says proudly.

The cast are equally proud of the show. "I liked not only the character, but the driving up to that set. I liked those people and I liked hanging out in the sun and putting on the old clothes and being in that world. It was really a rare experience, it was a real treat," Toby Huss said, while Amanda Aday calls it, with one exception, "the proudest work I've done in my career as an actress."

"It's one of my favourite roles I've ever played. I loved it. And it should have gone on," Diane Salinger says. "But it had the life that it was meant to live, obviously. But I think that for all of the actors it was one of the highlights of our work, to be in that show. It was incredible. We'll never forget it." ✨

Carnivale Seasons One and Two are available on DVD from HBO.



THE TOP 10 MOMENTS IN CARNIVALE



1. BEN HEALS JONESY

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 9 – 'LINCOLN HIGHWAY')

In a TV show that tends to be more bleak than triumphant, Jonesy's joy when Ben saves his life after a vicious tar-and-feathering is a rather wonderful, stand-out moment.



2. DORA MAE IN THE WINDOW

(SEASON 1, EPISODE 6 – 'PICK A NUMBER')

The Babylon two-parter was excellent, but it's the bleak ending we all remember it for. "Once we got to Babylon and the darkness of what was coming really stepped up, I felt like... now we're really diving in to the depths and the darkness," says Amanda Aday, who played Dora Mae.



3. JUSTIN REALISES THAT NORMAN'S GREATEST SIN WAS SAVING HIS LIFE

(SEASON 1, EPISODE 12 – 'THE DAY THAT WAS THE DAY')

This is the last hurrah for Brother Justin's conscience, as he understands the full horror of everything he's done.



4. THE FIRST TIME WE SEE BEN USE HIS POWERS

(SEASON 1, EPISODE 1 – 'MILFAY')

The first episode ends with Ben laying hands on a crippled girl's legs while an entire plantation of corn withers and dies around him. Finally, we understand why this boy is special.



5. THE CARNIVAL ARRIVES AT NEW CANAAN

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 11 – 'OUTSIDE NEW CANAAN')

It's impossible not to get a spine tingle when Justin finally sees the carnival Ferris wheel from his own window, and the two halves of the story collide.



6. SAMSON SEES BEN USE HIS POWERS

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 8 – 'OUTSKIRTS, DAMASCUS, NE')

Ben transfers a mother's life to her son after an accident, but what makes the moment truly special is Samson's look of awe as he fully comprehends what Ben is.



7. SOFIE'S TRUE NATURE REVEALED

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 12 – 'NEW CANAAN, CA')

All of the clues were there if we had chosen to see them, but Sofie's horrifying switch to the dark side still comes as a bit of a shock.



8. APOLLONIA DIES

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 1 – 'LOS MOSCOS')

Never has Sofie's psychic relationship with her catatonic mother been more powerful than when Apollonia is caught in a fire. "She's still screaming," Sofie tells a horrified Jonesy.



9. BROTHER JUSTIN SHOWS HIS SINS

(SEASON 1, EPISODE 2 – 'AFTER THE BALL IS OVER')

We understood Justin's power when he exposed a paedophile, but we only understood his nature when he used that information for his own gain.



10. THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

(SEASON 2, EPISODE 6 – 'THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS')

This entire episode is a treat: "Between takes it was more of a Fellini film than what we were actually filming," remembers actor Toby Huss.

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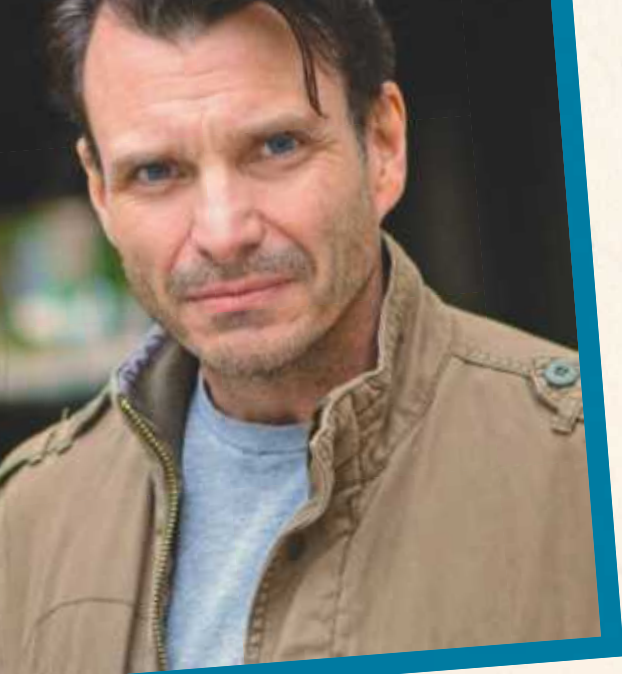
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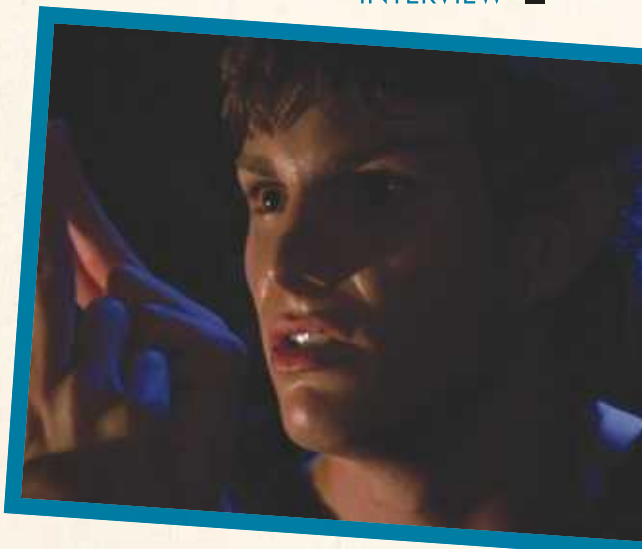
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STEPHEN MANLEY
INTERVIEW



INTERVIEW



STEPHEN MANLEY ON STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK

WE TALK TO THE STAR OF THIRD CINEMATIC STAR TREK ADVENTURE ABOUT PLAYING A YOUNG SPOCK, BEING DIRECTED BY LEONARD NIMOY AND HOW THE VULCAN REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE OF PON FARR NEARLY DIDN'T MAKE IT TO THE FINAL CUT...

