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DUNE

By Jack Komaroff

The sands of Arrakis cover the desert. The ground vibrates as a sandworm approaches. The bagpipes announce the arrival of the House Atreides. This is the land of Harkonnen and Fremen. The land of beautiful planets and mesmerizing galaxies. This is the land where the spice flows. This is the land of visionary director Denis Villeneuve. This is the land of *Dune*.

Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* is a masterpiece -- it is his magnum opus and one of the best films of all time. Faithfully adapting the first half of Frank Herbert's groundbreaking 1965 novel of the same name (the best selling science fiction book of all time), *Dune* follows Paul Atreides, wonderfully portrayed by Timothée Chalamet, son of the the new leader of Arrakis, Duke Leto (Oscar Isaac). The emperor of the known universe has decided to give Arrakis, the planet where spice (akin to oil) is produced, to House Atreides. To quote the novel, "He who controls the spice controls the universe". Spice is the film's MacGuffin, and the plot revolves around the villainous Harkonenn tribe's pursuit to take back Arrakis from House Atreides. The plot is a bit complex, but the film's 155 minute runtime allows it to be explored in sufficient detail. I won't discuss any spoilers, but the film does a tremendous job of developing the world and mythos of *Dune*, a rich and intricately crafted place with culture, tribes, and geography.

On a technical level, *Dune* is the most well made and technically proficient film of the last few decades. On a budget of only $165 million, this film is far more beautiful, creative, and innovative than other sci-fi epics of recent history. To fully appreciate *Dune*, however, one must watch it on an IMAX screen. To quote the director himself, "It has been dreamed, designed, and shot thinking about IMAX. When you watch this movie on the big screen, it's almost a physical experience. We designed the movie to be as immersive as possible, and for me, the big screen is part of the language... to watch *Dune* on a television, the best way I can compare it is to drive a speedboat in your bathtub. For me, it's ridiculous." After seeing *Dune* in IMAX, I can unequivocally say that to see *Dune* on a normal screen (or worse on HBO MAX at home) would ruin the pleasure of seeing this masterpiece. This film is very similar to Avatar, as how you watch it impacts your viewing pleasure.

The cinematography of the film is, as Villeneuve says, breathtaking. Every shot is stunning and cinematographer Greig Fraser delivers THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FILM EVER SHOT. