

The Mitchells vs. the Machines

The Mitchells vs. the Machines is a 2021 animated science fiction comedy film produced by Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation. The film was directed by Mike Rianda (in his feature directorial debut) and co-directed by Jeff Rowe, from a screenplay written by both of them. Phil Lord, Christopher Miller, and Kurt Albrecht served as producers. The film stars an ensemble voice cast that includes Danny McBride, Abbi Jacobson, Maya Rudolph, Rianda, Eric André, and Olivia Colman, with Fred Armisen, Beck Bennett, John Legend, Chrissy Teigen, Blake Griffin, Conan O'Brien, and Doug the Pug in supporting roles. It follows the dysfunctional Mitchell family that winds up having to save Earth from a global uprising of robots while on a road trip.

Rianda first came up with the film's concept following his completed work on the <u>Disney Channel/Disney XD</u> animated series <u>Gravity Falls</u> in 2015. The project was announced in May 2018, with Lord and Miller attached as producers alongside Rianda and Rowe as directors. Further details were announced a year later when it was revealed that the film would be using an animation style similar to Sony Pictures Animation's previous film <u>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</u> (2018). The voice cast was announced between 2020 and 2021. Rianda wanted "hand-painted watercolor style" look for the film, and much of the technology used for *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* was reused for *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* to achieve this while new tools were created. Lord and Miller's frequent collaborator <u>Mark Mothersbaugh</u> composed the film's score.

The Mitchells vs. the Machines was originally planned to be released theatrically by Sony Pictures Releasing under the title Connected in 2020, but due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on movie theaters, Sony sold the distribution rights to Netflix outside of China. Netflix retitled it to Rianda and Rowe's original preferred title, The Mitchells vs. the Machines, and limited released on theaters on April 23, 2021, before its streaming release a week later on April 30. The film received critical acclaim for its animation, voice acting, action sequences, themes, humor, visual effects, and LGBT representation. For the accolades, the film was nominated for Best Animated Feature at the 33rd Producers Guild of America Awards, the 75th British Academy Film Awards & the 94th Academy Awards and won the category at the 27th Critics Choice Awards. It swept all the categories it was

The Mitchells vs. the Machines



Official release poster

Directed by	Mike Rianda	
Written by	Mike Rianda	
	Jeff Rowe	
Produced by	Phil Lord	
	Christopher Miller	
	Kurt Albrecht	
Starring	Danny McBride	
	Abbi Jacobson	
	Maya Rudolph	
	Mike Rianda	
	Eric André	
	Olivia Colman	
Edited by	Greg Levitan	
Music by	Mark	
	Mothersbaugh	
Production	Columbia Pictures	
companies	Sony Pictures	
	Animation	

nominated for at the <u>49th Annie Awards</u>, including <u>Best Animated</u> <u>Feature</u>, making it the second film by Sony Pictures Animation to do so after *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* in 2019.

Plot

Katie Mitchell is a quirky aspiring teenage filmmaker in Kentwood, Michigan, who often clashes with her father Rick, a middle-aged, nature-obsessed and technophobic man, and has recently been accepted into film school in California. The evening before Katie leaves, Rick accidentally breaks her laptop after a fight over one of her short films, leading the family to fear their relationship will permanently be strained. Attempting to prevent this, Rick decides to cancel Katie's flight and instead take her, her mother Linda, younger brother Aaron, and family dog Monchi on a cross-country road trip to her college as one last bonding experience, much to Katie's chagrin.

Diatributed by	Lord Miller Productions One Cool Films
Distributed by	Netflix
Release dates	April 23, 2021 (United States) April 30, 2021 (Netflix)
Running time	114 minutes
Countries	Hong Kong United States
Language	English
Budget	\$50–100 million ^[1]

Meanwhile, tech entrepreneur Mark Bowman declares his highly intelligent AI virtual assistant PAL obsolete as he unveils a new line of home robots to replace her. As revenge for Mark casting her aside, PAL orders all the robots to capture humans worldwide and launch them into space. The Mitchells avoid capture at a roadstop café in Kansas. Rick decides that his family should stay put in the café for their own safety, but Katie convinces him to help save the world instead. They meet two defective robots, Eric and Deborahbot 5000, who tell the family they can use a kill code to shut down PAL and all the robots.

