

Epic the Musical Critique

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Introduction

As those who've already listened to these songs know, Epic the Musical is a Musical based on The Odyssey – a spinoff to the Iliad focusing on Odysseus' journey home after the Trojan war. Jorge Rivera-Herrans is the mastermind behind Epic – what's cool about Jorge's process is that he's very open about how he writes songs, how his songs have changed over time, and how he mixes his tracks. It isn't hard to find the videos where he talks about his process – in fact, it's most likely that Epic listeners found out about the musical through his YouTube shorts and TikToks where he talks about writing for Epic.

Normally, I have a difficult time critiquing music since I don't have a reference point for the artist's goals and intentions or how they led themselves to the choices in the final versions of their works. However, thanks to all of Jorge's videos talking about his process and all of the WIPs and teasers he posts, it's easier to see what his goals are and see all the choices he's trying to make.

There are some things you need to know before you read this critique. Obviously, huge spoilers for Epic the Musical. I recommend listening to it before you read this. In fact, this entire critique is completely incoherent if you haven't listened to Epic the Musical. For your convenience, [here is a playlist of animatics for every song in Epic](#). I wrote this as practice for making competent critiques of music and songs, so this review has more negativity than my usual writeups. I'll also address differences between the remastered Troy saga and Cyclops saga and their original versions as well as story changes from The Odyssey.

The Troy Saga

The Horse and the Infant

Epic is a sung-through musical, meaning that there's no "normal" spoken dialogue. Everything's expressed through song. As such, there are a lot of limitations on what you can do, compounded by the fact that this is a concept album with no visuals. The songs themselves have to say everything.

The Horse and the Infant is the first song where you run up against the issues that come with sung-through musicals that lack visuals. There's a lot happening in this song because Jorge Rivera-Herrans is trying to do four things at once. Establish Odysseus and his main characteristics (good speaker, great tactician), establish his motives (he hasn't seen his wife and son in years), catch everyone up on what happened in the Iliad, and establish the main moral conflict of the whole musical. It's a lot to put on a single song and there's a lot happening in the instrumental with several distinct sections and a lot of ideas being thrown at the viewer at once.

Since it's sung-through, they have to sing all of the exposition, even if it makes more sense to exposit with spoken dialogue. The part where Zeus is singing about the prophecy feels awkward since it's a lot of short syllables next to each other and there isn't a coherent melody at the beginning. His singing style here doesn't flow *nearly* as well as his song in the Thunder saga – Thunderbringer. The awkward attempt at trying to cram all this exposition into a song is something that I think turns a lot of potential Epic viewers away.

The new mix sounds better, but I prefer the older version of the other men chorusing. It was a better representation of the picture that Jorge was trying to paint. It sounded like a huge crowd of soldiers spread out over a large area. The new version feels better musically but sounds more like there are four men standing right next to Odysseus singing directly into his ears.

In the context of the larger musical, I think it's fine to have this song. It sets up associations and pairings that come back later, like Zeus giving Odysseus moral dilemmas for his own entertainment, Odysseus' cool electric guitar plucks, and the melodies/instruments associated with Telemachus and Penelope. Plus, the melting pot of ideas is fun to sift through on repeat listens. However, I'd prefer if it were just dialogue and the first song were *Just a Man*, which is a much better representation of what *Epic the Musical* is really about.

2/5

Just a Man

This is how you write lyrics for a musical. It's a monologue that feels like it could apply to any moral dilemma where you're forced to hurt someone innocent, but the details make it specific to Odysseus. The lines about looking into the child's eyes and being reminded of his son work threefold. They show you how much Odysseus misses his family (which is something that makes him want to kill the baby), show you why Odysseus is having such a hard time following through (how could he kill someone just like his son?), and tell you how long it's been since he's seen his family (driving home how much he misses his family and allowing the viewer to better empathize with Odysseus). Nearly every lyric in this song has this much thought put into it, and you can feel it.

The instrumentation is very simple, but I'm glad that they made the viola/violin more prominent in the new versions, especially because the viola is Penelope's instrument. It reminds you that Odysseus wants to see his wife so much that he'll (eventually) be driven to do anything to see her, without him even mentioning her name throughout this song.

It's a beautiful song with words so easy to twist around that you know it'll get referenced throughout the whole Musical.