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

How did you get the part of the regenerated Spock in *The Search For Spock*?

Leonard Nimoy had seen me in a soap series called *Secrets of Midlands Heights* and there was a storyline where I was trying to find peace with myself after my mother had passed away. He told me that he liked what I did [in that show] and that he was very concerned that the actor who played the part took it very seriously, had some sensitivity to it and respected the *Star Trek* universe.

The Search For Spock was Leonard Nimoy's directorial debut. What was he like to work with as a director?

He was very nice, giving and down to earth. There was a lot of pressure on him because whenever an actor takes on a director's role eyebrows are raised - no pun intended! He did a wonderful job and was very giving with everybody. He let me take my part in some directions and bring things to it too. He spent a lot of time with his actors going through things until they were very comfortable. He just wanted everyone to have a good time, get the work done but not to have any stress on the set, so it was a very stress-free set.

The pivotal pon-farr Vulcan ritual scene with Saavik was almost cut for being too

racy wasn't it?

Leonard mentioned on the film's DVD commentary track that there were some executives at Paramount who snickered at the scene and wanted it cut out because they thought it was laughable and they didn't understand it. Leonard said "Absolutely not! That's a very important scene. Steve and Robin [Curtis who played Saavik] did a great job. Look how good they are!" So he fought for that scene to stay and I will be forever grateful that he did.

You were also involved in one of the most suspenseful scenes in the film, when there's the order by Commander Kruge to have one of you killed at random...

I remember the filming of that vividly. Leonard wanted to do a pan shot to see each of our faces as the knife was going by. He was concerned how I should be reacting to the whole thing as I was standing there. So I figured that my character, even if he didn't have all of his memory, would still have some mannerisms that would tie in to the full size Leonard Nimoy Spock. So you may notice in one shot as the Klingon passes me that my right eyebrow goes up just slightly. During the filming of that Leonard smiled at me and said "I like it! It's just subtle enough for it to work." So that was my own little contribution.

It's a very emotional *Star Trek* adventure. Why do you feel the film holds up?

When I watch the movie it feels like one of the episodes of the original TV show but as a feature film with greater production value. I think the reason for that was the story was intimate and small. It of emulated the feeling that the show had. Also the story was very important and personal to Leonard and he brought that touch to it. It does feel different to any of the other films but in a good way and I think it's because it's a more intimate film.

Why do you think the *Star Trek* universe is so appealing after so many years and different iterations?

Because it appeals to everybody: men, women, every creed, every colour, every race - there's no prejudice in the *Star Trek* universe. When I started doing conventions in 2005 Robin Curtis said to me, "Where the hell have you been? People have been asking me who I had sex with in that movie for the last 25 years!" So I saw how strong the fans still were. *Star Trek* is going to be everlasting. It's never going to go away.



Star Trek III: The Search For Spock is available now on Blu-ray from Paramount Home Entertainment.



FLASHBACK

PREDATOR

WITH SHANE BLACK'S THE PREDATOR ON THE HORIZON, WE SPEAK TO THE ORIGINAL'S MASTER CINEMATOGRAPHER DONALD MCALPINE ABOUT THE SHOOTING OF THE SCIENCE FICTION HORROR CLASSIC...

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

"I liked the feeling that it was not that far from *King Kong*...a bunch of guys go to an island and go deeper and deeper in...and the thing they're chasing after happens to be a lot bigger than they thought..." director John McTiernan reflects during the DVD commentary of *Predator*, his breakthrough film, which ultimately ended up putting the troubled future filmmaker of such adrenaline-fuelled masterworks as *Die Hard* and *The Hunt For Red October* on the cinematic map.

The analogy is an apt one, but it would undoubtedly be doing a disservice to compare the deadly hunter at the heart of this riveting action-cum-science fiction horror film to a giant ape. The mystical sophistication of Stan Winston's titular chameleon creature creation grants *Predator* credence above and beyond anything action cinema had thrown against the screen up until that time.

It's all the more awe-inspiring for keeping said creature out of sight and cleverly camouflaged for most of the running time – building that all-important mystique in the background. And with its advanced ambient-light adjusting cloaking device, homing-in heat vision, together with its colossal stature and reptilian mannerisms (thanks to late 7'2" actor Kevin Peter Hall, who embodied the suit) – not forgetting its eerie ability to mimic human utterances and skin people alive – what a fundamental and terrifying threat the Predator is.

The original creature was far from agile and intimidating, however, as cinematographer Donald McAlpine astutely observed. "I was with the producer Joel Silver and he said 'come and have a look at this,'" recalls the veteran director-of-photography to SciFiNow. "We went to this room and there was the monster suit, which was just a big green suit, which had a man-type shape and I said 'Joel, it looks like a guy in a bloody rat suit!'"

Despite the underwhelming aesthetics of the extraterrestrial, footage was initially shot and subsequently sent to the studio who consequently

shut down production. "They immediately contacted the producers onset and said, 'Close it down. It looks like a guy in a rat suit!'" laughs McAlpine. "To this day Joel Silver believes I rang somebody at the studio and forewarned them!"