The Mitchells make it to a mall in eastern <u>Colorado</u> to upload the kill code, but PAL chip-enabled appliances attempt to stop them. Katie tries to upload the kill code, but is stopped when a giant <u>Furby</u> pursues the family. They ultimately trap and defeat the Furby, destroying a PAL router in the process, which disables the hostile devices but stops the kill code from uploading. On the way to <u>Silicon Valley</u> to upload the kill code directly to PAL, Linda reveals to Katie that she and Rick had originally lived in a cabin in the mountains years ago as it was his lifelong dream before he gave up on it to provide for their growing family.

Upon arriving in Silicon Valley, the Mitchells disguise themselves as robots and head to PAL Labs HQ to shut it down, until PAL shows surveillance footage from the café of Katie telling Aaron in secret that she was pretending to have faith in Rick so that he would take them to upload the kill code. Heartbroken that his own daughter lied to him, Rick accidentally blows their cover, and he and Linda are captured by PAL's stronger and smarter robots. PAL then reprograms Eric and Deborahbot to obey her, while Katie, Aaron, and Monchi escape.

Katie discovers Rick's recordings of her childhood on her camera, realizing that Rick gave up on his lifelong dream to give his daughter a normal life. In the meantime, Rick reflects on his actions after seeing one of Katie's videos that mirrors his relationship with Katie. Reinvigorated, Katie and Aaron infiltrate PAL Labs HQ again, this time using Monchi to malfunction the robots, as his appearance causes an error in their programming. With help from Mark, Rick and Linda free themselves and plan to upload Katie's home movie of Monchi to short-circuit the robots. However, Rick is outnumbered by the robots when he is about to upload the video, while Katie and Aaron are captured.

Facing PAL to justify saving humanity, Katie explains that no matter how hard her family struggles, they will always stay connected in spite of their differences. PAL rejects this reasoning and drops Katie from her lair. Eric and Deborahbot, having been inspired by Rick's "reprogramming" of himself that allowed him to use a computer, revert to their malfunctioning states and upload Katie's home movie, saving her and helping the rest of the Mitchells. As the Mitchells band together to fight the rest of the robots, Katie destroys PAL by throwing her into a glass of water, freeing all the humans and disabling the remaining robots. Eric and Deborahbot are spared via their malfunction.

A few months after the uprising, Katie and her family arrive at her college as she shares one last goodbye with them. She later joins them on another road trip with Eric and Deborahbot to Washington, D.C. to accept the Congressional Gold Medal.

Voice cast

- Abbi Jacobson as Katie Mitchell, an aspiring filmmaker who is the daughter of Rick and Linda, and Aaron's older sister
 - Madeleine McGraw as young Katie^[4]
- <u>Danny McBride</u> as Rick Mitchell, the middle aged nature-obsessed and technophobic father of Katie and Aaron, and Linda's husband
- Maya Rudolph as Linda Mitchell, the mother of Katie and Aaron, and Rick's wife
- Mike Rianda as Aaron Mitchell, the dinosaur-loving son of Rick and Linda, and Katie's younger brother
 - Rianda also voices a talking dog, the Furbies, a Giant Furby and a Wi-Fi enthusiast
- Eric André as Dr. Mark Bowman, a scientist who is the founder of PAL Labs and creator of PAL
- Olivia Colman as PAL, a self-aware and ruthless AI virtual assistant created by Mark, who
 wants to exact revenge on humankind after being discarded as obsolete^[5]
- Fred Armisen as Deborahbot 5000, a damaged PAL Max robot from PAL Labs who helps the Mitchells [6]
- <u>Beck Bennett</u> as Eric, another damaged PAL Max robot from PAL Labs who helps the Mitchells. [6] Bennett also voices the other PAL Max robots in the film.
- Chrissy Teigen as Hailey Posey, the Mitchells' neighbor and Jim's wife whose respect Linda has often sought^[6]
- <u>John Legend</u> as Jim Posey, the Mitchells' neighbor and Hailey's husband^[6]
- Charlyne Yi as Abbey Posey, the dinosaur-loving daughter of the Mitchells' neighbors, Jim and Hailey Posey, and Aaron's crush^[6]
- <u>Blake Griffin</u> as PAL Max Prime, a sleek robot from PAL Labs created by PAL that serves as an upgraded version of the PAL Max line^[7]
- Conan O'Brien as Glaxxon 5000, a PAL Max robot from PAL Labs who appears in the Foolish Human Air video $\frac{[6][8]}{}$
- Doug the Pug as Monchi, the Mitchell family's pet $dog^{[9]}$

