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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!
ALL AT SEA WITH DC'S UNDERWATER EPIC

307



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MAGIQUE!

FANTASTIC BEASTS

THE CRIMES OF
GRINDELWALD

The Wizarding
World heads
for Paris



EXCLUSIVE!

BUMBLEBEE

ROLLS OUT!

MORTAL ENGINES

On set with
Peter Jackson!

PLUS!

SUSPIRIA

OUTLANDER

GOOD OMENS

SHE-RA

WONDER WOMAN

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SFX Contents

ISSUE
307
DECEMBER
2018

32

BUMBLEBEE

Transformers rewinds to the '80s as everyone's favourite weaponised Herbie gets his chance to shine.

42

AQUAMAN

We're chucking away the water wings to plunge undersea and meet the king of the oceans.

52

SUSPIRIA

The classic tale of terpsichorean terror gets the remake treatment. We high-kick our way to Hell.

56

OUTLANDER

Jamie and Claire 4Ever! The centuries-spanning love affair returns for a fourth season.

60

FANTASTIC BEASTS

Meet the *Crimes Of Grindelwald* cast as JK Rowling's wizarding hero – no, the other one – returns.

66

ANDY WEIR

Imagine if the guy who wrote *The Martian* was stranded on Mars. This stuff would get him through.

70

MORTAL ENGINES

We're on set in New Zealand to find out more about Philip Reeve's tale of marauding metropolises.

76

M.R. CAREY

That's Mister Carey to the likes of you! Mister MR Carey, in fact. Show some damn respect.

78

TIME AFTER TIME

Hey, HG Wells – if you've gone forward in time and are reading this page, we love your work, man.



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Check out
page 24 for
more details

Save money and get yourself a free Marty McFly Playmobil collectable & '80s movie book



9

RED ALERT

9 SORRY TO BOTHER YOU

Boots Riley tells us all about his politically charged SF comedy.

12 ORIGIN

Discover the secrets of this new starship show from YouTube.

16 SHE-RA AND THE PRINCESSES OF POWER

For the honour of Grayskull! The '80s icon returns in a new toon.

22 DEVELOPMENT HELL

One day they'll run out of films they'll never make, you'll see.

REVIEWS

84 VENOM

Our critical process: rip off the head, slurp down the brains, give star rating.

88 THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE

Worth spending your nights in this prime piece of horror real estate?

92 INCREDIBLES 2

New Jack-Jack City. Another piece of cape-hating propaganda.

94 QUATERMASS AND THE PIT

Nigel Kneale's '50s classic arrives on Blu-ray this month. British Rocket Group baffled.

102 SOMEONE LIKE ME

MR Carey returns with a 21st Century take on Jekyll and Hyde.

108 BLACK PANTHER

Are you ready for the Intergalactic Empire of Wakanda? Strap in!



42

REGULARS

26 FIRST CONTACT

Your fiery opinions merge with our ink to create a whole new freaky lifeform.

28 FREESPEAK

Emiko Jean tells us why we need to see more diverse worlds and characters in fantasy.

30 BOOK CLUB

Turns out Adrian Selby is far from *A Stranger In Olondria*.

113 BLASTERMIND

Test your knowledge of the Pottermore and its wizarding wonders. Muggles need not apply.

114 TOTAL RECALL

Nick pays tribute to the weird, wonderful work of zarjaz 2000 AD artist Carlos Ezquerra.



102



52



70

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The Ed Zone



It's not that long ago that big blockbuster movies clustered around the summer months like demons around a Hellmouth. That's no longer the case, as studios spread their wares throughout the calendar – and even with no new *Star Wars* in December, the run-up to Christmas will be among the most hotly contested box office battlegrounds of the year.

The biggest star strutting his stuff before 2018 calls it a wrap is Bumblebee, who literally dwarves his human rivals. Even if you'd lost faith with the increasingly high-octane Michael Bay *Transformers* movies, this '80s-set prequel feels like the back-to-basics reboot the series needs. We speak to director Travis Knight, the man behind stop-motion classic *Kubo And The Two Strings*, about reigniting the robot saga's spark (p32).

Continuing the blockbuster theme, we perform our best Legilimency spell to grill the *Fantastic Beasts* cast about *The Crimes Of Grindelwald* (p60), test the waters of DC's *Aquaman* with director James Wan (p42) and explore cities on the move as Peter Jackson talks *Mortal Engines* (p70). We also scare ourselves silly with *Suspiria* (p52), follow *Outlander* to the US (p56) and talk to God's new right-hand man, Jon Hamm (p50).

There's more like this every month in *SFX*, the gift that keeps on giving – y'know, a subscription could be the perfect present for any fellow geeks in your life. Or why not just treat yourself? Details on p24.

Find me on page 60



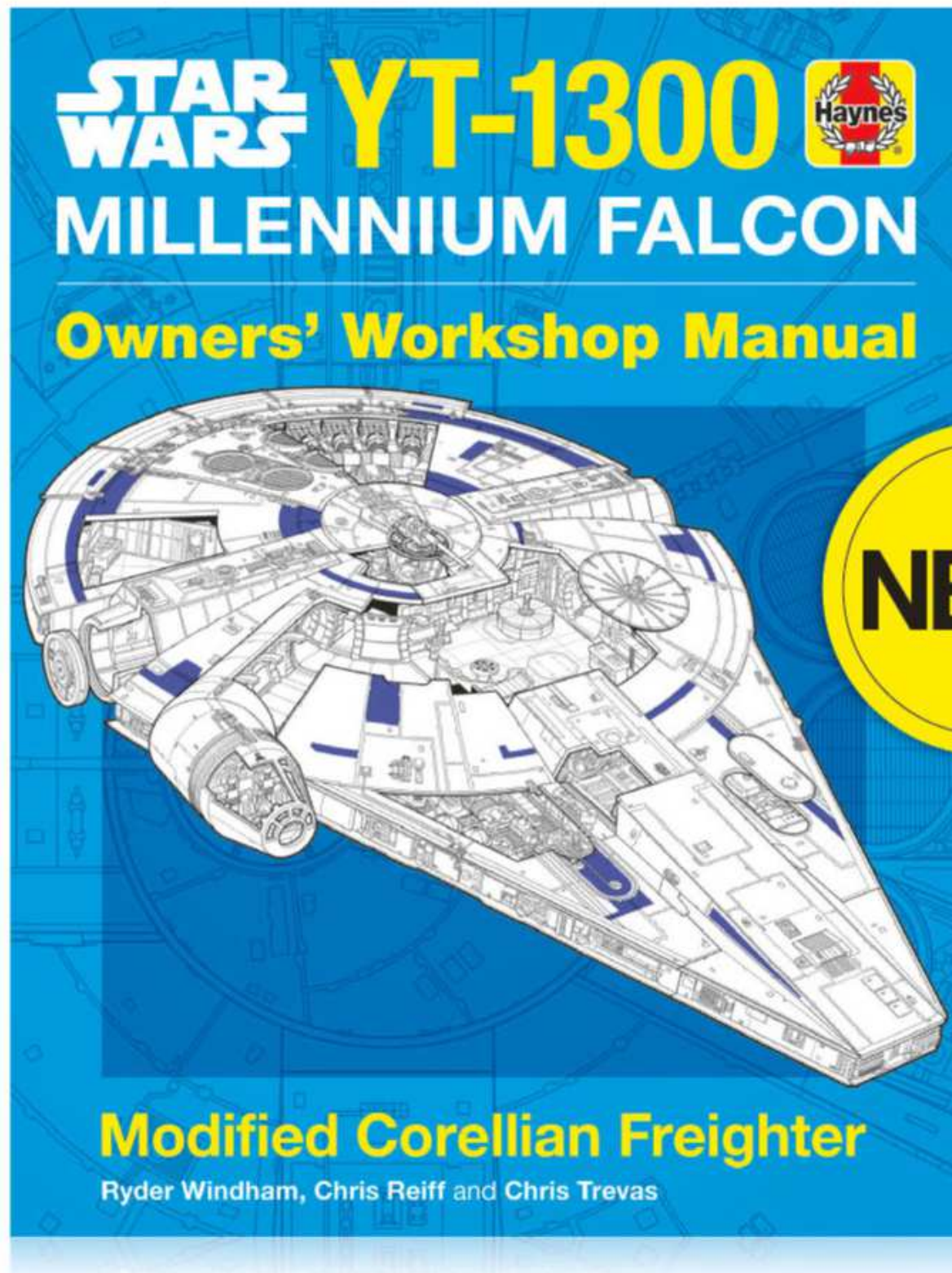
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"I've got a really good feeling about this."

HAN SOLO, *SOLO: A STAR WARS™ STORY*



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DECEMBER 2018

→ NEWS //// INTERVIEWS //// INSIGHT //// MERMISTA → edited by Richard Edwards

DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE



HOOK, LINE AND THINKER

Director Boots Riley on his crackpot sci-fi comedy *Sorry To Bother You*

Highlights



12 WAKE-UP CALL

→ Emerging from hypersleep is bad news in YouTube drama *Origin*.



14 ZOMBIE SHUFFLE

→ *Shaun Of The Dead* meets *Strictly* in *Anna And The Apocalypse*.



16 SHE IS SHE-RA!

→ The Princess of Power returns to TV after three decades away.

SCI-FACT! You can actually buy Tessa Thompson's politi-cool earrings. "We sell 'em!" says Riley. "They're part of the film's promotion."

➔ **When Boots Riley sat down to write** a film based on his experiences as a telemarketer, he ended up producing one of the most interesting and batshit crazy sci-fi movies of the year. "The sci-fi element came up in this film because it needed it," he tells Red Alert of *Sorry To Bother You*, his bold, genre-splicing debut about a broke Californian (Lakeith Stanfield) who lands a job at a telemarketing company, and ends up seduced by the promise of more money.

Smartly dressed in a dark suit and white shirt as we chat in London's Soho Hotel, Riley is open about the fact that he never set out to write a sci-fi film. "The character needed that; we needed that to happen," he explains of his movie's fantastical elements, which rear their terrifying heads in the final act (and which we'd be hugely remiss to spoil but, take our word for it, they're a doozy). "It wasn't because I was like, 'I want to do this,'" Riley adds. "None of the things that happen [in the film] just came about because I had the idea and then figured out how to put them in there."

Coming at genre from a very singular perspective, Riley originally wrote *Sorry To*

“Poverty is seen as the fault of the impoverished. In reality, capitalism needs poverty”

Bother You back in 2012. When he struggled to get it made, he first turned its themes into a rap album with his music group The Coup, and then published the manuscript in full as a paperback in 2014. One year later, Jordan Peele was in line to star. "He then directed *Get Out* and was like, 'I don't want to act any more,'" says Riley. "I believe that we got the best version of *Sorry To Bother You* that we could get, but that's the thing. There are all of these things that are intertwined, and moments that are happening with each other."

Riley's talking, of course, about the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which was founded in 2013 and earned Hollywood recognition during the #OscarsSoWhite furore in 2015. Now, in the wake of the success of other films helmed by black filmmakers, such as *Get Out* and *Black Panther*, Riley counts himself as part of the movement. "In a way, it's kinda like a certain kind of hip-hop verse," he says, "where people are going down the line and reaching out and touching on this and that, and showing how it's connected. I think maybe my film is way less random than that. I think all of these things are connected."



It was no time to be drawing dirty pictures.

How do you make small talk without mentioning the head injury?

Get Out explicitly tackled issues of racism, but *Sorry To Bother You* instead takes the conversation a step further to expose prejudice on a social scale, and how it infects everything from office culture to the lives of the working class. Blending tough political statements with hilarious flights of fancy (there's a reality show called *I Got The S#@ Kicked Out Of Me*), the film is tonally nimble, its most bleakly effective joke revolving around black characters adopting a "White Voice" to get more sales. Meanwhile, the telemarketing company's slogan ("Stick To The Script!") is the worst kind of oppressive.

Sorry To Bother You draws its battle lines early on, without ever backing away from them. "In my film, I'm talking about not only the black characters' performance of whiteness, but also investigating what white people's performance of whiteness is," Riley says. "Racist tropes are ones that say, 'Black people's culture is insufficient for survival,' or folks are 'savage' or 'lazy' or 'the family unit isn't right'. The whole point of it is to explain poverty as the fault of the impoverished. In reality, capitalism must have poverty if it wants to survive."

ENTER VALKYRIE

Alongside Stanfield, an actor who Riley commends for "always being in the moment", is *Thor: Ragnarok* star Tessa Thompson, who plays Stanfield's activist girlfriend Detroit. Wearing earrings that say things like "Tell Homeland Security We Are The Bomb", she's a fierce and magnetic presence in the film. "Tessa is a consummate professional," Riley reveals. "Having their two styles go against each other really created a great synergy and friction at the same time."

And we haven't even mentioned the film's crowning glory, a stop-motion sequence scripted by Riley and directed by Ri Crawford of Tippet Studios, who previously contributed to the *Star Wars* films. To reveal its content would constitute yet more spoilers, but it's integral to the film. "We've seen the horror of [SPOILER]," Riley says, "but I wanted to show people how it's repackaged. The feeling that you get when you see stop-motion animation is one of being happy and that everything's okay. It's the Disneyfied version that we see. I wanted to represent that."

As for Riley's original intention to write something that drew from his experiences as a telemarketer... "All the little stories that I thought I'd put in from the telemarketing, most of those didn't make it," he chuckles, "because it's not really about telemarketing, that's the bait and switch right there." Which is all part of the genius of *Sorry To Bother You*. **JWI**

Sorry To Bother You is in cinemas from 7 December.

A wonderful impression of a waxwork.

Tessa Thompson plays an activist called Detroit.

POLITICAL ALIENS

Boots Riley on the politics of sci-fi



→ "I'm a sci-fi fan definitely," says Boots Riley, the rap star who makes both his directing and genre debut with *Sorry To Bother You*, "but I have a critique of sci-fi in that many people on the left hide in sci-fi. They hide in it by creating worlds that are so different from our own that it's fun to be in, but none of the lessons, none of the ideas that you put in there end up meaning anything."

"You could have ultra right-wing fans of *Star Trek* that say, 'Star Trek is a socialist world,' at least in the original ones. *Star Wars* was [originally created], according to Walter Murch - who was part of that whole [American] Zoetrope thing - because George Lucas had the idea for what became *Apocalypse Now*. He was making a movie that was following the Viet Cong as the protagonists go to find their version of Kurtz, who was somebody that had gone over to work with the US and become this big powerful person. Lucas couldn't get it funded, so he was like, 'Okay, I'm putting that story in space.' So the Rebels are the Viet Cong, the Empire is the United States."

"But the point is, does it matter? You're spending your life writing this thing, trapped away from people, sitting in bedrooms and offices and cafés, writing this stuff, putting these ideas about the world into these things that, as people take them in, it doesn't matter to them, because we've divorced it so much from reality."

"The reason we can get them made is because they're divorced from reality. It's not just that it's escapism. [These stories are] so allegorical that nobody understands what you're getting at. And once they do understand, they can go on about their life without even applying it. I think there's a way to use science fiction as a tool that doesn't have to be so far removed from everything we're doing [in real life]."



SCI-FACT! There are two *Harry Potter* actors in *Origin* – Tom Felton was Draco Malfoy and Natalia Tena was Nymphadora Tonks.

SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

LOST IN SPACE

Waking up has never been easy – especially when you're millions of miles from home in *Origin*...



There's plenty of sci-fi TV out there to choose from but it can be frustrating that a lot of them tend to be rather parochial. That's why British writer Mika Watkins specifically wanted to create a series that featured an international cast playing characters experiencing the horror of waking up together, stranded on a spaceship in the middle of the inky black void of space.

As it turns out, YouTube Originals was equally interested in making a series that would play to its increasingly global streaming audience, so the company hired Watkins to create and showrun *Origin*. Developed with sci-fi TV veterans like Jeff Pinkner (*Fringe*) and Josh Appelbaum (*Alias*), with a pilot directed by *Resident Evil* mainstay Paul WS Anderson, the cast features international actors like Natalia Tena, Tom Felton, Nora Arnezeder, Philipp Christopher and Fraser James.

"It was always an international piece," Watkins tells Red Alert. "It was always about making sure we told really authentic stories about all the different parts of the world that we were exploring. I had a really strong sense of who I wanted, and then it was just about finding those people. And I do think the thing I'm probably proudest of is the casting. We just nailed it."

“The thing I’m most proud of is the casting. We just nailed it”

Talk about getting a rude awakening.



The Wizarding War had been hard on Draco.



"No, you can't have the last Jaffa Cake."

Tena leads the cast as Lana, one of the first people to wake on the ship and discover that something on their journey to a new home has gone horribly wrong. As more are woken from hyper-sleep, they band together to investigate the massive ship, and audiences get to see, in flashback, how many of them came to be there.

Watkins says those flashbacks are integral to exploring these character's pasts. "There are situations where you know what a character did in their past and you know the mistake they made, and that they'll make it again, because that's the extreme situation that they're in. And then there are times where you're like, 'Wow they really have learned from what they did and they're gonna do something differently.' I think that was always the heart of the show."

SHOCK HORROR

The surprise factor that comes with all of the characters was a huge selling point for Fraser James, who plays the geneticist Henri. Once signed on, the actor admits that Watkins only informed the actors about their backstories a week or two before their flashbacks were shot. "I knew that Henri was a geneticist and so I wanted to understand what he'd been doing," the actor explains. "That was pretty intense and part of the excitement of it. Then, as the episodes came, you were flipping through to find out what was happening, and there were a few moments when episodes were released where I was just like, 'Wow, you're doing that?! That is bold. That is ballsy.' We were like the early viewers of the series, as we were reading it for the first time. And my response to it gives me an indication that people that are going to be watching it are really going to enjoy this." **TB**

Origin starts streaming on YouTube Premium from 14 November.

GETTY (2)

AERIAL ASSAULT SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

- Netflix swings the axe on two of its Marvel shows, **Iron Fist** and **Luke Cage**.
- BBC confirms new three-part **Dracula** series "inspired by the novel" and written by *Sherlock's* Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss.
- Brit actor Jack Bannon to play young version of Alfred, Batman's butler, in Epix prequel series **Pennyworth**.
- It's a big month for streaming giants embracing epic fantasy worlds. With *The Lord Of The Rings* rights in the bag, Amazon has ordered a full season of Robert Jordan's **The Wheel Of Time**...
- ...while Netflix has picked up the rights to CS Lewis's **Chronicles Of Narnia** books...
- ...and ordered new seasons of Matt Groening's **Disenchantment** up to 2021.
- **Neil Gaiman** signs development deal with Amazon, his backers on *Good Omens*.
- Freya Allan, Anya Chalotra, Jodhi May and MyAnna Buring join Henry Cavill in Netflix's **The Witcher** adap.



JOE PASQUALE

THE COMEDIAN AND I'M A CELEBRITY... WINNER ON HIS GENRE FAVES

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY MOVIES

→ One film I loved even though people hated it was *Mother!* by Darren Aronofsky. If you know he's God and she's Mother Earth, you'll get it completely. I still love the old Hammer films and could watch them until the cows come home. *The Plague Of The Zombies* is my favourite.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

→ I like *The Walking Dead*, I think that's great, and I love the new *Star Trek: Discovery* - it's sensational. They've spent some money on it as well, with the scripting, the storytelling, and I love the way it's all tied in with the original series. I'm a huge Trekkie, I love it all.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY COMICS

→ I love Marvel stuff. DC's okay but not as good as Marvel as far as I'm concerned. I've still got thousands of the comics from when I was a kid. I have every copy of the *Dracula Lives!* comic from Marvel [via *Marvel UK*]. I've also got every single *Planet Of The Apes*. *Planet Of The Apes* is the best thing in the world for me, all of them. Even the crap one that Tim Burton done, I love it! And I've got every edition of the *House Of Hammer* magazine. I was obsessed with it. I've definitely got the collector gene. My mum used to go to car boot sales when I was a kid and come back with so much crap - so yeah, it's definitely in here. **RE**

Joe Pasquale's book *Deadknobs And Doomsticks* is out now.



“DON'T QUOTE ME”
“YOU'RE CONSTANTLY BEING SERVED THE SAME MEALS. 'BUT THIS ONE HAS A SPRIG OF PARSLEY ON IT!' IT'S LIKE, 'NO!'”

Don't expect *Incredibles* director Brad Bird to sign up for any remakes or reimaginings...



SCI-FACT! The town of Little Haven is supposed to be fictional – any relation to the Little Haven in West Wales is purely coincidental.

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...



ANNA AND THE APOCALYPSE

Shaun Of The Dead meets *High School Musical* in zombie comedy

IT BEGAN LIFE AS A SHORT

1 “The idea was the brainchild of Ryan McHenry,” explains Scottish director John McPhail. “Ryan made a short called *Zombie Musical*, after watching *High School Musical* and thinking, ‘Wouldn’t it be amazing if Zac Efron got chased by zombies?’ So they shot the short and won a New Talent BAFTA and they wanted to turn it into a feature.” Tragically, McHenry died from bone cancer in 2015, so McPhail stepped in as director after producer Naysun Alae-Carew saw his 2015 comedy *Where Do We Go From Here*.

IT’S A TRICKY BALANCING ACT

2 The story centres on a group of British teenagers, led by Ella Hunt’s Anna, whose preparations for a Christmas musical are interrupted by the zombie apocalypse. It’s a strange idea, but Hunt says there’s something here for everyone. “If you like musicals, you’re going to be happy, if you like horror, you’re going to be happy, if you like coming-of-age stories, you’re going to be happy. And if you

don’t like one of the three, you’re going to be okay, because there’s enough of the others.”

THE HUMOUR IS RELATABLE

3 One of the film’s best jokes has the characters arguing over which celebrities are still alive, which are dead and which are zombies – “Tay-tay is NOT dead, you take that back!” That streak of humour was a key factor for Hunt. “What I like about our zombie movie,” she says, “is we never try to work out how the zombies got there. I think audiences and filmmakers often get distracted by going, ‘Where? How? Why?’ instead of enjoying a human reaction to something completely surreal. So there’s plenty of opportunities for comedy.”

THERE’S A SANTA NUMBER

4 Songwriters Roddy Hart and Tommy Reilly have put a lot of effort into getting the songs right, with the sort of soundtrack that

will have you rushing to Spotify afterwards. However, one song stands head and shoulders above the rest. As Hunt explains, “Marli Siu, who plays Lisa, has this Santa song that’s laden with innuendo. I loved it from the top.” Red Alert has seen the scene and can confidently confirm it’s a YouTube hit waiting to happen.

THE DIRECTOR’S A HORROR FAN

5 “I was weaned on horror,” McPhail says. “When I was growing up, my mother used to come in and be like, ‘*Night Of The Living Dead* is starting on Channel 4!’” McPhail also drew on John Carpenter, *Evil Dead* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. “I tried to get everybody on set to watch *The Happiness Of The Katakuris* by Takeshi Miike,” he recalls. “I said, ‘It’s the original zombie musical!’ but they were all like, ‘I don’t know if I want to watch that.’ I think there was only one guy who watched it in the whole production!” **MT**

Anna And The Apocalypse is in cinemas from 30 November.

SCI-FACT! Titan is also releasing a new range of *Firefly* novels starting with Nancy Holden's *Big Damn Hero* in November.

WRITER EXCLUSIVE

THE ROAD TO MAL

The *Serenity* crew lick old war wounds in new *Firefly* prequel comic

➔ **Primarily set during the Unification War**, Boom! Studios' new *Firefly* monthly takes the crew of *Serenity* back to their formative days. Written by Greg Pak and drawn by Dan McDaid with creator Joss Whedon acting as a story consultant, the first issue opens just after the television series left off before harking back through the years to chronicle how Captain Malcolm Reynolds and his first mate Zoe Washburne initially crossed interstellar paths

"Even more important than that is what Mal and Zoe actually did during the war," says Pak. "They have some shared secrets that will be exposed during our series, with huge ramifications on all of the members of our cast. It's a big, emotional story that plays out on multiple surprising levels and intertwines with a major crisis in the present time."

With Pak revealing that, "*Serenity* itself is right there on page one of issue #1, in the middle of a massive crisis, as usual!", all of the

spaceship's rebellious personnel will play a role in what unfolds. "You might see some other familiar faces or settings here and there," he teases. "But the real thrill of this series is that we're getting the green light to expand the *Firefly* universe by creating brand new characters with critical links to the past and present. We're also going to new planets with new subcultures that explore different aspects of this amazing world that Joss and his collaborators created for us."

Stressing that "we're telling a war story, in many respects," McDaid insists that being in a state of constant conflict has a physical toll on Mal and Zoe's younger comic incarnations. "In some ways, they were older then, because they were exposed to horror on a daily basis," he reasons. "They're tired, hungry and on the edge, so War Malcolm is not quite the same man as *Serenity* Malcolm." **SJ**

Firefly's comic run starts on 14 November.

Serenity looks beautiful in Dan McDaid's sketchy style.



The new comic reunites us with Mal, Zoe and co.



AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

BAD ROMANCE

Pat Cadigan chronicles Harley Quinn's early days in new novel *Mad Love*



➔ **Having first watched her debut** in *Batman: The Animated Series* in 1993 with her then-young son, adapting Harley Quinn's origin story *Mad Love* into prose has been "purely personal" for Pat Cadigan, who, like DC's Maid of Mischief, also hails from New York.

"Like Harley, my mother's family were from Brooklyn and all the women were tough cookies," says Cadigan, who based *Mad Love* on a detailed synopsis from Harley Quinn co-creator Paul Dini.

"I was acutely aware that Harley is Paul's creation and I wanted very much to stay true to the way he imagined her," she says of Dini, who conceived Harley with *Batman: The Animated Series* overseer Bruce Timm during the second series of the show. "We get to see Harley as a child, and how certain things that happened to her put her on the path she takes as an adult, and we see her go through a whole lot as an adult as well."

But Cadigan won't reveal too much about the role played by Harley's notorious partner, the clown prince of crime. "I'll just say that the Joker being the Joker does what the Joker does," she teases, insisting that the book will still have lots of laughs. "How could there not be as Harley is named after the classic commedia dell'arte character, the harlequin? The humour's going to be pretty dark but, hey, that's the story of my life!" **SJ**

Mad Love is published on 13 November.

SCI-FACT! Noelle Stevenson started playing *D&D* when she wrote *She-Ra*, which influenced the show's quest-centric journey.

SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

FOR THE HONOUR OF GRAYSKULL!

She-Ra's undergone a huge makeover for her new series.

An '80s icon returns in *She-Ra And The Princesses Of Power*

➔ If hearing a cry of “For the honour of Grayskull” immediately inspires you to take on a power stance, you probably grew up in the '80s feasting on a steady diet of *She-Ra: Princess Of Power* and *He-Man And The Masters Of The Universe*. In the three decades since those original Filmation series, we've seen numerous reincarnations of She-Ra's twin brother He-Man, but nothing new from the Princess of Power herself. But this is remedied with Netflix's new series *She-Ra And The Princesses Of Power*.

The woman responsible for introducing She-Ra to a new generation is Noelle Stevenson, the Eisner Award-winning co-creator of *Lumberjanes*. She's reimagined the Princess of Power's fight against Big Bad Hordak and the Evil Horde of Etheria.

The showrunner tells Red Alert that it's a vital time to bring the heroine back into the spotlight. “With everything that's going on in the world, we need to both address it and escape from it,” Stevenson says. “We're setting up a fantasy world where you're free from the constraints of this world, but you have different problems as a result of that. She-Ra shows girls everywhere how to be brave, how to choose to

do the hard thing and how to fail and get back up again. Those are the lessons I want people to take away from the show. I want to make them more active in their lives, and communities, and all of that is really important to the core of the show.”

REBEL GIRL

It's also a traditional 2D animated series, which is delightfully unexpected in a CG-dominated landscape. Stevenson says the show's look is an intentional throwback, drawing on '70s and '80s sci-fi artists Moebius and Roger Dean, as well as contemporary anime. “I come from a comics background, so I bring a lot of that to

the show,” Stevenson says. “We just wanted to capture the fun and campiness of the idealised futuristic version of the '80s with the shoulder pads, the big hair, and even the glitter in Glimmer's hair.”

In this series, Adora of Planet Etheria is a 16-year-old orphan warrior training in Hordak's army to battle against the princess rebellion. When she stumbles upon a sword that reveals her true destiny as the warrior who will help conquer the Horde army, Adora must turn against the life she knows to bring peace and hope to Etheria. She soon finds help in fellow rebels Glimmer, Bow and Mermista as they battle Adora's former best friend, Catra, and the evil overlord, Hordak.

One hero you won't see is He-Man, who Stevenson says will not be a player in this story as he was in the '80s series. “He's got his own universe going on,” she explains. “Adora thinks she's an orphan so as soon as she finds out she might have a family, that plays out over the span of the show. So, she deals with part of his lore in slightly removed ways.” **TB/AM**



She-Ra And The Princesses Of Power starts streaming on Netflix on 16 November.

SCI-FACT! Clark Spencer, whose grandparents owned a cinema, came to Disney after working on Wall Street.



AFTERLIFE CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

144

BARBARA CRAMPTON

Megan Halsey in Re-Animator



Barbara Crampton still rocks the same blonde bob she did in 1985, when she played uni student Megan Halsey in horror-comedy hit *Re-Animator*. Although she's perhaps still best known for that role, Crampton has also featured in cult horror films like *From Beyond* and *Castle Freak*, while recent films include *Beyond The Gates*, *You're Next* and *Dead Night* (which is released in the UK later this month). "It is surprising to still be making horror movies today," she tells *Red Alert*, "but some of the best female roles are still in this genre, so who can complain?"

What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?

→ People ask me to scream. Once I was having lunch at a restaurant and someone recognised me and he says, "I'm a big fan – could you please just scream for me?" I had to politely refuse, of course.

Would you like to play Megan again?

→ I suppose I would do a new sequel if they asked me back but it is 35 years later now. I might have become a zombie but how do they explain that?

Did you get to keep any souvenirs from the set?

→ I kept my black leather bondage outfit from *From Beyond*, but who else was going to wear that than me, right? [Laughs] But *Re-Animator*? I had a lab jacket from that movie but I honestly don't know what happened to it. I might have just put it out in a yard sale!

What would it say on Megan's tombstone?

→ "She should have quit while she was ahead." **CW**

PRODUCER EXCLUSIVE

RALPH IMPROVEMENT

Wreck-It Ralph leaves the arcade behind to break the internet

How to break it to her that she was covered in goo?



It's been six years since *Wreck-It*

Ralph proved that you don't have to be bad to be a bad guy. Now the hammer-fisted hero and his best friend Vanellope venture into a whole new world in *Ralph Breaks The Internet*. In search of a replacement steering wheel for Vanellope's arcade console, without which it's off to the junkyard, the two pals go online, where they have very different reactions to the virtual experience.

"It felt to us that there's a great story to tell about two best friends who go to the big city, and one falls in love with it, and the other wants to go back home – but the first one can't," explains producer Clark Spencer. "Now their eyes have been opened, it's not a place [Vanellope] wants to go back to."

John C Reilly and Sarah Silverman return to voice the two leads, while the sequel introduces new characters to the franchise, including

Yesss (voiced by Taraji Henson), the algorithm behind the in-movie social media platform BuzzTube, and Skank (voiced by Gal Gadot), a character in the online game *Slaughter Race*. The movie is full to the brim with cameos from Disney properties, including *Star Wars*, Marvel, and of course the Disney princesses, who share the screen for the first time ever. For the multiple cameos, Spencer and his team wanted to use the original voice actors whenever possible and they scored some big names. "It's always been about trying to be as truthful as possible to the character," says Spencer. "We came to London and recorded Anthony Daniels for C-3PO, which was an amazing experience

to be able to do. But it felt to us: that's what makes that character real. So Anthony Daniels needs to be in this movie as C-3PO." **DW/JF**

All the Disney Princesses meet for the first time.



Ralph Breaks The Internet is in cinemas from 30 November.

GETTY (1)

SCI-FACT! Steve Cole was previously BBC Books' *Doctor Who* range consultant in the 1990s during Paul McGann's tenure.

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

TOME LORD

Steve Cole and Una McCormack on their inaugural *Thirteenth Doctor* novels

➔ After making her TV debut in October, Jodie Whittaker's Thirteenth Doctor is starring in a new series of novels. Starting with Juno Dawson's *The Good Doctor* (out now), it'll be followed by Una McCormack's *Molten Heart* and Steve Cole's *Combat Magicks*. With Cole admitting that, "we were told rather than shown many of the details," the unprecedented security meant that the authors had little to go on when it came to depicting her distinctive take on the latest incarnation of the Time Lord.

"What I responded to was Jodie's warmth, openness and sheer enthusiasm, as well as her motor-mouth," says Cole, who has also recently been appointed BBC Books' *Doctor Who* range consultant. "She's a bit like David Tennant but without the angst and cockiness. And of course, she's essentially the Doctor – mercurial, brilliant and always throwing herself into adventure."

McCormack was also keen to tap into her inherent Doctorishness. "She's never cowardly or cruel, never gives up or in!" she continues. "But at the same time, you're trying to capture the unique voice of that particular version. So I hope I've captured the speech patterns of the



new Doctor, and a little of how she moves about the screen."

With *Molten Heart* taking place on a distant planet and *Combat Magicks* in fifth Century Gaul, McCormack and Cole's efforts couldn't be more different. "My book is set on or, I should say, in – a new and unusual alien world that's facing some dramatic changes in the environment as the Doctor and company struggle to prevent a cataclysmic event from happening," teases McCormack, while Cole reveals that his book will see "the Doctor meeting Attila the Hun on the eve of the Battle of the Catalaunian Fields, one of the most bloodthirsty battles in history, with tens of thousands of Huns on horseback battling equal numbers of Romans and Visigoths, and both sides being helped by sinister alien forces for reasons unknown..." **SJ**

Molten Heart and Combat Magicks are published on 8 November and 22 November.



NEW STAR WARS!

IF THE CAP FETTS...

Say hello to *The Mandalorian*

➔ We've had so much new *Star Wars* since George Lucas sold the keys to the Empire, even Disney CEO Bob Iger has admitted it was "too much, too fast". But even after a small degree of space fatigue, it's virtually impossible not to get excited about new TV show *The Mandalorian*.

Okay, we're basing that on a tiny amount of intel, but just look at this first reveal, precision engineered to get original trilogy fans salivating. The photo introduces an unknown warrior who's taken fashion tips from Boba Fett. According to an Instagram post from series creator Jon Favreau, "We follow the travails of a lone gunfighter on the outer reaches of the galaxy far from the authority of the New Republic." Favreau said back in May that his show's set seven years after the Death Star-ending Battle of Yavin, three years after *Return Of The Jedi* – after the Empire but before the First Order.

We can't wait to find out who this enigmatic warrior is.

Just as exciting as the setting is the talent involved:

former *Clone Wars* and *Rebels* showrunner Dave Filoni leaps to live action to direct the first episode, while other helmers include *Thor: Ragnarok*'s Taika Waititi and *Jurassic World* star Bryce Dallas Howard.

If speculation is correct, the rifle slung over the Mandalorian's shoulder is like the one Boba Fett brandished in the lamented *Star Wars Holiday Special* – surely that can't be about to find its way into canon... **RE**

The Mandalorian will air on Disney's new streaming service, date TBC.



SCI-FACT! Teagan Croft had a recurring role in long-running Aussie soap *Home And Away* before heading to the States.



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

TEAGAN CROFT

Rachel Roth, aka Raven, from DC's *Titans* talks powers, dark sides and hanging out with Robin

PULLED FROM THE PAGES

“Some key character traits that I honed in on from the comic books were Raven’s sarcasm and dry sense of humour. I also played a lot of her concerns over her powers, about how she doesn’t know how to control them, her anxiety about what she can do and what she can see. Raven can read people’s emotions and she doesn’t understand why it’s happened to her.”

DEMON SEED

“Rachel’s big struggle is having a literal demon inside her. She doesn’t know quite what it is, or why it’s there. In her reflection, she sees another person. She sees herself, but it’s an evil version, which is a personification of her evil demon. She can’t control it or control reading people’s emotions, and she can’t control her own emotions. Her own emotions have an effect on the world and she doesn’t know why.”

FACE OF EVIL

“In the comic books, Raven’s father, Trigon, was typically drawn with multiple eyes, red skin and horn-like antlers. For the TV series, “I kept pestering the costume designer and the special effects team about it. I think they did it in an interesting way.”

TITAN FIT

“Rachel and Dick [Grayson]’s relationship is very mentor/learner. It was very similar between mine and Brenton Thwaites’ [who plays Robin] relationship. Brenton taught me so much about the business and he helped me figure out new ways to reach emotions. He was a really generous person to have as a mentor. And he’s an Australian, too, so we got to bond over that. It was good to have that connection with Brenton, so I could bring that over to the screen.” **BC**

Titans is now airing on DC Universe in the US and will stream on Netflix in the UK.



SCI-FACT! Ares was portrayed as the Roman god of war until writer George Perez went Greek again in 1987.

WRITER EXCLUSIVE



Wonder Woman stuck to a strict workout regime.

WAR GAMES

Ares gives peace a chance in G Willow Wilson's first **Wonder Woman** arc

➔ As the Greek god of war, Ares might not seem to have much in common with Wonder Woman. But G Willow Wilson, writing her first storyline for the Amazon warrior since taking over the title on issue #58, reckons the two immortal enemies aren't actually as poles apart as you might initially believe.

"He's such an interesting foil and is kind of the Moriarty to her Sherlock Holmes," she tells Red Alert. "I thought it would be interesting to look at these two characters who have similar powers but very different motivations. And also

what would their dynamic be if Ares saw himself as the good guy?"

Drawn by Cary Nord, "The Just War" sees Ares apparently embracing a more peaceful approach after teaming up with Darkseid's daughter Grail and escaping from their Themysciran prison. "One of the big questions of the arc is, 'Is there such a thing as a just war?' especially in this day and age where all conflicts are so complex, as there are so many different sides and it's very difficult to figure out what the correct or just cause of action is in any given scenario," explains Wilson. "For me, it was a very easy way into not just the relationship and conflict Wonder Woman and Ares have had going back to the beginning, but also these bigger questions like 'is there such a thing as a just war or benign violence?' We're looking at that through this high fantasy lens, and I have to say the results are very exciting!"

LA ISLA BONITA

With Diana being estranged from Themyscira of late, there have also been some significant changes to the mythical island kingdom. "We'll see that playing out in our world in some unexpected ways," teases Wilson. "Some other Olympians and a few secondary characters from the Olympian world will also show up in some surprising and not always welcome ways."

Wilson also claims that Wonder Woman isn't that different to Ms Marvel, whose adventures she continues to chronicle. "On a

moral and ethical level, there are definite similarities between Diana Prince and Kamala Khan," she reasons. "They both try not to lie, and it's important for them to do the right thing even when it puts them at a disadvantage. If they were ever to meet, they'd get on really well!" **SJ**

Wonder Woman #58 is out on 14 November.



NEWS WARP

HIGH-SPEED FACTS

➔ Judge Dredd co-creator **Carlos Ezquerra** passes away aged 70 – read our tribute on p114.

➔ **Scott Wilson**, Hershel Greene in *The Walking Dead*, has also died.

➔ **Wonder Woman** 1984 release date pushed back to **summer 2020**.

➔ **Guillermo del Toro** directing stop-motion **Pinocchio** movie for Netflix.

➔ *The Big Bang Theory*'s **Kaley Cuoco** to voice title character in DC Universe's adult-focused animated **Harley Quinn** show.

➔ **John Krasinski** working on sequel to **A Quiet Place**.

➔ *Blade Runner* 2049 scripter **Michael Green** to write **Blade Runner** comic for Titan.

➔ **Daniel Radcliffe** and **Anya Taylor-Joy** join **Playmobil** movie – yes, it's really a thing.

➔ **Jodie Whittaker**'s first *Doctor Who* episode is **biggest launch** since show returned in 2005.

➔ Disney's latest live-action remake will be **Lilo & Stitch**.

➔ **Sanaa Lathan** joins Jordan Peele's **Twilight Zone** reboot.

GETTY (3)

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

“I ENDED ON THE PERFECT SCENE. I WAS ALONE – SHOCKER! ARYA'S ALWAYS BLOODY ALONE.”

