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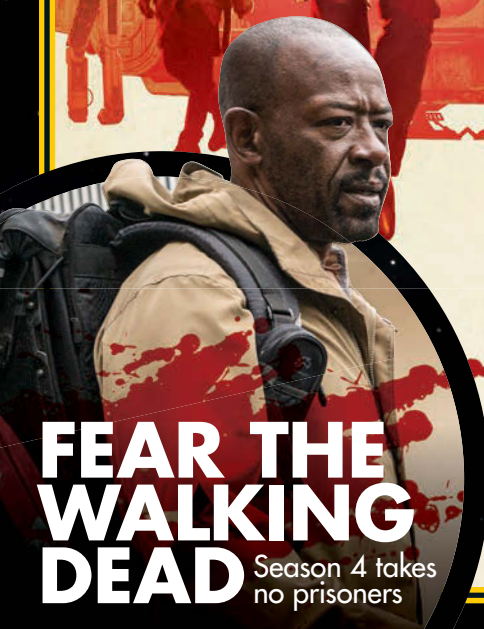


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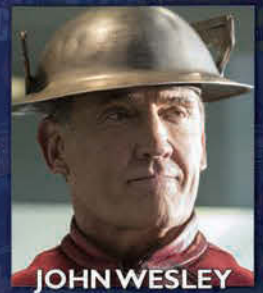


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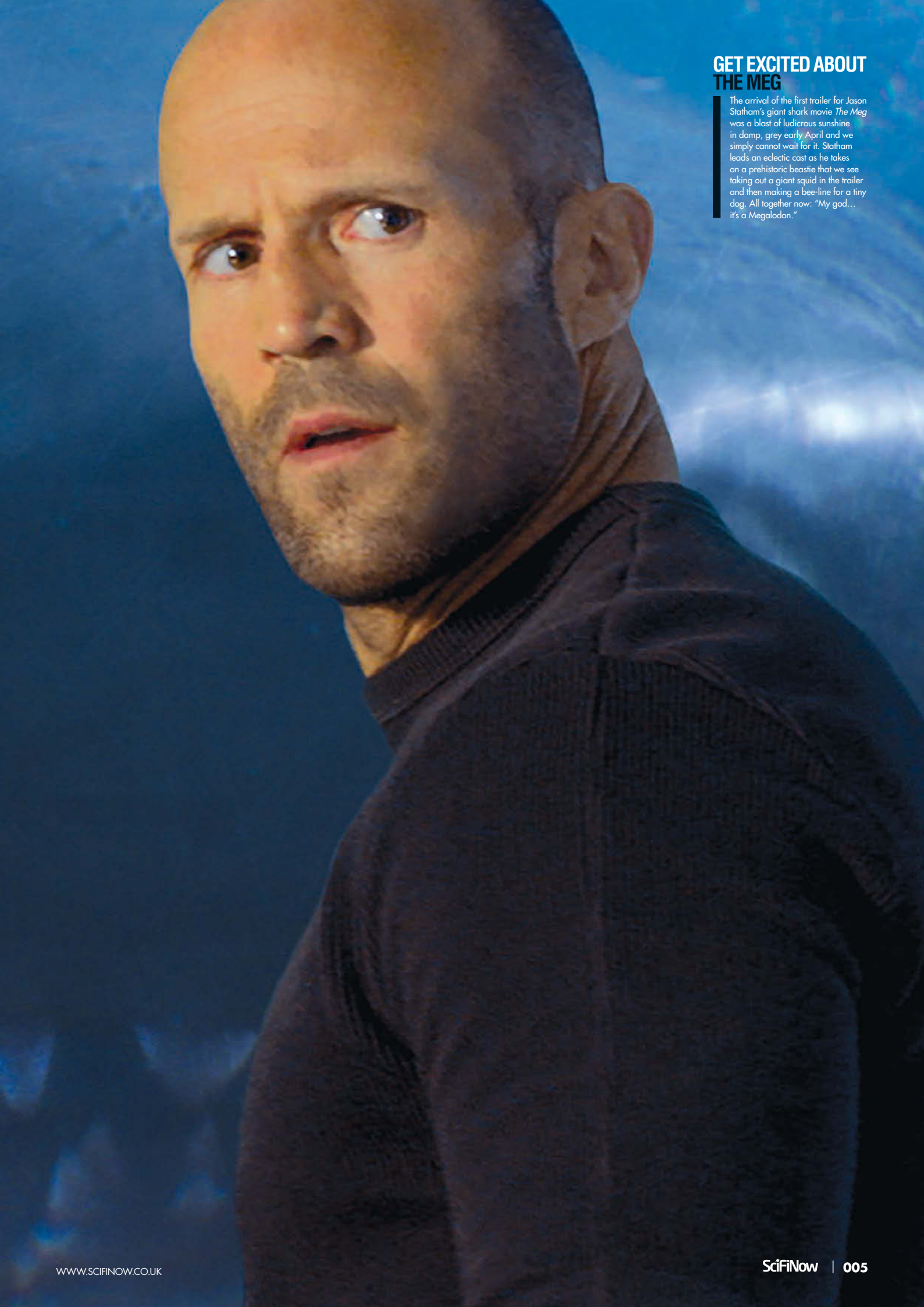
As a genre fan, it can often feel like you're hunting for something you haven't seen before. We all love the major franchises, blockbuster series and familiar faces, but we're so overwhelmed with things to watch at the moment that the precious spark of 'oh, I haven't seen this before' can hit you like a sledgehammer. By the time you read this, you will (presumably) know all the shocks and surprises that were lying in wait in *Avengers: Infinity War*, and that's what it's all about. If these universes can't find ways to make our jaws drop, then they're not doing their job properly.

Which brings us to *Solo: A Star Wars Story*. While the heavily reported production issues may have put many on their guard, there's an opportunity here to get out of the way of the established canon and have some fun. Yes, that sounds nonsensical given that it's a prequel but given that it's freed from the responsibilities of the ongoing sequel trilogy and the inevitable sacrifices of *Rogue One*, *Solo* could be a real adventure. And if we're talking about 'surprises', *Deadpool 2* is on the way to tear down the fourth wall and bring a little anarchy back to our comic book movies.

We're also very excited to highlight three of the most exciting genre indies of the year: Ari Aster's incredible horror *Hereditary*, Benson and Moorhead's mind-bending SF *The Endless* and Coralie Fargeat's hyper-stylish *Revenge*. These are three movies that you won't be able to get out of your head, trust us on this.

We've gone on set for *Fear The Walking Dead* to find out how the spin-off is growing into a show that is threatening to surpass its predecessor in the quality stakes, found out how the third series of *Humans* is going to take things to the next level, talked to the writers of *Infinity War* about helping to shape the MCU from *The First Avenger* onwards, and sat down with the stars of Marvel's TV freshmen series *Cloak & Dagger* and *Runaways*. Old favourites are running neck and neck with your new obsessions, and that makes for a very exciting time indeed.

**Jonathan Hatfull**  
Editor



## GET EXCITED ABOUT THE MEG

The arrival of the first trailer for Jason Statham's giant shark movie *The Meg* was a blast of ludicrous sunshine in damp, grey early April and we simply cannot wait for it. Statham leads an eclectic cast as he takes on a prehistoric beastie that we see taking out a giant squid in the trailer and then making a bee-line for a tiny dog. All together now: "My god... it's a Megalodon."

## PORTAL

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The fight back starts here as Season Two begins.

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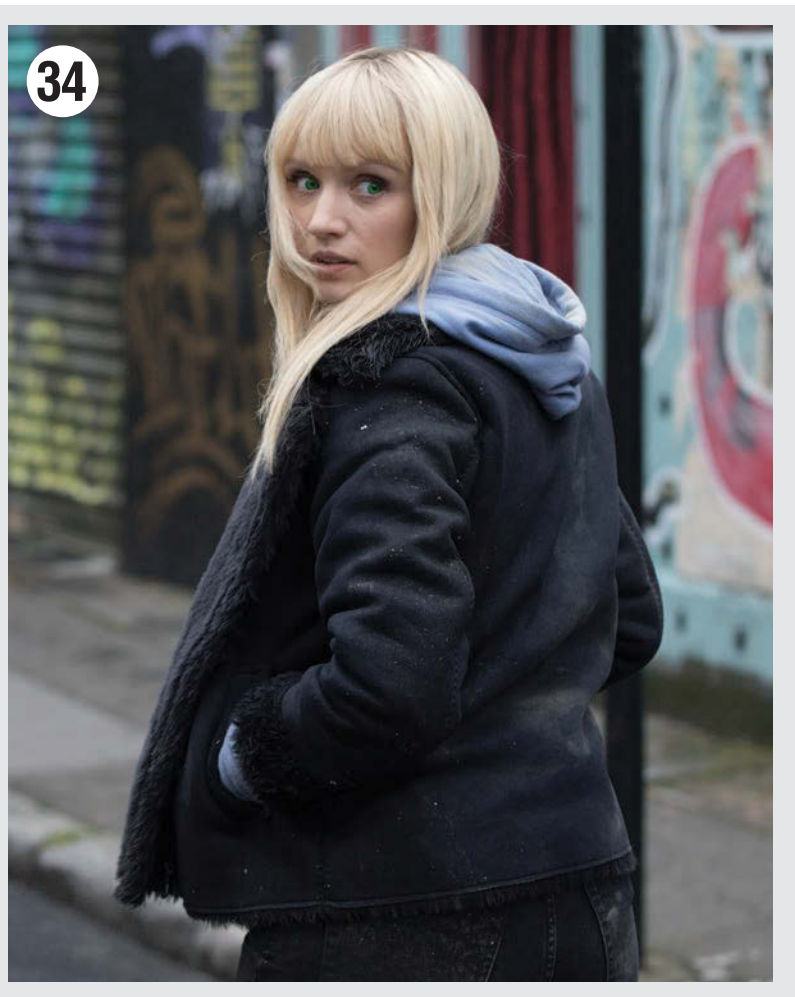
The director of the Stephen King classic takes us back to the burial ground.

#### Plus:

*Village Of The Damned*, *The Owl Service*, *Hannibal*.



© Dick Thomas Johnson



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## MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which genre character needs an origin story movie?



**Jonathan Hatfull**  
Editor

**A. Jesse Hooker from Near Dark**  
Henriksen's ideas are amazing and we need Bigelow back in genre.



**Abigail Chandler**  
Deputy Editor

**A. Guinan from TNG**  
Maybe then we could finally find out why the all-powerful Q was afraid of her.



**Poppy-Jay Palmer**  
News Editor

**A. Doctor Emmett Brown from BTTF**  
We've seen much of his past and future, but how did he get on at college?



**Marcus Faint**  
Art Editor

**A. Spider-Man**  
Just how did Peter Parker come to understand that with great power comes great responsibility?



**Rachael Harper**  
Sub Editor

**A. The Grim Reaper**  
Before meeting Bill and Ted, how did he become Death? And get so bad at board games? So many questions!

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## PORTAL

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

# UNDER HIS EYE

We're returning to Gilead for Season Two of *The Handmaid's Tale* – what new horrors will Offred face now that we're beyond the book's ending?

WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER

**The Handmaid's Tale** has one of the most famous open-endings in literature, which is exactly where Season One ended. Season Two is a jump into the murky unknown – for us and for Elisabeth Moss' Offred.

Trailers and pictures for Season Two indicate that the world of Gilead will be expanded, and that we'll get to see the colonies, as well as exploring the histories of various characters, while Offred faces a new challenge – keeping herself, her daughter and her unborn child safe. Motherhood, apparently, is a big theme of Season Two. "This season is [about the] different ways that you can be a mother and a father. The different approaches that people have to it, and what it really means," Elisabeth Moss explains. "[I]t's about how you want to raise a child in this world, but also the kind of world that you want to bring them into."

Even Aunt Lydia, the woman responsible for keeping the Handmaids in line, sees herself as something of a maternal figure, according to actress Ann Dowd: "You know, 'spare the rod and spoil the

child', she takes that [saying] to the fullest extent and I don't think she sees her actions as ones of cruelty," Dowd says. "It's my job to display her, that means it's my job to understand her and to step into a place where despite the fact that her actions hurt the Handmaids, her girls, it's her responsibility to do it, otherwise things will get worse for them."

Season One ended on a huge act of solidarity and defiance by the Handmaids when, en masse, they refused to stone Janine to death. It was a big moment in a series that, despite its themes of female oppression, rarely allows its female characters to stand together. Season Two, apparently, will give us more of that: "I think that one of the saddest things about Season One for me and Yvonne [Strahovski] was Serena not having solidarity with Offred or with any of the Handmaids," says Moss. "Without spoiling anything, yes, we do get into that more in Season Two and start raising the question more of why are you doing this? And not just Serena but the other wives as well. Why are you turning against your fellow women?"

Don't you see how you're standing in solidarity with oppression by not standing up for these women?"

But it seems unlikely that the "true believer" Serena Joy will risk her position for the sake of some Handmaids – although she might risk herself for the sake of the unborn baby she sees as being hers.

But if Joseph Fiennes, who plays Serena's husband the Commander, is to be believed, Serena could be becoming even more of a villain. "In Season Two, their union becomes strong again," he says of the married couple. "Gilead (and what it stands for) has taken her power and voice, and Fred stood by while it happened," Fiennes continues, explaining the distance between them. "I think it's right to say that Fred is insecure about Serena being a true visionary, but it was this visionary he fell in love with... Adding to that, I think Gilead, in giving great power to Fred, has produced in him a sense of almost patriarchal invincibility that he's not prepared to relinquish to Serena."

For Fiennes, his role on the show is to be the face of the oppressive regime, but he also never loses sight of the Commander's human side, even if it is quite dark. He says that the Commander is fully aware of the moral repercussions of what he and Gilead do and he "understands there is collateral damage, and that's what makes him wonderfully human. But he doesn't spend too much time dwelling on that because the bigger picture is the moral decay that needs to be addressed. And that's what I love about him... that he's dark, creepy and complicated, but in his world and in his mind, it's all about the betterment of mankind. Also, he's landed in a position and place that's

impossible to back out of!"

Writer Bruce Miller has stated that Aunt Lydia is one of the characters he finds most fascinating, so we can expect more great material for Dowd to work with in Season Two. She is constantly inventing back story for Lydia, and sees her as understandable, despite her outward cruelty. "I think something very significant might have happened with Lydia," Dowd muses. "Did she have a child at 16? Was she shamed because she had sex and enjoyed sex and her parents just about threw her into a fire?" She also thinks there's an aspect of Lydia that remains unfulfilled, wondering what else there is for her in the world.

The first season of *The Handmaid's Tale* had an impact far beyond what anyone was expecting, with protestors wearing Handmaid costumes and the show becoming part of the growing anti-sexism movements. "It does feel like the right moment for these stories," Moss says. "And I think that it was time, in so many ways, for the stories to start to have a voice and start to be told. Did I anticipate there being this crazy storm of the costumes being used at actual, real life protests, or at actual legislature? Of course not. But if we've given somebody a symbol for the resistance, I think that's fantastic."

The scariest thing about *The Handmaid's Tale* has always been how close it feels to our own world. Dowd has some final advice for how we can stop ourselves slipping into an oppressive regime like Gilead: "To me, that's the scariest line of Season One: 'By the time we put our phones down it was too late.' So what does that tell us? Stay alert, stay aware." ☞

*The Handmaid's Tale* Season Two will air on Channel 4 in May.



**010** CASTING ROUND-UP



Who's joining Star Trek, Mulan, IT 2 and more

**012** SLASHER



The cult horror hits the woods for Season Two

**013** LOCKE AND KEY



More bad news for the comic adaptation

**014** HOTEL ARTEMIS



An awesome cast face off in a hospital for killers



**“IT DOES FEEL LIKE THE RIGHT MOMENT FOR THESE STORIES”**  
ELISABETH MOSS

# CASTING CALL

The latest exciting cast additions to the most intriguing projects... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

## Wonder Woman 2

**EXPECTED RELEASE**  
November 2019

The sequel to 2017 hit *Wonder Woman*, Diana Prince returns to save both the world and the DCEU.

**ROLES**

**CHEETAH:** Female, 30-50s, any ethnicity. Must look a bit like a cat.

**MYSTERY CHARACTER:** Male, any ethnicity, 20-50s, doesn't mind secrets. Audition to find out more.

Though we probably won't tell you more even if you do get the role.

**CONTACT**

patty.jenkins@themyscira.com

**REPLIES**

KRISTEN WIIG, PEDRO PASCAL



## The Boys

**EXPECTED AIR DATE**  
Sometime in 2019

A CIA squad is tasked with keeping superheroes in line in this fresh take on the world of TV comic book heroes, developed by Evan Goldberg, Eric Kripke and Seth Rogen, and based on the comic book by Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson.

**ROLE**

**BILLY BUTCHER:** Male, Caucasian, 40-60s. Leader of the Boys, and a brutal and cunning fighter with a vendetta. Actors must be able to do a convincing East End accent.

**CONTACT**

goldberg@weehughie.com

**REPLIES**

KARL URBAN

## Star Trek: Discovery

**AIR DATE**

They won't tell us

The second season of CBS/Netflix hit *Star Trek: Discovery*.

**ROLES**

**CAPTAIN CHRISTOPHER PIKE:** Male, 40-60s, Caucasian, captain of the USS Enterprise.

**CHIEF ENGINEER DENISE RENO:** Female, 40-50s, any ethnicity. Comic timing desired but not necessary.

**CONTACT**

std@tardigrade.com

**REPLIES**

ANSON MOUNT, TIG NOTARO?

## IT: Chapter 2

**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE**  
September 2019

Set 27 years after the first film, members of the Losers Club have grown up and moved away, until a troubling phone call brings them all together again.

**ROLES**

**OLD BEVERLY MARSH:** Female, Caucasian, playing 40s. Has to look like young Beverly Marsh.  
**OLD BILL DENBROUGH:** Male, Caucasian, playing 40s. Has to look like young Bill Denbrough.  
**OLD RICHIE TOZIER:** Male, Caucasian, playing 40s. Has to look like young Richie Tozier.

**CONTACT**

Pennywise the Dancing Clown

**REPLIES**

JESSICA CHASTAIN, JAMES MCAVOY, BILL HADER

## Mulan

**EXPECTED RELEASE**  
March 2020

Disney's magical live-action, non-musical remake of 1998 animation *Mulan*.

**ROLES**

**UNNAMED WITCH:** Female,

Chinese, playing 50-60s. The lead villain, must be menacing.  
**EMPEROR QIN SHI HUANG:** Male, Chinese, playing 40s. Emperor of China.

**CONTACT**

nikicar@mulanisback.com

**REPLIES**

GONG LI, JET LI



## Untitled Terminator Reboot

**EXPECTED RELEASE**  
November 2019

Tim Miller's hopefully fresh take on the *Terminator*.

**ROLES**

**TERMINATOR:** Male, any ethnicity, any age. Terminator. Secret role, so please don't ask.

**LEADING LADY:** Female, any ethnicity, playing 20s. We said don't ask.

**MISCELLANEOUS SIDE CHARACTER:** Male, any ethnicity, playing 20-30s. Seriously, we won't even give you a script.

**CONTACT**

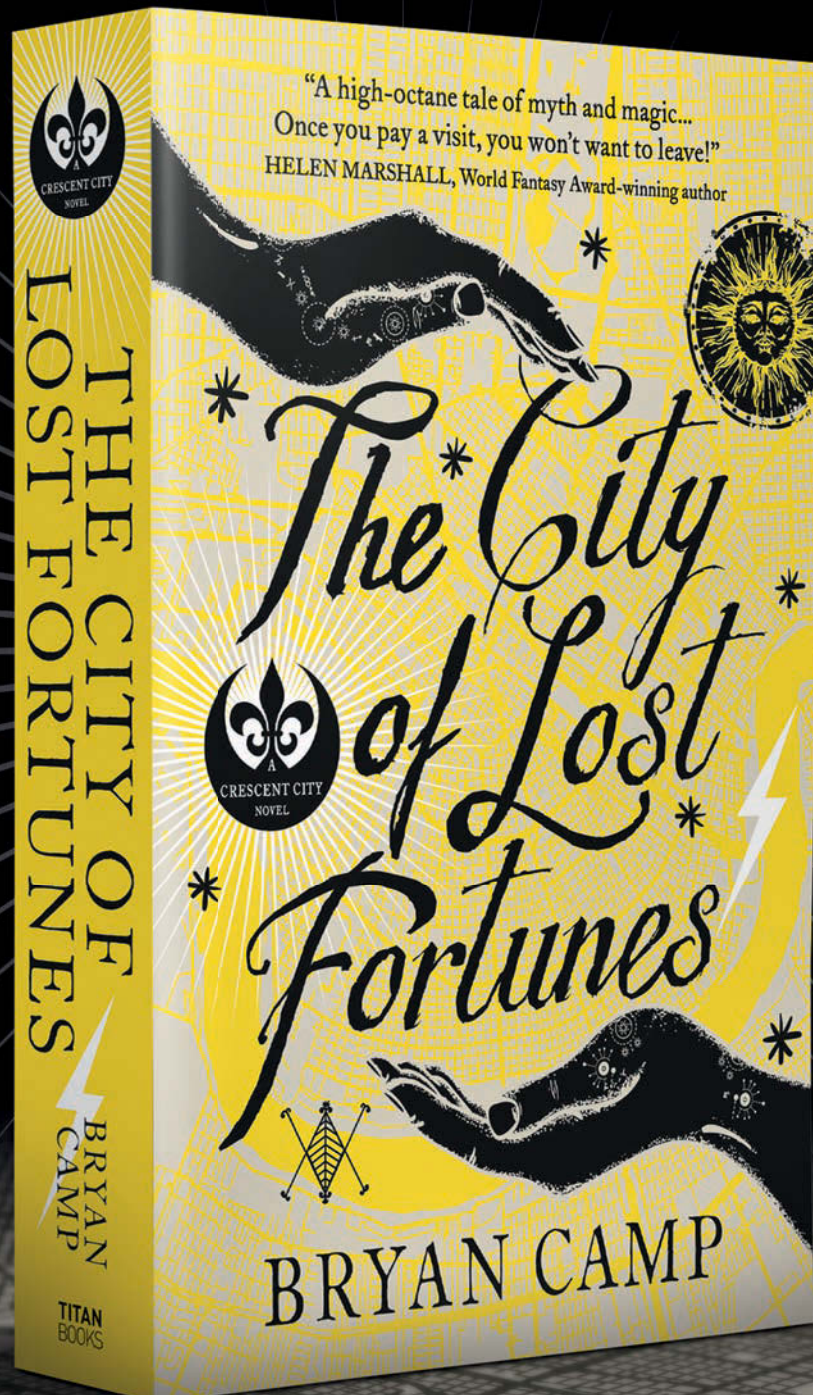
jamescameron4@terminator4ever.com

**REPLIES**

GABRIEL LUNA, NATALIA REYES, DIEGO BONETA

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RICHARD KADREY



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# KNIFE PARTY

Slasher creator Aaron Martin on how Season Two brings a killer to a cabin in the woods...

WORDS MICHAEL SIMPSON

**I**f the 1997 classic, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* taught us anything, it's that when you've covered up killing someone, the last place you should go back to is the scene of the crime. Yet, that's what the main characters do in the second season of *Slasher*. Subtitled 'Guilty Party', Season Two of the Canadian horror series centres on a group of summer camp leaders who take a winter trip to the wilderness to recover a body they hid there after a revenge killing five years earlier.

"It's set in the scariest environment I can think of, which is the middle of the woods in winter," creator and executive producer Aaron Martin tells us. "I think it's much more psychological than Season One in that you've got so many people who are wondering who the killer is among the 10 or

someone who knows their genre.

"I grew up in the Eighties and so I spent my teen years watching ridiculous movies where people get chopped up," Martin explains. "It's always been a thing that I looked back on fondly. It was kind of like a rite of passage to watch them with your friends."

Martin's big break in TV came as a writer on the Canadian teen drama *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, and he worked on the time travel comedy-drama *Being Erica* and sci-fi show *Killjoys* before heading up *Slasher*. Ironically, though, it was his stint on the medical drama *Saving Hope* that put him on track to make a series about psychopaths.

"On that show for some reason I had two episodes where people had bodies sown back together," Martin recalls. "I had a guy whose

**“IT'S THE THRILLS AND CHILLS OF SEASON ONE BUT MORE OF A CLAUSTROPHOBIC FEEL”**

AARON MARTIN

11 of them that are stuck together. So, it's a far different feel than Season One. It's still definitely the same kind of thrills and chills of Season One with the killing but it's more of a claustrophobic feel."

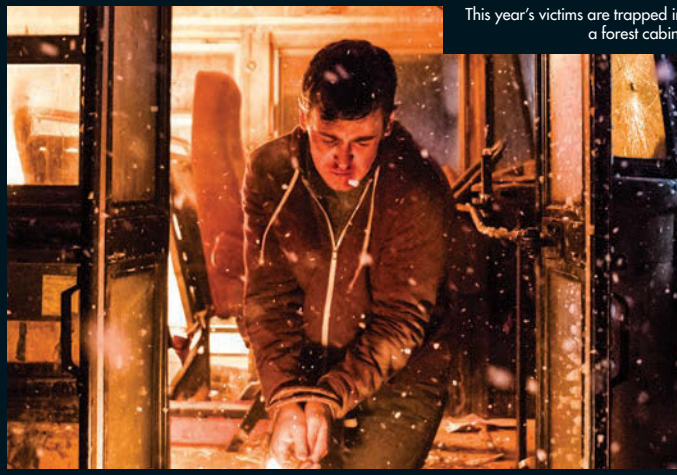
Like *American Horror Story*, *Slasher* is an anthology series that tells a different story every season. Season One, aka 'Slasher: The Executioner', centres on a woman who returns to a small town to live in the house where her parents were brutally slain on Halloween in 1988. The murderer, who dressed like a medieval executioner, was later jailed. Nonetheless, soon after the woman's return, a copycat begins an even bigger killing spree inspired by the seven deadly sins. Add into the mix a suspect who practices taxidermy and the killer's religious motives and there can be no doubt that *Slasher* is written by

hand had to be sown back onto his arm and there was something else, and I had to look up a lot of information on how the body works. So, I came out of that and thought: 'Why don't I just write this on spec and show that I can make something different?'"

Although Martin was familiar with slasher films, he hired Craig David Wallace to direct *Slasher's* first season. Wallace had co-created the series *Todd And The Book Of Pure Evil* and Martin wanted to use his experience.

"Craig David Wallace is a huge fan of all kinds of horror," Martin explains. "He brought in visually, and even in some story points, everybody from Dario Argento to... if you look at the opening of the first episode, it's very much inspired by the opening of *Halloween*. There's a lot of that





This year's victims are trapped in a forest cabin.

Will anyone make it out of the woods alive?



kind of referencing in Season One. In Season Two I think we pulled back on that but you can definitely feel things like *The Thing*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Friday The 13th*."

Something else Wallace had done on *Todd And The Book Of Pure Evil* was mix horror with humour, which both he and Martin thought was essential in *Slasher*.

"You can't just do eight hours of dreariness because who wants to watch that?" Martin says. "In Season Two, which is a darker season, I'm hoping that people find there is some humour in it. The one mandate that we always had was that the show should never cross over into torture porn. You can do terrible things to people but never just for the sake of terrorizing people. I hope that keeps it so it doesn't fall into something that's just impossible to watch."

Martin chose the anthology format for *Slasher* because he recognised that at some point a serial killer has to be stopped or it becomes absurd, he says: "I couldn't think of a way to rationally make it make sense to keep going on with the same storyline. It's hard to not wonder why people wouldn't just leave when these murders are happening. Even in Season One it was a bit of a stretch. It was like:

'Get out of that small town.' In Season Two they are stuck up in a cabin in the middle of nowhere and it takes place over three or four days. I don't know how you would keep doing that."

Another consideration is the mystery identity of the killer, which demands a climactic reveal. Martin's use of the whodunit approach echoes the *Scream* franchise but owes as much to a great British novelist as it does to Wes Craven's creation.

"I've also been a fan of Agatha Christie novels since I was a kid," Martin says. "A few years ago I said to my agent: 'Hey, what if you basically put these two things together as a series?'"

That formula clearly works because *Slasher* has reached its third season in North America. UK audiences will have to survive Season Two, however, before they see who gets the chop next.

"Serial killers are terrifying because they're not monsters – they're real people," says Martin. "In *Slasher* it's heightened but this isn't Jason Voorhees coming out of a lake and being a kind of supernatural being. The killers in this show are always going to be people."

*Slasher* is airing now on Pick TV.



## LOCKE AND KEY LIVES?

### The graphic novel can't catch a break

**We were all** thrilled when it was announced last year that Hulu had commissioned a pilot based on Joe Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez's *Locke And Key*. The comic book series is a true modern classic and it's had a tortured journey towards an adaptation. Sadly, it looks like that journey isn't over just yet.

After finding a cast (including Frances O'Connor, Megan Charpentier, Nate Corddry and Danny Glover) and getting one of the genre's hottest directors in *IT*'s Andy Muschietti, Hulu has passed on the pilot. This is a blow to those of us who've been rooting for *Locke And Key* since the 2011 Fox pilot entered pop culture history as the best thing to never be picked up for a series. A film adaptation by Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci was announced in 2014 and died in 2015.

However, we shouldn't give up hope yet. Star Samantha Mathis told *Cultured Vultures* that the new pilot was being shopped around other networks and streaming services, and with such brilliant source material and some serious genre heavyweights behind it (*Lost* and *Bates Motel*'s Carlton Cuse is on board as showrunner), surely someone will see sense and pick it up...



# NEW HOME FOR OLD SCHOOL

We talk to Lawrie Brewster about fostering UK genre talent with Hex Studios

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

If you're a horror fan, you may well be familiar with director Lawrie Brewster. Along with writer and partner Sarah Daly, he's delivered the blistering *The Unkindness Of Ravens* and black and white throwback *The Black Gloves* among others. Now, in addition to working on his own indie projects, he's giving fellow genre filmmakers a helping hand with Hex Studios.

"Hex Studios was created out of a dream to continue the legacy of Hammer, Amicus and American International Pictures from the golden age of horror/science fiction in the Fifties and beyond," he says. "Thanks to our friends from across the world, which include producers and production companies, we've been able to create an international alliance of shared interests and ambitions that

will see us produce and distribute independent horror/fantasy films. In doing so, we hope to create opportunities for aspiring artists to work with us on our feature films and on the content we're producing with our Hex Studios YouTube Channel."



One great film already on the channel "for the low low price of absolutely free" is Kate Shenton's savagely hilarious *Egomaniac*. "The film wowed us for its hilarious insights into indie filmmaking, especially from the female perspective," Brewster enthuses. "We felt that *Egomaniac* could reap the benefits of VOD distribution with a simultaneous release on Hex Studios YouTube Channel, which we're developing as a creative platform for up-and-coming talents in the genre. The sky's the limit! It's about getting the work out there however way

we can. With the bigger players pushing harder to squeeze the little guy out of the picture, it's up to us indies to create our own platforms, our own channels to get our work in front of an audience."

In the meantime, you can back Brewster and Daly's latest movie *Automata* on Kickstarter now, which he describes as "a subversive, brooding, sensual film with echoes of *Lolita* and *The Shining*." We're in.



Hex Studios' Lawrie Brewster.



Hex Studios' *Automata* is crowdfunding now.

## CHECK IN AT HOTEL ARTEMIS

A star-studded cast face off in SF action comedy

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Until recently, Drew Pearce's *Hotel Artemis* was just a mysterious entry on some very cool actors' IMDb pages. Now, we've seen the trailer and we could not be more excited for the directorial debut of the screenwriter of *Iron Man Three* and *Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation*, which features an incredible cast facing off in a heavily fortified hotel in a dystopian near future.

Sterling K Brown (*The People Vs OJ Simpson*) leads as a "one last job" crook who takes his wounded brother (*Atlanta's* Brian Tyree Henry) to the Hotel Artemis, a members-only hospital run by the Nurse (Jodie Foster) where you can get a new organ 3D-printed or a dose of healing nanobots. Strict rules keep the Artemis a violence-free zone, but the problem is that the brothers have got something belonging to The Wolf King (Jeff Goldblum) and he'll do anything to get it back.

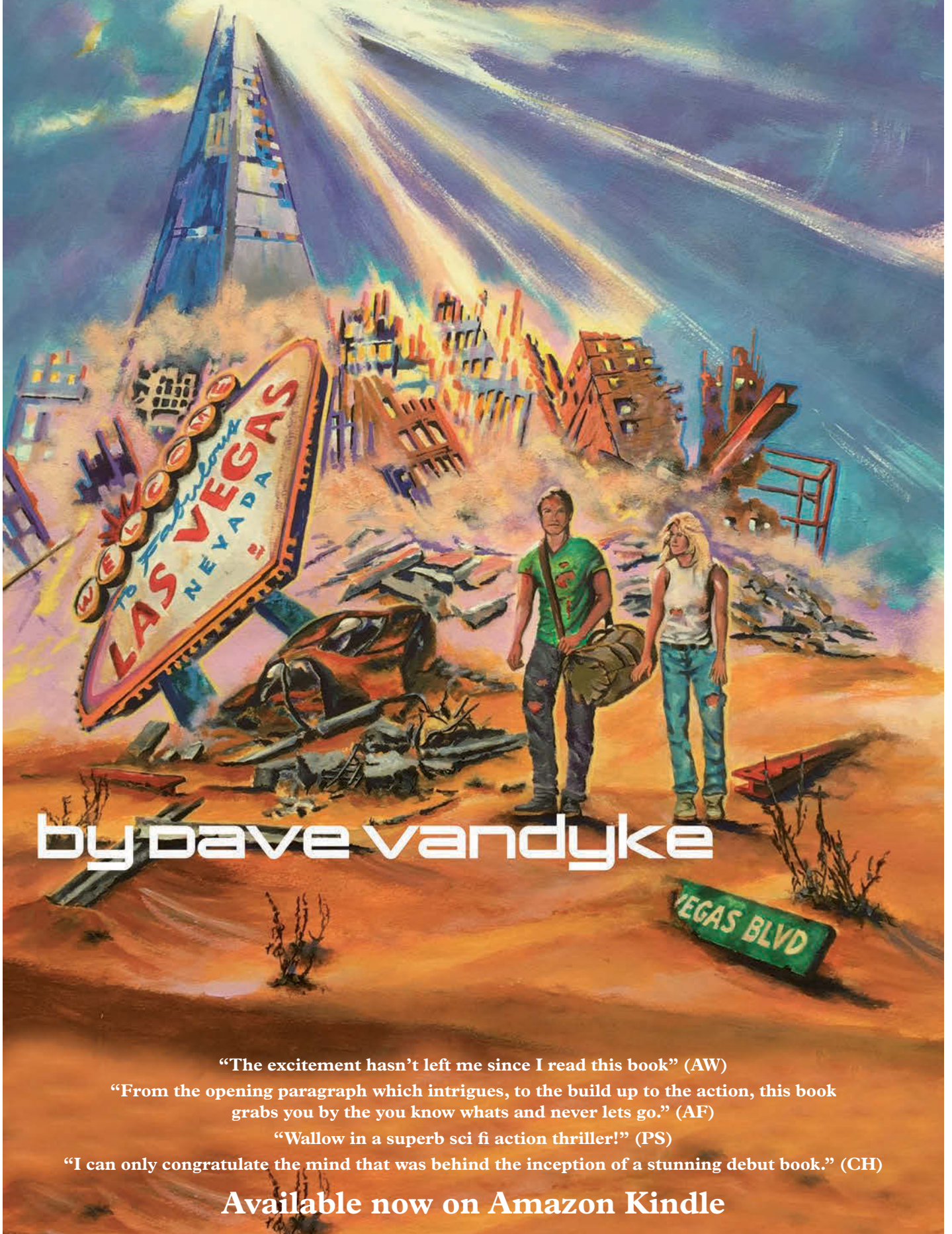
With a concept that sounds like a genre take on *John Wick* and a cast that also includes Sofia Boutella, Charlie Day, Dave Bautista and Zachary Quinto, this is sure to be a riot.

*Hotel Artemis* is released on 20 July.



Jodie Foster's Nurse is under siege.

# The Light



by dave vandyke

“The excitement hasn’t left me since I read this book” (AW)

“From the opening paragraph which intrigues, to the build up to the action, this book grabs you by the you know whats and never lets go.” (AF)

“Wallow in a superb sci fi action thriller!” (PS)

“I can only congratulate the mind that was behind the inception of a stunning debut book.” (CH)

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Day Of The Dead's influence lives on.



# EIFF 2018 REVIVES 80S CLASSICS



What's on at this year's Edinburgh Festival American Nightmare strand...

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**Y**ou can't move for Eighties nostalgia right now, so what better time to go back and watch the movies that inspired all the references? At this year's Edinburgh Film Festival, The American Nightmare strand will be screening classics from the likes of John Carpenter, George A Romero, Tobe Hooper and Joe Dante. Programmer Niall Greig Fulton tells us why you can't afford to miss it...

## What can we expect from The American Nightmare strand?

It's a golden opportunity to see Eighties genre classics on the big

screen again. It's a significant year for EIFF in terms of horror as there are also screenings of Stephen Norrington's *Blade* and Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark*.

## How difficult was it to whittle down the film selection to the ones you're showing?

Very. There were so many horror films made in America in the Eighties. Also, there is a distinct difference between the US horror movies of the early Eighties and those from the latter half of the decade, during which the rise of home video added a new dimension to the genre. So, it was

a matter of establishing which films would be best. Which titles captured the America's imagination the most at the time? Which titles are influential? Which titles are the most cinematic?

## How exciting is it to be able to show these classic and cult movies on the big screen?

It's very exciting indeed. That's the beauty of retrospective programming. It's very rewarding. Especially when you design a concept that binds several strands together. It takes months of thought and research, so it's a fantastic feeling to finally present it the public.

## Is there one film in particular that you're really excited for people to see?

Yes. George A Romero's *Day Of The Dead*. It's a rarely screened classic and, as I am reminded every time I see a trailer for *The Walking Dead*, the influence of Romero's films is beyond measure.

The 72nd edition of EIFF runs from 20 June-1 July 2018. For more information visit [www.edfilmfest.org.uk](http://www.edfilmfest.org.uk)



# SUNDANCE LONDON BRINGS HORROR HIT TO UK

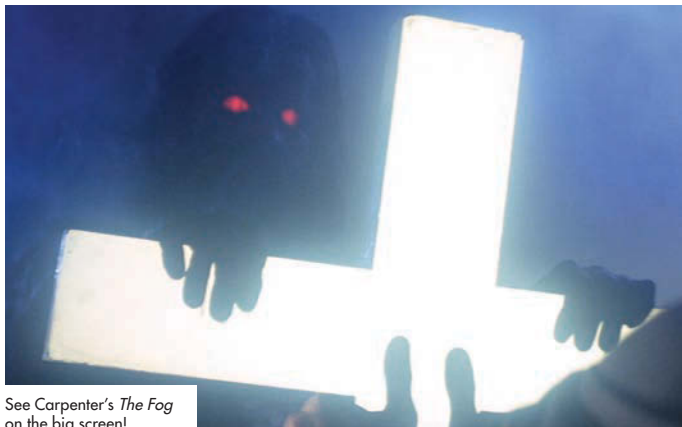
Get ready to see the best of the fest

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**It's that time** of year again: Sundance London will be showing a selection of the very finest films that graced Park City earlier this year, and it's one hell of a line-up. Aubrey Plaza, Matt Berry, Craig Robertson and Jemaine Clement star in *An Evening With Beverly Luff Linn*, the new dark comedy from *The Greasy Strangler* writer-director Jim Hosking. Documentary *Half The Picture* explores the difficulties that face women directors, Laura Dern stars as a woman remembering an abusive relationship in Jennifer Fox's drama *The Tale*, and Idris Elba makes his directorial debut with Seventies London gangster drama *Yardie*.

The big draw for genre fans, however, is the fact that Ari Aster's horror movie *Hereditary* will be playing. Toni Collette stars a woman who believes that something terribly wrong is happening to her family after her mother passes away. For more on the film head to our feature on page 46...

Sundance London runs from 31 May-3 June at Picturehouse Central. More information at [www.picturehouses.com/sundance](http://www.picturehouses.com/sundance)



See Carpenter's *The Fog* on the big screen!

“Levy is a writer of great talent and originality.”

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**Where:**  
 Radisson Blu Hotel, The Waterfront, Jersey, JE2 3WF  
**Contact:**  
 +44 (0)1534 511 115



Prestige! Events Jersey MD Michael Lopes with Jersey Greedo of Jersey Garrison at Corbiere Lighthouse.

# GALAXY: A STAR WARS CELEBRATION

## Jersey's first sci-fi convention welcomes Star Wars royalty

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

**Star Wars fans** hailing from the UK won't want to miss Galaxy: A Sci-Fi Celebration, Jersey's upcoming convention that will pay tribute to one of the biggest franchises in sci-fi history.

Prestige! Events Jersey is pulling out all the stops with a range of exciting exhibits and activities, including special guests like actor and puppeteer Timothy D Rose, who played Admiral Ackbar, Sy Snootles and Salacious Crumb in *Star Wars: Return Of The Jedi*.

"The great thing about puppets is they tell you who they are," Rose tells us. "If you don't believe what you are seeing on screen while you're doing it then nobody else will either. Actors and suit artists are two different animals. I've seen brilliant actors knocking themselves out inside a suit while nothing is happening outside the suit. You need to have two brains working at once. The first is working out the mechanics of the suite's movements while the second is

working out the intentions of the character being portrayed."

When Rose first started to bring Admiral Ackbar to life, he had no idea just how iconic the character would become: "When you create one of these characters, you have to work 14-hour days, sacrifice your home life, and get paid very poorly by your masters," he says. "My reward comes at the conventions when I get to see just how many people my 'silly little playing with dolls' has managed to touch and communicate with... I still have to pinch myself that there are people who want to see me! *Star Wars* fans are the most loyal and knowledgeable people in the world and I never get tired on meeting them."