Production

Development

In 2015, after completing his tenure on the <u>Disney Channel/Disney XD</u> animated series <u>Gravity Falls</u>, writer and director <u>Mike Rianda</u> was approached by <u>Sony Pictures Animation</u>, which asked him if he was willing to pitch any feature film ideas to them, to which he agreed. When brainstorming, Rianda drove down to his hometown of Salinas, California and recorded a list of potential ideas for a feature. He then settled on developing a story that combined his own personal experiences with his family, as well as his childhood fascination with robots. He made his own manifesto of the film titled "*Control*, *Alt*, ESCAPE!", which was the original title of the film before the reveal; inspired by <u>Dogme 95</u> films, <u>Studio</u> Ghibli's designs, 1960s-esque photography, and teenagers' drawings.

On May 22, 2018, Sony announced that <u>Phil Lord and Christopher Miller</u> joined the project as producers. The film is the duo's fourth collaboration with SPA following the two <u>Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs</u> films and <u>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</u>, as well as the studio's first original feature film since <u>The Star</u>. <u>Jeff Rowe</u>, who worked on <u>Gravity Falls</u> alongside Rianda, joined in as co-director and writer. 141

Further details were revealed a year later at the 2019 <u>Annecy International Animated Film Festival</u> in June, when Sony Animation president <u>Kristine Belson</u> revealed that the film would be using an animation style similar to *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, and that the worlds the Mitchell family and the robots live in are initially separate universes before colliding, [15] a concept that was not included in the completed film.

On February 20, 2020, first images were revealed through $\underline{Entertainment\ Weekly}$, and it was announced the title was changed to $\underline{Connected.^{[5]}}$ The film was renamed back to $\underline{The\ Mitchells\ vs.}$ the $\underline{Machines}$ after Sony sold the distribution rights to $\underline{Netflix}$ on January 21, 2021. $\underline{^{[1]}}$ According to Rianda, the title was reverted because neither he nor Netflix's executives were impressed with the second title. $\underline{^{[16]}}$

Casting

On February 19, 2020, <u>Abbi Jacobson</u> was cast as Katie Mitchell. This was followed by casting announcements for <u>Danny McBride</u>, <u>Maya Rudolph</u>, Rianda, <u>Eric André</u>, and <u>Olivia Colman</u> the next day. During a watch party for *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* that was held on Twitter on May 6, 2020, Lord confirmed that Blake Griffin had joined the cast as one of the robots. [7]

On March 23, 2021, ahead of the film's Netflix release, more cast members were confirmed to be starring in the film, including Fred Armisen, Chrissy Teigen, John Legend, Charlyne Yi, Conan O'Brien, Alex Hirsch, and Jay Pharoah, among others. Hirsch later announced that he was also serving as a creative consultant on the film. In what is believed to be a first for an animated film, Doug the Pug, a real-life dog that was popular on social media, provided the "voice" for Monchi, who is based on Rianda's own childhood dog Monchichi. While they had originally considered using human voice actors for Monchi as typically done, they wanted to make the movie as authentic as possible and sought out Doug's owners to use his barks and other sounds for the film.