Production was put on hiatus for 12 months as a result, with Stan Winston, (fresh from conceiving the innovative designs for both *The Terminator* and *Aliens*) appointed as the creature's new creator. A breakthrough arrived whilst the special effects wizard was sat on a plane next to frequent collaborator James Cameron, with the visionary director revealing that he'd always wanted to see a creature with mandibles. Winston appropriately incorporated fearsome jowls into the now iconic and unmistakably organic guise of the intergalactic humanoid hunter; a ghastly facial aspect that is literally unveiled when the creature removes his own helmet at the end of the suspenseful climax.

But without a formidable cast reacting to such an imposing threat, the consequences onscreen

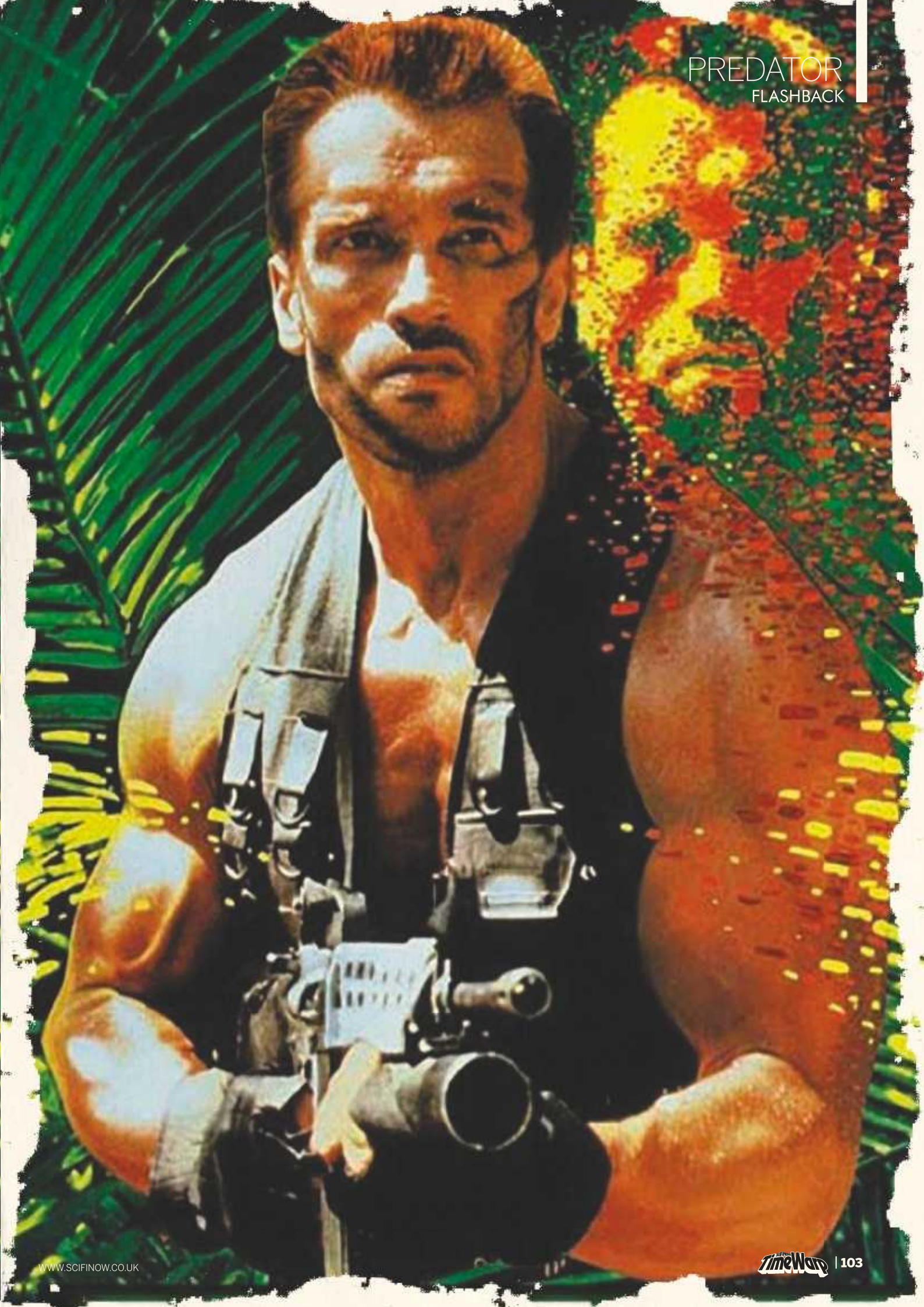
would seem far less terrifying. A *Magnificent Seven*-ensemble of some of the most macho action men of the Eighties was appointed to embody the predominately ill-fated commandos. The colourful line up included former *Rocky* adversary Carl Weathers as the not entirely trustworthy Dillon, bald *Commando* baddie Bill Duke as Mac, garrulous wrestler and former Navy-SEAL Jesse Ventura ("I ain't got time to bleed!") as tobacco-chewing mini-gun toting Sgt. Blain, *48 Hrs* antagonist Sonny Landham as the inscrutable Billy, real-life Vietnam veteran Richard Chaves as Poncho and *Lethal Weapon* scribe (turned future *Iron Man 3* director) Shane Black as wise-cracking Hawkins – led of course by the always-intimidating prospect of a young Arnold Schwarzenegger, playing cigar-chumping Dutch.

"They were all very interesting characters. Of course Arnie was a young man back then and he had a very interesting sense of humour," continues McAlpine. "There would often be tension between him and McTiernan about particular things and ➤

The sleek design of the Predator, far from the early concept.