Rose will also be joined by Greedo actor Paul Blake, who has frequented many a *Star Wars* convention over the last few decades: "It's a delight to meet people from cultures so diverse but have a common bond," he tells us.



The cast of Jersey Garrison pay a visit to Jersey's famous Elizabeth Castle.

"All age groups and backgrounds are represented, some in costume some not; some opinionated some speechless, but all with a curiosity and courtesy that is seldom breached. I have discussed the slimy alien with a New York Supreme Court judge, an astronaut, many professors, doctors, police officers, teachers, criminals, saints and sinners, even Santa Claus."

Other exciting touches at the convention include musical acts, costume competitions, gaming and arcade machines, life-sized props from all of your favourite sci-fi

properties, and loads more.

Vince Thorne Bespoke Photography will also be capturing the event and creating memories.

The convention is a must for all Jersey *Star Wars* fans, and fans from the UK can hop in their cars and get a Condor ferry from Poole.

Galaxy: A Sci-Fi Celebration is supporting Headway Jersey, with proceeds from the small entry fee going to a charity that works to improve life for brain injury survivors, their families and carers, and professionals in the health and legal fields.



# BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

WINNER



## THE MEG

With the movie basically being about a giant shark, any poster for a film like *The Meg* would usually have been in danger of being a bit too serious or far too cheesy, but this poster is happily poised in the middle ground. Perhaps the fact that there isn't too much going on in the poster was a conscious effort to ensure that middle ground was well and truly nailed...? That doesn't mean the poster is boring, though, far from it. It has a huge shark! And look at those giant teeth! It says all it needs to say really, and we have to admit that the fact that the tiny diver at the top is probably Jason Statham in flippers and a wetsuit just makes it even better in our minds...



## HEREDITARY

If *Hereditary's* gaunt, low light version of a classic family shot isn't weird enough for you, there are some other creepy little details in it, like how Toni Colette is staring in a slightly different direction to the rest of the group, or the fact that the daughter is holding a pigeon's bloody head.

MOST DRAMATIC



RUNNER UP



## HOW TO TALK TO GIRLS AT PARTIES

This poster for *How To Talk To Girls At Parties* may be loud and brash, but it really works. It captures the world perfectly as it's portrayed in John Cameron Mitchell's film, which is also...yep, loud and brash.

RUNNER UP



## THRESHOLD

This rather subtle poster for horror movie *Threshold* would look like it belonged to nice summery indie art film... if the people on it weren't screaming in terror of course.

## RAMPAGE

This was a pretty simple choice for us – the Japanese poster for *Rampage* is easily the most dramatic of the month, but it's the most dramatic in a good way we think. There's just so much going on here that we can barely take it all in but everything is absolutely necessary. Artist Kouji Tajima has managed to perfectly capture all that is wonderful about over-the-top Japanese monster movies.



## MEMORY BANK

Welcome to Memory Bank, the only 300 words of the magazine where we look back at past issues and reminisce about what was going on in the world of sci-fi, fantasy and horror.

This month, we're flicking through issue 61, where we examined *American Horror Story's* first season, and asked: 'Has TV gone too far?' It turns out that it could go a lot further. "Everyone is terrified of the idea of people breaking into their house," co-creator and executive producer Ryan Murphy told us. "That was the impetus – what scares us... We're not interested in making a slasher series. We're trying to talk about fears in society, and what these people are really afraid of." Seven years on, it's still doing just that.

The issue also marked the debut of *Once Upon A Time*. We spoke to creators Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis to find out what it was: "The idea started years ago," said Horowitz. "We sat down to write it and didn't know what the hell we were doing."

Issue 61 went on sale during the Matt Smith era of *Doctor Who*, so we caught up with him on the set of 2011 Christmas special 'The Doctor, The Widow And The Wardrobe'. "There's no show quite like *Doctor Who*," he told us. "I always come back and think: 'Nothing is really ever as good as making this.'" Hopefully he hasn't been living in a constant state of disappointment since he regenerated in 2013.

Still in the Christmas spirit, we also counted down the best of genre TV's festive episodes, and *Chuck's* 'Chuck Versus Santa Claus', *Pushing Daisies's* 'Corpsicle' and *Doctor Who's* 'A Christmas Carol' made the top three. The *Star Wars Holiday Special* topped the naughty list.

# ROGUES

# WANTED

AFTER A TUMULTUOUS PRODUCTION, THE ICON'S ORIGIN STORY IS FINALLY HERE. ALDEN EHRENREICH AND DONALD GLOVER TELL US ABOUT STEPPING INTO CLASSIC ROLES, DIRECTOR CHANGES AND FLYING THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...

WORDS ADAM TANSWELL

**EVERY NOW AND** then you see one of those lists pop up. You know, the-most-iconic-movie-character-of-all-time lists. The exact ranking may change from time to time, but if you skip to the end, you know whose face you're going to see. There's Harrison Ford in his prime, brandishing a blaster or flashing that trademark smirk.

There's simply no beating Han Solo. He's the rogue, the rascal, the scruffy-looking nerf herder who shoots first and pilots the fastest ship in the galaxy. His best friend is a badass Wookiee, he gets all the best lines while still having a heart of gold, and he forms the greatest power couple in the history of cinema along with Leia (possibly not the greatest parents in the history of cinema, but that's another discussion for another time).

So, with all that being said, a Han Solo origin story is simultaneously the most sensible and the most dangerous choice for Disney and Lucasfilm. On the one hand, who doesn't want to see the early years of such an iconic, entertaining and downright legendary character? On the other hand, what if they screw it up? Is *Solo: A Star Wars Story* a risk worth taking?

"I really liked this story," enthuses Donald Glover. "I really did, I was very satisfied..."

Phoebe Waller-Bridge [who plays droid L3-37, Lando Calrissian's partner in crime], who made *Fleabag* (which is one of my favourites), I was actually talking to her about it, and I was like, it's so hard to make something satisfying, especially the shorter it is, like with movies, it's really hard. And this really feels satisfying, which is the hardest thing."

"I felt the same way," agrees Alden Ehrenreich. "That is just so much the fun of this movie, and we were just talking about *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* and the opening [sequence] and how fun it is to see him learning and falling into the snake pit. And there is so much of that and so much building of that world and to me it's a really great early chapter."

Before we get to the world building, there's always going to be one elephant in the room when talking about this film: the behind the scenes changes. In June last year, it was announced that directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller had left the movie after six months of shooting following creative differences with the studio and producer Kathleen Kennedy. After a day or two of fevered speculation about possible replacements, the redoubtable Ron Howard

# SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY

Rogues Wanted



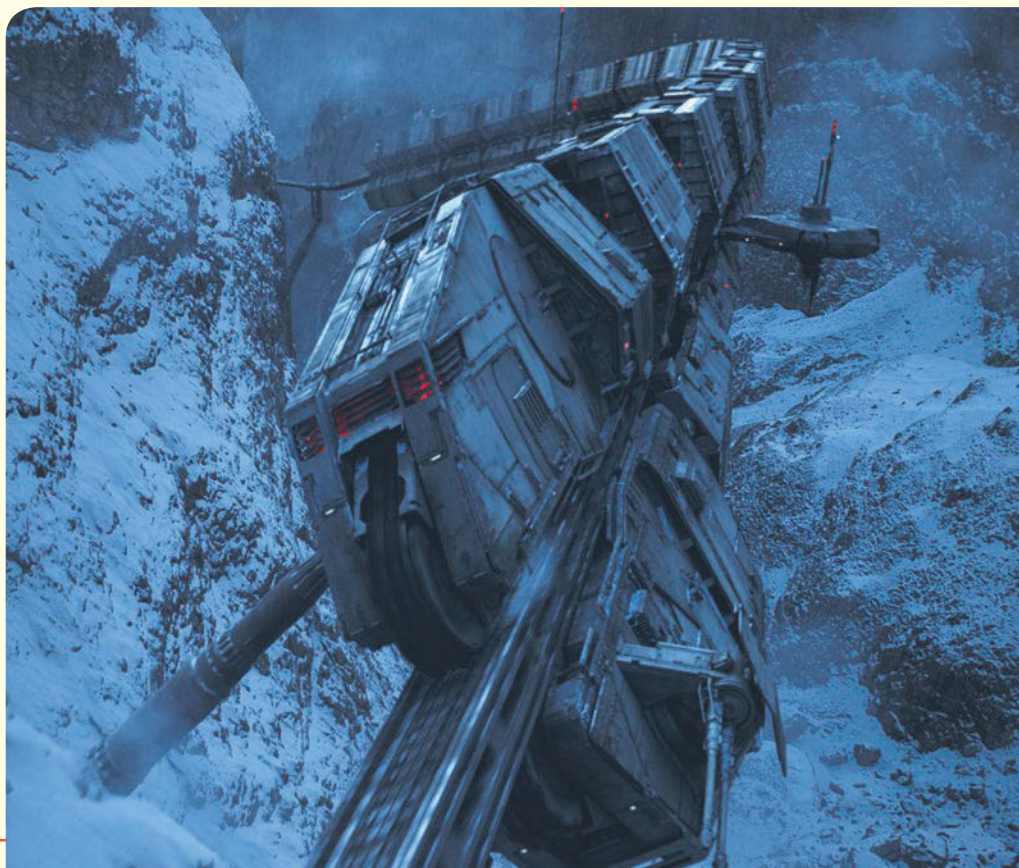
# COVER FEATURE

Solo: A Star Wars Story



➤ stepped in and has reportedly reshot a huge chunk of the movie. Now, there has of course been a huge amount of speculation about what exactly drove the wedge between Lord and Miller and the *Star Wars* producers, with unverified reports emerging here and there about the various bust-ups and conflicts that fuelled this parting of ways. For the actors, the transition seems to have gone as smoothly as possible.

“My feeling was that I loved Phil and Chris and it was just really what they said in the press, which was creative differences and basically the sort of truth was that there was just a difference of feeling,” Ehrenreich tells us. “And then when Ron came in, I think he had a week to prepare or something, and his adeptness, he just spoke the language so quickly, and I don’t know if that is because of his relationship with Lucas or just being around it. I think he went opening day to *A New Hope* and he watched it and left and then went right back in and watched it again. So, it’s kind of in him and it was wonderful. He was wonderful and understood where everyone was at, so gracious in that way.”



## "BILLY DEE WILLIAMS JUST TOLD ME TO BE CHARMING. THAT'S LITERALLY IT!"

DONALD GLOVER

While some facts about the reshaping of the film are known (Paul Bettany stepping in as an entirely new character to replace Michael Kenneth Williams, for example), we may never know all the details. However, the core concept at the heart of the film has stayed constant. This is a heist movie, a story that will show us how Han Solo became the character we know and love, how he first teamed up with Chewbacca and Lando Calrissian, and how he got his hands on the Millennium Falcon.

When the film was first announced back in 2015, a parade of young actors were linked to the starring role from Miles Teller to Dave Franco, but it was *Hail, Caesar's* breakout star Alden Ehrenreich who landed the gig. Prior to his performance as the 'would that

it were so simple' mangling Hobie Doyle, Ehrenreich had worked with amazing directors like Francis Ford Coppola and Park Chan-Wook, but the role of Han Solo is in, well, it's another galaxy all together. The amount of pressure and fan expectation that comes with it has been made apparent by the amount of scrutiny the actor has been under as we all wonder whether he'll go for a Harrison Ford impression or making it purely his own, but he tells us that the fact that the film is an origin story did give him a bit of breathing room.

"It was easier," he explains. "All of this was more fun than easier because you could make mistakes. We are not there yet with those things and it's not the opposite. It would be different if I was playing afterwards, then I would be like, what happened? And I have to make up a bunch. But you don't have to."

"I think it's easier to pretend the beginning of a relationship because it's the beginning of a relationship," adds Glover. Glover, of course, has pressures of his own, stepping into the cape and twinkling smile of Lando Calrissian back in the days when he and Han were just getting to know each other and before anyone was even thinking about allowing Darth Vader and his goons into Cloud City.

"When I got it, my mum was like: 'Oh my God!' She was like: 'This is the biggest role!'" he laughs. "And I am like, of course it was to you! That's the man."

Both Glover and Ehrenreich were able to meet with their respective predecessors before shooting began and glean some words of wisdom from the two icons. "Billy Dee Williams] just told me to be charming," remembers Glover. "That's literally it. He wasn't even looking at me when he said it. He just walked in, said it, and walked out. I think he was looking at a girl," he laughs. "But I think that was true and I like simple things. That was enough."

Fittingly, Ford's advice to Ehrenreich came with a delightfully enigmatic caveat. "Harrison said, if they ask, tell them I told you everything you need to know and that you are not allowed to tell anybody," the young actor laughs.

However, both actors were careful not to spend too much time agonising over the details. As brilliant and iconic as Ford and Williams' work is, do we really want to watch two hours of impersonations? For the stars, thinking too much about the burden of *Solo's* predecessors while trying to land their ➤



Clockwise from top: Han discusses plans with Beckett (Woody Harrelson), Emilia Clarke as femme fatale Qi'Ra, Lando and friend hit the tables, heist target the Conveyex.



# COVER FEATURE

Solo: A Star Wars Story



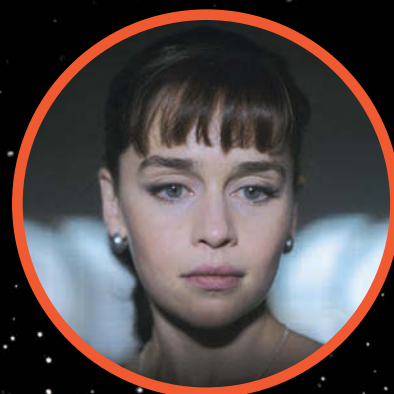
**Alden Ehrenreich is  
HAN SOLO**

What can we expect from this younger Han? Everything we've heard so far suggests that this is a young man finding his way. Sure, he's jaded after being tossed out of flight academy, but we can expect some idealism too.



**Donald Glover is  
LANDO CALRISSIAN**

Lando is in possession of the Millennium Falcon when we meet him, and Glover's talked about showing off Lando's love of the finer things. While he's very self-assured, Lando may think he knows more than he actually does...



**Emilia Clarke is  
QI'RA**

Qi'ra is Han's friend from childhood, his former partner in crime, and she knows all his secrets. She's got secrets of her own too, and that mystery is one of the her defining characteristics. She'll do whatever it takes to survive.



**Joonas Suotamo is  
CHEWIE**

While much of the hype around the film has focused on the meeting between Han and Lando, we can't wait to see how the unbreakable bond between Han and the Wookiee was forged.



## WHO'S WHO

You can't pull off an epic heist without putting together one hell of a crew



**Phoebe Waller-Bridge is  
L3-37**

The *Fleabag* star plays Lando's partner in crime, a self-made AI who has put herself together from parts of other droids. Smart and funny, she's more than a match for Lando, and she'll be right in the thick of the action.



**Woody Harrelson is  
TOBIAS BECKETT**

Every outlaw needs a mentor, and Beckett is the man who makes Han realise that even rogues need a code. He's also the one organising the heist at the centre of the movie, bringing Han and Chewie into a dangerous world.



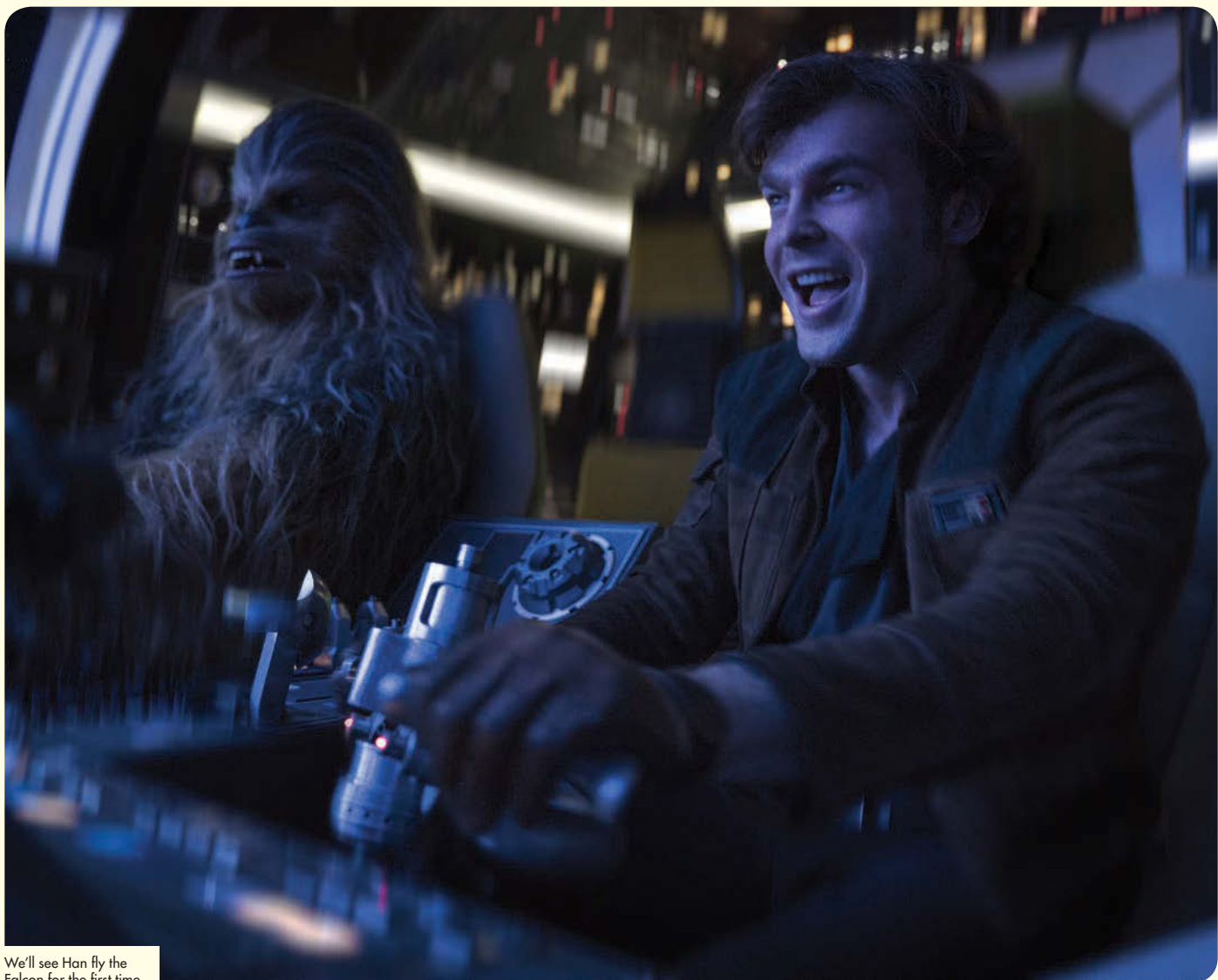
**Thandie Newton is  
VAL**

Details are still thin on this character, but we know she's one of Beckett's acquaintances. She's also not immediately taken with Solo, and the fact that we don't know whether she's with him or against him is very much the point.



**Paul Bettany is  
DRYDEN VOS**

While Bettany stepped in to replace Michael Kenneth Williams, he'll be playing a new, non-CGI character. Dryden Vos is the criminal overlord in the film, the crime boss that everyone either works for or fears.



We'll see Han fly the Falcon for the first time.

➤ roles could have meant getting lost in the sheer size of it all.

"I don't think I watched the original movies when I was auditioning," Ehrenreich tells us. "I think I watched the original, *A New Hope*, at some point, because I auditioned six times. But mostly I just read the sides and it was so clear from the beginning, reading the sides, that their take on it was so cool, and their feel for it and the language and how funny and fun it was. And so, I kind of just went in there and tried to make it personal. Because to try to absorb what that is in that short period of time, seemed like it would have been more of a burden than helpful."

"Yeah, the same thing," agrees Glover. "I feel like part of the reason we do any of this is for the process. It's like, okay, we are going to go through this process, but at the end it will have to be this exact thing. And nobody will see an imitation."

Instead, we'll get to see these two legendary characters meet and form the bond that we know and love. When it came time to

find that relationship, Ehrenreich tells us that what was on the page was more important than going back and watching *Empire* over and over again, not to mention finding his own chemistry with Glover.

"I think a lot of that comes in the writing," he explains. "And I think that one of the

**"I WENT IN AND TRIED TO MAKE IT PERSONAL"**  
ALDEN EHRENRICH

things they did a great job of with the script is not only talking in the language of these characters and [finding] their rhythms and dynamics, but kind of taking moments that happened in the early movies and extrapolating them into whole sequences or storylines. I think for us it's just about

hanging out and just feeling that out."

The writing, of course, comes from someone who knows *Star Wars* as well as (almost) anyone alive. Lawrence Kasdan's history with the franchise dates back to writing the screenplay for *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*, and it was great to see him return as one of the writers of *The Force Awakens*. It only seems fitting that he should be the one to bring us the story of Han's early years, writing the script with his son Jon (a veteran of *Freaks And Geeks* as well as the writer-director of movies *In The Land Of Women* and *The First Time*), and Ehrenreich tells us that their presence on set was definitely a bonus.

"It's great," he enthuses. "I mean, they speak *Star Wars*. They know the language and they know the detail and they know the characters inside and out. And so it was a wonderful resource to have them there and it also makes you feel like you are part of the original lineage – George Lucas [even] came and visited the set – and feeling like you are a part of this thing which people care so

### LET THE WOOKIEE WIN

We talk to Joonas Suotamo about returning to the role of Chewie

**The last couple** of *Star Wars* films have seen a graceful passing of the torch between the great Peter Mayhew and Finnish newcomer Joonas Suotamo, as the latter doubled Chewie in *The Force Awakens* before stepping into the role properly in *The Last Jedi*. Now, fresh off playing a Chewbacca still grieving for his old friend, Suotamo is back in the suit to show us how the two lifelong allies first met.

#### What can you tell us about Han and Chewie's first meeting?

I can say that we find Chewie in a bit of harm's way in this film. And yeah, we do get to see how the two characters formed this legendary partnership and how they met. But as to how, I don't want to spoil the details for anyone.

#### Does it feel like you're playing a much younger Chewie?

A Wookiee's life span is about 400 years. So, relatively, there is such little youthfulness compared to the other films that it doesn't really make a difference. But Chewbacca is in a new set of adventures that are surely going to give him some grey hairs.

#### So, you don't consciously play Chewie young?

I wanted to highlight it a little, because this movie is a fun, daring adventure film and there was some action needed. But yeah, there was some of that youthfulness, but that was because the wonderful script called for it.

#### How was it getting into the new Falcon with a new co-star?

Yeah, it was wonderful because the set design and everything was done in such a way that everything felt new, because I had been in the Falcon before. And yeah, now it's a bit of a different look. You'll [have to wait and] see some of the changes that will happen to the Falcon. But stepping into the Millennium Falcon with Alden, I noticed that he did the same thing that I did when I first stepped in the Falcon which is every time you visit it, something comes out of the place, because it's a very cramped set. And you lean on a lever and it can fall off, and there are so many levers and buttons and you are filming, and yeah, it was interesting to see, because I have broken so many things in the Falcon cockpit!

#### Peter Mayhew worked with you on the last two films, what did you learn from him?

He was great. We had a week-long Wookiee boot camp. We watched Chewbacca footage and Peter gave me not only his blessing, but he also gave me some really strict guidelines on how to wear the suit and how to make the sounds, [makes Chewie noises] and that stuff. Yeah, he was very helpful to me.

## "SOME OF THE WORLDS HAVE A VERY WESTERN FEEL...THE KASDANS BROUGHT THAT"

ALDEN EHRENREICH

➤ much about is great, and particularly this one, because it's so fun. This is the one that I think I would most want to go see."

Ehrenreich's enthusiasm also teases a little of what we can expect from the film's tone. While there was a lot of talk about the comedic elements while Lord and Miller were at the helm (possibly due to the fact that their background is almost entirely comedy), it turns out that we can look forward to a little bit of a western feel too as Beckett (Woody Harrelson) puts his team of crooks together.

"One of the things that's great about the movie is that it's such a big adventure film and it happens in so many different worlds," Ehrenreich teases. "And some of those worlds have a very Western feel to them. I know the Kasdans really love those movies and they really brought that feel to them. And Han being a space cowboy in certain ways, it's kind of appropriate to it."

Speaking of being a space cowboy, we simply can't let the duo go without

getting the answer to a very important, burning question. Surely, for an actor (or for pretty much anyone for that matter) there can't be many greater thrills than getting to fly the iconic Millennium Falcon?

"It's awesome," Ehrenreich exclaims. "That was really incredible. One of the funnest things is getting to [fly the Millennium Falcon]. And the way they shoot it now, it's not that you are looking at a greenscreen, they actually have it – it's like rear projection in the Thirties, they have the actual space that you are flying through and all the things that you are trying not to hit. And you are looking at that and being lit by that, and the ship is shaking. So, it's as close to real as they can get it, without flying. It's pretty cool. Are you freaking out about how that's so cool?"

"It's a ride," laughs Glover. ☺

*Solo: A Star Wars Story* is released on 24 May.



Han and Chewie hard at work on the Conveyex.



You can't be a space cowboy if you can't draw first.

## ORIGIN STORY **DO**S AND **DON'T**S

Showing us the early years of a beloved character? Careful now...

### **DO** take advantage of the gaps

Is there an iconic event that's never been shown? A beloved storyline that's never been filmed? This is your chance.

### **DON'T** cover old ground

The whole point is to bring something new. Don't just recreate the same old stuff with younger faces, no one wants to see that.

### **DO** stay faithful

With the previous point made, don't go so wildly off-book that you lose sight of who the character is. You'll only enrage the fans that way.

### **DON'T** be afraid to try a new tone

Has the universe you're working in gone camp? Or is it grim? Freshen up the world by going in the opposite direction.

### **DO** avoid too much fan-service

A few references are fine. But if all you do is stuff your film with nods to what's to come, it will just feel cheap.

### **DON'T** overdo the CGI

Today's amazing technology is tomorrow's joke. Think twice before de-ageing an older actor, instead of casting a younger one.

### **DO** have a point

Some origin films have stumbled through a weak plot to deliver an early adventure. If the story's not there, you shouldn't be either.

### **DON'T** spare the feels

There are reasons why these characters do what they do, and they're not always happy. If there's a tragic past, make us feel it.



The Falcon will be a little different to the one we know.



Beckett, Qi'Ra and Chewie had better buckle up...



# COME AGAIN?

HOW ON EARTH DID A FOUL-MOUTHED MURDERING ANTI-HERO BECOME EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE SUPERHERO? WE TAKE A LOOK AT DEADPOOL'S CHEQUERED HISTORY WITH HELP FROM RYAN REYNOLDS

WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL

**DEADPOOL** – Pool to his friends – is a strange beast. And not just because, well, he's a strange beast. It makes an odd, warped sense that Deadpool as a character makes no sense. Created as recently as 1991, he quickly became a recognisable character, delivering solid (if middling) comic book sales and popping up all over comic cons and T-shirts. His popularity can't be down to *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* in 2009 – technically Deadpool's big screen debut – because he didn't even get to don his classic costume in that movie (and Ryan Reynolds was mystifyingly swapped for a different actor halfway through). So how is it that even before the first film landed, Deadpool was a recognisable and beloved character?

The only comparable character is probably Harley Quinn, who was a pretty big deal

long before *Suicide Squad*, but she had *Batman: The Animated Series* and the *Justice League* animated series to bring her to a wider audience. Deadpool didn't have a kid's cartoon, bar a couple of appearances in *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Deadpool's popularity seemed to be solely based on his bonkers comic book appearances and his status as a mythical 'what if': What if Ryan Reynolds had been allowed to star in the *Deadpool* movie he wanted to make?

Then, seven years after the disastrous *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* butchered the character (literally and figuratively), Reynolds finally did get his *Deadpool* movie, and he still didn't make any sense. Despite being R-rated, *Deadpool* was the sixth biggest grossing movie of 2016, coming ahead of *Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice*,



Ah, right back in the cab with Dopinder.

*Doctor Strange, Suicide Squad and X-Men: Apocalypse.* And despite not being marketed to kids, its very sales are extremely healthy. It's all basically unprecedented. So what the fudgesicle is going on with *Deadpool*?

Wade Wilson was created by Rob Liefeld and Fabian Nicieza and first appeared in *The New Mutants* – shortly after Cable's first appearance and in the same issue where Domino first appeared, although that Domino turned out to be an imposter. It's no surprise that those two characters will be joining Wade in *Deadpool 2*. Over time *Deadpool's* comic book incarnation just got weirder and weirder. Writers including Joe Kelly, Christopher Priest and Gail Simone later honed some of what would become his iconic elements, including his frequent fourth wall-breaking and his conflicting thought-boxes. While the creators initially got away with it because *Deadpool's* sales figures were low enough to take some risks, Marvel soon figured out that *Deadpool's* weirdness was what fans loved about him. Later, he was given free rein to do pretty much whatever he wanted, including killing the entire Marvel universe and his own creators in *Deadpool Kills The Marvel Universe* (if Fox ever want to do a big reboot of their whole *X-Men* line, this could be the way to do it).

But comic books have lots of loveably weird characters that don't make the leap into the general public consciousness (where are the Dogwelder T-shirts, huh?). So why did *Deadpool* do it? The answer can probably be boiled down to two words: Ryan Reynolds. The dude just would not shut up about *Deadpool*. At every available opportunity, for over a decade, he would talk about his love for the character, and update fans about the standalone film that he swore was coming, even when we had lost faith. His Twitter

account began to sound like *Deadpool's* thought boxes, something he willingly owns up to: "I got Twitter because of *Deadpool*... So typically when I Twitter I am doing it sort of in the voice of Wade Wilson."

Slowly, non-comic fans came to understand that there was a *Deadpool*, somewhere in the Marvel Universe, and he bore absolutely no resemblance to the one in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. His iconic costume design helped cement him in the public's mind even before he popped up on a movie poster. If you attended a comic con in the last ten years – or were even within a one mile radius of a comic con – you'd see dozens of *Deadpools*. Although back then it seems that *Deadpool* costumes were being used by certain male 'fans' to harass female con goers via the safety of *Deadpool's* mask and his 'outrageous' personality. Had they known that *Deadpool's* longest running romantic infatuation was with Spider-Man, they may have reconsidered adopting him as their dude-bro mascot...

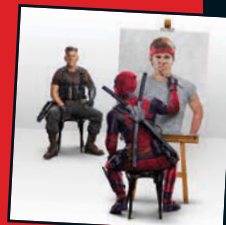
Reynolds has talked openly about the struggles he had persuading Fox to make the film, with a script and even some test footage failing to win them over. "[T]hey never even called us back about the test footage," Reynolds admitted at the time, "and then four years later, that test footage accidentally leaks onto the internet by some person involved in criminal behaviour which I do not condone, and that then transfers into this just overwhelming tsunami of feedback for the studio and that's what did it. The fans got the movie made, not me or anyone else."

He might credit the fans, but it was Reynolds' years of hard work – plus the efforts of writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick and director Tim Miller – that brought *Deadpool* to the big screen. And even before the film landed, the various

## THE ONE-MAN MARKETING MACHINE

Who needs traditional marketing when you have Ryan Reynolds' social media accounts? Here are some of the best pictures, teases and one-liners he's given us in the run-up to *Deadpool 2*.

'Painting you like one of my French girls. Happy birthday #JoshBrolin.'



'Take your passion. And make it happen. #Deadpool'

'Apparently you can't actually blow the Matterhorn.'

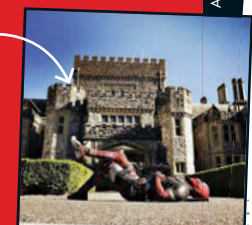


'Some might call this creation a masterpiece, but to me it's just well hung art to be shared with the world.'



'Spent another day with this beautiful lady. Just lost in each other's ears. #BlindAl #DriveBy'

'Dropped by X-Mansion. Looked closely for Beast's lawn bombs before taking well deserved nap.'



All images © VandyReynolds

weird *Deadpool* viral videos had started popping up all over the place – and, in case you were wondering, yes, Reynolds actually did film them himself, he didn't just do a voiceover. "I am seeing that a lot of people who didn't know anything about *Deadpool* before are very excited about the movie and that makes us feel like we are doing our job right," Reynolds said ahead of the release of the first movie. "But the marketing has been so much fun. I have not stopped playing *Deadpool* since I wrapped on the set eight months ago and I have a suit at my house because we are always sitting around thinking 'oh this would be a good video, let's shoot this'. And I would shoot stuff, sometimes with my iPhone."

So all that brings us to 2016, when *Deadpool* finally landed in cinemas after one of the greatest movie ad campaigns ever, and became a huge hit, to the surprise and confusion of everyone who wasn't a *Deadpool*/Ryan Reynolds fan. Are they basically one and the same thing now?

"[T]he line between Ryan and Wade is somewhat blurry, at least my wife believes that," Reynolds admits. Internationally, the film made over a whopping \$801 million, and it's currently the second highest grossing R-rated film ever in the US. The myth that R-rated films just couldn't make money was proven wrong. Since *Deadpool's* success we've had the R-rated *Logan*, which secured an Oscar nod for Best Adapted Screenplay, and Sony are talking about making their *Venom* movie R-rated. The *New Mutants* was nearly R-rated before opting to play it safe with a PG-13 rating, although it's been pushed back a year for reshoots, so it may eventually appear in an R-rated form. And the planned *X-Force* movie spinning off from *Deadpool* is probably going to be R-rated too.

Being R-rated didn't harm *Deadpool's* box office figures, nor its merchandising sales. Instead, it wisely targeted its merchandising at adults and teenagers (at the time of writing, *Deadpool Monopoly* was a bestseller on the Forbidden Planet website). In the period from January 2015 to March 2016, *Deadpool* was the ninth most popular comic book character for merchandise sales, according to a study by Slice Intelligence. He was ahead of Harley Quinn, Thor and Joker, and the *Deadpool* film didn't even come out until February 2016. It's fair to say his popularity has grown since then.

And it's only going to grow more when *Deadpool 2* comes out. Even 'creative differences' leading to the first film's director Tim Miller being replaced by David Leitch hasn't slowed its momentum (frankly, adding the co-director of *John Wick* to the mix can surely only improve things). When promoting the first film, Reynolds hinted at the tension between him and Miller, saying that "I am so passionate about *Deadpool*



## "THE LINE BETWEEN RYAN AND WADE IS SOMEWHAT BLURRY"


RYAN REYNOLDS

and I am so fiercely loyal to *Deadpool* and I will be the first to say that I was not easy to work with in the movie, and certainly Tim and I had our differences and our moments because I have a really specific take on *Deadpool* and... I am super protective of that and I'll argue anybody who thinks different."

The writers of the first film, Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick are back, and this time Ryan Reynolds gets a co-writer credit, as well as the producer credit that he held on the first movie too. The original cast are all returning, and this time they're bringing Josh Brolin into the Fox/Marvel universe as Cable as well as introducing X-Force. The only criticism you could really level at the first movie was that the plot was deceptively slight, but the sequel looks like being meatier – and filthier – than ever. But again, *Deadpool's* motivation seems simple – he's trying to save a kid from Cable, who has come from the future to kill him.

For all its bravura marketing, very little of the actual film has been given away. *Deadpool* instead relies on skits and shorts to promote itself, rather than trailing the

movie to death. The promotional material never feels like an afterthought – it's a piece of entertainment in itself. We're close to release, and yet we still haven't had the X-Force line-up confirmed. Pennywise himself Bill Skarsgård's in the film as a member of X-Force but no-one knows who he's playing. There's rumours of a big cameo that is being kept under wraps. Basically, the Merc With The Mouth is keeping things uncharacteristically close to the chest. That's the benefit of an R-rated superhero movie – you can fly slightly under the radar, and you don't have to cater to everyone.

For a character that's a murdering anti-hero, there's something traditionally heroic about the *Deadpool* franchise. The films themselves might be irreverent, but there's real heart and passion behind them. It's a true underdog, a sort of working class hero, pulling itself up by its bright red bootstraps. It's also 100% more disgusting than anyone thought a superhero film could ever be. Well done, *Deadpool*, you absolute reprobate. 

*Deadpool 2* is released on 16 May.



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF X-FORCE

WHO NEEDS A MANSION? MEET THE SUPER-DUPER GROUP



FOX PROMISED FANS AN X-FORCE MOVIE LONG BEFORE THEY WERE NAME-DROPPED IN THE DEADPOOL 2 TRAILER AS POOL'S SUPER TEAM OF MORALLY QUESTIONABLE CHARACTERS YOUNG ENOUGH TO CARRY THEIR OWN FRANCHISE FOR 10 TO 12 YEARS. DREW

GODDARD IS WRITING AND DIRECTING THE X-FORCE MOVIE, SLATED TO START FILMING THIS AUTUMN. RYAN REYNOLDS IS ALREADY SIGNED UP TO APPEAR IN IT, AND CABLE ACTOR JOSH BROLIN HAS BEEN VERY VOCAL ABOUT HOW DEADPOOL 2 IS A SPRINGBOARD LEADING TO HIM APPEARING IN MANY MORE MOVIES.

## SO WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT X-FORCE?

X-Force was initially launched from the pages of *New Mutants*. In 1990 artist Rob Liefeld and writer Louise Simonson introduced Cable as a new, militaristic leader for the New Mutants, eventually going on to introduce perennial X-Forcers like Domino and Shatterstar, both of whom are set to appear in *Deadpool 2*. With the *New Mutants* increasingly shunted to one side within their own book, they were eventually replaced entirely by the first *X-Force* ongoing series, with Liefeld at the helm. The first issue of *X-Force* sold around five million copies – an insanely high amount for a comic book.

X-Force has undergone many changes over the years, from a black-ops division of the X-Men to a cynical PR stunt, the superhero equivalent of a manufactured boy band. Typically, they're darker than the X-Men and more pro-active in their approach. *X-Force* books tend to also focus heavily on inter-team dynamics and have a solid dose of psychological realism (but we probably won't see that in *Deadpool 2*). *X-Force* has been cancelled, rebooted and relaunched countless times, and along the way has boasted the creative talents of Greg Capullo, Peter Milligan, Mike Allred, Rick Remender, Dennis Hopeless and Si Spurrier.

Milligan and Allred's run on *X-Force* – which was renamed *X-Statix* part-way through – is probably the closest in tone to *Deadpool*, featuring characters with weird powers who are regularly and inventively killed off while satirising the whole superhero genre. If Fox are aiming for the *Deadpool* market, they may well lean towards this take on the X-Force team – and with Reynolds' *Deadpool* slated to appear in *X-Force*, it seems unlikely that they'll be aiming for a serious, *Logan*-esque tone.

## THE DEADPOOL 2 X-FORCE TEAM

Not all of the members of *Deadpool 2*'s X-Force have been confirmed at the time of writing, but here's what we know, and what we can safely assume.

### DOMINO Zazie Beetz

Domino is the most prominent X-Force member to appear in *Deadpool 2*, with the exception of Cable. She has the power to subconsciously manipulate probability, essentially giving herself unbeatable 'good luck' (which is cinematic). If any of the X-Force members are likely to survive *Deadpool 2* and take a leading role in the *X-Force* movie, it's Domino.

### BEDLAM Terry Crews

Bedlam has the power to create electro-magnetic fields that can disrupt electrical equipment and interfere with people's minds and nervous systems to cause them pain or make them pass out. Bedlam was never a prominent member of X-Force, and hasn't been seen in comics for quite some time.

### SHATTERSTAR Lewis Tan

Shatterstar is another founding X-Force member who answers the call/help-wanted ad in the *Deadpool 2* trailer. In the comics, Shatterstar is a genetically engineered gladiator from another dimension who escapes to Earth and becomes a superhero. He has super strength, speed and agility and usually wields two swords.

### BILL SKARSGÅRD

Yep, Pennywise himself pops up in the *Deadpool 2* trailer as part of X-Force, but the character he's playing has yet to be confirmed. The presence of Shatterstar has led some to suspect he's playing his best-friend-turned-lover Rictor, but the green spit-guard he's wearing suggests he could well be playing Zeitgeist, a short-lived character from Milligan and Allred's run.

### ROB DELANEY 'Peter'

We are very, very excited about Peter. Fan speculation has it that Delaney will appear as Pete Wisdom, a British agent with the ability to fire burning thermal blasts. He's been in X-Force, but is more commonly associated with the Marvel teams *Excalibur* and *Mt.13*. However, in the new trailer he's American and claims to have no powers, just enthusiasm and a damn fine moustache.

## OTHER CHARACTERS

Brianna Hildebrand's Negasonic Teenage Warhead is back, as is Colossus, but they don't seem to become X-Force members. Another new character played by Shioli Kutsuna – perhaps playing Surge – also appears, but, again, isn't actually seen with X-Force. Julian Dennison plays a mysterious mutant with fire powers that Deadpool is trying to protect from Cable, who is on a mission from the future to kill him. And remember: in the comics Wade's fiancée Vanessa is Copycat, a shape-shifting former X-Force member herself.

## WHO ELSE COULD APPEAR IN THE X-FORCE MOVIE?

### CABLE

By the time the *X-Force* movie rolls around, you can safely assume that Cable will be in his rightful position as leader of the team.

### BOOM BOOM

Tabitha Smith's explosive Boom Boom is a fellow founding member of X-Force, but it's entirely possible that Hildebrand's Negasonic Teenage Warhead will take Boom Boom's place on the team.

### WARPATH

Another founding and long-running member, Warpath possesses enhanced physical abilities across the board. The character briefly appeared in *X-Men: Days of Future Past*.

### PSYLOCKE

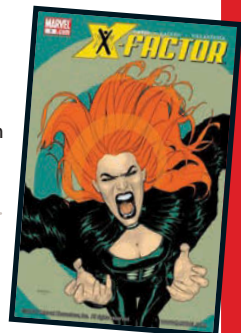
In recent years, Psylocke has been more of an X-Force member than an X-Man. It could be the perfect opportunity for an *X-Men* crossover if the *X-Force* movie nabs Olivia Munn's Psylocke.