Maisie Williams gives the closest thing we'll get to a clue about *Game Of Thrones*' ending.

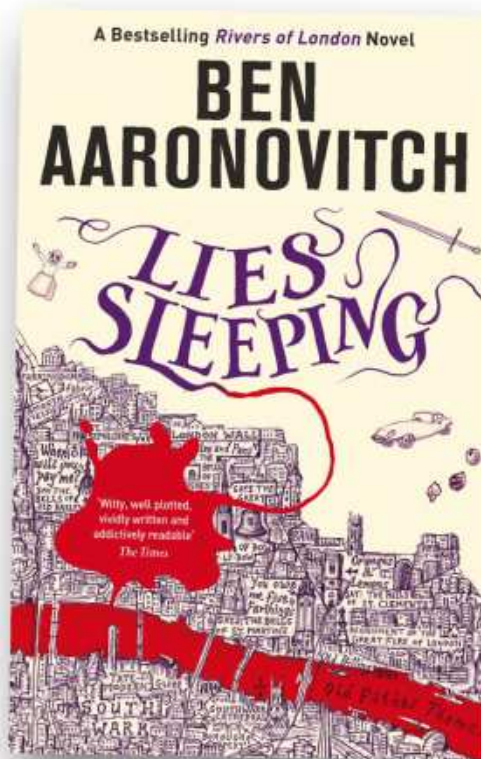


SCI-FACT! Mithras was the Roman god of mystery while Bacchus was the god of agriculture, wine and fertility.

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

SNOOZING MONSTERS

The new *Rivers Of London* novel is here but **Ben Aaronovitch**'s lips are sealed. Well, more or less...



➔ “I’m finding it hard not to tell people about it,” says Ben Aaronovitch about his new novel. “Most of my books are not normally very spoilery but this one is really spoilery, and I’m finding it hard to keep my mouth shut about it!”

Aaronovitch will at least admit that *Lies Sleeping* is the culmination of numerous plot threads from the previous six instalments in his *Rivers Of London* series, although he won’t specify “what plot lines come to a halt as that

would give you a clue as to what’s going to happen in the book”.

Centring around the now DC Peter Grant’s final confrontation with his deadliest adversary, Martin Chorley, aka The Faceless Man, *Lies Sleeping* opens with a terrifying family siege, and never lets up from there. “It’s one of the most ridiculously fast-paced books I’ve ever written,” laughs Aaronovitch. “Even I was like, ‘Woah, slow down!’”

While he admits, “I like titles with multiple meanings, and I’m particularly pleased with this one,” Aaronovitch refuses to elaborate on the significance of the book’s name. “It has several meanings, although I can’t tell you exactly what they are,” he says, pointing out that some hints can be garnered from the maps of London on the book’s cleverly designed cover. “Sometimes what we put on there is accurate and sometimes it’s not. We also throw in red herrings, and there are red herrings in the books as well.”

Along with the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, Aaronovitch visited the newly reopened London Mithraeum in the City of London as part of his extensive research. “It does play a role in the book,” he teases. “I like to think of it as the Temple of Bacchus because I prefer Bacchus to Mithras, who was a bit of a sour-faced mystery cult kind of guy, as like Bacchus I’m more into drinking wine personally.” **SJ**

Lies Sleeping is out on 15 November.

AUTHOR EXCLUSIVE

UNHOLY GRAIL

Alternate history maestro **Lavie Tidhar** heads towards an Unholy Land



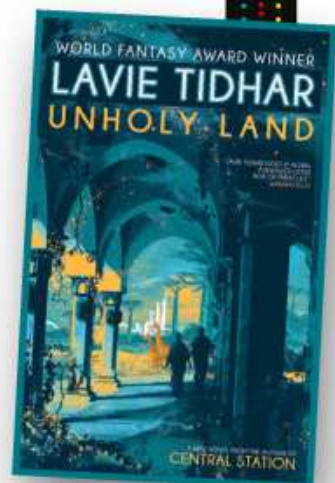
➔ **An overture from Joseph Chamberlain** to the leader of the Zionist movement to give the Jewish people a homeland on the border of Uganda isn’t the usual starting point for a fantasy novel. But when Lavie Tidhar, acclaimed author of *Osama* and *A Man Lies Dreaming*, chanced upon this nugget from history, he was instantly inspired.

“I became interested in this idea of a peaceful Middle East,” Tidhar says of his new novel, *Unholy Land*. “I wanted to write a political book, but I didn’t want to give up on the stuff I like, which is genre, so there are Lovecraft jokes thrown in and there’s a very Roger Zelazny vibe. It’s a weird little beast.”

The book follows time-travelling pulp fiction author Lior Tirosh, who, after visiting Palestina – the Jewish state founded in the early 20th century – finds himself the prime suspect in a series of murders.

“Like all my books, it kind of falls in that crack between genre and literature and political fiction,” Tidhar says, “so people who want the Lovecraft jokes, they don’t really want you to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian situation, and people who want a serious novel don’t really want jokes about Yiddish porn magazines!” **so**

Unholy Land is out on 22 November.



KEVIN NIXON



What other tasty morsels lie within this noggin?

LAWRIE PHOTOGRAPHY

Nick Setchfield's

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

Illustration by Paul Cemmick

on the story, is looking back at Jekyll and Hyde, and the idea of your shadow-self, and the idea of 'we are all multiple things...' There are times when Batman's the disguise, but there are times when his true essence comes out, because by being veiled a kind of instinctual side comes out that's very pure. That's what's fun about his character, is that there's a very bright light that shines on his shadow side. The idea of all of that is incredibly exciting."

GOING GLOBAL!

INDIANA JONES 5

➔ Given his rep as a globe-trotting adventurer there was precious little trotting of the globe in *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*. Producer **Frank Marshall** promises that the fifth Indy film will see that iconic red marker line stretch a little further across the atlas – and he's looking to honour the original vision of **George Lucas**, who steps down as producer on this one. "He moved on," Marshall tells *Coming Soon*. "We're very respectful of the original intentions of the movie, certainly Harrison's character. The serialisation of what the original intention was. I'd love to have George there. I love being around George and working with him, obviously. It'll be a little different, because the ideas are coming from a different place now." A different place? "I don't know if you'd call it a writers' room, but a lot of people that we trust pitch ideas and things. Gathering info." Top men, working on it right now. Top men.

BLUE BLISTERING SEQUELS!

TINTIN 2

➔ At this stage a sequel to 2011's *The Adventures Of Tintin: The Secret Of The Unicorn* seems as elusive a prospect as Red Rackham's treasure. But **Peter Jackson** – who produced the Spielberg-helmed franchise launcher, and pledged to direct the second – insists there's life in the ol' motion-captured quiff yet. "I'm intending to [make it]," he tells *Polygon*. "It's within the next year or two, I would hope." Jackson reveals that he's yet to write the



➔ **Lady Gaga** rumoured for the role of the villainous Ursula in Disney's live action *The Little Mermaid*... **Rebecca Romijn** starring in horror comedy *Satanic Panic*... **Ryan Coogler** officially signing on for *Black Panther 2*... **Sophia Lillis** starring in Grimm reimagining *Gretel And Hansel*... Amblin adapting **Michael Crichton's** miniaturisation thriller *Micro*... *The Equalizer's* **Richard Wenk** scripting a new take on *Universal Soldier*... Legendary adapting Image Comics' *God Country*... *World War Z 2* begins filming June 2019 with **Brad Pitt** and **David Fincher** onboard... **Margot Robbie** in talks for Warners' *Barbie* movie... **Chris Columbus** creative producer on the new *Scooby-Doo* animated movie... **Johnny Depp** returning to play Grindelwald in *Fantastic Beasts 3*... **Ron Perlman** starring in **Paul WS Anderson's** video game adap *Monster Hunter*... **Ralph Fiennes** rumoured for *Kingsman* prequel *The Great Game*... **McKenna Grace** to play the Warrens' daughter in *Annabelle 3*... **Tim Story** directing Warners' live action/animation take on *Tom And Jerry*... *The Flash* production pushed to late 2019...

“Peter Jackson insists there's life in Tintin's quiff yet”

script – and is still torn as to which Tintin tale he'll bring to the screen. "There's no one that dictates what it has to be – I get to choose. So I want to make that choice carefully because I love the variety, you know? You can go the Indiana Jones sort of *Prisoners Of The Sun*, or you can go into *The Calculus Affair* and be more of an Eastern Bloc thriller... There's the moon ones where you can explore the moon and space. There's so many choices, and I couldn't tell you today which way I'm going."

BACK ON THE MENU!

WRONG TURN

➔ Just how many wrong turns do you need to take before you invest in a decent Sat-Nav? We may be about to find out. Spawned in 2003, the *Wrong Turn* horror franchise has milked its inbred-cannibals-lurking-in-the-backwoods schtick across no less than six movies, most recently 2014's optimistically titled *Wrong Turn 6: Last Resort*. Now it's set for a reboot, with a script from creator **Alan McElroy**. This updated take is pitched as "a timely and topical meditation on society and its issues" – served off the bone, no doubt – where a cross-country hiking expedition places a bunch of friends in "the land of an inclusive society, where they soon discover they are under a different rule of law, and may not be the victims they thought they were." So, Twitter with added liver-munching, then. **Mike P Nelson** (*The Domestics*, *Studio Luma*) directs. "Alan's re-interpretation of his own work and Mike's vision are a frightening reflection of our world today," says producer **Robert Kulzer**. "One person's American dream is another's worst nightmare." ●

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First Contact



#THE NEW DOCTOR WHO

**HOT
TOPIC**

Your views on
the month's
big issue

➔ **Dametokillfor, Twitter**

I've tried for years to get into *Doctor Who* and never managed. Jodie Whittaker is the first one who's actually grabbed me. I'm so excited to finally be able to say, "That's my Doctor."

➔ **John Rutherford, Facebook**

"The Girl Who Fell To Earth" wasn't the best, but we needed to get to know the characters, so I can forgive it. I'm excited by the potential. My 12-year-old said, "The Doctor suits girl." I agree

➔ **Thomas Huartson, email**

Jodie Whittaker has nailed the role. Her energy powers the story, and the chemistry with her new companions is everything it should be. And the criticism that Bradley Walsh's subdued performance has received is unfair. It's realistic given that Graham's a former cancer patient in remission – I've looked after enough to know.

➔ **Mick Trezise, Facebook**

It felt like a cheap US serial with too much unnecessary explanation every few minutes. It was also too much of a *Predator* clone.



➔ **Craig Henderson, Facebook**

The assassin robots [in "The Ghost Monument"] were even more inaccurate than Stormtroopers, and the two racing aliens looked disappointingly human. Come on, Beeb! Pump some cash into alien designs and prosthetics, please. We're paying for this shit!

➔ **Ben Dawson, Facebook**

I worry we're seeing phase two of the Capaldi Syndrome that plagued Peter's first series, where bad writing's making the product weak – and in this case dull and depressing. Cancer remission, dead relatives, four-year-old boys breaking bones because their mother moved out of the way in a trust exercise... This is *Doctor Who*, a family show on a Sunday evening. It's not *Gotham* or *Game Of Thrones*! They need to make it a lot lighter.

➔ **Nikk Effingham, email**

One hour is only enough time for two people to get airtime: the Doctor and her companion. By having multiple companions they end up characterised by a feature rather than developing a full-blown personality: Dyspraxia Viewpoint Guy, Slightly Younger Victor Meldrew, and Not Sure Of Your Purpose Police Officer. They're crowding the story at the expense of the narrative.

➔ **Rob Perry, Facebook**

Whenever there's been a change in production team in the past it's reinvigorated the show. I got none of that from the first two episodes. Russell T Davies and Steven Moffat put their stamp on the show, grabbed hold of it and took it down some risky roads. The biggest risk this production team have taken is casting a woman – which has had no effect on the format. Maybe the new team are playing it safe while they settle in. Maybe Chibnall will develop a voice of his own. I hope so, because the show feels like a cheap knock-off of the RTD era.

➔ **PartTimeCrazy, Twitter**

Can someone get rid of the cats knocking over the bins during the theme tune?

➔ **Paul Morris, Facebook**

The custard cream dispensing machine is a gimmick too far!

➔ **David Mckee, Facebook**

The visual effects are a massive step forward. Downside: the TARDIS interior looks like the exterior is tacked on.

SFX It does look a bit like the TARDIS now has a porch, doesn't it? I'm expecting it to be full of junk mail and shoes by the end of the season.

THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

**IAN BERRIMAN,
REVIEWS EDITOR**

It's funny how reaction to things tends to divide depending on how it's submitted. The first two episodes of *Doctor Who* are a textbook example: generally positive on Twitter; negativity on Facebook; mixed views in our inbox. We've tried to reflect them all! Do get in touch: we love to hear what you think about the latest mag. Remember that each issue one correspondent wins a book, courtesy of our chums at Black Library; this month it's *Age Of Sigmar* novel *Hallowed Knights: Black Pyramid*.

➔ **Alan Wilkinson, Twitter**

Grace's death was horrendously predictable (Kill the Spare) and her funeral made for an odd way to (almost) end Jodie's new future. Oh, and if you've just stuck five micro-bombs in someone, you shouldn't get to complain when someone else kicks him off a crane...

➔ **Philip Wain, Facebook**

Did anyone notice how the Doctor talked about how it felt to regenerate? Is this a gender difference: the new Doctor talking about her feelings? Strikes me as a female strength. I don't know if this is deliberate on behalf of the writers, but I'm keen to see how this develops.

➔ **Rikki Bateman, Facebook**

It felt like it'd been written by a committee adhering to an inclusivity checklist. Shame – storytelling seems to have taken a back seat.

➔ **Fiona Crossley, Facebook**

One mistake is that no one drives from the Peak District to Bramall Lane via the Tinsley viaduct.

➔ **Ali B, Twitter**

Jodie Whittaker was amazing! But they have to be careful – Graham called her "love". I know that's an English term, but if the Doctor was a man he wouldn't have said that?!

SFX To be fair, the person who called people "love" most in episode one is Graham's wife, Grace. It's kind of a northern thing.

Get in touch!

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“Come on, Beeb! Pump some cash into alien designs and prosthetics, please”

TELEVISION FETT

➔ Ian Woodward, email

I'm torn about new *Star Wars* show *The Mandalorian*. Sure, the first picture was exciting, though basing a series on a Boba Fett type feels like the lazy option, like they're going for something that everyone will instantly agree is cool. I just feel live-action *Star Wars* belongs on the big screen, not TV. I can accept all the movies Lucasfilm is giving us, but there's something about bringing the galaxy far, far away to TV that makes it feel that little bit less special. It doesn't help that every other time it's happened it's been a creative disaster – remember the Holiday Special and those Ewok TV movies? I try not to!

SFX *This seems an old-fashioned perspective, now TV's home to so much great writing. I'm excited about seeing a version of Star Wars that has time for proper character development.*

#CAGE PLIGHT

➔ Lauren Hooper, email

Gutted Netflix have cancelled *Luke Cage*! I didn't mind about *Iron Fist* – it wasn't great and was troubling on many levels (rich white boy fantasy and all that) – but Luke Cage was a joy. I hope Luke pops up again on the Marvel shows, because he's too good to just throw in the bin. You have to wonder what kind of viewing figures a show gets for Netflix to cancel it; they surely have more viewers than network television?

SFX *It does seem odd, but then we know zilch about the audience data. Anyone have a horrible feeling Netflix might have found many international territories are less welcoming of a show centred on black characters? I really hope I'm wrong!*

#PANIC AT THE DISCO

➔ Keira Lindsey, email

I'm nervous about the second season of *Star Trek: Discovery*. The first was amazing because it was *Trek* as we'd never seen before, with more violence, people being properly nasty, and the bonkers nature of

the spore drive. But with the return of Spock and the Enterprise, we're in danger of getting a prequel that's too close to the original.

SFX *It does seem like we've only just got to know the new crew, and now iconic characters could steal the spotlight. Another big question is whether they can keep making us scream, "WTF?!" now we're primed to expect twists.*

#THRILLER IN VANILLA

➔ Michael Garner, email

The *Purge* series is a complete misstep. It should have been a satirical look at the class system and political views. That or a straight-up, balls-to-the-wall violence horror show. It doesn't get near to anything of that type at all. The violence is vanilla, and when it looks like they're trying to say something about sexual politics it turns icky, not scathing. Just poor!

SFX *Not caught up with this yet, and after The First Purge, I'm not optimistic. We'll have a full season review next issue.*

#P&P INCLUDED

➔ Gordon Smith, email

Thanks for the piece on *A Matter Of Life And Death* [SFX 305]. It was a fantastic read, and took me back to watching old films with my mum as a seven/eight-year-old: *Blithe Spirit*, *The Ghost And Mrs Muir*... but my favourite was always this Powell and Pressburger classic. I remember the sense of wonder engendered by the opening minutes, so British, whimsical and subversive. I always tear up watching it.

I have a fractured relationship with my youngest brother. Fifteen years ago, he bought me a subscription to *SFX*, and it remains the best present he's ever got me. Thank you, Neil!

SFX *That's SFX: bringing siblings together since 1995. Who needs family therapy?*

#SUPREME COMMANDER

➔ Robert MacDonald, email

It was a nice surprise to see the back page tribute to Servalan actress Jacqueline Pearce [SFX 306]. *Blake's 7* was such an integral part of my childhood that it's hard to believe she's no longer here. I got to know her about 20 years ago when her then-boyfriend was lodging with my friend's mum. Funny thing is, I never connected the person I came to know with that character she played. I'm surprised the BBC haven't screened an episode of Blake and his crew.

SFX *Never mind a one-off repeat, they should re-run the series in her honour!*

STAR PRIZE

This month's winner will receive *Hallowed Knights: Black Pyramid* by Josh Reynolds.



Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE SFX HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

➔ At the moment it's just a photo of someone dressed as Boba Fett but I'm ridiculously excited about *The Mandalorian*.
➔ Loving the new trailers for *Good Omens* and *Star Trek: Discovery*.
➔ Sundays already feel like *Doctor Who* night – it's so good to have it back.



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

➔ Officially excited by the trailer for *Glass*. I've only waited 19 years for the sequel to one of my top five fave movies – no pressure, Shyamalan!
➔ Just finished reading *The Monster Show* by David J Skal. There are some brilliant insights into the cultural history of horror.



IAN BERRIMAN REVIEWS EDITOR

RAVES

➔ This month I went to New York Comic Con, visited the *Jessica Jones* set, interviewed *Discovery*'s cast, and had my photo taken in Pike's chair. SO COOL!
➔ Loving the goofiness of Jodie Whittaker's Doctor.
➔ Intrigued by both Peter Strickland's *In Fabric* and John Ajvide Lindqvist movie *Border*.



KIMBERLEY BALLARD PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES

➔ So excited that one of my favourite books of the past year, Carmen Maria Machado's *Her Body And Other Parties*, is being adapted by FX.
RANTS
➔ Rolled my eyes so much when Jason Blum said there aren't many female directors. Like, please stop talking.



JON COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

➔ Nice cover art for Titan's *The Killing Joke*, *Mad Love* and *Court of Owls* hardback editions. Love those painterly/torn effects – feels very cool and collectable. Like!
➔ Excited that *Transformers* is going back to its blocky '80s roots (and the original VW) with *Bumblebee*.





BEYOND THE WEST

Emiko Jean on the need for diverse worlds in fantasy



“WRITERS OF COLOUR ARE HELPING TO REDEFINE THE FANTASY GENRE”

One of the hallmarks of great fantasy is that it holds up a looking glass to the world we live in. It challenges us to understand our history, problems and differences. If only some of the world’s voices write fantasy, only part of the world is reflected. We lose out on a fuller understanding of our shared world, we ignore cultures with a rich history of fantasy-based storytelling, and we miss the opportunity to explore new terrain. Most importantly, we hurt those who don’t see themselves reflected in our pages. We are beginning to see this landscape shifting. But we need more, faster.

Middle-earth. Westoros. Narnia. What do all three of these fantasy worlds have in common? They’re bestsellers, they have huge fan bases, and they’re all dominated by Western mythology. Carl Teegerstrom, avid fantasy reader and enthusiast, writes that “despite the variety of different characters and stories offered by the fantasy genre there has been a consistent motif in regards to setting; most of the secondary worlds developed by fantasy is based off of Europe.” And even when the fantasies aren’t set in Medieval Europe, “much of the cultures and languages of fantastical, secondary worlds are still based on European culture or tradition.” Not all fantasy is set in Medieval Europe. There are always exceptions to the rule. But deviating from Western culture shouldn’t be the exception.

There is good news. In the last decade, fantasy writers of colour have ever so slowly been gaining space and visibility in the publishing world. They are challenging the status quo and helping to redefine the fantasy genre in different ways. At last, societies previously left out of the canon are being introduced, ancient folklores are being rediscovered and reimagined, and whole new worlds are being born. In *Binti*, Nnedi Okorafor’s character hails from a desert community inspired by the author’s Nigerian heritage – a welcome addition to a genre that often bypasses Africa. In *The Grace Of Kings*, Ken Liu constructed Dara using a multitude of influences as his source material, albeit some Western, but the majority from historical China. In NK Jemisin’s *The Fifth Season*, there is a sole massive continent where catastrophic geological events shape societies, and communities are continually destroyed and rebuilt.

More importantly, writers of colour are putting complex, dimensional characters of colour at the forefront of their narratives. People of colour “hunger to see [themselves] as heroic figures, desperate parents, star-crossed lovers or battle-weary outcasts,” says sci-fi/fantasy author Kirk Johnson. In *The Fifth Season*, NK Jemisin’s main character, Essun, is a teacher and a woman of colour who is multifaceted and deeply human. *The Fifth Season*’s characters “are a slate of people of different colours and motivations who don’t often appear in a field still dominated by white men and their protagonist avatars,” says Vann R Newkirk II. By casting characters of colour at the forefront, Jemisin and authors such as Liu and Okorafor are able to create “a framework that also asks thoroughly modern questions about oppression, race, gender, class, and sexuality,” says Bernard Hayman. *Binti*, too, explores questions about race and cultural identity as the main character is put in situations where various identities clash.

Change is slow and sometimes frustrating. But diversity and diverse writers are gaining traction. Once I would never have believed an article like this could exist, because books like this didn’t exist. My wish for the reading world is that a day comes when non-Western-based fantasies are the rule rather than the exception. I do hope my children will get to see it. ●

Empress Of All Seasons by Emiko Jean is out 8 November from Gollancz.

GETTY (1)



Penny Dreadful

SFX's high priestess of horror

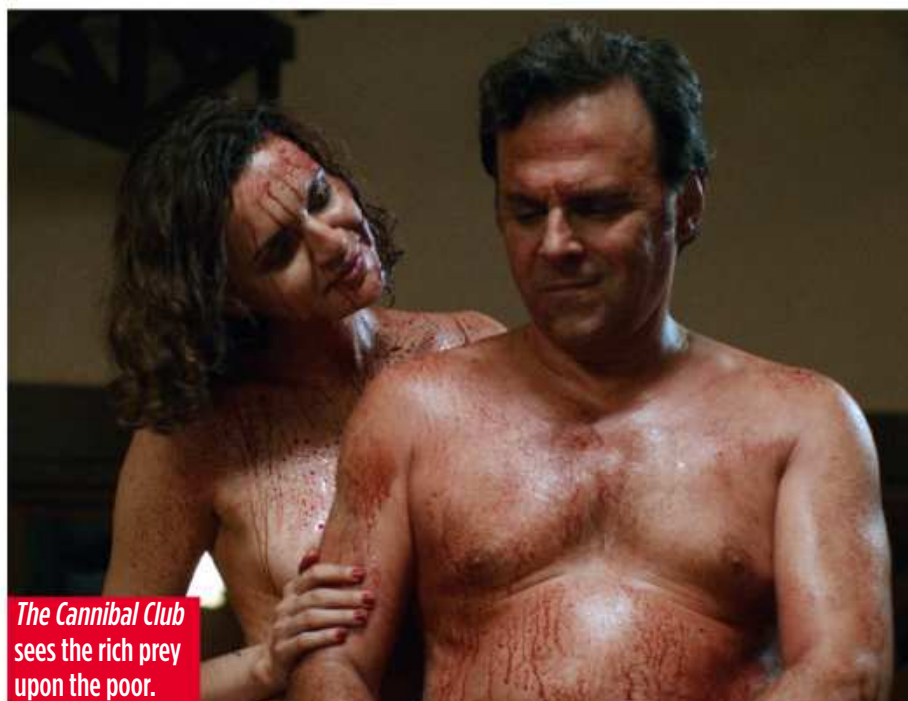
WOMAN UP

➡ **Halloween 2018** was pretty good, with progressive gender politics, but that's been overshadowed by uber producer Jason Blum's comment that the reason he hasn't made a single horror film directed by a woman is because "there are not a lot" of female horror helmers. Blum's done great things for the genre and he's since apologised for his dumb remark, but it does raise questions. "I'm a massive admirer of Jennifer Kent. I've offered her every movie we've had available. She's turned me down every time," he says, before struggling to remember the name of Leigh Janiak who made *Honeymoon* in 2014. If Blum genuinely wants to work with women, the model needs to change – lobbying low-budget projects at auteurs like Kent isn't going to work. Oscar-winner Jordan Peele probably wasn't rushing to do *Truth Or Dare* either. If we're going to see real change, female up-and-comers need a shot, and to tell their own stories. Rather than listing great directors Blum should be on the blower with, I'd rather he unearthed some I've never heard of and gave them space to succeed. Then next time a Marvel, or *Star Wars*, or James Bond movie uses a similar half-arsed excuse for not hiring a woman, we can point them at Blumhouse, and hey presto, Blum can go back to being my secret crush again.

EAR FULL OF GHOSTS

➡ The natural evolution of found footage is podcasts. My obsession with murders and cults via true crime podcasts has shifted into the realm of the unreal and it's great. It started with *Limetown*. A journalist delves into the disappearances of 300 people from a town in Tennessee, via strange scattered interviews with people claiming to be survivors. It's constructed like *Serial*, goes seriously *Twilight Zone*, and gets more oppressive and scary.

Ghosts, podcasts and the best genre flicks at London Film Festival...



The Cannibal Club sees the rich prey upon the poor.

The second season arrives this Halloween. I'm also currently bingeing *Archive 81*, which sees an archivist ordering and digitising a bunch of tapes made in a mysterious apartment building in the '90s – the story goes that the archivist has vanished and his friend is broadcasting the tapes as a podcast in the hope of finding clues as to what happened. It's creepy as hell and there's an amusing rat in it. Next on my list is *The Black Tapes*, which follows a journalist trailing a paranormal investigator docu-drama style. Find me on Twitter @SFXPennyD if you have more recommendations!

CAPITAL GAINS

➡ The London Film Festival 2018 featured a host of horror films. As well as high-profile showcases like *Suspiria*, *Mandy* and

Assassination Nation, the cult strand of the fest threw out some cool curios. From Brazil comes class satire *The Cannibal Club*, where the elite literally consume the hired help. Norway-set *Lords Of Chaos* is a nightmare of toxic masculinity set in the extreme death metal scene where stupid boys compete over who's a better Satanist. More devilishness from Indonesia in Timo Tjahjanto's *May The Devil*

Take You, which features a pact with Satan finally called in, in the most extreme ways. While *Cam*, from the States, opts for a different tone in an *Alice Through The Looking Glass* riff where a professional cam girl sees her online persona develop a life of its own. More on these as they land.

THE HAUNTING OF MY HOUSE

➡ I read an article this week saying horror movies can be therapeutic and I totally agree. Except that didn't work with Netflix show *The Haunting Of Hill House*. Loosely related to the book and the Robert Wise movie, a little bit meandering, but clever and emotional too, bingeing this show left me a nervous wreck. It wasn't the ghosts you see – the bent-

necked woman and the black eyed spectres bothering the Crains – it was the all the hidden ones lurking in the background of almost every shot. Distracting! How many did you spot? ●

Dreadful old movies

➡ Four John Carpenter classics are getting swanky 4K home releases complete with artwork and special features. *The Fog*, *They Live*, *Prince Of Darkness* and *Escape From New York* are all getting restorations, plus special screenings – you're still in time for *Escape From New York* on 22 November.



A STRANGER IN OLONDRIA

by Sofia Samatar, 2013

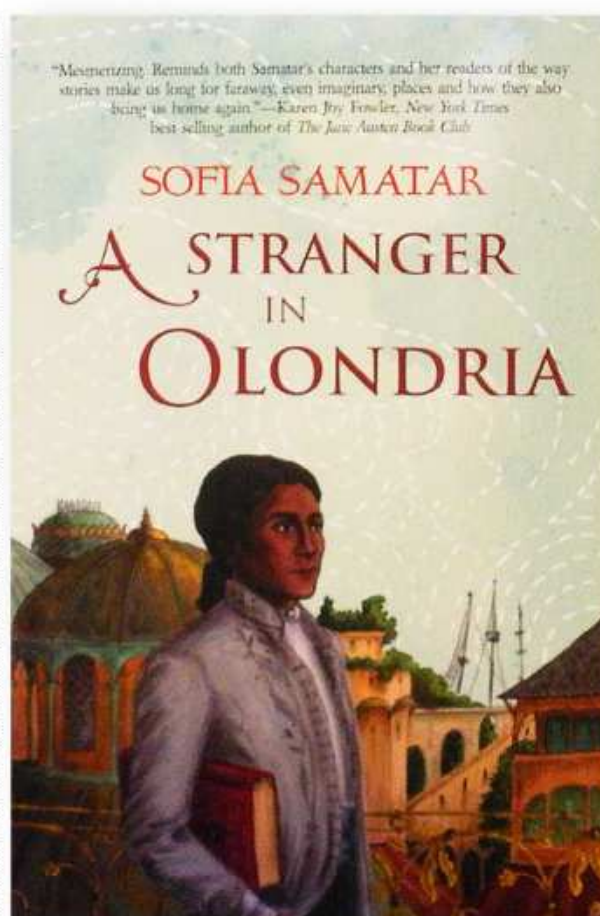
Adrian Selby celebrates a masterclass in world-building



“But preserve your mistrust of the page, for a book is a fortress, a place of weeping, the key to a desert, a river that has no bridge, a garden of spears.”

Sofia Samatar’s *A Stranger In Olondria* is the story of a young man, Jevick, son of a wealthy pepper merchant. He has lived all his sheltered life in his homeland of Tyom, longing to leave it for mainland Olondria and its legendary city Bain. Cosmopolitan and sophisticated, Bain represents everything Tyom does not, a place (and the subject) of legends, books and high culture. On his first visit to sell his father’s peppers, Bain exceeds his imagination, but he finds himself literally haunted by the ghost of a girl from his homeland, a condition which shortly finds him imprisoned before becoming a pawn in a great sectarian struggle.

Despite the elegantly infused depth Samatar brings to Olondria and its cultures, the focus remains on Jevick. The novel is intensely about him, and, refreshingly for a fantasy protagonist, he’s not the agent of change for much of the novel, but the wide-eyed farmboy. The haunting is an all-consuming experience, but this and the privations that dramatically alter his life’s course are mainly in service of a quite moving coming-of-age tale. Samatar herself, in an interview, said of Jevick, “He is a student... If I had made him a warrior, he would have a certain purpose: to conquer, not to look.” This gives Samatar the licence to explore the sights and sounds of a world that’s new to both the reader and Jevick with stunning intimacy, a book and its protagonist obsessed with



literature and language – themes that reflect the author’s cosmopolitan upbringing and her life teaching. The city of Bain, vividly and tonally akin to Constantinople, enraptures Jevick with all its dangerous decadence. It lives up to the exotic heritage he’s read about so obsessively as a lover of literature, rejecting the Tyom culture’s oral tradition for what he perceives as the sophistication of “the north” and its written tradition. It is in Samatar’s

astonishing ability to switch narrative registers, to have Jevick quote from poems, travelogues and fiction by authors that feel different to each other, that Olondria, through its literature, becomes such a convincing place to be. This is world-building of the highest order.

Jevick, after disobeying sober advice to avoid Bain’s Feast of Birds, wakes from a night of drink and debauchery to see the ghost of Jissavet, the girl from his homeland who died on the ship that brought him to Bain. Her haunting of him, believed by a forbidden cult to make him a saint, leads to him being put in a sanatorium. Escaping from there with the help of the cult, Jevick ends up a wanted man and, in the isolation of a deserted mansion, he finally confronts Jissavet. She harangues him to write down her story, to be her amanuensis, which he does in return for her help in keeping him alive and safe. Perfectly for this novel, Jevick’s quest is to tell a story. In doing so, he comes of age and ends up fulfilling, quite idiosyncratically, the Hero’s Journey.

The relationship he forges with Jissavet changes everything, and her life’s story has an impact, through him, that creates a lasting and sweeping change in Tyom. This book, unlike any other I’ve read, made me realise that if one cuts life, all that bleeds is stories. ●

The Winter Road by Adrian Selby is published on 15 November by Orbit.

Like this? Try these!

THE BURIED GIANT
by KAZUO ISHIGURO (2015)

→ 2017’s Nobel Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro wrote this moving and profound story about an elderly couple setting out to visit their son in a land under a spell.



AGAINST THE DAY
by THOMAS PYNCHON (2006)

→ Pynchon writes a revenge Western, a Wellsian sci-fi, spy thriller, class war story, mirror world story, and a search for a mythical hidden kingdom.



NEXT ISSUE

In our next Book Club (SFX 308, on sale 5 December) fantasy author Genevieve Cogman will be writing about *The Time Of The Dark* by Barbara Hambly. If you’ve never read this first instalment of the Darwath saga or fancy giving it another go, here’s your chance to prep before a top novelist shares her thoughts.



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THE DOCTOR IS BACK!

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QUESTLE HAWA



TRANSFORMERS IS
GOING BACK TO
BASICS WITH THE
'80S-SET
BUMBLEBEE,
AS DIRECTOR
TRAVIS KNIGHT
TELLS RICHARD
EDWARDS





Bumblebee was a very polite dinner party guest.

STAR WARS TOYS WERE ALWAYS THE TOP of any Christmas list, He-Man figures had their particular pumping-iron charms, and even *The A-Team*'s miniaturised incarnations came with cool little accessories such as backpacks, walkie-talkies and, er, multiple assault weapons. How we loved it when a plan came together on the kitchen table...

But for a certain generation, few toys could compete with Transformers. Not only did you get a cool-looking robot for your parents' money, the fact they were famously "in disguise" – along with some impressive feats of small-scale engineering – meant you also got a lorry, a sports car, a metal dinosaur, a replica of a cassette player, or whatever else Japan's best toy designers could come up with.

"I was a child of the '80s," says Travis Knight, director of new *Transformers* movie spin-off *Bumblebee*. "I grew up loving these characters, knowing these characters and their stories. When the *Transformers* first arrived they were unlike anything I had seen before. I thought they were completely awesome, this

idea that there are these things hidden in plain sight, that all of the articles around us have an inner life. I thought that was really fascinating."

The Bumblebee of the title is one of the original generation of Transformers and a key player in the five Michael Bay-directed movies. As a long-standing fan of the franchise, Knight believes 'Bee, with his characteristic yellow livery, was the logical choice to headline the first spin-off movie.

"Of all the Transformers, the one that had the greatest affinity for humanity was Bumblebee," he explains. "He was the one who was most like us, he was the one who resonated with me as a kid. Of all the Transformers, he was the one."

"I think it's the combination of the fact that he's this fierce tough soldier, he's Optimus Prime's right hand, but he's also just incredibly sweet and loving and loyal," adds *Bumblebee* screenwriter Christina Hodson. "There's a youth about him, he feels younger than some of the other Autobots."

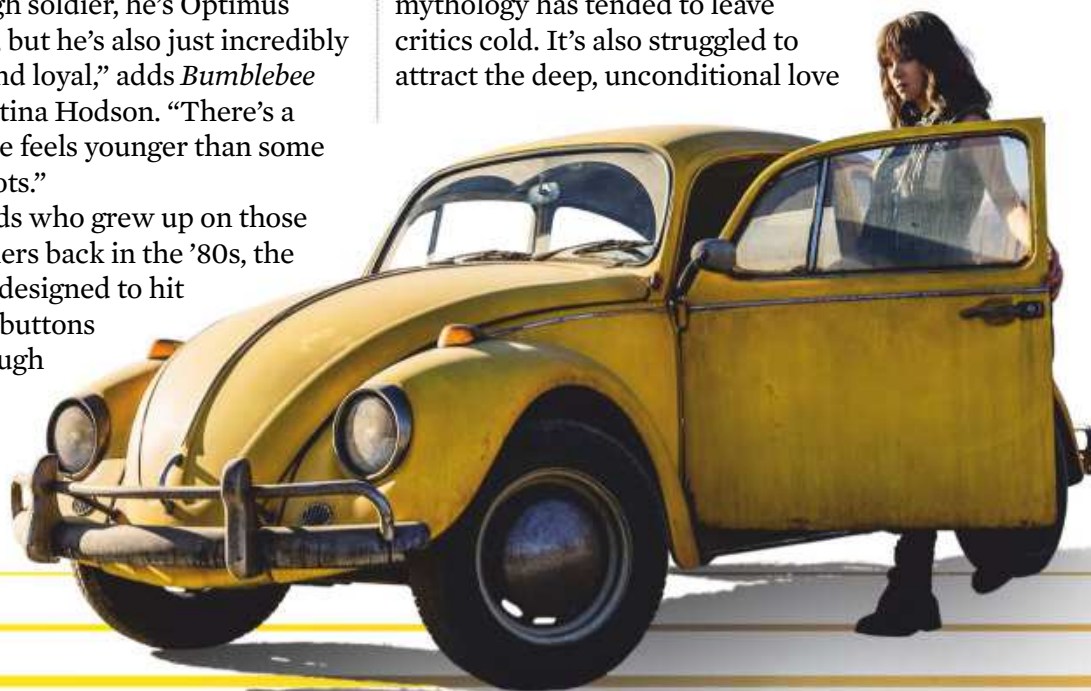
And for those kids who grew up on those original Transformers back in the '80s, the new Bumblebee is designed to hit plenty of nostalgia buttons – having gone through Michael Bay's live-action *Transformers* movies in the

sleeker, more *Top Gear*-friendly form of a sporty Chevrolet Camaro, he's reverted to his original stylings as a beaten-up VW Beetle.

"For me Bumblebee was always a Volkswagen Beetle," Knight tells *SFX* emphatically. "That's the way I was initially exposed to him, that's the toy that I played with. That's Bumblebee."

REINVENTING THE WHEELS

Of all the big movie franchises, *Transformers* is an anomaly. Five instalments in, it's been lucrative to the tune of billions of dollars – and has made in-roads in the Far East that other sagas could only dream of – yet its mix of slow-mo robot-on-robot carnage and complex mythology has tended to leave critics cold. It's also struggled to attract the deep, unconditional love





Hailee Steinfeld plays Charlie, the teenage girl who discovers Bumblebee.



Travis Knight puts his own spin on the Transformers.

30- and 40-somethings will always lavish on *Star Wars* and the MCU.

Paramount realised a few years back, however, that if they were going to prolong the brand's big-screen presence they probably had to explore new directions. Their bright idea? Bring together 14 scripters in a TV-style writers' room to thrash out future ideas for the saga. Last year's King Arthur-inspired *The Last Knight* was the first project to emerge, with *Bumblebee* the second.

"There was nothing wrong with the cycle we were in, but we were a little trapped," *Transformers* producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura told *SFX* last year. "I've been involved in a lot of movies that have been successful enough to get to sequels, and you sort of fall into a pattern unintentionally. You're trapped in a way by your own imagination, and adding other people's imaginations changed the course of it. I think for all of us one of the hardest challenges to keep going on a franchise is how you keep yourself personally interested and excited about it."

So if you'd lost faith with *Transformers* movies that had become progressively more bloated and overwrought since the Camaro-model Bumblebee first came into Shia LaBeouf's life 11 years ago, this *might* be the film to win you back.

It centres on mechanically gifted teen Charlie Watson (Hailee Steinfeld) getting her first car on her 18th birthday, falling in love with it... and then discovering that it's actually a 20-foot-tall metal alien from the planet Cybertron. That means major echoes of the original, where executive producer Steven

Spielberg suggested the focus should be "a boy and his car" as much as robots in disguise.