PREDATOR
FLASHBACK





Predator is not a film that's short on massive firepower...

Arnie used to take me inside his trailer with his Austrian chef and feed me a great meal... then feed me his side of the argument. I generally accepted the meal but not the argument!" he laughs. "I can remember Arnie coming out of his trailer one day and actually storming up to John in an absolute rage! He'd been given new pages that day and so he grabbed him by the shirt he said, 'John, I do three words, there's four here!' [laughs]. He was protesting a little bit but he always did it with humour."

A less laughable prospect was that of decidedly temperamental Native American actor Sonny Landham who played Billy – the commando noticeably at one with the jungle. "He had some problems with booze and drugs and they had to sit on him a bit," continues McAlpine regarding the turbulent actor who had to be appointed a bodyguard for insurance reasons to protect others from his potentially wayward behaviour. "But once again he was great value on the screen. [The bodyguard was there] to ensure he got to work properly the next day. That was the concept. It was sad in truth but particularly in those days you just accepted that sort of shit. Looking back though they were a good bunch of guys to work with."

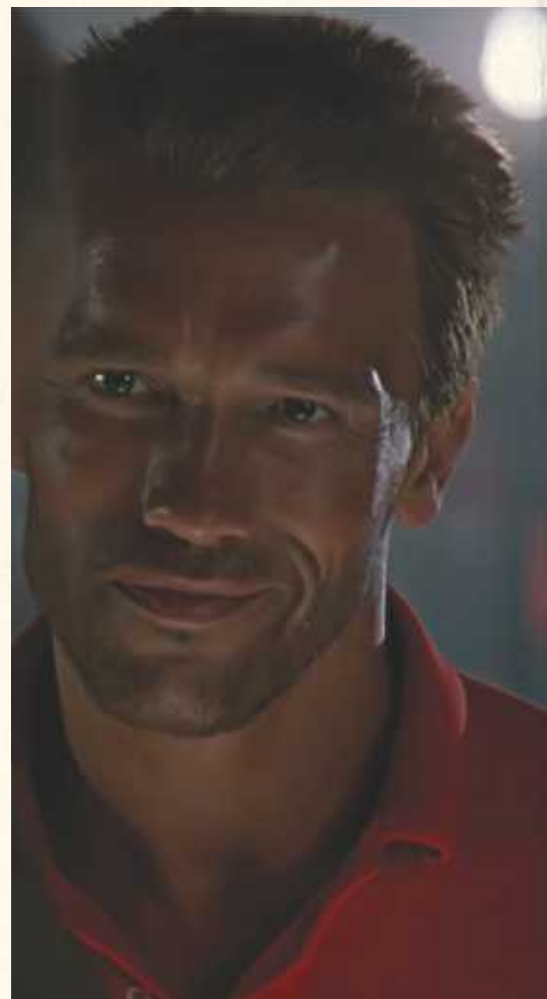
McAlpine also has fond memories of working with McTiernan, the recently incarcerated (and released) filmmaker, who was at the top of his game during this period. "He was amazing at that stage and it was a really positive and fun experience," says the cinematographer who would work with McTiernan again five years down the track on the Sean Connery adventure *Medicine Man*. "I remember every night being driven back home from the day's shoot – with the first AD

"I CAN REMEMBER ARNIE COMING OUT OF HIS TRAILER ONE DAY AND STORMING UP TO JOHN MCTIERNAN IN AN ABSOLUTE RAGE!"

DONALD MCALPINE

and driver in the front and John and I in the back bonding over a bottle of scotch. It was just really good fun and we were dedicated to the work. But I met him later down the line and John's character started to change a little bit. He became more morose and it was a shame because that sort of element was the thing that actually became his undoing I guess."

The hiatus in production on *Predator* turned out to be hugely advantageous, with two months (instead of the planned two weeks) spent fine-tuning a nail-biting dialogue-free man-against-monster climax, which sees sole surviving commando Dutch attempt to outwit the intergalactic hunter. "McTiernan had a very clear design – he had the gift and did it on a couple of movies around that period," observes McAlpine. "He had the ability to use the cinema to create that. Even in his first film out of film school, which was the same sort of genre (the 1986 Pierce Brosnan-headlining supernatural horror *Nomads*)



Arnold Schwarzenegger as Dutch, who has not been pushing too many pencils.

he had tension layered upon tension."

Things proved more problematic with the attempt to visualise onscreen the unique concept of the creature's infrared heat vision, however. "There was a whole lot of secrecy about special effects back then – everyone had their own little world and they were never going to share it," reveals McAlpine. "The effects company had developed this heat camera that was standard scientific equipment at that stage. They developed it to high-res and they had a heat camera element alongside a normal film camera. They shot tests in New York in Central Park and they came over and shot tests in LA for the studio. Then they came down into the jungle and set it up."

Unbeknownst to the crew at the time, the cameras began to register the heat of the entire jungle. "Eventually I found out that in the jungle everything is 92 degrees and it all registered monochrome," reveals McAlpine. "The next morning we got to the set and there were about four big water tankers with Mexicans on the top with blocks of ice putting it into water to chill it and they're spraying the jungle with big fire hoses! They set the camera up again, however it still didn't work! So it was a very big cost to the studio."

Finally the effect was achieved in post-production. "In actual fact that was some of the very earliest computer-generated effects," says the cinematographer. "It was done off a guy in a green suit but anything back in the jungle was very infantile CG work."

The genius of the film *Predator* is how it starts out as a relatively unassuming *Commando*-style action film, then switches gears without warning halfway through with a sudden burst of science fiction, followed by some slasher horror troupes as the otherworldly creature hunts down each of the human characters individually. "As the group diminishes we didn't need [as much] room for them to perform in," continues McAlpine. "That was the trouble of course – when you had the full group you had to have enough room to see them all, they couldn't just be behind the trees."