### SIRYN

The daughter of X-Man Banshee (played by Caleb Landry Jones in *X-Men: First Class*), Siryn is an alcoholic Irish woman with a hell of a scream on her.

### FANTOMEX

A recent addition to X-Force, Fantomex is a product of the Weapon X programme, has three brains, an external nervous system (which is also a spaceship) and the ability to create complex illusions. He's also a right murderous bastard.



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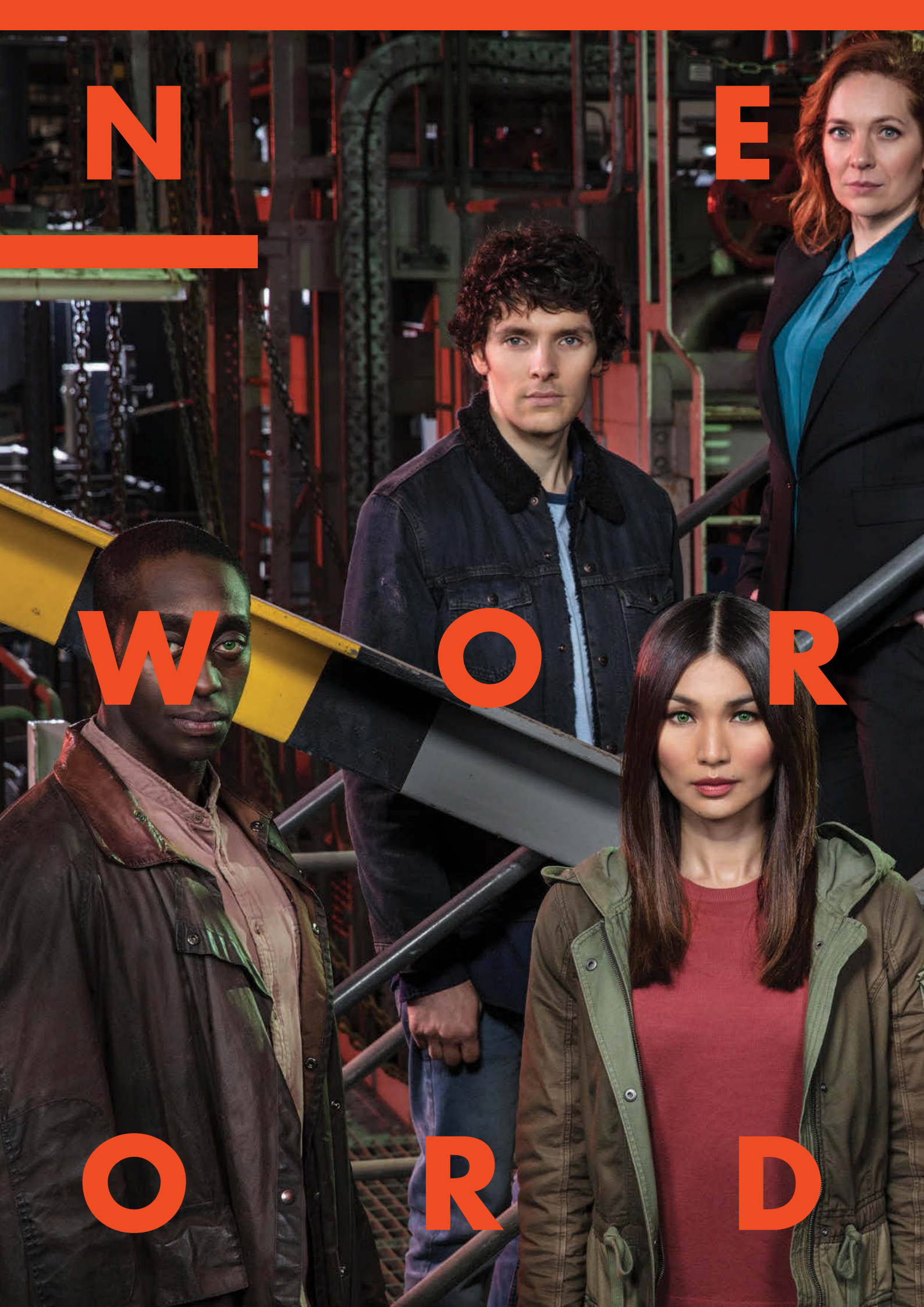
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THE LAST SERIES OF HUMANS CHANGED THE WORLD AS WE ONCE KNEW IT. WE GO ON THE SET OF THE C4 SHOW TO FIND OUT HOW HUMANITY IS DEALING WITH GLOBAL SYNTH CONSCIOUSNESS...

WORDS WILL LAWRENCE

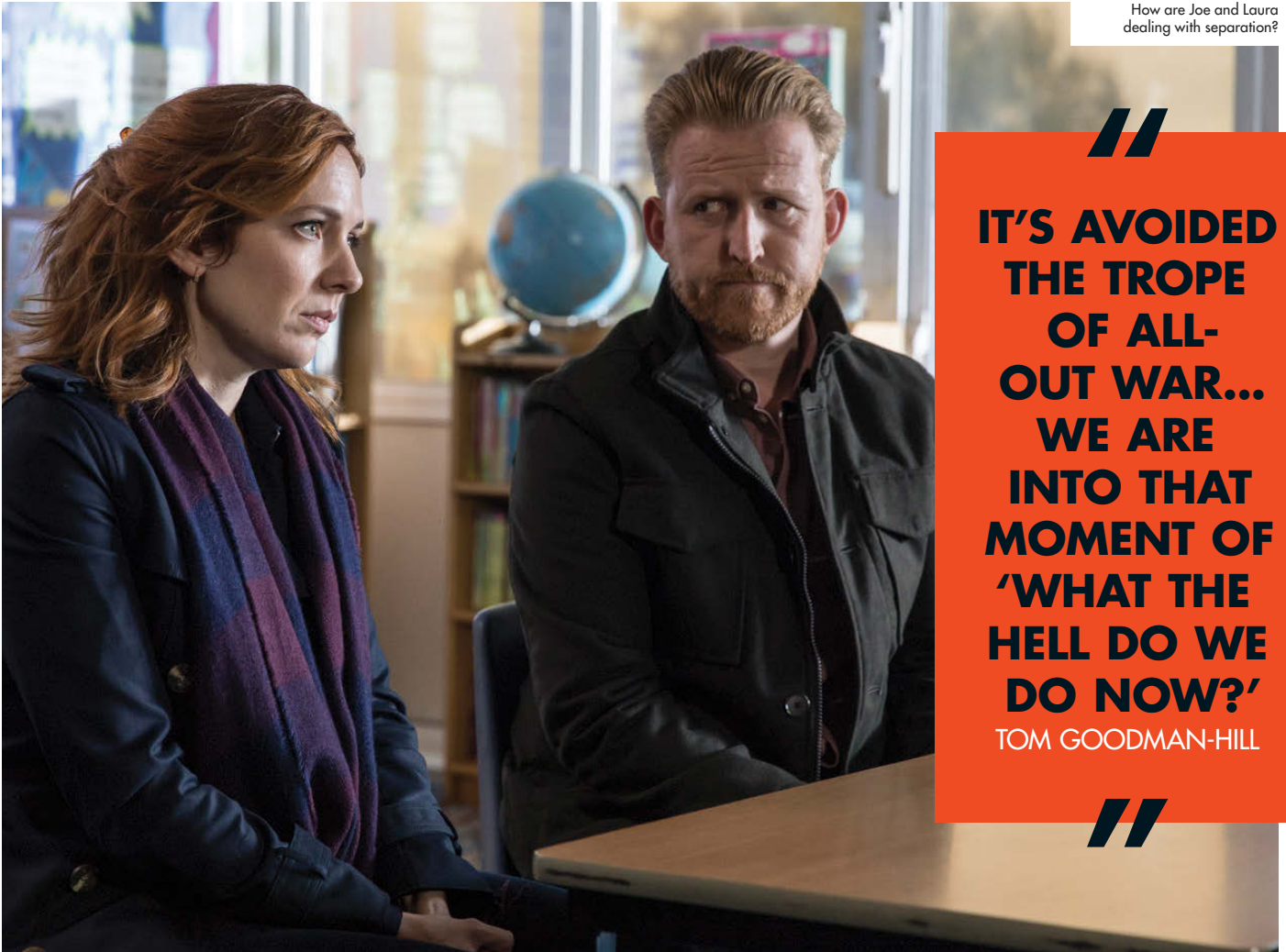
Once it was the preserve of sci-fi writers and filmmakers – Isaac Asimov through to Gene Roddenberry to Ridley Scott, James Cameron and beyond – yet now it dominates real world news. During the course of this article’s creation, techy business magnate Elon Musk has warned that Artificial Intelligence might well evolve into an ‘immortal dictator’, while a House of Lords select committee has just released a paper stating that ethics must be at the centre of AI’s future development. The debate over AI has never been more pertinent.

It is against that backdrop that the third series of *Humans* comes to terrestrial TV. During its first season, the show, which is drawn from the Swedish science fiction drama *Äkta Människor* (translating as ‘Real Humans’), emerged as Channel 4’s most popular drama in 20 years, winning over viewers and critics alike with its real-world, relevant sci-fi storyline. The new series opens in an alternate world where all the ‘green eyed’ synthetic humans, or synths, around the world have gained consciousness. This opens the door for the *Terminator* nightmare of man versus machine.

Certainly, according to actress Emily Berrington who plays Niska, the synth that shocked viewers with her violent proclivities at the series’ outset, the new series will offer drama, action and startling twists and turns: “This series has a different energy to it because of all the green eyes becoming conscious,” she says when she joins **SciFiNow** on the London set. “It is like there is this whole new species that has suddenly arrived on Earth. Inevitably, there is not room yet. Humans haven’t made room for them and the synths have to fight for their place, though they are trying to do it through peaceful means.”

There has been no *Terminator*-style apocalypse, but the change has created a grave new world rife with dramatic tension, as a decimated synth population struggles amid an uneasy truce with its human creators. “It does have a lot of dramatic tension,” Berrington agrees. “And then there is a whole other new ➤

How are Joe and Laura dealing with separation?



//

**IT'S AVOIDED THE TROPE OF ALL-OUT WAR... WE ARE INTO THAT MOMENT OF 'WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO NOW?'**

TOM GOODMAN-HILL

//

➤ species, the orange eyes," a generation of newly engineered 'safe' insentient synths. "They also have their place so there's a definitely new dramatic tension from that."

Given the arena in which *Humans* plays out, there is a certain irony to the fact that our visit to the Series Three set takes us inside the now defunct Barking Reach Power Station in the docklands of east London; a show about an alternate, high-tech digital reality is filming in a decrepit analogue environment, interviews conducted in a cold, dank room flanked by outdated technology. "*Humans* has notoriously unglamorous sets," says actress Gemma Chan, who plays the kindly synth called Mia.

The dusty, abandoned buildings provide the new season with a whole host of sets, for action and drama. "And the number of people that we have on set every day is much bigger than before," continues Berrington. "There are far more epic scenes with huge numbers of green eyed synths, so the series has become bigger, more epic and more cinematic in how it is shot. This has been a really exciting series. Everything that has happened was far better than I could have even imagined."

According to Berrington and her fellow cast-members, the creators of the British series,

writers Sam Vincent and Jonathan Brackley, have ensured the new series remains fresh and exciting by avoiding obvious narrative paths. Series anchor Tom Goodman-Hill, for example, who plays flesh-and-blood family man Joe Hawkins, believes that the starting point for the series cleverly dodges standard sci-fi tropes that viewers might expect with the awakening of synth consciousness.

After all, much of the show's success stems from the fact that it remains rooted in domesticity and the humdrum mechanics of everyday family life. The synth awakening, or Day Zero as it is also known, could have dragged the series in another direction. "You are going to see the immediate fall out of that [awakening]," says Goodman-Hill, "but Sam and John rather brilliantly don't do what you expect, and it all remains very relatable. "

The series starts one year on. "That fallout has happened and what you are seeing is the political fallout and the slow bubbling to the surface of mankind's rage at what happened the year before. It's avoided the sci-fi trope of an all-out war. The technological fallout has already been surpassed and we are into that moment of: 'What the hell do we do now? How does mankind cope with this and how do we

treat these beings that are conscious?'

"That's what stops it from falling into those sci-fi tropes and what keeps it being about the moral and ethical arguments, which is always what Sam and John wanted to make it about."

In the new series, the Hawkins family are separated, geographically. Joe has moved away from the family home and is running a fruit and veg business in Altringham. He misses his daughters though does see his son, Toby (played by Theo Stevenson).

His life is soon turned upside down, though, when synth Karen (Ruth Bradley), who had been hiding in plain sight while working as a detective, arrives on his doorstep. "I am so used to Joe being on the sofa with the kids and being in the house and he's taken right out of all that," continues Goodman-Hill.

"Karen walks into his life just like that and it is a huge surprise for him. She is the last person he is expecting to see, so his world is turned upside down. He is terrified of her. As far as he is concerned she's the single scariest being he could possibly run into and it is the last thing he is expecting. So, this series has been really fun for me."

When *Humans* first aired, Joe was cast as an adult human who was well-disposed ➤

## NISKA SPEAKS

Like the Girl With The Dragon Tattoo or the Bride from Kill Bill, Emily Berrington tells us that Niska is relentless in her quest...

### DOES NISKA GET TO KICK ASS AGAIN IN SERIES THREE?

There are some absolutely amazing kick-ass bits that we shot, which may or not may not involve a rain machine! It is very dramatic. If anything, there is more than the first two series put together. At the beginning of this series I was like: 'We have got to have comfy hardcore shoes and not the little heels I was running around in in Series One.'

### YOU MUST ENJOY THAT?

Oh yeah. It couldn't be more different from what I am like in real life, so it is very cathartic to be able to smash a pane of sugar glass. In the smash club scene in Series One, they gave me a rubber bat and padded all the stunt guys, so I was allowed to really go for it. Having never committed an act of violence in the real world, suddenly you get this release.

### CAN YOU JUST SNAP BACK INTO SYNTH MODE AT THE START OF FILMING?

I went back to training school and I practised whenever I was in my flat, doing the washing up and making the bed. I did try and walk down the street a bit. If I walk down the street in synth mode it is the one time when I am not the person ducking out of the way. Suddenly, the path clears in front of you. People can obviously sense it, or they just think: 'Who does she think she is, striding down the street!'

### HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TEMPTED TO GO INTO A BAR AND ORDER A DRINK AS IF YOU WERE A SYNTH?

There would be a risk that people would think I was a bit of a twat! It'd be: 'She actually lives in character now!' But walking down the street you do get to places a lot quicker. I went to New York a couple of years ago and there was much more direct walking and direct talking there. I thought: 'Okay, these people could all play synths!'

### HOW DID PEOPLE RESPOND TO THE NISKA-ASTRID RELATIONSHIP?

The response to that relationship has been so positive and I think *Humans* is absolutely brilliant in dealing with all the relationships, right across the show. None of them are trivialised and I love that nothing was ever made of this being a same-sex relationship. And that is what people responded really well to. People feel glad that the relationship has been portrayed in such a normal way.

### WHAT CONNECTION DID YOU HAVE TO SCI-FI WHEN GROWING UP?

I loved the film *Labyrinth* most of all. I am in a book club with some other actors and one of the first things we read was *Solaris*, a real classic, and that was really great. My older brother was a massive *Star Wars* fan, so I ended up being a fan as well. We had the little Ewok house and the figures!

➤ towards synths while his wife, fellow series mainstay Laura (Kathryn Parkinson), was set up as the sceptic. This flipped around during the course of the first two series and Laura, a lawyer, is now working for the Synthetics Commission, battling for synth rights.

“She has had a journey as somebody who is quite damaged and has got genuine grievances but then has experiences that change all that,” says Parkinson, whose character forms a relationship with a new introduction into the series, scientist Neil Sommer (Mark Bonnar). “So, I buy into her journey to become the kind of person who wants synths to have rights. She is very pleased in the third or fourth episode where she manages to pass a bill for a fine on any attack on a synth.” Goodbye smash clubs.

Meanwhile, in another turnaround, the domesticity once enjoyed by the Hawkins family has now taken root in the life of Berrington’s one-time violent loner synth Niska. Last season saw her strike up a loving relationship with the human Astrid (Bella Dayne). “That was something I was keen on being part of this season,” Berrington states.

“We see her in this series living a somewhat normal life with Astrid, which seemed impossible a season ago. And, inevitably, there are challenges along the way. But she has had domesticity for the first time ever, which is so lovely because it is absolutely the antithesis of all the action she does.”

Indeed, every major character has evolved during the course of the series, and that applies to Leo (Colin Morgan), too. Leo is unique in that he is part-human, part-synth and the conclusion to the last series has had a profound effect on his being.

“Leo was between two worlds, part this and part that,” says Morgan. “But any form of technology that was keeping him alive is gone now, so he is fully human. It’s a real surprise to him that he feels okay. He is rediscovering those human qualities that the technology suppressed, so he evolves in terms of emotions and also with the emergence of fully human memories. He is not used to flashbacks that he can’t control. It’s almost like PTSD.”

Morgan says that Leo feels like a different person. This series he is with Mattie Hawkins (Lucy Carless), Joe and Laura’s bright daughter who brought about Day Zero, igniting total synth sentience at the end of the last series.



“There is a strong connection between Leo and Mattie, with them both feeling like outsiders,” he adds. “Mattie having released the code at the end of Series Two feels very guilty and alone and Leo is the only one who can understand that. They’re two lost souls as Leo begins to find himself as a human.”

Elsewhere among Leo and Niska’s ‘family’, Leo’s close friend Max (Ivanhoe Jeremiah) is now the elected leader of a group of sentient synths who have forged their own clan that lives in an old railyard, surviving on the fringes of human society.

“We are living well, trying our hand at art and bringing ourselves up to date with

literature,” says Jeremiah. “We are trying to set up a society in the railyard. We have enough space, but we have problems with power, which is government controlled, so that for the synths is like starvation.

“Also, there are some extreme groups on site,” he adds, which allows the writers and cast to explore yet more conflict among the synth population. “Max was elected leader and he has to cope with the pressures because not everyone is on side. Series Three opens in a very unstable Britain,” which is something else, Jeremiah says, that keeps the show relevant to today.

When *Humans* first aired it was through

## HERE TO HELP US

Threatening AI is no stranger to the screen. Here are ten of our film favourites...

### METROPOLIS, 1927

Fritz Lang’s definitive piece influenced everything that followed. His ‘false Maria’ was a design model for George Lucas’s C-3PO for a start.

### THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, 1951

Who can forget their first glimpse of humanoid robot Gort zapping the US military with its visor-fired death ray?

### 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, 1968

Arthur C Clarke’s tale became an arthouse staple courtesy of Stanley Kubrick and the softly spoken killer HAL.

### WESTWORLD, 1973

Before the TV series was Michael Crichton’s movie; his early foray into amusement park mayhem. Here it’s robots rather than velociraptors.



LEO WAS BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, PART OF THIS PART OF THAT... BUT NOW HE IS FULLY HUMAN

COLIN MORGAN




Max (Ivano Jeremias) is now the leader of a clan of sentient synths, and faces pressure from both his fellow AIs and the human government.

Gemma Chan's Anita that audiences were introduced to the synth population, and she later emerged as Mia, another member of the core sentient synth 'family' built by Dr David Elster, which drove the narrative. In the new season, she embarks on a quest with Niska, while also coming face-to-face with Ed (Sam Palladio), the man with whom she forged a bond last time out. Their relationship concluded in rather fractious manner.

"And it starts quite fractiously when Ed comes back into her life at a crucial point," Chan says of the new season. "Mia has got very mixed feelings and it's a real struggle for her. She has been on a huge journey across this series and it so exciting to be a part of something that feels relevant."

The show's relevance, through both the focus on domestic life and the myriad themes of discussion provoked by the rise of AI, is something that inspires every cast member that we meet on set. Each one says that they have thought deeply about their own relationship with tech. Both Goodman-Hill and Chan have recently withdrawn from social media, for example.

Indeed, it was Chan who filmed the documentary on AI to accompany the show, *How To Build A Human*, and her conversations with scientists led her to believe that in many ways we don't know what we're dealing with. We are retrofitting legislation and are playing catch up when considering the implications of AI for the human species: "I worry we will blunder into something and we won't know what to do, and then it will be too late." She once said that we seem to be sleepwalking into our own annihilation.

Chan smiles when reminded, and she smiles again when conceding that she owns an Alexa but that it (or she) still sits in the box. We pause for thought when reading the feature back. Our Alexa is still playing some background music, and we ask her to stop. Should Alexa be put back in the box? Maybe that decision can wait until we know the outcome to the *Humans* storyline. In the meantime, we ask her to set a reminder for the start of Series Three... 

Series Three of *Humans* will air on Channel 4 in May.

**STAR WARS, 1977**

Who can forget their first glimpse of Darth Vader, who as we know was 'more machine now than man'. C-P30 and R2D2 were pretty cool, too.

**ALIEN, 1979**

Ridley Scott's seminal movie, a haunted house tale transposed to space, featured Ash, an android who valued the 'perfect organism' over humans.

**BLADE RUNNER, 1982**

Another Ridley Scott triumph, this was drawn from Philip K Dick's story about bioengineered replicants.

**THE TERMINATOR, 1984**

Though eclipsed by the sequel, James Cameron's classic has become synonymous with the idea of machines eclipsing man.

**THE MATRIX, 1999**

"Never send a human to do a machine's job," says the dangerous AI programme, Agent Smith in the Wachowskis' cyberpunk actioner.

**EX MACHINA, 2014**

Written and directed by Alex Garland, this modern-day cinematic classic saw AI deciding that it would gladly kill to live.



# CULT COMFORT

INDIE GENRE AUTEURS JUSTIN BENSON AND AARON MOORHEAD TELL US ABOUT THEIR MIND-BENDING NEW SCI-FI THE ENDLESS

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**"THERE ARE TWO IDEAS THAT ARE CONSIDERED AMERICAN THAT WE GROW UP WITH,"** Aaron Moorhead tells us. "That we are raised to be kind of anti-authoritarian for the most part – we're supposed to be, at least. We idolise that, even if a lot of people are followers. But simultaneously there's the arrogant idea that everyone else might have it wrong and you have it right, so it's like: 'There's this organised religion, that's not right, but the 12 of us with all our guns in the woods, we've got it figured out!' That's anti-authoritarian but it's also like this arrogant idea of: 'Oh, really, that guy has it figured out! Okay!'"

We're talking cults and authoritarianism with Moorhead and his filmmaking partner Justin Benson, the duo behind genre-bending indies *Resolution* and *Spring*, because their new film *The Endless* follows two brothers (played by the pair) who decide to return to the doomsday cult they escaped from as teens. Aaron (Moorhead) is disaffected with the way his life has turned out and idealises their time spent in the commune in the woods, while Justin (Benson) is more sceptical. When they arrive, Aaron finds everything is even better than he remembered, while Justin is convinced that something deeply wrong is going on.

It's not much of a giveaway to say that there's something unnatural is happening in *The Endless*. To say exactly what that is, however, would be to give away one of the film's most enjoyable secrets, but we can tell you that the two filmmakers are aware of

how we as approach movies about cults.

"There's so much content available about cults," Benson nods. "You can tell the story exploiting what people's knowledge probably is. Hal [the cult's leader] is a handsome nice guy who smiles at the beginning and you're like: 'He's up to something!' You can play with that through the whole first half of the movie and make people feel unnerved. There is a secret, there's something unspoken and that's where you get your uneasy feeling."

Much of the tension in the first half comes from the disagreement between Justin and Aaron about the group. Once we arrive, Aaron's viewpoint seems more reasonable, and it's interesting that the 'get out there and do your own thing' idea was the impetus behind the film getting made in the first place.

"The more we talk about it the more we realise that it filters down to every single thing," says Moorhead. "The idea was to make a self-reliant movie that nobody could stop us from making. That's one of the reasons we're in it and why it's low-budget. That idea of: go change your life, take charge. Then we made a movie about that thematically and there's two sci-fi ideas in it that both have to do with 'change your life, reject authority'. And then there's the literal idea of cult authority, and [Justin and Aaron] are in an emotional cycle that is in some ways antagonistic and need to break out of their own emotional cycles. It was weird how this one idea seemed to end up filtering through everything."

That relationship between the two brothers is at the core of *The Endless* and the

performances from Benson and Moorhead are excellent ("because we don't suck as actors in this movie, the default is: 'Oh I guess they're just playing themselves!'" laughs Moorhead). As big and as challenging as the ideas get in the film, it's that central bond that keeps it moving forward.

"Something I'd observed in brothers who are close in age is that they talk so much shit to each other or there'll be a quiet simmering life-long anger. Not in a dysfunctional way but being zen so you don't kill each other because you've been around each other so much!" explains Benson. "But when something big goes down, a lot of love is expressed. There's something interesting about that when you put it in a dramatic structure."

Finally, we have to address the L word. Benson and Moorhead's work, particularly *Spring*, has consistently drawn comparisons to HP Lovecraft and they tell us it's not a particularly conscious decision. "When *Resolution* and *Spring* were developed, neither of us really had any knowledge of Lovecraft," Benson tells us. "We'd read the reviews and be like: 'Oh Lovecraftian, we should check that out!' I think one reason is that there's things in it where he explains it just enough that you're like: 'That might be real. Maybe that could be.' And then he leaves everything else in the unknown."

Knowing as little as possible is the best way to go into *The Endless*, and it's certainly an experience you won't forget in a hurry. In fact, it confirms Benson and Moorhead as two of genre cinema's most exciting talents, and they tell us that they have plans for bigger movies.

"We've always had those projects going, it's just that [they] are almost always cast-dependent," explains Benson. "You need to get a big celebrity. We make small films, but there's this perception of: '*Spring's* this indie phenomenon that probably gave you all these opportunities,' and you're like: 'Yeah, it does but it doesn't make Jake Gyllenhaal read your script!' If we wanted to do something traditional and had a script that was ready to go, we could probably get something like that made but it's not what's in our hearts. We want to do something bolder and oftentimes the material that we generate ourselves, it's the analogy of the custom-fitted suit versus getting one off the rack."

Two brothers on the verge of discovery...



*The Endless* is released on 29 June.

THE ENDLESS  
Cult Comfort





**MUST-SEE TV**

Fear The Walking Dead

# DEAD CROSSING

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD HAS A FAMILIAR FACE JOINING THE FIGHT AS MORGAN JONES BRINGS HIS AIKIDO STAFF TO THE SHOW. WE GO ON SET TO MEET THE NEWCOMERS AND SURVIVORS AS SEASON FOUR GETS UNDERWAY....

WORDS SIMON THOMPSON

# FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

Dead Crossing



## THE GOLDEN RULE IN TV AND FILM IS TO NEVER SAY NEVER AND HERE WE ARE ON FEAR THE WALKING DEAD'S FOURTH SEASON, FINDING OUT EXACTLY WHY THAT IS.

Lennie James' Morgan Jones has joined the cast from flagship show *The Walking Dead*; the first character and cast member to make a move across franchise lines. This was a possibility that had been flatly dismissed by showrunners who wanted to keep the worlds separate.

So how did we get here? Sitting and chatting on the set of the show on a ranch just outside Austin, Texas, James takes us back to the conversation that started it all.

"At the beginning of every season you have to sit down with [*The Walking Dead* showrunner] Scott Gimple and he tells you what the arc of this season is going to be and what your character's arc is going to be. You mostly don't listen to anything he's saying because you just want to know whether or not you're going to die," explains James. "By the time you get to the end of it and you are not dying you have to get him to repeat everything he said because you genuinely haven't been listening! We actually did that a bit later than we usually do because I was already in Atlanta when I had that chat with him.

"A couple of days later he phoned me up and said he forgot to talk to me about something and would I come back. So, I drove back to his house thinking he forgot to tell me that I'm dying. I got there, I sat down, I got a bottled water and he said: 'By the way, this is not a conversation about you dying.'

"My first reaction was: 'Oh thank God for that', but then he said it was much weirder than that. He talked about his new role of overseeing both shows and then he said: 'How would you like to continue the story of Morgan in *Fear The Walking Dead*?'"

This was the first time that the idea of moving a character from one series to another had even been discussed. The showrunners and creators have always countered questions about crossovers with concerns about timelines and locations, but now we're four years in and the ➤





# MUST-SEE TV

Fear The Walking Dead

➤ zombie outbreak is fully underway... enter Morgan. However, the character's relocation was just as dependent on the actor as the writer, and it wasn't a choice that James made lightly.

"At the end of the conversation Scott said that he was sure I had loads of questions and, to be honest, I probably did but I couldn't bring a single one of them to my lips," James remembers. "He asked what I wanted to do and all I was that said I was just going to leave and get back to him. I had a 45-minute drive back to my apartment so I wanted to leave, let it sink in and figure out what I thought, to talk to my wife and then we'll have a conversation about it."

"We just started talking about it over the next couple of weeks and months as there was a lot to take on board. It wasn't a case of: 'This is going to happen', it was genuinely a case of what I thought about it. There was absolutely a choice. It wasn't a case of it being if it wasn't me or it wasn't Morgan then it would be somebody else, they were very much saying: 'We were thinking about doing this thing and if you're really not up for it then we'll go a completely different direction.'"

Though he was an established and long-running cast member on *The Walking Dead*, the first day on the set of the spin-off was always going to feel like the first day at a new job – different co-stars, different location, different crew and a brand-new adventure on the page and in real life.

Alicia Debnam-Carey is one of the show's original cast members returning for the fourth

season, reprising the role of Alicia Clark. Making James feel part of the family right away was something she couldn't wait to do.

"He's great, he's such an amazing actor, really humble and hardworking and just a lovely person so working with him has been fantastic. It took a little bit of getting used to suddenly having a different situation created within the show," she explains as we relax between

**"THERE'S A GREATER SCOPE BUT IT IS SO MUCH MORE CINEMATIC, VISUALLY"**

**ALICIA DEBNAM-CAREY**

takes at Briarpatch Ranch.

"The first [time] I met Lennie was the first day that he worked. It was a massive day on set, it was a really big part of our first episode, everyone was working and we all just jumped in the deep end. It was kind of a little chaotic but it meant that everyone was just there and had to bond and get to know one another," Debnam-Carey adds. "Colman Domingo [who plays

Victor Strand] and I ended up organising a night of barbecue because that seems to be the great equalizer here in Texas: 'Let's all just go and get barbecue.' That kind of kickstarted everything, to just get so comfortable with one another and starting this new adventure."

However, Lennie James' Morgan isn't the only new face in the fourth season of *Fear The Walking Dead*. Jenna Elfman (*Will And Grace*) joins the cast as Naomi, Maggie Grace (*Lost*) makes her bow as Althea, and *Deadwood's* Garret Dillahunt arrives as John. He might be new to this show but he tells us that he's excited to be working with his *Deadwood* co-star Kim Dickens, who's returning to lead the cast as Madison Clark.

"I can't talk about who I do scenes with and [who] I don't but it's been really great to be back working with her," he enthuses. "I have no problem working with Kim ever, anywhere, any time for any reason. I just feel a real warmth in this ensemble, and it really is a real ensemble which is my favourite kind."

However, despite being great friends on and off the set, one thing she didn't warn him about was exactly how physically exhausting filming can be. "I've done a lot of fight scenes in my life and I like them, we also have a great stunt team on this show," Dillahunt tells us. "I'm not a kid anymore but I'm not an old man and I feel very capable. Kim did say to me that this was the hardest job she's ever had and I was surprised. About five episodes in I took her to dinner and I was like: 'This is really hard.' She turned round



to me and said: 'Yeah, I don't think I've ever recovered,' and I was like: 'That's a little different than saying it's the hardest job you've ever had. You should lead with that next time!'"

Aside from getting to work with Dickens again, *The Walking Dead* world was something Dillahunt has been angling to explore professionally for a number of years, and he was even linked with the role of *TWD*'s most iconic big bad.

"I'm a fan of this universe so I wanted to be a part of it for quite a while but I was always busy or doing something else," he explains. "When I was doing a show called *Hand Of God* I sort of bothered Scott (Gimple) because I heard Negan was coming up on *The Walking Dead*, and I kind of lobbied him for that. It was never really close, I was just messing with him really, but it started a relationship. I think he remembered me and sort of wrote this with me in mind. It was an easy sell and I was like: 'I'm in, sounds cool.'"

Dillahunt adds: "For me, I think *Fear The Walking Dead*, and *The Walking Dead*, are perfect combinations. I've said this before I even thought of being on the show that something like sci-fi and westerns are two of my favourite genres because you can tell any story, you can make it about anything and not offend anybody because it's these unreal worlds."

Aside from an unspecified lapse of time between the end of *Fear The Walking Dead*'s third and fourth seasons, something fans of the show will notice is the look of the show has changed somewhat; it not only feels bigger in scope and scale and more cinematic but also there's an extra richness to the characterisations.

"There's a greater scope because, of course, we've merged these two worlds but it is so much more cinematic, visually," enthuses Debnam-Carey. "I know they had a lot of westerns in mind when they were recreating certain shots for this season, they were a lot more one-shot takes, there's a simplicity to a lot of the shots."

"For my character, Alicia, there is an exciting element of this season, in particular in the first half, where we play a lot with time. You get to see her in very different points of who she is as a character and they're very, very different, they're filmed very differently, they look very different and that's really exciting. It's something I've never seen attempted in any of *The Walking Dead* universe but even really any other TV show at the moment. There's also a lot of dramatic changes happening for her."

Could the drama include characters from *Fear The Walking Dead* 'doing a Morgan' and crossing over to *The Walking Dead*? It's something Colman Domingo is now very much on board with, saying: "I would love to see Victor Strand pop up in *The Walking Dead*. I think that would be interesting. I think he would pilot a jet or something and get himself to wherever they're at. He would be a great challenge for them; they wouldn't know what to do with him."

"I'm a fan of the crossover now," he reveals.

"At first I was hesitant, wondering what was going to happen. Now I think it's interesting because it keeps expanding the universe and I look forward to expanding even further, maybe to Russia or Japan. I would like to know where how other countries are dealing with this apocalypse."

Having already crossed over one show to another, James is also open to expanding the universe even further if Gimple was to consider it: "I think that might be interesting in a next incarnation is that it is a different country," he suggests. "I think it kind of warrants that because so far this telling of the story has been very much in America. It would be very interesting to take it elsewhere. Maybe we could spin it off everywhere and have *The Walking Dead Paris*."

"In *Fear The Walking Dead*, Morgan's still going to be traveling the path but this is very

much about who he is now. His story is no longer being told in reference to Morgan as a friend of Rick or asking whether he's a Kingdom-er, an Alexandrian or a Hilltop-er. One thing I said to Andrew Chambliss and Ian Goldberg, our new showrunners, and Scott of course, is that I want to be as surprised by what happens to Morgan as the audience will be and I want to be challenged in different ways."

He concludes: "When I first came to America, the idea of being associated with a character for as long as I have been with Morgan, I literally would have said to you that if that happens to me, please put a bullet in my head because I've sold my soul. But this really, genuinely, doesn't feel like that." ☞

*Fear The Walking Dead* Season Four is currently airing on AMC on BT TV.

Victor Strand (Colman Domingo) takes aim.



## FAMILIAR FACES

The kings and queens of the series cross-over



### SPIKE

*Buffy The Vampire Slayer* to *Angel*

After sacrificing his life in the *Buffy* finale, James Marsters' snarky vamp materialised in *Angel*'s final season and completely stole the show: "You're a wee little puppet man."



### JOHN CONSTANTINE

*Constantine* to *the Arrowverse*

Sadly, Matt Ryan only got one season on his own show before NBC pulled the plug, but after an appearance on *Arrow* he is being teased as a *Legends* regular.



### MARTHA JONES

*Doctor Who* to *Torchwood*

Freema Agyeman's medical student had a relatively brief run as a companion but crossed over to join Captain Jack and the *Torchwood* gang after leaving the *TARDIS*.



### WORF

*Star Trek: The Next Generation* to *Deep Space Nine*

Michael Dorn returned to the *Star Trek* universe to join *Deep Space Nine*'s fourth season and became a key player as the show continued to find its own voice.



### CLAIRE TEMPLE

*Marvel Netflix* shows

It was strange that Rosario Dawson didn't show up in *The Punisher*. After playing a key role in *Daredevil* she's been the glue that binds the *Marvel Netflix* world together.



# Family Trauma

GRIEF HAS NEVER BEEN SO TERRIFYING. ARI ASTER TELLS US ABOUT CRAFTING ONE OF THE MOST SCARRING HORROR FILMS IN YEARS WITH HEREDITARY

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

## AS A HORROR FAN, YOU SOMETIMES GET ASKED WHY YOU GO TO SEE THESE FILMS.

What do you get out of them? What are you hoping to experience? Do you want to jump? Do you want to cry? Do you want to be made so uncomfortable that you leave the cinema feeling like you've been through a profoundly troubling experience? Ari Aster's debut feature *Hereditary* is the kind of film that crawls under your skin and fixes you to your seat, unable to look away as its immaculately crafted horrors unfold. You can hear a pin drop... except for the moments when someone watching has an audible response to what they're watching.

"Those are my favourites," laughs Aster when we tell him about the gasps and groans we heard while watching his film. "In every screening that I've sat in on, there was always at least one person in the audience who was audibly suffering! Which, for whatever reason, was something that I was going for!"

*Hereditary* premiered at Sundance and established itself as the 2018 horror to watch. There's normally one horror film at the festival that gets that kind of buzz, and as the movie has begun its wider festival run, each audience's response makes it clear it's living up to the hype.

"It's funny because you get so wrapped up in the minutiae of what you're making, just in the post-production process, that I frankly forgot that I was making a horror film," Aster tells us. "What maybe separates this from other horror films is we were kind of avoiding a lot of the clichés and we were trying to stay away from jump scares. So, it was never really part of the process, especially in post, to make it scarier or go for any specific genre effects on the audience. And then watching it with an audience, it became very clear to me. 'Oh right, I set out to make a horror film!' and it was a relief to see that people liked the film, but it was also very gratifying that they were reacting to it and it had a visceral collective effect."

One of the reasons for that collective response is that *Hereditary* is dealing with something every audience member can relate to: grief and loss. The film begins with the Graham family leaving for Annie's (Toni Collette) mother's funeral. It's immediately clear that, although the deceased woman was living with them, the relationship between Annie and her mother was somewhat strained. Her mother had a lot of secrets and as the days pass, the legacy of that pain begins to resurface in terrifying ways...

"I wanted to make a serious film about grief and trauma that gradually curdles into a nightmare in the same way that life can feel like a nightmare when disaster strikes," Aster explains. "And so that was the original goal: I want to make a film that is a family tragedy that works as a nuanced family drama and then I want the film over the course of its running time to kind of break down and collapse in on itself as the family does."

Annie is a successful miniature artist and

➤ we see her sculpting the rooms, people and events of her lives in incredible detail, but there's only so much control you can have over the real world. In an early scene, she turns a piece featuring her mother to face the wall and it's safe to say that no conflict or horror in *Hereditary* can be so easily resolved. This is a film in which raw, ugly, unforgivable things are said as tragedy continues to find its way to the family. As an audience member, you're watching the shocking and heartbreaking destruction of a family that has a comparable, if not greater power than the supernatural other which may or may not be lurking in their home.

"I wanted to make a film about the corrosive effect that grief and trauma can have on a family," Aster enthuses. "There are a lot of films about grief ultimately bringing a family together. You'll usually have a scene in films where there's some cathartic fight and things are said that shouldn't be said but in the end they're closer because of it. Whereas here, it's like watching a car wreck where bit by bit you're seeing things take place that can't be undone, and not just the big dramatic events, but these small quiet unsaid moments that are contributing to this toxic dynamic and so ultimately, yeah, I wanted to make a film about a family that is dealing with grief in all the wrong ways and

## "THE FILM CURDLES INTO A NIGHTMARE"

ARI ASTER

in the end it's catastrophic."

You might think, given the subject matter, that writing the script for *Hereditary* would have been a rather deeply painful experience, but Aster tells us that would be wrong. "Honestly, for me it was a therapeutic process, it was very cathartic," he remembers. "But I also think that there's something inherent in the genre – it demands catharsis. And so, the process was maybe one of wrestling with a lot of unresolved feelings and then also needing



to resolve them in one way or another."

The script also had the desired effect when it came to finding the perfect cast. Collette is joined by Gabriel Byrne, who plays her softly spoken husband Steve, Alex Wolff plays her teenage son Peter (who has a particularly tricky relationship with his mother), and Milly Shapiro plays her young daughter, Charlie, who seems to be the hardest hit by the loss of her grandmother. Each actor gives an excellent performance, and there is a typically brilliant supporting turn from Ann Dowd (*The Leftovers*) as Joan, who Annie meets at a grief counselling group.