"That's very much what inspired me with this one," says Hodson, who also has DC's Harley Quinn-fronted *Birds Of Prey* movie on her slate. "I remember the first time I turned the keys in my dad's car when I was 14 or 15, and that amazing feeling of bringing a big hunk of metal to life. It feels so incredible, so to take that one step further and make it a robot is the greatest thing in the world. I was always inspired by that small, intimate connection between the two of them."

The Spielberg connection didn't end there. "Those great, powerful Amblin films of the '80s, when I came of age, really stuck with me," says Knight. "They really excited my imagination, and got me to think about storytelling in a different way. The classic Amblin films would always evoke three beautiful responses in me. It was wonder, it was laughter and it was tears. *Transformers* fused with that filmmaking philosophy of those great Amblin coming-of-age stories of the '80s felt like a perfect marriage."

In other words, think *ET* or *Gremlins* with the cute friendly alien/furry creature replaced by a cute friendly giant robot who's more likely to guzzle gasoline than raid the contents of your fridge.

"The film is a two-hander," explains Knight. "One of the hands is Hailee Steinfeld's hand and the other is a computer-generated hand, and they've got to be as compelling as each other. You can't have Hailee giving this beautiful layered performance and then Bumblebee being a visual effect. He's got to be →



GET THE MEMO

Jorge Lendeborg Jr
is Memo

How would you sum up Memo?

Memo is the nerdy, neurotic type of character. He's 16, he has a bit of a crush on Hailee Steinfeld's character, Charlie – he's vying for her attention and that kind of brings him into all the mishaps that happen in the film.

How does he feel about the fact that Charlie's new car is also a robot?

For one he's a pretty big nerd, so his mind is already very accustomed to sci-fi. But when he sees him it is very shocking – imagine how you'd feel if you saw an alien that was technically a car but also a robot from outer space!

One of your main co-stars was created in a computer after you'd finished shooting. How did you find acting to thin air?

It's fun. We had a guy on stilts, we had a big cut-out version of him and obviously we had the stick and the tennis ball, so we had all those versions to play with. So he was around. But I had fun. At the end of the day I'm an actor and it's all make-believe, so to have nothing gives me even more freedom.

You were born after the '80s. Were you given a pop culture revision list?

Not so much the movies, but our director Travis definitely made a point of keeping everything honest to the '80s – he made sure to tell us what things were very important, just to try to keep that kind of authenticity apparent throughout the whole film.

Richard Edwards

GETTY (3)

ORIGINAL MODELS

Generation One Transformers return in *Bumblebee*

SOUNDWAVE

Although he appeared in second *Transformers* movie *Revenge Of The Fallen* (as a satellite, of all things), Soundwave is very much a Decepticon for the analogue era. How unfortunate that he chose to take the disguised form of a cassette player, tech that would be redundant come the turn of the 21st century. His robot incarnation in *Bumblebee* echoes his look in the original cartoon – though presumably he can't shrink down from giant robot to pocket-sized player.



RAVAGE

Another retro member of the Decepticon line-up, Ravage traditionally existed as a cassette living in Soundwave's chest. He can be seen in the *Bumblebee* trailer in his robot panther form on Cybertron, though it's yet to be revealed whether we get to see fellow mixtapes (*SFX*'s name – definitely not canon) Blitzwing (a condor), Ratbat (a bat) and Rumble (a little guy who makes the earth move).

SHOCKWAVE

Shockwave is unusual among Decepticons for having a characteristic single robotic eye – what he lacks in depth perception is more than made up for by his ability to stand out at parties. He's a genius scientist, one of Megatron's key lieutenants, and one of his hands is actually a powerful laser cannon, so you probably don't want to mess with him.

STARSCREAM AND BLITZWING

Backstabbing Starscream was traditionally one of the coolest Decepticons: he had a memorable colour scheme, transformed into a fighter jet and was constantly vying with Megatron for leadership. Then the movies reincarnated him as a weirdly messy mass of metal, so indistinct most didn't realise when he kicked the robot bucket in *Dark Of The Moon*. Blitzwing was another of many original Decepticon jets, though not one of the "Seekers" led by Starscream.

TRIPLE CHANGERS

Ever imagined what it would be like to have a robot that turned into a space shuttle *and* a train? Or an aircraft carrier *and* a jet? Hasbro did, so you didn't have to – this particular pair were Decepticon Astrotrain and Autobot Broadside, respectively. Shatter and Dropkick in *Bumblebee* have similar capabilities.

Richard Edwards

Please make sure any small dogs are out of harm's way.

They could only meet in rooms with high ceilings.



as much an actor as Hailee is. I'm so proud of the work that the crew did, because you absolutely buy into him as a living, breathing emotional thing."

As an Autobot scout on Earth, Bumblebee's here on his own while Optimus Prime, Jazz, Ironhide and the rest are still back on their home planet of Cybertron. In *Transformers* movie chronology, that places the action in the late '80s, some 20 years before the first movie, when the robots in disguise are yet to become city-trashing headline news.

"[Setting it in the '80s] felt consistent with the direction of the story we were doing," explains Knight. "The mid-'80s was when the Transformers first arrived on our shores, and it felt like if we were going to go back to the beginning to show where this character came from. This was a natural place to begin. It was also a pretty exciting time both in terms of the music and the fashion, the design, and yeah, the nostalgia."

"We also had a great GoBot gag that alas didn't make the final cut," Knight laughs, alluding to Tonka's rival robots-in-disguise toy line. "It was self-indulgent, and more for me than anybody else, but I'm sure it'll make the DVD extras if anybody buys DVDs anymore!"

RETRO ACTIVE

Does setting the film in the '80s mean Knight sees it as a prequel?

"I did want to make sure that an audience could come into this film knowing nothing about the Transformers and still know what was going on. It doesn't pre-suppose any familiarity with these characters, but there's all kinds of layers in there for people who are fans of the franchise, both in terms of the original cartoons and Michael's films."

As well as Bumblebee getting a Beetley makeover (see Plan Bee overleaf), Decepticons such as fighter jet Starscream and cassette player (yes, really) Soundwave come in a colourful livery more in tune with the '80s cartoon than the Michael Bay movies, where the vast majority of Cybertronians came in the same brand of dirty silver – in Apple terms, it's probably space grey. →

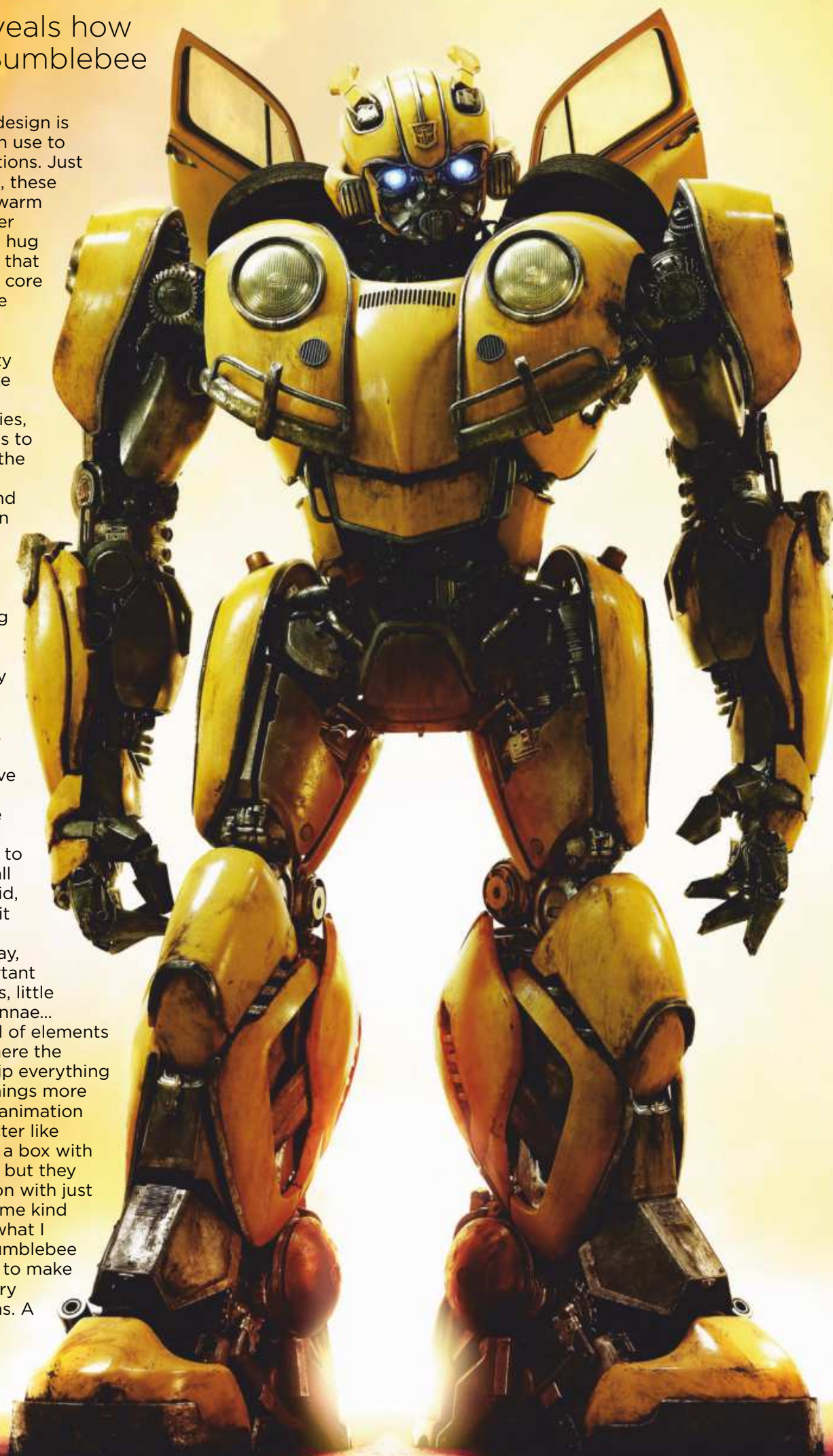
PLAN BEE

Travis Knight reveals how he remodelled Bumblebee

For me as an animator, design is something that you can use to convey ideas and emotions. Just the shape of the VW Beetle, these rounded forms, these very warm shapes... I think if there's ever been a car that you want to hug it's a VW Beetle, and I think that sort of evokes what's at the core of Bumblebee, how he is the most human of the Transformers, how he is the one with the greatest affinity for humanity. When you take that shape and then you contrast that with the baddies, the Transformers that he has to go up against, you can see the difference just in the shape language – these angular and angry shapes that you see in the Decepticons make you see how formidable they are relative to this warm, rounded VW Beetle.

"Right from the beginning one of my things was to streamline, to strip down. I met with my designers early on about Bumblebee himself, and I was talking about how important it was for him to be the most expressive Transformer we've ever seen. Their initial approach was to say, 'We're going to make him more hyper-detailed, we're going to go into his face and put in all sorts of moving parts...' I said, 'No, no, no, no! Don't make it more detailed, make it less detailed. Strip that stuff away, make the stuff that is important stand out!' So that's his eyes, little aspects of his face, his antennae...

"If you take just a handful of elements and we make sure that's where the audience looks, and you strip everything else away, it makes those things more expressive – it's a standard animation trick. If you look at a character like WALL-E, it's essentially just a box with a couple of eyeballs on top, but they can convey so much emotion with just those simple forms. That same kind of animator perspective is what I brought to the design of Bumblebee and all the robots. I wanted to make sure that they were very, very expressive with simple forms. A lot of that stuff was just stripping it down to the basics." **Richard Edwards**





You just hope there's not a hidden stinger somewhere.

"I have to say that I was incredibly giddy to bring these characters to life," admits Knight. "If we were going to see a Cybertron, I wanted to see a Cybertron that was evocative of that initial feeling and design that I experienced when I was a child. There was something so beautiful and clear and wondrous and magical about that initial wave of designs."

Knight also seems to tacitly acknowledge one of the biggest problems with the previous movies – that with most of the robots looking more-or-less identical from a distance, it was almost impossible to work out what was going on at a distance.

"Seeing these giant hunks of metal smashing into each other, I think it's always really important that the audience understands what they're looking at, and I think it's very easy for these things to become confusing visually," Knight says. "Those initial designs of that first wave of Transformers were so perfect because they had to be physical things that actually moved – there was a simplicity to them, and you always knew which character was which, just based on colour. When you have all these high-octane, white-knuckle battle sequences and the camera's flashing around all over the place, you want to make sure the audience knows what it's looking at."

With no Megatron on the cast list (at least, as far as we know – Michael Bay famously said the Decepticon leader wouldn't be in *Transformers 2*, only for him to turn up in the movie), there's room for new antagonists this time. For starters, Shatter and Dropkick (voiced by Angela Bassett and Justin Theroux, respectively) are a pair of

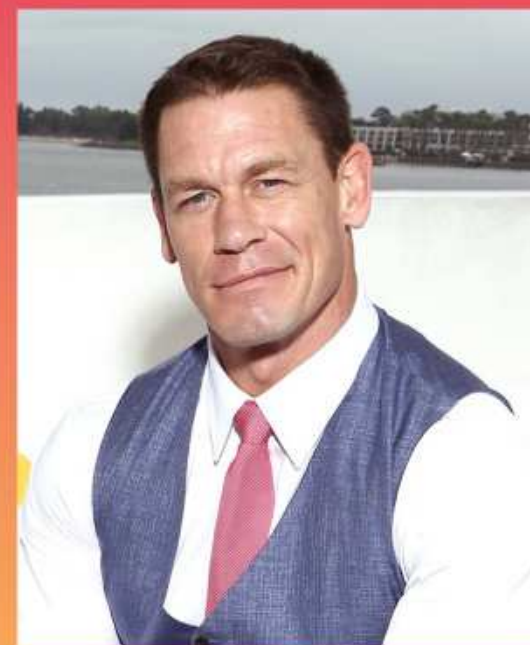
Decepticons who've come to Earth "to hunt Bumblebee down" – as "Triple Changers", they're capable of morphing into two distinct vehicle forms.

There's also a human antagonist in the form of Agent Burns, played by WWE wrestler John Cena. While his true motives have been shrouded in secrecy, we do at least know he's *not* a friend of Bumblebee and Charlie.

"With John Cena's character Agent Burns, it was important for me to make sure that he was not this two-dimensional, moustachio-twirling baddie," says Knight. "So even though we're certainly not rooting for him and he's a heavy guy, we understand where he's coming from. That makes his perspective almost more terrifying, that on some level he's kind of right. His point of view on the world makes sense and we get where he's coming from, even though we don't agree with him."

A KNIGHT'S TALE

But looking past the Amblin influence, the fan-pleasing nods to the original Transformers, and an '80s setting that's worked wonders for the likes of *Stranger Things*, the most exciting weapon in *Bumblebee*'s arsenal is arguably its director. Travis Knight may be making his debut as a live-action filmmaker, but in animation his CV is spectacular. As one of the leading lights at stop-motion powerhouse Laika, he's worked on acclaimed films like *Coraline*, *ParaNorman* and *The Boxtrolls*, while his first feature film as director, *Kubo And The Two Strings*, is a beautiful, sophisticated piece of storytelling that arguably deserved →



MAKING A CENA

John Cena is Agent Burns

What do you want the audience to take away from this movie?

I certainly want the people who have followed the *Transformers* franchise since its inception to be pleased with the effort. I think we've done a good job of staying true to the franchise, but I also want to attract new fans, and I think the reason we will do this is because the story is so well told. We're taking a step back in maybe the amount of Transformers you wanted to see, [in order] to get people to believe in the personalities of these Transformers and the actors that are involved.

If you could be a Transformer, which one would you be?

That's tough! Supersonic flight would definitely be [important], just because it would save me time. So anything that falls into the category of supersonic flight.

What do you admire most about your character?

It was the fact that I could do something different. Also, I think my intentions are right.

In your wrestling career, you can always see your opponent. What was it like performing to one who didn't exist?

It was different, because when you act opposite Bumblebee, you're acting with this tripod with a tennis ball on top. But it was extra special because our director, Travis Knight, had the ability to see the movie before he could make it, like most directors do, and also the ability to explain his vision, so that I could understand it. He was an instrumental part of making this movie as heartfelt as it is.

Richard Edwards

GETTY (3)



Charlie's in charge because she gets the cool jacket.

to beat *Zootropolis* to the Best Animated Feature Film Oscar. Not a bad training ground for a director who's now working with a computer-animated lead character...

"I've been an animator professionally for more than 20 years, so my whole job has been to breathe my life into inanimate objects," says Knight. "Oftentimes it's been in stop-motion with a puppet, but in this case it was something made of ones and zeros, so I approached all the key scenes with Bumblebee and the other robots not as visual effects, but as characters – these are actors."

"There are definitely analogous experiences to working in live action," he adds. "Obviously in animation it's much, much slower. *Kubo And The Two Strings* took five years from beginning to end to bring to life. On this film, our production schedule was something like 58 days. It just moves at a much faster clip, but the same skill sets are there."

Perhaps you could even say it's destiny that the Transformers-loving kid turned animator should end up bringing them to life on the big screen.

"I've loved stop-motion since I was a kid," Knight says. "I remember those first Ray Harryhausen creature features absolutely captivated me, and to this day there's something absolutely magical about seeing these inanimate objects being brought to life through the skill and the talent and the hands of an animator. To me it evokes that time when we're children and we have these beloved playthings where we imagine these things have an inner life – stop-motion effectively is as if it's a child's plaything being brought to life, and that's why I think there's such a primal quality to it."

"So it is interesting that 30 years after I was introduced to these characters that I would tell stories about them through my own hands. It's a surreal thing, but definitely those things are connected." ●

Bumblebee is in cinemas from 26 December.



wide eyes and grabby hands

IMPORTS IN DISGUISE

The real-world history of the Transformers

- The Transformers story starts shortly after World War II, with a partnership between America and Japan that saw the States helping rebuild the decimated country.
- Using discarded tin cans donated from American bases, Japan turned them into toys – rebuilding one of their most important industries. Those cans became many things, but the most popular were the wind-up robots that became a national obsession.
- The robots leapt to the printed page, launching the Manga industry. They spread further, with *Astro Boy* and *Ultraman* bringing Japanese culture into American living rooms.
- Toymaker Takara was watching this American market closely, and the success of the US GI Joe doll line led the company to obtain the Japanese licence for the franchise from Hasbro, creating a new GI Joe – a robot they called "Transformation Cyborg".
- An oil crisis led to the invention of the Micronauts (smaller, more cost-effective version of the Transformation Cyborg), which was such a success it allowed Takara to go big again – with Diaclone, giant robots that transformed into spaceships and futuristic vehicles. Initially a success, the line stopped selling – and a change was needed.
- In 1982, the Diaclone car robot line (robots that transformed into cars) was created, which expanded into a line called Microchange; robots that turned into household objects, such as boomboxes, cameras and, yes, bright yellow Volkswagen Beetles.
- Back in the States, Hasbro had done some transforming too, shrinking down its bulky GI Joe dolls into dynamic action figures; an instant hit. Looking for new ideas to build on that success, Hasbro bosses travelled to Tokyo for the annual toy fair.
- In Tokyo, Hasbro saw the huge range of transforming robots, and the massive potential for another successful import deal. Hasbro signed a contract with Takara that allowed the American company to combine Diaclone and Microchange into one line – a line they called Transformers.
- The previously unconnected toys were given a mythology – with the good Autobots waging war against the evil Decepticons – with Hasbro approaching Marvel Comics exec Jim Shooter, who wrote the backstory bible that's survived ever since.
- In 1983, Shooter enlisted writer Bob Budiansky to come up with character names and individual backstories (though Batman writer Denny O'Neil came up with Optimus Prime) for a comic series.
- Then, in 1984, the animated series launched, and – combined with catchy commercials and an iconic jingle – created one of the fastest-selling toy lines in history.

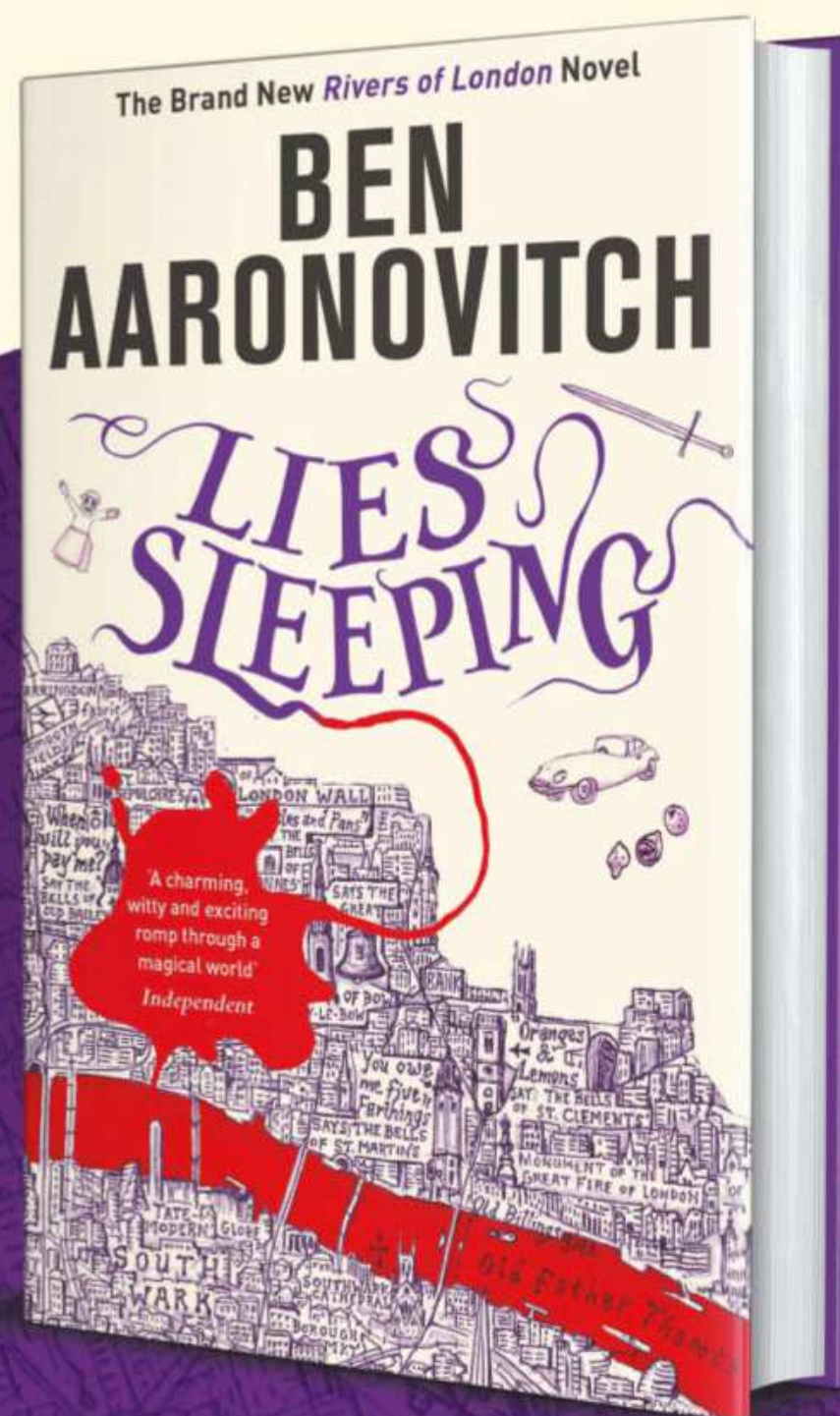
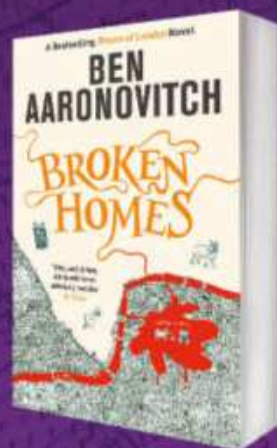
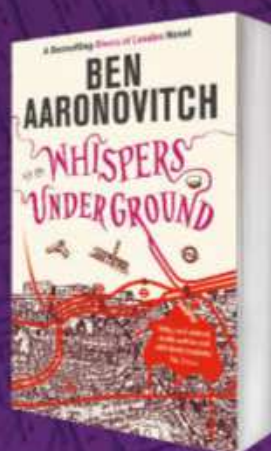
Sam Ashurst



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AQUAMAN

DEEP

JAMES WAN WADES INTO THE DC MOVIE

UNIVERSE WITH **AQUAMAN**, DETERMINED
TO TAKE AUDIENCES TO A NEW WORLD (OR
SEVEN). JAMES WHITE HOLDS HIS BREATH



IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT THE WARNER BROS/DC FILM UNIVERSE has suffered in comparison to the cinematic and cultural behemoth that is Marvel's movie output. While the box office figures haven't been

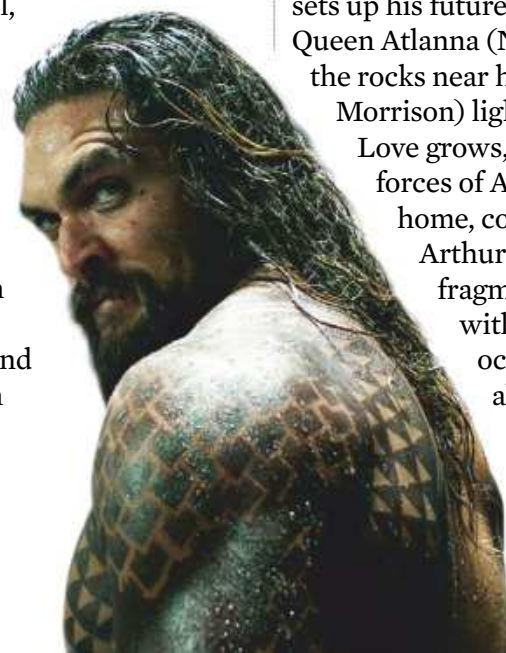
atrocious, the reaction to almost everything bar *Wonder Woman* has been less than forgiving. Which is why *Aquaman* director James Wan is feeling a little more pressure than he originally thought he might, and not just because his latest job involves journeying many leagues under the sea. Not only is there the challenge of bringing something livelier to the DC stable, he's got to do it with Arthur Curry (*Game Of Thrones* veteran Jason Momoa); a superhero who, to the wider world at least, is something of a joke

in the comics. When he sits down to talk in Los Angeles' swanky London hotel, it's a few days before Wan will unveil the longest portion of footage he's shown the world to a demanding audience of the faithful at Comic-Con. But he's not sweating it, even if *Aquaman* is a very different proposition now to when he took the job. "I thought that I'd make a movie that was under the radar, and no one would care about the guy who talks to fish!" Wan laughs, shrugging off the idea that he has to be part of the solution for DC's problem. "I'm not here to save anything, I'm here to make the movie I want to make, have fun with it, and hope fans and the masses come along with me on this journey. Whatever happens, happens!"

Wan is a director of horror and low-budget indies including the *Saw* films and the ever-expanding *Conjuring* universe, which has thus far spawned two main

movies and three spin-offs (the first two he directed, the rest he produced) with a combined worldwide haul to date of more than \$1.5 billion. His ability to hop genres – he also handled the hit seventh entry in the *Fast & Furious* franchise – and his facility for crowd pleasing made him a candidate to handle one of the hopes for DC's future. The film, which Wan was developing in the days before Batman battled Superman and the Justice League assembled, explores Arthur Curry's past and sets up his future, revealing how his mother, Queen Atlanna (Nicole Kidman), washed up on the rocks near his father's (Temuera Morrison) lighthouse one stormy night.

Love grows, a child is born, but then the forces of Atlantis, Atlanna's former home, come to retrieve her. Young Arthur grows up knowing only fragments of his liquid lineage and with a serious grudge against the ocean dwellers. Oh, and the ability to communicate with





RightMove began advertising ornate underwater palaces.



“IT’S THE HARDEST MOVIE I’VE DONE IN MY LIFE”

Jason Momoa is Aquaman

We’ve met Arthur in *Justice League*. What new aspect will we see here?

Everything. You see his mother and father and him being a child and growing up and then being separated from his mother. He’s not accepted. If you’ve been told your whole life that you’re this chosen one, and then you’re treated as a half-breed and a piece of crap, you revolt against everything. Then, you get to see that man who is alone open up, and he has a lot to offer the world, and the world needs his beauty.

What is the scope of his relationship with Amber Heard’s Mera?

We get to show each other our different worlds, so she gets to see what’s beautiful on the surface and he gets to see what’s beautiful underneath, and that it’s worth saving both worlds.

How was the wirework for the water sequences?

If there’s a sequel, I can’t wait to re-think all the ways we’re going to change the harnesses! We’ve got so many ideas. It really does wear you out, too, and you can freeze when you get hosed down with water. Thank goodness we shot in Australia!

Did you enjoy the stunt work?

Aquaman is the hardest movie I’ve done in my life, physically, and I had two stunt doubles. Both of them got hurt, and so did I. The sheer amount of stunts and action in this was insane. You’re fighting in a 40-pound suit, and by the end you’re in a soup of you... And I don’t like my soup!

James White



Just try to remember that fish are friends...

fish, whales and other oceanic creatures. But a major threat from his rival and half-brother Orm (Wan regular Patrick Wilson) finally draws him home, aided by driven Atlantean Mera (Amber Heard), who has little time for Arthur’s gruff yet jokey ways.

FISH OUT OF WATER

While the *Fast* film had given Wan a taste of big-budget work, this was something else again, a story to be woven into the wider tapestry of an existing, interconnected world. And yet, as he explains it, the director didn’t face too many restrictions: “I’ve never had this much freedom in any of the movies I’ve made before. It’s awesome,” he chuckles. “You always hear about, when you do low-budget films, you get the freedom to do what you want, but you never have the money to do it. And then you do the big-budget film and you have the money, but not the freedom. I feel like with this one, I’m getting the best of both worlds. I’ve got no one to blame down the line!” →

WHO'S FOR A CURRY?

The changing face – and secret origin – of Aquaman

1941 The original Aquaman is the son of an undersea explorer who discovered the submerged remains of Atlantis. His father teaches him to live beneath the waves using ancient Atlantean knowledge.

1959 Aquaman's origin is retooled for the Silver Age. Now he's Arthur Curry, son of a human lighthouse keeper and Atlanna, an outcast Atlantean. It's his genetic heritage that gives him superhuman abilities.

1989 After canon-purging crossover *Crisis On Infinite Earths*, Aquaman's rebooted. Now he's a pure Atlantean, the offspring of Queen Atlanna and the wizard Atlan. His birth name is Orin.

1993 It's the '90s so peak time for a grimdark makeover: brutal, brooding, bearded. Losing his left hand to a shoal of piranha Orin replaces it with a harpoon. Edgy enough for ya?

2006 Here's a whole new Aquaman with a sword 'n' sorcery spin. This version's fully human – his powers come from mutagenic serum his oceanobiologist father used to save his life as a baby.

2011 DC's New 52 sees Aquaman abdicating the Atlantean throne. He also has to deal with a public that views him as a second-rate hero. Yes, it's all a bit meta...



Playing a mer-woman is easy after playing a Stepford Wife.



Patrick Wilson tries and fails to be menacing with a man-bun.

All the same, there were other movies to keep in mind, with Aquaman introduced briefly in *Batman V Superman* and playing a more substantial (if still only supporting) part in DC's team-up *Justice League*. Was there anything he needed to figure out before embarking on this film? "There were two aspects I said to Zack [Snyder] and the studio early on that I wanted them to please stay away from, and one of them was going to Atlantis. My hero blames Atlanteans for what happened to his mother, so he's refused to go there. But I wanted him to go for the first time in my movie. I want to show the audience Atlantis through the point of view of my lead character.

"The other one is I wanted to finally introduce the classic Aquaman costume. I'm not just doing it for my own ego's sake, I'm doing it because it's such an integral part of the storyline, and so if they had done that, it would have screwed with the movie I wanted to tell. And Zack was super respectful about that." Yes, as seen in the trailer, you can expect to see Momoa slip into Aquaman's iconic green/gold suit in the course of the story. And probably make a wisecrack about it.

It was Momoa's sense of humour and overall personality that Wan wanted to truly highlight, something he rarely got a chance to express in *Justice League*. "I sat down with him early on and said, 'Moving forward, I want to see more of you in there. You're so cool and likeable and goofy, I want all of that in the film!' I want him to be more three-dimensional and not just a tough guy. Jason can do that, it's a given. But to show that he can be a romantic lead, that he can deliver comic lines with timing, that's important." Wan's model for what he wanted was Kurt Russell's Jack Burton from *Big Trouble In Little China*, a man with clear brawling abilities who is just a tick behind when it comes to dangerous situations.

OCEAN BLUES

Even as he looked to other movie archetypes for the hero's journey, *Aquaman's* visual style is inspired by the work of someone considered a homegrown hero in the UK. Stand back, Supergran. Bad news, Captain Britain... We mean David Attenborough. "I watched a lot of *Blue Planet*, *Planet Earth*, all of that," Wan admits, citing *Jaws* as another touchstone.



Aquaman steps into his classic costume for the first time.



“JAMES WAN HAS CREATED SOME INCREDIBLE UNIVERSES”

Amber Heard is Mera

How was the repartee between you and Jason when you were filming?

We can't stand each other! [Laughs]. Arthur and Mera are really very different but inform each other in certain ways. Where one is strong, the other is weak and vice versa. It's interesting, because they have playful, cool banter that develops into something deeper. But Jason and I have pretty decent banter too.

What are you excited for people to see?

James has created some incredible universes that we could only get a little sense of by seeing certain concept art. And when you watch even a little of it in the trailer, in clips, you get a sense of the enormity of this universe that we have not seen yet as audiences. There are seven different kingdoms, all with a distinct look and culture and it's not just one world we meet.

What was the costume like to wear?

It was, how uncomfortable can I be? When I got to put a coat on for a few scenes out of the water, I felt like I was being hugged all over my body by baby angels! I didn't want to go back to my Atlantean suit.

But you weren't the only one with costume issues...

When I first saw Patrick [Wilson, who plays the villainous Orm] on set, no one told me he was going to be hoisted up in the air in my eyeline. And I lost it. I wasn't expecting it. He looked like a Christmas ornament, flying through the air!

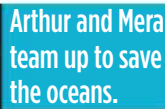
James White



This beat waiting for the ferry to pick him up.

“Whatever we can cook up, that's nothing compared to how beautiful mother nature is, or how terrifying it can be as well. One thing I wanted to capture in the movie is the magic and wonderment of the underwater world, but also how scary it is.”

Frightening might come easy to a man who's unleashed vengeful spirits, demonic nuns and merciless torturers upon characters and audiences, but it would also be a good word for the sheer amount of effects work needed to bring this film to life, from hanging his actors in harnesses to simulate water scenes to vast vistas of blue screen to be replaced by the Seven Kingdoms. “I joke that half the time I'm making an animated movie. I'm making *Finding Nemo*, really!” Wan smiles. It's all in aid of taking Arthur and cinemagoers somewhere different in terms of the genre. “We've seen lots of superhero movies where they deal with a threat from outer space, another dimension, or god knows where,” Wan points out. “But we've rarely seen the threat that is beneath our nose. ➔



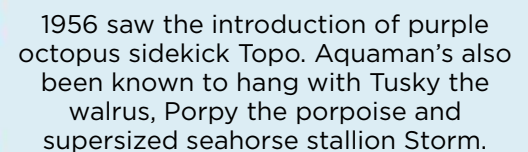
But all that spectacle is so much seaweed-draped window dressing if you don't believe in the story, and Wan credits his directorial history with reminding him what's really important. "I learned making horror movies

Aquaman is in cinemas from 14 December.

A typhoon of trivia!

Aquaman's look took time to evolve. Norris recalled editor Whitney Ellsworth had "done a sketch of a guy, a little cartoon character with a big cigar in his mouth and fins on his feet."

Aquaman didn't appear on a comic book cover until 1960 – 19 years after his debut.

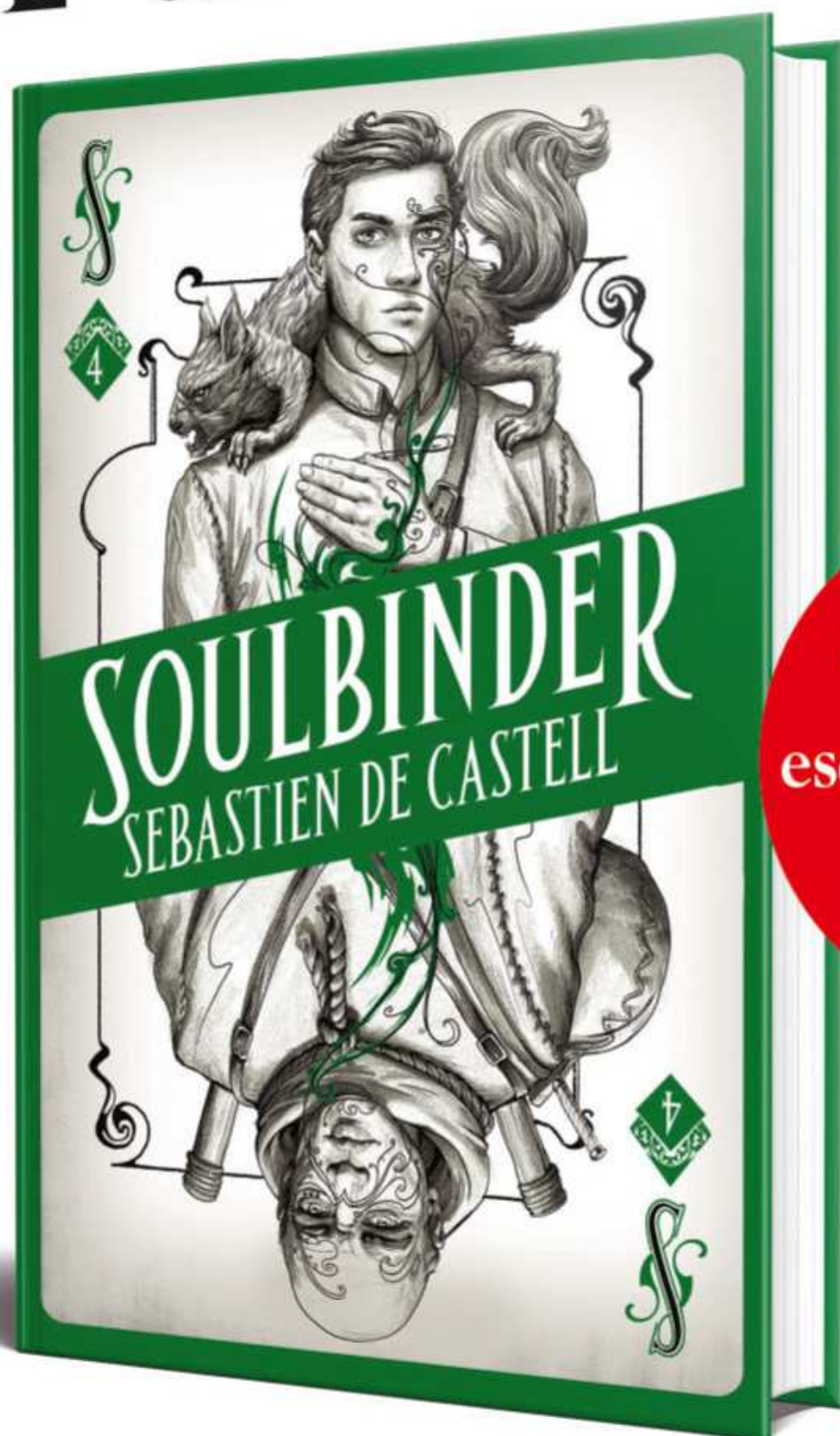


An Aquaman movie became a running gag in *Entourage*. Directed by James Cameron it winds up as the most successful film ever made. “Jim Cameron was joking around saying ‘We should really do this thing!’” producer Mark Wahlberg recalled.