The Mexican jungle locale proved a technical challenge too. "It was a pretty rough location but technically it was very interesting because you



Elpidia Carrillo as Anna, who knows more than she lets on.



Chopper in, chopper out. Easy, right?

couldn't use any lighting. We had the best of fun shooting it. The jungles are so dense that if you put up a light all you do is create shadows and so basically 99 percent of it was done with available light in the jungle."

Whether original cast member Shane Black, who will indeed helm the next instalment in the franchise, (see box-out for further details) achieves the same superb blend of suspense and mystique that has been largely absent in subsequent sequels and spin-offs remains to be seen. Can the rumoured return of Arnie (who once proclaimed: "We need to get back into the jungle!" in response to returning for a future film) help channel the spirit of McTiernan's classic



and maximise exhilaration levels on *The Predator*? We'll have to "stick around" for a couple more years to find out... ☞

Predator is available on Blu-ray from 20th Century Fox.



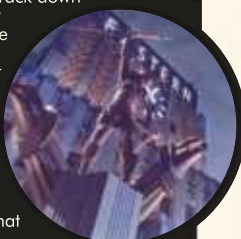
A comment from James Cameron inspired the look.

PREDATOR OVERKILL

To date none of the subsequent follow-ups to *Predator* have matched John McTiernan's original.

Predator 2 (1990)

Stephen Hopkins' sequel relocates the action to the urban jungle of downtown Los Angeles in this 'futuristic' follow up. Arnie may have bailed but Danny Glover is a solid replacement as a tough cop determined to track down the mysterious perpetrator behind a slew of gruesome killings in the city. Notwithstanding the talent involved this is largely a muted effort which leads to an eye-opening climax on board the Predator craft, where eagle-eyed viewers might glimpse a certain xenomorphic skull – a throwaway gag that led to...



AVP: Alien vs Predator/Requiem (2004/2007)

Despite the more than welcome sight of *Aliens* star Lance Henriksen (in a nice nod to his Bishop character) in the Paul W.S. Anderson directed first film, both the *Predator* and *Alien* series plummeted to new depths in these soulless comic-book adapted monster mash-ups.



Predators (2010)

Paying loving homage to McTiernan's original both in terms of intense jungle setting and slow suspenseful buildup, this Robert Rodriguez-produced *Predator* sequel certainly has its heart in the right place (and Adrien Brody makes for a surprisingly gutsy lead) but come the over pumped climax a nagging sense of déjà vu settles in.



The Predator (2018)

Citing his intentions to make a highly anticipated and crucially scary 'event movie', Shane Black (who played wisecracking commando Hawkins in the first film and was responsible for some uncredited writing too) wants to finally bring back the dreaded mystique and suspense of the titular threat with his fast-approaching aptly titled *The Predator*. "How do you make it a scary alien invasion movie again?" he said in a recent interview. Well, there's no easy answers when you consider how that mystique has slowly been eroded from the previous four instalments. Time will tell if his mission becomes triumphant...



WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

JOIN US AS WE TAKE A TRIP TO LA TO REVISIT DAVID LYNCH'S EXTRAORDINARY LOVE/HATE LETTER TO HOLLYWOOD AND BETTY AND RITA'S QUEST TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY. JUST DON'T GO AROUND THE BACK OF WINKIE'S...



MULHOLLAND DRIVE

Film

RUNNING TIME:

147 minutes

RELEASE DATE:

19 October 2001

DIRECTOR:

David Lynch

WRITER:

David Lynch

CAST:

Naomi Watts, Laura Harring, Justin Theroux, Ann Miller, Mark Pellegrino, Melissa George, Dan Hedaya, Patrick Fischler

People love to try and solve *Mulholland Drive*. In the 16 years since its release there has been a multitude of articles explaining the hidden meanings, the real answers, the secret messages. David Lynch, despite his legendary reticence to explain himself, issued 10 clues for viewers to look out for. As with all things David Lynch, however, the answers are not the point. The world of Lynch's films is dark, dangerous and seductive and logic doesn't exactly have a very strong hold.

With so much excitement surrounding the filmmaker's imminent return to TV with the third season of *Twin Peaks*, it's easy to forget that *Mulholland Drive* began life as a pilot that never made it. On closer inspection, many of the potentially long-running mystery elements are there, and there's no shortage of colourful characters who could have populated the world of a TV series, such as Betty's protective landlady Coco (the late, great Ann Miller), sleazy hitman Joe (Mark Pellegrino), the sinister Hollywood Mafiosi who keep insisting "this is the girl" (played by the wonderful combination of Dan Hedaya and Angelo Badalamenti) and on-the-money medium Louise Bonner (Lee Grant).

However, to imagine *Mulholland Drive* as a television series is to imagine a world in which we didn't have this extraordinary film. It's a truly incredible experience, especially if you're ever lucky enough to catch it on the big screen. It is a beautiful,

atmospheric poison love letter to Hollywood, where dreams are made and shattered, where art fights commerce, and where nightmares live.

Speaking of nightmares, and before we get into the rest of the film, we should address the fact that *Mulholland Drive* offers one of the best scares in the last 20 years. It's a scene that feels slightly separate from the rest of the film, at least in plot terms, but it absolutely fits with the mood. A man named Dan (Patrick Fischler) sits in a Winkie's diner with a man named Patrick, and explains that he wanted to come here because he'd dreamt about it.

"You're in both dreams and you're scared too," Dan explains. "I get even more frightened when I see how afraid you are and then I realise what it is. There's a man... in back of this place. He's the one who's doing it. I can see him through the wall. I can see his face. I hope that I never see that face, ever, outside of a dream."