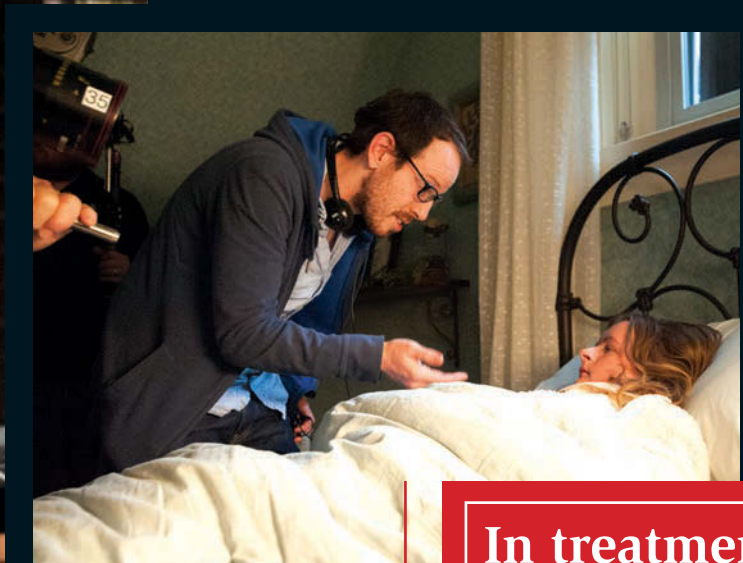
"Well, with the adults we sent the script out as offers and we got everybody that we were hoping to get," Aster tells us. "I just felt incredibly lucky to have actors of Toni and Gabriel and Ann's calibre. That ultimately means that your movie gets made but also the performances will have the depth that a film like this needs in order to actually work. I was prepared to search for Charlie for a very long time, but Milly Shapiro came in relatively early and this is her first film, but she actually had an

honorary Tony that she won when she was ten for playing Mathilda on Broadway. So, she's a veteran theatre actress despite being very young so she's just an incredible actress who can do anything. Alex Wolff also came in pretty early into the process and he gave definitely the most powerful audition, but he didn't look like anybody in the family at the time because we had a different Steve before Gabriel, and so he didn't get the part right away but at a certain point it became clear that we really had to go with him, he was the best person for the part. Now it feels silly that it was ever a question!"

It's an incredible ensemble, and Collette leads with an intense, ferocious and heartbreaking performance that is stunning. "She really just is an incredibly disciplined, devoted actress so she kind of just brought all that stuff to the set," remembers Aster. "I did give her a ten-page biography for the character before we got started; I had written a lot on Annie, and so I furnished her with that but beyond that her instincts are second-to-none and it's a very easy job to direct her."

In addition to the exceptional performances,





Clockwise from left: Annie (Toni Collette) hard at work on her immaculate miniatures, Ari Aster directs the amazing Milly Shapiro (Charlie), the horror finds its way in...


*Hereditary* has a particular atmosphere that is claustrophobic and intense. It nods to genre classics (Aster cites Japanese horror, *The Shining*, *Don't Look Now* and *The Innocents* as genre touchstones) but it really has a unique power. Once the camera goes into that house, you never feel comfortable.

"We actually built the entire interior of the house, so all of that was built on a stage," Aster reveals. "We couldn't find a house that would accommodate what we needed to shoot what I had mapped out. So, we had to build everything on a stage and Grace Yun was the production designer and she is just fantastic. And the biggest challenge there was that we had to design everything. Not just what the spaces were and the dimensions of each room but also what the dressing and the props would be because we needed to replicate all of those. We needed to have our miniaturist Steve Newburn to replicate everything. And we had those miniatures coming in on the day we needed to shoot them at the very end of the shoot so that was very, very intensive.

"And then beyond the spaces that we built, I

would say the atmosphere really comes down to my cinematographer Pawel Pogorzelski who I've been working with for about ten years now, we met at AFI as students," Aster continues. "He and I have a very, very close relationship and we have a shorthand that's close to telepathy. I think what he was able to do just with lighting the house; I'm really proud of what he did there."

So much of the fear in *Hereditary* comes from trying to figure out what exactly is going on, which of the potential evils is the root cause, and where exactly this terrible wrongness is coming from. It's the kind of exceptionally-crafted horror that turns your stomach in knots as you become aware that you're completely in the filmmakers' hands and things can get exactly as bad as they want them to.

"There's something that a teacher at AFI once said, that filmmaking should essentially be mischief making," Aster remembers. "That always rang really true for me. And that's something that I hope I'm bringing to every film I make: that sense of mischief." 

*Hereditary* is released on 15 June.

## In treatment

Notes on genre cinema's most troubled mothers



### AMELIA

It's obvious that Amelia has been under a tremendous amount of stress since the loss of her husband, and her son Samuel requires constant attention. However, I am concerned about her description of this children's book she claims to have received. She says she can't get rid of it...



### MARGARET WHITE

Of course, I respect Margaret's beliefs and I know she feels very passionately about raising her daughter Carrie to be a good Christian girl. However, I can't help but worry that she's shielding her too much from the outside world, and that her methods will cause resentment and rage...



### NORMA BATES

I have yet to actually meet with Mrs Bates. Her appointment was made by telephone, and all my attempts to contact her have been (very politely, it must be said) rebuffed by her son Norman. From what I can gather, she very rarely leaves her room, so perhaps a house visit is in order...



### BEVERLY SUTPHIN

It's always a pleasure talking with Beverly. She loves her family and she has a delightfully wicked sense of humour. Really, I don't see what she gets out of therapy at all, it seems very unlikely that she gets irresistible homicidal urges or anything along those lines. Hang on, what's on the news...



### GRACE STEWART

From what I can gather, Grace has a difficult relationship with her two young children. It's understandable, with her husband having gone missing in the war, and those house servants are somewhat sinister. I think it's very important that she spend some time out of the house. As a matter of fact, I'm finding it hard to leave myself...

# OPPOSITES

WE TALK TO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JEPH LOEB, DIRECTOR GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD AND STARS AUBREY JONES AND OLIVIA HOLT ABOUT MARVEL'S CLOAK & DAGGER...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL

WITH NEW SUPERHEROES GRACING THE SMALL SCREEN EVERY YEAR, IT'S BECOMING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO ENTICE VIEWERS AND CONVINCING THEM THAT EACH NEW SUPERPOWERED SERIES IS GOING TO BE SOMETHING THEY HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE. WHICH IS WHY MARVEL'S CLOAK & DAGGER IS SETTING OUT TO BE SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

Like Bill Mantlo and Ed Hannigan's comics, the show follows a pair of teenagers, Tyrone Johnson (Aubrey Joseph) and Tandy Bowen (Olivia Holt), as they develop superpowers and begin to attempt to understand them. Tyrone can engulf others in darkness and transport them through the Darkforce dimension, while Tandy has the ability to emit daggers made of solid light that drain living beings of vitality. Realising their powers are stronger together, they team up and become Cloak and Dagger.

However, there's more to the relationship than their complementary abilities; connected through a shared

to have the love/hate relationship fights, but I think it is important for it to be fun. It's important for them to feel like they are kids in the show and not just stressed out kids all the time."

"Once you spend enough time around a person, you start to have your first argument and things like that," adds Joseph. "But you know, this is like punting... no matter what, Tandy brings light to Ty's life."

"I think we bring a cool aesthetic," says director Gina Prince-Bythewood, who helmed the show's pilot episode. "I mean, my big thing is characters. Really, really strong characters. I love damaged women and putting them up on screen, and that's what I love about this show. These two damaged characters find each other. It's right within my wheelhouse. And then I get to do stunts and special effects, which is really cool."

To add to the romance of it all, the series is set in New Orleans, a city not often (or ever) frequented by superhuman

"THESE STORIES HAVE TO BE TOLD BECAUSE SO MANY KIDS FEEL LIKE THEY'RE ALONE"  
AUBREY JOSEPH

childhood tragedy, Tyrone and Tandy quickly catch feelings for one another. Instead of focusing purely on superpowers and fighting crime like many Marvel series, *Cloak & Dagger* examines the pair's blossoming romance. In short, it is a love story.

"It's all about these real people and this is what real people go through," Joseph tells us. "I feel like these stories have to be told because so many kids that go through these things feel like they're alone, and that nobody goes through it. I must be unique because I go through this, but everyone has gone through it. Everyone goes through their insecurities."

The star-crossed lovers aspect of the show takes centre stage, but it's not a *Romeo And Juliet*-style tragedy. "I think there's some cheeky and witty moments throughout the season, which is nice," says Holt. "It kind of breaks up all those heavy topics. I think for us it's important for Tandy and Tyrone's relationships. Yes, it is complicated and they are going through a lot – but they are also teenagers and they're going to be a little sassy with each other. They are also going

beings. Many genre shows view their settings as additional characters, and *Cloak & Dagger* is no different. "One of the reasons why we chose New Orleans is it is a city which continually has been forced to be reborn," explains executive producer Jeph Loeb. "And so when you think about Katrina, and when you think about the accident with the oil rigs just recently, this is a city that's burned; this is a city that's [been] continually challenged for centuries to stay alive. And that's one of the themes of the show, which is that these two young people are caught up in something that could be life-threatening."

"Across the board, there's an undertone of so many different topics that I think it's going to be really great for the audience to hear and witness and to relate to and cope with," says Holt. "First and foremost, New Orleans is a city that has overcome so much in the past. I think that really speaks to Tyrone and Tandy's characters. They are overcoming so many situations as teenagers. They're both very damaged souls... They are going through a lot, on top of having these powers. I

# ATTRACT

CLOAK & DAGGER   
Opposites Attract





Our heroes keep finding each other.



Tandy keeps her powers secret.



## HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

A couple counsellor's notes on the star-crossed lovers of the superhero TV universe...

DAVID HALLER AND SYD BARRETT

**Notes:** Spend too much time away from each other

.....  
Most arguments are settled with a dance-off

KARA DANVERS AND MIKE MATTHEWS

**Notes:** On again, off again relationship

.....  
Mike isn't home often and it's taking its toll on Kara

BARRY ALLEN AND IRIS WEST-ALLEN

**Notes:** Grew up together

.....  
Carry a lot of denial at the fact that they're basically siblings

OLIVER QUEEN AND FELICITY SMOAK

**Notes:** Act like they're soulmates but their history is alarming

.....  
They're a very self-centred couple

MATT MURDOCK AND ELEKTRA NATCHIOS

**Notes:** Both turn up with a lot of new bruises every week

.....  
Spend most of the sessions flirting – weird

JESSICA JONES AND LUKE CAGE

**Notes:** There are some serious trust issues on both sides

.....  
They both appear to think they wear the trousers...

### I DON'T GET PAID ENOUGH FOR THIS

Alternative career options: child psychologist, body language expert, high school guidance counsellor, zookeeper?

think there's definitely a bunch of heavy topics that we discuss, but it is subtle."

"It was really important that New Orleans was a character in the show; especially if you're going to shoot there," says Prince-Bythewood. "It's a beautiful city. Not only the look of it, but the city has a lot of really heartbreaking history as well – and we wanted to bring that into the characters' lives. For example, Tandy lives in a trailer park and we wanted to make sure that a lot of these trailers that we used were some that were damaged in the hurricane. We wanted to see the Xs on them, but we also wanted to bring the beauty of the city as well. It was also fun to shoot there because of the food. I mean, it is not a cliché. It is great. It's so good."

The only thing more important than the setting was obviously finding the right people to play Tandy and Tyrone, and the task ended up becoming a somewhat taxing search. "It was a very big push to find real teenagers," Prince-Bythewood explains. "It was literally three days before we were supposed to leave for New Orleans to shoot the show and we had still not found them. When you get to that point, people start thinking about settling for someone they've already seen, but I didn't want to do that. When I watch TV, I hate watching high school shows where they look like they are 30 years old. I want to know that they are really in high school – but when Olivia and Aubrey came in on that last day, they looked the right age. They were so good

*SHIELD* and the Netflix shows, which all directly tie in with the films.

"Those are really our Marvel street public heroes," says Loeb. "They are heroes that, as we see it, are not necessarily interested in saving the universe – but are often interested in saving the neighbourhood, or themselves."

The plan was to continue the 'street public heroes' trend for a few years, but plans often have a way of unravelling to create something better. "We took a look at the growing landscape and we realised that the motion picture division was going to be redoing *Spider-Man*, where Peter was a high school student – and we thought: 'How do we, on the television side, get in the young heroes business? How do we find characters that will speak more directly to an audience that might skew younger than the audience that we currently have?'"

As a result, Hulu's *Runaways* and Freeform's *Cloak & Dagger* were born. "We've also been very lucky in that very often it's a one-stop-shop," Loeb continues. "In other words, we didn't go to Freeform and say: 'Here are five different characters.' We went and we said: '*Cloak & Dagger* is something that we believe in. We believe it's right for the audience that you guys are going after.' And to give credit where credit's due, Karey Burke, who is one of the top executives there, was someone who knew the property and aggressively went after it and now we have a show."

## "I HATE WATCHING HIGH SCHOOL SHOWS WHERE THEY LOOK LIKE THEY ARE THIRTY YEARS OLD!"

GINA PRINCE-BLYTHWOOD

individually and we were so excited – and then we put them together, we did an improv with them, and it was electric. You felt it. You felt like you were watching the show and it was a really beautiful moment. Before we found them, it was scary for me, because it's my job to bring out performances and make sure the show is good. And I was thinking: 'How am I going to tell this story with these actors that I don't think are right?' In that sense, finding Olivia and Aubrey was my favourite part."

Holt felt that hers and Joseph's chemistry was magic from the very start. "We read to a bunch of people at the audition," she says. "But once we went into that room and did the improv scene together, we just fed off of each other so well. I think both of us leaving that room, whether we felt like we were going to book the parts or not, it just felt good in that moment. That's something we can never take back. I think we'll be able to hold on to that forever."

"Such a big part of acting, period, is just being invested," Joseph tells us. "I was in the room with Liv and she was so invested and I was so invested. It was just like, the only way you can really have a show that's grounded is if the actors come to set and then they're ready to tell a story and they are invested."

Though *Cloak & Dagger* is taking the teen drama route, it's still setting out to create a story that everyone can relate to. When looking to develop a new show to expand its television presence, Marvel looked at its past series like *Agents Of*

"Every show that we start with, we always want to start with who's the person?" he continues. "What's happening to them? In particular, what we love about the show is it's hard enough trying to figure out how to be a teenager. Now let's add that little Marvel sauce of: 'Oh, by the way, you have powers.' People ask us all the time: 'Do you think that there are too many superhero shows?' I go: 'I don't know. We don't make superhero shows. We make shows about people.' Yes, they have powers and yes, they are Marvel, but if it doesn't work on a very basic level where you love Ty and you love Tandy then it won't work at all."

"I said from the beginning I feel like this show is a game-changer in so many different ways," Holt says. "I mean, regarding what's happening right now in this day and age, I think it's so important for us people who are living it to be able to tell that story. I feel really grateful to be able to talk about these topics and start an open dialogue, which is so important for not just our generation here but even the generation to come or people older than us. I think it's just so important to all be opinionated but to respect each other and to stand our ground and to be bold and resilient and have an opinion and stick with it and to be able to stand up for what you believe in. I think that that's exactly what Tandy and Tyrone are doing. That's exactly what Olivia and Aubrey want to do as well." 🗨️



*Cloak & Dagger* airs on Amazon Prime on 8 June.

**INTERVIEW**  
Lin Shaye



# THE GODMOTHER OF HORROR

GENRE ICON LIN SHAYE TELLS US ABOUT  
LEADING THE INSIDIOUS FRANCHISE AND  
A CAREER IN HORROR MOVIES

WORDS KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

**SPEAKING TO LIN SHAYE VIA TELEPHONE IS A SURREAL EXPERIENCE.**

At first, her instantly recognisable, disembodied voice makes you feel as if she's instructing you through The Further in her role in the *Insidious* films as parapsychologist Elise Rainier. After a few seconds her bubbly persona shines through as she guides us through her genre career, talking at a break-neck speed and occasionally breaking to giggle or belly laugh at the cheeky stories she tells about the people she has met and worked with over her over 40 year career as an actor.

Lin Shaye has about ten genre movies listed as in post- or pre-production and filming. Among those titles, she's slated to appear in Nicolas Pesce's *The Grudge* reboot and a new *Re-Animator* flick alongside Brad Dourif. She thanks James Wan for the resurgence in her horror career: "James is a special human being in every way. I met him because he was a fan of a little film I did called *Dead End*. He's one of the kindest, smartest visionaries I've ever met. I do mean that, and he is my hero because he gave me an opportunity to do what he saw that I never would have seen. I love him!"

Shaye first met Wan through mutual friend, Tim Sullivan, at a small party at her house where he asked her to take part in a short prequel to an Xbox release called *Doggie Heaven* with Leigh Whannell. About a month later Wan sent the screenplay for *Insidious* to Shaye. She read it in one sitting and says: "It was so scary I locked it into my closet that night and I'm not joking." So far, *Insidious* has spawned a four-film franchise with the fans falling in love with Shaye's endearing parapsychologist and creators Wan and Whannell bringing her character back from the dead to explore her backstory.

Shaye's first foray into horror was a small part in the iconic *A Nightmare On Elm Street* by the late Wes Craven. She played a teacher and says she got the role because her "big brother" Robert Shaye, the founder of New Line Cinema, suggested it to Craven. On her time working with Craven she says: "Wes was a prince, that's the only way I can really describe him. Wes was one of the most delightful, humble, emotional guys. He was very softly spoken and a very elegant man, he was a true intellect."

Shaye worked with Craven again soon after, on an episode of the Eighties reboot of *The Twilight Zone*. She recalls a story about how she amused him in her audition for the role: "In the audition for the episode I play this character who emerges, and you don't know if she's a robot or a person and it was kind of an emotional scene. I teared up during the audition and the casting director says: 'Can you do it again a little less cheesy?' And I gave him the finger! Wes was in the back and Wes looked at me and then

put his head down laughing. I got the job!" Shaye is complimentary about everyone she's worked with in genre: "I've been so fortunate - I haven't worked with any dogs." She talks about her roles with such relish, remembering the experiences on set rather than any details about plot.

Much like how the producers of *Insidious*, Blumhouse work today, New Line gave opportunities to first-time directors. Shaye worked with Stephen Herek and *Masters Of Horror* creator Mick Garris on their movie directorial debuts, *Critters* and *Critters 2* respectively. Shaye dyed her hair red to play the role of Sally in those films: "I remember I did the false nails and we really went the whole hog with it. I would sit in this little hillbilly town with my romance magazines eating Oreo cookies and when I look back on that I go, good for me!"

On reprising the role in the sequel, Shaye says: "For Sal we kept the theme with her in these old-fashioned dresses and the hat. I had the hat for a long time and I finally gave it away. I probably should have auctioned it off on eBay! It was a lovely experience but when I look at those movies they seem so far away." She continues explaining her experience of working with Garris on his first film: "Doing a sequel is a bit of a responsibility. He didn't come forward straight away, he kind of let the movie and us come to him a bit."

Shaye has kept coming back to horror over the decades, and the obvious question is, why? She says: "It's exploring fear, I mean we're all afraid, we all have fear in us." Swinging back to the *Insidious* films Shaye expands by saying: "Leigh [Whannell] has discussed in subtle ways about how you deal with fear. Movies like this, there's such humanity in what he has written and such messaging about growth and endurance that I feel gifted to have been involved in these films." On how she has approached the role of Elise Rainier, she explains: "What we know about Elise, coming out of that kind of abuse and the horror of watching people murdered in front of you, not only did she live through it, but she became this generous, giving, funny, fierce woman. For me, that's a superhero." And on working with the team again: "I hope to keep these people close to my heart and a creative force for a long time."

Certain horror circles have dubbed Shaye as a 'Scream Queen' and 'Godmother Of Horror' and on her time spent working within the genre she says: "If I'm considered a genre actress I'll take it! I'm beyond grateful. It makes me feel emotional. I'm filled with gratitude for who I have become. The fact that people have opened their arms to me, I fall right in." 🐾

*Insidious: The Last Key* is out on Blu-ray & DVD 21 May.

**GREATEST HITS**

Some of Lin Shaye's finest performances



**INSIDIOUS**

Over the course of four films Lin Shaye's medium Elise Rainier has become the franchise lead - she's consistently brilliant and grounds the franchise.



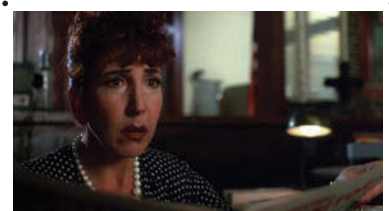
**DEAD END**

This 2003 indie has its flaws but Shaye is stunning as the deranged matriarch of a family who can't escape a woodland road. It's a performance that will stay with you.



**A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET**

Okay, so it's not a massive part, but we all remember seeing Shaye as Nancy's teacher in Wes Craven's classic.



**CRITTERS 1 AND 2**

Everyone's got a soft spot for *Critters*, and Shaye has a hilarious cameo as Sal in the 1986 original alongside M Emmet Walsh. She returned for the 1988 sequel.

# SPEAKING FOR THE AVENGERS

WE TALK TO WRITERS CHRISTOPHER MARKUS AND STEPHEN MCFEELY ABOUT CAPTAIN AMERICA, INFINITY WAR AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

WORDS AND INTERVIEW ABIGAIL CHANDLER

**WHEN YOU THINK OF THE KEY DRIVING FORCES IN THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE, YOU TEND TO THINK OF PEOPLE LIKE ROBERT DOWNEY JR AND KEVIN FEIGE. YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO THINK OF CHRISTOPHER MARKUS AND STEPHEN MCFEELY. THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW THEIR NAMES. BUT THEY'RE THE PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY BROUGHT FOUR MCU MOVIES TO LIFE BEFORE THEY TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE EPIC AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR TWO-PARTER. THEY'RE MORE INVOLVED IN THE FRANCHISE THAN ANY OF THE DIRECTORS HAVE BEEN. THEY'RE THE WRITERS.**

They've written all of the *Captain America* films and even took *Agent Carter* into her own spin-off TV show, which they executive produced. They also co-wrote *Thor: The Dark World*, and, following on from *Captain America: Civil War*, they were the obvious choice of writers for *Infinity War* and its

sequel. No writers know the MCU as well as they do. A couple of weeks before *Infinity War* opened in cinemas, we had a long phone chat with Markus and McFeely about the film, the Marvel universe and whether there's any difference at all between Robert Downey Jr and Tony Stark. But don't worry if you haven't seen *Infinity War* yet – you won't find any spoilers here.

Markus and McFeely were offered the *Infinity War* job while filming *Civil War* and immediately got to work on what Stephen McFeely calls "a really long memo" to Marvel about what directions those *Avengers* films could go in. The jam-packed roster of *Civil War* turned out to be good practice for what was to come: "We wrote down every single character we had access to and basically decided, okay, we fully intend to put every single character we have access to into this movie," Christopher Markus says. "What is the way that isn't just one big crowd shot for two hours? People began to make sense geographically as we began to figure out Thanos' quest and where it might take him."

McFeely adds that splitting the characters into smaller groups made the most logical sense: "What was thrilling about it was that those groups would involve characters who had never met before," he says. "That was one of the benefits of this crazy experiment called the MCU, that now you've invested in all these people, just the idea of Doctor Strange standing next to Tony Stark fills my geek heart with joy."

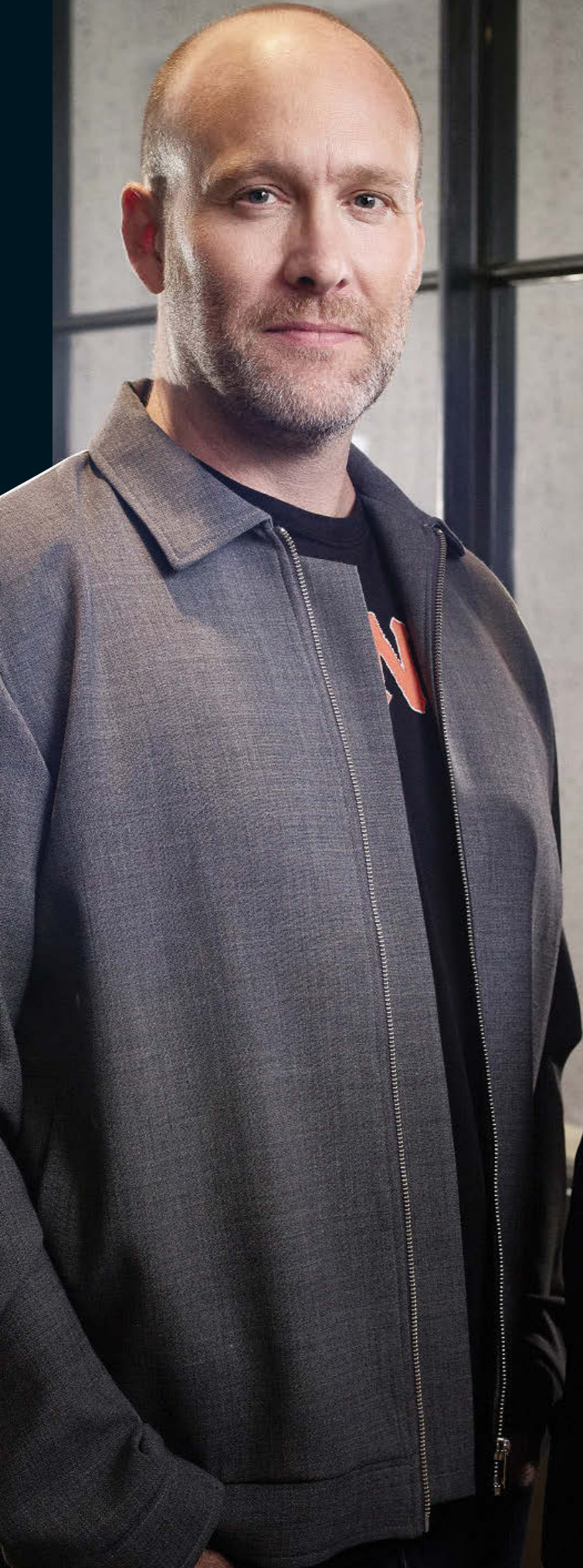
The sheer number of characters meant that while Markus and McFeely had a heck of a big toy box to play with, they also had a lot of characters to do justice to, some of whom they had never written for before. Markus tells us that he "enjoyed taking Nebula from *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and bumping her up against people who aren't prepared for what she is" while McFeely was the most excited about writing Doctor Strange, but that presented challenges too: "You don't want to make [Strange] just the straight man for Tony Stark, you want them to each be each other's straight man. But that dynamic was pretty fun."

But, despite everyone's best efforts, they admit that some characters ended up being slightly sidelined. "There have been times where we've written a scene and gone: 'Oh, there's an Oscar winner in this scene and we didn't give them a line,'" McFeely chuckles. But don't ➤



The duo is thrilled to match Stark and Strange.

MARKUS AND MCFEELY   
Speaking For The Avengers



The sheer scope of the crossover is dizzying.



## “WE HAVE TWO MOVIES THAT ARE CLEARLY LINKED BUT WE HAVE TWO MOVIES IN BETWEEN THEM”

STEPHEN MCFEELY

➤ worry, it's not all bad news, as McFeely reminds us that *Infinity War* is merely part one. “If your favourite character has a small role in one movie, odds are they're going to have a bigger role in the second movie. We gave ourselves permission to use both canvases to tell two big stories.”

### **AS WELL AS ALL THE FAMILIAR AVENGERS AND GUARDIANS, INFINITY WAR ALSO HAD TO FIND ROOM FOR ONE BIG NEW ADDITION: THANOS, A CHARACTER FIRST GLIMPSED IN THE VERY FIRST AVENGERS MOVIE.**

Markus reminds us that while Thanos has been showing up here and there for years, his personality and motivation was still a blank. “There wasn't so much established, so we could go in any direction we wanted. James [Gunn] had the longest scene [in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*], it was maybe a page and he was mostly fairly angry. We wanted to make sure that he came off as the protagonist in his own movie. So he has a specific emotional reason for doing what he does. He's not just a cartoon bad guy.”

Markus and McFeely have been involved in the MCU from its very early days, and it's taken up most of the last decade of their lives. In that time they've become very familiar with the workings of Marvel Studios and make it clear that one of the things they love about working within the MCU is the freedom that each filmmaker has to create their vision. But with *Infinity War*, they had to move away from that template slightly.

“Normally what happens in the MCU is that each filmmaker gets to do exactly what they want... and that's one of the reasons why the MCU works so well, they don't usually rob Peter to pay Paul,” McFeely says. “Kevin [Feige]'s watchword is always ‘make the best movie you can in front of you and we'll deal with the consequences afterwards’. In this weird case, we have two movies that are clearly linked, but we have two movies in between them, so... we had to make very slight suggestions.”

With *Black Panther* and *Thor: Ragnarok* in particular, Markus and McFeely had to make sure that the characters they needed to use were left in the right place. “We can make

strong requests, primarily just ‘would it be possible for you to leave this character in this location or in this emotional state?’ so we can pick them up at the right point,” Markus explains. *Black Panther* in particular was a challenge as, due to the immense size of the *Infinity War* two-parter, the films were being made simultaneously.

“There were two other Marvel movies – *Black Panther* and *Ant-Man And The Wasp* – that came to Atlanta, did pre-production, filmed and left while we were filming [*Infinity War*],” Markus says. “So we had to be shooting before they even had a script for their movies. There were some crossed fingers that everything would link up.”

Given the close links between *Black Panther* and *Infinity War*, Markus and McFeely were understandably thrilled – and relieved – when the film was a hit: “I don't think there was a single person on earth who thought that *Panther* was going to consume the international consciousness the way it did, it was just so fantastic,” Markus says. “It opens up so many avenues, both for the MCU and for quote-unquote ‘Hollywood.’”

It also meant that, thankfully, the characters that they were giving a lot of *Infinity War* screentime to have proven to be popular. “We were writing for characters that had barely been cast,” McFeely says, “they certainly hadn't been acted or edited or anything, so we were like ‘boy, people better



# MARKUS AND MCFEELY'S BEST MCU LINES

like Shuri' and 'I hope Okoye is popular because we've given her a lot of stuff to do!'"

Given that Markus and McFeely launched Black Panther in *Civil War*, they are understandably delighted by the movie's success, raving about both that film and *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, another film that spring-boarded out of *Civil War* and which McFeely calls the "purest" *Spider-Man* movie to date.

They are also, notably, films that have been able to do away with the usual origin story because the MCU is so well established now. Black Panther got a mini origin in *Civil War*, and Marvel just didn't bother with Spidey's origin because, frankly, no-one needs to see a kid get bitten by a spider three times in 15 years. The fact that all these Marvel characters have been around for a while now means that Markus and McFeely are able to hit the ground running.

"The characters are so well-established now," says Markus, "that you can put all that character origin story stuff to the side and tell more complex stories, because you have more time that would have otherwise been spent in the first act getting to know everybody. You know everybody coming in, so you can really get moving."

The MCU has created a new type of storytelling – huge interlinked franchises that share cast members and occasionally



**"I DON'T LIKE BULLIES; I DON'T CARE WHERE THEY'RE FROM."**

**STEVE ROGERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER**

**"THE TRUTH IS A MATTER OF CIRCUMSTANCES; IT'S NOT ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE ALL THE TIME. AND NEITHER AM I."**

**NATASHA ROMANOFF, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER**

**"I CAN DO THIS ALL DAY."**

**STEVE ROGERS, MULTIPLE FILMS**

**"THAT THING DOESN'T OBEY THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AT ALL!"**

**PETER PARKER ON CAP'S SHIELD, CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR**

**"I KNOW I'M ASKING A LOT. BUT THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS HIGH. IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN. AND IT'S A PRICE I'M WILLING TO PAY. AND IF I'M THE ONLY ONE, THEN SO BE IT. BUT I'M WILLING TO BET I'M NOT."**

**STEVE ROGERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER**

**"SOMETIMES I WANT TO PUNCH YOU IN YOUR PERFECT TEETH. BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU GONE. WE NEED YOU, CAP."**

**TONY STARK, CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR**

**"BEFORE WE GET STARTED, DOES ANYONE WANT TO GET OUT?"**

**STEVE ROGERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER**

**"WHEN YOU CAN DO THE THINGS THAT I CAN, BUT YOU DON'T, AND THEN THE BAD THINGS HAPPEN? THEY HAPPEN BECAUSE OF YOU."**

**PETER PARKER, CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR**

**"IN TIME, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE. TO FEEL SO DESPERATELY THAT YOU'RE RIGHT, YET TO FAIL ALL THE SAME. DREAD IT. RUN FROM IT. DESTINY STILL ARRIVES."**

**THANOS, AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR**

have massive crossovers. The level of investment that viewers have in these characters now is intense, and no-one wants to see any of them die. But not everyone appreciates the MCU's approach, which McFeely understands, even if he's slightly frustrated by it: "When I see critics say 'this is alienating because I don't know all the movies', I understand that point of view because they assume that a movie is a start- to-finish experience, I can go in blind, I can see *Kramer Vs. Kramer* and come out the other end affected, and Marvel do something slightly different, and a bit more like television. It's a bigger horizon and it rewards investment."

**AUDIENCES AREN'T THE ONLY ONES INVESTED IN THE MCU – THE CAST AND CREATIVES ARE JUST AS DEDICATED. MARKUS AND MCFEELY HAVE BEEN ON BOARD SINCE BEFORE MARVEL STUDIOS WAS THE BEHEMOTH IT IS TODAY.**

"I think we're given a lot more responsibility than we were in the early days," McFeely says, when asked how their experience of making Marvel movies has changed. "Marvel was a fledgling studio, certainly anything could sink it, and then hopefully we proved ourselves a little bit over the course of it. We're just in the soup much more as we go along." ➤





# INTERVIEW

Markus And McFeely

## THE OTHER BIG **MCU** INFLUENCERS

### **KEVIN FEIGE**

THE PRESIDENT OF MARVEL STUDIOS, HE'S BEEN OVERSEEING PRODUCTION ON MCU FILMS SINCE THE FIRST IRON MAN. IF ONLY ONE PERSON COULD TAKE THE CREDIT FOR THE MASSIVE SUCCESS OF MARVEL STUDIOS, IT'S THIS GUY.

### **JON FAVREAU**

THE DIRECTOR OF THE FIRST TWO IRON MAN MOVIES HELPED TO SET THE REAL-WORLD TONE OF THE MCU, AND HE CONTINUES TO ACT IN THE FRANCHISE AS HAPPY HOGAN. WITHOUT THE SUCCESS OF IRON MAN, THERE WOULD BE NO MCU.

### **JOSS WHEDON**

THE FIRST PERSON TO BRING THE AVENGERS TOGETHER WAS WRITER/DIRECTOR WHEDON. THE FRANCHISE COULD STILL HAVE FALLEN APART IF THE BIG CROSSOVER DIDN'T WORK, BUT AVENGERS ASSEMBLE WAS A STONE-COLD TRIUMPH.

### **JAMES GUNN**

THE BRIGHTLY-COLOURED, FUNNY, JUST PLAIN WEIRD GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY WAS A RISKY OUTLIER, BUT THANKS TO GUNN'S SUCCESS THE MCU WAS MORE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS IN ITS MAIN FILMS.

### **RYAN COOGLER**

COOGLER TOOK A FAIRLY LITTLE-KNOWN CHARACTER AND A MOSTLY BLACK CAST AND TURNED IT INTO THE BIGGEST GROSSING MCU MOVIE EVER. BLACK PANTHER IS MORE THAN JUST A MOVIE – IT'S A WATERSHED MOMENT.

➤ Their approach to characters has changed over time too. With their *Captain America* films they found themselves digging down into more politically charged areas (“well, you name a guy ‘Captain America’ you have an obligation to be relevant,” McFeely remarks) and their understanding of the characters has changed as they’ve worked with the actors.

“They all know their characters well,” Markus says, “and we’ve had moments with most of them where they go: ‘I don’t think I’d say that’ and every time they do that it helps us calibrate their voices a bit better. So it’s always actually very welcome.”

It also won’t surprise anyone to know there’s one actor who’s had more input than the others. “I think where Stark ends and Downey begins is up for debate,” McFeely laughs. “He’s one of the most collaborative, he influences a lot of his own dialogue.”

‘Collaborative’ is a key word for Markus and McFeely, as they do it all the time. They’re a writing team, so even before anyone else gets involved they’re already collaborating. It comes naturally to them, especially when working with Joe and Anthony Russo, who directed the last two *Captain America* movies and who are behind the camera on *Infinity War*. “There’s two of them and two of us and we all see movies I

think very similarly,” McFeely says, “which is to put the characters at the front, even if there’s giant robots standing over them, because people only go to the movies to care about other human beings.”

Markus adds that “four movies in, I think we’ve all convinced each other that we’re not in it for our egos. The best idea wins, it doesn’t matter who it comes from. We’re all willing to get messy. Some producers and directors and writers don’t want to get in a room and tear things apart and look inside and see what’s not working. We all think that’s the only way to make a good movie.”

McFeely agrees: “We can only make a good movie by making some bad movies first.”

They have to collaborate with even more people when it comes to the MCU’s massive action set-pieces. “We’ll write the first version and it’ll have action in it, suggestions from us, but mainly we’re mapping the emotional beats of the characters throughout the fight,” Markus explains. “And then it will go to people far more talented about the physics of combat than we are, the visual effects department, the stunt department will get in there, and at a certain point it’ll come back to us, greatly improved, to see if we’ve got new character ideas based on the new gigantic ideas that they’ve had. It all goes

hand-in-hand that way.” Markus does admit, though, that sometimes during the writing process they’ve forgotten that “there’s a character so powerful that the entire fight we just mapped out is completely pointless.”

## **MARKUS AND MCFEELY HAVE ENJOYED COLLABORATING WITH THE RUSSOS SO MUCH THAT THEY’RE TAKING THEIR COLLABORATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL, AND SETTING UP A STUDIO TOGETHER.**

The Russos got funding for it, and approached Markus and McFeely to be executives alongside them. It’s something the writers are clearly excited and passionate about. “We want this to be a place where the only notes you’re getting are from writers and directors, the four of us,” McFeely explains. “It’ll be a very small room filled with people who have been there before. So we can be a little speedier about what gets close to production. You’re not going to hear a note from us like ‘I really wish it was 20% funnier’. You’re going to get help from us like ‘this point’s in the wrong place!’”

They clearly want to take everything they’ve learnt from their time in the MCU and put it to good use helping other writers – and, of course, helping themselves a bit too. “We don’t have to go and talk to any suits!” Markus jokes. “If there’s a movie we want to make we can talk to ourselves!”

So does this new studio mean that it’s the end of MCU road for Markus and McFeely? “For the moment it might be,” McFeely admits. “I think it might be a while before we take something on that will take up three years of our lives. It’s a big commitment.”

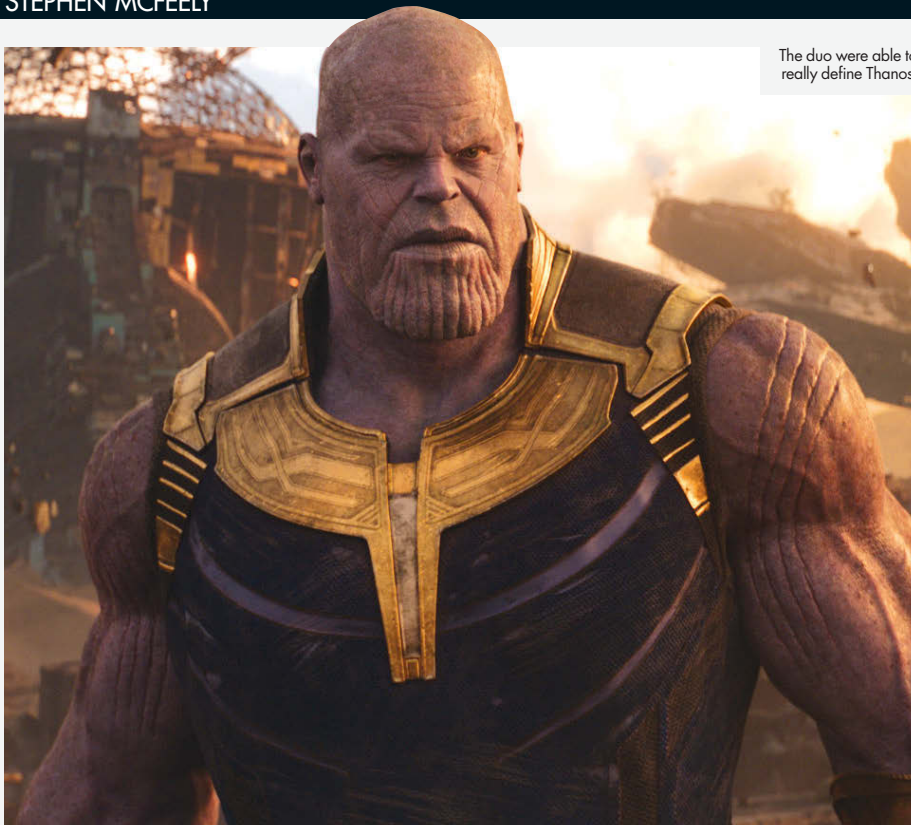
Markus points out that they’re not finished with MCU yet – they’re still in the edit on *Avengers 4*, and they won’t be truly finished until it’s in cinemas. But they’re writers, and they know that every story has to have an end. “[G]ood storytelling requires some finality to it eventually,” McFeely says. That includes their time at the MCU and no doubt the end of some of the stories within it too.

Markus and McFeely got us invested in the MCU – especially in *Captain America* and his supporting characters – and now we have to reap the negatives of that emotional investment and say goodbye to some of the people involved in the MCU up to this point, behind or in front of the camera. “Grief is a part of life,” Markus says, far too cheerfully.

All we can do in the meantime is try to avoid spoilers. “I think people are good at thinking this is special and trying not to screw it up,” McFeely says, urging people who have seen the films to keep quiet about them. The MCU has given us ten years of entertainment – the least we can do is help keep some of its secrets. ☺

## **“IT MIGHT BE THE END FOR US... GOOD STORYTELLING REQUIRES SOME FINALITY TO IT EVENTUALLY”**

STEPHEN MCFEELY



The duo were able to really define Thanos.

*Avengers: Infinity War* is in cinemas now.

# BEST SERVED HOT

REVENGE GIVES A CLASSIC B-MOVIE TROPE A SHOCKING, STYLISH FEMINIST TWIST. WE TALK TO WRITER-DIRECTOR CORALIE FARGEAT ABOUT TURNING A GENRE ON ITS HEAD

WORDS ELENA LAZIC





**A YEAR AFTER JULIA DUCOURNAU'S RAW SHOCKED AUDIENCES** the world over with its bold and darkly comic story of hereditary cannibalism, another French first-time director is behind one of this year's best and most original genre films. Coralie Fargeat's *Revenge* updates the controversial rape-revenge movie for the 21st century, with a feminist perspective that goes deeper into the roots of sexual violence than most classics of the genre. And if that wasn't impressive enough, the film also manages to be a madly entertaining, deeply funny, visually stunning treat.

