

Sawyer Burton
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My name is Sawyer Burton, but when I was little, my mom had another nickname for me. Now, it's kind of embarrassing, so please don't laugh. It was Sunshine. I heard it all the time. "Dinner's ready, Sunshine" "You're late on rent, Sunshine." "For the last time, you can't wear your Batman cape to church, Sunshine." She said it was because I was always smiling, always trying to make other people happy. Even though little-me balked at being called something so un-macho, I always secretly strived to live up to it.

Then I became a teenager and a lot of life happened to me all at once. I got diagnosed with all the cool kid disorders the cool kids have and suddenly I didn't feel so much like being Sunshine anymore. You read one sentence of Nietzsche on Instagram in 2012 and it's all over: you're a Nihilist. I don't make the rules. I saw it as hopeless to try to save my inner child in a world specifically designed to Captain Falcon Punch your inner child in the dick. That's about the time I discovered the "Riot Grrrl" punk movement of the 90s.

If you haven't heard any "Riot Grrrl" artists, you're doing yourself a disfavor. I bet this class is filled with fans who just don't know they're fans yet. Now, I am not the target demographic, but in its own way, punk taught me to be okay with myself as I was, the person I grew to be now, and who I will inevitably grow into tomorrow and tomorrow... until five years from now, when I join Mia Zapata and Kurt Cobain in the 27 Club.

Crawling Mary is a Halloween comedy about three remarkably untalented teenage girls who start a band, unaware that the instruments they stole from a local pawn shop are haunted by the ghosts of *Crawling Mary*, a 90s punk band of witches who were murdered on the cusp of fame. Now they must work with the ghosts to save their town from the killer, an international superstar. This movie is *It: Chapter One* meets *Scott Pilgrim vs the World*. Frenetic energy, surreal humor, and outlandish characters give it a unique identity in line with the Riot Grrrl attitude. You

add a kickass punk soundtrack, a healthy splash of Halloween debauchery, and nobody with a beating heart will be able to fight the smile creeping across their face.

Our protagonist, Naomi, has an unhealthy obsession with self-actualization. Her adopted sister, Becky, was raised by a pack of maternal wolves until she was 10. Now she's a wage slave at an auto parts store. Shirley, her friend, is a shameless reprobate with a heart of gold plated barbed wire. In life, Beatrice was a witch and the lead singer of the post-punk turned ghost-punk band. Now even in death, her faded pink mohawk commands respect.

But a movie is only ever as good as its villain... Lolita Steele is an industry titan, a canonized diva pop star goddess. She hasn't aged a day since she killed the members of *Crawling Mary* 30 years ago. That's probably because she's a centuries-old witch locked in a blood pact with the Devil. When the girls discover her plans to sacrifice a stadium full of fans to the devil during the blood moon on Halloween, they realize it's up to them to stop the ritual and save their town.

Naomi, Becky, and Shirley work with Beatrice's ghost to improve their musical prowess and witchcraft in preparation for their faceoff with Lolita. To spread the word about Lolita's plan, they perform in small venues, on street corners, a packed Denny's, anything to make people listen. Naomi slowly learns to let go of the harmful narratives she's built for herself. But the controversy they drum up only works in Lolita's favor, as ticket sales continue to skyrocket. After barely surviving an attack from Lolita's "fans" (demons dressed in overpriced merch), they recruit a legion of middle-aged former Riot Grrls for one final showdown at Lolita's sold-out Halloween concert.

Crawling Mary is more than just another punk vs pop farce. Like the lively subculture that inspired it, this film is loud, proud, and subversively irreverent. Embracing the "Riot Grrrl" philosophy of radical self-acceptance, *Crawling Mary* is just the right kind of Halloween season release that has been missing from theaters for far too long.