Patrick then suggests that Dan has come here "to see if he's really out there" to which Dan agrees. Together, the two men head outside and around back, and the sense of dread increases. Dan leads, and as he walks towards the back of the restaurant, a horrifically burned figure bursts out from behind the wall, grinning, as Dan collapses into Patrick's arms.

As unforgettable as the Winkie's

monster is, the real star of *Mulholland Drive*, of course, is Naomi Watts with her incredible dual performance as Betty/Diane. This is in no way to diminish Laura Harring's excellent turn as the amnesiac star Camilla Rhodes, or Rita, who we first meet as her limousine takes an unexpected turn onto Mulholland Drive before an accident occurs, leaving her stumbling into the night of Los Angeles.

This noir opening stands in stark contrast with how we meet Betty: wide-eyed and beaming as she emerges into the blinding sunshine as she leaves the airport arm-in-arm with her new friend Irene (Jeanne Bates) and her husband. This world is so new and exciting to her, and so full of promise: "Oh, I can't believe it!" she exclaims. The arrival of a beautiful amnesiac woman is just like something out of a real-life movie with a starring role for Betty, especially with Rita's bundles of cash and a mysterious blue key.

Then there's Adam Keshner, the achingly cool, golf club-wielding movie director played by Justin Theroux. He's on the brink of starting his new project and needs to recast his lead actress when he's forced into an artistic compromise by the studio heads, shady figures the Castigliane brothers who are incredibly fussy about their espresso (the way in which Angelo Badalamenti vomits the undrinkable espresso onto his napkin is wonderful), ➤

"THE ARRIVAL OF A BEAUTIFUL AMNESIAC WOMAN IS LIKE A REAL-LIFE MOVIE FOR BETTY"

About

A woman in a limousine is about to be murdered when an accident spares her life, but robs her of her memory. She heads into Los Angeles, where she meets newly arrived and highly excited young actress Betty. Together, Betty and the woman, now calling herself Rita, set out to discover the truth of her identity. Meanwhile, director Adam Keshner is being forced to bow to exterior pressure when it comes to casting his leading lady. As Adam ponders whether or not he should follow instructions and Betty and Rita inch closer to solving their puzzle, they're about to collide in a violent, terrifying way.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE

RETRO CLASSIC



Visions of classic Hollywood flood *Mulholland Drive*.



CLASSIC QUOTES

**"NO HAY BANDA!
THERE IS NO BAND!"**

BONDAR

"THIS IS THE GIRL."

ADAM KESHER

**"I HAD A DREAM ABOUT
THIS PLACE."**

DAN

**"YOU WANT ME TO MAKE THIS EASY FOR
YOU? NO FUCKING WAY! IT'S NOT GONNA
BE. IT'S NOT EASY FOR ME!"**

DIANE SELWYN

**"WHAT ARE YOU
DOING? WE DON'T
STOP HERE."**

RITA

**"THAT'S NOT WHAT SHE SAID. SOMEONE
IS IN TROUBLE. SOMETHING BAD IS
HAPPENING!"**

LOUISE BONNER

**"IT'LL BE JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES.
PRETENDING TO BE SOMEBODY ELSE."**

BETTY ELMS

**"I HATE YOU.
I HATE US BOTH."**

BETTY ELMS

**"I'M JUST SO EXCITED TO BE HERE. I MEAN I
JUST CAME HERE FROM DEEP RIVER, ONTARIO,
AND NOW I'M IN THIS DREAM PLACE. WELL,
YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW I FEEL."**

BETTY ELMS

"COULD BE SOMEONE'S MISSING."

DETECTIVE NEAL DOMGAARD

**"IT'S BEEN A VERY
STRANGE DAY."**

CYNTHIA

**"A MAN'S ATTITUDE... A MAN'S ATTITUDE
GOES SOMEWAYS. THE WAY HIS LIFE WILL BE.
IS THAT SOMETHIN' YOU AGREE WITH?"**

COWBOY

"SILENCIO..."

BLUE HAIRED LADY

"IT'S STRANGE CALLING YOURSELF."

BETTY ELMS

"DON'T PLAY IT FOR REAL UNTIL IT GETS REAL."

BOB BROOKER



Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux) gets close to his leading lady.

RETRO CLASSIC

MULHOLLAND DRIVE



Twin Peaks star Michael J Anderson appears to add some sinister mystery.



➤ and a wheelchair-bound man played by *Twin Peaks*' Michael J Anderson, who is listening in on a microphone suspended from the ceiling. As much as Adam protests, and he certainly does protest, there's no way around this. Luigi Castilgiane repeats "This is the girl" over and over again and, after screaming once in rage, his brother Vincenzo tells Adam: "It's no longer your film."

This is the grim, if highly eccentric, reality of the Hollywood into which Betty has arrived. For the bulk of the movie, Betty and Adam's storylines remain separate. Adam's journey becomes briefly hilarious (when he arrives home to find his wife in bed with the pool guy, played by Billy Ray Cyrus) and then increasingly sinister. The meeting between Adam and mysterious enforcer The Cowboy is a brilliant and oddly tense sequence. The filmmaker's bluster crumbles in the face of this calm, deadpan figure, whose language is both folksy and threatening: "No, you're not thinkin'," he tells Adam. "You're too busy being a smart aleck to be thinkin'. Now I want ya to 'think' and stop bein' a smart aleck. Can ya try that for me?"