We talked to Coralie Fargeat about the genesis of the project, opting for sharp characterisation, and turning movie violence into an artistic gesture.

### HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA OF MAKING A RAPE-REVENGE FILM?

I didn't actually aim to explore the rape-revenge genre at all! I was never attracted to it and haven't seen many rape-revenge films apart from *The Last House On The Left*. The idea for *Revenge* came from the 'revenge movie' — like *Rambo*, *Mad Max* and *Kill Bill*, where the character is crushed and has to rely on their inner resources to stand up again and take revenge. These films inspire me because they transcend the simple stories they tell through a truly cinematic idea: they create a phantasmagorical universe. By contrast, the rape-revenge genre remains rather realistic and focuses on the event itself, which wasn't what I wanted *Revenge* to be centred on.

Instead, I wanted to see how this character could be crushed not only by the rape itself, but also by the way she is perceived. Because Jen (Matilda Lutz) is a woman, because she presents herself in a frivolous and sexy manner, because she plays with her seducing power — to the men from the film, these are good reasons to consider her worthless. They think they can do whatever they want with her, make her shut up, get rid of her, and move on. It is this dimension of the situation that I wanted to study. It was important to make clear that the violence Jen suffers isn't random, but due to the way she is perceived. The rape, in the end, is only an extreme manifestation and a symbol of this violence.

### WHY ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE FILM FRENCH?

I initially wrote the film in French, but I knew that this kind of film was difficult to finance in France, so I kept a door open for a more international aspect to the film. This mix of languages is basically what allowed us to finance it — to get financing from France, all the while having this international value. In the end, having the film in English was also coherent with the narrative and in line with the universality



A getaway is about to take a nasty turn.

of the topic. But I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't worked with the story.

### HOW DID YOU CONSTRUCT THE CHARACTER OF JEN?

I wanted unambiguous, extreme characterisation. At first, she's the icon of the Lolita: ultra sexy and sensual, with her body a real means of expression, and a fascinating power of attraction.

Then, I really worked on the idea of moulting — the way insects abandon a dead part of themselves, and continue their lives in a second form. It's a metamorphosis, like the phoenix reborn from its ashes, feeding on a mystical power it is infused with in its second form. I wanted Jen to stay in tune with her body and sensations, and to get closer to the elements and to something almost animalistic inside her. I liked the idea of a character who needed almost nothing except herself to be reborn and be strong — that's why I didn't want her to have to cover herself when she starts hunting the men down. She's barefoot, and her scars become almost a superhero costume. She only gets a tattoo, which becomes a sort of shield that infuses her with an almost magical strength.

### SHE TRANSFORMS HERSELF, BUT REMAINS SEXY.

I think that what needs to change isn't her appearance, but the way others perceive her. She's always been strong, because she always assumed who she was. She's just found a new way to use her body, to express her strength in a body that remains totally hers and that she doesn't need to change. I wanted to stay very close to that body — the

body of the woman, which is at the centre of the discourse.

### WHAT ABOUT THE MEN IN THE FILM?

I think this kind of story, where I play with symbolic elements, works best with black-and-white characters. So, early on, I chose to make no concessions — I wrote them as total bastards, each one embodying a facet of power and coercion. There's the aggressive one who thinks he's allowed to use this girl; the one who says nothing; and the one who wants to get rid of her as soon as she gets in his way. That's her boyfriend Richard (Kevin Janssens). He only likes Jen when she makes him look good and is something he can have fun with.

### THE FILM IS ALSO REALLY FUNNY, WHICH IS QUITE UNEXPECTED.

Humour emerged early on as an important element of the project. I asked myself how I wanted to deal with the violence, and I knew I didn't want the sadistic, realistic kind that we often find in horror films.

I wanted phantasmagoric and operatic violence, like in South-Korean cinema, where the baroque and excessive aesthetic of violence transforms it into something more artistic than nasty. It acts as a filter between the film and reality. Humour is another filter, because it allows the filmmaker to underline the crazy aspects of the characters. It's very important for me to have that filter, because it turns violence into a cinematic gesture and allows me to construct something cinematic with it. ♻️

*Revenge* is released on 11 May.



**MUST-SEE TV**  
Marvel's Runaways

# DEAD



# END

# JUSTICE





# WE TALK TO THE CAST AND CREW OF MARVEL'S RUNAWAYS ABOUT TEENAGERS STANDING UP AND GETTING THE JOB DONE THEMSELVES...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL

**A FEW YEARS AGO, THE THOUGHT OF SCHOOL STUDENTS MARCHING THROUGH THE STREETS AND FIGHTING FOR GUN CONTROL WHILE THE ADULTS IN CHARGE DID NOTHING WOULD HAVE SOUNDED LIKE THE PLOT OF A DYSTOPIAN SCI-FI. THIS YEAR, IT'S THE NEWS. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, THERE'S A GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON TEENAGERS. THEY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO VOTE, BUT GENERATION Z HAVE ALREADY PROVEN THAT THEY CAN PROTEST AND INFLUENCE BY STANDING UP AND SPEAKING OUT.**

Though Marvel's *Runaways* (created by Josh Schwartz and Stephanie Savage) first premiered in the US on Hulu last November, it's hard to ignore the parallels to the current climate. Based on the graphic novel by Brian K Vaughan and Adrian Alphona, it's about a group of teenagers that has to unite against a common enemy: their parents, and their involvement in a criminal organisation known as the Pride. It's about young people sorting out larger problems when the adults refuse to help.

"I think this is a time where figures of authority are in question for some of us, and this is a story where teenagers are at that age where they're starting to see their parents as fallible and human," explains Schwartz. "Just because somebody is in charge doesn't necessarily mean they are here to do good."

"You know, Marvel stories work best when we take things that are happening in the real world, our world — if this world is actually real — and we put this through the Marvel prism," adds executive producer Jeph Loeb, "and they come out as action, adventure, drama, comedy, those sorts of things, so that the audience can come away looking at it and go: 'Wow, it's super cool that some of these kids do unusual things.' And some people go into it and say: 'Oh, I get it. This is a way of their commenting on what's going on outside.'"

Just as the likes of *Wonder Woman* and *Black Panther* have set out to empower communities that aren't often represented in this type of media, *Runaways* is looking to empower young people. "I feel that if it spoke to kids, we could all be our own hero, even though we don't have a hero right now," says Allegra Acosta, who plays Molly Hernandez on the show, the group's youngest member who possesses superhuman strength and invulnerability. "I think it also shows kids, and kids of all different ethnicities, young girls, young boys, that we can totally conquer

the world without a suppressor, or a controlling egotistical figure."

With the villains of their world being their own parents, the people they should be able to trust with anything, the *Runaways* only have themselves to rely on. "It's very interesting, just the situation," says Rhenzy Feliz, who plays nerdy leader of the gang Alex Wilder. "I mean, what happens when you find out that your parents aren't who they say they are? They aren't these loving figures you think they are? So I think just that journey initially is very interesting, seeing what these kids have to go through, in order to reconcile that fact. So it is kind of that: 'Whoa, what do we do here?' I mean, you don't come out and want to accuse them immediately. You hope to God that it isn't what you think it is. So I think the journey is very interesting. They're trying to figure that out, and the whole thing is good."

When the series starts, its young stars have no reason to believe their parents might be up to something sinister. But all it takes is a few small actions for a sense of uncertainty to appear. With the first episode being told from the *Runaways*' point of views and the second turning the table to hear the parents' side of the story, what is painted is one series of events but it's one that's soaked in doubt and unclear motives. As a result, the show breaks away from a 'one Big Bad' narrative.

"It's important to us that there are no true villains in the show," says Schwartz. "The book obviously tells the story from the point of view of the kids, and it's really important to us that we take the time to build up the parent characters in this story as well... So it's really to have that balance and to understand the motivation that's taking place for both sides of the equation."

"One of the things that Stephanie [Savage] and Josh did that was really interesting was that rather than [the teenagers] all teaming up and going: 'Okay, we all agree that they're terrible people, and we all need to go to the police,' each of them have sort of an answer," Loeb tells us. "Do they want to talk a little bit about it, like what their relationship is like with their parents, and how that affects their feelings?"

Having previously been involved with shows like *The OC* and *Gossip Girl*, Schwartz and Savage's TV background has been firmly rooted in teen dramas. As a result, they see *Runaways* as more of a coming-of-age show than a superhero show.

"The great thing about working in this sort of coming-of-age story is that when you're a teenager, everything feels like it's life and death ➤

## PARENTAL ADVISORY

The *Runaways* on their complicated teenager/parent relationships...

### RHENZY FELIZ (ALEX WILDER)

"Alex has a pretty good relationship with his family. But when that question is first posed, like: 'What's going on here?' it's hard for him. He doesn't want to accept it. But at the same time, he is a very smart kid, so he's more about the facts. He's more about: 'Let's find out what's going on here...'"

### ALLEGRA ACOSTA (MOLLY HERNANDEZ)

"Molly is passionate, so she goes by her gut feeling on a very strategical plan. She knows what she wants. But I think it's already hard for Molly... It just comes as a shock. But you realise at a certain point in your life, unfortunately, that you have to grow up. So I feel like that's what it comes to."

### VIRGINIA GARDNER (KAROLINA DEAN)

"For my character, I've seen my parents do a lot of good, so to see what we see in the first episode, none of us are really quick to jump to any conclusions. Like, we all wanted to search for facts... In our own way, we're all fighting for our parents and hoping that they really are not evil. We don't want to believe that."

### GREGG SULKIN (CHASE STEIN)

"Chase doesn't have a great relationship with his father. He is a bit of an egotistical maniac. But it is one of those things where no matter how much you dislike your parents, deep down, blood is thicker than water. And I think you would always want to see the best side of your parents and your loved ones around you."

### ARIELA BARER (GERT YORKES)

"When you learn that side of your parents there is also a lot of internal searching that goes [with it], because no matter how evil you could decide they are, you learn your ideals from them, and you become the person you are from them. And I think that circles back politically... it's like: 'Am I the product of this?'"



# MUST-SEE TV

Marvel's Runaways

stakes," Schwartz explains. "And in this story, it actually is. So that felt like a really nice kind of evolution for us, in terms of story-telling... We're working with such great source material, and we have Jeph as our guide, our north star. But I loved the comic book. I was a huge Brian K Vaughan enthusiast. I think it was fun for me because Stephanie doesn't necessarily come from that world and to get her take as an outsider reading the material, because it was important to us that the show work for everybody – fans of the comic book, and people who were coming to it and knew it."

"Josh said to me: 'I know you, and you will really like this,'" Savage adds. "When I read it, I fell in love with it, and I fell in love with Brian's voice, the strong female characters, the amount of humour that was in the comic, the incredible cliffhangers at the end of every issue. So for that, that was the real drama. Then I think working together and working with Brian, a lot of what our job was, was to just translate this from the page to live action and make sure that everything just felt really grounded. And as much as we were putting a teen drama story through the Marvel prism, we were taking a Marvel show and putting it through a teen drama prism, and making sure that the emotion felt grounded. And then even when the characters were in extremely heightened situations, they still had real-world reactions to things, and the emotion and the dynamics always felt true." ❧

Runaways is now airing on Syfy.



It's a teen drama first and foremost.

**"IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THERE ARE NO TRUE VILLAINS ON THE SHOW"**

JOSH SCHWARTZ



Every school situation is life or death.

# SciFiNow Reviews

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



SciFiNow  
LATEST  
REVIEWS  
ONLINE  
SCIFINOW.CO.UK

## 67 RAMPAGE "THE JOYS ARE MEMORABLE IN THEIR RIDICULOUSNESS"

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

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Must  
see  
now!

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## FILM INFO

**Released**

Out now

**Certificate**

12A

**Director**

Brad Peyton

**Screenwriters**

Ryan Engle, Carlton Cuse, Ryan J Condal, Adam Szykiel

**Cast**

Dwayne Johnson, Naomie Harris, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Malin Akerman, Jake Lacy, Joe Manganiello

**Distributor**

Warner Brothers

**Running Time**

107 mins



# RAMPAGE Go ape

The prospect of watching one of Hollywood's most likeable action heroes teaming up with a giant gorilla to take on mutated animals is undoubtedly enticing, and Dwayne Johnson's latest action adventure gets a lot of mileage from its star's breezy charisma.

But his third team-up with director Brad Peyton (*Journey 2: The Mysterious Island*, *San Andreas*) finds itself torn between celebrating the silliness of its premise and putting Johnson's commitment to finding the emotional core of the film above all else. This is a movie in which evil billionaire siblings have used gene editing to give animals the attributes of other species with the side effect of making them aggressive, colossal and grow wings, but it's also a film which has something serious to tell us about the brutality of poaching. Doing both successfully would be a feat and, despite giving some fun on the way, *Rampage* can't pull it off.

Johnson plays primatologist Davis Okoye, a man more comfortable with the honesty of wild animals than the

lying and manipulating that comes from human contact. His best friend at the San Andreas Wildlife Sanctuary is George, a playful albino gorilla rescued from poachers as a baby. But when the aforementioned science experiment crashes to earth from a space station, poor George is promptly infected.

Can Davis and rogue geneticist Dr Kate Caldwell (Naomie Harris) find a way to get his buddy back? Will the evil Claire and Brett Wyden (Malin Akerman and Jake Lacy) get away with their plan to make billions from playing god? How well is Joe Manganiello's grizzled mercenary really going to fare when his barely-introduced team is faced with a 30-foot wolf that can fly? Will Chicago become the battleground between a giant ape, wolf and alligator? When the film acknowledges just how ludicrous this all is, it kind of works.

The problem is that it's so torn between anarchic self-aware chuckles and big-hearted responsibility that Peyton and his four writers constantly flip tones. Earnest dialogue and dumb

plot devices are painfully noticeable when the filmmakers have only just finished winking at the audience, despite the hard work of Naomie Harris (who's lumbered with the bulk of it). You can tell no one involved is taking it seriously, just seriously enough to make you feel like you're suddenly laughing at, not with, the film.

With that being said, Jeffrey Dean Morgan swaggers in as a mysterious twinkly-eyed government agent, sporting all the cowboy clichés and the film's best lines, and threatens to get the whole thing back on track. It's clear he knows what kind of film he's in and he's a reminder of what it should be.

The action sequences are solid enough. There are some inventive moments in the city-crushing carnage of the final act, but the nods towards the game mean it's not capable of conjuring the awe of something like *Godzilla* and it doesn't have the monster love of *Pacific Rim*. It should be noted that George is an adorable and finely crafted performance capture creation (by *Death Note*'s Jason Liles).

Despite all its flaws and clumsiness, there is some fun to be had. It's funny (often on purpose), Johnson is as watchable as ever, Morgan deserves some kind of medal, and the opening sequence is so ridiculous that it sets an impossibly high bar. Taken as a whole, it just doesn't work, but while the joys are fleeting they are at least memorable in their ridiculousness.

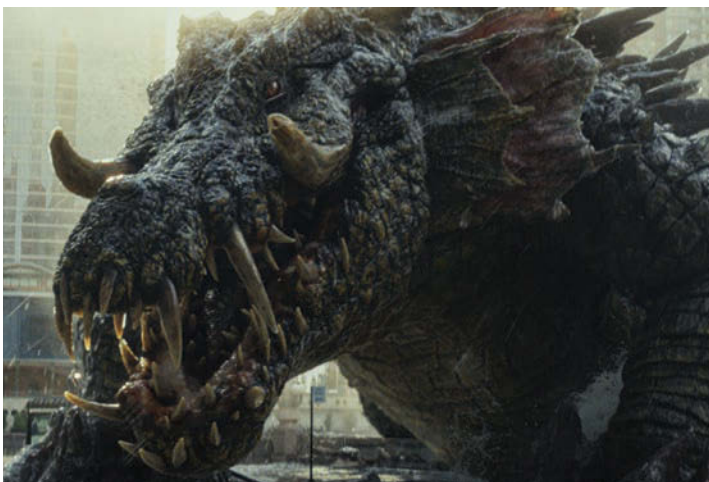
**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★☆

**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle**  
Dwayne Johnson and a strong cast lead the fun return to Jumanji.



## RAMPAGE FAQ

**So, it's based on a video game?**

Yes indeed, *Rampage* began life as an arcade game back in 1986 and the last one came out in 2006.

**Is there a lot in the film for fans of the game?**

There are definitely plenty of references dotted about (like the names of the monsters), and the final act has more than a few shots that feel like they're taken from the games.

**But does it break the video game curse?**

'Breaking the curse' seems a bit strong, but it's certainly not terrible. However, we'd argue that *Tomb Raider* already did that a month or two ago. It's certainly much more consistent than *Rampage*.

**But The Rock is fun, right?**

Yeah, he's good value. He plays things pretty straight for the most part, but he gets some fun wisecracks in there too. His face-offs with Jeffrey Dean Morgan are delightful and there is a real sweetness to his relationship with George.

SciFiNow  
Must see now!



## A QUIET PLACE

Don't say a word

**Details** 15 // 90 mins // Out now **Director** John Krasinski  
**Screenwriters** Bryan Woods, Scott Beck, John Krasinski **Cast** Emily Blunt, John Krasinski, Millicent Simmonds, Noah Jupe **Distributor** Paramount



**There's been a lot** of discussion about what makes a film 'horror' recently, but you won't come away from *A Quiet Place* wanting to place it in any other genre. The third directorial effort from *The Office* star John Krasinski (and his first genre movie) is a nerve-wracking experience that has a brilliantly simple pitch: if you make a sound, you die.

Humanity has fallen to a race of monsters who use their incredible hearing to track their prey. Lee and Evelyn (Krasinski and real-life wife Emily Blunt) have managed to keep their family alive in a rural farmhouse by following the golden rule: stay quiet. But it's far too easy to slip up, and as the pregnant Evelyn's due date draws near, so do the creatures...

The tension is there from the get-go thanks to a concept that is simple and brutally effective, especially as Krasinski doesn't waste any time. We meet the Abbotts on a supply run in a ransacked supermarket where every precarious item on every wobbly shelf is a potential catalyst for disaster. An early emotional gut-punch shows just how high the stakes are, but it also shows how determined the

filmmakers are to not lose sight of this family's journey.

The influence of Steven Spielberg and M Night Shyamalan (particularly *Signs*) is evident in the horror, the setting and in the way Krasinski keeps nudging the Abbotts to the foreground. Blunt is predictably excellent, and the director-star is great too, but it's the kids who really impress, with Millicent Simmonds as the rebellious Regan and Noah Jupe as the fearful Marcus delivering superb performances. We really get a sense of what they have been through and what they will do to keep each other safe.

The silence is so good and so intense that it's hard not to resent the cheap jump scares that pop up every now and again, and the plotting is nowhere near as deft as the emotional arcs. Still, you can't deny the film's effectiveness. Krasinski has crafted a very scary and surprisingly affecting horror movie that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

**Jonathan Haifull**

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Signs**  
A grieving family realise that creatures from another world are coming.

## HOW TO TALK TO GIRLS AT PARTIES

Not quite weird enough

**Details** 15 // 102 mins // 11 May **Director** John Cameron Mitchell  
**Screenwriters** Philippa Goslett, John Cameron Mitchell **Cast** Alex Sharp, Elle Fanning, Nicole Kidman, Ruth Wilson **Distributor** StudioCanal



**A punk musical** about a teenage boy hooking up with an alien based on a short story by Neil Gaiman should be bonkers and awe inspiring. The costumes are designed by Sandy Powell and the project is overseen by the man who directed and starred in cult musical *Hedwig And The Angry Inch*. All the ingredients for something cosmically grand are there and yet the result is something that manages to be both wildly inventive and weirdly derivative.

It's 1977 in Croydon where Enn and his two friends, John and Vic, are searching for an after party. When they come across a house packed full of strange and alluring beings their minds are blown. These creatures look human, but all dress in colour-coded outfits and adhere to a strict regime laid out by each branch. Zan, who takes the form of a teenage girl, is sick of it all and when she meets Enn they form an instant connection over his punk ideology. She's granted 48 hours away from the fold to make up her mind about their beliefs and so a sweet romance begins between the two as Zan embarks upon a spirited rebellion.

The heavy petting sessions are daringly mucky and absurd, with armpit stroking, toe-to-nose rubbing and vomiting in mouths. And in the house there's the obvious



anal probing but there's also sex harnesses. Many characters express themselves through dance, and whether it's John playing with his third nipple to Kraftwerk-like tunes or Enn's mum getting frisky in the kitchen there's a freeing vitality to it. When Fanning takes to the stage to express Zan's frustrations the film is lifted to exhilarating heights, likewise when Nicole Kidman is acting out as leader of the pack.

There's a *Galaxy Quest* vibe to the aliens which is at first endearing, but the humour in their group scenes starts to grate and you're left feeling like you're watching a bad episode of *Doctor Who*. There's not a hint of nuance in their narrative about fighting conformity to bring about change and that proves to be a major problem throughout.

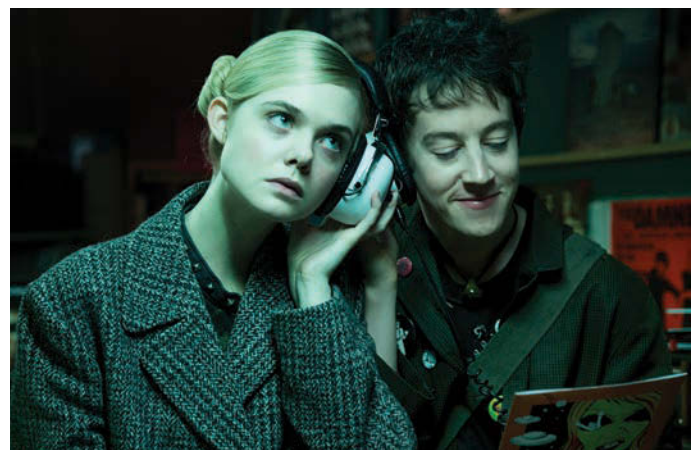
**Katherine McLaughlin**

★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Galaxy Quest**  
When a group of aliens mistake the cast of a sci-fi TV show as real-life heroes hilarity ensues.



# TRUTH OR DARE

Blumhouse wants to play a game

**Details** 15 // 100 mins // Out now **Director** Jeff Wadlow  
**Screenwriters** Jillian Jacobs, Michael Reisz, Christopher Roach, Jeff Wadlow  
**Cast** Lucy Hale, Tyler Posey, Violet Beane, Sophia Ali, Landon Liboiron, Nolan Gerard Funk **Distributor** Universal



**There's a fine line** between stupid and clever, and it's a line that Blumhouse horror *Truth Or Dare* finds itself dancing all over during its 100-minute running time. It's easy to sneer at the apparent barrel-scrapping of its title but there's a wickedly mean-spirited potential to the idea of forcing a group of friends to tell their darkest secrets to the people that it would hurt most and do things that would kill them or make them wish they were dead.

However, despite one or two well-executed shocks and twists, it's an opportunity that the four writers and *Kick-Ass 2* director Jeff Wadlow never exploit as much as they should. *Truth Or Dare* likes (most) of its characters too much to cut as deeply as something like *Unfriended*, and it's lacking a personality of its own. Consequently, the film springs into life whenever it's game time then reverts to the traditional teen horror model with dull regularity.

It all kicks off when a boozy Spring Break round of truth or dare in an abandoned Mexican church takes a sinister turn, as shady stranger Carter (*Hemlock Grove's* Landon Liboiron) tells selfless Olivia (*Pretty Little Liars'* Lucy Hale) that he's just cursed her and her friends. A demonic force won't let them stop playing, and if they don't do as



instructed... they die.

It's not without its charms. Some of the challenges are nicely twisted, some of the deaths are surprisingly gruesome, and the whole thing is so relentlessly high-pitched that it can't be accused of a lack of energy.

But it's never sharp enough. You'll laugh more than you'll jump (it doesn't help that the evil grin effects are only so hilarious) and it's so frequently clunky that you end up willing the demon to pick up the pace as the bickering and detective work drag on. The performances are fine, but only Hayden Szeto (*The Edge Of Seventeen*) stands out.

If you're looking for a dumb, disposable teen horror, *Truth Or Dare* could be the Friday night nonsense you're looking for, but you can absolutely do better.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★

**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Wish Upon**  
 A Chinese puzzle box grants a teenager's wishes... at a deadly price!



SciFiNow  
**Must see now!**

# WILDLING

Womanhood and werewolves in a world controlled by men

**Details** 15 // 92 mins // Out now **Director** Fritz Böhm  
**Screenwriters** Fritz Böhm, Florian Eder **Cast** Bel Powley, Liv Tyler, Brad Dourif, James Le Gros, Collin Kelly-Sordelet **Distributor** Warner Bros



**'Do you want to hear a story? Do you want me to tell you about the Wildling?'**

Fritz Böhm's feature debut *Wildling* opens with a story of monsters and bestiality told by a dad (Brad Dourif) to little Anna (Arlo Mertz) at bedtime. Yet the place where Anna hears this story – a wooden cabin in wild forestland – mirrors the mythic tropes of daddy's fairytale, suggesting a certain fluidity between his fictions and her reality. The truth is daddy is always trying to control both Anna and her narrative, through words and diet and medicine – and over time we get the idea that her barred window and electrified door are designed less to keep the legendary Wildling out than to keep Anna in. This is *Dogtooth* for the American North.

Aged 16, Anna (now played by Bel Powley, from *The Diary Of A Teenage Girl*) does finally emerge, and like the female counterpart to the foundlings from *The Enigma Of Kaspar Hauser*, *Bad Boy Bobby* and *Brigsby Bear*, she must learn to navigate a world that is alien to her. Here Anna happily falls under the wing of outsider Ellen Cooper (Liv Tyler), the

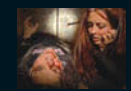
city-born sheriff who found her in the cabin, and learns for the first time about mums and menstruation. She also falls for Ellen's school-age brother Ray (Collin Kelly-Sordelet), who, according to Anna's awakening taste for meat: "Smell[s] like a hamburger." Yet it is not so easy to escape the grip of patriarchy, and at a certain point daddy's metaphors catch up with Anna, transforming her awkward adolescence into a werewolf story that merges the monstrous feminine with a newfound liberation.

Ultimately *Wildling* becomes a full-blown genre film, embracing forest fantasy and playing out like a creature feature. Yet while a mysterious wolf-skinned woodsman (James Le Gros) and loving, accommodating Ray accept Anna for who she is in all her snarling wildness, it is the town's predatory menfolk, with their rape-happy bullying and conspiratorial abuse, who are the real monsters.

**Anton Bitel**

★★★★★

**OR STAY IN AND WATCH...**



**Ginger Snaps**  
 John Fawcett's film deploys lycanthropic lore for female adolescent anomie.

## BIG FISH & BEGONIA

Sometimes you have to swim against the current

**Details** PG // 105 mins // Out now **Directors** Liang Xuan, Zhang Chun  
**Screenwriter** Liang Xuan **Cast** Ji Guanlin, Su Shangqing, Xu Weizhou, Yang Ting, Pan Shulan **Distributor** Manga Entertainment



### Directors Liang

**Xuan** and Zhang Chun have been trying to put their feature animation together since 2004 and their passion is certainly evident on screen. Drawing on ancient Chinese mythology, *Big Fish & Begonia* is an ambitious and emotional tale.

We're told that there is a realm underneath the human world where magical beings spend their lives in harmony. As part of a coming-of-age ritual, adolescents are sent through a maelstrom into our world for seven days, living as dolphins and forbidden from interacting with people. But when a young man dies saving Chun from a hunter's snare, she brings a piece of him back with her in the hopes that she can restore him to life.

The realm's soul keeper agrees to help (at a price, of course). The boy's soul is manifested as a tiny narwhal that she will have to keep secret and look after until it grows big enough to travel back through the maelstrom. In exchange, Chun gives up half of her lifespan, but the cost of keeping something that doesn't belong will affect everyone.

The magical realm is stunning; a brightly coloured dream world with unusual creatures and fantastic wildlife. However, the opening minutes are somewhat disingenuous, filled as they are with giddily happy youths and a surprising amount of toilet humour.



Once Chun begins her task of raising her human dolphin (now named Kun), she faces hardships at every turn. Her loyal friend Qiu desperately tries to help while concealing his love for her but each victory comes at an increasingly heavy cost.

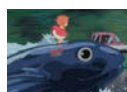
There's endless self-sacrifice and a lack of communication, but it often feels like the exact message the film is trying to get across is a little muddled.

But, as heavy and occasionally confusing as things get, there are wonderful moments of levity and eccentricity. These are courtesy of the cat-loving soul keeper and the rat matron (a brilliantly gleeful and self-serving antagonist). While the story perhaps isn't as polished as it could be, it's a beautiful world to get lost in.

### Jonathan Haifull

★★★★★

### OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**Ponyo**  
A goldfish princess leaves her home and meets a boy in Studio Ghibli's fairytale.



## THE OLD DARK HOUSE No beds!

**Details** PG // 72 mins // Out now **Director** James Whale  
**Screenwriters** RC Sherriff, Benn W Levy **Cast** Boris Karloff, Melvyn Douglas, Gloria Stuart, Lilian Bond **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



### James Whale's 1932 gothic horror *The Old Dark House*

*House* has long had a reputation as a neglected classic, so it's wonderful to see it given such a handsome restoration and made available to see on the big screen. Whale made the film shortly after *Frankenstein* as he launched into an incredibly prolific period, and his fingerprints are all over it. The cinematography is stunning, the mood is electric, and the performances are a mixture of straight-faced seriousness and self-aware winking.

Indeed, viewers who have been primed for a terrifying horror experience may be surprised by the high level of humour running throughout it. Much as he would go on to do with *Bride Of Frankenstein*, Whale encourages his actors to play up the high camp of the Gothic archetypes.

In this film, that's Horace (Ernest Thesiger) and Rebecca Femm (Eva Moore), the bickering elderly siblings who own the titular house which provides a refuge for our young heroes when they're caught in a storm.

The Femms reluctantly take in Philip (Raymond Massey) and Margaret Waverton (Gloria

Stuart) and their cheerful friend Penderel (Melvyn Douglas), but Horace is full of warnings about what will happen when their mute manservant Morgan (Boris Karloff) gets drunk...

The whole thing is generally good-natured, particularly the love story between Penderel and late arrival Gladys (Lillian Bond), but fans of Whale's work will adore the sinister cinematography that plays with reflections, shadows and whatever is waiting upstairs.

So, while we get good natured blustering between the marvellous Melvyn Douglas and the immortal Charles Laughton (having a tremendous time as Gladys' bickering benefactor), we also get Karloff relentlessly pursuing Gloria Stuart down dark corridors and some fairly bruising fight sequences.

It's a balance that shouldn't really work as well as it does, but the brilliant cast, excellent set design and camerawork makes for something that verges on horror comedy in an unexpectedly delightful way.

### Jonathan Haifull

★★★★★

### OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



**The Uninvited**  
Two siblings buy a gothic mansion and begin to believe that it's haunted.

# Downsizing

Big ideas

**Details** 15 // 135 mins // 2018 // **DVD** // **Released** 28 May  
**Director** Alexander Payne **Cast** Matt Damon, Kristen Wiig, Christoph Waltz  
**Distributor** Paramount Home Media Distribution



**Scientists develop** a method of shrinking people in a procedure known as 'downsizing', and it's quickly seen as a way to both save the planet and get rich quick. Volunteers start undergoing the procedure and moving into their dream houses within tiny communities.

Though we've often seen humans being shrunk down to



size in sci-fi, the film's concept still feels fresh and its execution unique. A lot of thought was clearly put into the science behind the fiction – candidates' teeth are removed before being downsized so their heads don't explode, and people with artificial bones and metal plates are considered ineligible – and it pays off for the first act.

But once Matt Damon is five inches tall, the magic quickly goes as it transforms into a story about the nature of humanity. That's obviously fine in some cases, but it's not always what you want when you're expecting tiny *Honey, I Shrank The Kids*-style hijinks. *Downsizing* tries to be more than it is, which ends up being its downfall.

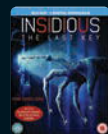
**Poppy-Jay Palmer**

★★★★☆

# Insidious: The Last Key

Never go home again

**Details** 15 // 103 mins // 2018 // **DVD** // **Released** 21 May  
**Director** Adam Robitel **Cast** Lin Shaye, Leigh Whannell, Angus Sampson, Spencer Locke **Distributor** Sony Pictures



**While it is**

wonderful to see Lin Shaye firmly established as the lead of a horror

franchise, it is something of a disappointment that the fourth instalment of the *Insidious* franchise can't match the solid chills delivered in *Chapter III*.

On the one hand, this is the most personal *Insidious* film yet, as Shaye's medium/ghost hunter is forced to head to her childhood home to cast out the



demon that scarred her family when she was a girl. On the other, it's lacking in the tension and atmosphere that has made the series so enjoyable.

Shaye makes the most of every bit of development and pathos that series creator Leigh Whannell's script gives her, delivering what's probably her best performance in the franchise so far. It's a shame that the rest of the film can't match up to her good work, with Tucker and Specs continuing to grate and potentially shocking twists signposted by obvious casting.

There are a couple of well-mounted scares and some nice ideas, but *The Last Key* doesn't live up to its lead.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★☆

# Coco

Drop dead gorgeous

**Details** PG // 105 mins // 2017 // **DVD** // **Released** 21 May  
**Director** Lee Unkrich **Cast** Anthony Gonzalez, Gael García Bernal, Benjamin Bratt, Alanna Ubach, Renée Victor **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home



**Now that Pixar** seems to be famous purely for how good its films are (with only a few exceptions)

the bar is raised higher with every new release. Its latest output *Coco* doesn't only reach the bar; it effortlessly leaps over it without even breaking a sweat.

Set in both Mexico and the afterlife, the film follows 12-year-old music lover Miguel Rivera as he's accidentally transported to the Land Of The Dead after stealing a guitar from the mausoleum of his great-great-grandfather, renowned



Mexican musician Ernesto de la Cruz. In order to return to the land of the living, Miguel has until sunrise to track down Ernesto and receive his blessing, or else he risks being trapped in the afterlife forever.

The combination of gorgeous audio and stunning animation has resulted in easily the most vibrant story in Pixar's back catalogue, one of the most emotional, and perhaps even the best. From the first scene, which features Miguel narrating the whimsical story behind his family's hatred of music to a storyboard cut from brightly coloured paper picado, *Coco* bleeds character and individuality. From there, it continues to flow through a thrilling adventure packed with both fun and raw emotion.

Much of *Coco's* charm comes from the almost mundane portrayal of the Land Of The Dead. Walking skeletons, twinkling lights and

Sci-Fi Now  
Must see now!



Escher-esque buildings stacked on top of each other are wonderfully juxtaposed against said skeletons queuing at customs in order to be allowed to visit the real world and, more poignantly, the heartbreaking fact that people in the afterlife also experience the loss of loved ones, which occurs when there's no one left on Earth that remembers them.

*Coco* is an endearing family film with something for everyone but, as it's Pixar, it goes deeper than that.

It plucks on the heartstrings more gracefully and effortlessly than even Miguel could on the strings of his prized guitar. It's a thoughtful and irresistible look into not only death, but life, love and family.

**Poppy Jay Palmer**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**The Book Of Life**  
 Bullfighter Manolo Sánchez embarks on an adventure in the afterlife.

# TREMORS: A COLD DAY IN HELL

A chilly reunion

**Details** 15 // 94 mins // 2018 // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Don Michael Paul **Cast** Michael Gross, Jamie Kennedy, Tanya van Graan **Distributor** Universal



**When some scientists** are devoured at an Arctic research base, veteran monster hunter Burt Gummer (Michael Gross) and his son Travis (Jamie Kennedy) head up from Nevada to kick some monster ass... and that's it, really. The most disappointing thing about this film is the lack of storyline. Tonally, it is also quite far removed from the classic Stampede *Tremors* films, with the bad language and puerile humour of *Tremors 5* unfortunately



still present. There's nothing wrong with either of those things per se, but they just fall flat here. Things don't get off to a promising start, with a fairly generic opening sequence featuring some dodgy CGI and even dodgier accents. A return to Perfection is welcome but makes little sense (what happened to all the citizens? Where are the tourists?) and an ass blaster attack on a plane is over too quickly... though to be fair, given the budget it's actually pretty impressive. The film does pick up in its middle section. There is one great plot twist regarding some shady government types, and the dialogue starts approaching classic *Tremors* banter levels. Things tail off in the last act, though, where there is not enough of a sense of danger. Placing Burt in mortal peril is fine, but the threat is so unlike anything we've seen in the



film series so far that it never really hits home. Gross and Kennedy handle the bog-standard father-son patter well, but never get the chance to give more. There are some nice supporting performances but just too many characters. The first film handled its sizeable cast by introducing them slowly but the pacing of this leaves no time for any satisfying character development. It must be said that there are some beautiful shots. Returning director

Don Michael Paul should be praised once again for making the film look better than it has any right to. Take however many beers you needed for *Tremors 5*, add a couple more, and you might have a decent time, but hardcore fans will be left wanting.

**MJ Michaels**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**The Thing** If you're looking for gory creature feature fun in the snow, this classic chiller is for you.

# BATMAN NINJA

Culture smash



**Details** 12 // 82 mins // 2018 // **Released** 14 May  
**Director** Junpei Mizusaki **Cast** Roger Craig Smith, Tony Hale, Grey DeLisle, Tara Strong **Distributor** Warner Home Video



**A time travel experiment** by Gorilla Grodd has pretty cataclysmic consequences in this fascinating anime take on the Caped Crusader and his various friends and foes, who are transported back to Feudal Japan. Because of his physical distance from the event, Batman arrives after everyone else and finds that the supervillains have each staked a claim to different areas, with the Joker



and Harley coming out on top. Getting home is a priority, but the tech that sent them back could have a terrible impact on their future... Director Junpei Mizusaki and character designer Takashi Okazaki are obviously having a fantastic time putting an entirely new visual spin on these characters, but what's really interesting is that, as the film progresses, it continues to pivot and pay homage to different anime styles and genres. By the time we're watching supervillain castles turn into robots to smash each other to bits, any minor quibbles about plot seem redundant. This is incredibly creative, beautifully made and enormous fun.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★

# THE WHISPERING STAR

An elegant sci-fi spin on memory and mortality

**Details** U // 100 mins // 2015 // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Sion Sono **Cast** Megumi Kagurazaka, Kenji Endo, Yūto Ikeda, Kōko Mori **Distributor** Third Window



**From early on**, it's clear that Sion Sono's *The Whispering Star* is going to be about time as we watch Yoko Suzuki (Megumi Kagurazaka) going about her everyday routines.

What takes longer for us to realise is that this traditional-looking kitchen is the interior of a spaceship and Yoko's an android courier. In a future where teleportation allows for instant contact, Yoko's old-



school mission takes decades.

Shot almost entirely in monochrome and with many of its lines spoken in subdued tones, the film gently parcels out its messages of loss and loneliness over a leisurely duration. Sono wrote the first draft 20 years before he made it, but the devastation of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami is in the film's texture.

Accordingly, the abandoned towns of Fukushima double as different planets and real Fukushima residents play exiled Earthlings. Meanwhile Yoko keeps a captain's log and boxes up her banal but treasured object – signs that she too yearns to connect.

**Anton Bitel**

★★★★★



# SUICIDE SQUAD: HELL TO PAY

Life after death

**Details** 15 // 91 mins // 2018 // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Sam Liu **Cast** Christian Slater, Billy Brown, Liam McIntyre, Vanessa Williams, Tara Strong **Distributor** Warner Bros Home Entertainment



**After hearing of an object** that supposedly guarantees entry into heaven after

you die, Amanda Waller brings together a group of imprisoned villains, including Deadshot, Harley Quinn, Bronze Tiger, Captain Boomerang, Killer Frost and Copperhead, to form Task Force X, who agree to track it down in exchange for a year knocked off their sentences. An extended RV road trip, a visit



to a male strip club and a lot of chicken nuggets later, the group looks to be close to retrieving the mystical artefact.

Fast-paced and frequently funny, *Suicide Squad: Hell To Pay* is just generally better than David Ayer's 2016 live-action outing. It turns out you don't need to spend \$175 million to make this group of mismatched characters entertaining.

*Hell To Pay* does occasionally venture into 'cheesy' territory, but what animated super-powered adventure doesn't? A strong voice cast adds layers to the largely unpleasant characters, and a tight script keeps the admittedly simple story engaging.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**

★★★★☆

# WINCHESTER

Creaky ghost story

**Details** 15 // 99 mins // 2018 // **Released** 28 May  
**Director** The Spierig Brothers **Cast** Helen Mirren, Jason Clarke, Sarah Snook, Eamon Farren, Angus Sampson **Distributor** Lionsgate Home Entertainment



**It's baffling how** a story as fascinating as Sarah Winchester's resulted in a film this drab and lifeless. *Winchester* certainly had potential: the facts are amazing, it's nice to see Helen Mirren in a rare genre role and the Spierig Brothers have done good work on films like *Predestination* and *Jigsaw*.

But not only does the film steadfastly refuse to take any steps out of the ordinary, it also has a lack of atmosphere which



is unforgivable given that it's about one of the most notorious haunted houses of all time.

The plot follows Jason Clarke's psychiatrist as he's sent to the titular mansion by the Winchester corporation to evaluate whether Sarah (Mirren) is mentally fit to run the arms company her husband left her. Sarah is haunted by the ghosts of those killed by the weapons she profits from, but are her demons as real as she believes? It's no surprise that the answer is yes, but a few surprises would have been welcome.