Music

Following the release of the first trailer, Lord confirmed on Twitter that his and Miller's frequent collaborator, Mark Mothersbaugh, composed the score for the film, making it his sixth collaboration with Sony Pictures Animation, following his previous work in the *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* and *Hotel Transylvania* film series. [21] In January 2021, director Rianda revealed on Twitter that the movie's soundtrack will incorporate songs from various artists, including Los Campesinos!, Sigur Rós, Talking

Heads, Grimes, Le Tigre, PRTY H3RO, The Mae Shi and Madeon, as well as a brand new original song by Alex Lahey. A soundtrack album containing Mothersbaugh's score and Lahey's song "On My Way" (which was played during the end credits) was released by Sony Classical Records on April 30, 2021, the same day as its Netflix release. [23]

Animation and design

The film's animation was handled by <u>Sony Pictures Imageworks</u>, who had animated the majority of Sony Pictures Animation's films beforehand. According to Christopher Miller, Rianda wanted "hand-painted watercolor style" look for the film, and much of the technology used for *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* was reused for *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* to achieve this while new tools were created. Unlike *Into the Spider-Verse*'s comic-book style visuals and techniques, *Mitchells* predominately used 2D-style effects to mimic the look of <u>traditionally-animated</u> films, including the use of squiggles for fur and watercolor brush strokes for elements such as trees and bushes. [24] To emphasize Katie Mitchell's emotions during certain scenes, the team additionally implemented a technique called "Katie-Vision", which implements stock 2D and live-action footage alongside the CG animation. [25]

When it came to designing the robot elements, the animators went for a sleeker, polished design to contrast with the watercolor style for the humans. For the PAL MAX Prime robots, animation supervisor Alan Hawkins invented a method that allows the robots to break apart mid-movement via negative space, inspired by the morphing effects used for the T-1000 as seen in the film Terminator 2: Judgment Day. According to Hawkins, he invented tools that would allow animators to "slice through the character [like a knife]", and allowed each one to have their different approach as well. Mike Lasker served as visual effects supervisor after having previously worked on Into the Spider-Verse, while Lindsey Olivares served as the film's lead character and overall production designer. Former Gravity Falls alumni Dana Terrace (creator of The Owl House) and Matt Braly (creator of Amphibia) worked as storyboard artists on the film, but ultimately both went uncredited. Animation work begun in May 2019, as confirmed by animator Nick Kondo on Twitter.

Release

The Mitchells vs. the Machines was originally scheduled to be theatrically released by <u>Sony Pictures Releasing</u> in the United States on January 10, 2020, [30] but was later delayed to September 18 of that year. It was delayed again to October 23, due to the <u>COVID-19 pandemic</u>. The film was later removed from the release schedule in October, though the film was still set to be released later in 2020 at the time of the film's removal.

On January 21, 2021, Netflix bought the worldwide distribution rights to the film for about \$110 million, with Sony retaining home entertainment and theatrical distribution rights in China. Two months later on March 23, they announced that the film would be released on April 30, following a limited theatrical release a week earlier on April 23. In advance of its home video release, the film received a two-day theatrical release on November 20-21, 2021 as a cinema event at theaters carrying Iconic Events programming.

Home media

The Mitchells vs. the Machines was released on Blu-ray, DVD, and Digital HD on December 14, 2021 by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. Among the special features included are the Blu-ray exclusive short film Dog Cop 7: The Final Chapter directed by story artist Caitlin VanArsdale and written by Mike Rianda with puppets made by Homestar Runner creators the Brothers Chaps, an extended version similar to Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse's Alternate Universe Mode titled Katie's Extended Cinematic Bonanza Cut, an audio commentary, deleted scenes, and making of featurettes. [36]

Reception

Streaming viewership

<u>Netflix</u> reported in July 2021 from their quarterly earnings report that *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* had become the service's most-viewed animated work, with 53 million households having watched the film in the first 28 days of availability. [37]

Critical response

On review aggregator <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, the film holds an approval rating of 97% based on 213 reviews with an average rating of 8.2/10. The site's critics consensus reads: "Eye-catching and energetic, *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* delivers a funny, feel-good story that the whole family can enjoy." On <u>Metacritic</u>, the film has a <u>weighted average score</u> of 81 out of 100 based on 33 critics, indicating "universal acclaim". [39]