After explaining the seriousness of his situation with the use of a buggy simile and threats about attitude, The Cowboy tells Adam that the choice of The Girl is not his. "You will see me one more time, if you do good. You will see me... two more times, if you do bad. Good

night." As far as dangerous figures go, The Cowboy is much more similar to a *Twin Peaks* creation than the raging monsters of *Blue Velvet*'s Frank Booth or *Lost Highway*'s Mr Eddy. After all, the movie business is indeed a business, and those kind of threats are delivered quietly and firmly.

While this non-artistic decision is being made, Betty is beginning her journey as an actress in Hollywood, and her talent is undeniable. One of Watts' many standout scenes in the film is Betty's audition for *The Sylvia North Story*. Acting opposite Woody, a bronzed older man who's sleazy in a condescending, cheerful way, Betty goes from wide-eyed ingénue to sexually charged seductress. It's an amazing transformation; to quote Woody: "Yeah, there it was alright. Baby, you got a way with you, really." She is then taken over to meet Adam Kesher, but Adam has already made his choice...

We're not too far away from the big rug-pull of *Mulholland Drive*, but first there is Club Silencio. This sequence only becomes more affecting with each viewing, as Betty and Rita take their seats in a theatre and the emcee explains that: "No hay banda! There is no band!" there's only a tape recorder, "and yet we hear a band."

"It's all recorded," he declares. "No hay banda! It's all a tape. Il n'est pas de orquesta. It is... an illusion!" A tearful singer takes to the stage

WAKING NIGHTMARES

Top 5 Scariest David Lynch characters

FRANK BOOTH (BLUE VELVET)



1 Dennis Hopper's gas-huffing, Blue velvet-loving, Pabst-drinking violent monster is absolutely compelling, and also weirdly quotable. Just make sure you don't get in a car with him.

MYSTERY MAN (LOST HIGHWAY)



2 In a precursor to *Mulholland Drive*'s horrors, Robert Blake's impossible and impossibly creepy oddity doesn't make sense and is scarier for it. He's in front of you, and he's at your house. Right now.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE

RETRO CLASSIC



"TO REDUCE IT TO A PUZZLE TO SOLVE ROBS THE FILM OF WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL"

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Lynch is a master. It expands and improves upon the already near-masterpiece of LOST HIGHWAY."

@AHPodcast



"Love it! Once had to write an essay on it for a film class, on no sleep. Delirium turned out to be the ideal state for that."

@kapto



"Confusing on the first viewing, confusing on the second. Perfect Lynch. A very good movie."

@DaveNeal33



"I love it. Unsettling, surreal, and infinitely mysterious."

@HermiaMoira



"It's the best film of the 2000s!"

@MondoDan



"Can't work out if it's his best or my favourite, but it's a luxurious bathe in cinematic superb either way."

@MilesVanHamer

WATCH FIRST



LOST HIGHWAY (1998)

Lynch's LA-set horror is pitch-black, even cruel in places, but it rewards the brave viewer and there are ideas that recur.

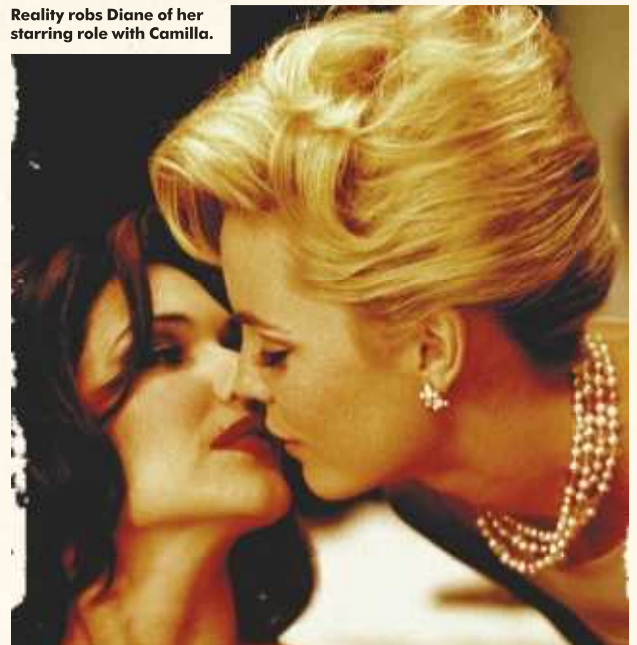
WATCH NEXT



THE NEON DEMON (2016)

Nicolas Winding Refn cribbs from a lot of filmmakers with his stylish, provocative fashion industry horror, including Lynch.

Reality robs Diane of her starring role with Camilla.



and, overcome with emotion, Betty and Rita weep as they clutch hands. This is the magic of cinema; fake emotion creating real emotion, an artificial construct giving birth to sincere responses. It culminates in the love scene between the two women, a tender moment that we're about to learn is an absolute fantasy.

Betty is, of course, Diane, an embittered actress who's lost her beautiful lover to the Hollywood elite. Camilla Rhodes is a star on the rise, who not only got the part in the Adam Keshner movie, she also got the director as her new beau.

Diane is left lonely and angry on the sidelines, a plus-one on set and a plus-one to the party in the hills where she's forced to explain how she could ever have become close to the movie star in the first place, and watch her ex-lover enjoy success and popularity.

It's Diane who, unable to cope, places the hit on Camilla Rhodes, and that rotting corpse alone in the apartment is hers. In the film's second most terrifying scene, Irene and her husband emerge screaming and grinning, swarming the howling Diane before she finally shoots herself.

And so *Mulholland Drive* comes to a close. The more times you watch it, the more the facts of the mystery swim into focus. There are websites devoted to solving the riddle, but, as we said, to reduce it to some kind of puzzle you can explain really does rob it of what makes it special. Even if there's no band, cinema moves us, and *Mulholland Drive* is beguiling, terrifying and moving.