There are one or two decent jumps along the way and a good supporting turn from *Twin Peaks*' Eamon Farren but you can skip this one.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★☆

# CURE

Memories of murder

**Details** 15 // 111 mins // 1997 // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Kiyoshi Kurosawa **Cast** Kôji Yakusho, Masato Hagiwara, Tsuyoshi Ujiki, Anna Nakagawa, Yoriko Dôguchi **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



**Genre fans will** tell you that it's hard to pin Kiyoshi Kurosawa down.

He's made some truly terrifying chillers, including the original *Pulse* (*Kairo*), and then he's made affecting arthouse fare like *Journey To The Shore* and *Tokyo Sonata*. 1997's *Cure* is much closer to the former, a faintly meandering but totally compelling and deeply scary blend of police thriller and horror that is now available on home video in the UK for the first time thanks to Eureka Entertainment.

Kôji Yakusho (*13 Assassins*) plays detective Keniche Takabe, tasked with investigating a string of grisly murders. None of the perpetrators have violent histories, but they felt compelled to commit this one terrible act. As Takabe desperately hunts for some kind of connection,

we meet Kunio Mamiya (Masato Hagiwara), an amnesiac who drifts into people's lives at random and gives them the nudge they need to kill.

While it has the structure of a cop movie, flipping between Takabe's investigation and Mamiya's eerie encounters, Kurosawa establishes a rhythm entirely of his own. Every piece of information that gets our hero closer to his target is simply... information. We start to understand how Mamiya is committing these crimes, but each answer leads to another question, and the 'why' of it all continues to escape us.

It's a grim labyrinth where the next murder is an inevitability, and Kurosawa compounds this sense of mundane, ever-present evil by avoiding overtly Gothic imagery or mood for the bulk of the film. The 'X' on the wall is a simple but dread-inducing signifier while



sudden moments of gore are all the more shocking for their rarity.

As with *Pulse*, there's an underlying sense of urban disconnection here as Takabe struggles to balance his commitment to his job with caring for his wife, who's struggling with mental health issues. Mamiya is an empty vessel who locates repressed resentment, finding the nasty little

voice in your head and amplifying it to monstrous levels. There's no escape from something that's always there.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★☆

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**Pulse**  
 Kurosawa's horror is much better than its 'ghosts in the internet' pitch would suggest.

# THE SUPER INFRAMAN

Thunderball fists of fury

SciFiNow Must see now!

**Details** 12 // 88 mins // 1975 // **Released** Out now  
**Director** Hua Shan **Cast** Danny Lee, Wang Hsieh, Terry Lau, Yan Mantzu  
**Distributor** 88 Films



**With giant monster** movies enjoying a Hollywood revival, 88 Films' beautiful restoration of Shaw Brothers' classic *The Super Inframan* is a blast of fresh air for everyone who'd rather be watching men in suits duke it out in choreographed fight sequences than CGI creations destroying cities.

When Princess Dragon Mom and her mutant army attack Hong Kong, the fate of the world is in danger. Luckily, a professor has been working on a project to turn a man into a superhero, and Inframan is born.

Aside from the Saturday morning pleasures of man-in-suit monsters, there's a real energy

and invention to Hua Shan's ambitious adventure. Each of the mutants has distinct powers and personalities (the regenerating plant monster is particularly brilliant), forcing the professor to find new ways to improve our hero (Thunderball fists!), it's a delightfully uncomplicated battle between good and evil with high stakes and the action sequences are a joy to watch. This is a treat.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★



# THE HELLBOUND HEART

Such sights to see!

SciFiNow Must hear now!

**Details** N/A // 75 mins // 2018 // Download // **Released** Out now  
**Creator** Simon Barnard **Cast** Tom Meeten, Neve McIntosh, Alice Lowe  
**Distributor** Bafflegab Productions

**Bafflegab Productions** brings us their version of Clive Barker's 1986 novella *The Hellbound Heart*, famously adapted on film in 1987 as *Hellraiser*. This pacy, punchy adaptation launches straight into the familiar tale of lifelong ne'er-do-well Frank Cotton getting in way over his head with a gang of otherworldly pleasure-seekers. His brother Rory and Rory's wife Julia move into the house where he disappeared, and an accident brings Frank back as a monstrous half-man in need of blood to regrow his body.

Audio is a great medium for Barker's story, allowing the squelchy sound effects to construct the nasty visuals in your head. Admittedly, it is difficult to



forget the film but the cast here do a sterling job. Tom Meeten is great in a dual role, playing both mild cuckold Rory and the superbly nasty Frank, while Neve McIntosh believably transitions from unsatisfied spouse and Alice Lowe does well in the slightly thankless role of Kirsty. This is a short, creepy listen which will bring a shiver to a sunny commute or a stormy night in.

**Martin Parsons**

★★★★★

# THREADS

The way the world ends

SciFiNow Must see now!

**Details** 15 // 118 minutes // 1984 // DVD // **Released** Out now  
**Creator** Barry Hines **Cast** Karen Meagher, Reece Dinsdale, David Brierly, Rita May **Distributor** Simply Media



**No one ever** forgets the experience of watching *Threads*. The 1984 BBC TV movie, directed by Mick Jackson and written by Barry Hines, is arguably the most devastating piece of television ever produced in this country. It's perfectly crafted, totally human and so completely harrowing you'll think that you'll probably never want to watch it again.

But the thing about *Threads* is that it doesn't go away. In the Noughties it seemed to have taken on a cult status that bordered on urban legend ('you think that film's upsetting? Have you seen *Threads*?'), and now our world leaders are so terrifying that the argument has been made that it should be aired again to remind people what the effects of a nuclear conflict look like.

This handsome new restoration (which comes with commentaries, interviews and other goodies) has scrubbed away a lot of the grime from previous DVD releases (so much so that it takes a little getting used to) but the impact is exactly the same. Barry Hines' impeccable screenplay spends close to an hour setting the scene, as young Sheffield couple Ruth Beckett (Karen Meagher) and Jimmy Kemp (Reece Dinsdale) fret about her unexpected pregnancy while conflict in the Middle East continues to escalate.

The pacing is perfect. We watch



these relatable characters try to push the doom and gloom out of their minds with variations on 'there's nothing we can do about it' until emergency preparations for annihilation make it impossible to carry on as normal. They're doing the best they can, and doing what the government tells them to, but nothing can prepare them for the reality of what's to come.

Once the bomb drops, Jackson and Hines do not flinch. The immediate effects are jaw-dropping and watching the survivors in the days and weeks to come is heart-breaking. A group of local council members in a bunker realising that they are going to have to let people starve to death, the inability to bury the dead, and the RP voiceover explaining the effects of fall-out dust and nuclear winter... You'll never forget it.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**Miracle Mile**  
 Anthony Edwards gets an early warning of nuclear Armageddon in this underrated film.





Season Two

# A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Only slightly more unfortunate

SciFiNow Must see now!

**Details** PG // 452 mins // 2018 // NETFLIX // **Released** Out now  
**Creators** Mark Hudis, Barry Sonnenfeld **Cast** Neil Patrick Harris, Patrick Warburton, Malina Weissman, Louis Hynes **Distributor** Netflix



**Following a stunning** first season, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* needed to do something special for

Season Two if it was to stand any chance of topping it. The latest episodes don't reach that goal, instead offering more of the same. However, that's no bad thing; it retains Season One's whimsy and gothic flair, while bringing in a cast of new characters and unfortunate situations for the Baudelaires.

Things get truly grim for Violet, Klaus and Sunny as the upsetting saga continues with 'The Austere Academy'. Having spent Season One attempting to escape the clutches of Count Olaf (Neil Patrick Harris), the Baudelaires were in need of something else to focus on if the show were to avoid becoming a little bit same-y.

That something comes in the form of Duncan and Isadora Quagmire, a pair of triplets (the third triple, Quigley, was tragically killed) that end up becoming the Baudelaires' closest, if not only, friends. After meeting the Quagmires at Prufrock School and bonding over the fact that all of their parents were killed in fires, the orphans' main season aim becomes reuniting with Duncan

and Isadora, alongside keeping Count Olaf at arm's length.

The change in goal adds an extra layer to the story, but it isn't enough to stop it feeling slightly repetitive. The stories themselves, not to mention the continually wonderful scripts, are engaging and exciting, but it's hard to shake the feeling that we haven't seen them all before.

However, a strong new supporting cast brings the kind of variety that made Season One so great, including Lucy Punch as the vile but on-trend Esmé Squalor, the always good value Tony Hale as her husband Jerome, Sarah Rue as Prufrock's kind-hearted librarian Olivia Caliban, Nathan Fillion as Lemony's dashing adventurer brother Jacques, and 12-year-old Kitana Turnbull as unbearably snotty but entertaining schoolgirl Carmelita Spats.

On top of that, Harris continues to dominate as Count Olaf, and Patrick Warburton's hypnotic Lemony Snicket voice is just as deliciously dulcet as it's always been.

**Poppy-Jay Palmer**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**Goosebumps**  
 Jack Black is marvellous as *Goosebumps* author RL Stine.

# LOST IN SPACE

Danger, Will Robinson?

**Details** 12 // 600 minutes // 2018 // NETFLIX // **Released** Out now  
**Creators** Irwin Allen, Matt Sazama, Burk Sharpless **Cast** Molly Parker, Toby Stephens, Parker Posey, Taylor Russell, Mina Sundwall **Distributor** Netflix



**It's fortunate** for Netflix's *Lost In Space* reboot that it only has to clear the bar of the naff

1998 movie to be considered an improvement, and this take on Irwin Allen's Sixties SF TV series shows that it's capable of doing so. Although it looks spectacular and is moderately gritty (it never reaches *BSG* levels), *Lost In Space* 2018 remembers that this is a show about a family.

When a larger mission to colonise a new world runs into trouble, the Robinson family's ship crashes on an undiscovered planet. At first, they're struggling to stay alive in the face of extreme weather and the occasional monster, but the world's breathable atmosphere could lend itself to a new home... until they realise that they need to find a way off the planet as soon as possible.

The writers quickly establish the family dynamics, as their simmering feuds and not-so-hidden fears need to be dealt with in order to focus on the business of survival. Molly Parker and Toby Stephens put in solid work as the parents (Parker is particularly good, making the most of Maureen's increased role as an aerospace engineer) and the children are well cast.



The relationship between Will (Maxwell Jenkins) and the Robot (Brian Steele) is a high point, as the alien machine manages to be unknowable, charming and deadly all at once.

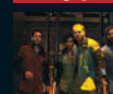
The problem, as with so many Netflix series, is pacing. Once a big discovery is made in episode four, *Lost In Space* settles into a repetitive structure with a lot of padding. It picks up steam for the finale but it's hard to shake the feeling that, were this being broadcast weekly, you may not tune in for the next episode.

However, it does have the undeniable draw of Parker Posey as the scheming Dr Smith. She's as wonderful as you'd hope she'd be, and watching her manipulate, lie and squirm away from being cornered is a joy.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**



**The Expanse**  
 The adaptation of James SA Corey's novels continues to impress.



Season One

CLAIRE NORTH

84

82

**Claire North**

Talking near  
futures and George  
Orwell with the  
author of 84K

**078** Book reviews

**084** The Folio Society  
I Am Legend gallery

**086** Graphic novel reviews

**088** Ed Piskor interview

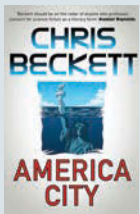
**090** GX Todd interview



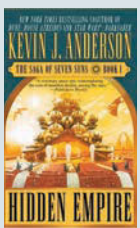
## Your 5 Best Near-Future SF



TELL US YOUR FAVOURITES @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. **America City**  
"Chris Beckett's *America City* because it sounds scarily plausible! #BookClub" @ToneSibley



2. **The Saga Of Seven Suns**  
"I recently finished *The Saga Of Seven Suns* space opera series by Kevin J Anderson (@TheKJA), and I must say that I enjoyed the h3l out of it. #BookClub" @EatonKrone



3. **The Handmaid's Tale**  
"The repressive bible-inspired regime of *The Handmaid's Tale* is chilling, particularly

when you add that only a small percentage of women can bear children following an unexplained pollutant #BookClub"

@iankmoore



4. **Ready Player One**  
"Ready Player One. Cause I'm gonna be senior in 2045 and still can play computer games. #BookClub" @Amywiell

**"ITS ENERGY IS INFECTIOUS AND ITS IDEAS ARE PROVOCATIVE"**



5. **Ack Ack Macaque**  
"Ack Ack Macaque by @garethlpowell because Cigar Chompin', Gun Weildin' Monkey Pilot - what more reason do you need? #BookClub" @andyangel44

Details Author: Claire North Publisher: Orbit Price: £18.99 Released: 24 May

# 84K **Hard facts or fantasy?**

**Claire North imagines** the UK as a place where human rights have been scrapped and the country has basically been taken over by a wealthy company. It's not a far cry from where we could be headed. Crime is punishable by fine, which means the richer you are the more likely you are to get away with murder. It is Theo Miller's job, as an employee of the Criminal Audit Office, to place value on law breaking and in turn place value on human life.

This dystopian fantasy paints society as a form-filling, hellish place to inhabit where gentrification and privatisation are lived out to absurd and damaging extremes. Areas are cordoned off for the elite and the

poor who can't afford to pay for petty misdemeanours are packed off to sweat shop style prisons. Is this the way capitalism is heading? Or are we already there? North asks these questions about dehumanisation through a love story that leads Theo across the country, meeting those who choose to live outside society and learning more about the way he has blindly accepted the system he works in.

At the start of the novel all we know is Theo is hiding a secret and his long, lost lover Dani Cumali can unearth it if she chooses to do so. As the story goes on North slowly reveals his true character through flashback chapters and the reasons why he has turned into the blandest

man imaginable. He keeps his head down at work and keeps his numbers to an acceptable rate. Dani, on the other hand is a passionate, risk taker living on the poverty line who has had enough. Learning about their past relationship adds a genuinely nostalgic tinge and pathos reminiscent of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.

The different tribes of people Theo meets along the way vary greatly in their standing and how they comply with the rules. The 'howlers' live outside society, scavenging and left for dead in ghost towns, meanwhile there are some, led by a fascinating character called Queen of the Patties, who scrape by. Theo even encounters a wealthy woman with whom he embarks on a dangerous mission of morals. Occasionally, we meet one or two characters whose story lacks robust shading in but that rarely takes away from the gripping and emotionally involving narrative.

The kindness of a woman living on the British waterways, who chooses not to leave Theo lying on the side of the canal with a head injury adds another layer of intrigue to the story. North starts with the reality of what the privatisation of health care really means. It's a startling beginning where the emergency services hang up if you don't have the right health care package.

North's ambitious, modern spin on George Orwell's seminal novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* similarly follows the regimented rules and regulations attached to that text without skimming on the humanity. *84K* is a furious, confrontational book that's extremely smart and knowledgeable about capitalism, society and bleak current affairs. Its energy is infectious, and its ideas are fiercely provocative.

**Katherine McLaughlin**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
 **Nineteen Eighty-Four**  
**George Orwell**  
Hugely influential dystopian novel that explored the dangers of totalitarianism.



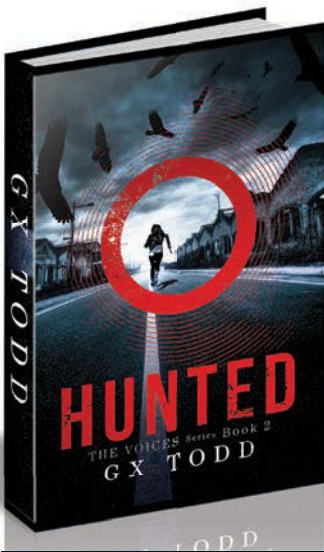


**Details** Author: GX Todd Publisher: Headline Price: £18.99 Released: 31 May

# HUNTED

Hide and seek

The second instalment in GX Todd's four-part *The Voices* series doesn't waste any time hanging about, but readers may be surprised that the heroic Lacey isn't there to greet them (for a little while at least). Instead, Todd switches focus and broadens



the scope of her post-apocalypse world, introducing two groups of survivors who have the same goal.

One is a collective of kind-hearted souls led by Albus, who's receiving visions from his sister Ruby of three women in need of his help and the horrors to come if they fall into the wrong hands. The wrong hands are being controlled by the malevolent voice we encountered at the end of *Defender*, who is just as determined and more vicious...

It's a bold move to hold off on familiar faces for so long, but Todd's gift for delivering rounded characters with a blend of tragedy, humanity and violence means we're fully immersed in this dangerous world before we know it. While the first novel was a road story, *Hunted* is all about the chase as seen from two different perspectives. We get to see how we hope humanity would pull together (Albus' group is made of



people from different backgrounds, willing to work together and sacrifice for the greater good) and how we fear they'd fall apart.

Good-hearted Albus is an interesting new lead but it's the unfortunate Sunny who proves to be the most compelling new character: a woman who finds herself caught up with this monstrous voice due to a paralysing combination of pity (for its unfortunate, visibly deteriorating host Posy), fear and inertia. While there is true evil at play here, Todd's story continues to explore the grey areas of human nature, making for an end-of-the-world story that's as complex as it is gripping.

**Jonathan Haifull**



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**The Fireman**  
**Joe Hill**

A fight for survival ensues when the planet is decimated by spontaneous combustion.



## What you lot have been reading this month?



"A *Spell In The Country* by @HeideGoody and Iain Grant - two of the funniest authors around, on the top of their game #BookClub"  
**@andyangel44**



"Been enjoying *The Incredible Hulk: Crossroads*, where Hulk is banished by Dr Strange to the otherworldly crossroads. #BookClub"  
**@paul\_bowler**



"I picked up *Smoke Eaters* from @SeanGrigsby and am loving it. Plus there are dragons. Bonus! #BookClub"  
**@farscape08**



"Just started *Embers Of War* by Gareth L Powell so far enjoying the story very much! Got to love space ships who know their own minds... #BookClub"  
**@johntheboy**



"Currently reading *Idle Hands* by @T\_A\_Fletcher good to get back into the dystopian adventure of Wild Alan and Bloody Nora again. #BookClub"  
**@Cascararogue**



"I'm reading *Rise Of Fire* by Sophie Jordan and it's okay. #BookClub"  
**@JasminMaaz**



"Been reading *Meddling Kids* by Edgar Cantero. *Scooby Doo* meets *Stranger Things* if it was written by Blyton as satire. #BookClub"  
**@Zombie\_Simon**



"*Vorkosigan Saga* book three, French edition! I think George Lucas knew these stories in the late 70s lol #BookClub"  
**@nb1t2017**



"Just finished *All Systems Red* for #ReadWomenSF. Short but really great. #BookClub"  
**@GemTodd**

Tell us what you're reading on Twitter or Facebook

**Details** Author: Peter Newman Publisher: HarperVoyager Price: £14.99 Released: 14 June

# THE DEATHLESS

Into the wild

The **Deathless** are immortal beings who protect their lands from the sprawling forests of the Wild, a place of monsters and darkness where ordinary folk dare not tread.

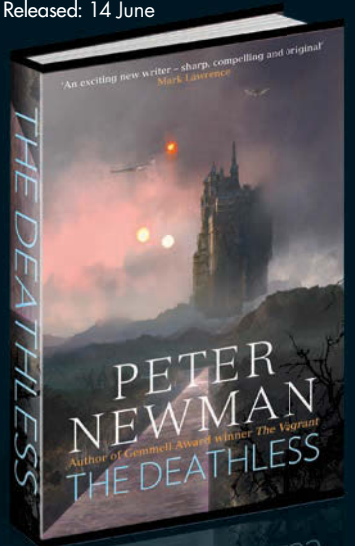
Safe in their floating crystal castles, the various Deathless dynasties have co-existed in alliances that work against the Wild. However, when assassins strike at the Sapphire family, tensions inevitably rise and it becomes clear that the Wild has far more influence over the Deathless than they would like to admit.

Blending genres is a surefire way to add depth to a novel and Peter Newman stirs several into his fantasy with apparent ease. The political intrigues and machinations of the Deathless meld seamlessly into the horrors of the Wild, with romantic relationships and thrilling action sequences along the way.

The various twists and turns in the novel feel organic too with ramifications for both character and plot rather than being introduced simply for the shock value.

Newman lets his imagination run when in the Wild, creating fantastical and horrifying creatures that emphasise the land's fearsome reputation. Several setpieces have such a chilling aspect to them that the tension feels almost unbearable, particularly as there is frequently a young child involved. It is in these moments that *The Deathless* really excels, creating a dark and oppressive atmosphere that it feels like a relief whenever the action moves away from it. Of course, the family politics provide a different kind of tension.

*The Deathless* is the first in a new series and it makes for an exciting entry into Newman's



vast and intriguing world.

Manipulating his characters like chess pieces, it is going to be very interesting to see where they all end up next time.

**Becky Lea**



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**The Emperor's Blades**  
**Brian Staveley**  
Siblings must deal with the fate of an empire when their father is murdered.



**Details** Author: SJ Morden Publisher: Gollancz  
Price: £10.99 Released: Out now

# ONE WAY In space, no-one can hear you scream

**Given the choice** between serving out a life sentence in prison or taking a high-risk job on Mars, which would you choose?

For Frank Kittridge, it's a no-brainer. He's locked up on a murder charge, but leaving the planet offers him a chance to rebuild his life, maybe even win back the respect of his son. So he's put through gruelling training and then shipped off to Mars – along with a team of other convicts, whose job it'll be to construct a living facility before NASA arrives to take over.

On Mars, everything goes wrong, because of course it does. The idea of sending a bunch of barely trained criminals to do the work of highly skilled astronauts is a sci-fi horror premise, rather than a particularly sensible plan.

But that's kind of the point. While *One Way* functions as a slasher in space, with Frank's team getting picked off one by one in a series of suspicious 'accidents', it's really about the horrors of

cut-throat capitalism. Though the main narrative is told from Frank's POV, it's interspersed with memos from Xenosystems Operations, the contractors behind the plan, which make it clear how little the prisoners' lives matter to those in charge. It's not just that the odds are stacked against them – it's that, as long as the base gets built, their survival is irrelevant.

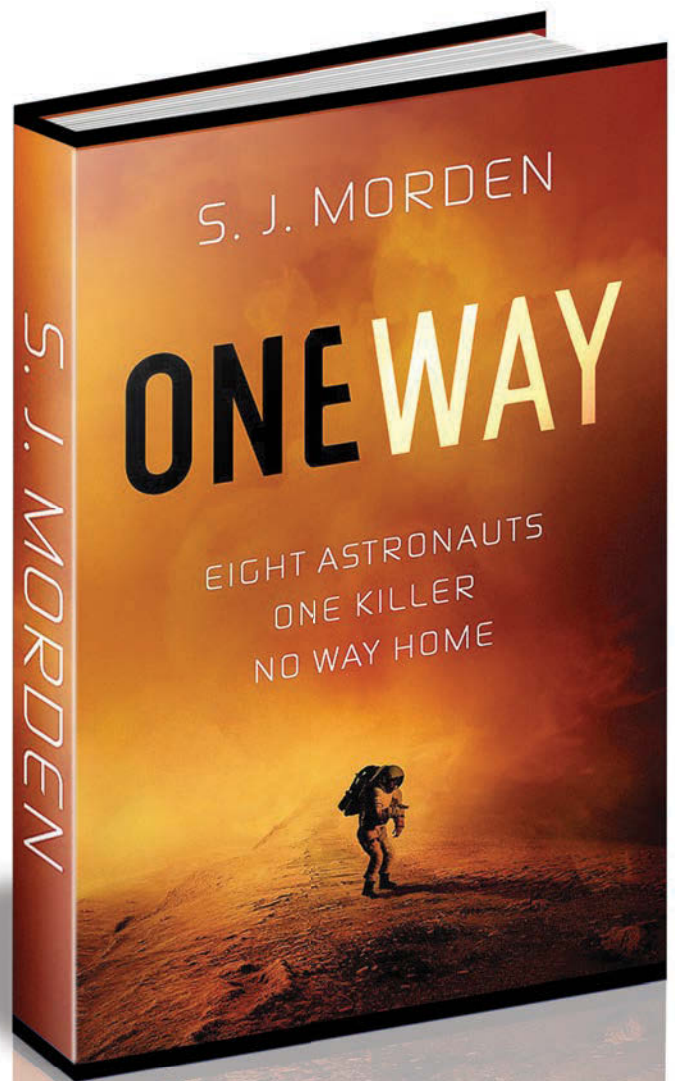
If you're hoping for a compelling mystery or a shocker of a final twist, you may be disappointed with the way things shake out. But Morden knows his stuff when it comes to space travel, so the depiction of life on Mars is fascinating, and there's something chilling about the idea of being so far from home, and so utterly beyond rescue.

**Sarah Dobbs**

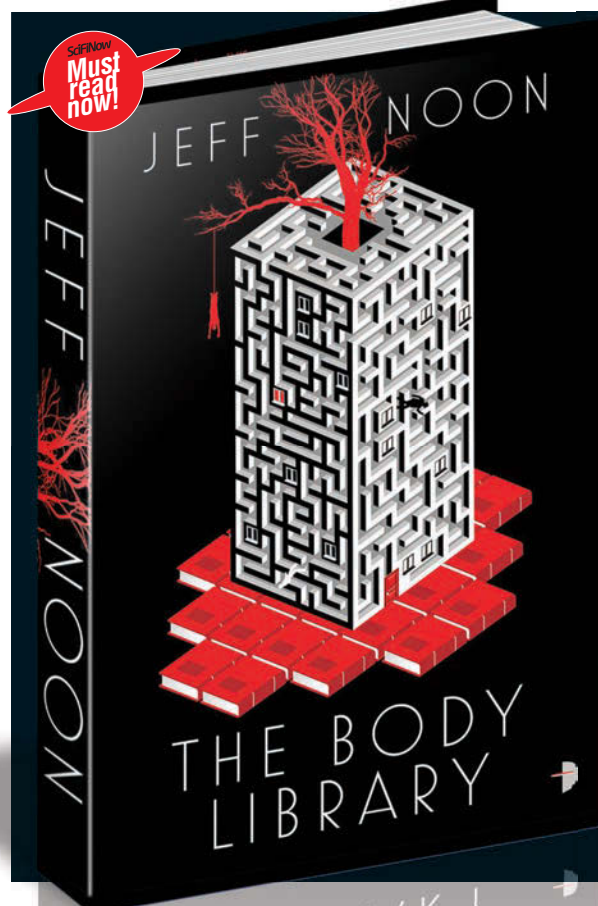
★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**Six Wakes**  
**Mur Lafferty**  
A far-future murder mystery set on a spaceship where people should live forever...



**"IT'S ABOUT THE HORRORS OF CUTTHROAT CAPITALISM"**



**Details** Author: Jeff Noon Publisher: Angry Robot Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

# THE BODY LIBRARY Written in blood

**After plunging his** private eye John Nyquist into a world of light and dark in *A Man Of Shadows*, Jeff Noon delivers a sequel of sorts in this engrossing literary noir. The 'of sorts' means that newcomers shouldn't have any problem jumping in, and the world of Storyville is easier to get your head around than the world of Dayzone and Nocturna.

Here, story is everything, whether you're creating a narrative or wrapped up in someone else's. When we pick up with Nyquist he's in full detective mode. He's being paid to follow a man, but a trip to a Melville tower block ends up with him killing the target in self-defence and hiding from crooks with a dame in tow.

As in *A Man Of Shadows*, Noon uses the structure of classic noir as a anchor for headier themes. Not only is Nyquist thrown in over his head, he's also caught up in a mystery involving a cut-up text called The

Body Library, filled with contagious words whose narcotic properties come with deadly side-effects. It's not long before these words get under Nyquist's skin and he's forced to take control of his own narrative or end up on the mortuary slab.

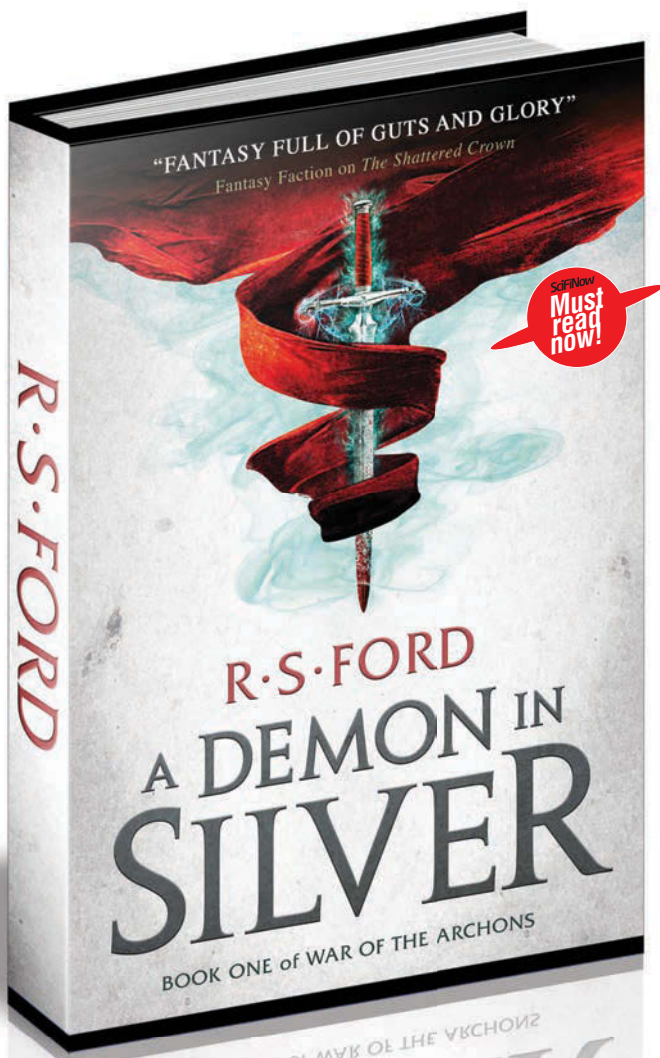
Noon keeps up an impressive pace as Nyquist hunts for answers, but he certainly doesn't sacrifice detail. Authorities keep tabs on citizens to insure they're not hiding any illegal story details, narrative addicts are driven insane by the disappearance of their muse, and once we're inside the high-rise otherworld of Melville 5, all bets are off. This is rich, inventive and recommended.

**Jonathan Hatfull**

★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
**The City And The City**  
**China Mieville**  
A detective investigates a murder across cities that can't acknowledge each other.



**Details** Author: RS Ford Publisher: Titan Books Price: £7.99 Released: 12 June

# A DEMON IN SILVER

## Magic hunt

**Magic has not** been seen for over a century, but when a young woman, Livia, exhibits powers that she nor anyone around her understands, a chase ensues. Livia is sought by several factions, each with a vested interest in the farm girl. Among them is notorious mercenary Josten Cade, who becomes caught up with Livia's plight.

The immediate thing you notice about *A Demon In Silver* is just how much fun you're having. RS Ford plunges you into the action with the rakish Josten and builds a world from there. It's one which feels sprawling, with a weight of history behind it. Different factions, gods, and villains are introduced steadily as the quest for Livia grows and the start of most characters' arcs are laid out neatly. Without any spoilers, there is also a nicely subversive element to the tropes that Ford deploys, taking well-worn narratives and applying a twist to them to keep his world fresh and interesting.

The narrative's furious pace keeps it very entertaining, but occasionally, Ford has to resort to telling rather than showing in order to advance characters' relationships. That particular area of the book feels a little rushed, particularly in terms of a main character's motivation for staying involved with the fight for Livia. Livia herself walks a fine tightrope between character and MacGuffin and wobbles a little, but she has enough fight and personality to ensure sympathy.

However, *A Demon In Silver* is such a rollicking start to a new trilogy that it is easy to forgive these minor quibbles. It's a great ride and there's one hell of a set-up for the next instalment, one which we eagerly await.

**Becky Lea**

★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Starborn**  
**Lucy Hounsom**  
A girl has to flee when her superstitious village turns on her.

**“THE IMMEDIATE THING YOU NOTICE ABOUT A DEMON IN SILVER IS JUST HOW MUCH FUN YOU’RE HAVING”**

**Details** Author: Roger Levy Publisher: Titan Books Price: £8.99 Released: Out now

# THE RIG

**Better get your story straight**

**The brave new** world of Roger Levy's first novel in over a decade is not an overly welcoming one. There are criminal gangs, the unsettling idea of immortality via lottery, and a world named Bleak that is as inhospitable as its name. Diving into the book, with its multiple story strands and uncanny way of pushing the truth further away from the reader with each clue, feels a bit like jumping off a cliff but it's a leap worth taking.

Earth has been abandoned, and wealth has determined the divvying up of the new interplanetary system. On an intensely religious planet named Gehenna, a young boy named Alef makes friends with an intense, dangerous child. Their friendship will plunge Alef into a life of criminal enterprise and murder, but how does that connect to the book's second main story, involving disgraced cop Bale, professional

storyteller Razer and reconstructed near-murder victim Tallen?

There is a lot of detail and a lot to take on board, but Levy's deliberate pacing and flawed, interesting characters make for engrossing reading. Alef's ascent in the world of crime lacks the glamour we're used to because his personality makes it increasingly tragic. Meanwhile, the mystery surrounding the killer whose actions turned Tallen into a science project and plunged Bale and Razer into a perilous conspiracy unfolds slowly but carefully.

*The Rig* requires patience but this is a rich, dangerous world and we'd recommend taking the dive.

**Jonathan Haifull**

★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**All The Birds In The Sky**  
**Charlie Jane Anders**  
A witch and a scientist's lifelong bond is threatened by the oncoming apocalypse.





# BOOK CLUB

Interview





# WHAT'S TO COME

Claire North's *84K* takes a look at where we're heading. We talk to the author about Orwellian visions and humanity in the machine

WORDS KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN

"2015 to 2018 has certainly been a bit of a rollercoaster for me," says Claire North on the direction her literary output has taken in the last few years. The UK has swung to a strange and frightening place where injustice is rife and plans to abolish the Human Rights Act are actual conversations had in the political arena – thankfully put on hold for the time being while the Government make arrangements for leaving the European Union.

In North's dystopian novel, human rights have been abolished and an aggressively wealthy company has taken charge of the country. The poorest members of society live on the fringes, eat substandard grub and are allowed nowhere near the rich elite. If you choose to live outside those rules, you're on your own or sent to a sweatshop-style prison.

In her previous novel, *The End Of The Day*, North tackled bleak current affairs with a fresh Terry Pratchett-like humour and relish. *84K* is a darker take, a modern Orwellian style vision of the way things are headed in this country. The title is a spin on his novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and on that North says: "I'm a little bit leery because it's George Orwell – the guy's got moves! You don't want to pack yourself into the George Orwell group in much

the same way you don't want someone asking: 'Are you the next JK Rowling?' Don't even go there! But on the other hand: George fucking Orwell! Yeah! The only reason I'm down with it is because it is what comes next."

North explains her ideas further, saying: "*Nineteen Eighty-Four* was very much looking at communism and how that went horribly wrong and I sort of feel like we're at the point now where we've swung so far on the political spectrum that the time has come to look very hard at the direction capitalism is going and how that is going wrong. Prisons are run by private companies, women can't get tampons, books are not allowed inside. Medicine is becoming privatised at every possible step. Academies are asset stripping the education system and depriving children access to learning. This is kind of where we're going."

On the seeds of inspiration for this book coming together North explains: "I think dealing with the DWP on behalf of my grandma may have been a strong factor in this idea brewing up in my head."

The main idea sprouted from an image North had in mind and posing the grisly question: 'What if you can pay to get away with murder?' She goes on to say: "That was the basic principle that spiralled out into this chaos, doom and destruction from there. It started with that question and very specifically a picture of a character. The greyest, blandest, most bureaucratic character I could possibly think of who spent his days in a bland office, auditing the most horrific things that had happened."

The protagonist in her novel is a lonely and apathetic man called Theo Miller, who keeps his head down at his job at the Criminal Audit Office. North says: "I like that as an image. I like bloodshed, gore, depression, misery all being summed up by someone saying: 'But where's form 32B?' I think that's the essence of dehumanisation in this modern world, in a way even more than the blood and the gore and the shouting is when people are reduced to even less than a news story, to a statistic, a bit of paperwork – which is how it feels dehumanisation works a lot of the time."

As Theo's circumstances change and he begins to fight for his own passionate cause,

triggered by the murder of long-lost lover, Dani Cumali, he finally starts to question the horrible system: "We've developed all these systems to build a complicated society that's supposed to be as fair as it humanely can," North says, "and the attempt to unionise and legalise fairness – which is a noble aspiration – but we have killed any scope for human imagination. Especially with the automated, digitalisation of these things, any room for nuance or thinking beyond that tablet is pfffttt! People are so trapped in having to follow what's on the screen that to actually engage in any sort of meaningful way is beyond imaginable."

A smidgen of hope comes in Theo's decision to avenge Dani's death and attempts to break the system. His quest takes him to dangerous places, meeting a range of fascinating characters who have rejected the rules and formed their own communities. One called Queen Of The Patties has a mythological like hero quality to her and we ask North if there are any historical figures or real cases that inspired their stories?

"Not hugely for *84K*," North says. "History colours everything I've done because I love it. If anything was in the Queen Of The Patties, it was probably the [English] Civil War. Every time I've read up on it it's just blown my tiny mind. I think The Levellers, and the people who went back to the farms and ran away from it all. All these incredible sects just broke out and defied every norm of society. That was probably closer to what was going on in my head at the time but in a very unconscious way."

North's ambitious story also confronts the reader on where society is heading and Capitalism. North concludes by saying: "What is our society good for? What do we seek to aspire to as humans? Do we seek to go to Mars? Do we seek to build a warp drive? If the definition of what our lives is: 'What do we need to do to make more money?' and that is good then our society is never going to live in *Star Trek*. Wealth is not the moral good. It's a tool and nothing more."



*84K* by Claire North is available from Orbit on 22 May.



There are connections to Orwell's classic.

# LAST MAN STANDING

The Folio Society takes on Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* with the help of Dave McKean

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

As the years pass, the influence of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* continues to grow. The grim tale of the last man left alive in a world overrun by vampiric creatures has had a legion of adaptations both official and not (it was famously a touchstone for George A Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead*).

However, none of them have quite been able to capture the tragic sense of isolation and loneliness of the original novel, as Robert Neville spends his days hunting and killing these creatures before spending

his nights alone with his dog, while the monsters crawl around outside his barricaded home.

As the story progresses, we learn more and more about Neville's own tragic past, but more importantly we see how his position in the world has shifted. Is he the heroic final bastion of humanity, or is he the monster picking off the weakest of the Earth's new rightful inhabitants?

The new edition of *I Am Legend* from The Folio Society is introduced by Joe Hill

(*NOS4R2*, *The Fireman*) and comes with beautiful illustrations from the great Dave McKean (who also worked on their absolutely gorgeous edition of *American Gods* last year), and we have a selection of his artwork here for you...

The Folio Society edition of *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson, introduced by Joe Hill and illustrated by Dave McKean, is exclusively available from [www.foliosociety.com](http://www.foliosociety.com)



Illustration by Dave McKean from The Folio Society  
edition of I Am Legend ©Dave McKean 2018



**Details** Writer: Ed Piskor Artist: Ed Piskor Publisher: Marvel Comics  
Price: £16.99 Released: Out now

# X-MEN: GRAND DESIGN

Cover version

“Dear Reader, I hope you enjoy this love letter. It was made with you in mind. Turn the page and enjoy.” So begins an astonishing journey through *X-Men* continuity as chewed up, regurgitated and reconstituted by comics mix-master Ed Piskor. As with Piskor’s *Hip Hop Family Tree*, a four-volume retelling of the wayward narrative that binds together hip-hop culture, this is formalised fandom – possibly the nerdiest, most obsessive project you’ll find on shelves this year.

On first glance, this may seem a straightforward task. Surely this is a simple, linear, blow-by-blow account of events as originally told in every issue of *X-Men*, starting with Stan Lee and Jack Kirby’s influential 1963 origins, right? Not quite. After all, *X-Men* more than any other comics series is one filled with retcons, flashbacks and chronology tweaks, and in practice *Grand Design* only reaches *X-Men* #1 after about 40 or so pages of dazzling and confounding continuity-fudging. By then, we’ve covered stories published from the whole span of the series, filling in gaps in the overarching history – such as the first meeting of Xavier and Magneto (*Uncanny X-Men* #161 from 1982) and how Henry McCoy picked up the Beast moniker and joined the ranks of the team (as told in backup stories in *X-Men* #50-#52 in 1968).

There are also some very creative sequences that don’t quite match up with the comics as we know them. A glimpse at mutant activity in the Second World War posits that Logan partnered with Captain America, and met

a young Magneto along the way – which seems to be riffing on themes and hints presented in an issue of the *What If?* alternate universe series and the *X-Men* and *X-Men Evolution* animated TV shows.

If any comic required footnotes, this would be it. Unfortunately, it doesn’t have any, which lands *Grand Design* in an awkward middle ground between being an accessible, catch-all precis for new readers (who might be baffled) and offering a loving tribute to *X-Men*’s convoluted universe for the hardcore faithful (who might side-eye some of Piskor’s more liberal readings).

However, if the reading experience perhaps isn’t as breezy as you’d hope, the simple act of drinking in Piskor’s wonky, indie comix-influenced artwork is a joy. This first collection comes complete with pages of sketches by Piskor as an *X-Men*-obsessed kid, so it is clear that these characters were part of his repertoire long before he became a professional artist. His distinctive style, first presented in *Hip Hop Family Tree* and arguably perfected here, is suitably specific for the anorak-friendly projects he tackles. Pages have the wizened, yellow texture of old newsprint; colour palettes are painstakingly sampled from the four-colour processes of Seventies and Eighties comics; and the book, itself, is oversized like a Marvel Treasury Edition.

Conceptual novelty aside, though, there’s an undeniable thrill in seeing the *X-Men*’s iconic moments, line-ups and costumes through the years re-interpreted in this colourful mode. The series’ grand design, both in scope and on the page, is, ultimately, its strongest and strangest quality.