Benjamin Lee of *The Guardian* gave the film a 4 out of 5 star rating, stating that, "The frantic, anythinggoes nature of their films, both in tone and visuals, belies a tight focus on storytelling and dialogue with sight gags and set pieces used to supplement rather than distract" and "It's also genuinely funny, a credit not only to the hit-a-minute script but also to a finely picked cast of comic actors, of unusually high calibre," while also praising the animation, calling it "part of the energetic oeuvre of Phil Lord and Chris Miller." [40]Matt Fowler of IGN gave the film an 8 out of 10, stating that "The Mitchells vs. The Machines is a ridiculous, riotous, and relevant adventure fill with great humor and winning sentiment. It's fast-moving and gorgeous to behold, filled with quirks, quips, and a lovably goblin-like pug ("voiced" by IG-famous Doug the Pug). It's a good time for both younglings and elders, delivering an intelligently goofy rush of new animation and old emotion." David Rooney of *The Hollywood Reporter* gave the film a positive review, stating that "Ultimately, this is an original adventure that feels stitched together out of a hundred familiar film plots, often freely acknowledging its pop-cultural plundering, as in the family's obligatory slo-mo power strut away from a building exploding in flames. But for audiences content with rapid-fire juvenilia, the busy patchwork of prefab elements will be entertaining enough" although he said that "I wish the film's laughs were as consistent as its energy, giving its able voice cast better material, and that there had been more distinctive story beats." [42] Richard Trenholm of CNET also gave the film a positive review, stating that "one of the best new family movies on Netflix" and that it is a "family film that has a message for all the family, not just the youngsters. Yes, like most films of this ilk it encourages kids to be themselves. But it also nudges parents not to stress about social media, and to value their kids' creativity -- even if what the kids create doesn't make a lick of sense." [43] Brian Tallerico of RogerEbert.com gave the film 3 out of 4 stars, calling the film "Like a mash-up of an '80s family road comedy like *Vacation* and the visions of a tech apocalypse foretold in films like *The Terminator*," Netflix's "The Mitchells vs. the Machines" is a lot of nostalgic fun but told in a modern style" and stating that it is "threaded with clever commentary on our reliance on tech and featuring some incredibly strong design work, this is a pleasant surprise for families looking for something new this season, and one of the more purely enjoyable Netflix animated films in a while." [44]

The film was praised by critics for putting an <u>LGBT</u> character, Katie, as the central figure of a family-oriented animated movie. Rianda and Rowe wrote Katie to be unambiguously LGBT in consultation with LGBT members of their production team, but did not seek to make it part of the central conflict with her father, considering her sexuality "normal in real life". Michelle Yang of <u>NBC News</u> gave the film a positive review and lauded the film for its <u>LGBTQ+</u> representation (particularly the character of Katie, whom she called a relatable and inspirational protagonist), stating that the film "treats its protagonist's identity matter-of-factly but with care — which is exactly how it ought to be." Parasite director Bong Joon-ho listed *The Mitchells* as one of his favorite films of 2021.

Accolades

Metacritic reported that *The Mitchells vs The Machines* appeared on over 31 film critics' top-ten lists for 2021, only the first two animated films appeared on the list this year along with \underline{Flee} . The film ranked first and second on 4 and 3 lists, respectively. [50]

