

Why *Creature Commandos* Is the Perfect Re-Starting Point for the DC Universe

Showrunner Dean Lorey and star Sean Gunn break down why Max's adult animated show is a must-watch.

By **Isaiah Colbert** Published November 18, 2024 | Comments (7)

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Starting over is never easy—a truth further amplified when the revamp in question is a major event in pop culture. It's surprising, then, that one of the first projects that DC is releasing under the guiding hand of James Gunn is *Creature Commandos*, an animated series following a bunch of virtual nobodies in the DC mythos.

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Ahead of the show's December release, we spoke with *Creature Commandos* star Sean Gunn and showrunner Dean Lorey to learn more about how the show came into being and what they hope its legacy will spell for the future of the DC Universe.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Isaiah Colbert, io9: While its premise isn't too dissimilar to *The Suicide Squad*, *Creature Commandos* stands as the first foray into the

new DC era under the guiding hand of James Gunn. In your estimation, what makes *Creature Commandos*—another group of deep-cut unknown characters—the best restarting point into the DC universe?

Sean Gunn: I think it's a good example of where the DC Universe is going. My brother [James Gunn] has referred to it as an appetizer, and the cool thing about it is that you don't need to know any of these characters. There's no history. Anybody can go in and watch *Creature Commandos* from episode one and love it, even if they've never read a comic book or seen a comic book movie in their lives. But the hardcore fans will also get Easter eggs and things like that. I think it's nice—before *Superman* even starts—to get a sense that this is a very expansive world with many different nooks and crannies. My favorite thing about it is that these characters are unusual, but that makes it feel like we're all starting together.

Dean Lorey: James actually started writing the series before he was the president of DC. He'd written most of it and picked it up because he was the president. I don't know that it's specifically representative of what his DCU is going to be, but it is very much like a classic sort of James Gunn material. There's a lot of drama. There's a lot of action. It's definitely got comedy. But what it really has is a lot of heart that I think people are not expecting. If it's representative of the rest of the material he's putting out for DC, then yeah, it's classic James Gunn.

io9: How does *Creature Commandos* approach adult animation differently from other DC shows like *Harley Quinn*?

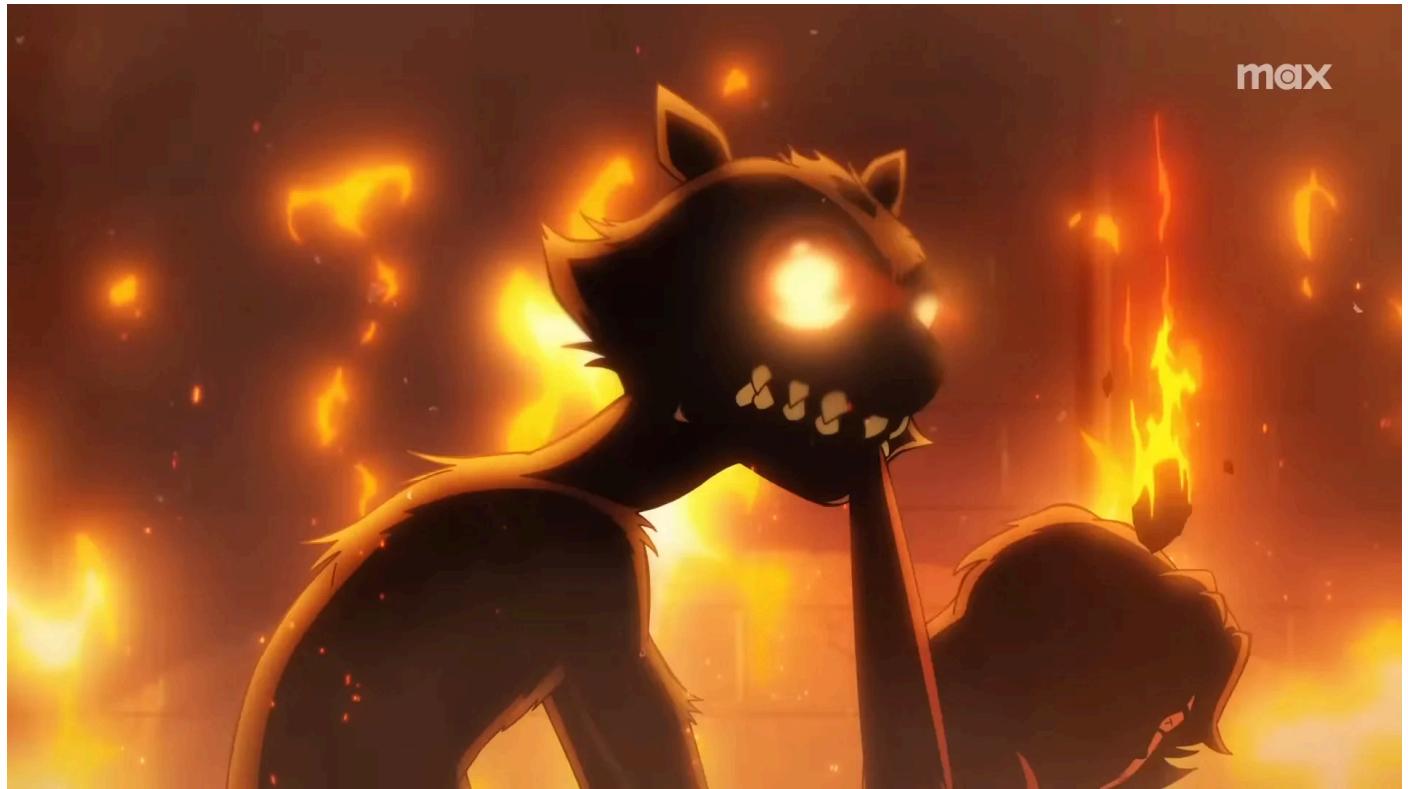
Lorey: *Harley Quinn* and *Kite Man* are both pure comedies. We always like to break those stories into dramas because we want to invest in the characters and all of that. But ultimately, they're comedies, and *Creature Commandos* is closer to something like *The Suicide Squad* or *Guardians of the Galaxy*. There's comedy in it, but it's probably more of a drama-action picture than it is a pure comedy.