5/5

Full Speed Ahead

It's more exposition, but it's more enjoyable than the Horse and the Infant. The introductions to Eurylochus and Polites are smooth, with Eurylochus getting backed by the crew's vocals more prominently than anyone else, establishing that he speaks for the crew. They don't have much time to set up Polites' friendship with Odysseus, but they do it well in both this song and the next one, since Polites is the one Odysseus chooses to go with him to the Lotus Eater's island.

It isn't my favorite leitmotif, but the "Full Speed Ahead" motif is something that Jorge needs in this sung-through musical, since there isn't another way to convey that the ships are moving without it completely overwhelming the songs that take place in boats and making them sound chaotic.

2/5

Open Arms

This is one of the big changes from The Odyssey – Polites has a more important role and they deal with the Lotus Eaters in a different way. The change fits the story that Epic's trying to tell – Open Arms is the counter-ideology to what literally everyone else wants Odysseus to do. It's not as lyrically deep as Just a Man, since you can take everything Polites sings at face value (and they still need to make straightforward descriptions of the Lotus and what the Lotus Eaters are doing), but there's still parts you can read into, like how Odysseus seemingly "disproves" Polites' ideology within the song it's established in, but Polites immediately turns it around and gets more help from the Lotus Eaters.

Open Arms is also more upbeat than other Epic tracks, which I think turns people off on their first listens of Epic, but it fits Polites perfectly since the whole point is that it's the counter-ideology to Ruthlessness. The instrumental isn't doing anything too interesting, but there's still cool details like Odysseus' guitar plucks kicking in once he figures out what the Lotus does.

3/5

Warrior of the Mind

Like most songs in this saga, there's more exposition, but it's the most effective exposition so far. Athena spends maybe half a line talking about what she does and everything else is implied. They didn't even need to mention "goddess of wisdom, master of war", since the title she's trying to give Odysseus (Warrior of the Mind) says it all. Young Odysseus' 'expositing', singing/rapping about what Athena's all about doesn't come off as forced exposition. Instead, it comes off as a Young Odysseus in-character fanboying about seeing his favorite goddess right in front of him.

The back and forth after Young Odysseus "tricks" Athena is also pretty clever. Athena sings Melody A, Odysseus repeats it, and then Athena sings a slightly different version of Melody A. You expect Odysseus to repeat it, but Odysseus does his own thing, carrying the rest of the bar. It's a neat way to show off how clever Young Odysseus is and it makes it easy to see how Athena would focus on Odysseus over anybody else.

The instrumental's fun – Athena's Piano going nuts throughout the whole song and mixing with Odysseus' plucked guitar makes it super entertaining. I do wish it was clearer what the quick-thought/time-stop sound effects are to the listeners. I think it might've been clearer in older cuts of Epic where there were more "Odysseus and Athena" songs, giving the listener more opportunities to figure out what those sound effects mean.

4/5

The Cyclops Saga

Polyphemus

This isn't part of the rating, but this is the easiest Epic song to sing.

On the surface, it seems like another exposition-heavy song, telling you what's in the cave and explaining what wine is – however, it never comes off that way. Odysseus isn't simply explaining what wine is – he's hyping it up to try and get Polyphemus to calm down and buy himself time to slip some Lotus in there. Jorge's vocal performance in both versions helps to sell his cunning and desperation. They don't even need anyone to describe Polyphemus as a monster – you get that from his footsteps, the distorted voice, and the deep cello/synth backing his part. It *might* work better as dialogue, but since it's a song, it gives Odysseus the opportunity to take Polyphemus' melody and turn it against him to try and spin the situation in his favor.

3/5

Survive

Odysseus' role as a captain lets him verbally paint a picture of the battlefield, since he needs to describe everything that's happening and tell his crew what to do. The first few lyrics are literal, but it works because he *has* to do it to make sure that he and his crew know what to do to survive. The impact of Polyphemus' attack and Polites' body hitting the floor are fantastic transitions from the upbeat, exciting electric guitar section back to Polyphemus' cello, filling the viewer with dread and completely flipping the energy both in the music and in the story. Coupled with the absolutely *terrified* voices of the rest of the crew and the newer mix making it clearer that Polites died, the transition is intense, but not jarring.

I really appreciate that it's made clearer that Polites died right in front of Odysseus – it's an important moment for him. A moment where a Monster killed the man who represented the whole reason why Odysseus shouldn't become the monster and embrace the Ruthlessness ideology.