In comic book lore Arthur Curry can leap up to six miles and swim at up to 10,000 ft per second. He's also gifted with superhuman strength, sonar hearing and eyes that can penetrate ocean darkness. His telepathic link with marine life extends to seagulls – always handy for a strategic shit-blitz against evildoers.

© DC

FATE CAN BE FATAL

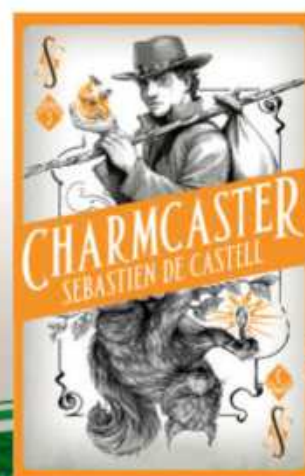


'Gloriously,
escapist fantasy'
OBSERVER

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JON HAMM

The Mad Man's back as God's smarmy right-hand man in *Good Omens*

Words by Tara Bennett with Paul Terry /// Photography by Michael Buckner

There aren't a lot of actors who can transition impeccably from enigmatically sophisticated to unabashedly goofy quite like Jon Hamm. While he was a relatively late bloomer, only gaining traction in his acting career when he turned 30, he's gained devoted fans for roles as disparate as con man doomsday preacher Richard Wayne Gary Wayne in *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* to his Emmy-winning turn as ad man Don Draper in *Mad Men*.

Now he's having a go at playing both comedy and drama as the Archangel Gabriel in the upcoming television adaptation of *Good Omens*, the apocalyptic 1990 novel co-written by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman. Overseeing Michael Sheen's angelic Aziraphale, Hamm gets to embody the perfect "asshole" boss as he goads his underling to bring about Armageddon as God has instructed. As Hamm admits to *SFX*, the role has turned out to be quite, dare we say, heavenly.

How was it working with Neil Gaiman as your showrunner?

As you know his storytelling and world-building are so specific and detailed yet so imaginative and original that you feel very well taken care of. The map is laid out very specifically for you and it's fun. And the good news is when you are creating something out of whole cloth and you have the creator there, you can ask him anything.

Your character is really only mentioned in the book so how is he fleshed out in the series?

Yes, Gabriel is not in this book, even though he's in another book. *The book*. But he's mentioned in this book, so Neil decided to flesh him out and give him an arc. He's God's right-hand man, basically, and Aziraphale's boss. He's tasked with making sure Aziraphale does his job bringing about Armageddon. I pop in and pop out and keep poking Michael's character on the back about this thing we're meant to do.

Is he a micro-manager then?

Well, he's the boss we've all had in some capacity who you just hate because he is so confident and assured and certain that his way is the right way, and he's completely wrong. He's poorly informed. You have to do what they say but they're so dumb and you wish you didn't have to. I get a lot of joy out of playing handsome, misinformed idiots. But it's all to the point of telling this incredibly detailed story that has been rendered with such great care by the team behind *Good Omens*.

He's the angel we're meant to hate?

Yes, and I think it works nicely off Michael's sweetness and light. The idea that even in Heaven, which is supposed to be all good, that there's not all good, was appealing.

Were you familiar with the book before you were cast?

Yes, and I couldn't believe they were making it. I read it back in the '90s when I was a kid, and I thought – the same way I thought about *American Gods* – that it would be such a cool movie that they will never make because it's impossible to do. But now we live in a world where you can make a six-hour movie and call it a limited series. You can do that. How we have grown as storytellers, and the tools at our disposal, and the tools to get it to people means it can be something else. I'm pleased as all hell to get to do it.

Was it at all intimidating joining a very British cast?

There's always the challenge of coming to anything, and the terror of the first day of school. But I've worked in the UK extensively and I really enjoy it. And to get to play against Miranda Richardson, Michael Sheen and Michael McKean wasn't intimidating but it sure was exciting.

You've worked on streaming TV projects before. Does *Good Omens* feel like a unique project in that space?

I've worked in pretty much every television capacity from network TV to basic cable and premium cable. When we started *Mad Men* everyone asked about working for AMC because we were so free to be able to do all this creative stuff and I was like, 'Is it that different? I don't think so.' I think the necessity to appeal to an incredibly wide swathe of the marketplace is lessened at Amazon because only they know their metrics and it's a hit if they say it's a hit. And that's a great place to be because we know if we like it, and if we want to do more. You're not dependent on some nebulous third party who deems if you can go further.

Does the limited series angle for this adaptation feel too close-ended? Audiences love sequels.

No, I've always been a fan of the British way of doing things, television wise, because all of their shows, with the exception on *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*, come to an end. They only made 12 *Fawlty Towers* and four seasons of *Blackadder* and they're great and they stop. And for the actor doing the same thing over and over again seems particularly weird. Go get into making thimbles if you want to make things over and over again.

Good Omens starts streaming on Amazon Prime Video in the first half of 2019.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Actor

Born

→ 10 March, 1971

From

→ St Louis, Missouri

Greatest hits

→ *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (2008), *Mad Men*, *30 Rock*, *Black Mirror*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *Bad Times At The El Royale*

Random fact

→ Hamm is now a cricket aficionado after Daniel Radcliffe introduced him to the game while they filmed *A Young Doctor's Notebook* & *Other Stories*.

“I GET A LOT
OF JOY OUT
OF PLAYING
HANDSOME,
MISINFORMED
IDIOTS”

SUSPIRIA

DARIO
ARGENTO'S
BEWITCHING
HORROR
SUSPIRIA
HAS
RECEIVED
THE REMAKE
TREATMENT.
DIRECTOR
LUCA
GUADAGNINO
SPELLS OUT
HOW HE
DID IT

DANCING
WITH

DEATH

*Words by
Ian Berriman*



H

OW THE DEVIL DO you remake a film as distinctive as Dario Argento's 1977 magnum opus *Suspiria*? The tale of Suzy Banyon, a young American woman who joins a dance school in

Germany and, after a string of horrific killings, discovers it's controlled by an ancient witch, it's a startling one-off; a film which blasts out events as mundane as Suzy's arrival at an airport and subsequent cab journey at a panic-inducingly hysterical pitch. Notorious for its high-contrast Technicolor, brutally violent set-pieces and operatic prog rock score, it's a gloriously irrational fever dream.

A remake's been on the cards for years – back in 2008, David Gordon Green (who's just reworked another horror classic, *Halloween*) was attached. But the man who's finally brought the project to fruition is Argento's compatriot Luca Guadagnino, a fan of *Suspiria* since he first caught the film on Italian TV at the tender age of 13.

"It made such a humongous impression on me," the director recalls. "I even went to the public library to find newspapers from the time it came out. I had notebooks in which I would write, '*Suspiria* by Luca Guadagnino'. I started to think of a *Suspiria* that could be mine."

Thirty-three years later, he finally got the chance. Sensibly, his approach to crafting a new take on a film so inimitably stylish was, well, not to imitate it.

For starters, while Argento's version (set in the small German city Freiburg) has a fairytale feel – the director set out to recreate the



Tilda Swinton feels the power of the dance as Madame Blanc.

colours of Disney's *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* – the remake is grounded in sociopolitical reality by being set in Cold War Berlin, against the backdrop of the far-left Baader-Meinhof Group's bombing campaign. Guadagnino describes it as "a fable of a very specific time and place, where the past was so dark that it goes hand in hand with digging into the darkness of the self." And the look of the film grew out of that setting: "We wanted to tell a story set in Berlin, 1977, and we wanted to make a film from that era, as if we were there."

So, rather than bathing the chief location (Grand Hotel Campo dei Fiori, an abandoned art nouveau hotel on a mountaintop

overlooking Varese, Northern Italy) in vivid red, blue and green light, Argento style, the director and cinematographer Sayombhu Mukdeeprom took inspiration from German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder's '70s output, using a palette of greys and browns, pale blues and greens.

"Sayombhu and I discussed [cinematographers] Michael Ballhaus and Xaver Schwarzenberger's work for Fassbinder, as well as the paintings of [Polish-French modern artist] Balthus," Guadagnino says. "We wanted to encompass something that was from the period and the place, rather than mimic a mood or find a random one. We really wanted

THE FIRST DANCE

The making of the 1977 original

What exactly sparked Dario Argento's classic horror? Depends if you believe the director or co-writer Daria Nicolodai. She claims it was her grandma's stories of going to a girls' school with witchcraft on the curriculum. Argento said he was inspired by a book on the topic. The director also drew on "Levana And Our Ladies Of Sorrow", a prose poem in Thomas De Quincey's *Suspiria De Profundis* (1845). It discusses a goddess called Mater Suspiriorum (Our Lady of Sighs). Argento pinched the name for his ancient witch.

Shooting took place from July-November 1976, in Rome (studio interiors) and Munich (locations). Argento planned to cast girls of 11-14, but the distributor insisted he go older. But he kept the characters' dialogue juvenile – and placed door handles higher up, "to reduce the actresses down in size".

Argento picked lead Jessica Harper because of her role in 1974's *The Phantom Of The Paradise*. It was a "tower of Babel" experience for her, surrounded by people not fluent in English. In one scene, actor Udo Kier repeated lines fed to him by a crew member lying out of shot! As for Mater Suspiriorum: she was played by a 90-year-old ex-hooker Argento found on the streets of Rome. Well, that's what he told Harper, anyway...



You'd never guess *Suspiria* was made in the 1970s...

GETTY (1)



Director Luca Guadagnino pops in to chat.



Dr Josef Klemperer is Swinton under layers of make-up.

it to be a reflection of the period and the German cinema of the period.”

WHICH WITCH

Another significant evolution is the role of dance within the film. The original's Tanz dance academy setting is a fairly arbitrary one; there doesn't seem to be any compelling reason why the centuries-old Helena Markos (aka Mater Suspiriorum, the Mother of Sighs) would have made it the base of her coven. Here, the power of dance as an occult weapon is a vitally important element. Screenwriter David Kajganich did his homework accordingly: studying the history of the medium; interviewing Sasha Waltz, joint artistic director of the Berlin State Ballet; and attending rehearsals with her. This all fed into his version of Madame Blanc, icy leader of the Helena Markos Dance Company, played by Tilda Swinton. A regular collaborator with Guadagnino, Swinton recalls him pitching her ideas for the film over 25 years ago.

“As long as I can remember we've been discussing and planning *Suspiria*,” Swinton says. “All those years of mastication, of marination, lend a deep ease to a project.”

The actor views Blanc as a woman steeped in ambivalence. “She's a dancer and choreographer of genius, a charismatic and

CASTING A VET

Four more anonymised actors

PETER DAVISON

The future Doctor Who was unrecognisable beneath saggy jowls and a pig-like snout in *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, playing an Ameglian Major Cow, a creature bred to want to be eaten. Davison stole its West Country burr from Darth Vader actor Dave Prowse.



ANTHONY AINLEY

Eighties *Doctor Who* was forever concealing Ainley's Master. Most egregious example: 1982 stinker “Time-Flight”, in which the villainous Time Lord pointlessly disguised himself as plasticine-faced magician Kalid. The anagrammatical credit “Leon Ny Taiy” fooled no one.



KEANU REEVES

Bill And Ted's Alex Winter co-directed *Freaked* (1993), a fantasy black comedy centred on a freak show. His fellow dude was totally unrecognisable (and uncredited) as the freaks' leader, the furry-faced, befanged Ortiz the Dog Boy.



GARY OLDMAN

Oldman endured hours of prosthetic applications as *Hannibal*'s Mason Verger, a child molester Hannibal Lecter gave PCP, then convinced to cut off his face. Oldman decided that since he was playing “the man with no face” it'd be apt to do so anonymously.



Dakota Johnson plays young ballet student Susie.

powerful teacher who inspires real love and devotion in her dancers,” Swinton explains. “But her conflict is a keen one: she's done a deal with the supernatural for the sake of the preservation of her company and must live with the consequences. She feels herself deeply compromised by the witchcraft she employs.”

And Blanc's not the only character Swinton plays. The film also features Dr Jozef Klemperer, an octogenarian psychologist who investigates after a former student of the company comes to him for help. Initially, Guadagnino was insistent that the role was portrayed by “Lutz Ebersdorf”, a real-life psychotherapist and first-time actor. But Swinton recently caved in the face of constant questioning, admitting that *she* played Klemperer, concealed under old man prosthetics. Why? “For the sheer sake of fun,” she told the *New York Times*.

Of course, another effect of that casting choice was to award another key role to a female actor, in a film that was already overwhelmingly female-dominated. (Dakota Johnson, the remake's Susie Banyon, has noted that with 40 women in an abandoned hotel together, their menstrual cycles synchronising, the filming process got pretty “witchy”...) That seems rather appropriate for a story that has female power right at its heart.

“I want people to see this movie and be impacted by it in a very unconscious way,” Guadagnino explains. “I want people to reflect on their relationship with their mothers. And I want them to see the extreme power of women, who are so strong and motivated. They are not victims. They are complex, fantastic, disturbing, powerful, and sometimes evil.” ●

Suspiria is in cinemas from 16 November.

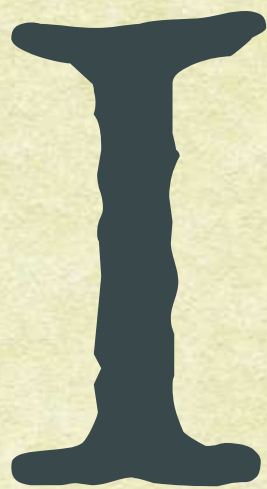
OUTLANDER

The Call

A woman with dark hair, wearing a brown jacket and a dark scarf, is riding a dark brown horse through a dense forest. The horse is facing forward, and the rider is looking slightly to the left. The forest has many trees with green leaves, and the ground is covered in brown leaves and dirt. The lighting is soft, suggesting a dappled sunlight effect.

THE TIME-
DEFYING
LOVERS OF
OUTLANDER
ARE BACK...
AND BUILDING
A NEW LIFE.
TARA BENNETT
TELLS US WHAT
SEASON FOUR
HOLDS FOR
JAMIE AND
CLAIRE

of Home



IN JUST THREE SEASONS of the TV adaptation of Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* books, the star-crossed story of Jamie (Sam Heughan) and Claire Fraser (Caitriona Balfe) has time-hopped the pair from 1948 to 1744, had the lovers separated for 20 years in their respective origin times, and then reunited them again in 1766. That's a lot of time travelling for a series without a

TARDIS or Quantum Leap accelerator. And in this show, the timey-wimey happens via standing stones that work their magic in ways that the characters still don't fully understand. But the twisty tale will get more complicated in season four, when Jamie and Claire's grown daughter, Brianna Randall, and her suitor, Roger Wakefield (Richard Rankin), become big-time players in the paradox party of it all.

While it all sounds super complicated, executive producer and director Matthew B Roberts assures fans, and curious potential viewers, that the new season will actually be the most rooted of them all. "We always start with the Claire and Jamie story, so when you look at the first three seasons, they spend more time apart than they do together, and then they spent a lot of time trying to figure out ways to get back to each other."

The new season, based on Gabaldon's fourth book *Drums Of Autumn*, finds the Frasers in 1767 colonial North Carolina looking to settle down and build their own homestead together. "When we started breaking book four, you realise Jamie and Claire are together," Roberts explains. "They're literally just together the whole time and they're not separated by time, by space, by adventure. So, this season is about what do you call a home? Is a home a piece of property? Is a home your house? Is a home just the people you have around you, and is that ultimately what really defines a

home, the ones you love?

That's what we're questioning and answering over season four."

That exploration is a real change of pace for the couple, and for the writers' room.



The star-crossed lovers are finally together again.

Roberts says when it came to figuring out the season's arc, "The one thing that we had to start looking at is what affects both of the characters at the same time, and can they have different takes on the same thing because Claire and Jamie don't have the conflict that a lot of couples do in literature and in television, of, 'Will they stay together, or won't they stay together?' That's something no one will buy, so we don't even pretend to go down that road," he chuckles. "So, we have to [ask], what can affect them together, and how can they, as a team, overcome the obstacles in the season?"

NEW ROMANTICS

Some of that conflict will come from new characters, like Jamie's Aunt Jocasta (Maria Doyle Kennedy) and the new nemesis of the Frasers, Stephen Bonnet (Ed Speleers). "They both bring so much new blood and new talent to the show," Roberts enthuses. "They definitely spice things up for the cast as they get to play off new characters and there's new dynamics. Like there's a whole new level of intrigue with Bonnet as he's really different than the Black Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies) villain. With Black Jack, you didn't want to be in the same room with him very long, but with Bonnet he's a little more charming and you get lured in by him and you walk away going, 'Why did I like that guy? I was duped into liking that guy,' and then you feel bad. With Black Jack, I don't think you ever felt bad. You just knew he was bad."

Meanwhile, Jocasta's plantation of River Run will welcome Jamie and Claire for a bit, but it will also force the couple to come to terms with real moral issues of the time, like slavery. Roberts says Jocasta is a wealthy woman and a strong Scot who speaks her mind

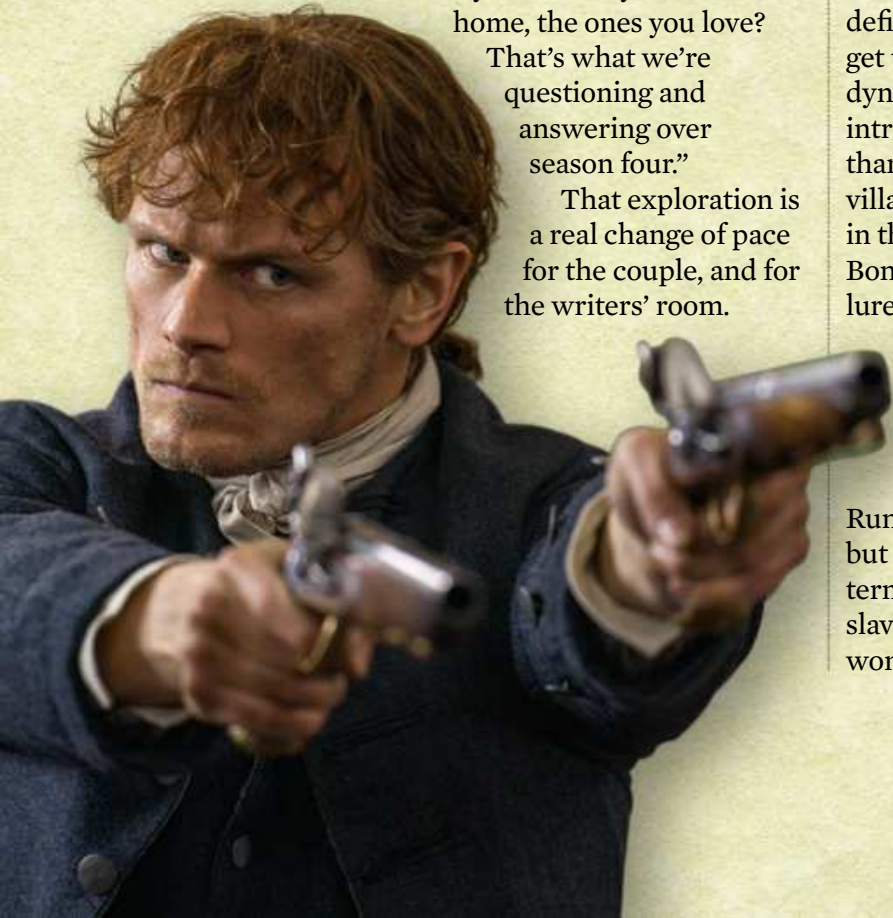


Family outings were so tense.

“It all comes down to love and how much they're willing to sacrifice for their love”

and will have her own way of doing things. "She's a Mackenzie so you're both wary of her, but you also find yourself, in a weird way, very endeared to her," he teases. "She may have her own agendas and she may want things to happen in a certain way, but she's also a caring person and she cares about you, especially if you have Mackenzie blood in you."

Roberts adds that they were thrilled to land Doyle Kennedy as Jocasta after her successful run on *Orphan Black*. "She read the character and then really wanted to play it," he says. "My first meeting with Maria, she had a lot of great ideas. We really sparked to her ideas, and then we told her what we felt about the character,





It was so romantic here, if you ignored the horse manure.



Brianna Randall and her beau Roger are back.

and she sparked to that. And once you get her in costume, she looks completely different. She embodies Jocasta and she's just amazing. Looking back, I don't know if there's another choice for Jocasta. She's Jocasta to me now."

There will also be stories around the Native Americans living in the region, the history of Scottish settlers in North Carolina, and the evolution of existing characters, like Jamie's nephew Ian Murray (John Bell) and Lord John Grey (David Berry). But the biggest narrative to play out this season will be the expansion of Brianna and Roger's story, which will start in 1971 and then take an epic journey through the season. Roberts explains, "We introduced them in season three a little bit, and we knew that they were going to grow in season four. They actually take on that new love [story] that we had with Jamie and Claire in seasons one and two. That's the nice thing that mirrors the

Jamie and Claire relationship. Will this couple stay together? How does this couple stay together? How does this couple get back together because they are separated?"

INFINITY STONES

As it turns out, Roger and Brianna will discover some historical documents that cause them both grave concern about Jamie and Claire in the past, which means those standing stones could be warming up for a return engagement. "We do lean into [time travel] in season four," Roberts confirms. "As a show, we will never show the journey through the stones, just the journey to the stones. But for me, it's always important to show the decision to go. How that weighs on the character, and the choices that they're making. What they're giving up, and what they're hoping to find. And with the folks travelling through this season, it all comes down to love and how much they're willing to sacrifice for their love of someone else. I think that's the theme of the time travelling."

What that will eventually lead to is another iconic book moment that readers are bristling with excitement to see played out. Roberts says he can assure fans it's a moment worth waiting for, with all of the emotional release one would expect. "We set the tempo early [in the writer's room] with, 'Let's get to that meeting because that moment is what it's really about when we talk about the season being about home.' So, if you want all your loved ones around you, then that's the moment. Then off of that, you have to fight to keep it together. That's really what happens in the season. It's the lead-up to getting your family collectively together, and then to watch that explode in your face, and to find a way of getting it back together," he smiles. "I'm really excited for the fans to see that, and then I'll be heartbroken when they see it fall apart almost immediately."

With a wicked smile of a showrunner who knows good drama, he adds, "You can't let them enjoy too much enjoyment for too long because you've got to rip it away from them." ●

Outlander is streaming on Amazon Prime Video.

"They're really solid as a couple"

CAITRIONA BALFE
IS CLAIRE FRASER



Season four will see Scotland doubling for colonial America. Was it easy to imagine that new landscape in the same digs?

Yes! One of the coolest things is that traditionally we've used so many of the castles and old stately homes of Scotland but colonial America is very different. For season four, the crew built a town in an ex-quarry and it had that incredible feel of really being on a movie or TV set where you think of old America and those building facades. It looks so cool.

We finally get a season where Jamie and Claire are firmly together for once and not being torn apart by time. How does that play out?

It's lots of arguments about whether he took the trash out, or not, or if he left the toilet seat up [laughs]. No, it was really nice to explore this other side of their relationship. There's something beautiful when they are relaxed around each other. It's not that they don't have disagreements, there's just no cliffhangers anymore in terms of if they are going to stay together, or not. Now, it's outside influences and they're really solid as a couple.

You get to share the screen this year with another big romantic couple as Brianna and Roger's story plays out. How was it watching them build their epic narrative in parallel?

It was incredible for Sam and I to see Sophie and Richard really take the reins and to be able to have such responsibility with the new material. They did an outstanding job. And it gave us some days off! [Laughs]

Tara Bennett

WORLD of the World



AS THE SECOND **FANTASTIC BEASTS** MOVIE PREPARES TO
APPEAR INTO CINEMAS, THE CAST TELL RICHARD EDWARDS
ABOUT THEIR CHARACTERS IN *THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD*...





Eddie Redmayne
is back as kooky
wizard Newt
Scamander.

“I HAD THIS THING WITH A FRIEND, THAT WHENEVER A NEW Harry Potter film came out, the reviews would always start with, ‘It’s so much darker...’” laughs Eddie Redmayne, now a fully signed-up resident of JK Rowling’s Wizarding World as *Fantastic Beasts*’ leading man Newt Scamander. “There was a moment when we were shooting in a cemetery in Highgate in the middle of the night. I took a photo of various graves, and I sent them to my friend. I was like, ‘This is so much darker than the others...’ He’s like, ‘How much darker can it get?!’”

But darker times call for darker movies. Having disguised himself as Auror Percival Graves for the duration of *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, proto-Voldemort Gellert Grindelwald is now on the loose, and wreaking havoc through magic circles as the action moves from New York to London and Paris. “It parallels the rumblings that were occurring before World War II,” explains Dan Fogler, aka Muggle baker Jacob Kowalski. “Grindelwald is amassing his army in a lot of the same ways that Hitler is amassing his army at the very same time. So this evil vortex is happening wherever Grindelwald is going. On the other side, you have the forces of good, with Dumbledore trying to collect his troops. We’re dealing with a lot of similar topics to World War II – racism, fascism, the Other.”

While the Wizarding World is now old enough to have left Hogwarts (though the school will appear in the film), *The Crimes Of Grindelwald* isn’t totally pre-occupied with more grown-up concerns.

“It’s got that sort of childish magical quality, but the stakes get really high,” explains Jude Law, making his debut as the younger Albus Dumbledore – who famously has history with Grindelwald.

“I actually think part of Jo [Rowling]’s real genius is the capacity to juggle tones,” adds Redmayne. “Within one scene, you can be at a place that really is threatening and dark, and in the next, you can be in a buddy comedy or a romantic comedy or a thriller. It’s actually quite effortless.”

And besides, Rowling is back as screenwriter to help shepherd the worlds she created to the screen. “Everything shuts down when she comes to set,” laughs Katherine Waterston, back as American Auror Tina Goldstein. “The actors, like moths to a flame, go to her. She’s kind enough to [director] David Yates to not come around so often, so that we can make the movie.”

“Rowling’s like Dumbledore, you know?” laughs Ezra Miller, who plays Credence Barebone. “She’s there when she absolutely needs to be. And then she’s gone.”

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald is in cinemas from 16 November.

NEWT SCAMANDER 1

(EDDIE REDMAYNE)

REDMAYNE One of the things I love about Newt is that he’s completely his own person. He’s learned to be content with that – or he thinks he’s content with it. In the last movie, he connected with the [principal] trio, and particularly with Tina, who saw elements in him which other people had never seen. Probably one of the only other people in his life who had seen that was Dumbledore. As his teacher, Dumbledore, I think, had always admired his complete commitment to who he was.

LAW He has a really beautiful moral compass. We all have those friends that you just know make the right moral decision, and you go to them because they’re good.

REDMAYNE And Dumbledore likes to manipulate that [laughs]. One of the lovely things about the relationship between Dumbledore and Newt is that it is master/apprentice, but the apprentice is growing up and challenging the master. He’s aware that he’s being manipulated but is going along with it anyway.

TINA GOLDSTEIN 2

(KATHERINE WATERSTON)

WATERSTON Tina’s been in Paris for a while when you see her at the beginning of the film. You know when you’ve been somewhere for a while, and you feel like you know what you’re doing? I think she’s enjoying that feeling of faking that she’s blending in. I think she felt more like a fish out of water in the first film, and I think maybe she and Newt recognised the similarity in one another. They both were in a situation where things weren’t quite familiar or right for them. I think because she’s been reinstated as an Auror, that’s her home environment – she feels good in her skin, and really thrives in the work.

ALBUS DUMBLEDORE 3

(JUDE LAW)

LAW I think Dumbledore feels somewhat isolated, and that in order to progress and do the right thing he’s going to have to face up to demons that he’s carried, and actions that he’s taken in his past. He is also in a situation where he relies on others to believe in his causes, and act for him. So that leaves, in its wake, rather a lot of... I suppose guilt, in a way. He’s complicated. But you know, unmistakably, as is mentioned in all the books, he has this sparkly and mischievous quality, which is such a lovely thing to be able to sprinkle in.

I did [go back and watch Richard Harris and Michael Gambon’s performances], but I was freed up immediately by Jo Rowling and David Yates, who said, “Come on, there are 80-odd years between them. You’re not him yet.” There are little things I wanted to pick up on that Harris and Gambon did, but it was just an excuse to go back and get into the world. What am I doing this weekend? I’m going to watch all of the Harry Potter films and pretend I’m taking notes!

CREDENCE BAREBONE 4 (EZRA MILLER)

MILLER There are certain elements of growing agency, in the sense that now Credence knows what he is, to some extent. But I think the idea in the first film was that he had repressed his own magic to such an extent that he was unaware of it. And you had Grindelwald, in the guise of Graves, sort of manipulating what awareness remained of the magic that was inside of him, and offering him a chance to join a world in which he would be accepted. So now, Credence has this awareness, but that includes all of the blood on his hands, and the awareness now includes his complete lack of a sense of self. His mission in this film is to try to figure out who he is.

NAGINI 5 (CLAUDIA KIM)

When we spoke to Claudia Kim, the identity of her character – Voldemort's future snake familiar in the Harry Potter saga – was still under wraps. Which probably explains why she wasn't able to say much...

MILLER She's a new classification of being in the Rowling-verse: the Maledictus, who are referred to at one point in the movie – by someone we don't like very much – as "under-beings". [She's not an Animagus] because an Animagus is a human being that can transform into an animal at will, but can also transform back at will.

KIM That's the biggest difference, because my character is cursed to transform completely into a beast.

MILLER She will be trapped in that beast body for the rest of her life. I think Claudia's character takes the initiative to assist Credence in his journey to try to figure out who he is. I think she empathises with him. And you know, there's commonalities between our characters and what we're going through, in terms of our magical afflictions.

JACOB KOWALSKI AND QUEENIE GOLDSTEIN 6 (DAN FOGLER AND ALISON SUDOL)

FOGLER This one takes up where the first film left off, so a few months have passed. They're together, and because all the rules are so harsh, they're travelling to Europe to find a place to be together. How they get there is quite interesting.

ALISON SUDOL They're two people who are dealing with a really unfair situation. You know, love is hard enough to find – period. To have something as arbitrary as "you're different and you cannot mingle, you certainly can't be together" – it's ludicrous. Queenie certainly thinks it's ridiculous, and just wants to be with someone she loves. It's particularly hard because she can read everyone's minds – there's not a lot of mystery with men, you know? So when she finds a good one, she's going to do what she has to do, which is not necessarily always making the wisest choices.

FOGLER Jacob's like Alice in Wonderland, falling down the rabbit hole. I equate it to Bottom meeting Titania. He's transfigured, this weird schlub. But she loves him for some reason, and they share this dream together. I think he's addicted to that.

LETA LESTRANGE AND THESEUS SCAMANDER 7 (ZOË KRAVITZ AND CALLUM TURNER)

KRAVITZ I play Leta Lestrange, and she's an old friend of Newt's from Hogwarts. Newt's gone away and come back, and I've become engaged to his brother, Theseus.

TURNER Theseus is the Head Auror at the British Ministry of Magic. He's really strait-laced, determined, successful, and wants his brother to fall in line, and join the good fight. He knows he's special.

KRAVITZ Leta's a Pureblood, which is a big deal. She's quite a complicated person. She's got a dark side to her. As the story goes on, you kind of see what it is in her past that's torturing her. I think the family has a reputation and I think it's meant to be unclear whether she is good or bad, and what that's about. She has some dark secrets that do come to the surface. You see why she is the way she is – it's not just that she is a bad person or anything.





Let David Yates
have a wand
for once.

SPELLING IT OUT

There are set to be five *Fantastic Beasts* films in the series. What do we know about the saga?

★ It looks like a key part of the *Fantastic Beasts* movies will be Dumbledore's past relationship with Gellert Grindelwald - the Hogwarts professor sends former student Newt Scamander on a mission because he "can't move against Grindelwald" himself. It seems to be building up to the epic battle between Dumbledore and Grindelwald in 1945, mentioned in *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows*. Surely it can't be a coincidence it happens the same year as the end of World War II...

★ JK Rowling has confirmed that Grindelwald will become a figurehead for the Nazis, who were known historically to be fascinated by mysticism. This could tie the Wizarding and Muggle worlds together during a dark time in human history.

★ Throughout the course of the movies, we will learn more about characters with familiar names. Rowling's said that Tom Riddle's childhood will be explored, as well as how he came to be Lord Voldemort. Meanwhile the story of Scamander brothers Newt and Theseus is seemingly tied up with Leta Lestrange - the great-grandmother of Voldemort disciple Bellatrix Lestrange.

★ One of the biggest twists in the trailer is Voldemort's snake and future horcrux Nagini being revealed in human form - she's a Maledictus, a carrier of a blood curse that will eventually turn her into a beast permanently. At this point, she's a circus attraction who can transform at will, but her time is apparently running out.

★ After a curious fan tweeted Rowling asking her to clarify the number of movies in the sequence, the author replied "5. Five. Cinq. Funf. Cinco. Cinque." Is this a hint to the possible locations of the three remaining movies? We know *The Crimes Of Grindelwald* is set primarily in Paris, on the back of New York. Should the cast be looking forward to trips to Germany, Spain and Italy in the future?

Krishna Chauhan



Important lessons
in being a dapper
wizard ensued.



Jeez, stop
canoodling
already.



Sometimes she
secretly looked
at pictures of
sexy wizards.

Claudia Kim plays
Nagini in her
human form.

It's so annoying
when an ex keeps
drunk calling you.



WAR OF THE WIZARDS

Who is the Wizarding World's greatest Big Bad?

By Krishna Chauhan

GRINDELWALD

FULL NAME
Gellert Grindelwald

BORN
1883

EDUCATION
Durmstrang Institute
(expelled at 16)

MISSION STATEMENTS

- ★ Find the Deathly Hallows and lead a magical revolution where witches and wizards rule Muggles
- ★ Capture the New York Obscurial (aka Credence Barebone) to harness its powers

POWERS

- ★ Master duellist and strategist
- ★ Exceptionally skilled at occlumency
- ★ Manipulation

WEAKNESSES

- ★ Albus Dumbledore

VOLDEMORT

FULL NAME
Tom Marvolo Riddle
(an anagram of "I am Lord Voldemort")

BORN
1926

EDUCATION
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

MISSION STATEMENTS

- ★ Kill the Boy Who Lived, Harry Potter
- ★ Enslave and kill Muggles
- ★ Promote prejudice among the wizarding community

POWERS

- ★ Speaking parseltongue
- ★ Mastery of legilimency and occlumency
- ★ Near-immortality thanks to his seven Horcruxes

WEAKNESSES

- ★ Harry Potter
- ★ Albus Dumbledore

HEROES & INSPIRATIONS

ANDY WEIR

THE MAN BEHIND *THE MARTIAN* TELLS TANAVI PATEL WHAT TOOK HIM TO THE STARS

Portrait by Erin Lubin

SCIENTIFIC INFODUMPS DON'T have to be dull. No, really, especially if you're reading a book by *The Martian* and *Artemis* author Andy Weir.

"If I can just find an excuse to have somebody talking about science I can usually make it interesting," he reckons, "because it's interesting to me. Also I've found a reader will forgive any amount of dry exposition if you have a joke every couple of paragraphs."

Despite suffering from jet lag when *SFX* meets him in his New York hotel, the cheeky wit and touch of mischief in Weir's *New York Times* bestsellers are very much in evidence. His geek credentials are also to the fore as he enthuses about his new role as a talking head on the inspirational National Geographic series *Mars*. "I'm one of the Big Thinkers, which is kind of an honorific I'm not sure that I'm entitled to, but I can sit around and talk about Mars and space travel all day."

A good time then to talk about inspirations closer to home...

ISAAC ASIMOV, ROBERT HEINLEIN AND ARTHUR C CLARKE

In terms of writers, they are my holy trinity, which is funny because they are one generation back from what you would expect from my age. But I grew up reading my dad's science fiction collection, so those are the writers I was reading as a kid and everything's awesome when you're 10. So that's what really inspired me. I read all the *Robots* stuff by Asimov, the *Robots Of Dawn* series but also *I, Robot*. For Heinlein, before he got older and became a perverted weird guy, the early stuff was really cool, like *Have*

Space Suit – *Will Travel*, *Farmer In The Sky*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Red Planet*. *Red Planet* was the first time I ever read a book from start to finish in a single day. And it was a school day too, around tenth grade, so I was in the back of the class reading – I was not a great student! One of my favourites of Clarke's is *Rendezvous With Rama*, and I also really like his short stories. Nowadays I feel like science fiction has been taken over by dystopian young adult miseriescapes where the world is a fascist dictatorship and can only be saved by teenagers doing weird shit. But I liked Asimov's aspirational views of the future.

ECONOMICS

In addition to my other elements of nerdity I'm an economics nerd, and that's a really hard thing to make an exciting story about. Or it can be exciting to me but it's not going to be exciting to anyone else, and as we learned from *The Phantom Menace* you don't start a story with a description of supply side economics, it's not enthralling. But to me, economics is what drives civilisations forward, and that's why for *Artemis* when I'm like, "I want to make a story about a city on the Moon," at first I was unable to move forward until I came up with an economic foundation for why there would be a city on the Moon. There are tons and tons of economics articles that I like to read online, and also a few years back the Greek debt crisis,

which is still going on – that became my favourite soap opera! Every morning I would get up and eagerly read the news for what's going on and think, "Oh no, they did that?" It's interesting – it's conflict, it's massive, it's multi-national and it's also really testing the whole concept of the Euro.

DOCTOR WHO

It's my favourite science fiction show. That had a big effect on me growing up as a kid. Time travel is one of my favourite devices to have in a story. But I write hard science fiction, realistic science fiction, so I'd have to really work at it to come up with a time travel story, but I have ideas. I would love to write an episode of *Doctor Who*. I've told Chris Chibnall I'll do it for free! I'll do it for £1!

STAR TREK

Artemis is supposed to take place in the 2080s, so it's kind of hard to explain a lot of pop culture from today still being relevant then, but I do figure *Star Trek* would still be relevant because *Star Trek* is 50 years old now, and there are plenty of dorks out there, myself included, who can give you stupid little details about the classic series, so why wouldn't it survive another 50 years? It's a classic, just like *Casablanca*. I like classic *Trek* the best, mainly because that's what I grew up on – *Trek*

re-runs. I was already a teenager by the time *Star Trek: The Next Generation* came out. "Mirror, Mirror" is one of my favourite episodes. The idea of a parallel universe full of evil people – they invented that, right there, in that one episode. Now it's just a trope, everybody does it, but the concept of an evil parallel universe and the idea that your evil twin has a goatee came from that! →



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNELS/ERIN LUBIN



Neil deGrasse Tyson:
no jacket required.

Weir wants to
groove every
time he hears
The Beatles.

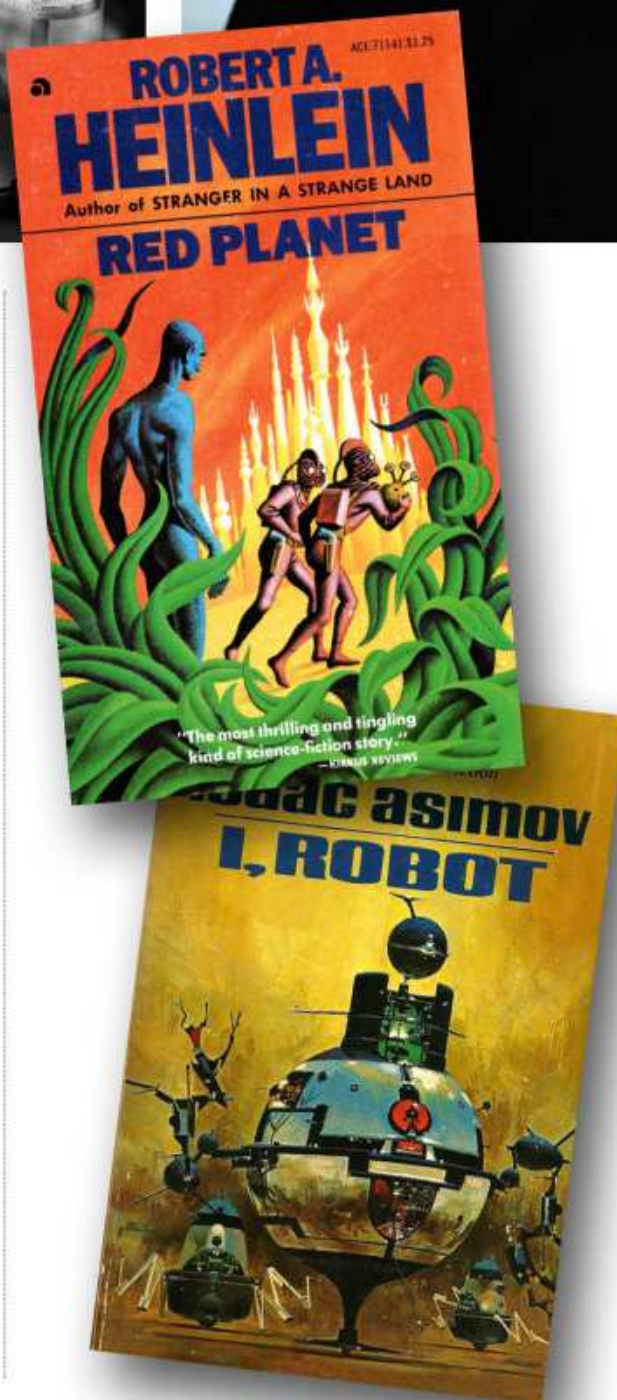
Terry Pratchett
was a huge
influence on
a young Weir.