io9: James Gunn has a knack for making a group of oddball characters work. What's more, Sean, you always seem to end up playing some of the more bizarre crayons in the box with characters like Weasel in *The Suicide Squad*, who makes his grand return in *Creature Commandos*. Is there an ongoing bit between you two to have you voice fringe characters in the DC mythos, or is this something you seek out as an actor?

Gunn: I don't mind doing weird stuff. I'm pretty shameless as an actor, and I mean that in a good way. I don't mean to be like anything salacious, but my first question is always going to be, "What's the task, and how can I perform it to the best of my ability?" regardless of how crazy or weird the character is. I think that it just kind of worked out that way.

Weasel is such a weird character. He's almost like a big dog, so I have this very narrow range of noises and sounds that Weasel can make. He doesn't speak human words, and he growls and squawks and squeaks and purrs, and does all kinds of little things like that. Trying to deliver an emotional performance through that, I find, to be challenging. *The Suicide Squad* Weasel is pretty straightforward, comic relief but he really has to do some some lifting here in *Creature Commandos*, which I really appreciated. I also wanted to do a voice as well and James had mentioned me for GI Robot early on.

It's almost like if James were managing a baseball team, I'm the utility infielder on the bench that he can call in to do whatever I can. I can play backup shortstop. I can play the backup catcher position. I can throw a few innings of relief if I need to. I kind of do a lot of multi-purpose stuff because he knows my work, and I know how he works. Sometimes, he gives me some of the harder material, I think. But I love doing it.



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io9: What keeps you coming back to work with your brother?

Gunn: My brother is incredibly talented. Even though we've been together our whole lives, I set that aside and I'm like, "He's such a great writer." I want to work with great writers and great directors so part of it is just respecting his work, and knowing that he respects mine.

There's also the element of us having a shorthand for communicating with one another that makes it easy. There's always a learning curve when working with a new creator. As an actor, you have to get on common ground and make sure that you can speak to one another, and James and I already have decades of that in the bank.

He can catch me up to speed on what's going on with a project and what it's supposed to feel and look like very quickly. I love working with my brother. I like doing other things, too. I like being known as an actor who doesn't just work with James, but I also respect and enjoy his work so much that I don't ever want to say no when he approaches me about a project.

io9: What are recording sessions for Weasel usually like? Do you need to have honey and tea at the ready? Or are your vocal cords war-tested to make all those noises?

Gunn: We laugh a lot as Weasel cause I'll get directions that are kind of like, "Well, Sean, I'm sorry to say this, but can you do a longer, slower lick?" and

things like that. But I'm up for it. I just make sure I warm my voice up and lots of water.

I just try to find the center of it. It was definitely challenging. The episode that is Weasel's backstory episode has a good long sequence that we did in one take and it was tough. I've done a lot of voice acting, but I don't have quite the breadth of experience as, like, an Alan Tudyk. He's the greatest on the mic. But I'm working on it.

io9: You not only voice Weasel in *Creature Commandos*, but you also voice GI Robot, a quirky li'l guy whose idea of bonding is killing Nazis with his friends. How was the process of finding a balance between their two distinctively unhinged tones?