The vibe of the first section, however, is done much more effectively in the next song – Remember Them.

3/5

Remember Them

The instrumentation here is firing on all cylinders - the distortion guitars playing as Eurylochus is trying to get Odysseus to snap out of it are appropriately overwhelming as they slightly drown out both Odysseus and Eurylochus. That's the point. He's hyping himself and his crew up for Round Two against the Cyclops, and they intend to win this time. The electric guitar riffing between Odysseus' lines also feels appropriately exciting, and I'm glad that the instrumentation drops off as Odysseus screams his own name. Not only does that make the delivery feel more impactful, but it also removes the exciting "comeback" feel of the electric guitars going nuts and makes you realize that he's maybe made a mistake in telling Polyphemus his name.

I also love the piano playing Athena's theme getting chaotic when Odysseus refuses to kill the cyclops. It communicates Athena's confusion and surprise at Odysseus' defiance, before she even says a word in response to Odysseus' simple "no".

4/5

My Goodbye

This song would hit harder in older cuts of Epic where we spend more time with Odysseus and his crew and get to hear Athena talk to Odysseus

more, regarding guidance and strategies. It feels like a “friendship falling out” song and it’s written well, with both Athena’s and Odysseus’ performances clearly communicating that they both feel betrayed, but it doesn’t hit nearly as hard as it should, especially on the first few listens where it seems like Athena was barely present, not even here for a full arc. I understand why most of those songs were cut, since they didn’t feed into the main idea of Epic and the balance between Ruthlessness and Mercy, but this song is less impactful because of those cuts.

I’m not the biggest fan of this song – there isn’t anything wrong with it, but nothing stands out, apart from Odysseus’ delivery of “YOU’RE ALONE!” and the twist on “Just a Man”. It’s normally used when Odysseus is in a difficult moral situation or to justify a tough choice, but here it’s used to make fun of Odysseus, saying that he can’t understand why Athena wanted him to kill the Cyclops because he isn’t as smart as a god/goddess.

3/5

The Ocean Saga

Storm

The trumpet carries this song. It leads and sets up the main vocal melodies, then backs those same melodies when Odysseus and his crew starts singing. This contrasts with previous instrumental setups – if the main vocal melody was played at all in the instrumental, it’d normally come after the vocal melody sings it first, but here the instrumental sets up the vocal melody before the vocalists start singing. It helps sell how powerful the storm is – it’s literally pulling Odysseus and his crew along both in the story and in the song.

The trumpet also completely flips the vibe of the song – without it, the electric guitar would make it feel too similar to Survive and Remember Them.

3/5.

Luck Runs Out

If I made this critique before the Thunder Saga came out, I'd write something here about the limitations of sung-through musicals. It'd work better as a simple conversation between Odysseus and Eurylochus. It isn't badly written – there's clever callbacks to Open Arms (e.g., the line about leading from the heart) to show how Odysseus still wants to find symbolic alternatives to "killing an infant", but it isn't too exciting, apart from the slight instrumental change at the end to make Odysseus seem more intimidating and Odysseus' acoustic guitars occasionally breaking into the instrumental.

Mutiny, however, justifies this interaction being written as a song instead of as simple dialogue. It serves as foreshadowing for the crew turning against Odysseus and lets Jorge do clever stuff with Odysseus and Eurylochus trading vocal melodies and roles to show, musically, how everything's changed and how Odysseus has to stop Eurylochus from endangering himself and the rest of the crew. The contrast hits harder since, in this song, it's Eurylochus trying to stop Odysseus from endangering the rest of the crew.

Retroactively, it's a much more fun song to listen to because Mutiny exists.

2.5/5

Keep your Friends Close

This song has a plenty of charm for a few reasons. Wind instruments are barely present throughout Epic, making this song stand out more. It also feels like a standalone Ancient Greek Myth. Think about it – a Greek hero stuck in a storm asks the wind god for help, and they agree under one condition: the magic bag full of wind remains closed. But then the wind god tricks the crew

into opening it, and everyone's completely screwed. It's got as many distinct sections as the Horse and the Infant, but there's a clear story arc tying everything together rather than a bunch of events and ideas put next to each other for the sake of expositing as much as possible.