THE BEATLES

Right now I have this struggling moustache going on because I'm trying to grow it for a Halloween costume. My friends and I are going to be the Beatles. We already have the outfits to be the *Sergeant Pepper* album cover. I'm John, so I have to get this John moustache going. I love the Beatles, they are my favourite band ever. *Sergeant Pepper* is my favourite album though I really like *Abbey Road*. I love the way their music sounds, though none of it spoke to me on a personal level; I just really like the music. I'm not into their personal lives – that's their business.

TERRY PRATCHETT

I know I'm heavily inspired by Terry Pratchett. I always forget to mention him because people are always talking in the context of sci-fi, but I was definitely inspired by his style of humour. Pratchett will go off in random footnotes that are hysterical. One is where there's a character walking across the Brass Bridge in Ankh-Morpork. There's a footnote that goes something like, "The Brass Bridge has eight rampant hippos and it's been there longer than anyone can remember; no one remembers who built it the city is so old. But it is said by many that if ever the city's in danger those hippos will come to life and run away!" [Laughs].



There are just unexpected twists and turns in the humour that I love.

DAVE BERRY

Dave Berry used to write columns in the order of 1,000 words long for the *Miami Herald*. Of course in the '80s when I was reading it you'd have these compendiums, so I had a book full of columns. It's hard for me to describe what it is but he was just really funny. There was this one time in real life where this whale washed up in somewhere like Oregon; it died, and so now there's this whale carcass on the beach. Berry's article on this is hilarious as he writes, "So they decided to call the Oregon Highway Patrol, on the theory that whales and highways are similar in that they're both big things."

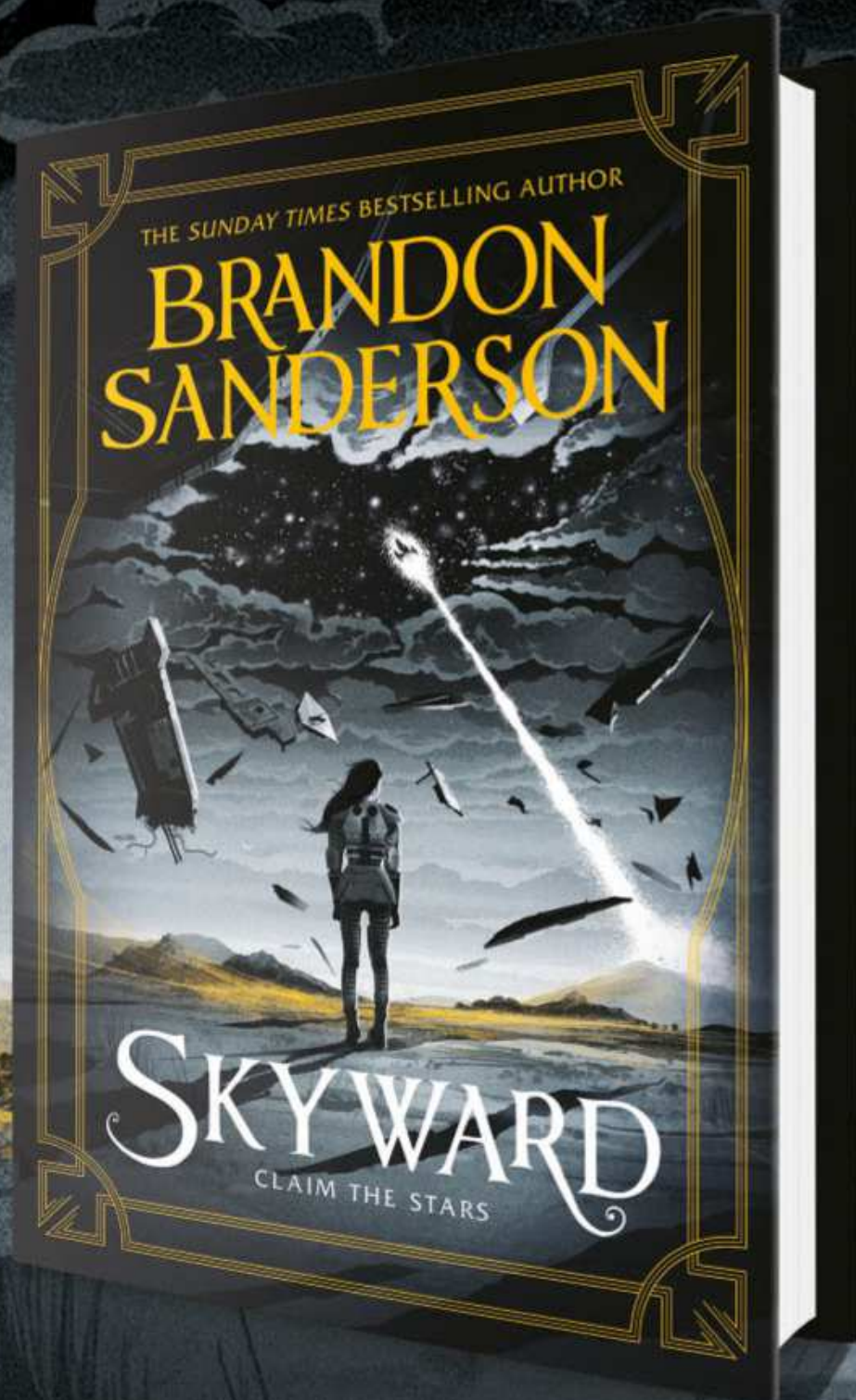
NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON

He is one of the most well-known astronomers in pop culture. I've done many events with him. He's a very good communicator and extremely charismatic. If you're in a room with him you just fall in love with him. He's got a presence to him that draws you to him and makes you want to listen to anything he has to say. ●

Mars season two premieres on National Geographic on 11 November.

GETTY (2)

FOR EVERYONE WHO'S EVER
FELT LIKE AN OUTSIDER.
THIS IS YOUR TIME.
CLAIM THE STARS.



‘Ender’s Game
meets **Flight of the
Navigator** in an
exciting start to a
new sci-fi series’

Fantasy Book Review

THE BRAND-NEW NOVEL FROM *SUNDAY TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

BRANDON SANDERSON

Available from
Waterstones





CITY-LIVING

PETER JACKSON IS BRINGING THE POST-APOCALYPTIC SPECTACLE OF **MORTAL ENGINES** TO THE BIG SCREEN. BRYAN CAIRNS IS ON SET AS CIVILISATION FIGHTS TO SURVIVE...

PETER JACKSON EXCELS AT EPIC STORYTELLING. Every frame of his *Lord Of The Rings* and *Hobbit* trilogies – from the massive set-pieces and dazzling visual eye candy, to the lavish costumes and compelling characters – conveys that message, loud and clear. Now Jackson's taking another crack at world-building with the sprawling fantasy saga *Mortal Engines*. Based on Philip Reeve's young adult novel of the same name, the project has been on Jackson's radar for more than 10 years. Truthfully, the New Zealand native always planned on stepping behind the camera for it, but a hectic schedule prevented that from ever happening. "It was probably one of the movies I would've done during the time that *The Hobbit* was being shot," Jackson tells *SFX* on the *Mortal Engines* set. "But I ended up directing that and it sort of took me out of commission for five years. And coming out of it we were faced with a situation where the rights to the book, which we've had for a decade or so, were due to expire, and we had to move fast." →

“It’s a love story, but I also just like the idea of seeing big cities eating each other”

They knew the bus stop was around here somewhere.

Yet Jackson’s fingerprints remain all over *Mortal Engines*. He wrote and produced the movie alongside regular collaborators Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens. Furthermore, they tapped Jackson’s protégé, Weta digital effects veteran Christian Rivers, for his directorial debut.

“Christian is a filmmaker I want to support,” says Jackson. “He’s worked with me for 25 years and he needed to direct something soon. He shot the short film called ‘Feeder’, if you’ve seen it. It’s probably on YouTube. It’s great. And, he’s done storyboards for me forever, since *Braindead*.

“Also, Fran and I ended up after five years on *The Hobbit* with so many other projects we wanted to write and develop ourselves,” he adds. “In fact, we went straight into another movie with me directing it. Again, it took me two years out of commission. Whereas here we write the script as producers, which allows us to write our other scripts and screenplays, while Christian does all the hard work.”

It’s June 2017 when *SFX* travels to Stone Street Studios in Wellington, New Zealand to visit the set of *Mortal Engines*. The tale takes place in a post-apocalyptic future, roughly around the year 3800, where a cataclysmic event has almost annihilated civilisation. Out of those ashes, survivors live in “traction cities”, enormous mobile metropolises on wheels that



Meet the brave (and very attractive) band of rebels.

roam the harsh landscapes. These cities prey on tinier towns, essentially devouring their supplies and integrating the people. One of the imposing and predatory cities, London, dwarfs almost everyone else.

Today’s sequence involves the human element of the narrative. London has gobbled up a smaller quarry. In the lower levels, affectionately referred to as “the Gut,” the captured residents are being wrangled. It’s here that a masked, knife-wielding Hester (Hera Hilmar) attempts to assassinate respected politician and head of the Guild of Historians, Thaddeus Valentine (Hugo Weaving). Hester blames him for disfiguring

her as a child, as well as being responsible for the death of her mother. When Historians apprentice Tom (Robert Sheehan) intervenes, Hester fails at her mission, but still manages to escape. Unfortunately for Tom, Thaddeus cannot allow anyone to link him to Hester, or his past crime. He consequently pushes Tom down a chute, exiling him to the outside world.

Now alone and on unfamiliar ground, Tom and Hester forge an unlikely partnership in order to navigate the hostile terrains, return to London and put the kibosh on a conspiracy, one that jeopardises the traction cities’ way of life. To make matters worse, Shrike [Stephen Lang] – an undead soldier reanimated with





A bit ambitious flying through there, isn't it?



We hope you get poked in the eye with a sharp stick.



Who wouldn't want to rue the end of the world against a beautiful sunset?



THE REVOLUTIONARY

Hugo Weaving is Valentine

What was your initial impression of Valentine?

The character incorporates a great kind of broad spectrum of humanity. He's set up as being a hero, in a way. But, he kind of travels to another place. So, it's partly concealing certain things from the audience. You have to make a psychological sense of that for yourself as an actor and make the character real.

What is Valentine's world view?

Valentine is someone who can really see that tractionism is dead. They are in dire trouble. They have starvation problems.

Valentine actually doesn't believe in tractionism or London. If we see him as a revolutionary, as someone who is trying to push the boundaries and trying to change the whole paradigm, then that's more interesting. That's what I've been doing.

Can you tease about the final showdown between Valentine and Hester?

You're in a climactic point in the film where London is charging towards this war and Valentine's trying to get away. Hester's trying to stop him. She's tethered his airship to London. He's trying to cut the rope. She has a gun on him. There's a war about to erupt. Within the scene, Valentine starts to talk her down, and then starts to take her back into her childhood. Then, within that scene, we go into a flashback where she sees Valentine 15 years before with her mother. It's actually a loving situation. So, the scene travels internally into her brain. It's this mesmerizing thing within this crazy world going on.

Bryan Cairns

mechanical parts, who also shares a past with Hester – is hot on the pair's trail.

"This is one movie where I hope it's successful enough that we get to do the other stories because the story mushrooms in such unexpected ways in the future books," Jackson says. "I really hope we get to make those films."

"At its core, it's a love story," he continues. "It's an unlikely love story. It's about a young woman who doesn't really think she will ever find love, and she finds it through a very unexpected way, in the middle of this chaotic, strange world that we're in. I also just like the idea of seeing big cities eating each other. There's a personal story and there's the spectacle, which is going to be pretty amazing."

STRICT MACHINE

As expected, the *Mortal Engines* screenplay takes liberties with the source material – all with author Reeve's blessing. Most notably, the key characters are no longer teenagers. Instead, they now fall into a more captivating "*Star Wars* protagonist age group".

"We've aged it up," confirms Jackson. "The book is written for quite a young audience, to some degree, you know? I just don't think anyone wants to see another teenage dystopian movie anytime soon. We made it a little more adult. So, in some respects, it differs from the book in quite a few places. Philip comes out here, and we always

send him script revisions as we do them, and he always seems to be very pleased with them."

To bring *Mortal Engines* to the big screen, the production has constructed more than 63 sets. Some require computer animation to extend their volume or allow them to reach the sky. Others are more practical. A few rest on gimbals to simulate the motion of these roving cities speeding across the lands.

One gigantic soundstage serves as the set for the London Museum. Glass cases display artefacts from our present day, including smartphones, videogame consoles, CDs, laptops and even *Despicable Me* Minions, which are labelled "ancient deities".

Obviously, back in 2008, the movie industry was vastly different. The technology alone has improved in leaps and bounds. Jackson admits *Mortal Engines'* scope could never have been executed in the same manner as it is now.

"One thing that's probably happened in the last 10 years in terms of digital effects, and I'm sure we'll see it on this film, is the way digital humans can be made for a lot of the big stunt and action stuff," Jackson shares. "Even just some of the stunt scenes that we've been doing on the second unit... 'Okay, we'll do this and this, but this shot has to be CG,' because you want it to be something that'd be so hard to shoot. "That's one development," says Jackson. "Because by 2008, we had made *Lord Of The Rings*. We had done *King Kong*. We knew what we were doing. But, certainly →



“This movie’s on a scale where you can’t always build sets. A city a mile long on wheels?”

having digital CG people and digital doubles are the things that have really clicked over the last few years.

“And, I’m sure we’ll be seeing quite a bit of that in some of the people I’ve shot on this film,” Jackson continues. “Because this movie is on a scale where you can’t always build sets. I mean, we’re building as many sets as we can, but a city that’s a mile long on wheels... You just can’t build anything that size. So, it’s going to be great to be able to do that and to have it full of realistic-looking people. And you won’t be able to tell they aren’t real.”

ON THE ROAD

Mortal Engines adapts the first of four novels by Reeve. That means there’s still plenty of material to mine and room to grow in additional instalments. As a result, Jackson and his co-writers intentionally planted seeds that will pay off down the road.

“That is where we have an advantage where Philip didn’t because when he wrote the first book, I don’t think he knew he was going to write the other books,” Jackson notes. “I think he wrote that one book as a story. The fact that people liked it, and he thought he had more story to tell, he carried on. But, we have benefitted knowing what’s in the other books. So there are little subtle things we’re doing that will help us flow into the others.”

As far as Jackson is concerned, *Mortal Engines* is firing on all cylinders. If the movie runs away at the box office this winter and there are sequels, he tells *SFX*, “I’d love to direct the last one if we get that far. But, by then, if Christian’s directing them, I’ll let him decide. We’d produce, for sure. And obviously Christian would be having first offer to direct and hopefully he would.”

In the meantime, Jackson intends to turn away from blockbuster studio films and return to his low-budget roots in the vein of his 1994 film *Heavenly Creatures*.

“That’s one of the reasons why I’m not directing this,” Jackson concludes. “Fran and I just want time to write. We’ve got a few projects, which are all kind of museum stories, like relatively smallish. These are stories we want to develop, and we aren’t getting any younger. We thought this would be the best plan, to have Christian direct this. But, yeah, the next two or three movies I direct myself are probably going to be quite small!”

Mortal Engines is in cinemas from 8 December.



SKY PILOT

Philip Reeve returns to the literary world of *Mortal Engines*

When Philip Reeve visited the *Mortal Engines* film set in New Zealand, it didn’t just demonstrate to him how his 2001 novel was being translated onto the big screen. It also provided the inspiration for his new short story collection. Set in the same post-apocalyptic world, *Night Flights* was inspired by a conversation the author had with Jihae, who plays rebel aviator Anna Fang.

“Jihae was lovely, and she will be superb as Anna,” says Reeve. “But it made me wish there was more of her in the book, as she was so strong that I ended up slightly sidelining her so that the younger characters have to take charge of things. So when my publishers Scholastic wanted to republish a longish short story called ‘Traction City’, which I first wrote as a World Book Day book a few years ago, I thought it would be a chance to put Anna at the centre of things.”

Having extensively revised the original version, “Traction City” is now the second of *Night Flight*’s three stories. “It’s set aboard the Traction City of London and features a young and rather angry Anna, who is now at the heart of the action,” explains Reeve. “I’ve also written a new story called ‘Frozen Heart’, about how Anna escaped from the slave-holds of Arkangel – events which are referred to several

times in the *Mortal Engines* quartet, but this is the first time the truth has been revealed! The third story, ‘Terth Of The Sea’, has an older Anna working as an intelligence agent for the Anti-Traction League and encountering a new type of predator town.”

Reeve has also collaborated with Jeremy Levett on *The Illustrated World Of Mortal Engines*, a visual guide to *Mortal Engines* that’s based on the encyclopedia-esque Traction Codex that the pair released online a few years ago. It’s lavishly illustrated by Aedel Fakhrie, Ian McQue, Philip Varbanov, Amir Zand, David Wyatt and Rob Turpin and with maps by Lowtuff and Maxime Plasse. In Reeve’s words, it answers questions such as ‘Mobile cities – how is that even a thing?’ “It’s been a great way of expanding the *Mortal Engines* world and filling in a lot of history which the novels only hint at,” he continues. “It also gives a glimpse at how Traction Cities have developed in places my heroes have never visited. Places like South America and Australia. And there are quite a lot of puns as well!” **Stephen Jewell**

Night Flights and The Illustrated World Of Mortal Engines are out now.



Brought



To Book

M.R. CAREY

The novelist and scriptwriter tells us why SFF isn't escapism

Words by Jonathan Wright /// Photography by Olly Curtis

One of the ideas that people have about genre fiction is that it's essentially about escapism. Not true, according to MR Carey. "Ursula Le Guin said it best," he says, "people who don't read science fiction think that science fiction stories are excursions and they're not, they're incursions, they're digging into the real world." This is a statement you could also apply to Carey's latest, *Someone Like Me*, a novel that plays games with readers' expectations as it finds new ways to tackle that hoary old psychological thriller plot of someone with multiple personalities – dissociative identity disorder in current parlance.

"It's a genre staple and I think it's been handled badly far more often than it's been handled well," says Carey. "There's a lot of cod psychology that goes into these stories, bearing in mind there's huge disagreement within the psychiatric profession as to whether dissociative identity disorder even exists, or if it's just a misnomer for some other condition, or something iatrogenic, something that's been created by the relationship between the patient and the therapist."

It's an idea Carey explores through the eyes of Liz, "a woman who seems to be having some kind of psychotic break with extreme personality shifts, which she experiences as something else taking her over and acting through her". Deepening the theme of mental illness, and the way that treatment and condition interact in ways that are culturally as well as scientifically determined, another character is also key to the story. Fran is a teenager suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after being kidnapped and "really too young to process what was happening", but now wants to know what really happened.

URBAN DECAY

As for the book's setting, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this also plays in here. Not only is the USA the place where most diagnoses of dissociative identity disorder are made, but it's located in the country's so-called Rust Belt, an area that's long been suffering the effects of deindustrialisation – social breakdown, drug abuse, depopulation. "I wanted to set the story in a blasted urban environment and some of the inner city areas of Pittsburgh are among the most deprived neighbourhoods in America, and possibly in the developed world," says Carey.

The 2008 global crisis only made things worse for the poorest, so that city dwellers of whatever class are more than ever aware of the invisible borders that separate well-to-do neighbourhoods from those where you think twice about exploring even in the daytime. "My wife works

in an archive and she's shown me [a map of London] designed for the use of out-of-towners to stop them getting into serious trouble, so it was a map of affluent areas versus thieves' nests and rookeries, places where you shouldn't go," he says. "What was striking was that all the safe and affluent areas were along main thoroughfares, so you would only have to step away for a couple of blocks, take the wrong turning into an alley, and suddenly you're in a very different world. And it sort of feels like that's happening again, that in a sense our urban geography is going back in time."

FANTASY NARRATIVE

No wonder, perhaps, that we all look for ways to explain what's happening. As we discuss the way that regression therapies may actually make people remember things that didn't happen, Carey moves on to the idea of how narratives impact on our lives. "I tend to think narratives aren't just the most important determinant of our reality, narratives are our reality," he says. "We think we live in the real world, that is very seldom the case. You can visit the real world for short periods of time, if you take special equipment, most of the time we live in stories that we tell ourselves, the Brexit narrative, for example, Trump's Make America Great Again."

"The great thing about those narratives is once you get people invested in them, they have a massive inertia. All of these things coming out about Trump's past, all of his own appalling behaviour, do nothing to shift those who have bought into his narrative, there's too much of their own social identity now locked into the narrative."

Not that a novelist is ever likely to shift public opinion to that great an extent, but Carey's growing success – and he's now in demand as a screenwriter in the wake of adapting his own novel *The Girl With All The Gifts* for cinema, while he also continues his work in comics with *Barbarella* and *The Highest House* – means his take on reality, his *incursions*, now have a wider audience than ever.

Carey remembers going to see David Simon, creator of *The Wire* who also wrote *Homicide: A Year On The Killing Streets*, give a talk at the BFI. "Someone asked him what was the difference between writing *The Wire* and writing as a journalist for the *Baltimore Sun*, where he used to be on staff," remembers Carey. "And he said, 'Oh it's so much easier to tell the truth when you're writing TV drama than it is as a journalist.' And there's something profound about that. I think genre fiction allows you to get under the skin of the real world in some really, really useful ways." ●

Someone Like Me is published by Orbit in November.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born

→ 1959

From

→ Liverpool

Greatest Hits

→ After initially finding success in comics, Carey's breakthrough as a novelist came with his *Felix Castor* series, which he's now adapting for a potential TV series.

Random Fact

→ Carey is at work on several screen projects and a new novel, about which he'll say only that it's a post-apocalyptic, coming-of-age story set in Yorkshire.





BROUGHT TO BOOK
M.R. CAREY

“WE THINK WE
LIVE IN THE
REAL WORLD
BUT THAT’S
VERY SELDOM
THE CASE”

Time Machine

THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND
FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

1979



HG WELLS AND JACK THE RIPPER
WALK INTO A TIME MACHINE...
ANDREW OSMOND REMEMBERS
A HIGH CONCEPT CLASSIC

“YOU HAVEN’T GONE forward, Herbert, you’ve gone back... You, with your absurd notions of a perfect and harmonious society. It’s drivel. The world has caught up with me and surpassed me. Ninety years ago, I was a freak; today I’m an amateur. The future isn’t what you thought; it’s what I am.”

So declares history’s most infamous (though eloquent) serial killer, Jack the Ripper, to science fiction author HG Wells. At this point in *Time After Time*, the two legends are sitting in a hotel room in 1979 San Francisco – the future for these Victorians – and watching the world’s horrors on TV.

It’s an anti-*Star Trek* lesson, about humanity’s inability to escape its violent heritage. Fittingly, both characters are played by future *Trek* villains. Jack the Ripper is played by David Warner, who would torture Picard in *The Next Generation* (“How many lights do you see?”). HG Wells is played by fellow Brit actor Malcolm McDowell, who’d kibosh Kirk in the film *Star Trek: Generations*.

LONDON FOG

Time After Time doesn’t start in San Francisco, but in the London of 1893. It’s dank and foggy, but McDowell’s youthful Wells is an optimist. He fervently believes the world will become a rational utopia of world peace and brotherly love. In fact, Wells is so convinced of this that he builds his own time machine (a charming steampunk capsule that looks like a mini-submarine) in the basement of his house.

Summoning his gentleman friends to a farewell supper, Wells announces his departure, but there’s an interruption. Police arrive, announcing there’s been a murder nearby by Jack the Ripper. To Wells’ astonishment, damning evidence is found in the briefcase of one of his guests, Wells’ friend and chess-playing rival Doctor John Stevenson (played by Warner).

Stevenson seems to have vanished from the scene, till Wells has a dreadful thought. Sure enough, his time machine has vanished from his home, and Wells realises he’s let the Ripper loose on the future, on the utopia of his dreams.

However, the machine rematerialises, empty. (Wells has built it so that it will always make a return trip, except when a special key is used.) Girding his loins, the shy author embarks on his pursuit of the Ripper, ending in the year 1979. He’ll find that the 1970s aren’t the utopia that he expected. But at least San Francisco’s sunnier than London...

Time After Time was released amid the ’70s wave of SF/fantasy blockbusters: *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Superman*. But Warner didn’t think of *Time After Time* as a sci-fi film. “I saw



OUT of TIME THE TV REMAKE THAT WENT NOWHERE



In spring 2017, ABC aired a TV remake of *Time After Time*, taking Wells and the Ripper to contemporary New York and adding an arc plot, a conspiracy somehow involving the Ripper called “Project Utopia”. Wells was played by Freddie Stroma (Cormac in the later Harry Potter films) and the Ripper by Josh Bowman. The 12-part series was canned in America after five episodes, though the remaining episodes reportedly aired in Spain and Portugal. Arguably, there’d already been an homage to *Time After Time* in the 1990s series *The New Adventures Of Superman*, where Lois and Clark are sometimes helped by a gentlemanly time-travelling HG Wells.

it as a romantic thriller, with slight science fiction connections,” he tells *SFX*.

Warner adds, “Some years later I met Robert Zemeckis (*Back To The Future*) who said *Time After Time* was his second favourite time travel movie! I believe at the time it was marketed as a romantic film, which perhaps didn’t reflect its mix of genres.” Zemeckis would borrow one of *Time After Time*’s actors to up the romance in *Back to the Future*. We’ll get to her later.

FLIGHT OF FANCY

Two of *Time After Times*’s tricks were to reinvent a classic story – Wells’ 1895 novella *The Time Machine* – and to blur fact and fiction, conflating the real Wells with his own nameless hero. (In the original book, the protagonist is called the “Time Traveller” and he travels not to the 20th century, but to the 8,000th century and beyond.)

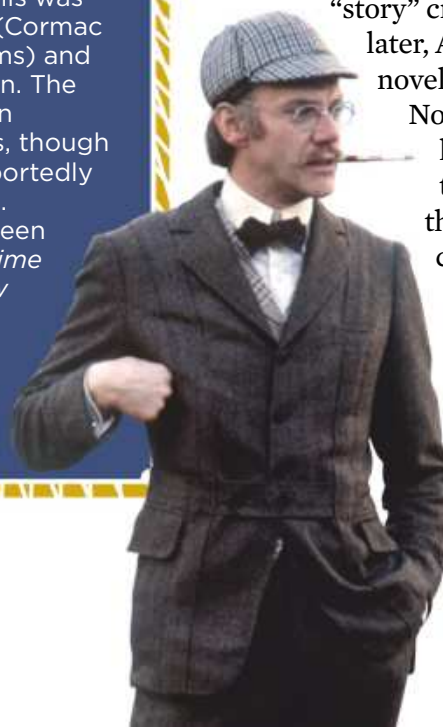
Time After Times’s director, Nicholas Meyer, had already used these kind of story tricks in a bestselling novel that wasn’t SF. Called *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, it imagined Sherlock Holmes as a psycho analysed by Freud. Published in 1974, the book was filmed two years later (directed by Herbert Ross).

“Jack the Ripper was interesting to me as a symbol of malevolence and destruction”

Then Meyer received a phone call from an old university acquaintance, Karl Alexander. He was writing a story about HG Wells and Jack the Ripper, influenced by Meyer’s approach when writing *Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. Meyer read the early pages and an outline, and swiftly optioned it as a film.

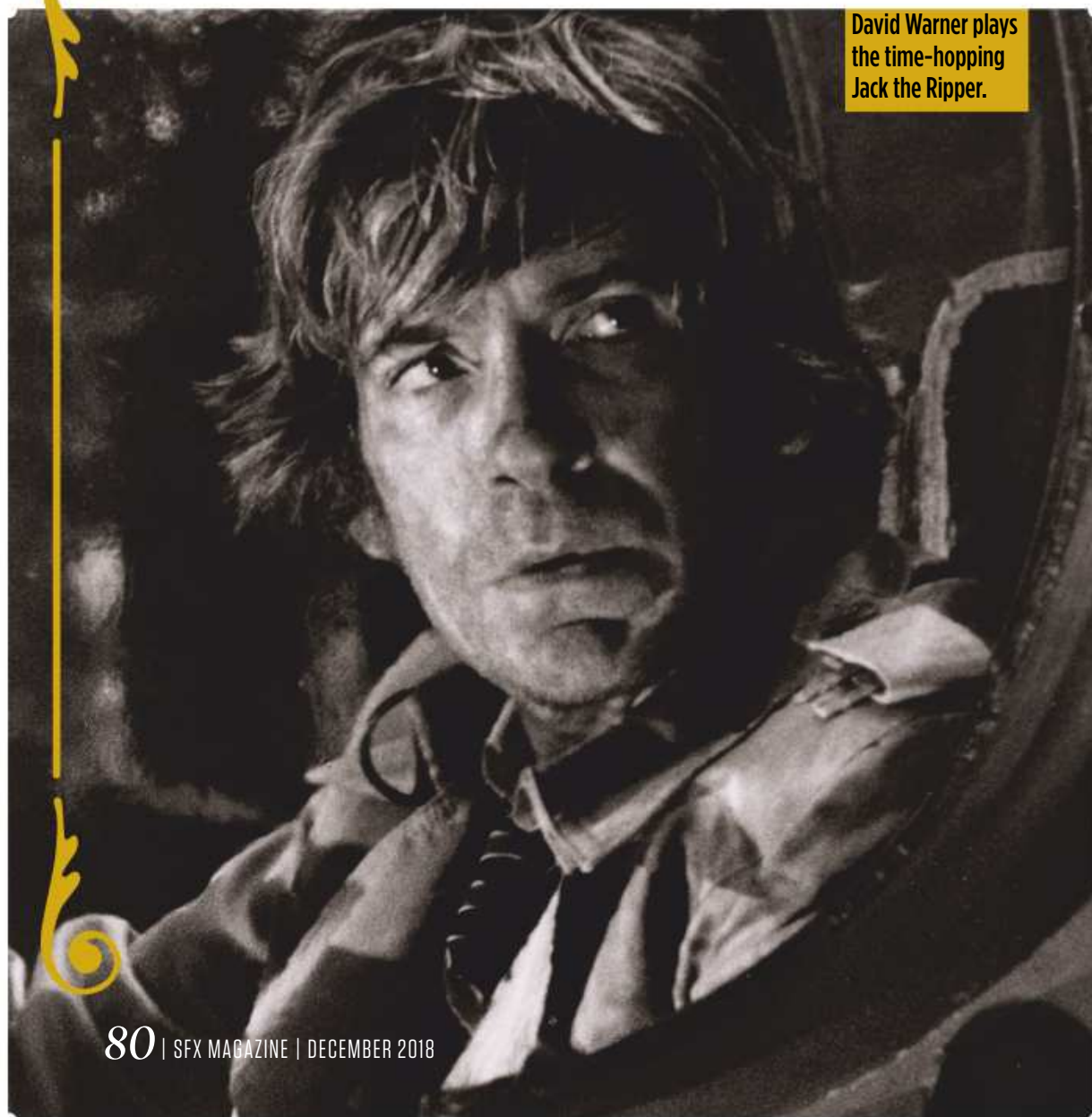
To complicate matters, Alexander’s novel had originated as a short story that he co-wrote with another author, Steve Hayes, who has a “story” credit on the film. Thirty years later, Alexander wrote a sequel novel, *Jaclyn The Ripper*.

No doubt the Ripper angle helped to sell the film. Meyer, though, had little interest in the enigmatic Jack. In a contemporary interview, Meyer said, “As a criminal he was strictly small potatoes compared with Hitler or Idi Amin – which is what he realises, of course, in the film. He was only →





Malcolm McDowell went against type to play HG Wells.



David Warner plays the time-hopping Jack the Ripper.



Wells has to grapple with being a Victorian man in a modern age.



This is perhaps the cutest time machine we've ever seen.

interesting to me as a symbol of malevolence, of the destructive side of man's nature."

From this perspective, the hotel scene – which happens after Wells arrives in 1979 and tracks the Ripper down – is the central scene in *Time After Time*. According to Meyer, the scene was influenced by his memory of seeing TV reports of the murder of Martin Luther King in 1968, and how even this tragedy was horribly normalised by TV advertising.

"I sat on my bed and was truly appalled by what I was seeing," Meyer said. "People were screaming, and there was blood, and suddenly all of this was interrupted by someone who says 'Miami for 25 dollars less.' It's preposterous, it's George Orwell time, it scares the fuck out of me."

Warner thinks the hotel confrontation was a great scene, but for him, "It was the whole script that encouraged me to do the film. The thing I remember most about it was my struggle to remember the lines!"

TOUCH OF EVIL

Warner's version of the Ripper is no eye-rolling caricature. For most of the film, he's composed, charismatic, and even perversely dashing. At one point he dons a white disco suit that might have been borrowed from John Travolta. It's a very long way from a character skulking around foggy Whitechapel.

While Warner has said in the past that he's bored of being thought of as a "villain" actor, *SFX* wonders how he'd rate the Ripper among the evil roles he's played. "If you insist on rating it – I'd say number one," he says. "The whole script was quite superior to any other villain roles I'd played."

"When I first met Nicholas Meyer and the producer Herb Jaffe, they told me they wanted me to play the part, but Warner Brothers wanted Mick Jagger! Thankfully, somehow Meyer and Jaffe prevailed. Also there was the opportunity to work again with my old friend Malcolm McDowell, who by then had become a bit of a star."

Warner appreciated Meyer's no-nonsense direction. "On the first day's shooting Nicholas Meyer gathered the cast and crew together and said it was his first film, so please don't be afraid to come to him with any suggestions. I don't remember any talks with Nick about intention, motivation or any of that kind of thing. We just got on and did it."

"There was a good atmosphere on set, and Meyer was easy to work with," Warner adds. Actor and director would work together again on the sixth *Star Trek* film, *The Undiscovered Country*, in 1991.

On the effects side, the time-travel visuals for Wells' journey to the future have dated – some are even reminiscent of vintage *Doctor Who* titles. However, they're bolstered by a wonderful soundtrack, a sped-up history of



RIPPING YARNS

HE LOVES THE STARSHIP ENTERPRISE, BUT CAN'T STAND OFFICE CULTURE



Many writers have imagined Jack the Ripper surviving into a new age, as in *Psycho* author Robert Bloch's story "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" and his 1967 *Trek* episode "Wolf In The Fold." Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's grisly graphic novel *From Hell* includes a hallucinatory sequence where the Ripper, midway through his worst crime, finds himself in a modern office space. Unlike Warner's Ripper, this Jack doesn't revel in the future's violence. Instead he's appalled by the spiritless people of today. "How would I seem to you? Some antique fiend or penny dreadful horror, yet you frighten me!"

1893 through to 1979, full of audio "glimpses" of music and world events.

"I wondered how we could do time travel differently because it's usually so boring," said Meyer of the scene. "The audience just sighs and waits till it's over. I really wanted to do it differently... I thought, could we turn the theatre into a giant radio set for a minute and a half? And I had the abstract images all going forward, a tunnel type of effect, with the radio sounds of different events in history all going around them."

LOVE SPRINGS

But *Time After Time* is remembered for more than its scenes of time travel and its Wells-Ripper duel. It has an enormously charming love story, in which the timelost Wells draws the attention of bank employee Amy, played by Mary Steenburgen. Her performance was a complete surprise for Meyer, who quipped, "I wanted a fast-talking city-chippy and I got a slow-talking kook instead."

Steenburgen and McDowell are superb on screen together. The undoubted highlight is a restaurant scene where Steenburgen chatters about modern sexual relationships, while an

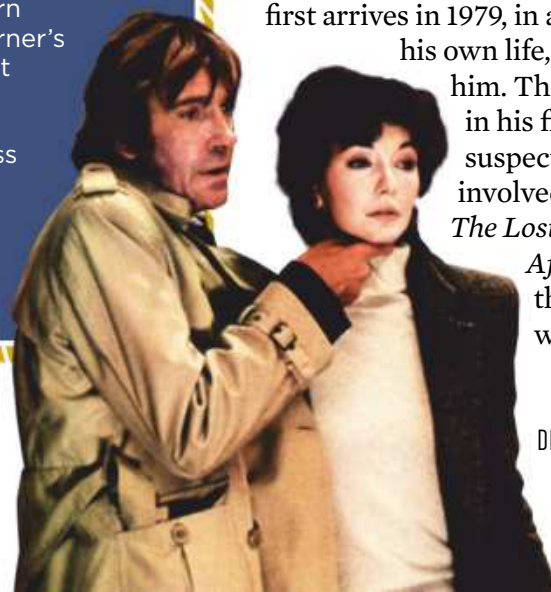
"I wondered how we could do time travel differently, because it's usually so boring"

astounded Wells, that randy prophet of free love, looks like he's been dropped into the restaurant scene from *When Harry Met Sally*.

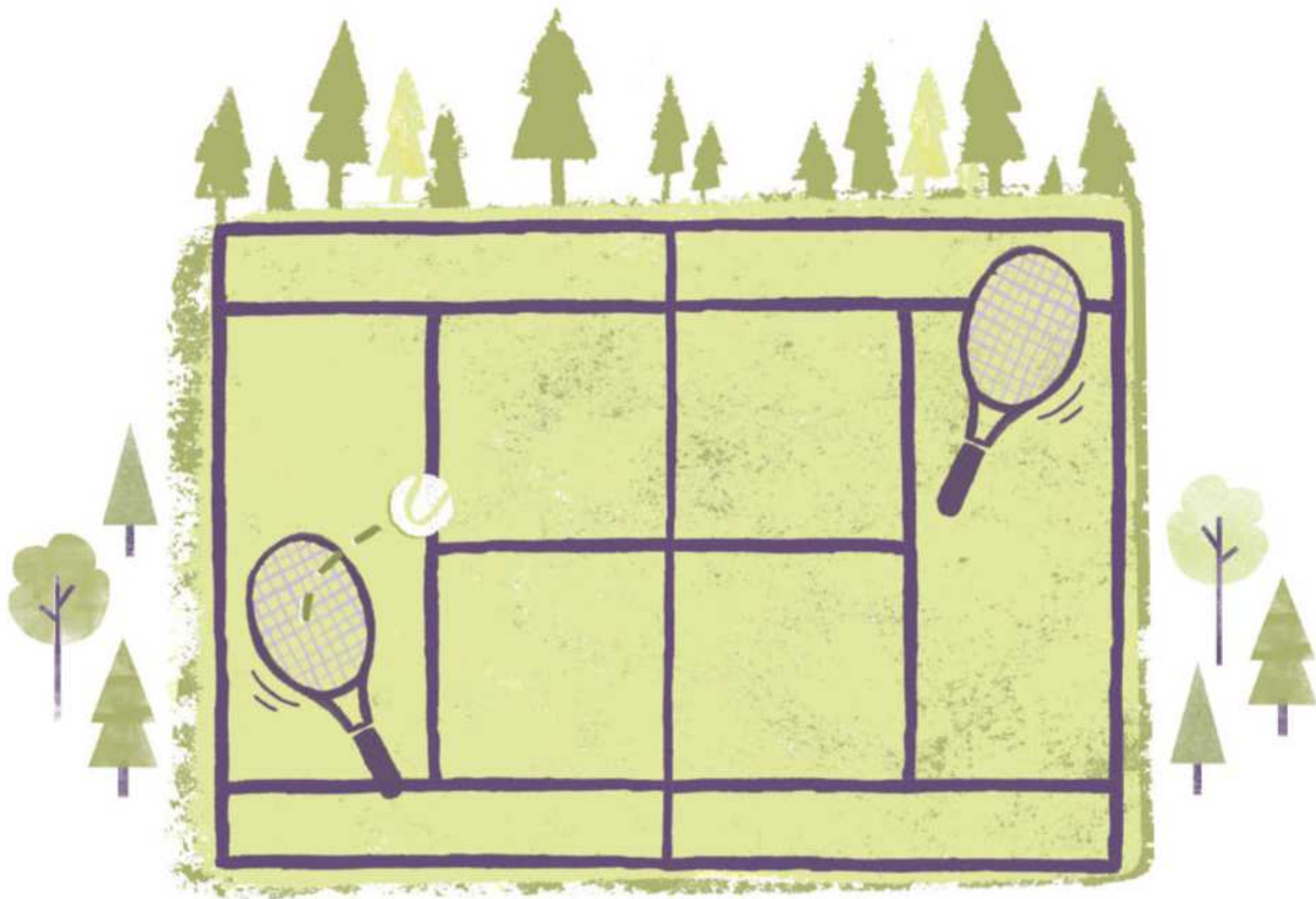
Of course, it helped that the two actors were hitting it off for real. Steenburgen and McDowell shortly began dating and were married the following year. Steenburgen would then appear in a similar role in the third *Back To The Future* film, directed by *Time After Time* fan Robert Zemeckis, where she falls for the time-travelling Doc Brown.