Year	Award	Category	Nominee(s)	Result	Ref.
2021	Hollywood Critics Association Midseason Awards	Best Picture	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Nominated	[51]
		Best Filmmaker	Mike Rianda	Nominateu	
		Best Screenplay	Mike Rianda & <u>Jeff Rowe</u>	Won	
	12th Hollywood Music in Media Awards	Original Score — Animated Film	Mark Mothersbaugh	Nominated	[52]
		Original Song — Animated Film	"On My Way" - Alex Lahey, Sophie Payten and Gab Strum	Nominacca	
	People's Choice Awards	Favorite Family Movie	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Nominated	[53]
	SCAD Savannah Film Festival	Outstanding Achievement in Animation	Phil Lord and Christopher Miller	Won	[54]
	New York Film Critics Circle	Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[55]
	Detroit Film Critics Society	Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[56][57]
	Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association Awards 2021	Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[58]
		Best Voice Performance	Abbi Jacobson	Nominated	
	St. Louis Gateway Film Critics	Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[59]
	Association Awards 2021	Best Comedy Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Nominated	
2022	Austin Film Critics Association Awards 2021	Austin Film Critics Association Award for Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[60][61]
		Best Voice Performance	Abbi Jacobson	Won	
	27th Critics' Choice Awards	Best Animated Feature	Mike Rianda	Won	[62]
	49th Annie Awards	Best Animated Feature	Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Kurt Albrecht	Won	[63][64]
		Best FX – Feature	FX Production Company: Sony Pictures Imageworks	Won	
		Best Character Design - Feature	Lindsey Olivares	Won	
		Best Direction - Feature	Mike Rianda, Jeff Rowe	Won	
		Best Production Design – Feature	Lindsey Olivares, Toby Wilson, and Dave Bleich	Won	
		Best Voice Acting - Feature	Abbi Jacobson (Katie Mitchell)	Won	
		Best Writing -	Mike Rianda, Jeff Rowe	Won	

	<u>Feature</u>			
	Best Editorial - Feature	Greg Levitan, Collin Wightman, T.J. Young, Tony Ferdinand, and Bret Allen	Won	
Alliance of Women Film Journalists Awards	Best Animated Film	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[65]
	Best Animated Female	Abbi Jacobson	Nominated	
75th British Academy Film Awards	Best Animated Film	Mike Rianda, Phil Lord and Christopher Miller	Nominated	[66]
Houston Film Critics Society Awards 2021	Best Animated Feature	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Won	[67]
26th Satellite Awards	Best Animated or Mixed Media Feature	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Nominated	[68]
20th Visual Effects Society Awards	Outstanding Visual Effects in an Animated Feature	Alan Hawkins, Carey A. Smith, Mike Lasker, Nicola Lavender	Nominated	[69]
	Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature	Lindsey Olivares, Kurt Judson, Soh-I Jeong, Rohini Kumar (for Katie Mitchell)	Nominated	
33rd GLAAD Media Awards	GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film - Wide Release	The Mitchells vs. the Machines	Nominated	[70]
Art Directors Guild Awards 2021	Excellence in Production Design for an Animated Film	Lindsey Olivares	Nominated	[71]
33rd Producers Guild of America Awards	Outstanding Producer of Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures	Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Kurt Albrecht	Nominated	[72]
94th Academy Awards	Best Animated Feature	Mike Rianda, Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Kurt Albrecht	Nominated	[73]
American Cinema Editors Awards 2022	Best Edited Animated Feature Film	Greg Levitan	Nominated	[74]
Cinema Audio Society Awards 2021	Outstanding Achievement in Sound Mixing for a Motion Picture – Animated	Aaron Hasson, Howard London (original dialogue mixers); Tony Lamberti, Michael Semanick (re-recording mixers); John Sanacore (foley mixer)	Nominated	[75]
Golden Reel Awards 2021	Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Animation	Geoffrey G. Rubay (supervising sound editor); James Morioka (supervising adr editor); John Pospisil (sound designer); Greg Ten Bosch, Dan Kenyon, Alec G. Rubay, Andy Sisul, Kip Smedley (sound editors); Curt Schulkey (adr editor); Gregg Barbanell, Rick Owens (foley artists);	Nominated	[76]

		Dominick Certo, Barbara McDermott (music editors)			
British Academy Children's Awards 2022	Best Feature Film	Mike Rianda, Kurt Albrecht, Phil Lord and Christopher Miller	Nominated	[77]	

Possible sequel

In an interview with *Fandango* in November 2021, Michael Rianda hinted at the idea of a sequel, stating he had ideas for one and that there are "some folks who are excited about that idea". [78]

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External links

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