The transitions between each section also help a lot. Aeolus' voice dropping off along with most of the instrumental leaves room for Odysseus' guitar, which helps convey that a lot of time has passed, which makes it more believable that Odysseus would accidentally fall asleep. The instrumental calming down gives it time to build up throughout Odysseus' section before dropping off entirely to communicate that he's fallen asleep and just missed something important. It's subtle, but very clever.

Aeolus' voice is literally perfect. When Jorge was putting out the casting calls, he really *did* mean that he'd bring you on if he thought you had the right voice, regardless of gender or anything like that. I can't picture any other voice for this song. It's the perfect combination of effortless and playful that embodies this interpretation of Aeolus.

I'm still not sure how I feel about the percussion during the first couple of sections – I don't know what I'd call it, and I'm not sure what kind of percussion I'd even give the wind god, so I guess it works? It isn't obtrusive – I'm just wondering if it was the best choice.

It won't affect the rating, but this is my mom's favorite song in Epic.

4.5/5

Ruthlessness

Immediately, Poseidon proudly breaks the rules that Epic's put in place. His music's divided into triplets and, instead of someone calling out his name once before he starts singing (as with every other character's introduction), he

has a chorus of giants scream his name in the melody of the Danger Motif a thousand times, which clearly communicates that everyone nearby is completely screwed, before he's even said a word.

Both Ruthlessness and Keep Your Friends Close are incredibly catchy, but their vibes couldn't be more different. "Ruthlessness is mercy upon ourselves" feels like it was handcrafted to stick in my head, making it a perfect line for defining one of Epic's main ideologies. Even though it's just Poseidon yelling at Odysseus for acting like an asshole and killing his entire crew, the instrumental changes throughout the song prevent it from ever getting stale, with the energy always shifting ever so slightly to keep us (and Odysseus) on our toes. The section where Poseidon drowns most of Odysseus' crew feels intentionally overwhelming and, though I can't hear the water sounds over the song, it still communicates that something powerful and chaotic is happening to the crew and they aren't taking it too well.

Poseidon stealing lines from Odysseus' "Remember me" works twofold. For one, it's to get the satisfaction of vengeance on Polyphemus' behalf, twisting his own words against him. Two, it's to show that Poseidon's violent demonstration of his own philosophy (counter to Open Arms) will stick with Odysseus and haunt him for the entire rest of the musical. Poseidon wants him to remember this moment so his philosophy can reign supreme.

The twist on "when does a ripple become a tidal wave" also works on multiple levels – obviously, it's twisted here as a reference to Poseidon's control over water and how he used it to murder everyone. It's also the question most likely ringing through Odysseus' head – the question he was asking himself in Just a Man. On top of that, the song *itself* functions as an answer to the questions from Just a Man. Here it is! The Candle became a Blaze. The Ripple became a Tidal Wave. And now everyone's dead – he left one thread loose and lost nearly everyone all at once.

5/5

Circe Saga

Puppeteer

There are two things redeeming this song – one is the string ensemble. I was an orchestra kid, so I'm biased in favor of anything with this the string ensemble sound. I also like the sections where Eurylochus raps a line or two followed by Circe singing a few words, then Eurylochus rapping again, then Circe singing. It's a fun way to have a "musical conversation" with a unique rhythm and feel where the two people aren't even interacting.

That said, I'm not a fan of Puppeteer's lyrics. They aren't as tightly written as every other Epic track. There are some weird parts, like where Circe rhymes "Puppeteer" with "Puppeteer" and fills in random syllables with "yeah". I don't want to say that this was his first draft, since Jorge *clearly* takes the time to rewrite everything to the point where he wrote over 80 songs and threw out more than half of them to end up with the 40 best ones. I know he works hard, which is why these strange lyrical choices confuse me so much.

On top of that, I'm not sure how I'm supposed to take the repetition of "No I'm not a player I'm a Puppeteer", because it doesn't really feed into the main moral conflict of Epic or even describe Circe herself particularly well, which is a shame because there's a lot going on with Circe's character, even outside of The Odyssey and Epic.

2/5

Wouldn't You Like

I didn't like this song for a while, just because I preferred the tone of the string ensemble over the fast disco synths, but I've learned to appreciate this

one more and more. It's got a very funky and mischievous energy, which tells us everything we need to know about Hermes' character in Epic without Hermes himself having to explain anything for us. Again, the casting's literally perfect. Hermes just appeared in Jorge's studio and started singing and laughing like a maniac, and I'm all for it.