**Michael Leader**

★★★★★

**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**  
Marvels  
Kurt Busiek & Alex Ross  
Marvel’s Golden and Silver age stories re-told from a street-level perspective.





**Details** Writer: Evan Dorkin Artist: Jill Thompson  
 Publisher: Dark Horse Comics Price: \$19.99 Released: 9 May

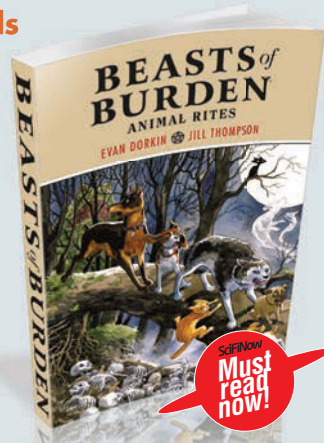
# BEASTS OF BURDEN: ANIMAL RITES

**Good boys and ghouls**

**One of the** best comics you've probably never read, the six-time Eisner-winning series *Beasts Of Burden* receives a handy paperback introductory collection, bringing together four short stories that first appeared in disparate Dark Horse anthology books and an ensuing four-issue miniseries, originally published between 2003 and 2009.

These are spooky suburban tales of horror from the perspective of a group of dogs (and two cats). Gradually, *Beasts Of Burden* encompasses all types of horror and starts to construct a fictional world of its own, as our good boys and girls grow from petrified pups into apprentices in the order of Wise Dogs – the animal kingdom's first port of call against all things paranormal.

Writer Evan Dorkin is first to admit that the series developed out of smart-aleck wordplay. When tasked with contributing a chapter to *The Dark Horse Book Of Hauntings*, he hit upon the idea of a haunted doghouse. However, every story since has displayed a clever approach to finding the horror in familiar, real-world situations. It recalls Stephen King at times, but also the monster of the week format that Dark Horse peer Mike Mignola used to terrific effect



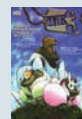
SCIFI NOW  
**Must read now!**

in *Hellboy* (a hero the *Beasts* would mingle with in a later crossover one-shot). It's the perfect playground for artist Jill Thompson (*Scary Godmother*), whose fully-painted interiors flip from the cute to the creepy in an instant. Her watercolour pages recall the picture-book Americana of Norman Rockwell... until the unseemly horror takes over, that is.

Dorkin and Thompson have taken their time with *Beasts Of Burden* – returning only when inspiration strikes. Let's hope the rest of the stories, published over the last decade, appear in a similar collection soon.

**Michael Leader**

★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**We3**  
 Grant Morrison & Frank Quitely  
*Homeward Bound* meets *RoboCop* in this sci-fi epic.



**Details** Writers: Justin Jordan, Nikki Ryan Artist: Morgan Beem  
 Publisher: Image Comics Price: \$16.99 Released: Out now

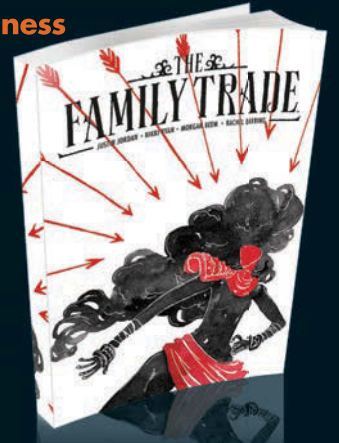
# THE FAMILY TRADE VOLUME 1

**Adventure is our business**

**To say that** *The Family Trade* is swimming in the same waters as *Assassin's Creed* and *Dishonored* would be a kind understatement. The Free Republic of Thessalia, known by the locals as The Float, is a sort of ocean-bound, Renaissance Venice, an isolated community of former seafarers whose social hierarchies still mirror the above/below deck divisions of their maritime ancestors.

Keeping the higher-ups in check is a secret, working-class society of assassins, spies and con artists called The Family, who lurk in the Float's shadows. Familiar, perhaps, but once we're introduced to Jessa Wynn, our curly-maned heroine, and her quest to uncover the Float's conspiracies, this detailed world becomes a fine set up for an alt-history adventure on the YA end of the scale.

Written by Image veteran Justin Jordan (*The Strange Talent Of Luther Strode*) and first-time comics writer Nikki Ryan, *The Family Trade* often relies on on-the-nose storytelling (a crass demagogue campaigns with the slogan 'make The Float glorious again') – but there is much here for artist Morgan Beem to play with. After short comics and anthology contributions, *The Family Trade* is Beem's Image Comics debut, and her work



here is something of a revelation. From the first establishing splash spread of the Float's skyline to her dynamic, beguiling character designs, her art is a delight.

There's a wonderful bit of back matter in this first collection, too. On one page, Beem lays out the materials used to create her artwork for the series, right down to the ink, the tubes of watercolour paint, and the specific brushes and mechanical pencils. There's even a small sketch of her messy palette with colours and water mixed together to show her process, taking us behind the scenes with a very promising new artist.

**Michael Leader**

★★★★★



**IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...**

**Bandette Volume 1: Presto!**  
 Paul Tobin & Colleen Coover  
 Brilliant Euro-inspired crime-caper series.





# UNCANNY DESIGNS

Acclaimed indie artist Ed Piskor tells us about taking on the X-Men with the incredibly ambitious *Grand Design*

WORDS MICHAEL LEADER

**“If this is** my one superhero story, I’m happy with that.” Following his acclaimed and award-winning series *Hip Hop Family Tree*, indie comics artist Ed Piskor tackles the *X-Men* universe in his ambitious Marvel Comics project, *X-Men: Grand Design*. Covering decades of comics, *Grand Design* seeks to iron out hundreds of issues of continuity, incorporating iconic incidents, origin stories and spin-offs into one digestible timeline. On the phone from Pittsburgh, Piskor takes us behind the scenes of *Grand Design*, lets us in on his own *X-Men* origin story, and breaks down his unique approach to comics history.

**Where do you start with a project like this? And then how do you go about turning it into its own work?**

When I floated the idea to Marvel, I re-read everything. And then came the point where it was becoming closer to reality, so I re-read it all again. In preparation for each issue, I knew that I had 40 pages to use, and I dare say this is the densest Marvel comic, or comic from the Big Two, that’s been put out in a zillion years. I have 40 bullet points for each issue, what’s going to happen on each page. And then I spend about a month doing a quick version

of the comic. I don’t write a script for myself, I just draw the comic on a piece of paper to create a template for how the page should look. After that, it’s a six month period of actually drawing it, colouring it, lettering it and then wash-rinse-repeat, six times, and that’ll be the entire *X-Men: Grand Design* saga.

**You’re not just pulling all of these story threads together, you’re also tying together decades of artwork. You’re reinterpreting stories drawn by Jack Kirby, Dave Cockrum, John Byrne et al, in your own style. What was that like?**

It was fun and really humbling. I learned a lot, because I’m able to look at their work on a molecular level, and study what they’re doing. I can see all their strong points, and their flaws and weaknesses, too. But to do a project like this, I have to trick my mind into being worthy of participation. I can’t trip too hard on just how great a lot of these guys are. I’m not going to try and punch above my weight class, I’m just going to do what I can do.

The *Hip Hop Family Tree* series has made me feel comfortable with the idea of sampling. Taking bits of existing stuff and putting my own spin on it to create something new. When you’re looking at Warren Worthington pulling off his clothes to reveal his wings are bound down, there’s nobody who could draw that better than Jack Kirby in the first issue of *X-Men*. So, okay, I’m going to take that, but I’m going to add my own energy to it. And that’s the spirit that I’m using to make this comic. I like the idea of incorporating a little bit from all my favourite *X-Men* artists in there, to create this epic chronicle.

**What’s your X-Men origin story? Did you grow up in the Chris Claremont era?**

It was absolutely the Chris Claremont era. The primo John Byrne [penciller], Terry Austin [inker], Chris Claremont [writer] material is the cream of the crop. I consider that to be one of the great collaborations in comics history.

The first issue I remember having was issue #157, which actually came out a couple of months before I was born. My dad was 34-35 when he had me, and I think he was excited to finally have a kid, so I have this memory

of having comics by the heaps. So I was collecting *X-Men* comics before I could even read the English language. It was the only constant of my life from, say, age 5 to about 12. I got it every month, but then I also got classic *X-Men* as well, so I was able to brush up on the material that came before. So I had the best of both worlds.

**It’s a nice touch to include sketches and drawings of the X-Men from when you were a kid. What made you include that?**

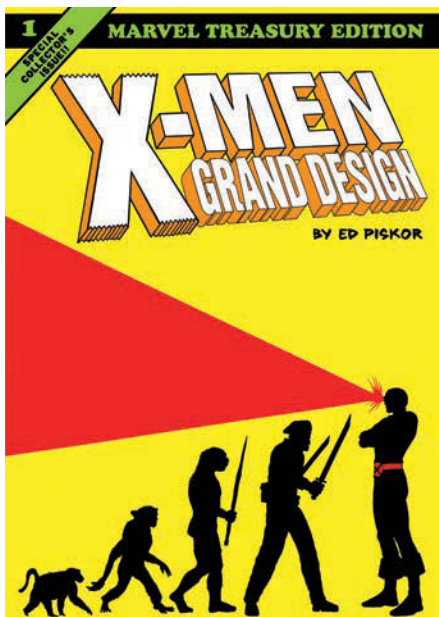
The reason that I put that in is to illustrate that I’m not joking. I like *X-Men*! It’s a comic that I know! To me, the book collection could not work without that – because it provides context for the entire thing. I hope that it inspires kids, or gives them permission, to go ahead and draw comics in their notebooks, because I received that permission from Robert Crumb, from this documentary *Comic Book Confidential*, where they’re interviewing him about the evolution of *Fritz The Cat*, and he shows them some of his earliest notebook comics. I saw that when I was seven or eight years old. I was already drawing comics at that time, but to see that somebody else was, it made me feel like I was on the right path.

**What was it that first attracted you to X-Men, and keeps bringing you back?**

I think, just growing up, it was just purely superficial. I couldn’t even read at that time, but those comics were the most attractive comics on the racks, for years and years. I’m 35 years old, I’m probably the last vestige of the kids who could go to the grocery store and have five or six dozen comics to choose from. They’re not accessible in that way any more.

Perhaps there’s some nostalgia to it. I’ve never once put down these comics – I re-read them every couple of years. Perhaps my endeavour in making this *X-Men* comic will be my way to absolve myself from it. Maybe, after I’ve finished it, I would have said and done everything I can with it. And perhaps I can then move on. Maybe then I’ll move on to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* or something!

*X-Men: Grand Design* is available now from Marvel Comics.



INTERVIEW  
Ed Piskor



# THE HUNT IS ON

We talk to GX Todd about *Hunted*, the next chapter in her superb post-apocalyptic series

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

**What if the** little voice in the back of your head told you to kill? That was the start of GX Todd's *Defender*, an excellent post-apocalyptic tale that followed Pilgrim and Lacey as they travelled across a ruined America in search of the latter's young niece and realised a greater and fantastically deadly conflict was taking place. Now, the story continues with *Hunted*...

**What can you tell us about where the story picks up in *Hunted*?**

It's set a few short weeks after *Defender*, where two very different groups are hunting down Lacey, Addison and Alex. It all becomes a race against time as to which group gets to Lacey and her gang first and uncovers the secret they've been harbouring. We also get to see the growing formation of voice-hearing factions, and how the voices are developing some new and unexpected traits of their own.

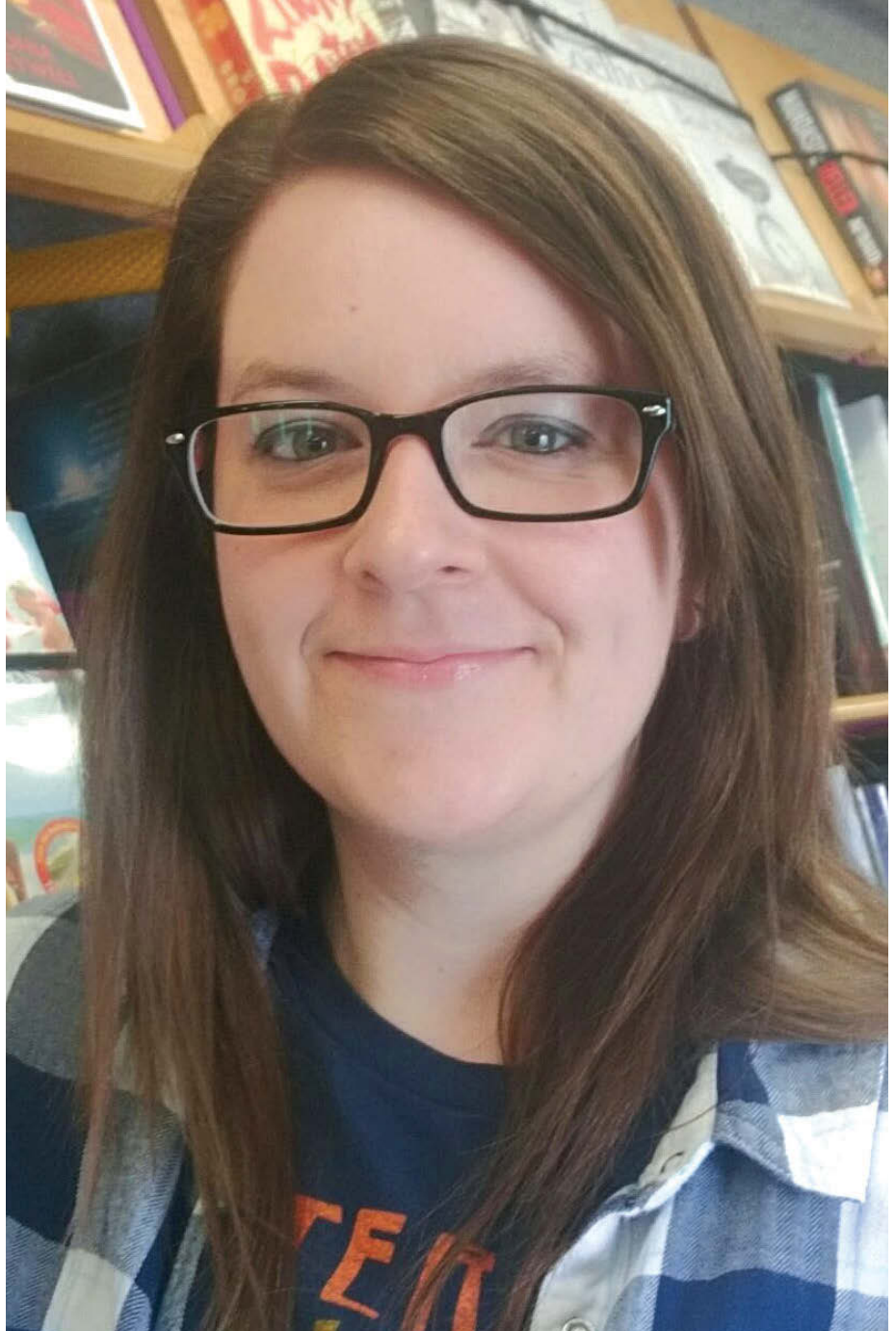
***Hunted* really opens up the world of the story and introduces a lot of new faces.**

**When did it start taking shape?**

It was all written and finished by the time *The Voices* series sold. But after *Defender* went through publisher edits, and certain aspects of the story were expanded, I had an awful lot of rewriting to do. I don't generally plan much but tend to go back and fit in ideas or develop themes retrospectively. It was an interesting experience – to have something already set down that I then needed to shoehorn into a completely different hole.

**Were there any nerves about placing the new characters front and centre, and keeping Lacey back until about halfway through?**

ALL THE NERVES! It's a bold way to set it up, and, in all honesty, in the first draft, Lacey and her gang were in *Hunted* from the very start. It was all laid out in a very chronological, linear format (much like *Defender*). It was only through edits and re-thinking that we decided to rejig the structure and push the meet-up with Lacey back until a little later. I think it works really well from a suspense standpoint.



**“THE READER REACTIONS ARE THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE PROCESS FOR ME. I LOVE IT”**

GX TODD

**How was it seeing the amazing reaction to *Defender*?**


Firstly, it was a massive relief. All I've ever wanted (besides tea for two with Ryan Reynolds) was for people to read my stuff and enjoy it. And, secondly, it's been wonderful to have such positive reader feedback. Their reactions are *the* biggest highlight of the process for me. I love it.

**What stage have you reached with the series now? Is it nearly finished?**

I've just finished edits on book three and am about to start the first draft of book four any day now. Which is terrifying. I need to actually sit down and make sense of everything I've written so far. I'm not sure I have the mental capability, to be honest. We'll have to see.

**Finally, is there an overlooked post-apocalyptic film or novel you think more people should know about?**

For a film, I think *Right At Your Door* is a hidden gem. It's such a clever movie. All told from a single set, where a husband is advised to quarantine himself inside his home from the detonation of a dirty bomb. Unfortunately, it also means he needs to leave his potentially infected wife outside to fend for herself.

Book-wise, I'd say *The Reapers Are The Angels* by Alden Bell. I found this to be such a fresh take on zombie fiction, with an unusually young female protagonist. Plus, it's beautifully written. 



*Hunted* by GX Todd is available on 31 May from Headline.

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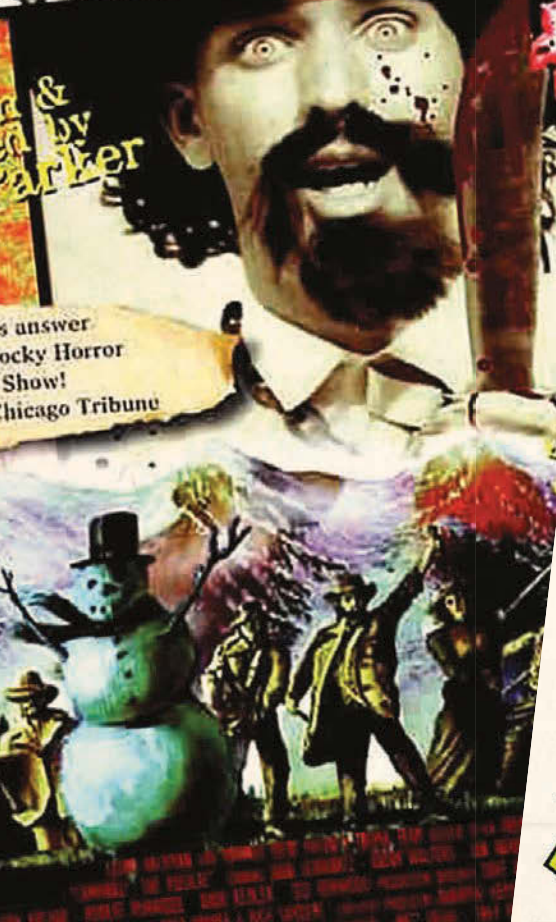


## WILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

© Ben McLeod/Peter Pose

A SCIFINOW  
MONTHLY

LLOYD KAUFMAN & MICHAEL HERZ  
**ANNIBAL**  
**THE MUSICAL**



Troma Entertainment, Inc. The Troma Building 733 Ninth A  
 (717) 757-4555 (fax: (212) 399-9885) <http://www.troma.com>



**THE TOXIC AVENGER**

The first

**HUMANS... THE OTHER WHITE MEAT.**  
 UNLESS YOU'RE BLACK, THEN IT'S DARK MEAT.  
 OR IF YOU'RE ASIAN, THEN IT'S YELLOW MEAT.  
 OR IF YOU'RE NATIVE AMERICAN, IT'S RED MEAT.  
 (WELL... YOU GET THE IDEA.)



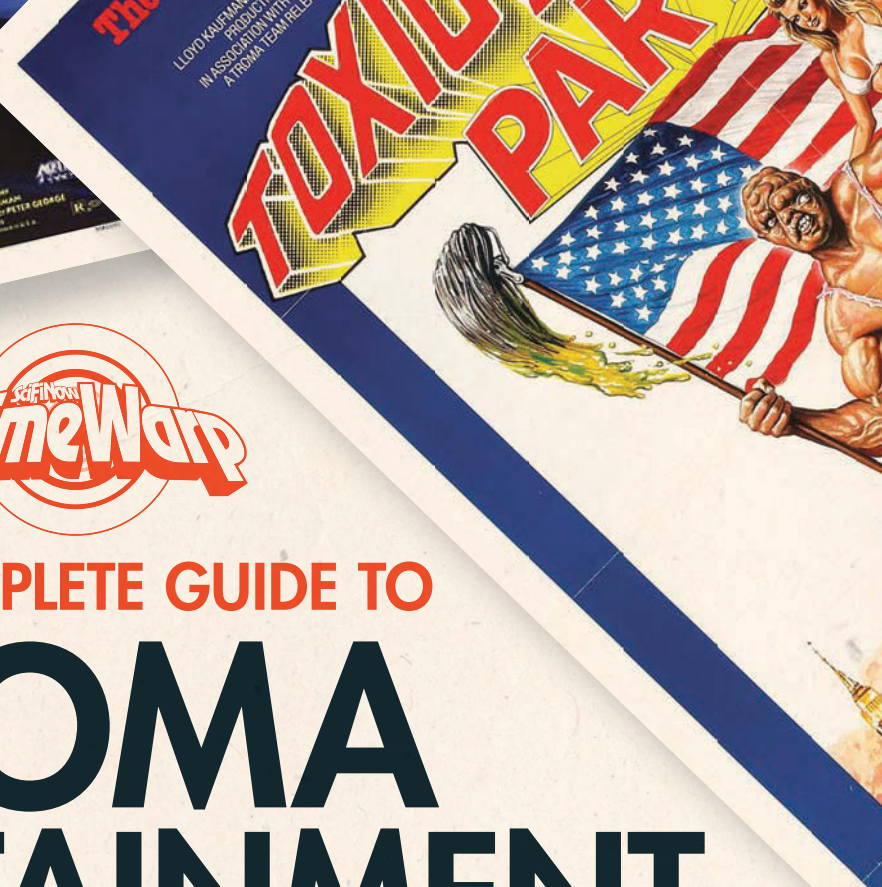
A LLOYD KAUFMAN / MICHAEL HERZ PRODUCTION

**POULTRYGEIST**



**COMBAT SHOCK**

Executive Producers  
 Written, Produced



## THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

# TROMA ENTERTAINMENT

THE LABEL THAT GAVE THE WORLD THE TOXIC AVENGER HAS BEEN ENTERTAINING FANS WITH ITS ODDBALL CREATIONS AND OUTLANDISH CREATURE FEATURES FOR OVER FOUR DECADES...

WORDS CALUM WADDELL

For any child of the video age the name Troma Entertainment will doubtlessly bring up some of the most riotous motion picture titles ever conceived – *Surf Nazis Must Die* (1987), *Rabid Grannies* (1988), *Stuff Stephanie In The Incinerator* (1989), *Chopper Chicks In Zombietown* (1989) or *A Nymphoid Barbarian In Dinosaur Hell* (1990) being prime examples.

For others, it will doubtlessly conjure up the surprise success of *The Toxic Avenger* (1984) and *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* (1986), the two Eighties horror-comedies that made the studio a household name for genre buffs across the planet. Yet, the story of Troma Entertainment is more complex than just a steady stream of trashy, late night, low budget B-flicks. Rather it is a tale of survival and – against all odds – the four decade long perseverance of a company that remains one of the few independent film studios in the United States. Whereas even the likes of Cannon, Empire Pictures, Orion and Roger Corman's New World, all of whom made bigger budgeted genre fare, have come and gone – it is the Manhattan-based Troma that still stands and continues to fight onwards as an outspoken voice for underground cinema.

"This is actually what pisses me off the most," begins Michael Herz, the co-owner of the studio with the more notorious producer/director Lloyd Kaufman. "The mainstream press always like to take shots at us, and cheap

ones, by saying that we are cheap and low budget and that we do not even pay some of the people on our shoot... but they never look at the upside of that. The fact is that we have saved a lot of these kids tens of thousands of pounds in going to some bullshit film school. They would have paid us to work on these movies [laughs]. And all of the people we give a chance to work on our shoots... they tell us afterwards that they have learned a lot from being around us. We are the underdogs. We always have been. But no studio has given out more opportunity – and you can see some of the talents that we have launched. James Gunn put Lloyd Kaufman in *Guardians Of The Galaxy* because we gave him his first break. We distributed the first film from the *South Park* team, who are still our friends. We are open to anyone who comes knocking at our door."

Whilst Yale graduates Herz and Kaufman began working together in the Seventies, the founding of Troma Entertainment came in the middle of the decade. Kaufman had dabbled with the lure of the grindhouse thanks to producing the flesh-flaunting 1973 classic *Sugar Cookies* (which also had the involvement of his former Yale University compatriot Oliver Stone), but the company's first major success was winning the distribution rights to *The Incredible Torture Show* (1976), a semi-pornographic horror roughie. Low-rent even by the standards of 42nd Street in New York, the movie introduces viewers to an off-Broadway theatre

show that purports to depict simulated Grand Guignol. In actuality, the deaths are real – and women are placed on-stage to be sexually humiliated and slaughtered. The film had come and gone from theatres without gaining either critical nor commercial notice – but Troma re-titled it as *Bloodsucking Freaks* and had an unexpected success on their hands... attesting to the lure of a memorable title!

"We originally wanted to call that *Suck Bloody Geeks*," laughs Kaufman to SciFiNow. "Today, that film is something that we would have nothing to do with at Troma. But I can tell you it still does great sales on Blu-ray and DVD and it makes a lot of money. People can laugh at it today. We get a lot of females who come to midnight screenings of it and I think we can all look at it like you would a Renaissance painting that depicts women in shackles. You can see *Bloodsucking Freaks* now and have a good laugh at it because it is quite ridiculous – which is why Eli Roth did a commentary track for the DVD. However, I do not think that in 1976 Michael Herz and I properly exercised the correct choice when we picked it up. We both went to an all-boy's school and neither he nor I had any involvement with women. To me women were sex objects. It is only now that I can say I would have nothing to do with *Bloodsucking Freaks*. However, it was a big money maker for us in the early days of Troma."

Kaufman would dabble in the mainstream ➤



Gore and laughs are Troma trademarks.

➤ by location scouting on the original *Rocky*, and working in a similar capacity on *Saturday Night Fever*, but his heart ultimately remained in the independent sector. The first in-house genre production for Troma would be *Mother's Day*, directed by Lloyd's brother, Charles Kaufman, and arriving in 1980 to a mix of critical acclaim and disdain (Roger Ebert was famously revolted) and immediate box office profit. The movie would be banned in the UK, and it also become a victim of the 'video nasty' purge, but it remains a favourite of such contemporary horror names as Adam Green and Eli Roth, whilst 2009 saw a glossy remake starring Rebecca De Mornay. In the original, three old high school friends go hiking and run afoul of a psychotic old lady and her two survivalist sons who use the girls as cannon fodder. Eventually the tides turn and the film shifts into an *I Spit On Your Grave*-style revenge-thriller...

"*Mother's Day*, of course, is my brother's movie," enthuses Kaufman. "The film was very political – there is a lot going on in [the movie], a lot of dark humour and a lot of social commentary about where we were as a country in 1980. I think it is one of the best movies in the Troma catalogue and I think my brother should have had the career that Sam Raimi and Peter Jackson later had – but *Mother's Day*, whilst very successful, was sadly ignored by Hollywood until many decades later."

*Mother's Day* also points towards the future evolution of the Troma brand: characters are

larger than life, the comedy is broad, the violence is extreme and political correctness quickly gets thrown out of the window...

"That is just the kind of stuff we want to make," continues Herz. "We never think about if something is going to offend somebody or if our idea is going to make several million or even who it is for. We do not need to be politically correct. We just do our own things and that is it. We like to make movies with a

**"WE LIKE TO MAKE MOVIES WITH A LITTLE SOCIAL COMMENTARY AND THEIR OWN IDENTITY"**

MICHAEL HERZ

little social commentary and their own identity."

Of course, it would be in 1984 with *The Toxic Avenger* that Troma really hit pay-dirt. In the four years that followed *Mother's Day*, Kaufman and Herz were typically interested in producing *Porky's* style teen comedies – but the Troma identity changed immediately when the least likely superhero movie became a surprise worldwide sensation. Inspiring everything from

three sequels to the *Toxic Crusaders* cartoon show and merchandise line, *The Toxic Avenger* (which was mainly directed by Kaufman under his trade union-skipping pseudonym Samuel Weil) remains a low budget wonder and the label's greatest in-house achievement to date.

Amazingly, though, it took a while for anyone to take notice... "I spent a whole year trying to sell *The Toxic Avenger* to theatre chains in America," bemoans Kaufman. "I also went to Cannes and could not get a deal for the foreign rights. So we played it in New York. We got into a little theatre there and it grew and grew. People responded to it – as I knew they would. And I went back to Cannes and suddenly everyone was calling me to buy it. The word had spread abroad. I was told to make sequels too. When *The Toxic Avenger* went to VHS it was a huge seller so now we needed a part two and a part three, although I regret that I made these for an R-rating. I don't think *The Toxic Avenger Part II* is such a bad movie – I just shouldn't have compromised on it but we thought we might get a larger audience with less explicit violence."

Herz also remembers how *The Toxic Avenger* – which was censored by several minutes when it first hit UK videotape – took shape...

"I remember when *The Evil Dead* came out in New York and it broke records," he maintains. "It was very exciting for us because we had never seen a movie like that before. We thought that was the sort of thing we were interested in ➤"



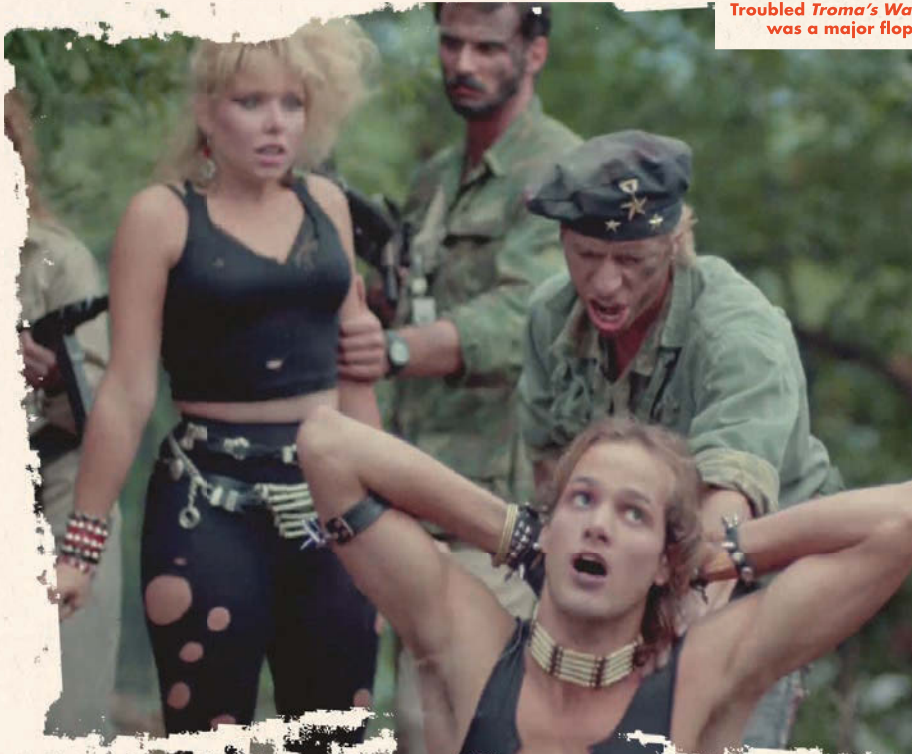
## NOT QUITE RAMBO

### The madness of *Combat Shock*

**Troma has long** realised the need to sell audiences on excess even when the final film does not quite deliver. As such, the snore-inducing likes of *Stuff Stephanie In The Incinerator* (1989) and *A Nymphoid Barbarian In Dinosaur Hell* (1990) achieved rental success through gloriously misleading monikers (to put this into perspective – the latter title features no nudity or sex). However, when Troma picked up the downbeat psychological horror movie *Combat Shock*, wherein a Vietnam veteran with a baby who is deformed from Agent Orange exposure begins to lose his mind, the company realised it probably needed a slightly different spin on the picture in order to get people into the cinema.

"*American Nightmares* was the original name and Troma wanted to change it to *Combat Shock* after they purchased the rights," remembers the director, Buddy Giovannozzo. "Lloyd Kaufman believed that they could not market something called *American Nightmares*. Then Troma wanted to market it with *Rambo* and all of these Chuck Norris Vietnam parables that were out in the cinemas at the time; *Missing In Action* and all that. They wanted to make a big killing, as fast as possible, in a few theatres and then take it to video before anyone realised it was not that kind of movie. From a business perspective they just needed to make as much money from it as they could and that was the reason for the whole campaign to market it as an action film. In the long run I think that hurt them because it really wasn't what the film was about. But all power to Troma for taking a chance on the movie when no one else would."

**Troubled Troma's War** was a major flop.





# COMPLETE GUIDE

TROMA ENTERTAINMENT

**"I'm so proud of my boys –  
they never forget  
their mama."**



CHARLES KAUFMAN'S

# MOTHER'S DAY

"MOTHER'S DAY" • Produced by MICHAEL KRAVITZ & CHARLES KAUFMAN • Directed by CHARLES KAUFMAN  
Starring NANCY HENDRICKSON • DEBORAH LUCE • TIANA PIERCE • HOLDEN McQUIRE • BILLY RAY McQUADE • ROSE ROSS  
Executive Producer ALEXANDER BECK • Production Executive RAY SUNDLIN • Associate Producers LLOYD KAUFMAN & MICHAEL HERZ  
Written by CHARLES KAUFMAN and WARREN D. LEIGHT • Music by PHIL GALLO and CLEM VICARI • Edited by DANIEL LOWENTHAL  
Production Design SUSAN KAUFMAN • Director of Photography JOE MANGINE • Color by TVC • Equipment by Cinecam, Inc.  
Released by United Film Distribution Co.

This picture contains scenes of a violent nature.  
No one under 17 will be admitted unless accompanied by an adult.





Total chicken madness in *Poultrygeist*.

➤ making but we wanted our version to be less harsh – no women being cut up or anything like that. Vincent Canby in *The New York Times* gave *The Toxic Avenger* a good review – we were getting some mainstream coverage for the film. But as Lloyd said, for a long time no one wanted it. They didn't understand it – they said it was impossible to sell it because it wasn't a horror film and it wasn't comedy."

With the success of *The Toxic Avenger*, and its story of a nerd who transforms into a muscular mutated superhero due to a city-wide pollution problem, Troma would evolve into a home for high concept, but cheaply realised, horror fare. Before Kevin Smith had the idea of his View Askew universe, Kaufman created Tromaville – where almost all of the narratives to Troma's in-house films are set. Next up would be another hit: *Class Of Nuke 'Em High*, which – despite behind-the-scenes problems (original director Richard Haines left the project halfway through and disavowed Kaufman) – would be another audience favourite and spawn four sequels, the most recent arriving just last year. A less gritty experience than *The Toxic Avenger*, *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* benefits from feeling like an old school Fifties monster movie, albeit with contemporary bare breasts and plenty of over-the-top plasma spillage.

"With *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* we wanted an R-rated horror movie that would play in even more theatres than *The Toxic Avenger*," states Kaufman. "But that was the movie where we

began to feel the American censor board, the MPAA, who of course are owned by the major studios, had a double standard and probably had it in for us. *The Toxic Avenger* had been a hit and the major studios did not like that. We were these young upstarts and they had a new rival. So with *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* the MPAA told us we needed to make cuts to this cartoon violence we had. There is a scene where a bullet hits this monster and it sprays ➤



"WE BEGAN TO FEEL THE AMERICAN CENSOR BOARD HAD A DOUBLE STANDARD AND HAD IT IN FOR US"

LLOYD KAUFMAN

## WHEN LLOYD MET MICHAEL

How Kaufman and Herz first found common ground

**Were one to** imagine the first meeting of Lloyd Kaufman and Michael Herz at Yale University, chances are, it might be a scenario in which two dedicated film buffs ended up swapping movie recommendations. However, as Herz explains, the reality was anything but: "The only thing I gave a shit about back then was that Lloyd had a TV in his room" laughs the producer. "He let me watch his TV. That is what appealed to me. He was not some snotty upper class spoilt Yale student which was common back then. He was cerebral. He was a good guy.

"But Lloyd was a senior and I was a freshman so I did not know him so well. I only knew him for about a year when he was there. I was trying to do gut courses. A gut course is a course that is easy to get through so you can take more time away from class and stay at home and play poker. Lloyd was far more vigorous and he was very dedicated to his studies – he was doing Chinese Studies. I was the opposite. I did like movies back then but I never considered going into the business. I was going to drop out of Yale I was so bored. Lloyd was making movies at Yale and I was even in one of them. This was back in the early Seventies. However, Lloyd would teach me about the business after he graduated. That was really when we became friends and when Troma began to take some form."

➤ a ridiculous stream of yellow blood. Well that had to be cut out of the movie (laughs). Believe it or not, yellow liquid coming out of a plastic monster was too much for the MPAA. They removed that so we could get an R-rating. But it was okay to show blood and dismemberment in *RoboCop* which came out at the same time. That, to me, was proof that the MPAA was out to get rid of us."

Kaufman would also face heavy censorship cuts to *Troma's War* (1988), a story of survival on a desert island which featured a \$3 million budget (the company's highest to date). The film would be so heavily bowdlerised that even with its selling point of having 'the highest kill count in the cinema history', many fans could make neither heads nor tails of the finished production. The movie flopped badly and Troma hit financial dire straits – leading to the need for quickie *Toxic Avenger* and *Class Of Nuke 'Em High* sequels. An attempt to repeat *The Toxic Avenger's* success by introducing a new Troma kingpin, *Sgt Kabukiman NYPD* (1990), would also fail to captivate audiences. On the plus side, the label continued to purchase distribution rights to some of the more interesting independent genre fare of the era including *Combat Shock* (1986), *Monster In The Closet* (1988), *Luther The Geek* (1990) and Trey Parker's pre-*South Park* horror-musical-comedy mash-up *Cannibal! The Musical* (1993)...

"We tell everyone the same thing," claims Herz. "Whenever anyone comes to us we say: 'It's hard to make a movie and you made one so congratulations. Now shop it around and try and get a shitload of money. But if you cannot get distribution we will put it out and do our best with it.' And that is what we do. Sometimes we hit on something outstanding, like *Combat Shock*, and we put it out in theatres – but that is rare."

In the Nineites, Troma was less prolific than its *Toxic Avenger* heyday, but the company gained a wide theatrical release – including in the UK – for its Shakespeare spin-off *Tromeo And Juliet* (1996). The film was co-written by James Gunn and takes some ridiculously gross liberties with the source material – adding incest, child abuse, pornography, masturbation and a new ending – which feels like a deliberate attempt to provoke purists. Nonetheless, there is fun to be had with *Tromeo And Juliet*, which also looks slicker than the many Troma movies that would follow...

"*Tromeo And Juliet* was when things changed for us," mentions Kaufman. "We got into a lot of theatres with that movie – but then the studios bought everything and that was it. Nowadays we cannot get bookings like that. And it is not as if people do not want to see our stuff. *Tromeo And Juliet* was a popular release."

Post-*Scream* and Troma would join the post-modern horror trend with the self-reflexive and interesting slasher movie *Terror Firmer* (1999), which also featured a screenplay with input from James Gunn, but the real main event came



*Mother's Day* remains unsettling and nasty.

**"IF YOU ARE AN INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR TODAY THERE IS NO WAY TO MAKE MONEY UNLESS YOU SELL TO A MAJOR STUDIO"**

MICHAEL HERZ

the following year when Kaufman brought back an old favourite with *Citizen Toxic: The Toxic Avenger Part IV*. Featuring cameos from Eli Roth, Corey Feldman and porn actor Ron Jeremy, and a comic book story of parallel universes and rival Toxic Avengers, the film is outlandish and outrageous – but also quite unlikeable. More interesting was *Poultrygeist: Night Of The Chicken Dead*, which arrived in 2006 and has still to gain a UK release.

"*Poultrygeist* is the best movie I have ever made," claims Kaufman. "But, sadly, we only placed it in one cinema. Yet we were the highest grossing screen in America for that week. We beat *Speed Racer*. But two weeks later we got kicked out for *Indiana Jones*. That is the problem – today the independents have it very bad. The rules that used to protect the public against monopolies have been done away with. The rules to encourage independent art and commerce have also been removed."

Whilst this may indeed be the case, Troma soldiers on. *Return To Class Of Nuke 'Em High Vol.1* arrived in 2013 and the follow-up instalment debuted last year. Meanwhile, the company continues to re-master its back catalogue on Blu-ray and talk continues about a Hollywood remake of *The Toxic Avenger*. In the meantime, Kaufman labours away on his sort-of follow-up to *Tromeo And Juliet*, entitled *Shakespeare's Shitstorm*...

"It is Lloyd's spin on *The Tempest*," laughs Herz. "I think it will be a lot of fun, but Lloyd is still doing the auditions. I think you will see

*The Toxic Avenger Part V* too – but we want to see the remake going forward because it will obviously increase the visibility of the Troma brand. I am skeptical of Hollywood but I think that the creative team for the new *Toxic Avenger* is much better than the one they had for *Mother's Day* – which I thought was a terrible movie. They seem a lot more dedicated to the film rather than the pay cheque. Ninety nine percent of Hollywood does not care about the end product. But in this they want sequels and a TV series so they need for *The Toxic Avenger* remake to be good."

With the Troma identity still holding strong, but with the home video market depleting, Kaufman and Herz have a challenge ahead of them as they seek to find new ways to introduce fresh generations to the charms of Toxie and the rest of their mutant creations. Looking to the future and Herz admits that he foresees a traumatic, rather than a Tromatic, road ahead...