But there's another famous actor in *Time After Time*, or rather an actor who would be famous. Look closely at the scene where Wells first arrives in 1979, in a museum exhibit about his own life, and a little boy spots

him. The lad is Corey Feldman in his first film role, not suspecting that his future involved films like *Goonies* and *The Lost Boys*. But then, as *Time After Time* reminds us, the future's never what we expect. ●



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DEC
2018

edited by Ian Berriman

Reviews

CINEMA 84

TV 88

HOME ENTERTAINMENT 92

BOOKS 102

COMICS 108

GAMES & STUFF 110



86

SUSPIRIA

The Witch Is Back

THIS ISSUE

58

REVIEWS

Highlights



84
VENOM

→ The toothy alien symbiont comes to San Francisco in Sony's substandard *Spider-Man* spin-off.



92
INCREDIBLES 2

→ The superhero Parr family fly into living rooms as the belated Pixar sequel comes to disc.



102
SOMEONE LIKE ME

→ MR Carey's twisty horror sees an abused woman losing control to her dark side.

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ SUPERB ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ AVERAGE ★★★★★ POOR ★★★★★ TERRIBLE

VENOM

Parasite City



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 112 minutes

▶ Director **Ruben Fleischer**

▶ Cast **Tom Hardy, Michelle Williams, Riz Ahmed, Jenny Slate, Scott Haze, Melora Walters**

▶ **Looks like Sam Raimi's** spider-sense was bang on the money. The director of the first three Spider-Man movies always made it clear he was never a fan of parasitic anti-villain Venom, whose presence in *Spider-Man 3* helped to unbalance a movie that was already overloaded with villains. Now the unholy alliance of investigative journalist Eddie Brock and extraterrestrial goop is the headlining act, you can't help feeling that Raimi was right to be sceptical. Because *Venom* is a mess, the sort of lazy blockbuster-by-numbers that treats little things like story and character as disposable commodities – and feels like a cynical effort to milk Sony's lucrative *Spider-Man* rights while their super-asset is off fighting Thanos in the MCU.

As a *Spider-Man* spin-off it's totally redundant, a brand extension that shares minimal connective tissue with its web-slinging forebear. The Wallcrawler is totally absent here, and aside from a few sly nods to

Spider-Man lore, the only reason a newcomer might guess the two were linked is that Venom's eyes look vaguely like Spidey's. That was logical in the Spider-Man comics, where the alien symbiote Venom joined with Peter Parker before hooking up with Eddie Brock, but here it's more like some weird cosmic coincidence, as probable as an alien invader landing on Earth in the mood for a bit of Spidey cosplay.

Venom also looks, well, disappointing. In the comics it's easy to see why he's such a fan favourite, that simple matt black riff on the Spider-Man suit so effortlessly cool that you can understand why someone would want to put it on a t-shirt. Reimagined in live action, however, he looks like a walking oil slick with eyes, his unlikely steroidal physique and sharp, pointy teeth proving more ridiculous than iconic. That slobbering, prehensile tongue, meanwhile, is just unpleasant, like Gene Simmons from Kiss mixed with your worst nightmares.

Venom's grotesque appearance, coupled with his insatiable desire to eat people – being a hybrid of man and alien burns a lot of calories, apparently – suggests a higher horror quotient than you'd usually get in a superhero movie.



He was furious there were no eclairs on the sweet trolley!



"What do you mean there's no more pepperoni pizza?"

Yet despite having enough violence and gore to justify a 15 certificate, the movie never feels particularly scary. It also struggles to give any emotional weight to the psychological drama of its lead character's literal split personality. Tom Hardy throws himself into the role(s), turning up the "look at me acting" twitchiness when he's Eddie Brock, and having fun with the heavily treated Venom voice. Yet it never feels like an impossible struggle for a man's soul – as cannibalistic alien symbiotes with designs on world domination go, Venom is relatively benign.

“Venom looks like an oil slick with eyes”

Which leaves you wondering why the filmmakers didn't go all out to make this a *Deadpool*-style comedy. There are a couple of big laughs, maybe even the beginnings of a hilarious comic partnership, but the humour's just too low in the mix to stick in the memory.



It's never clear whether *Venom* is supposed to be a flawed hero, wisecracking anti-hero or useless villain – he's just... there.

Instead, bad guy duties are left to Riz Ahmed's Carlton Drake, a multi-billionaire businessman so obviously evil that the filmmakers missed a trick by not giving him a moustache to twirl. There's precisely zero ambiguity about his motives for using the arrival of a quintet of alien symbionts to further his supposedly world-saving medical research – he's the sort of guy who can't wait to get cracking on the human trials. It's a

colossal waste of an actor of Ahmed's talent, for whom this could have been a massive Hollywood breakthrough after being one of the standouts in *Rogue One*. Michelle Williams, as Brock's lawyer ex-fiancée Anne Weying, is left similarly short-changed by a one-dimensional role that veers from being the movie's sole voice of reason – it's hardly bulging with likeable characters – to totally sidelined.

While *Venom*'s earned enough money at the box office to make a sequel inevitable – a closing credits sting even hints at where it

might be going – the live-action Spider-verse is looking like a creative non-starter, much like almost every other cinematic shared universe that isn't the MCU. In fact, the most damning thing about *Venom* is that the brief post-credits sequence from the upcoming *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse* animation contains more wit and invention than the whole of the movie that preceded it. Where's Spidey when you need him? **Richard Edwards**

i The astronaut who survives the spacecraft crash is named Jameson – a nod to John Jameson, son of J Jonah Jameson.

2 BECOME 1

Other symbiotic relationships in sci-fi

JADZIA DAX

In *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, DS9 science officer Jadzia Dax carries the memories of the seven previous hosts of the worm-like symbiont that lives inside her. When Jadzia dies, the symbiont's passed on to new crew member Ezri.



THE JAFFA

While *Stargate: SG-1*'s Goa'uld take everything from their hosts, their larvae give human incubators the Jaffa more control. In return for providing a place to grow, the host gets extra strength and a longer life.



MELANIE AND WANDERER

In one of those insidious alien invasions where the visitors possess the human race, the "Souls" in Stephenie Meyer's *The Host* usually erase their host's personality. But Melanie Stryder's self continues to shine through after being assimilated by "Wanderer" – and the pair become unlikely BFFs.



YIVO/OUR UNIVERSE

Why settle for bonding with a single creature when you can have an entire universe? In *Futurama* special "The Beast With A Billion Backs", Lonely Yivo, a being from a dimension where it was the only living thing, shares its tentacles with all of us – which, frankly, is just a bit icky.



Richard Edwards



Their maths teacher would never set algebra homework again.

ANNA AND THE APOCALYPSE

Die School Musical

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 30 NOVEMBER

15 | 109 minutes

▶ Director **John McPhail**

▶ Cast **Ella Hunt, Malcolm Cumming, Sarah Swire, Paul Kaye**

➔ **Glee meets *Shaun Of The Dead*** in this merrily macabre Christmas musical, in which Scottish high schoolers battle zombies. While that concept might make *Scrooges* of more hardcore horror fans, *Anna And The Apocalypse* has the potential to become a breakout festive classic thanks to its fantastic cast, gleeful gore and showstopping tunes.

"It's not zombies, that's stupid," states Anna (Ella Hunt), as her dreams of ditching her small town

post-graduation are interrupted by the undead. Along with best friend (Malcolm Cumming) and a fellow, goodwill-obsessed student (the brilliant Sarah Swire), she embarks on a mission to save her classmates from the overrun high school.

Though he deftly juggles horror and humour, McPhail really shines in the musical numbers. The canteen-set "Hollywood Ending" is a cracker, while a hilariously saucy Christmas number tops *Mean Girls* for awkward stage performances. When horror comes to the fore, the film misses the odd beat, but by then you'll be putty in its hands. **Josh Winning**

i The film grew out of "Zombie Musical", a 2012 short by Ryan McHenry. Watch it on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/zombimus>

SUSPIRIA

In a class of its own

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 16 NOVEMBER

18 | 153 minutes

▶ Director **Luca Guadagnino**

▶ Cast **Dakota Johnson, Tilda Swinton, Mia Goth, Angela Winkler, Ingrid Caven**

➔ **You're on a hiding to nothing** remaking *Suspiria*. Dario Argento's 1977 horror is the object of fervid cult worship thanks to its vicious murders, lurid palette and bombastic prog score. It's a film where style is everything – but imitate that style and you'd be slated for making a knock-off.

Wisely, Luca Guadagnino's version takes the basic elements – in '70s Germany, young American Suzy/Susie (here Dakota Johnson) attends a dance school run by witches – but places them in a different setting, making use of muted colours and stately pacing, and fixing issues with the original.

In Argento's film, there's no particular *reason* why witches are running a dance school. The remake's masterstroke is to place the power of dance front and centre, with the choreography of teacher Madame Blanc (a typically extra-terrestrial Tilda Swinton) functioning like spells written in the air. The three standout sequences all focus on dance: a horrific demonstration of its power; a stunning group performance; and a gloriously overblown finale, which improves upon the original's anticlimax.

The one great issue is its length. Guadagnino's *Suspiria* is self-indulgently baggy, testing even the most patient viewer at every level: shot, scene, subplot. A story thread which sees elderly psychoanalyst Dr Klemperer investigating the school could be excised at no great loss. And the mischievous decision



Strike a pose, there's nothing to it...

to have Swinton play Klemperer too (submerged beneath old man prosthetics) proves distracting, leaving you half-expecting a plot twist – with Klemperer pulling off a mask, or being rejuvenated – that never comes. Feminine body language still reads through the make-up, and the doctor always feels like a performance rather than a character.

Ultimately, this "cover version" (as Swinton has described it) is a commendable effort, a jazz-freestyle take on a standard which throws some interesting new shapes. But it doesn't cast a spell quite as powerful as that of the original. **Ian Berriman**

i The costumes for the troupe's performance were inspired by a work by the artist Christo, and made using bondage rope!



We don't think that's a puppy or a kitten in there.

OVERLORD Monster Mash

★★★★☆

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

18 | 110 minutes

▶ Director **Julius Avery**

▶ Cast **Jovan Adepo, Wyatt Russell, Pilou Asbæk, Iain De Caestecker**

◉ **Fusing the scorched visuals of *Full Metal Jacket* with the body horror of *The Thing*, this solid B-flick is a gory diversion that thrills in the watching, but is ultimately rather forgettable.**

Still, it opens with a bravura sequence aboard a transport plane, which is shot down over France during World War II. Director Julius Avery bolsters long, jittery takes that put us right in the action alongside sensitive Private Boyce (Jovan Adepo) and no-nonsense Sergeant Ford (Wyatt Russell, son of Kurt). It's a nail-shredder of a scene that Avery struggles to match for impact elsewhere.

“It fails to deliver more than generic twists”

When Boyce, Ford and their surviving comrades (including Iain De Caestecker) land in an apocalyptic village, they attempt to complete their mission of taking out a radio tower, while uncovering disturbing experiments led by Nazi Dr Wafner (Pilou Asbæk). Plus there's villager Chloe (Mathilde Ollivier) to worry about – she's taking care of her young brother while her afflicted aunt (Meg Foster) suffers behind a closed door upstairs.

Favouring a slow burn that endears us to its characters, but fails to deliver more than generic monster movie twists, *Overlord* is a fun, brutal exercise in genre-mashing. There's a comic book vibe to the underground Nazi lair, and Adepo and Russell make for charismatic heroes it's impossible not to root for. Meanwhile, producer JJ Abrams's presence is felt in the seamless synthesis of prosthetic effects and CGI, which gifts Caestecker the film's most comically nasty moment. Solid sci-fi, then, but it rarely breaks new ground. **Josh Winning**

i The film's disembodied head scene was inspired by a real Russian experiment on a dog, which was filmed in 1940.



SMALLFOOT

★★★★☆

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

U | 96 minutes

▶ Director **Karey Kirkpatrick**

▶ Cast **Channing Tatum, James Corden, Zendaya, Common**

◉ **A reverse-mythology story of yetis encountering a human – a creature they've always been told simply doesn't exist – is the basic idea behind *Smallfoot*, which itself feels like that unusual beast; something thoughtful where the trailers had you thinking it would be wall-to-wall zany.**

It all starts with plenty of silliness, introducing us to the icy, yet pleasant, existence of Migo (Channing Tatum), a happy yeti living in a happy yeti world who wants nothing more than to keep doing what he's doing, and preparing to become the man (creature?) with the responsibility of ringing the morning gong, which everyone believes brings the shining snail to give them light each day. There are songs and pratfalls, but once he meets camera-toting world traveller Percy (James Corden), his worldview starts to open up, with big ramifications for his society and his new friend's nearby town.

Director Karey Kirkpatrick, adapting Sergio Pablos's book *Yeti Tracks*, uses the trappings of a wacky cartoon adventure to sneak in some interesting ideas. There's a look at how societies are run by those in power, how lies can keep people in line and even how faith can work both for and against that. Heady stuff, but he never allows it to suffocate the story, or the lively character voice work from the likes of Zendaya, Common and Danny DeVito.

James White



GOOSEBUMPS 2: HAUNTED HALLOWEEN

★★★☆☆

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

PG | 90 minutes

▶ Director **Ari Sandel**

▶ Cast **Madison Iseman, Jeremy Ray Taylor, Wendi McLendon-Covey, Jack Black**

◉ ***Goosebumps* was that rare surprise: a film aimed primarily at kids that everyone could enjoy, which channelled its enormously popular source material with enough wacky wit that it worked. It didn't hurt that it boasted a fun, committed performance from Jack Black as a version of author RL Stine. Which is why the sequel is ultimately so disappointing.**

Haunted Halloween follows much the same track as the original, as kids discover a Stine tome and accidentally unleash monster madness. Yet setting it at the scariest time of year just feels lazy – costumes and decorations coming alive are hardly the most inspired idea to create a family-friendly horror feel. The scares are largely anchored around creatures such as Gummi Bears leaping towards the cast, and that concept quickly becomes stale. To make matters worse, the jokes don't hit their targets.

To cap it all, Black's Stine is himself an afterthought; while it was sensible to not have him solve everything again, his absence throughout most of the running time creates a charisma void that none of the new cast can fill. This is the cinematic equivalent of a knock-off Halloween costume: a disappointing copy festooned with sloppy stitches. **James White**



Always put the lid on the blender when making smoothies.

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- 🍷 The sinister Bent-Neck Lady turns up. Or a floating fella in a hat, carrying a cane.
- 🍷 Someone tries to open the door to the impenetrable Red Room.
- 🍷 The psychically gifted Theo puts on or takes off her gloves.
- 🍷 We revisit an event, but see it from a different perspective.
- 🍷 Someone uses the Jackson line "in the dark, in the night".
- 🍷 Something we initially thought was a ghost turns out not to be after all.
- 🍷 A mysterious suited man raises a glass to Shirley.



THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE

Fright Move



▶ UK/US Netflix, streaming now
▶ Showrunner **Mike Flanagan**
▶ Cast **Michiel Huisman, Elizabeth Reaser, Kate Siegel, Oliver Jackson-Cohen, Victoria Pedretti**

EPISODES 1.01-1.10 **On the face of it,** opening out Shirley Jackson's immaculate haunted house novel into a 10-part series is a dubious idea. An economical work, it has the perfect amount of incident for a feature film – as Robert Wise's 1963 classic *The Haunting* proved.

Oculus writer/director Mike Flanagan's solution is ingenious: keeping the titular house, giving names to new characters, and threading elements of the book throughout. A pair of women cowering in terror as something

bangs on a door; touchstones like a teacup decorated with stars; textual fragments scattered here and there. *Hill House* may have been radically remodelled, but Jackson's spirit still walks its halls.

A series with grief, secrets and familial resentments at its core, it's bubbling with repressed emotion, which periodically finds expression in moving extended monologues. It's also a tale of two time periods (and twin casts), which flicks between 1992 and now to show the traumatising past and damaged present of one-time residents the Crains (mother, father, five kids). The editing strategy is clever, employing visual and verbal rhymes as, say, one character turns a door handle in the past and another walks

through in the present. And the sound design is a triumph, with low ambient rumbles setting your nerves jangling. In *Hill House*, silence is never just silence.

When it comes to the scares, the series deviates wildly from both the novel and the film, in which the most explicit supernatural occurrence is a door bulging out of shape; this *Hill House* is positively crowded with eerie spectral figures that'll make your neck hairs prickle. But, with some clever misdirection, many are more than simple spooks. The devastating conclusion of episode five, which reveals the true nature of a key spirit, is liable to leave you winded. And the sixth episode is breathtaking: a technical tour de force powered by outstanding

performances from the ensemble cast, it achieves almost magical effects as it dramatises the locus of pain, regret and resentment that is a family funeral using long takes and concealed cuts to seamlessly mesh past and present.

The concluding instalment, in which the family finally return to the derelict mansion whose power has warped their lives, over-eggs its surreal slippages into a dream realm just a little. But *Hill House* remains a triumph. Combining emotional depth and jump scares within an intricately folded narrative, it respects Jackson's work but doesn't remain constrained by it. **Ian Berriman**

i The psychiatrist in episode five, Dr Montague, is played by Russ Tamblyn, one of the stars of *The Haunting*.



TITANS Season One

For the birds?

FIRST LOOK



UK Netflix, TBC
US DC Universe, Fridays
Showrunner Greg Walker
Cast Teagan Croft, Anna Diop, Brenton Thwaites, Ryan Potter

EPISODES 1.01-1.02 Superhero shows

can't *just* be superhero shows if they want to stand out anymore. They need an angle: the weird one; the comedy one; the teen soap one. What has *Titans* plumped for? The *Watchmen*-with-body horror one, which is certainly a unique take on the genre – and a surprisingly successful one.

Based on a DC comic that started out as a teen Justice League featuring sidekicks and “kid”-prefixed versions of A-listers, the series pulls together Robin, Raven, Beast Boy and Starfire in a plot full of damaged, world-weary heroes. Dick

Grayson's time with Batman has left him verging on psychotic, Starfire is an amnesiac who revels in frying bad guys, and Hawk (of the Hawk and Dove duo, who drop by to up the bird-themed superhero ante) suffers from erectile dysfunction.

It's very gory at times, but inventively so. Rationed swearing is used to good effect, it's full of DC Easter eggs, fun is had with the ludicrous costumes, and the fractured arc plot structure (few of the main characters have actually met by the end of episode two) is more fast-paced than a Netflix/Marvel series. There are cheesy moments, clunky dialogue and convenient plotting too, but file this under promising.

Dave Golder

Episode two features a removal firm called Ditko. Legendary comic-book artist/writer Steve Ditko co-created Hawk and Dove.

DAREDEVIL Season Three

Hopefully not a Matt finish



UK/US Netflix, streaming now
Showrunner Erik Oleson
Cast Charlie Cox, Deborah Ann Woll, Vincent D'Onofrio, Wilson Bethel

EPISODES 1.01-1.13

Viewing the new

season of *Daredevil* as the wheels of the Netflix/Marvelverse appear to be coming off – it launched the same week *Iron Fist* and *Luke Cage* were cancelled – is a disconcerting experience. It's almost impossible to watch without thinking, “Is this getting axed too?” You desperately want it to be something special to ensure the show's future.

Instead, it's pretty much business as usual. Normally this wouldn't be a bad thing; the first two seasons of *Daredevil* were impressive. Not flawless, but with plenty to recommend them, including hard-hitting themes, a street-level vibe, complex villains,

excellent supporting casts and great action scenes.

We get that all again here, wrapped up in a new tale vaguely based on comic-book storyline “Born Again”. Matt's gone even more angsty after almost dying in *The Defenders*, refusing to let Foggy and Karen know he's alive. He hangs out in his priest mate's church being given tough-love advice from a no-nonsense nun (Joanne Whalley, in fine form). Meanwhile, the Kingpin orchestrates a return to prominence while still officially in custody by manipulating the FBI.

Mostly, it's very good. After a rather slow-moving premiere, the series kicks into gear with a story full of twists and cleverly crafted moments. The series also introduces its own twist on comic villain Bullseye (Wilson Bethel), who is brilliantly creepy.



There are also the usual Netflix/Marvel problems, though. It's too long, and sags, padding things out with indulgent backstory flashbacks. And Daredevil is one of the least interesting characters here; you'll find yourself rooting more for tarnished FBI agent Nadeem (Jay Ali).

Overall, season three feels like it's preaching to the converted. It's more than good enough to satisfy fans, but unlike season one, it's not going to explode through word of mouth **Dave Golder**

Episode four's 15-minute fight scene was filmed in one shot, with no hidden cuts. It took a full day to rehearse.

THE FIRST

Sean Pennsive



UK Channel 4, Thursdays
US Hulu, finished
Showrunner Beau Willimon
Cast Sean Penn, Natascha McElhone, Anna Jacoby-Heron, LisaGay Hamilton

EPISODES 1.01-1.10 Given that *The First* is about humanity looking to go where only robots and probes have been before and land on Mars, you'd be forgiven for anticipating an exciting blend of space travel, endeavour and just a touch of interpersonal drama. Especially since creator Beau Willimon managed to graft high melodrama onto poisonous politics in *House Of Cards*.

This is definitely not that sort of series, though. Certainly, there are visits to the futuristic NASA facility, where we follow what happens as personnel changes are

made and the situation shifts rapidly when the first crew are tragically killed shortly after launch. The last episode of the season charts the second batch heading out on their attempt.

But make no mistake, this is Sean Penn's show. The focus of the narrative is his Tom Hagerty, a veteran rocket man who has walked on the Moon and had been involved in training the crew for this new mission. While we do see him figuring out issues with the back-up astronauts and arguing with the Elon Musk-esque money source/visionary Laz Ingram (Natascha McElhone), he spends most of his time brooding and trying to reconnect with addict daughter Denise (Anna Jacoby-Heron). Penn here sometimes seems so low key it's as if someone has fed him tranquilisers. And he's

such a mass of knotty muscles and bulging veins you'd think he was auditioning to play *Guardians Of The Galaxy's* Groot without the aid of CGI.

You can see why this is the sort of role to lure Penn from his usual movie stomping grounds; he gets to build a character over several hours, filling in all the nuances and subtleties that even indie films rarely have the space to cover. And yet Hagerty rarely comes across as a fully fleshed-out person, even with an entire episode dedicated to the turbulent relationship he had with Denise's mother Diane (Melissa George, doing a lot with a little). Instead, Hagerty is a morose, one-note anger factory who's less than compelling to follow through the story.

Outside of Tom, the rest of the crew get their little moments to shine, including LisaGay Hamilton as his fellow commander, struggling with having her

“Feels a little like a bait-and-switch”

ambitions thwarted and her opinions largely ignored because everyone is willing to cut Hagerty every break imaginable.

The First feels a little like a bait-and-switch, as if you were promised something along the lines of *The Martian*, but instead of the astronaut action watched eight hours of Matt Damon agonising about how his potatoes aren't growing properly in poo. It's well-acted, directed and written, but it's not always the most satisfying viewing experience on the planet. **James White**

i Like Hagerty, Penn exercises with weights at the bottom of a pool – something he learned from ace surfer Laird Hamilton.



CHARMED

Season One

FIRST LOOK



UK E4, TBC
US The CW, Sundays
Showrunner Jennie Snyder Urman
Cast Melonie Diaz, Sarah Jeffery, Madeleine Mantock, Rupert Evans

EPISODES 1.01-1.02 Previously

on *Charmed*, three sisters discovered they were witches and cast an addictively watchable spell. Twelve years on, it's déjà vu all over again as this reboot – overseen by *Jane The Virgin* showrunner Jennie Snyder Urman – introduces a new trio who drag the concept into the new millennium.

After their mother's mysterious death, siblings Mel (Melonie Diaz) and Maggie (Sarah Jeffery) find they have another sister, Macy (Madeleine Mantock), which coincides with the awakening of their witch powers. Before they can say “familiar much?”, they're vanquishing a demon and being taken under the stuffy wing of “Whitelighter” Harry (Rupert Evans).

Fans won't have trouble spotting the recycled ingredients – possessed boyfriends, the “Source of all evil”, truth serum – but oddly, it's *Harry Potter* and *Game Of Thrones* that cast the longest shadow, notably in the shape of a rip-off White Walker demon.

On the plus side, its dedication to diversity is commendable, and there are signs this could develop into a fun remix. But *Charmed 2018* needs to ditch its clunky political references (Trump, Brexit and a mishandled #MeToo plot feature) if it's to cast a spell as bewitching as its forebear. **Josh Winning**



The room turned icy when Madonna was mentioned.

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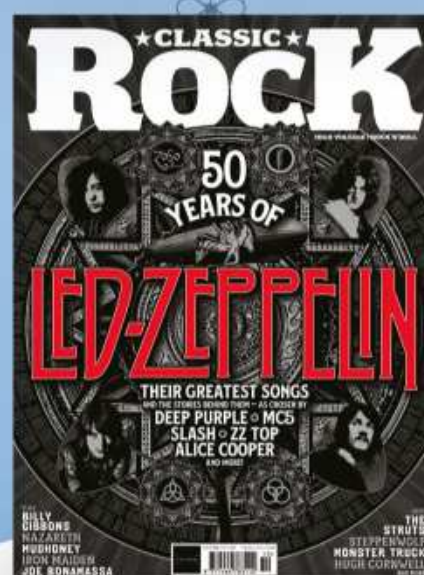


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INCREDIBLES 2

Bringing Up Superbaby

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 12 NOVEMBER

(download out now)

2018 | PG | Blu-ray (3D/standard)/DVD/
download/VOD

▶ Director **Brad Bird**

▶ Cast **Holly Hunter, Craig T Nelson,
Sarah Vowell, Huckleberry Milner,
Catherine Keener, Samuel L Jackson**

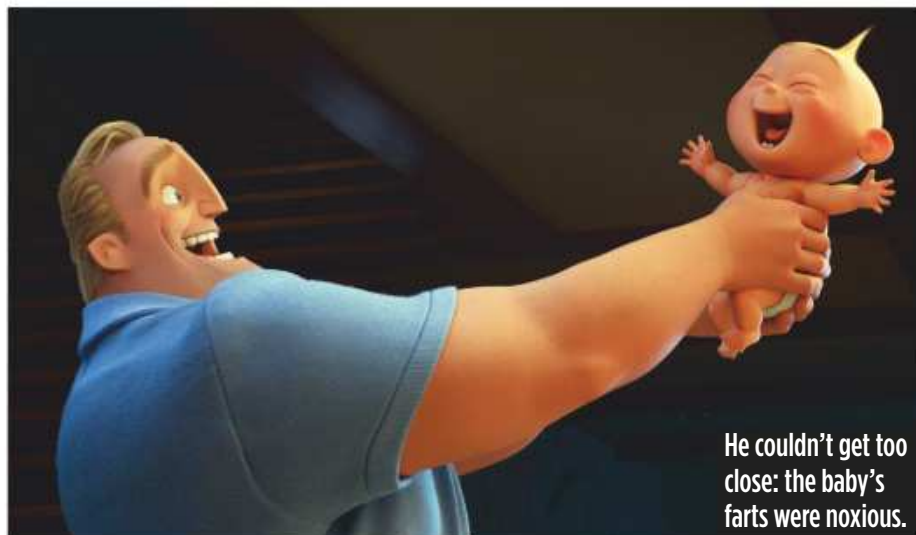
➤ **Incredibly, the original *The Incredibles*** was released before the Marvel Cinematic Universe. In the 14 years since, the MCU redefined superheroes and made them our biggest movie genre. Not that this had any effect on *Incredibles 2*...

Advances in CG animation aside (Frozone's ice slides look really pretty now, and characters touch each other a lot more) this belated sequel feels like it could have been made straight after the first film. That's partly because the world has a timeless, faux-nostalgia aesthetic (kinda '60s, kinda not) but also because these films aren't superhero parodies. *Incredibles 2* doesn't need to react to the MCU, because *The Incredibles* is more closely related to the Flintstones and the Jetsons than the Avengers. It's not a superhero franchise, but rather a family-based sitcom in which the family in question just happen to be superheroes.

So while there's superhero action aplenty, the theme at the

heart of this film is actually a staple of US sitcoms going back decades: gender role reversal. With superheroes still illegal, a billionaire "supers" fan, Winston Deavor, decides to plough his money into a publicity campaign designed to win back public support for the mask-wearing do-gooders. But with his spreadsheets showing that Mr Incredible's wayward attitude to collateral damage isn't always good for optics, Deavor decides that Elastigirl should front the campaign. This leaves Mr Incredible as Mr Househusband, looking after the kids – a chore made more difficult thanks to baby Jack-Jack developing a zillion uncontrolled superpowers at once and Violet's boyfriend problems (note to parents: mindwiping your offspring's potential date will backfire on you).

While Mr Incredible is left holding the baby, Elastigirl is baited by a supervillain called the Screenslaver, who clearly thought up the name before the MO – which in this case happens to be hypnotising people through TV screens and monitors (or anything similar when the plot demands). Screenslaver has a particular beef with superheroes and is intent on undoing all the good Deavor's publicity campaign is achieving.



He couldn't get too close: the baby's farts were noxious.



Someone had forgotten to park the buses.

All of which is jolly good fun, very exciting and punctuated with genuinely touching moments of the non-saccharine sentimentality that Pixar does so well. But despite all the much-publicised breaking of box office records, *Incredibles 2* isn't quite the movie its predecessor was. The action sequences are great, but there isn't one stand-out set-piece that you'll be talking about afterwards. The villain's not particularly interesting either, and is the subject of an obvious twist that's becoming a bit of a Pixar trope. The film's role-reversal aspects,

“Good fun punctuated with touching moments”

while very funny and sensitively handled, feel a little familiar too. And popular supporting characters from the first film, such as Edna and Frozone, feel like they've been shoehorned in to please fans without having much to add to proceedings.



MIND PROBE

BRAD BIRD

Writer/director of *Incredibles 2*



Where did the “The” in the title go?

→ We put the title *The Incredibles 2* in a wind tunnel, and the “The” just went!

What did you hope to achieve with the new action scenes?

→ I’d love to give you a pretentious answer that makes it sound like I’m incredibly smart. But the truth is, we were just running like hell, trying not to get run over by the freight train right behind us. You make the action every bit as exciting as a live-action film. That’s hard to do because in people’s minds, animation has a history of the Road Runner, where somebody falls off a cliff and then dusts themselves off. So jeopardy is hard to do. I think we were successful with jeopardy in the first film. So we tried to continue in that tradition.

Could you do a George Lucas and revise the original with new tech?

→ No. Well, if you’ve got a spare couple of hundred million, we’ll be glad to! It’s actually not as computer-driven as you’d think. The computer is just a big tool. It’s a big paintbrush that’s wielded with care.

Will we have to wait another 14 years for *Incredibles 3*?

→ I don’t know. Don’t ask me now. Enjoy this one!

Matt Maytum



None of which should stop you watching it. Despite a nagging sense that it’s going through the motions at times, *Incredibles 2* remains vastly more entertaining than a great many blockbuster superhero films. It’s just not *quite* as incredible as its predecessor.

➤ **Extras** There are two great shorts: the delightfully manic “Auntie Edna” (five minutes) fills in what happened the night Edna Mode babysat Jack-Jack. Then there’s the sweet and slightly macabre “Bao” (eight minutes) which features a Japanese mother coming to terms with her son

leaving home by reimagining him as dumpling; this also comes with its own Making Of. “Strong Coffee” is a featurette about director Brad Bird (19 minutes) in which his colleagues paint him as an animation genius and a very exacting (though inspirational) boss. Interestingly, in respect of that portrait, he takes a back seat for the audio commentary, letting his chief animators do the honours instead; the result is amusing, enlightening and trivia-packed.

There are 10 deleted scenes (with introductions). Jack-Jack is spotlighted in “Superbaby” – a

hybrid of documentary/hip hop music video. There are featurettes on Pixar’s working parents; the work of production designer Ralph Eggleston; and designing the film’s buildings, costumes and vehicles. Plus: long versions of the character theme songs, vintage-style toy ads, trailers and yet more mini-docs.

Two scene breakdowns and a piece on Samuel L Jackson’s love of comics are digital exclusives. Buy the DVD and you just get the commentary and “Bao”. **Dave Golder**

i The Godzilla-like beast Dash is watching on TV at one point is actually the iguana Mr Jones from *Toy Story Of Terror*.



QUATERMASS AND THE PIT

Ghosts Of Mars

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1958/1959 | PG | Blu-ray

▶ Director **Rudolph Cartier**

▶ Cast **André Morell, Cec Linder, Anthony Bushell, John Stratton**

BLU-RAY DEBUT **Nigel Kneale's**

sci-fi serials about rocket scientist Bernard Quatermass were massive cultural phenomena in the '50s, allegedly emptying the streets. This third and final outing (until the character's revival in 1979) is the most sophisticated of the lot.

Sparked by the writer's observations of London's post-war renewal, it sees building work

unearthing the skull of a "missing link". Further excavations reveal a giant capsule dating back millions of years... and its alien occupants.

Kneale has to stretch to work Quatermass into this scenario, but he pulls it off, and André Morell is superb playing the professor. Urbane but possessed of steely determination, Quatermass sparks entertainingly with his army counterpart Colonel Breen (Anthony Bushell), the voice of obstinate "common sense" denial.

It's a surprisingly slick production. Though it went out live, pre-filmed inserts shot at Ealing Studios mean that the dig

has an impressive scale which lends the tale verisimilitude. And Kneale cleverly uses supporting characters to anchor the outlandish events in workaday reality: gormless onlookers captured in vox pops; squaddies gossiping about whether their superiors have a clue.

It isn't flawless. Martian insects are one thing; asking us to swallow a device that can read mental images that was a) invented by a paleontologist and b) has been sitting on a shelf instead of being hailed as a scientific breakthrough is another. Some "looking out of the tent" acting is required to convey mass panic. And in the final episode, the capsule looks like what it is: a small wax model being blasted with hairdryers.

These are forgivable lapses, though. What's particularly impressive is how many ideas Kneale's keenly intelligent script takes in over its six parts, from poltergeist activity and genetic engineering to race memories and ethnic purging. Every episode

DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

🍷 Quatermass and Colonel Breen metaphorically butt heads.

🍷 Cables start thrashing about, or papers fly in the air.

🍷 There's an old-fashioned use of the word "queer".

🍷 Journalist James Fullalove takes a snaps of something with his spy camera.

🍷 There's a burst of strange radiophonic burbling/shrieking.

🍷 The only significant female character, Barbara Judd, is patronised or dismissed.

🍷 Some squaddies brew up a round of tea.



brings fresh revelations that take the story in new and often surprising directions. Sixty years on from its first transmission, it remains utterly gripping.

➤ **Extras** A 1991 interview with effects men Jack Kine and Bernard Wilkie is charming, but it's short (seven minutes) and was on the old DVD. You also get the credits from a 1960 omnibus repeat, a stills gallery, CD ROM content (including scripts) and a booklet.

The real meat comes in the commentary tracks. Hosted by Quatermass expert Toby Hadoke, and taking a different tack for each episode, they combine commentary from Hadoke, Kneale's biographer, and one of the restoration team with contributions from five surviving cast and crew, as well as archive interviews with four more who've passed away (mostly taken from Hadoke's personal collection).

Ian Berriman

i The climactic explosion involved a pound of flash powder. Actor Cec Linder had pads put on his eyes so he wasn't blinded!



THE SECRET OF MARROWBONE

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** 19 NOVEMBER
(download out now)

2017 | 15 | DVD/download

▶ Director Sergio G Sánchez

▶ Cast Anya Taylor-Joy, Charlie Heaton, Mia Goth, George MacKay

➔ **At the same time as *The Orphanage*** director JA Bayona was diving into blockbuster waters with *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, his erstwhile writing cohort Sergio G Sánchez was making his directorial debut with this richly atmospheric but derivative self-penned horror.

George MacKay heads up the cast as the eldest son of a family who, in the late '60s, flee England for a crumbling gothic pile in rural America. Soon after they arrive, however, a bullet is fired into one of the windows and the movie cuts to a "six months later" caption. We have to wait until the last reel to find out what happened, though seasoned horror watchers will be able to piece it all together.

There's much to admire in Sánchez's handsome chiller, from composer Fernando Velázquez's lush orchestrations to MacKay's perfectly coiled turn as the protective Jack, but there's too much that's familiar here, and the denouement owes more than a little to *The Orphanage*. Sadly, *The Secret Of Marrowbone* doesn't come close to matching that film's bone-deep chills, and while it may hold surprises for genre newbies, horror-heads with longer memories may prove harder to seduce.

➔ **Extras** Deleted/extended scenes (27 minutes); a visual effects reel. **Steve O'Brien**



D'aww, what a sweet smile.

JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM

Bidding adieu

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** OUT NOW!

2018 | 12 | Blu-ray (3D/4K/standard)/
DVD/download

▶ Director JA Bayona

▶ Cast Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Ted Levine, Rafe Spall

➔ **The *Jurassic* series has stuck** pretty doggedly to the island of Isla Nublar for the past 25 years, so blowing it up (well, engulfing it in volcanic lava) in the first reel of the latest movie looked like a refreshingly bold move. Have no fear though, the dinos have all (well, mostly) been saved and relocated to a grand mansion in northern California where – oh no! – they're to be auctioned off to the world's wealthiest bastards.

Hiring Spanish director JA Bayona to make a *Jurassic World* film in the claustrophobic style of his 2007 horror classic *The Orphanage* may have seemed an artistically daring idea early on. Sadly, trapping these dinosaurs in a series of dimly-lit rooms only

seems to rob the movie of its cinematic power. The cliffhanger ending, however, does point the way towards a more thrilling reinvention of the decades-old dino franchise. Fingers crossed.

➔ **Extras** Upside: this release is packed with extras. Downside: you've probably seen them before on YouTube. There's little of substance here (most run for around two to five minutes), but having Chris Pratt in your cast is a dream for any movie marketer, as he's great at doing promo, whether being interviewed or fronting his own on-set featurettes. The best of the bunch is "Fallen Kingdom: The Conversation" (10 minutes), which has members of the cast (including Jeff Goldblum!), plus Bayona and screenwriter Colin Trevorrow shooting the breeze. Once upon a time, this would have been done as part of a commentary...

Steve O'Brien

i Keep 'em peeled for a portrait of author Mary Shelley in Lockwood Manor, next to one of John Hammond.



CANDYMAN

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED** OUT NOW!