Hermes explaining what the Moly fruit does during his song works so well because of how quick and effortless his singing style is. It didn't work as well for Zeus in the Horse and the Infant, because Zeus' singing style is a lot slower with a few powerful lines dropped between plenty of pauses and longer notes, which isn't ideal for explanations and exposition. It works well with Hermes because of his faster rhythms lining up better with actual speech.

It's also catchy as hell – I can see why they used this one in nearly all of the trailers and advertisements for the Circe Saga.

3.5/5

Done For

This entire song is a twist on the section I liked from Puppeteer – the back and forth between Eurylochos and Circe. The difference here is that it's Circe and a Moly-boosted Odysseus, allowing their instrumental melodies to clash and ebb in/out with each other. When Circe starts threatening Odysseus, her strings and distorted chorus take over, until Odysseus brags about the Moly, during which his melody starts playing on his plucked electric guitar, forcing the strings/chorus away until their actual battle. When Odysseus gains the upper hand, you expect his instruments to start playing, but Circe's still got one more trick that she's convinced will work, which is why her string ensemble continues. The instrumental cleverly tells you about who has the advantage during their fight. It's a straightforward battle song, otherwise.

3/5

There are Other Ways

There are lots of clever details in this song – Odysseus starts singing Just a Man while Circe’s trying to trick him. It isn’t even that he realizes that he’s being tricked – he just doesn’t want to do it because he doesn’t want to cheat on his wife. It’s a clear departure from The Odyssey, where Odysseus sleeps with every single woman he runs into. In Epic, he refuses to cheat on Penelope, which just feels better because Penelope does the same thing at home. It means that both are held to the same standards, and it really sells how much he misses Penelope specifically, rather than just missing physical intimacy in general.

Penelope’s viola and melody are also used effectively. Before he even mentions her name, you already know that Odysseus is about to complain about how much he misses his wife. The instrumental isn’t doing anything too interesting, but it works well enough. I really appreciate the sudden stinger and eerie chorus that come in when Circe mentions the Underworld. It might just be me, but during my first listening, I interpreted it as Circe threatening to just kill Odysseus and send him to the Underworld that way.

In terms of how it feeds into the overall narrative, I think it’s necessary. Odysseus just witnessed the biggest slaughter in his whole career and has every reason to embrace the Ruthlessness philosophy. But he begs for mercy and, by some miracle, it works. It’s a small thing that pushes Odysseus *slightly* away from entirely succumbing to the Ruthlessness philosophy. For now, however, it won’t be enough, as we’ll see in the next arc.

The Underworld Saga

The Underworld

This song stuck out to me during my first few listens because I was learning how to write drum parts at the time. None of the other Epic tracks had prominent snare drums, but they're loud and clanky here (similar to the snare that I really like from Friday Night Funkin's Ugh). These heavy snares coming in while the crew's singing along makes those sections hit harder and amplify the feelings of anguish I'm supposed to get from Odysseus.

There are several sections, but it all feels cohesive since all of them are based on the people who've died on the journey so far. The section where Odysseus' dead crew tells him that he's stupid for letting the Cyclops live and Polites' refrain sound completely different, but it doesn't feel random and incoherent. Polites' section is especially important, not just because it makes me cry, but because it reminds Odysseus that Polites, the guy who stood in opposition to Poseidon's Ruthlessness ideology, is dead.

The section right after Polites where Odysseus' mom shows up hits hard, with emotional line deliveries and Odysseus' mom seeming to sing past Odysseus, not acknowledging anything he's saying, as if she doesn't even see him. This works better than what they did in The Odyssey, where Odysseus had the opportunity to talk to his mother and have one last goodbye. In Epic, Odysseus is denied that final goodbye and is just reminded again of how long he's been at sea. The silence at the end followed by the chorus coming back in louder than before makes me believe that Odysseus would happily embrace Ruthlessness over Open Arms just to stop himself from feeling this way again.

No Longer You

Without taking into account lyrics, this is my favorite track in the Underworld saga just because of how unique and elegant this song's flow is. It's the only Waltz so far and the haunting orchestration/chorus combined with the organ and piano going nuts the whole time gives it a completely different feel from every other track in Epic. The final verse with the organ and orchestration spinning downwards makes you feel like Tiresias has seen everything and he's just trying to tell Odysseus everything he's seen before his song ends.