Gunn: Fortunately, other than the very first session in the booth, they were all separate. I've done several things now where I played two roles. I did it playing Rocket Raccoon [in motion capture] and Kraglin in *Guardians*. When I do my preparation as an actor, it's like doing your algebra homework for an hour and then putting it aside and doing your English homework. I think, in some ways, [*Creature Commandos*] is easier because Weasel and GI Robot are so different that it's just a matter of finding the center of each voice right before we start and then going from there.

io9: Where does GI Robot fit in the pantheon of automatons, like the peaceful Iron Giant and unstoppable killing machines like the

Terminator?

Gunn: I would say GI Robot lands at the very top.

io9: The very top? Not even a side-to-side? Just a totem pole?

Gunn: I don't know what the spectrum is, but, man, I love GI Robot. I've been telling everybody it's a character I could really relate to because he hates Nazis, and I hate Nazis. And particularly right now in our day and age, which, believe me, I'm not going to get political, but it's good to have a hero who is the center of his moral compass. Nazis are bad. It should be a hero that everyone can relate to. So I appreciate that.

io9: As advertised on the tin, basically.

Gunn: Yeah.



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io9: Coming back to James' talent for making folks care deeply for characters who are otherwise unknown, redemption and not judging a book by its cover seem to be the new prevailing themes of DC, replacing the power fantasy themes of old. Where do those themes resonate the most with the cast in *Creature Commandos*?

Lorey: “Don’t judge a book by its cover” is very ingrained in the series. We learn a lot about characters we’ve seen before, like Weasel. He has a major arc in this season, and it’s very much about “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” It’s really true of all the characters. You have Frankenstein, who is a bit of an intellectual. He’s also a stalker. I think the characters are probably different from what you would expect out of those characters and we learn a lot of new things about them.

Gunn: It's absolutely true for both Weasel and GI, and even more so for Weasel. A lot of these characters have undergone some kind of trauma that has led them to where they are. These character's stories may be tragic, but they're not tragedies unto themselves. Even though you get these characters who can be wildly unpredictable and do things that aren't great, you get a sense of where they come from. We get to really relate to them.

I think, in the case of GI, he has it the best of the *Creature Commandos* because he is a robot. What is interesting about the character is that some little speck of humanity is trying to burst through. Trauma does not weigh him down the way that it does a lot of the other characters. And maybe the same is true for Weasel. Although Weasel [is] certainly a miserable character in his own right. I really love how it all works for all these characters.



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io9: While live-action DC projects shine in the mainstream as the de facto medium for the superhero genre, DC appears to be on a spree of re-embracing animation as its mode of storytelling—a field it has dominated for a long time. How does *Creature Commandos* elevate that legacy for DC to new heights?

Lorey: First of all, it's a real quality series. It has the highest of ambitions, and in terms of the legacy of DC—*Batman: The Animated Series*, and all that—I think it fits right in there with classic shows like that. I think it is a very good and wonderful animated history. I think it's a continuation of what was.

io9: There's become an increasing anxiety for animation fans with new shows dropping in quality after its premiere episode. Many posit that animated shows' drastic dip in quality comes from factors like budgeting and time not being allotted to animators to properly produce shows—leading to rushed, rough, or, worst cases, unfinished animation sequences. As *Creature Commandos'* showrunner, how did you ensure its animation quality remained consistent throughout its first season?

Lorey: A lot of it is the people you work with. Rick Morales was the animation supervisor on the show, and he did a spectacular job. We also partnered with a French studio called Bobbypills, and they did a good bit of the design work. When we get the animation in from the studios, we do a pass ourselves

internally and really go through and add layers onto the existing animation. So, there's a lot of bites at the apple in terms of trying to make it great.

io9: What do you see the future of DC animation looking like under James Gunn's ideas for the DCU?

Lorey: I expect that we'll see a lot of shows with a lot of heart. The thing that James brings to the table is he loves characters. He has a real deep love of character, and particularly underdogs, so I think we'll see more of that. I'd like to be able to say we're going to see more shows in the Harleyverse. I don't have news on it yet, but we're far along on some things there. And in general, I think it's just good storytelling. We're all about trying to honor the source material of these shows. I feel really good about where we're at with *Harley* and the new season will be coming out soonish. I'm very proud of *Kite Man*, and I just love *Creature Commandos*.

io9: What do you hope new and old fans get out of *Creature Commandos* that they've yet to experience from the DCU so far?

Lorey: It's a classic blend of heart and extreme action, and character. I think people will be very surprised at the mix of all of those things inside of one show, because it really comes from love. James wrote it with enormous passion and we really tried to honor that passion in making it. I'm very excited for people to see it.

The first two episodes of *Creature Commandos* premiere December 5 on Max.

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