Mulholland Drive is in UK cinemas on April 14th and on DVD, Blu-ray and EST on May 8th.

BOBBY PERU (WILD AT HEART)



3 Sailor and Lula are at their lowest ebb when he decides to trust his old partner, and Bobby is not trustworthy. He'll use your toilet, harass your girl and then try to kill you. "They're dummies... dummy!"

BOB (TWIN PEAKS)



4 The mysterious force at the heart of *Twin Peaks'* dark side is absolutely terrifying, from the first moment he appears to scare the shit out of poor Grace Zabriskie (and the rest of us).

VISITOR #1 (INLAND EMPIRE)



5 To be honest, we just wanted to include Grace Zabriskie on this list. We nearly went with her *Wild At Heart* killer but the way she says "BRUTAL! FUCKING. MURDER." in *Inland Empire* sealed it.



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FLIRTING

1. Who is assigned to retrieve Doctor Durand Durand from the Tau Ceti region?
2. Where in the Tau Ceti region does Barbarella crash land?
3. What type of pill do the people of Earth consume instead of having sex?
4. Who is the last of the ornithanthropes?
5. What kind of objects attack Barbarella after her ship crash lands?

FOREPLAY

6. Who is the inventor of the Positronic Ray?
7. What name does Mark Hand also go by?

8. The labyrinth acts as a prison for people who are cast out of which city?
9. What does Pygar lack the will to do?
10. What is unusual about the key to the Great Tyrant's Chamber of Dreams?

CLIMAX

11. Who is the leader of the resistance?
12. Is the essence of evil (which is also known as the Mathmos) a) a liquid, b) a solid, or c) a gas?
13. What machine is supposed to make Barbarella die of pleasure?
14. Who repairs Barbarella's ship for her after it is

damaged in a rockslide?

15. What ends up protecting Barbarella and the Great Tyrant from the Mathmos?

AFTERGLOW

16. Who created the original comics the film was based on?
17. Which Italian character actor appeared in the film as Mark Hand?
18. Who was Jane Fonda married to at the time of Barbarella's release?
19. Which band provided the vocals for the film's opening song?
20. Which film beat *Barbarella* to the top spot at the UK box office in 1968?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

BARBARELLA

Even when the odds are against you and all hope seems lost, you still always come out on top. What's your secret? There's no way someone as hopelessly accident-prone as you could succeed so often, and so marvellously, and yet...

11-15

THE GREAT TYRANT

As a villain who makes it out of the film alive, you clearly know how to cheat the system. Let's just hope that you're not cheating at quizzes. If you team up with someone with a little compassion and understanding, you're bound to be forgiven.

6-10

PYGAR

You have lost the will to do a lot of things, and it seems completing quizzes to an good standard is one of them. But you can still pick yourself up. Your memory may be terrible (even non-existent), but you still possess common sense.

0-5

DURAND DURAND

You're supposed to be a genius, but you keep being beaten by random space agents. Maybe if you stopped focusing on being diabolical and started caring about things other than yourself, more people would want to be on your quiz team. Geez.

ANSWERS: 1. BARBARELLA 2. ON THE 16TH PLANET 3. EXALTATION-TRANSFERENCE PILLS 4. PYGAR 5. DOLLS 6. DURAND DURAND 7. THE CATCHMAN 8. SOGO, THE CITY OF NIGHT 9. FLY 10. IT IS INVISIBLE 11. DILDANO 12. A) A LIQUID 13. THE EXCESSIVE MACHINE 14. PROFESSOR PING 15. BARBARELLA'S INNATE GOODNESS 16. JEAN-CLAUDE FOREST 17. UGO TOGNAZZI 18. ROGER VADIM, THE FILM'S DIRECTOR 19. THE GUTTERHOUSE 20. THE JUNGLE BOOK

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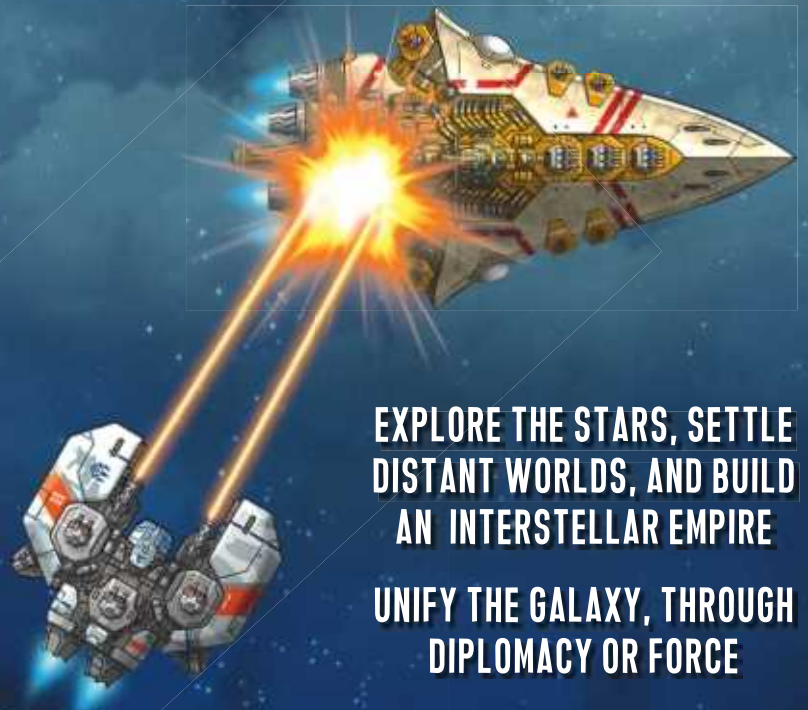
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