In Epic, Tiresias speaks like you would expect a prophet to speak – with riddles and rhymes. It's another change from The Odyssey, but I'm not sure how to feel about it. In the Odyssey, he's straightforward – Tiresias straight-up tells Odysseus "hey, you're gonna go home and kill a lot of people. Jesus that's a lot of blood". On the one hand, I like the change because it lets the listeners piece everything together before they reach the Thunder saga. It's the most effective for listeners who listened to the Underworld Saga as it was released and had to wait a couple of months for the Thunder saga to come out, as the time between release dates gave listeners time to come up with fun theories. For example, the lines about "a brother's final stand" don't make sense during the first listening because we haven't heard about anyone's brother and we're pretty sure that Odysseus doesn't have a brother. However, on a relisten, you realize that Eurylochos calls Odysseus his brother in Luck Runs Out. It also allows Odysseus to figure out what everything meant and realize for himself that he's going to kill a lot of people. On the other hand, I think the version in The Odyssey is much funnier, just because it's not at all what you'd expect a prophet to do.

Monster

I wish the first song in Epic were Just a Man because having that as the opener and Monster as the closer of Act I would be awesome, tying the entire act together and framing the first half of his journey as Odysseus discovering why he should become the Monster and rejecting his “weakness” in Just a Man.

It’s an introspective song and it knows that – the instrumental is less busy than the other two songs in the Underworld Saga. The loudest sections aren’t nearly as loud as the choruses in the previous two tracks either.

The section where Odysseus is listing off all the “monsters” he’s had to fight is clever. He reflects on how all of them justified their own “Ruthlessness” ideology, ending it with a reflection on how *he* himself ended the Trojan war, which makes the song more introspective and reveals that he already thinks of himself as The Monster. He’s already waged an entire war, so it makes sense for him to take that last step and embrace Ruthlessness. The fact that he doesn’t sing the Just a Man melodies and instead sings Poseidon’s melodies through Monster tells you everything you need to know.

4.5/5

The Thunder Saga

Suffering

This song’s just cute – the instrumental feeds into this vibe with upbeat guitar strumming and snapping. The contrast works in its favor because it comes right after the Underworld Saga, where every track had a dark and heavy tone. There’s just one detail that’s somewhat strange – the weird “plastic wobble” sound? It’s noticeable when Odysseus says “How am I to evade them? How am I to get home? Which route should I take? Where am I supposed to go?”. I don’t know what the sound is supposed to be.

Lyrics are also cute – “Penelope” mentioning a daughter and behaving in a weirdly playful way are obvious hints that something’s off and that this might be a monster in disguise, but she still happily explains the one route Odysseus can take to avoid Poseidon. It’s as if she’d been waiting a long time to infodump her seafaring knowledge onto someone else.

Playing into the overall narrative, Suffering gives Odysseus more melodies associated with Penelope. The repetition of “I can take the suffering from you” works on two levels – one, it’s what Odysseus genuinely believes will happen when he gets back to Ithaca. That is, all the suffering he’d been through will vanish and it’ll be worth it when he sees his wife again. Two, it works because here, Penelope’s a monster in disguise. She’s the Monster – the Monster can take his suffering from Odysseus, further validating his decision to become the Monster.

3.5/5

Different Beast

The horn at the beginning stands out the most. It feels dangerous and emulates a *huge* threat at sea, without ever using water or thunder sounds. It’s a bloodbath and Odysseus murdering the Sirens in a needlessly cruel way does a great job at showing how far Odysseus has come from letting a Cyclops live after it killed dozens of his men. On the one hand, it feels cathartic to see him use that darker side so he can save the rest of his crew and get what he wants. On the other hand, it feels foreboding – like he’s already gone too far, a feeling of dread amplified by the Sirens screaming as Odysseus sings about killing them.

This song’s also weirdly cute? He explains his entire plan to the Sirens and puts a lot of emphasis on his real wife knowing that he’s not scared of the water. He didn’t need to clarify that – I don’t think anybody cared. It reads like

he doesn't want anyone to think that he's afraid of water and that he's sort of embarrassed that he had to pretend like he was afraid. It's a strangely cute detail in this song about killing a group of Sirens.