"I don't have high hopes for Troma or for the industry as a whole," he reveals. "But Lloyd has an iconic presence and we still have an audience for what we are putting out. We are luckier than a lot of people because if you are an independent director today there is just no way to make any money unless you manage to sell your film to major Hollywood studio. It is a very sad state of affairs but I am happy and relieved that Troma is still here." ☞

Troma classics are available on Blu-ray and DVD from 88 Films.

# TEN MUST SEE TROMA TREATS



**MOTHER'S DAY**  
(CHARLES KAUFMAN, 1980)

The release of *Mother's Day* in 1980 is probably the best point at which to identify the genesis of the Troma identity. The film is about a mentally deranged mother and her two sons torturing three women who have been camping in the woods. With bad taste, full of politically incorrect torture and torment and heavy handed dark comedy, this is nonetheless a tense slasher film.



**THE TOXIC AVENGER**  
(MICHAEL HERZ AND LLOYD KAUFMAN, 1984)

Troma's most successful figurehead emerged with this surprise hit about a nerd who turns into a superhero after being exposed to toxic waste and to this day, it probably still keeps the company afloat. Inspiring three sequels, the original movie is the best example of the company's body-horror comedy and the end result remains entertaining and charming.



**CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH**  
(RICHARD HAINES, MICHAEL HERZ AND LLOYD KAUFMAN, 1986)

The other famous Troma figurehead – this high school set monster mash is very low budget but contains enough creature feature thrills to be oddly endearing. The Troma toilet gags are ever-present, of course, but there is a real sense of the company paying its own dues to the days of drive-in cinema trash with this well-realised horror-comedy.



**COMBAT SHOCK**  
(BUDDY GIOVINAZZO, 1986)

It is actually amazing to think that only Troma would gamble with the distribution of this independently made sickie that follows a Vietnam veteran during the last day of his life, culminating in a shocking act of horror. Part arthouse and part skid-row splatter movie, *Combat Shock* is a must-see chiller.



**SURF NAZIS MUST DIE**  
(PETER GEORGE, 1987)

This is one of Troma's most famous pick-ups, but it certainly feels like one of their movies with obnoxious characters and cheapjack stunts galore. Basically a biker movie throwback, the plot to this throws in a few neo-Nazis and a futuristic premise for one of the company's strangest flagship titles.



**LUTHER THE GEEK**  
(CARLTON J. ALBRIGHT, 1990)

One of the great late-day, pre-*Scream* slasher films, it was up to Troma to get *Luther The Geek* distribution, despite some rave reviews for the horror movie from the press of the era. Achieving a slight resurgence of reputation, *Luther The Geek* is a true gem in the Troma catalogue and a must-watch for Troma and horror fans alike.



**CANNIBAL! THE MUSICAL**  
(TREY PARKER, 1993)

Before hitting the big time with *South Park*, Trey Parker and Matt Stone worked on this surreal musical based around the exploits of the real life American explorer Alferd Packer who ate some of his team of prospectors when they became stranded in the hills of Colorado during a winter storm.



**TROMEO AND JULIET**  
(LLOYD KAUFMAN, 1996)

As a devoted Shakespearian it was only a matter of time before Kaufman gave an old English classic the Troma treatment. Featuring lots of nudity, masturbation, gross-out gore and bodily fluids, this is not for everyone – but the script by James Gunn manages some smart and well-intentioned laughs.



**ALL THE LOVE YOU CANNES!**  
(LLOYD KAUFMAN, SEAN MCGRATH, 2002)

Troma hit Cannes in this amazing, insightful documentary that not only shows Kaufman and his company – warts and all – but gives audiences one of the most insightful behind-the-scenes look at the annual bash ever produced. An essential and at times hilarious documentary.



**POULTRYGEIST: NIGHT OF THE CHICKEN DEAD**  
(LLOYD KAUFMAN, 2006)

A well-intentioned takedown of the fast food and meat industries, Kaufman takes his real life veganism and puts it on screen with added musical numbers and slapstick. There's a lot of toilet humour but his childlike enthusiasm is difficult to resist.



**FLASHBACK**

# PET SEMATARY

ON THE SPECTRUM OF STEPHEN KING FILM ADAPTATIONS, PET SEMATARY HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE TO BE EMBRACED AS A CULT CLASSIC. WE SPEAK TO DIRECTOR MARY LAMBERT ABOUT TRANSLATING PSYCHOLOGICAL TERROR TO THE SILVER SCREEN

WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

**For every list of definitive Stephen King screen adaptations there's unfortunately an equally extensive list of shambolic ones. Arguably 1989's *Pet Sematary* sits somewhere on the fence, alongside Tobe Hooper's now revered TV movie *Salem's Lot* (1979) and Tommy Lee Wallace's original 1990 mini-series *IT*, as a warmly remembered creepy curio that demands timely retrospection.**

Legend has it that after penning *Pet Sematary* Stephen King hid it in a drawer thinking nobody would want to read something so morbid. The story had stemmed from his experiences living with his family on a busy road that had claimed the lives of numerous animals. As a consequence of the mounting road kill, a neighborhood cemetery had been created where his daughter ultimately buried

their cat after it was run over. Soon after, there was also a close call on the road with his infant son. King felt he had gone too far in taking this reality to such a nightmarish conclusion. Thirty years after directing the movie adaptation of the novel, Mary Lambert tells **SciFiNow** that hitting home the ramifications of King's 'sometimes dead is better' coda convincingly was her primary objective.

"Translating to screen this idea that you can't follow somebody into death, that you can't bring them back [and if you do] bring them back it's not going to work, was something I wanted to make really clear," acknowledges Lambert, whose prior film, the fantasy drama *Siesta*, had confronted a similar theme.

"*Siesta* was about obsession and the need to move on. It was about a woman who is so obsessed about the man she loves that although she is dying she can't let go... she can't leave

the mortal plane and move on. And because she can't she visits him in this strange alternative universe, which doesn't exist."

*Pet Sematary* revolves around the Creeds: a young family of four who move to a seemingly idyllic property in the New England state of Maine. The home is situated on Route 15, a dangerously busy road that is frequented by road trains and it's not long before their elderly new neighbour Jud Crandall (Fred Gwynne) takes them down the morbid path behind the house to the titular isolated place where all the road kill rests.

More sinister still, beyond the cemetery, located on an expansive canyon lays an ancient Indian burial ground that can revive the dead. Jud persuades patriarch Louis Creed (Dale Midkiff) to bury the beloved family cat here after it is tragically killed on the road, to save his adolescent daughter Ellie (Blaze Berdahl) from sorrow. But when the cat returns from the grave it isn't so affable anymore.

Lending a distinctive backdrop to this gruesome story is the northeast state of Maine itself. Despite the significant costs to production, Stephen King, (who also wrote the screenplay) insisted on filming *Pet Sematary* in his cherished home state, the iconic setting to all his novels.

"It was completely integral to the movie and it always is when a movie is about a place like that," acknowledges Lambert. "*Pet Sematary* was so much about nature and the landscape: the tree and the yard; the woods and the cemetery; the cold and the summer. We spent a long time location scouting and I have vivid memories of getting up at the crack of dawn and driving all over Maine. But I'm so glad we got to shoot there."

Collaborating with the legendary author, (who also cameos as a funeral service minister),



The film has one of King's best cameos.

# stephen king's

Sometimes dead is better

# PET SEMATARY



**BASED ON THE BEST SELLING THRILLER**

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A RICHARD P. RUBINSTEIN PRODUCTION A MARY LAMBERT FILM PET SEMATARY MUSIC BY ELLIOT GOLDENTHAL  
EDITED BY MICHAEL HILL AND DANIEL HANLEY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PETER STEIN CO-PRODUCER MITCHELL GALIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER TIM ZINNEMANN SCREENPLAY BY STEPHEN KING BASED UPON HIS NOVEL  
PRODUCED BY RICHARD P. RUBINSTEIN DIRECTED BY MARY LAMBERT READ THE SIGNET PAPERBACK

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➤ was thoroughly rewarding as the director recalls: "I've had many experiences with writers but this was the very best. We were in total agreement about the story. I loved his book and wanted to put as much of it on the screen as I could," says Lambert.

"Most of my input was about the way things could be visualised rather than changing the structure of his script. I was concerned with how you tell this story and he was very respectful of my ability to do that and I was incredibly respectful of his adaptation. We really had a good time working together."

Another joyous collaboration for Lambert was with esteemed, towering character actor (and *The Munsters* star) Fred Gwynne, who embodied the instrumental role of Jud Crandall – the elderly neighbour who introduces the haunting pet sematary prospect to the Creeds.

"The minute I read the script that's who I wanted," confirms Lambert. "At first the studio thought he would take audiences out of the movie due to his association with *The Munsters*, but they were intrigued with the idea. I didn't want to make the movie without him."

Also pivotal from a casting standpoint was securing the toddler who would portray two-year-old Gage – the Creeds' cherished son who is tragically killed on Route 15 and is subsequently brought back to unsettling homicidal life by his desperate father.

"The whole idea that this evil gets awakened from the burial ground, that when Gage comes back and the cat comes back, they're sort of conduits for this evil... it was just a really hard thing to put into the movie," admits Lambert.

Talented child actor Miko Hughes, who five years later would bring equally impressive intensity as Heather Langenkamp's creepy son

in Wes Craven's *New Nightmare*, was ideally cast in the role.

"Paramount wanted to have twins and I respected the reasoning behind that because you obviously have a lot more time with the actors if they're trios. But I had a real rapport with Miko and I knew he could do it so I begged for him. He wanted to do it too. When you work with young children, one of the things you look for is their desire to do it."

However, Paramount wasn't at all enthusiastic about Gage's funeral service scene, which memorably culminated with a distressing

scene before and I recut the scene after."

More unsettling still was the climatic act where Gage returns from the grave to wreak bloody havoc at the Creed household with a scalpel. Clever editing and careful use of an inanimate stand-in yielded terrifying results: "Anytime you see the back of Gage's head or you see his hand it's a puppet," reveals Lambert. "I've used this technique a couple of times but if you use the puppet for the whole thing then it will look like a puppet. If you can mix it with the real human it makes it more realistic."

"There were certain things I didn't want to ask Miko to do but Fred [Gwynne] was great with him and made everything into a game. He'd say to Miko: 'Okay, we're going to play, you're going to come out and scare me and you're going to pretend to bite me and I'm going to scream.' Whenever there was blood or anything like that Miko was not on the set."

Arguably the most nightmare-inducing element of *Pet Sematary* however, remains the notorious Zelda flashback sequences. An unusual approach came to the casting of the infamous role of Rachel's sister, who suffered from horrendous and terminal spinal meningitis.

"When we started casting Zelda we kept bringing in these 12-year-old girls and all of them were so sweet and wanted to look pretty [but] I needed someone scary and I needed some intensity," admits Lambert. "Finally I said, 'let's cast a little boy' – because these girls are just too sweet and not scary. I felt that if we made him up a little as a transdresser then there would be something slightly off about it that would translate. Also, a boy would have more energy for being creepy and I was right!"

In the film, Louis' wife Rachel (Denise Crosby) has deeply traumatising, guilt-ridden memories

## "FOR THE ZELDA SEQUENCE I CHANNELLED MY SISTER AND WHAT WOULD SCARE HER!"

MARY LAMBERT

physical confrontation between Louis and his abusive father-in-law that inadvertently upends the coffin.

"They wanted to take it out. It's funny they wanted a horror movie but there was a horrific or emotional element to that that they felt was perhaps too much," continues Lambert. "Sometimes if you move it around or lose one of the scenes before or after, then the scene that you think is important becomes appropriate or inoffensive to the people who didn't like it. It's all about telling stories in an appropriate way. I told them to give me a chance to recut it and in the end I didn't have to; I simply lost the


of her handicapped sister, deriving from her childhood when her parents unwisely left her alone at home with Zelda.

The director reveals that the horrific inspiration for these chilling sequences stemmed from her own childhood. "It's a homage to one of my younger sisters who I used to torture when we were children at bedtime!" admits Lambert. "I would always tell scary stories as soon as the lights were turned out, so when I was filming the Zelda sequence I channelled my sister and what would scare her the most. It ended up being very effective and really sticks in peoples' minds."

Although critics were unkind, *Pet Sematary* became a success with audiences when it was released on 21 April 1989. In the three decades since, admiration has only continued to grow, with a recent comprehensive documentary, *Unearthed & Untold: The Path*

*To Pet Sematary* supporting its enduring cult classic status.

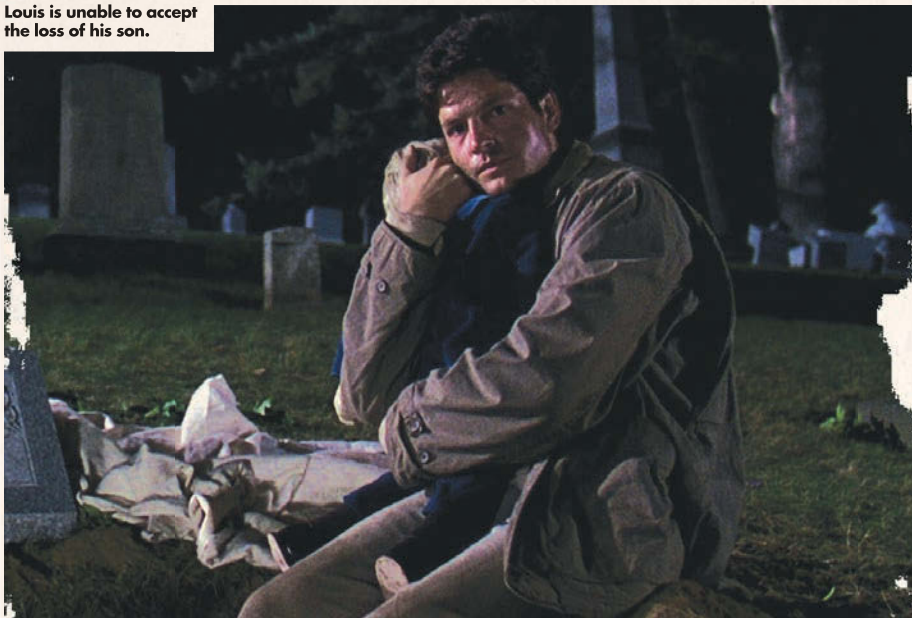
There was a sequel that surfaced in 1992 that featured entirely new characters and was helmed once again by Lambert. The filmmaker had wanted to centre it on sole surviving character Ellie Creed but Paramount was reportedly wary of a teenage female lead and secured a then sought-after Edward Furlong to headline instead.

Now, with the massive success of Andy Muschietti's *IT*, a remake has been set for an April 2019 release, but whether it will be able to replicate the true terror of King's novel or capitalise upon the unique chills of Mary Lambert's adaptation remains to be seen. 



*Pet Sematary* is available on Blu-ray from Paramount Home Entertainment.

Louis is unable to accept the loss of his son.



Rachel's return provides a horrifying final shock.



## DALE MIDKIFF ON PLAYING LOUIS CREED

We quiz the actor about shouldering *Pet Sematary's* emotional burden and playing a character who refuses to acknowledge that sometimes dead is better...

### What did you want to bring to the part of Louis Creed?

I wanted to be as truthful to the novel as I possibly could. Stephen King was at a lot of the early rehearsals when we got to Maine, so his influence was very present. He would sit at the reading table, drink a can of Jolt, which has three times the caffeine and four times the sugar of other sodas, and read out loud from the obituary. It was very funny actually.

### Louis has to go through intense emotional torment in the film. How did you prepare for these scenes?

Luckily, I was young and angry at the time so that helped. As the film progressed Louis felt more isolated, more frustrated, angrier and more saddened. I could relate to all of that during that period of my life.

### We're often in denial when we lose a family member or friend. What do you think about not moving on and attempting to bring someone back?

The fact that we think about them so often is one way of bringing them back and that we miss them so much and their love so much... especially if someone young dies. You feel you've failed them somehow and that probably haunts you for the rest of your life.

### What do you recall about shooting that intense climatic fight scene with the undead Gage?

He was such a good little kid. It was intense and I felt bad for him sometimes as there was so much going on. At his age I would have been traumatised but he got through it okay. Fortunately, he's a sweetheart of a man now and doesn't remember much of it!

### Why do you feel the film resonated so strongly?

I think it really scared people. Anything to do with something happening to a child just frightens people to death. It helped that Stephen King was on the set during filming and that we shot it in Maine, which is a very spooky place. There are lots of cemeteries there, let's put it that way!



FLASHBACK

# THE OWL SERVICE

WE REVISIT THIS CULT TV SERIES, ALMOST 50 YEARS SINCE IT WAS FIRST BROADCAST, TO SEE IF IT WILL STILL LEAVE US SPELLBOUND

WORDS NADIA ATTIA

## Scratchings and beginnings

Next year, *The Owl Service* TV series turns 50. Many won't remember it from the first time around, but if you listen closely you might hear its strange scratchings all through pop culture and in the recent resurgence in folk horror. The cult series pushed the boundaries for children's TV with its passionate characters and cryptic, sexually-charged narrative: 'It's unthinkable that something as complex, ambiguous and strange as *The Owl Service* could be broadcast on British television in a prime-time slot these days – let alone on ITV1 as a children's programme,' wrote critic and fan Kim Newman.

Alan Garner adapted his own 1967 novel, creating eight 30-minute episodes, which were directed by Peter Plummer with more than a touch of psychedelic licence. But it's in Garner's

words that the magic happens, spelling you into an unsettling and confusing viewing experience – thankfully, TV execs insisted on narrated recaps at the start of each episode. The plot revolves around three teenagers – two boys and a girl – who are thrown together in a remote Welsh manor, each bound by class, stifled by adults and struggling to express themselves. When they discover an old dinner service in the loft, an ancient legend threatens to play itself out; will they be strong enough to resist the allure of the 'owl service'?

Garner has become a legend in British culture, much admired by fantasy novelists such as Susan Cooper, David Almond, Neil Gaiman and Philip Pullman: "Garner is indisputably the great originator, the most important British writer of fantasy since Tolkien," claims Pullman, "and

in many respects better than Tolkien, because deeper and more truthful... Any country except Britain would have long ago recognised his importance, and celebrated it with postage stamps and statues and street-names." To unpick the esoteric narrative of *The Owl Service* you'd need to go back to Garner's past, as a youth in rural Cheshire surrounded by nature. The author spent roughly five years of his childhood laid up in bed (with cheesecloth over the windows during wartime), suffering with diphtheria, meningitis and pneumonia. He was pronounced dead twice by a local doctor. Stuck in that room, Garner had only his imagination and the patterns on the walls to save his sanity. In fact, the idea for *The Owl Service* was triggered by an odd pattern on a friends' dinner plate: 'Could it be flowers or owls?' they asked. From this humble beginning was spun a tale that wove together a love triangle, burgeoning sexuality, a mystical landscape and British folklore.

"ITS INFLUENCE CAN STILL BE FELT TODAY...IT'S DESTINED TO ECHO ACROSS GENERATIONS"

## She wants to be flowers and you make her owls

Step-brother and sister Roger (Francis Wallis) and Alison (Gillian Hills) are reluctantly brought on holiday by their newly-wed parents Clive (Edwin Richfield) and Margaret (unseen). Clive is keen for his son to bond with his new family, and Margaret's remote Welsh manor house is the perfect place to get away from it all. He didn't, however, account for irascible housekeeper Nancy (Dorothy Edwards), her wayward but clever son Gwyn (Michael Holden), or the strange groundskeeper Huw Halfbacon (Raymond Llewellyn), who each become entangled in their affairs. When Alison hears scratching in the loft it's Gwyn who goes up and they find a china dinner service – at the same time Roger discovers an ancient standing stone with a hole in it. Alison becomes obsessed, drawing the plate's pattern, and after making paper owls the plates appear blank. During a nightmare she claws Roger on the face when he comes into her room – and thus



Garner's story finds three teens in thrall to an ancient legend.



## FLASHBACK

### THE OWL SERVICE

begins the trio's investigation into a local myth.

Ever-smiling Huw Halfbacon seems to know what's going on, but he only talks in riddles. He tells them about the stone of Gronw. Later, they discuss the local legend of a wizard who made a woman out of flowers called Blodeuwedd ('flower face'), then got into fight with another man over her and killed his love rival with a spear shot through the rock. Blodeuwedd was turned into an owl as punishment. When a scratching within the walls of the house reveals a painting through the plaster, it's of a woman made of flowers with owl-like eyes.

Over time, Alison and Gwyn get closer, and when she sneaks out of her window one night he follows her to a wendy house (a clumsy scene that uncomfortably resembles sexual assault). Later they kiss on a sweeping Welsh mountain and secretly meet at the stables. This not only angers Roger, but Alison's mum who banishes her from seeing the 'yobbo.' A snubbed Gwyn tries to run away but Huw finds him, reveals a dark secret and claims that Gwyn is lord of the valley now. Class divisions soon come to a head and Nancy quits her job, dragging Gwyn away from the manor and from Alison. When Huw puts a pendant around Alison's neck, a parting gift from Gwyn, she falls into a feverish fit. Roger rushes to bring Gwyn back to break the spell – but who will be her saviour?

#### Legend and landscape

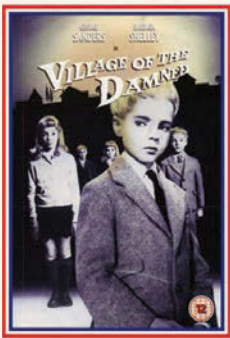
The series was shot in the summer of 1969 around Dinas Mawddwy in North Wales and at Poulton Hall in Liverpool. "It was an incredible experience for all of us," said 19-year-old Michael Holden (Gwyn) in a *TV Times* interview. "It was as if we personally were living the thing. The legend, the spirit of the valley was so strong that we became obsessed by it." Director Peter Plummer makes good use of the landscape and gives the action an uncanny feel through innovative use of extreme close-ups, lingering shots of small natural details, by switching the camera suddenly into first-person and by having the three teens symbolically wear a particular colour. Garner's striking words chime against jazzy interludes or a discordant harp: "I am the fire upon a hill, I am a hawk in the sun's tears," shouts wise old Huw to the wind.

*The Owl Service* is not without its faults: some performances lack finesse, it hasn't aged well, and with the objectification of Alison, you can see why some contemporary critics questioned whether it was suitable for young eyes (the DVD is rated 12). Its influence, however, reached into other folk horror and landscape-inspired drama such as *Dead Of Night: The Exorcism*, and *Children Of The Stones*, and can still be felt today in *The League Of Gentlemen* and *Britannia*. That's the thing with any good legend – it's destined to be played out again and again, and echo across generations... ♪

*The Owl Service* is available on DVD from Network.

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR CHILD EXHIBITS SPECIAL POWERS AND STARTS USING THEM FOR EVIL? WE VENTURE INTO MIDWICH AS WE LOOK BACK ON WOLF RILLA'S DEEPLY UNSETTLING FILM OF JOHN WYNDHAM'S CLASSIC...



# VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

### Film

**RUNNING TIME:**  
77 minutes  
**RELEASE DATE:**  
7 December 1960  
**DIRECTOR:**  
Wolf Rilla  
**WRITERS:**  
Stirling Silliphant,  
Wolf Rilla,  
Ronald Kinnoch  
**CAST:**  
George Sanders,  
Barbara Shelley,  
Martin Stephens,  
Michael Gwynn

### About

When all the inhabitants of the British village of Midwich mysteriously fall unconscious at the same time, the military is sent in to investigate. The event is considered a freak occurrence after everyone regains consciousness a few hours later, apparently unaffected, and life continues as normal. Two months later, every woman in the village falls pregnant with no explanation, but the real mystery doesn't begin until after all the babies are born on the same day: each child is found to have platinum blonde hair, unusually narrow finger nails, arresting eyes, and a telepathic connection with one another.

**If there's one thing that we can all agree on, it's that children are creepy. They always have been and always will be. It's just a fact of life: blood is red, the grass is green, and children have an uncanny ability to give anyone the heebie-jeebies. We're talking purely in films, of course. In real life, children can sometimes be quite pleasant, especially when they're related to you. But in horror films, they're awful. Whether it's Damien Thorn from *The Omen*, the Grady twins from *The Shining* or Isaac Chroner from *Children Of The Corn*, horror film children have an unearthly talent for spooking viewers to the core in a way that no adult ghost, demon or murderer could hope to.**

As far as creepy children go, those from Wolf Rilla's 1960 film *Village Of The Damned*, based

on John Wyndham's novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*, are up there with the best of them. Even the way in which they came to be is enough to send a shivers down the spine. The children could easily have appeared in Midwich already fully formed following the village-wide blackout — in other films, they might have been adopted from a dubious but apparently creditable orphanage, or even just dropped out of the sky — but *Village Of The Damned* is nothing if not unsettling.

Instead, the village's women fall pregnant with them after coming back round to full consciousness. There's something deeply invasive about the thought of people becoming mysteriously pregnant via...not the usual way. As a result, the children's very first act of terror, even before the telepathy and murder, was to lurk uninvited inside the uteruses of half of Midwich's residents.

After a horrifying start, the children quickly prove that their existence can

only get worse. The fact that they can communicate telepathically and read other people's minds confirms that they are not of this world, but their supernatural powers aren't what make them so frightening: they also possess a higher intelligence than the average adult and no moral grounding, two qualities which, when combined, never yield positive results.

Though Midwich's adults could easily overpower them physically, the children remain in control. Professor Zellaby (George Sanders) quickly realises that they are far more astute than first presumed and even tries to talk to them as if they were adults, creating a dialogue to find out who they are, where they came from and what they really want, but still the children are in charge.

At first the film provides no answers to the baffling village blackout or how the children came to be. But from there, it quickly transforms into a monster movie, with child actor Martin Stephens leading the extraterrestrial gang of terrors as Zellaby's son David. Stephens seemed to perfect the 'creepy child' attitude during his time working on *Village Of The Damned* and went on to star as the terrifying Miles in Jack Clayton's haunted house horror *The Innocents* the following year.

Midwich's generation of mysterious children develops at an alarming rate, and it's also later found that they all share a handful of the same traits: each has platinum blonde hair, unusually narrow fingernails and arresting eyes that seem to stare right through you. The fact that their eyes also glow is just the cherry on the hideous cake. David alone is already >



BEWARE  
THE STARE  
THAT WILL  
PARALYZE  
THE  
WILL  
OF THE  
WORLD



METRO-GOLDWYN-MAY  
**GEORGE SANDERS**  
**BARBARA SHELLEY** in

# VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED



with  
**MICHAEL GWYNN**  
Screen Play by  
**STIRLING SILLIPHANT**  
**WOLF RILLA** **GEORGE BARCLAY**  
Based on the Novel "The Midwich Cuckoos"  
by JOHN WYNDHAM  
Directed by  
**WOLF RILLA**  
Produced by  
**RONALD KINNOCH**

## CLASSIC QUOTES

"A BRICK WALL...  
A BRICK WALL... I  
MUST THINK OF A  
BRICK WALL..."

**GORDON ZELLABY**

"YOU HAVE  
BEEN TAUGHT  
TO LEAVE  
US ALONE."

**GORDON ZELLABY**

"PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY  
CHILDREN, AREN'T  
MEASURED BY THEIR IQ.  
WHAT'S IMPORTANT  
ABOUT THEM IS WHETHER  
THEY'RE GOOD OR BAD,  
AND THESE CHILDREN  
ARE BAD."

**ALAN BERNARD**

"IT'S NOT A  
MATTER OF  
BELIEF, IT'S  
A MATTER  
OF FACT!"

**DOCTOR WILLERS**

"WOULD YOU GET  
ME MAJOR BERNARD  
AT HIS WHITEHALL  
NUMBER?"

**GORDON ZELLABY**

# RETRO CLASSIC

VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED



## WATCH FIRST



### THE BAD SEED (1956)

Sweet-faced and pig-tailed Rhoda is also self-centred and has a tendency to steal and unravel.

## WATCH NEXT



### THE WICKER MAN (1973)

A police sergeant grows suspicious of the residents of Summerisle when a young girl goes missing.

➤ unsettling, even before he starts killing people, but a whole horde of murderous tykes that look just like him is downright petrifying, and far too much for the villagers to handle.

Even their downfall is somewhat sinister: after luring the children into a building on the outskirts of the village, Zellaby smuggles in a time bomb which explodes and appears to kill everyone in the vicinity. However, though their bodies are surely left in pieces the children's reign of terror may not be over just yet. The film ends on a shot of the building's burning ruins, with the ominous glow of their eyes superimposed over the fire before

shooting off into the sky, suggesting Zellaby defeated their bodies, but not necessarily their intelligence. *Village Of The Damned's* uncomfortable cliffhanger became one of the first 'it might not be over' endings in cinema; a trope which has since become an eye-rolling genre cliché.

From older films like *Village Of The Damned* to newer ones like *Orphan*, *Insidious* and *The Babadook*, scary children continue to be a prevalent theme in the world of horror. Many people have or know kids that have proven themselves to be perfectly sweet and pure young souls, so what is it about screen children that makes

them so damn terrifying?

"Could it be connected to the fact that more and more parents have difficulty balancing work responsibilities, child-rearing, and elder care (not to speak of nurturing their own relationships, personal and career aspirations) and are squeezed financially by the costs of raising children and taking care of their own ageing parents?" horror director Joe Dante asked website Hopes And Fears. "Therefore, is it any wonder that children in genre movies are portrayed as powerful, disruptive, and uncontrollable? Perhaps these menacing moppet movies reflect the

## THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

### GENRE'S TOP 5 UNUSUAL VILLAGES



### NEWTON HAVEN (THE WORLD'S END)

1 The end of the world begins with Newton Haven, spurred on by one group of friends' innocent attempt to complete a pub crawl.



### ROYSTON VASEY (THE LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN)

2 Royston Vasey likes to keep to itself, which is best for all of us. It's local town for local people, after all.

# VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

RETRO CLASSIC

It starts with a fainting fit...

## YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"It's a scary ass film, I hate creepy kids, lol!"

@Oldman980



"One of the best, most faithful and creepiest adaptations of Wyndham's work. Had the pleasure of saying this to one of the Midwich Cuckoos in person, Martin Stephens aka David Zellaby. Wyndham like King illustrates beautifully how the ordinary deals with the extraordinary."

@kimmilard



"Scared me to death when I first saw this as a kid! Not much better now though, lol!"

@AnthonyHerod



"I really like this version of John Wynham's *The Midwich Cuckoos*, his second best novel after *The Day Of Triffids*. The 1995 version was good, the sequel *Children Of The Damned* and the 1962 film *The Damned* with Oliver Reed had much in common with these films, typical of the Sixties."

@ja1eg2eb3ge43



"Creepy as hell. But then again, I've always found kids creepy..."

@tvproduceruk



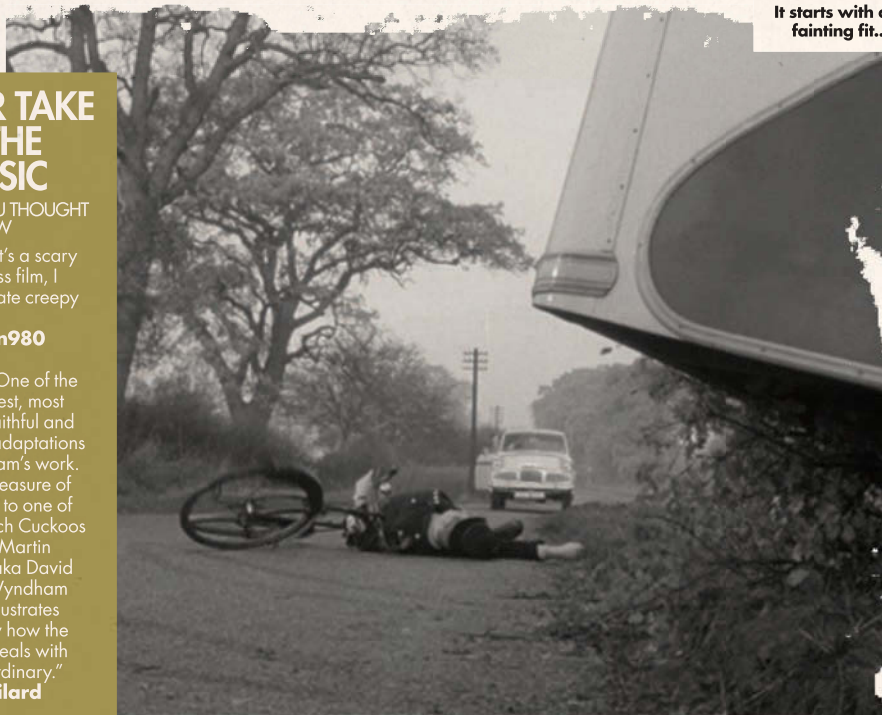
"Scary but an amazing sci-fi horror."

@OMMIMovie



"It was pretty creepy at the time."

@LesleyMusson



The creepy Midwich look is iconic.

fears inherent in helicopter parenting — that the minute you take your eyes off your child, something dreadful will happen."

The trope started back in the Fifties with Rhoda Penmark, the young pig-tailed sociopath from Melvyn LeRoy's *The Bad Seed*, and has been getting scarier ever since. People have always associated children, particularly babies, with light, happiness, and other sickeningly positive concepts. There's nothing more innocent than a child. So when horror exploits that preconceived notion in order to shock, often by putting a child in danger, the tables are suddenly turned. However, said tables are then flipped entirely when the children *become* the danger.

The danger is often the force in charge of any situation, which is why evil children make such wonderful villains. Kids are unpredictable and not as civilised as their fully grown counterparts — in real life, they don't have the ability to make much of a difference in the grand scheme of things, so there are usually few to no consequences for their actions. However, that notion is very much

## "THERE'S A DEEP-SEATED FEAR THAT YOUR OWN CHILD DOESN'T ACTUALLY LOVE YOU"

dead in the case of the Midwich kids; as hyper-intelligent beings, the consequences are far, far greater.

Even worse, there's a deep-seated, unspoken fear that lingers in the deepest corners of every kind of parent's mind: that your own child doesn't actually love you, that they are inwardly mean-spirited or even psychopathic and just play along so they continue to be fed and cared for. It's a fear which ends up ringing true of the Midwich kids.

As much as we would all like to deny it, even the sweetest and most well-behaved children are capable of disturbing thoughts. Online listicles of creepy things parents have heard their kids say may be fun to read, but only because they're deeply unsettling, and the exact opposite of everything we think about childhood. What if the children aren't just speaking gobbledygook, and there actually *is* a monster under their bed, or ghost in the attic, or a gaunt,

suited man that visits their bedroom every night? And, even worse, what if the child is on their side?

The thought that there is, in fact, a minuscule possibility that your child might secretly be evil is a horrible one, but it's one that you just have to keep telling yourself is ridiculous, even though it occasionally isn't. After all, a percentage of children from all types of upbringings do actually grow up without a conscience.

Films like *The Bad Seed* and *Village Of The Damned* (even with the extra-terrestrial aspect) just make the possibility that your kid could be a monster in a pinafore seem all the more feasible. Especially when it's late at night, the lights are off, and you hear the sound of a tiny pair of feet on a loose floor board creak from the top of the staircase... ☞



*Village Of The Damned* is available on DVD from Warner Home Video.



### COVINGTON (THE VILLAGE)

**3** The residents of a 19th-century community in Pennsylvania are stalked by creatures that surround their home in *M. Night Shyamalan's* twisty psychological horror.



### HOGSMEADE (HARRY POTTER)

**4** With lots of tourist spots, from the Shrieking Shack to the Three Broomsticks, Hogsmeade is for everyone. It's best explored in the snow, or under an invisibility cloak.



### DERRY (IT)

**5** The Maine town of Derry has acted as the setting for a handful of Stephen King stories, but most recently its residents have chilled us to the very core in last year's hit horror movie, *It*.



# THE SCIFINOW HANNIBAL LECTOR QUIZ

ARE YOU HUNGRY FOR MORE FROM HANNIBAL LECTOR? OR DOES HE JUST LEAVE YOU FEELING COLD AND FREAKED OUT? FIND OUT WITH OUR QUIZ!

## MANHUNTER

1. Who plays Will Graham to Brian Cox's Hannibal Lecter?
2. Which Scottish serial killer did Cox base his performance on?
3. In which year was *Manhunter* first released?
4. Who directed the film?
5. Which Thomas Harris novel is *Manhunter* based on?

## SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

6. Who directed *The Silence Of The Lambs*?
7. What is the real name of the serial killer

known as Buffalo Bill?

8. Where is Hannibal Lecter being kept at the start of the film?
9. What does Lecter demand from Clarice Starling in exchange for clues about Buffalo Bill?
10. Who is Lecter following when he calls Starling from an airport in Bimini?

## HANNIBAL RISING

11. In which country is Lecter Castle located?
12. Who plays the character of Lady Murasaki in *Hannibal Rising*?
13. What is Lecter Castle transformed into after the events of World War II?

14. What does Hannibal inject himself with while trying to remember who was responsible for the death of his sister?
15. Who owes a restaurant in Fontainebleau?

## NBC'S HANNIBAL

16. Who plays Jack Crawford in the series?
17. What is Hannibal Lecter's serial killer nickname?
18. Who does Hannibal effectively adopt as a surrogate daughter?
19. What name does Hannibal kill under when he moves to Italy in Season Three?
20. Who plays Will Graham in the series?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

### ANTHONY HOPKINS

The king of the Lecters, most people's minds immediately go to you whenever they hear the word 'cannibal'. Your quiz skills are almost as staggering as your eating people skills. You're full to the brim with useless talents.



11-15

### MADS MIKKELSEN

Your turn packs a punch but it's not showy enough for some. You're clever, cunning and hypnotic, but people will say you're always be lingering in someone else's shadow. Delicious? Yes. Iconic? We'll see...



6-10

### BRIAN COX

You might perform better than most, but you also don't show up very often. For that, you're a brilliant yet unreliable quiz team member. Work on giving people what they want and then wow them while you have their attention.



0-5

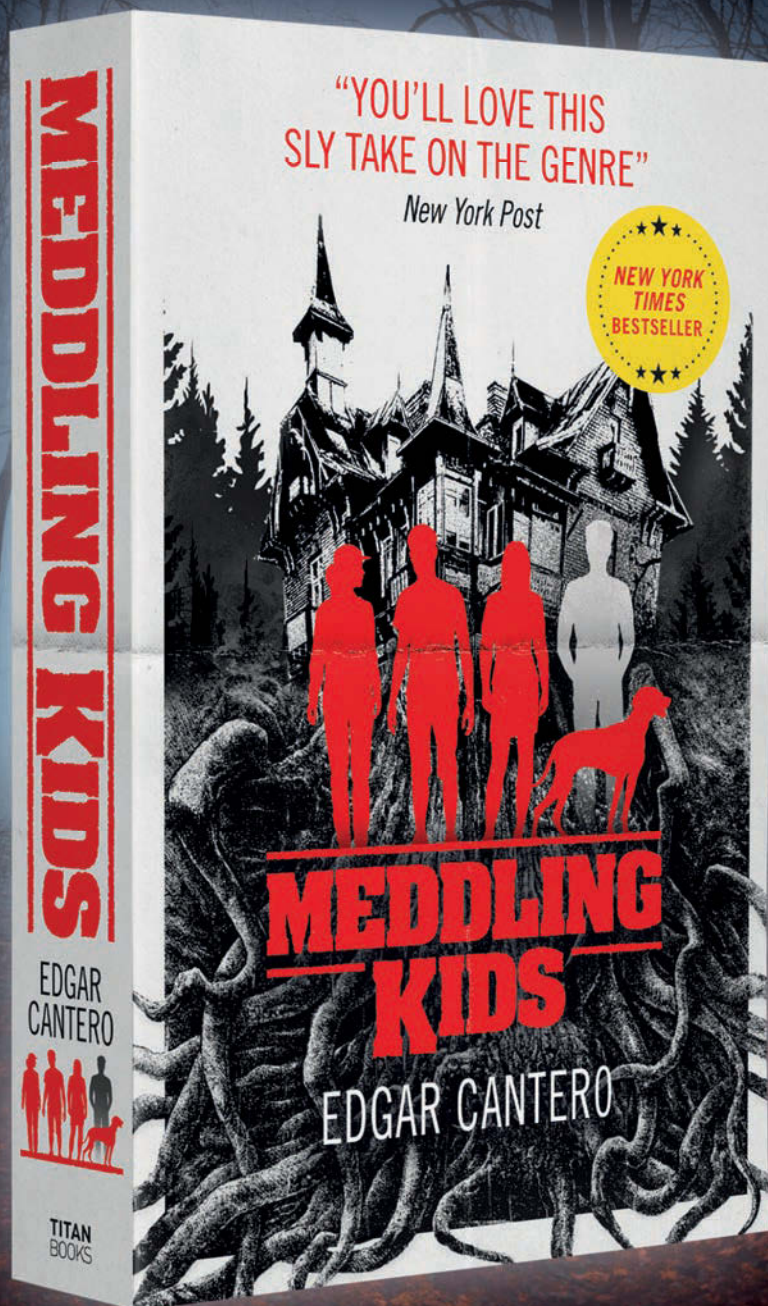
### GASPARD ULLIEL

Oh, how you try, but your best just isn't good enough. It doesn't just come down to you, though. Your surroundings need to be in top condition for you to perform well; unfortunately, you keep getting stuck with duds.



ANSWERS: 1. WILLIAM PETERSEN 2. PETER MANUEL 3. 1986 4. MICHAEL MANN 5. RED DRAGON 6. JONATHAN DEMME 7. JAME GUMB 8. BALTIMORE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE 9. PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT HERSELF 10. DR FREDERICK CHILTON 11. LITHUANIA 12. GONG LI 13. A SOVIET ORPHANAGE 14. SODIUM THIOPHENTAL 15. MADAM KOINAS 16. LAURENCE FISHBURNE 17. THE CHESAPEAKE RIPPER 18. ABIGAIL HOBBS 19. IL MOSTRO DI FIRENZE 20. HUGH DANCY

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