1992 | 18 | Blu-ray

▶ Director Bernard Rose

▶ Cast Tony Todd, Virginia Madsen, Kasi Lemmons, Xander Berkeley

➔ **Say his name five times and he shall appear...** *Candyman* marries an irresistible premise to some muddled themes, but remains an effective and unconventional slasher.

Grad student Helen Lyle (Virginia Madsen) is working on a thesis about urban legends and focuses on the story of the Candyman, a vengeful ghost whom she unwisely proceeds to summon. Hook-handed and vaguely eroticised (well *it is* based on a Clive Barker story), carnage ensues.

The film has itself become a bit of a legend thanks to Todd's performance. Effortlessly menacing, he also brings a sense of nobility. Its handling of racial issues is confused to say the least, but the film has bags of atmosphere and looks gorgeous in this new 4K scan.

➔ **Extras** Both the US and UK cuts are included in this new Special Edition release. A prime feature is a half-hour interview with Barker, looking back over his film career. "Unwrapping *Candyman*" smartly critiques the film's attitude to race. There are interviews with Todd and Madsen, as well as features on production design, make-up and Barker's original story. Three short films provide insight into director Bernard Rose's early career. There are also two commentaries: an entertaining chat track with Rose and Todd, and a more informative one from horror experts Stephen Jones and Kim Newman. Plus: galleries and trailers. **Will Salmon**

JOHN CARPENTER

Vengeful spirits and hidden aliens

RELEASED OUT NOW!

1980/1988 | 15 | Blu-ray (4K/standard)/DVD

Director John Carpenter

Cast Adrienne Barbeau, Jamie Lee Curtis/Roddy Piper, Keith David

Hot on the heels of limited theatrical releases, restorations of two cult items by John Carpenter have now hit Blu-ray.

The Fog (★★★★) saw the director following up *Halloween*'s phenomenal success with horror of a different stripe: an old-fashioned ghost story in which spirits from a ship that was led onto the rocks punish descendants of the plotters responsible.

Bottling lightning a second time proved tricky for Carpenter and his *Halloween* crew, with the director shooting additional footage after his first cut was

a dud. He got there eventually, and some of the inserted material – like a lot full of cars blaring their horns – is among the best. Kudos is due to cinematographer Dean Cundey, whose atmospheric lighting renders silhouettes and clouds of dry ice deeply sinister, and to Carpenter for his mournful, minimal score. It's a very straightforward tale though, and rather wastes Jamie Lee Curtis in a thinly sketched secondary role.

They Live (★★★★) resonates even more now than it did when it was made. Part commentary on the Reagan era, part *Body Snatchers*-style B-movie, it sees the emblematically-named John Nada (former wrestler Roddy Piper) discovering hideous alien overlords walking among us when he stumbles on sunglasses that reveal the subliminal messaging

bombarding humanity, then launching a one-man mission to wipe them out, spraying bullets and laconic quips.

Piper is surprisingly plausible as this blue-collar beefcake, though an absurdly over-extended fight scene showcasing his ring skills brings things grinding to a halt. Bolting together paranoid satire and first-person-shooter action, it's a movie you kind of hope not too many InfoWars viewers watch in case they read it as non-fiction...

Extras New on *The Fog* (★★★★): a solid Making Of featuring various crew and critics (45 minutes); a featurette on films Carpenter nearly made, but didn't (nine minutes). A mid-'90s Carpenter/co-writer Debra Hill commentary is technical, but good for identifying the tweaks; a 2013 one teaming two cast/the production designer is more jocular. Plus: a detailed locations piece (28 minutes); an eight-minute Carpenter interview and "scene analysis" from a 2003 French release; 1980 doc "Inside *The Fog*"; a storyboard-to-scene comparison; outtakes; TV ads; trailer; gallery.

They Live (★★★★) also weds a strong new retrospective (47 minutes) to a collection of old bonuses. The 2002 chat track teams Carpenter with an ebullient Roddy Piper. There are 2012 interviews with Carpenter, Foster and fellow cast member Keith David (27 minutes), as well as the original EPK/associated interviews with Carpenter, Piper and co-star Meg Foster. Plus: extended footage of TV ads from the film; real TV ads for the film; and an image gallery. You also get art cards, a poster and a booklet, while the four-disc 4K sets both add a soundtrack CD.

Ian Berriman

The germ of the idea for *The Fog* came from some weather John Carpenter witnessed while visiting Stonehenge.



THE FIRST PURGE

★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

RELEASED OUT NOW!

2018 | 15 | Blu-ray (4K/standard)/DVD

Director Gerard McMurray

Cast Y'lan Noel, Lex Scott Davis, Joivan Wade, Marisa Tomei

The fourth entry in this increasingly political horror franchise rewinds to, well, the first purge, when presiding party The New Founding Fathers Of America opt to make Staten Island the test site for a 12-hour period where all crime becomes legal.

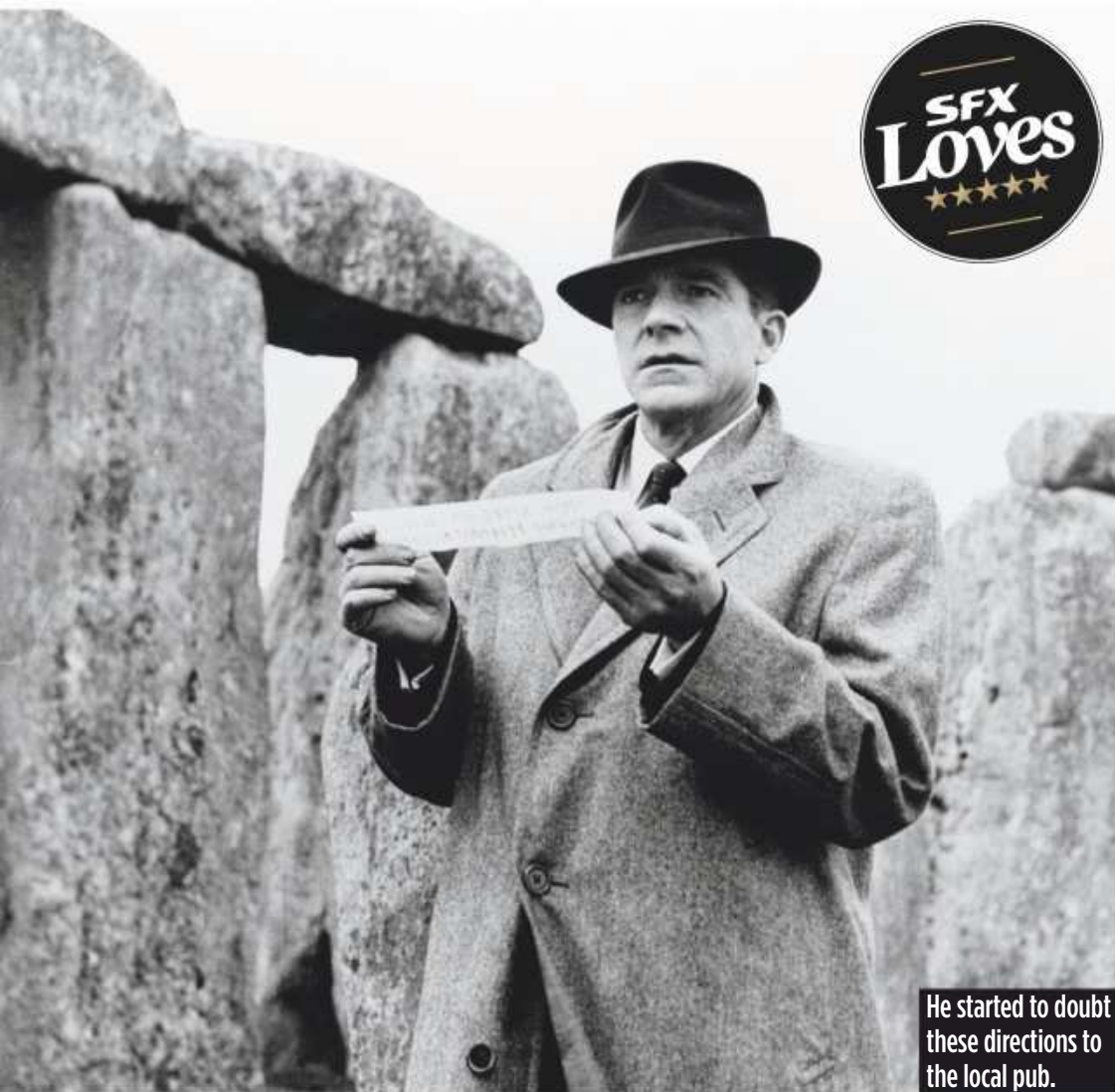
Will the release of all of that pent-up socio-economic and racial rage reduce crime rates for the other 364 days of the year? If not, muses the nationalist, ultra-religious NFFA, it will at least delete a bunch of undesirables given that Staten Island is predominately a black, low-income area.

It is, as ever, a sharp idea, and the on-the-nose dialogue and imagery (like a gang dishing out death dressed in KKK hoods) can be excused given that subtlety has no place under Trump's reign. But the violence that takes place across the *Purge* movies is never as savage as the central concept, dulling the exploitation edge, and even worse is the extended finale's fetishised gunplay. In a film that levels its sights at the NRA-funded NFFA (aka the Republicans now in office), why send the message that the best way to fight back is with all guns blazing?

Extras Three blink-and-you'll-miss-'em promotional featurettes (seven minutes); a deleted scene which gives bloodthirsty killer Skeletor a jump scare and a new ending.

Jamie Graham





NIGHT OF THE DEMON

James the cursed

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1957 | PG | Blu-ray

▶ Director Jacques Tourneur

▶ Cast Dana Andrews, Peggy Cummins, Niall MacGinnis, Athene Seyler

BLU-RAY DEBUT The “cold light of reason” wrestles with “the deep shadows that light can cast” in this classic adaptation of MR James’s tale of a demonic curse, “Casting The Runes”. Director Jacques Tourneur inflates James’s original short story into a distinctly Hitchcockian thriller – if only Cary Grant had taken the sturdy Dana Andrews’s place as the sceptic hero – while genius production designer Ken Adam makes even the corridors of the Savoy look like infinite battlegrounds of light and shade. It’s all deliciously atmospheric, filled with dread and tweed, its demon-haunted woods

feeling like the very locus of the English uncanny.

➤ **Extras** An absolute Satanic banquet! As well as the original full-length version, you get the UK theatrical cut and the US theatrical cut and reissue; a forensic examination of the various versions; commentary by Tony Earnshaw, author of a book on the film; 2007 documentary *Speak Of The Devil*; eight informed appreciations by such horror mavens as Sir Christopher Frayling and Kim Newman; archive interviews; “Casting The Runes” read by Michael Hordern; a 1947 radio adaptation; isolated music and effects track; silent Super 8 version; trailer; gallery. Plus: a double-sided poster and 80-page book! **Nick Setchfield**

i A line in a seance scene – “It’s in the trees! It’s coming!” – was sampled by Kate Bush for her song “Hounds Of Love”.



ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS 3

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1989 | 18 | Blu-ray

BLU-RAY DEBUT Directed by Claudio Fragasso, of *Troll 2* infamy, *Zombie Flesh Eaters 3*’s biggest contribution to the undead canon is providing us with an early example of fast ‘n’ fighty dead. The plot – folk wander around a zombie-infested island – is thin, and the dub is terrible (a child sounds like a 30-year-old), but there’s a pace and energy to the film that make it at least fun to watch.

➤ **Extras** Three interviews; trailer; booklet.

Will Salmon



RATS: NIGHT OF TERROR

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 12 NOVEMBER**

1984 | 18 | Blu-ray

BLU-RAY DEBUT Chocolate, Lucifer, Video... the names are a highlight of this Italian killer rat schlock. It follows an amusingly incompetent biker gang, led by a Bee Gee-alike; when not in-fighting or having the screaming ab-dabs, they’re barricading themselves in but forgetting a window. Making docile rodents look deadly is an issue. After 90 minutes of seeing them tossed by stage hands, you’ll be #TeamRat.

➤ **Extras** Interviews; trailer; poster; booklet. **Ian Berriman**



CONSTANTINE: CITY OF DEMONS

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2018 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

➤ **This animated web-series** puts the guts back into John Constantine. When an old friend contacts him, convinced his sick daughter’s under a spell, Constantine (Matt Ryan) uncovers a link to his own murky past. It’s a suitably grim adaptation of graphic novel *All His Engines*, though its British dialogue is comically tone deaf, with Constantine barking, “Ooo did ya shag then knob’ead?” like Dick Van Dyke with Tourette’s.

➤ **Extras** WonderCon panel; featurette. **Will Salmon**



THE GUARDIAN

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1990 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

BLU-RAY DEBUT Originally mooted for Sam Raimi, this overripe horror about a nanny who sacrifices newborns to a giant tree found an epically ill-suited replacement in William “*The Exorcist*” Friedkin. Despite the silliness (a scene where it attacks a group of thugs is mockably bad), Friedkin plays the movie with a misguided straight face. Jenny Seagrove is solidly effective as the nanny, but Dwier Brown and Carey Lowell are fatally underpowered as the couple whose lives she invades.

➤ **Extras** None. **Steve O’Brien**

WILLIAM CASTLE AT COLUMBIA Volume One

Gimmick! Gimmick! Gimmick!

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1959-1961 | 15 | Blu-ray

▶ Director William Castle

▶ Cast Vincent Price, Guy Rolfe, Charles Herbert, Patricia Breslin

BLU-RAY DEBUT The king of stunt cinema and his gimmicks are celebrated in this box set, covering William Castle's early-'60s output.

The Tingler (1959) – aka the one where audiences were buzzed by seats rigged with vibrators – is a nonsensical chiller starring Vincent Price as a scientist who discovers that extreme states of terror cause a sort of timid rubber lobster to gestate in your spine.

Price is great in a less villainous role, but the film is ploddy; a solid B-movie, but not as much fun as its reputation suggests.

Far better is *13 Ghosts* (1960), aka the one where audiences were given a "ghost viewer" to see the spooks. A hugely entertaining haunted house flick with a ghostly chef and a lion amid its phantom parade, the regular splashes of vibrant red and blue among the black-and-white give it an odd vibe of buttoned-up psychedelia.

Homicidal (1961) – aka the one that isn't really in SFX territory – is a blatant Hitchcock knockoff that, nevertheless, proves that Castle could play things straight.

It's an entertaining thriller, though it does have a whiff of transphobia.

Completing the set is the excellent *Mr Sardonicus* (1961) – aka the one where the audience chose the ending... sort of. Here a disfigured Baron forces a doctor to perform facial surgery on him to remove his rictus grin. It works because, for all his cruelty, *Sardonicus* is as much victim as villain, given a tragic backstory and brought to life with a terrific performance from Guy Rolfe.

While the films are a mixed bag, they all look superb, with beautiful 4K scans. A lavish and well-presented set that gives Castle's output the treatment it deserves.

“The films look superb, with beautiful 4K scans”

▶ **Extras** *The Tingler*, *Homicidal* and *Mr Sardonicus* all have journo/podcaster commentaries. *13 Ghosts* misses out, but is presented both in black-and-white and the original “Illusion-O” version, and there's an interview with actress Pamela Lincoln. *Spine-Tingler! The William Castle Story* (82 minutes) is an excellent documentary with contributions from John Landis, Roger Corman and John Waters; it comes with its own short Making Of. Elsewhere, Kim Newman gives a fond appreciation of *The Tingler* while Jonathan Rigby celebrates *Mr Sardonicus*. Plus: trailers, music tracks, intros, promo and archive material and booklets. **Will Salmon**

i Despite the film's infamous “punishment poll”, in reality only one ending was ever shot for *Mr Sardonicus*. What a swizz!



LONG WEEKEND

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1978 | 15 | Blu-ray

▶ Director Colin Eggleston

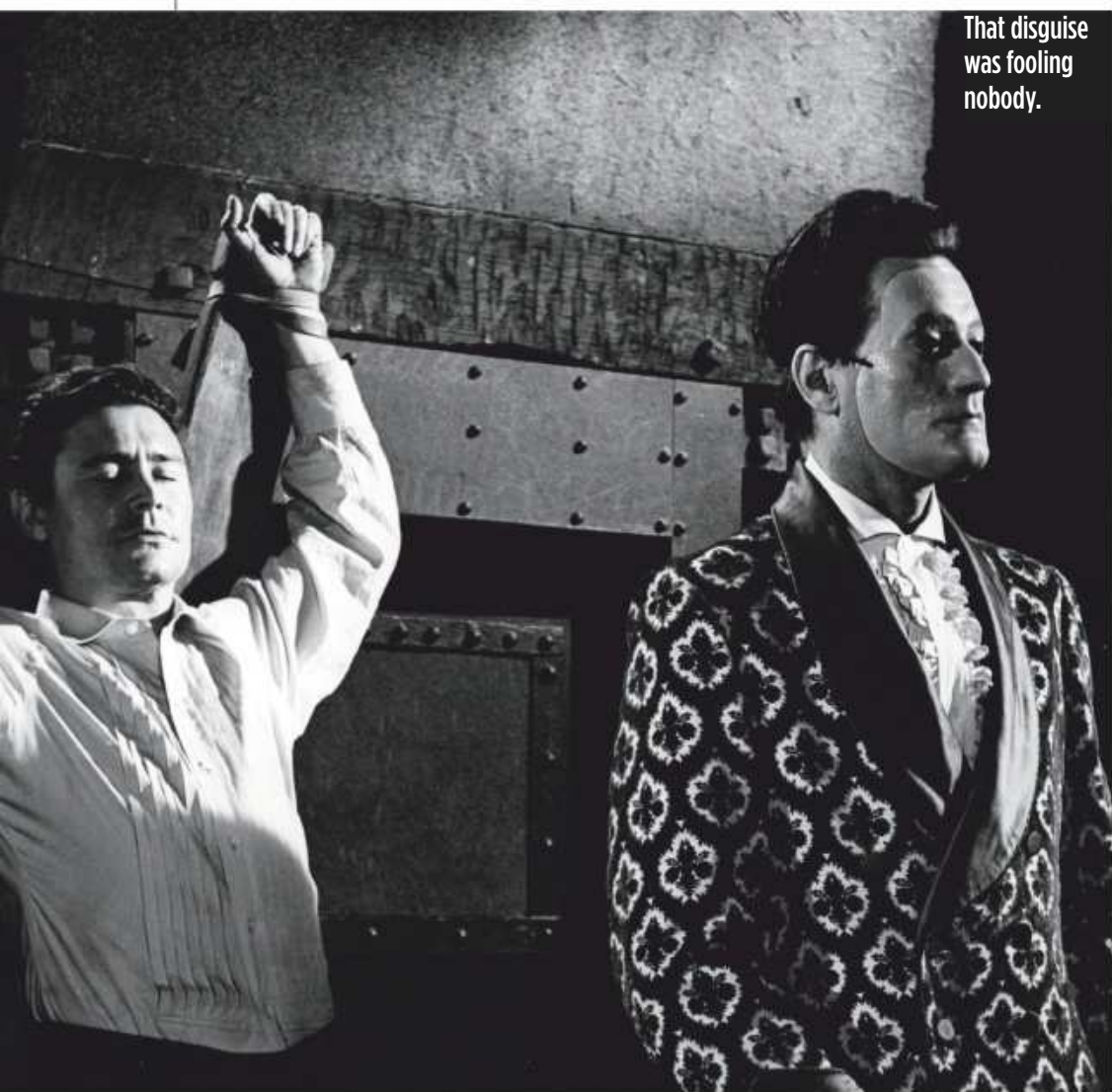
▶ Cast John Hargreaves, Briony Behets

BLU-RAY DEBUT From *Jaws* to *Phase IV*, *Grizzly* to *Empire Of The Ants*, cinema peddled many compelling reasons never to venture outdoors in the '70s. This Australian eco-horror is one of the smarter entries in the Nature's Revenge genre.

A suburban couple head to the outback on a camping trip, hoping to repair their fracturing marriage. Their car collides with a kangaroo on a dark road, inciting a karmic chain of cause and effect, as they're confronted with a hostile, unforgiving wilderness that deepens the faultline in their relationship.

There are hints of *Deliverance* and *Straw Dogs* in the vibe of city vs country paranoia, but despite moments of pure schlock – when possums attack! – the film aligns itself more with the haunted Australia seen in Peter Weir's movies. Helmer Colin Eggleston favours mood over straight thrills, deploying unearthly howls and black, inexplicable shapes in the surf to build a landscape that's as much psychic as geographic.

▶ **Extras** Commentary by exec producer Richard Brennan and cinematographer Vincent Monton; a roundtable with four film critics (24 minutes); uncut interviews with Monton, star Briony Behets, and the writer, conducted for Ozploitation doc *Not Quite Hollywood* (18 minutes); stills gallery with '90s audio interview with star John Hargreaves (five minutes); trailer. **Nick Setchfield**





Michael Sheen was really the one who needed a shave.

APOSTLE Cutthroat Island



▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2018 | SVOD

▶ Director Gareth Evans

▶ Cast Dan Stevens, Lucy Boynton, Mark Lewis Jones, Bill Milner

NETFLIX The latest Netflix

Original is one of those films that captivates through their sheer force – a rough-hewn, unignorable blunt object of a movie.

Set in 1905, it follows Thomas Richardson (*Legion*'s Dan Stevens, all furious glares) to a Welsh island in search of his kidnapped sister. It's home to a religious community led by prophet Malcolm Howe (Michael Sheen, making good use of the talent for booming oratory he's displayed as a political activist), who worship – and sacrifice blood to – a mysterious goddess in return for bountiful crops.

So far, so *Wicker Man*, but in the later stages the spirit of *Leatherface* crashes in too. As the film expands on its themes, exploring man's exploitation of nature and the repressive effects of patriarchal authority (with strong echoes of Islamic State), it becomes a wince-inducingly visceral experience.

Blessed with gritty, earthy cinematography and an obtrusive yet effective score – all wasp-swarm strings and pan-banging percussion – it's a film of strong flavours, thick with textures: dark wood, scar tissue, gnarled roots. Watching it's like feeling the heft of an antique farming implement in your palm, or rough bark rubbing against your skin.

Ian Berriman

i Welsh actress Sharon Morgan (who plays the nameless goddess) also portrayed Gwen Cooper's mother in *Torchwood*.

THE TIME TUNNEL Lost In Time



EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1966-1967 | PG | Blu-ray

▶ Creator Irwin Allen

▶ Cast James Darren, Robert Colbert, Whit Bissell, Lee Meriwether

BLU-RAY DEBUT *Lost In Space*

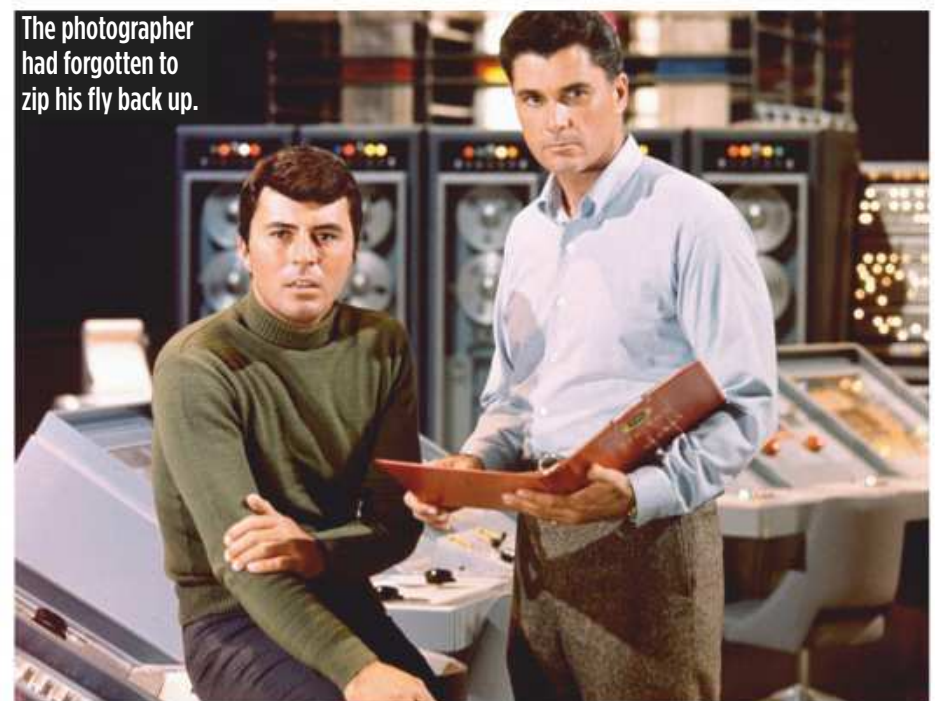
creator Irwin Allen was behind a number of other fondly remembered shows, like this one.

Set in 1968, *The Time Tunnel* is the story of two scientists at a government time travel project. Threatened with its closure, Doug Phillips and Tony Newman head into the "time tunnel" themselves. At each location visited, project director Kirk and the other scientists back at the control room can observe them, send occasional aid and ultimately jump them back into the tunnel – but remain unable to return them back to the present.

There's a very *Quantum Leap* feel, as Tony and Doug attempt to survive and help those around them. It quickly becomes tiring, though. Despite several interesting conceits (aliens attempt to invade in our past; traitors encountered in the future turn up in the present; historical figures are transported themselves), it often feels formulaic. And though the show's visuals start promisingly – the credits have a Saul Bass feel, and the opening shots of the complex are stunning – it becomes an overly familiar

“Despite interesting conceits, it's formulaic”

The photographer had forgotten to zip his fly back up.



combination of stock footage and Californian landscape.

A show with potential, so it's a shame it only ran for one season (30 episodes), but it's far from an essential part of TV history to visit.

▶ **Extras** The original unaired pilot (53 minutes); the unaired pilot for a 2002 reboot (49 minutes); *Time Travelers*, a 1976 Irwin Allen TV movie written by

Rod Serling (72 minutes); four cast interviews (28 minutes); home movie footage shot during the making of the pilot (52 minutes, no audio); a camera test of the time tunnel effects; TV/radio ads; galleries of stills, merch, comic art and storyboards. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Keep 'em peeled watching the pilot and you may spot Dennis Hopper in the background as a passenger on the *Titanic*.

GETTY (1)



CHILDREN OF MEN

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2006 | 15 | Blu-ray

▶ Director Alfonso Cuarón

▶ Cast Clive Owen, Julianne Moore, Michael Caine, Clare-Hope Ashitey

➔ **When *Children Of Men* was first released, its depiction of an economically ravaged Britain, slamming its doors shut to refugees and immigrants, seemed comfortably improbable. Now, 12 years on, with Trump in the White House, Brexit on the horizon and the right on the rise, it appears worryingly, grimly prescient.**

Set in a near-future (2027 specifically) where two decades of human infertility has left society on the brink of collapse, it's a devastatingly unvarnished view of a future that appears, at the moment at least, terrifyingly plausible. An essential watch.

➔ **Extras** It's a testament to *Children Of Men's* hallowed standing that so few of the special features of this BD reissue are vacuous star-centric hypeathons. Instead of Clive Owen and Julianne Moore-fronted features, it's up to academics like author and critic Bryan Reesman (audio commentary), BFI movie writer Kat Ellinger and film historian Philip Kemp to lecture their way through the special features. Most are held over from the previous BD release, but the new featurettes, both 22 minutes long, have the benefit of historical hindsight. Kemp's documentary talks about the movie from a Brexit 2018 perspective, while Ellinger's visual essay draws parallels with other end-of-the-world fictions such as *The Last Man On Earth* and *The End Of August At The Hotel Ozone*. **Steve O'Brien**



Lightning would just pass right through him.

BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES

Wayne's World

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1992-1995 | 12 | Blu-ray/download

▶ Creators Bruce Timm, Eric Radomski

▶ Cast Kevin Conroy, Loren Lester, Efreem Zimbalist Jr, Mark Hamill

BLU-RAY DEBUT *Batman: The*

Animated Series wore its influences on its cape: the gangster-sharp film noir stylings of Tim Burton's blockbuster movie; the shadow-drenched aesthetic of the '40s Fleischer Studios Superman cartoons. And it transcended those influences – along with the traditional limits of kids' animation – to create what may just be the screen's definitive take on the Dark Knight.

Remastered for Blu-ray, these 109 episodes alchemise decades of Bat-mythology into something that feels equally fresh and classic, reverent and playful. The scripts are intelligent and unafraid to gun for genuine emotion – Emmy-winning "Heart Of Ice" plays the origin of Mr Freeze as a human tragedy – while the moody,

characterful animation proves you can bring darkness to Batman's world without sinking into sub-Frank Miller grit 'n' grimness.

➔ **Extras** Enough to pack a Bat-Cave to the stalactites. New to this release are "The Heart Of Batman", a 94-minute documentary split into three parts, and "Concepting Harley Quinn", which sees Paul Dini discussing the creation of the show's breakout character. It also includes full-length animated movies *Batman: Mask Of The Phantasm* and *Batman & Mr Freeze: Subzero*. Ported over from the DVD release are 11 audio commentaries and five episode introductions by co-creator Bruce Timm; "The Dark Knight's First Night", the original 1991 promo reel; plus 23 more featurettes, including various "Arkham Asylum Case Files", in which creators discuss the show's villains. **Nick Setchfield**

i Mark Hamill has revealed that a key inspiration for his Joker was the Chief Blue Meanie in *Yellow Submarine*.

(ROUND UP)

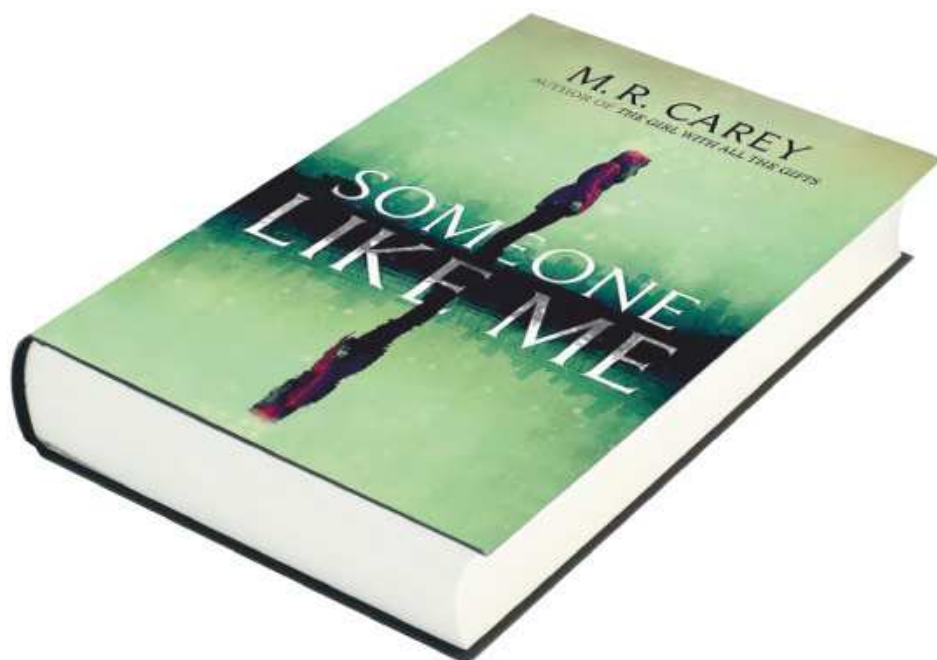


Three more fancy reissues to tell you about, starting with Stanley Kubrick's enigmatic 1968 opus **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY**

(Blu-ray/download, out now). Kubrick lover Christopher Nolan worked closely with the team on the mastering of this new 4K edition, which enjoyed a theatrical run this summer. The three-disc home entertainment release includes a standard Blu-ray disc, a disc of extras, a digital version, four art cards and a booklet. There's also a new 10th anniversary box set of **TWILIGHT** (Blu-ray/DVD, out now). Featuring all five entries in Stephenie Meyer's sparkly-vampire saga, it comes with three hours of new extras, including "The Twilight Tour... 10 Years Later" (10 minutes), in which director Catherine Hardwicke and Jackson Rathbone (Jasper Hale) revisit key locations, as well as interviews with Meyer and cast members, a bit on the fan phenomenon, and red carpet/premiere footage. A Studio Ghibli classic is also celebrating an anniversary – its 30th. The new box set of **MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO** (Blu-ray & DVD) is a double-play edition. The discs come packaged with 176-page book *The Art Of My Neighbour Totoro*, art cards, a 16" x 24" poster, magnetic stickers, a notebook and a tote bag. Finally, a quick canter through the latest TV box set releases. Available now are *Ash vs Evil Dead* season three, *The Expanse* season two and *Star Wars: Rebels* season four, with *Preacher* season three arriving on 12 November and *Wynonna Earp* season three due on 19 November. Phew!



TOTAL
FILM
ON SALE 16TH NOVEMBER



SOMEONE LIKE ME

Two sides to every story



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

512 pages | Hardback/ebook/audiobook

► Author **MR Carey**

► Publisher **Orbit**

◉ **The Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll**

And Mr Hyde is one of those modern fables that keeps being reinvented; sometimes with a wonderfully lurid lack of subtlety, as in Hammer's *Dr Jekyll And Sister Hyde*, but often in less obvious forms, such as Stephen King's *The Dark Half*, or even *The Incredible Hulk*. The appeal is obvious: we all like to think of ourselves as the hero of our own story, but we all fear we have the potential to be the villain.

The veneer of MR Carey's new novel would seem to suggest we have yet another modern version of Jekyll and Hyde here. That's certainly the way it's being marketed. And that's certainly the way things seem at the beginning. But *Someone Like Me* isn't just Jekyll and Hyde with, say, a social media/VR twist. Partly because Carey mixes in other fantasy

tropes to create a deeply weird and eerily enticing urban horror, but also partly because the central conceit doesn't actually rely on us all having "a dark side". It just happens that the main character is brought face to face with hers.

The book is full of twists and surprises, with major game-changers occurring regularly, making it tricky to discuss the plot in detail. So here's a spoiler-light primer. Liz Kendall is a long-suffering victim of domestic violence, who finally stands up to her abusive ex-husband Marc, burying a broken bottle in his face when he tries to strangle her. But Liz doesn't feel like she's in control when it happens; she feels like a puppet with someone else pulling the strings, and that someone else

“A deeply weird and enticing horror”

starts gaining more control. Especially when Marc starts stalking Liz, trying to frighten her out of taking him to court.

Meanwhile, a teenage girl called Fran who was, as a small child, kidnapped and held hostage by a man the press tagged the Shadowman, is still having nightmares and hallucinations. Very *mundane* hallucinations: small details, such as colours or the position of things, change. She deals with these problems partly by seeing a therapist and partly by interacting with her imaginary friend, a fox called Lady Jinx.

There's a connection between the characters. The motel where Fran was held captive was the same place Liz and her husband first had sex. And when Fran starts an adorable teen romance with Liz's son, she's surprised to see two people occupying the same space whenever she looks at Liz...

As an urban horror, *Someone Like Me* works brilliantly. The violence is lobbed like incendiary bombs into a prosaic life of health insurance, legal aid and trying to make ends meet. The creeping terror of Liz's loss of control is chillingly evoked. Liz's "dark side" is deliciously Machiavellian. The book also benefits from vividly-drawn characters, who all have their own failings to face up to, usually with a healthy dose of self-deprecating wit.

Carey feels less sure-footed when it comes to the more fanciful fantasy elements. There are moments when he enters the dark fairytale arena beloved of Neil Gaiman, Graham Joyce and Diana Wynne Jones, but his less lyrical style means that the two tones don't convincingly dovetail. It also means that you're less willing to dismiss lapses in the plot rationale as dream logic. Especially what happened to Liz's dark half to make her so dark – it feels like one of the Gwyneth Paltrows in *Sliding Doors* turning into a mad axe murderer. It's not enough of a problem to claim the book suffers from a split personality, though; it's more of an intriguing, mild personality disorder. **Dave Golder**

i *Someone Like Me* has been optioned for TV by Hillbilly Films, the production company behind *Holy Flying Circus*.



GIRLS OF PAPER AND FIRE



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

400 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Natasha Ngan**

► Publisher **Hodder & Stoughton**

◉ **The title's a bit of a**

mouthful, and the premise – about a teenage girl kidnapped from her village to serve as a king's concubine – is rather distasteful. But thankfully Natasha Ngan has taken an ages-old idea and, being a thoroughly modern writer, breathed new life into it.

The story follows Lei, a human ("Paper") living in a world with half-demons and full demons, who of course are the ones in charge. Leading them is the bull-demon king, a nasty bastard who chooses each night's bed partner from a tally of terrified – or, depending on their backgrounds, honoured – girls. Lei wants none of the bull-king's attentions; her fear of what will happen when she finally does spend the night with him is the visceral, driving force of the novel. Plus things get more complicated when she falls for one of her fellow Paper Girls, who harbours a few secrets of her own...

Violence and humiliation are common here, but there's also a beautiful love story at the book's heart. Sure, the surroundings of the Royal Palace are claustrophobic at times, and some of the minor characters are boringly familiar archetypes, particularly the bitchy Mean Girl types. But others convince – particularly, weirdly, the king himself: a homicidal Minotaur on Viagra. Excuse us while we shudder...

Jayne Nelson



EMPRESS OF ALL SEASONS



► **RELEASED 8 NOVEMBER**

384 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author **Emiko Jean**

► Publisher **Gollancz**

◉ You'll think you know

where this story is going: rooted in Japanese mythology, it's the tale of a yokai (monster) girl competing to become the bride of the Emperor's son in a land where yokai are subjugated. Mari, the heroine, is plain yet determined, raised to marry a rich man then run off with his wealth, as *Animal Wives* do. There's the obligatory boy who loves her, in this case another yokai, Akira, The Son of Nightmares. The prince is suitably handsome and lonely. But there are twists you won't see coming.

Another thing that's unexpected is the sheer humanity of the characters. While they conform broadly to certain familiar tropes, there are little nuances in their thoughts and actions that make them feel like real people. You'll empathise with them, and genuinely hope things work out for the best.

If there's anything to complain about, it's that sometimes things happen illogically quickly – Akira's able to master using the shuriken in a matter of days, though Mari had to train with her naginata for years – and the wonderfully diverse nature of yokai isn't really explored, with most of the ones encountered being humanoid. However, the power of the characterisation carries things through to the end, which is rather abrupt.

Miriam McDonald



SKYWARD

Top Gun in space



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

518 pages | Hardcover/ebook

► Author **Brandon Sanderson**

► Publisher **Gollancz**

◉ Renowned for his fantasy

series, Brandon Sanderson turns to science fiction with *Skyward*, a novel whose heroine suggests a Young Adult demographic, though the prose is strong enough to satisfy adult readers. Spensa is the aforementioned star of the tale, a hot-tempered, sharp-tongued teen with fire in her belly cut from a cloth familiar to any *Hunger Games* fan. Stranded on a planet called Detritus, the last remnants of mankind face constant attack from the alien Krell, but no one knows who the enemy is or why they won't stop fighting. Spensa lives with the shame that her fighter-pilot father was shot down as a deserter, and is determined to prove her worth by enrolling in flight school and joining the battle.

Sanderson is very good at action. Every time Spensa and her

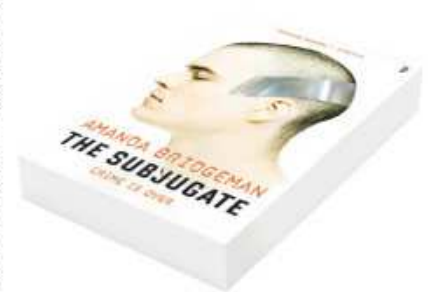
classmates take to the skies to face the Krell, the book goes into *Top Gun* mode, with thrilling accounts of aerial combat. Of course, there's more to the unhappy fate of Spensa's father than official accounts reveal, and that's one of the most compelling threads in the plot. Sanderson doesn't flinch from some of the realities of war and not all of the cast survive encounters with the aliens, although the supporting characters aren't drawn with enough depth to make their losses feel harrowing in the way Suzanne Collins does in *The Hunger Games*.

Spensa has a habit of shooting her mouth off and early on can be abrasive and childish, but that's the start of her emotional journey, not its culmination. There's a hint of romance between Spensa and her flight leader, but that element of the story is underweight and likely something to be developed further as this series continues to unfold. And some characters feel like they exist purely to facilitate the plot, most particularly Spensa's engineer pal Rodge. But the breathless rush of the dogfights is what lingers longest in the mind.