3/5

Scylla

The calmer section at the beginning sets the scene effectively with the slower tempo and calm instrumentation telling you how fast the crew's going and how they haven't run into any monsters yet, even though you can hear Scylla's voice. Scylla's wispiess and strange mixing also help tell you that she isn't anywhere close to the boat. Eurylochus choosing now to confess that to opening the wind bag is strange, but it's made clear when he starts singing parts from Just a Man – Odysseus' own song. It foreshadows his betrayal in the next song, Mutiny, and how he tries to take Odysseus' place as the leader of the crew. It also sets up the obvious comparison between both Odysseus and Eurylochus doing what they think is best and it ending in bloodshed no matter what they choose. This parallel is further solidified by Scylla's vocals in the background of the first section talking about betrayal and doing what it takes to survive.

The second section is awesome. The violin going nuts and Odysseus' command transitioning fully into Scylla's section makes this section hit hard. Again, the casting in Epic is literally perfect. I don't even know what voice you'd cast for Scylla, but they found her. The *crunch* in her lines along with the strong delivery and cool harmonization makes her feel appropriately monstrous and powerful.

The shakers(?) and piano at the very end feel like the calm at the end of a storm. Since it comes right after Scylla's full and energetic section, it feels even *more* peaceful and calm. It's telling that every artist/animatic I've seen

has lit the very end of Scylla with a beautiful sunset as the ship is covered in gore.

The only nitpick I have is that it isn't clear *what* was going on in Scylla's section. The livestream had an animatic for that section of the song specifically, and I got to watch it, but Jorge doesn't leave the VODs up. Normally, this wouldn't be an issue, but Scylla going after the people holding the torches that Odysseus told Eurylochus to light up is super important to the story and explains why Eurylochus turns against Odysseus in the next song. Admittedly, I don't know how to convey Scylla going after the men holding the torches without something tacky like a crewmate screaming "OUCH! MY TORCH ARM!" in the middle of Scylla's section. By definition, it's something you can only convey visually, which makes it tricky to write into a sung-through musical with no visuals.

4.5/5

Mutiny

This song singlehandedly justifies *Luck Runs Out*. It opens with the chords from *Luck Runs Out*, but then Eurylochus starts singing something different, which communicates that this song's about Odysseus' relationship with the rest of his crew, but that it's going to be more severe than in *Luck Runs Out*.

There's some cool musical storytelling here. Instead of the electric guitars and distortion guitars following Odysseus' actions and lyrics, like in *Done For*, it's Eurylochus who cues those instruments in, showing that he's stepping up and trying to act as the leader for the rest of the crew because he

thinks that Odysseus failed them. Then in the second half of the song, after Odysseus wakes up, they start singing the same melodies from Luck Runs Out with Odysseus singing Eurylochus' part and Eurylochus singing Odysseus' part, but then it shifts back to Odysseus singing his own melodies midway through that section, showing how Odysseus still knows what's going on and that he'll lead the rest of the crew with the little time he's got left. It isn't too catchy, but I like it for the clever musical storytelling.

4/5

Thunderbringer

Zeus' voice is perfect. It's beautiful and it sounds like Zeus. I don't know what that sounds like, but this is Zeus.

His unique introduction is meant to contrast with Poseidon's own rule-breaking introduction. In Poseidon's case, he had a bunch of Giants sing his name a thousand times with the Danger motif to show how powerful and angry he was. For Zeus, nobody has to mention his name and he doesn't feel the need to introduce himself either. He doesn't need to show off his power because he *is* power. His lines about using and wielding pride like a damsel in distress for him to take advantage of tell you everything you need to know about Zeus without doing a bunch of exposition – you know what he's like (especially if you've heard any other Greek myths) and you know what he's here to do.

Again, very clever musical storytelling with the crew singing "Just a Man" at the same time as Penelope singing about how she can take the suffering from Odysseus, which was a melody established at the beginning of the arc. Then Penelope's singing drowns out the crew's voices, and you just know that Odysseus has already made his choice. The crew was doomed from the very beginning of the song, which also recontextualizes him singing "Please

don't make me do this – don't make me do this!'. It's an obvious callback to the Horse and the Infant, but here it's put in a different light. He's already made his decision and doesn't need an entire other song to figure out what to do. He just doesn't want Zeus to make him do it.