David West

i *Skyward* has roots in "boy and his dragon" books Sanderson loved as a young man, like Anne McCaffrey's *The White Dragon*.

“Sanderson is very good at action”



THE SUBJUGATE



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

432 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author **Amanda Bridgeman**

► Publisher **Angry Robot**

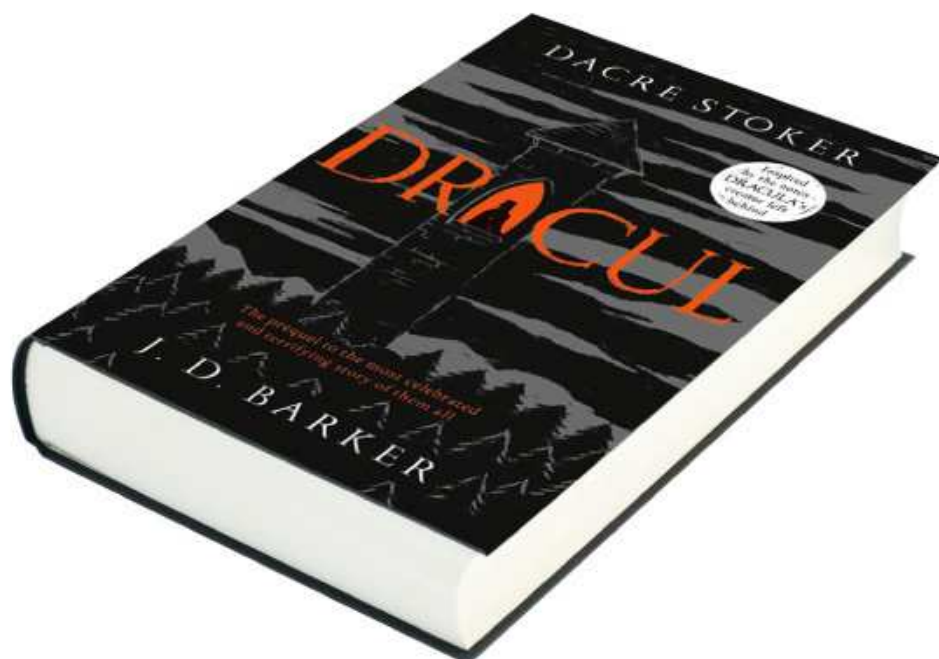
◉ As a sci-fi whodunnit, *The Subjugate* is more *Mid-stunner Murders* than *Airlock Holmes*.

In a near-future America, following some technological Black Monday, there's a murder in a small religious community that's turned its back on technology. A teenage girl is raped and killed, the word "PURE" carved into her body.

Two reluctantly paired-up cops from the city – emotionally stunted militant atheist Salvi and alcoholic, possibly girlfriend-killing Mitch – are sent to investigate. Suspicion immediately falls on the "inmates" at a nearby scientific complex, where convicted murderers and rapists undergo experimental treatment to readjust them into balanced, functioning members of society.

The SF here is merely set dressing. The book never explores its concepts, and the story could easily be rewritten with an Amish community and a mental asylum. Considering that convicts are being robbed of their will, the ethics of their treatment is only ever discussed superficially (wouldn't Amnesty International be protesting?).

Bridgeman is more interested in the relationship between her lead cops (both have *secret pasts*!) and the creaking murder mystery. The latter works well, but is hampered by heaps of infodumping, Salvi's constant second-guessing internal dialogue and some predictable twists. It's passable, lightweight fluff, but there's nothing new to see here. Move along. **Dave Golder**



DRACUL

Fam Stoker's Dracula



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

512 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Authors Dacre Stoker, JD Barker

► Publisher Bantam Press

➤ **Nine years ago, Bram Stoker's** great-grand-nephew Dacre co-authored *Dracula The Undead*, the self-proclaimed "official sequel" to his great-grand-uncle's greatest novel. Now he's back with *Dracul*; not quite a prequel, more "the story behind the story", showing how the young Bram's various encounters with the actual, real-life vampire Count inspired him to put pen to paper.

We begin with the sickly seven-year-old Bram living just outside Dublin under the care of an uncanny nanny – one who secretly sleeps in a box of soil hidden under her bed. The bulk of the book takes place 14 years later, when Bram learns exactly who his "Nanna Ellen" was, what she was doing in semi-rural Ireland, and who she was trying to escape. You might expect Stoker's subsequent adventures, in the company of siblings Thornley and Matilda, to take him to Whitby, and eventually to mittel-Europe; you might also expect references to fly-eating, the appearance of a Van Helsing-like

professor of the esoteric, and a female relative to fall under the vampire's spell. In all this, you will not be disappointed.

But despite several striking set-pieces – and the past life of Nanna Ellen, when it comes, is undoubtedly the novel's best sequence – the whole suffers from lapses into 21st century idiom and Americanism. That's a significant issue when you're writing, as per the original *Dracula*, in epistolary form – that is, in letters supposedly authored by 19th century Anglo-Irish correspondents. Someone has "snuck out"; someone says "We need to talk"; the "leaves of fall" have begun to "turn color"; and most painfully, the Count himself tells a woman she looks "stunning"!

A lengthy afterword persists with the cobblers claim that Bram's novel was written as a warning of some horrid truth. All very amusing, of course, but we can't help thinking that you don't best honour an ancestor by negating their genius, and instead insisting that their greatest work was a disguised autobiography.

Alan Barnes

i Bram Stoker also had a walk-on part in *Dracula The Undead*... along with Elizabeth Bathory, and even Jack the Ripper!



STRANGER THINGS: WORLDS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

224 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author Gina McIntyre

► Publisher Century

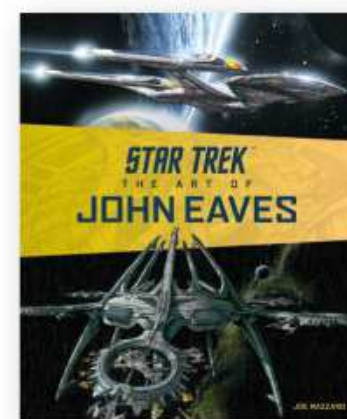
➤ **"Do you copy? This book is** for nerds. Repeat. This book is for nerds." So say *Stranger Things* creators the Duffer brothers in their foreword to this official behind-the-scenes companion, and they're not lying. It's so packed with details about the making of Netflix's '80s-set show that come the end, you'll know more about Hawkins, Indiana than the people who live there.

The prose may be functional rather than sparkling, but this is much more than your average Making Of. There's loads of input from the key players, but what really sets the book apart is the attention to period detail: stuff like a guide to the Duffers' favourite films presented as a Betamax ad, or character profiles as high school yearbook entries. The guide to the Upside Down, meanwhile, is *literally* upside down.

It's also peppered with footnotes that expand the cultural background of the show: the movies referenced, the historical context and even a guide to the '80s mullets that inspired Steve Harrington's magnificent 'do. The last chapter reveals more intel on next year's *Stranger Things 3* than you're likely to have seen elsewhere. In fact, the only thing it's missing is a free pack of Eggos. **Richard Edwards**

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



STAR TREK: THE ART OF JOHN EAVES

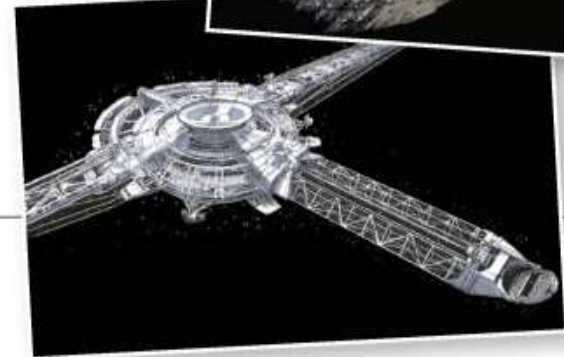
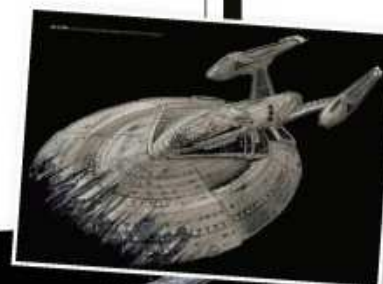
► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

208 pages | Hardback

► Author Joe Nazzaro

► Publisher Titan Books

- This large-format volume showcases the output of a concept artist whose work encompasses *Trek* films (from *The Final Frontier* to *Beyond*) and TV (principally *DS9*, *Enterprise* and *Discovery*).
- Spaceship designs (from Zefram Cochrane's Phoenix to the Discovery and Shenzhou) predominate, along with weapons and other tech.
- Highlights include some very cool (and beefily cyberpunk) Borg Queen designs for *First Contact*.
- The interview text details some interesting inspirations. For example, *Insurrection's* Son'a ships were based on horseshoes because Eaves's daughters were rodeo girls.
- Best anecdote: Eaves based the look of Khan's transporter device in *Into Darkness* on a back-worn vacuum he borrowed from his office cleaner!





ELEVATION

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

160 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Stephen King**

► Publisher **Hodder & Stoughton**

➤ **Not so much a novel as a** short story in search of a collection, *Elevation* is, according to King, “almost like a sequel” to his equally slim 2017 tome *Gwendy’s Button Box* (co-authored by Richard Chizmar). A dark fairy tale set in King’s favourite fictional locale, Castle Rock, *Gwendy* at least had some creepy illustrations by Keith Minnion to justify its standalone status. *Elevation*, however, merely has a few line drawings (possibly King’s own doodles) and an extract from *Gwendy* to bulk the story up.

So is *Elevation* simply a cynical exercise in milking King fans? Actually, no. It’s a delightfully charming tale with a very different vibe to *Gwendy*, which is so fully rounded and self-contained that its status as a volume in its own right feels thoroughly earned. Part moral fable, part sci-fi B-movie, it’s like *It’s A Wonderful Life* meets *The Incredible Shrinking Man* – except that the man, Scott Carey, doesn’t shrink; he mysteriously loses weight without losing any bulk.

This weird affliction plays out against a backdrop of intolerance to homosexuality, the resolution to which is downright cheesy but oddly life-affirming. There are also hints in the final moments that the 71-year-old writer is facing up to his own mortality with a cheery pragmatism. It may be brief, but King elevates it above a short story. **Dave Golder**



IN/HALF

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

368 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Jasmin B Frelih**

► Publisher **Oneworld**

➤ **It’s 25 years from now, and** three friends who haven’t seen each other for years are turning 50. The world the trio live in is breaking down as our information age ends, to be replaced by bewildering, Kafkaesque landscapes where nothing is ever quite as it seems.

That said, the real-world problems of Slovenian debut novelist Jasmin B Frelih’s protagonists are wholly recognisable. Theatre director Evan is a junkie; famous poet Zoja has a stalker; and politician Kras, a former minister of war, sits amidst a dysfunctional family, with some of the dysfunction provided by Kras himself. Might a meeting between the three, to which the novel builds, offer them resolutions?

Of sorts, perhaps, but it’s worth bearing in mind that *In/Half* isn’t a near-future tale as a genre writer might tackle it. Rather, it’s a slipstream literary novel that essentially borrows the tools of science fiction to explore how the uncertainties with which today’s millennials have to cope may impact on the lives they subsequently lead.

Whether it’s wholly successful is another matter. There’s a density to much of the prose that can become wearisome, yet this is still a novel that repays careful reading for some brilliant set-pieces, for its believably flawed characters, and for its bone-dry, even cynical, wit.

Jonathan Wright



OUR LIFE IN THE FOREST

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

151 pages | Paperback/ebook

► Author **Marie Darrieussecq**

► Publisher **Text Publishing**

➤ **It gives us no pleasure to be** the small boy pointing and laughing at the naked emperor’s winkie, but it’s occasionally necessary when it comes to literary fiction.

This slim volume by French author Marie Darrieussecq is a case in point. It’s been showered with critical bouquets in the author’s homeland, described as “a brilliantly executed dystopia”; “ingenious and brilliant”; “spellbinding”. Quite why is hard to fathom.

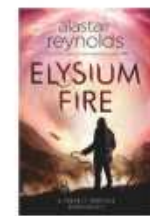
Told as one long first-person monologue, *Our Life In The Forest* recounts the protagonist’s escape from a world where some of the population have “halves”: blank, insensate clones used for harvesting replacement organs. Bafflingly, “Rest Centres” exist where people can visit their halves and sit holding their hand, a waste of resources that is about as plausible as the main twist.

The fact that Darrieussecq struggles to build a believable world wouldn’t matter so much if the book had resonant metaphoric depths, but it doesn’t. And while her spare style is appealingly idiosyncratic, two of the narrator’s ticks – repeated use of the Jim Royle-esque ejaculation “My arse!”, and explanations of every cultural reference (“The Mona Lisa is a famous painting from the 16th century”) – are downright annoying. Spellbinding?

My arse. **Ian Berriman**

REISSUES

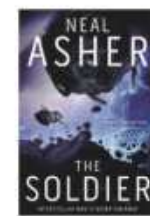
Pick of the paperbacks this month: **ELYSIUM FIRE** (★★★★★, out now, Gollancz), the sixth in



Alastair Reynolds’s *Revelation Space* sequence. This space opera thriller/whodunit

sees the return of Inspector Tom Dreyfus from 2007’s *The Prefect* (recently reissued as *Aurora Rising*). In his beat of the “Glitter Band”, citizens are connected by neural implants, which are now being used to murder people. Unless Dreyfus succeeds, thousands could die. We said: “technically hugely accomplished and as ambitious as anything Reynolds has written.”

Neal Asher’s **THE SOLDIER** (★★★★★, 15 November, Tor) kicks off a new series set in his Polity universe, *Rise Of The Jain*.



It centres on an AI-enhanced human tasked with overseeing deadly leftover tech

created by the long-extinct Jain species, and the resurrection of a Jain supersoldier. We said: “The action is handled quite brilliantly, and it’s difficult to imagine Asher’s fans being disappointed. Less happily, there’s a nagging sense of familiarity about parts of the book.” **THE COFFIN PATH** (★★★★★, out now, Headline Review)



is set on the Yorkshire Moors in the aftermath of the English Civil War,

Katherine Clements’s novel mixes a *Wuthering Heights*-esque love story with a MR James-esque fireside frightener, as a farmer encounters rum goings-on, like the sacrificial slaughter of lambs. We said: “You can almost feel the wind whipping through the pages of this clever and satisfying gothic horror.”

INSIDE BLACK MIRROR

Charlie says



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

319 pages | Hardback/ebook

► Author **Jason Arnopp**

► Publisher **Ebury Press**

► **This scrupulously researched** volume takes a deep dive on Charlie Brooker's anthology show, unearthing countless fascinating facts. Did you know that the second script written was abandoned for being "heavy-handed"? Or that the composer on "15 Million Merits" sampled exercise bikes for a rhythm track? Or that in "Metalhead"'s first draft,

the killer robot was controlled by a drone operator?

Other revelations are more eye-opening. Thought the *Black Mirror* team left Channel 4 in the lurch, lured away by a suitcase of Netflix cash? In fact, a month before the series blew up in the States, the UK broadcaster dropped the show due to its cost.

The story's told via oral history, with around 15 pages on each episode. It's a format that looks simple but can be tricky to pull off, and Jason Arnopp does a first-rate job. Brooker and fellow producer Annabel Jones are the lead voices;

their self-deprecation and mutual mockery are hugely endearing, and the former's accounts of the sometimes tortuous evolution of his scripts are particularly insightful. But Arnopp casts his net wide, interviewing cast, directors, production designers and more; this is very much a portrait of a team effort. Cleanly designed, with concept art treasures spotted throughout, it is, as Making Of books go, a flawless exemplar. **Ian Berriman**

i Lost script "Inbound" was a war story in which people think aliens are attacking Britain – but they're actually Norwegians!

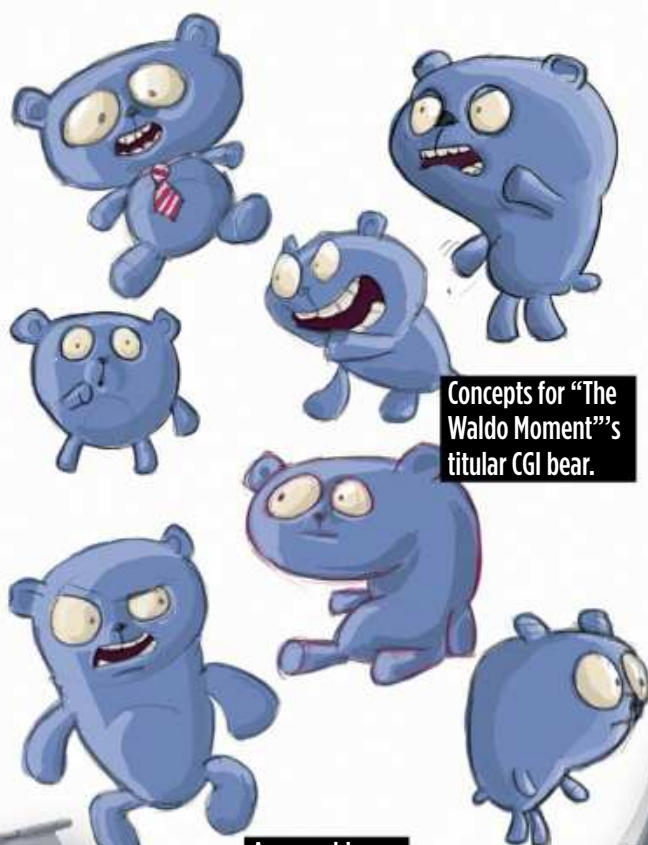


ALSO OUT

SCARLET TRACES: EMPIRES OF BLOOD

(out now, Abaddon Books) is the first in a new series set in the universe of Ian Edgington's excellent steampunk comics sequel to *The War Of The Worlds*. The first three 13th Doctor novels hit shelves: **THE GOOD DOCTOR, THE MOLTEN HEART** and **COMBAT MAGICKS** (out now/8 November/25 November, BBC Books). **Juno Dawson**, a newcomer to the range, penned the first; old reliables **Una McCormack** and **Steve Cole** are behind the other two. Speaking of *Who*, a new **TARDIS TYPE 40 INSTRUCTION MANUAL** (out now, BBC Books), features

schematic diagrams of every version, plus case studies of the ship's adventures. The subtitle to **MONSTERS OF THE WEEK** (out now, Abrams Press) sums it up: *The Complete Critical Companion To The X-Files*. Clocking in just under 500 pages, it gives some episodes less than a page, and others up to four. The use of run-on text feels a bit old-fashioned (we're used to episode guides with categories like best lines and Easter eggs). Hammer statots will eat up **INFOGOTHIC** (out now, Telos Books), which crunches numbers on the studio; its attempts to make sense of the *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* timelines are impressively anal. Finally, after volumes on superheroes and villains, **Jon Morris's third, THE LEAGUE OF REGRETTABLE SIDEKICKS** (out now, Quirk Books) celebrates the likes of Thunderfoot and Superman Jr via art and write-ups dripping with snark.



Concepts for "The Waldo Moment"'s titular CGI bear.



Space Fleet comic art by artist Billy Butcher.

A spaceship design from "USS Callister".

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adventures coming this Autumn.

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bookshops now



BBC
BOOKS

BLACK PANTHER

Space Is The Place



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Marvel**

► Writer **Ta-Nehisi Coates**

► Artist **Daniel Acuña**

ISSUES 1-4 **Marvel's line-wide** comic relaunches are happening so frequently that it's almost getting comical, with their latest Fresh Start initiative arriving directly on the heels of the much-trumpeted Marvel Legacy one. However, in the case of *Black Panther* writer Ta-Nehisi Coates's acclaimed current run, this series relaunch isn't just a way of hopefully boosting sales – it's also the kick-off for a radical change that pushes T'Challa in an unexpected direction.

"The Intergalactic Empire of

Wakanda" is the title for this new saga, and the set-up pitches us straight into a world that could be a parallel universe, an alternate future, a different timeline, or something even stranger.

Here, the technologically advanced kingdom of Wakanda made the leap into space 2000 years ago, and now they control vast sections of the galaxy as a brutal empire. However, there are also rebels fighting against Wakandan rule – including an ex-slave with only shadowy memories of his previous life, who's taken the name of T'Challa...

Coates has already proven himself a great writer of pulp action, but this shift into *Star Wars*-esque space opera is both deeply unexpected and surprisingly entertaining. The story quickly switches from a

Spartacus-style break-out on an alien prison planet to full-on intergalactic rebellion, while also exploring the series' usual energetic take on Afrofuturist sci-fi on a much broader scale.

The result is plenty of action and thrills, alongside some seriously impressive visuals from artist Daniel Acuña, who brings the Intergalactic Empire of Wakanda to life with a barrage of crazy pulp-SF designs. His style and colours also give the action sequences an impressive level of energy and intensity.

The question of whatever has transformed reality is intriguing, and yet also turns out to be a slight weakness for the series. These

“ Gives the action scenes impressive energy and intensity ”

opening four issues are frequently thrilling and never less than entertaining, but what with an amnesiac hero and very few clues as to what's happening, some aspects of the storytelling are maybe a little too ambiguous. It's hard not to feel like the mystery box approach is holding Coates back from the kind of texture and philosophical touches he was previously able to add to T'Challa's adventures.

However, those in the mood for muscular sci-fi action will find little to complain about, and *Black Panther* looks likely to remain a well-crafted and satisfying example of superhero storytelling for many issues to come.

Saxon Bullock

i Coates is also currently working with *The Wire* creator David Simon on a HBO miniseries about Martin Luther King.



EUTHANAUTS



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **IDW/Black Crown**

► Writer **Tini Howard**

► Artists **Nick Robles, Eva De La Cruz**

ISSUES 1-3 **As final frontiers go,** death is one of the scariest and most mysterious – but in *Euthanauts*, a new series from IDW's Black Crown imprint, it's just an unknown territory that's waiting for the right explorers.

This offbeat supernatural fantasy focuses on Thalia Peacetree, a receptionist for a funeral home who finds herself pulled into a strange adventure following a near-death experience. Befriended by a group of eccentric researchers, Thalia discovers that she's a permanent link to a Euthanaut – a dead scientist who's currently attempting to map the mysteries of the afterlife.

It's a heady concept executed with considerable style, as writer Tini Howard takes an experimental approach to the narrative and pulls off some dense and engaging storytelling. Admittedly, these first three issues take a little while to build up momentum, but they're also reminiscent of early Vertigo titles like *The Sandman*, and the provocative themes and sparky dialogue are matched by *Euthanauts'* well-executed art.

Occasionally evocative of the early output of JH Williams III, Nick Robles's work showcases strong character designs, eye-catching splash pages and some gorgeously psychedelic set-pieces. Robles gives this bold fantasy a unique visual flavour; this, combined with Howard's already intriguing scripts, means *Euthanauts* is off to an impressive and mind-bending start. **Saxon Bullock**



He was on the lookout for a nice cardboard box to sit in.



HOPE: FOR THE FUTURE

★★★★★

► **RELEASED** 15 NOVEMBER

► Publisher **Rebellion**

► Writer **Guy Adams**

► Artist **Jimmy Broxton**

GRAPHIC NOVEL You can't write noir fiction without an awareness of how it was shaped by the horrors of WWII, and this *2000 AD* series from Guy Adams and Jimmy Broxton (the team previously responsible for the brilliant *Goldtiger*) has that right at its heart. Mallory Hope is a former New York cop who's come to work as a private eye in Los Angeles after a personal tragedy (exemplary noir backstory there), and is hired to locate a missing child actor. But Hope has been touched by the horrors of war in a very literal way: this story is set in an alternative Earth where occult magic is real, and an encounter on the battlefield has given him access to dark forces.

The atmosphere is faultless and Broxton's murky, hazy LA is brilliantly depicted: details such as his faux-period movie posters add to the world-building. The plot is relentless in its grim descent, but Adams leavens it with plenty of humour along the way, and Hope's use of magic – for example, to make people answer his questions and be honest – gives him an extra dimension (as well as enabling him to cut to the chase).

It's a satisfying story, but it's just one case and there's much left unexplored, with the promise of future instalments to fill in the blanks. It's well worth catching up before Hope returns to the prog.

Eddie Robson



Her Trump supporter cosplay was ruined.

PROJECT SUPERPOWERS

New Tricks

★★★★★

► **RELEASED** OUT NOW!

► Publisher **Dynamite Entertainment**

► Writer **Rob Williams**

► Artist **Sergio Davila**

ISSUES 1-3 First brought together

as Project Superpowers by Alex Ross and Kim Krueger in 2008, this disparate band of public domain superheroes are essentially Avengers/Justice League composites, although many of the characters actually date back further than their more illustrious counterparts.

The story starts at a breakneck pace, as Buddhist magician the Green Lama desperately attempts to prevent all the world's airplanes from crashing to earth. The audacious twists come thick and fast, as the Spirit of the American Flag possesses African-American teenager Imani Cooper. Injecting some youthful, diverse blood into their ranks, they avoid becoming just another Justice Society-style heritage outfit, so it's unfortunate when Imani lapses into a coma.

From frightened civilians mistaking the Black Terror for a terrorist because of his foreboding name to the brutish Samson imploring his opponents to read books, Rob Williams imbues his script with the same wry humour that makes *Suicide Squad* such an engaging read. In a neat moment of meta-fiction, when glamorous Masquerade is interviewed on TV to promote her new autobiography, the book has the same Alex Ross cover as the original *Project Superpowers* collection.

Sergio Davila brings a visceral muscularity to the numerous fight scenes, and his opening first splash page of the Flag making ominous pronouncements while hovering over an ordinary New York street is downright spooky. With its enthralling mix of action, horror and satire, this is a super-team book that, refreshingly, isn't afraid to go against the grain.

Stephen Jewell

i Some of the '40s Black Terror strips were penned by Patricia Highsmith, later author of *The Talented Mr Ripley*.



LIP HOOK

★★★★★

► **RELEASED** OUT NOW!

► Publisher **SelfMadeHero**

► Writer **David Hine**

► Artist **Mark Stafford**

GRAPHIC NOVEL Described as “a tale of rural unease”, *Lip Hook* certainly borrows liberally from the folk horror canon: there's a local pub, a sinister lord, mysterious rituals and sex magick aplenty. But it's more reminiscent of Robert Aickman's deeply peculiar short fiction than, say, *The Wicker Man*. The atmosphere is weird and unsettling, weighted with a sense that things are *wrong*, but holding back explanations until late in the story.

The story sees the mysterious Vinnie and Sophia on the lam, fleeing a bad past with a suitcase full of treasure. They drive into Lip Hook, just your average village surrounded by a wall of permanent fog and deadly insects, and decide that it's the perfect place to hide. As they settle into life in the village, Sophia begins to bring the locals under her spell and rises in power. Meanwhile a pair of teenagers begin to uncover some of the village's dark secrets and what they have to do with a missing woman...

Mark Stafford's linework and the murky colour palette give everything a suitably phantasmal feel. At the same time, there's an amusingly parochial sense of humour to David Hine's writing here (particularly when it comes to the local coven – actually a fairly believable representation of modern Wicca) and a focus on character that grounds the book. Charming and strange rather than horrific, it feels like magic(k). **Will Salmon**

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

Going Greek



RELEASED OUT NOW!

Format Playstation 4
Also on Xbox One, PC
Publisher Ubisoft

VIDEOGAME No one was prepared for an *Assassin's Creed* game this good. Whether you're taking in the beauty and splendour of Ancient Greece, engaging in some naval combat, experimenting with the RPG-focused loadout options and skill tree, battling mythical beasts like the wonderfully snarky Sphinx, or simply getting down and dirty with the locals, *Odyssey* is an evolution of everything in the series to date.

It's clear that every element has been tailored to improve on what's

come before in every way imaginable. In particular it's focused on choice. You decide everything you do in *Odyssey*, from picking your hero (Kassandra or Alexios) to the dialogue options and choosing who lives – and who dies. With nine potential endings, three major questlines and a volume of sidequests that pushes its playtime easily into the hundreds of hours, Ubisoft really wasn't joking when they called this an *Odyssey*.

Striking a slightly different tone to *Assassin's Creed* games of old, there's a richness and a warmth to the world and the characters you meet, regardless of whether they're a main storyline player or a small side mission. There's more

personality in a side character here than some games have in their entire campaign, and a strong sense of each one's quirks and personality traits, even in the smallest interaction. It also helps that Kassandra and Alexios are the most rounded heroes the series has ever had, with BioWare levels of personality crafting and dialogue options that will make you fall in love with them within the first few hours.

That's because each one is *your* assassin. You've been able to craft them, personalise and tweak skills, weaponry and even apply perks and buffs to truly hone your Kassandra or Alexios to become the hero you want them to be. This truly is a game about choice, and every one you make can matter either in that moment, or much, much further down the storyline.

Odyssey is the pinnacle of the *Assassin's Creed* series, a wonderfully mature RPG, so mythically deep you should expect your trip to Ancient Greece to be an extended one. **Sam Loveridge**

i At one point, thugs attack a politician with snakes. One says they'll "make Athens great again". Sound familiar?



JEFF WAYNE'S THE WAR OF THE WORLDS: THE MUSICAL DRAMA



RELEASED 29 NOVEMBER

300 minutes | Download

Publisher Audible Studios

AUDIO DRAMA Inexplicably, "Jeff Wayne" has yet to become modern parlance for "one-trick pony". Wayne may seal his own fate, however, with this latest variation on his celebrated 1978 concept album.

This 10-part adaptation of HG Wells's definitive alien invasion novel is underpinned with – and, sometimes, overwhelmed by – instrumental versions of the songs from the LP. So while it stars big names like Michael Sheen, Taron Egerton and Adrian Edmondson, sadly you're not going to hear any of them belt out, "The chances of anything coming from Mars..." It comes across like an audio drama with the most overwrought incidental music ever.

While the concept is a little flawed, this production has one big thing going for it: it's an amazingly loyal adaptation. Okay, the narrator's brother's story has been given to his wife instead in an acceptable beefing up of the female roles, but otherwise the five-hour running time allows for even really minor details from the novel to make it through intact. Superbly acted, with excellent sound production, it has moments – the Thunder Child sequence especially – when the music and drama gel into something genuinely pulse-pounding. **Dave Golder**





SPEED FRECKS

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Number of players Two

► Publisher Games Workshop

TABLETOP GAME **Pity the Ork.**

Once one of Games Workshop's core races, they've been rather ignored in *Warhammer 40,000* over the last few years in favour of newer, sexier factions. Well, no more. *Speed Frenks* is both a new game and the start of the company's renewed plans for the greenskins. It brings the Orks and their love of ramshackle, *Mad Max*-style vehicles back to the table top in a big way.

This is something new for the 40K universe: essentially a racing game, albeit with axes and machine guns. Players control one of two "speedmobs" (made up of three warbikers and a larger vehicle, either the Kustom Boosta-blasta or the Shokkjump Dragsta) who compete over various scenarios, from straight-up races to attack missions and more traditional scraps. The emphasis is on fast, kinetic encounters with the vehicles modified by "speshual gubbinz" like boosters, spike droppers and grippy tyreaz – sorry, tyres.

The miniatures are typically great – the warbikers are older kits, but still look good (and, not coincidentally, make a solid starting force for a 40K Ork army). They are, however, a little trickier than usual to build, requiring a fair bit of additional knife-work and painting in stages to get good results. It's nothing that will put off skilled hobbyists, but may be a little daunting for beginners – a shame, as the game itself is fast, fun and very easy to get to grips with. **Will Salmon**



Who needs stealth with a gun this big?

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III

Like Fortnite, but too weak

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PlayStation 4

► Also on PC, Xbox One

► Publisher Activision

VIDEOGAME **You know your game**

is a success when the biggest first-person shooter franchise around starts cribbing your homework. Over the last year, Epic Games' battle royale sensation *Fortnite* has captured every facet of pop culture interest, so it's no surprise the makers of *Call Of Duty* have finally taken note.

Black Ops III's headline mode, called Blackout, mimics the action of Epic's cartoony shooter, then plasters it over the existing *Call Of Duty* mould. That means fluid blasting features heavily, as your marooned survivor tries to outlast another 99 players on a remote island laden with fully-auto implements of death. While Blackout is fluid and, on occasion, compellingly nerve-shredding, it also feels rote and tired.

If nothing else, *Black Ops III* is at least a robust package. The survival shootouts of Blackout are ably assisted by the shooter's traditional multiplayer modes – including twists on team deathmatch and the base-snatching Control – while the now decade-old *COD* Zombies also shuffle back onto the scene. Though the former suite of online match types are thankfully more welcoming than before (owing to the fact that your soldier can now withstand more bullets), the increasingly tired, ever cluttered *Zombies* fails to capture the magic of the original undead-slaying mode that debuted all the way back in 2008's *Call Of Duty: World At War*. The fact that the action also looks offensively blurry doesn't help matters. Where once *COD* was a sharpshooter savant, now it feels like a confused student trying to copy off others.

Dave Meikleham

i Should that be *Black Ops IV*? The Romans used both addition and subtraction methods for numerals. So it's fine.



BLIND TERROR: THE GODS OF FROST

★★★★★

EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► 200 minutes | Download

► Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO DRAMA **The fifth**

release in Big Finish's Originals line of new dramas, *Blind Terror* is a gothic tale of grief and ghosts with just a dash of class warfare.

The story follows widower Kathryn Ellis (*Torchwood*'s Eve Myles), who moves into Hodder Hall to take up a position as the new housekeeper. But it turns out not to be quite what she expected; as well as dealing with a troublesome maid, them upstairs are an eccentric bunch. Clarissa Hodder (Bethan Rose Young) keeps babbling madly about ghosts, while her brother Isaac (Joseph Tweedale) is consumed with his experiments into the occult. When people begin to die in mysterious circumstances, it becomes clear to Kathryn that the masters do not have the servants' best interests at heart.

Guy Adams' script does a good job of cooking up something new from familiar ingredients: arcane rituals, spooks and a decrepit old folly, to name just a few. For the most part, it's a compelling tale. Eve Myles is excellent, and it's authentically eerie in places. That said, the last episode is a struggle. Focusing on Ellis and her grief makes sense, but it's rendered here as lots of characters shouting at each other for half an hour, making for a difficult listen. But it's still a good story, (mostly) well told.

Will Salmon

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THE WIZARDING WORLD

How much do you know about JK Rowling's tales of magic and fantastic beasts?

Quizmaster Richard Edwards, Editor

QUESTION 1

Which Hogwarts House did Newt Scamander belong to during his time at school?

QUESTION 2

Who filmed scenes as poltergeist Peeves in *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone*, but was ultimately cut out of the movie?

QUESTION 3

What are the first names of Harry Potter's mum and dad? (Clue: put them together and you get the name of a famous actress.)

QUESTION 4

Which wizarding school does Fleur Delacour represent in the Tri-wizard tournament in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*?

QUESTION 5 PICTURE QUESTION

Which Hogwarts teacher is this?

QUESTION 6

In *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, what name do Americans give to Muggles?

QUESTION 7

Which character does David Tennant play in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*?

QUESTION 8

Which of the following Hogwarts professors has *not* been Harry's Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher? Filius Flitwick, Gilderoy Lockhart, Quirinus Quirrell, Severus Snape, Dolores Umbridge?

QUESTION 9 PICTURE QUESTION

Who voiced this character?

QUESTION 10

What's the name of Ron Weasley's rat, who turns out to be Death Eater Peter Pettigrew in disguise?

QUESTION 5



QUESTION 13

QUESTION 11

Two members of the *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* cast have since joined *The Walking Dead*. Who are they?

QUESTION 12

In which film did Michael Gambon play Albus Dumbledore for the first time?

QUESTION 13 PICTURE QUESTION

Name this famous Auror from the Ministry of Magic.

QUESTION 14

Who played Cedric Diggory in *The Goblet Of Fire* before taking the lead in another YA series?

QUESTION 15

Name the village near Hogwarts that older students are allowed to visit on the weekends.

QUESTION 9



QUESTION 19

QUESTION 16

What position does Harry Potter play in quidditch?

QUESTION 17

In the organisation founded by Hermione Granger, what does SPEW stand for?

QUESTION 18

What was the first name of Slytherin, who gave his name to the Hogwarts house?

QUESTION 19 PICTURE QUESTION

What's the name of this greedy, gold-loving creature from the *Fantastic Beasts* movies?

QUESTION 20

What's the name of the son Harry Potter drops off at Platform 9 3/4 at the beginning of *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*?

Answers
1 Hufflepuff 2 Rik Mayall 3 Lily and James 4 Beauxbatons 5 Professor Trelawney 6 No Maj 7 Barty Crouch Jr 8 Filius Flitwick 9 Toby Jones and Dan Fogler 10 Scabbers 11 Samantha Morton 12 *The Prisoner* 13 Alastor "Mad Eye" Moody 14 Robert Pattinson 15 Hogsmeade 16 Seeker 17 Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare 18 Salazar 19 Niffler 20 Albus

How did you do?

How much magic do you have in you?

0-5
Standard Muggle

6-10
Party conjuror

11-15
Witch/wizard

16-19
Hogwarts professor

20
Minister for Magic

Total Recall

Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



CARLOS EZQUERRA

Nick Setchfield, Features Editor

first encountered the genius of Carlos Ezquerra's work during wartime.

He was the artist on *Rat Pack*, a strip in *Battle*, one of the roughhouse Brit weeklies still fighting WWII in the psyches of '70s kids. It was a steal from *The Dirty Dozen* – a squad of criminal lowlifes, enlisted for suicide missions against the Axis – and Ezquerra's explosive, ugly-scruffy style suited it perfectly.

I soon knew his work on sight. Ezquerra's art was alive on the page. It felt itchy, weird, kinetic and loaded with grizzled cool. He specialised in outsiders, heroes who existed beyond the traditional moral compass of comics; loners with hard-bitten faces, every line carved by a hostile and distinctly scuzzy universe. "My art has never been very clean," he once admitted. "Everything looks dirty with me."

Born in Zaragoza in 1947, Ezquerra drew Westerns and war tales for Spanish publishers before finding work on British titles. In 1976 Pat Mills recruited him for new SF launch *2000 AD*. Ezquerra was tasked with visualising the worldscape and characters of a near-future cop story called *Judge Dredd*.

The imaginative verve of these designs spurred Mills to shift the strip even further into tomorrow. Mega-City One was no longer New York the



day after next; now it was a sanity-cracking architectural fantasia, full of stratospheric structures entwined in high-rise freeways, future shock incarnate. And Dredd, with his monstrous boots and shoulder-mounted bird of prey, was an equally startling, equally outsized figure, one who could never be dwarfed by his city.

Ezquerra also gave us *Strontium Dog*, the adventures of a white-eyed mutant bounty hunter named Johnny Alpha. "I made his face hard, but not as cold as Dredd," he remembered. "Johnny Alpha was more human." Ezquerra clearly had a bond with Johnny, refusing to draw the story that killed him off.

Other heroes followed, from the ABC Warriors to the Stainless Steel Rat, but Dredd stamped Ezquerra's name on a generation. In one memorable image Dredd's wall-shattering Lawmaster bike almost erupts out of the page itself, its scowling rider clinging to the handlebars as a giant wheel mows directly into the brains of gobsmacked readers.

Carlos Ezquerra lost his fight against lung cancer in October. Someone once asked what kept him at the drawing board. "The desire to do something better than the last job," he replied. ●

Nick unleashed the war's dirtiest fighters on the enemy.

FactAttack!

→ Ezquerra drew the controversial *Kids Rule* OK cover for the 18 September 1976 edition of *Action*.

→ James Coburn was an enduring totem for Ezquerra, inspiring Major Eazy and the Stainless Steel Rat.

→ Ezquerra used the pseudonym L John Silver when he felt he'd rushed an assignment.

→ The sentient cyber-cigar in *2000 AD*'s strip *Robo-Hunter* is named Carlos Sanchez Robo-Stogie in tribute.

SEE YOU
NEXT MONTH!
5 DEC
DETAILS ON
PAGE 23



LOT #319

RIDDLER'S (FRANK GORSHIN) "?" GREEN SUIT JACKET AND VEST

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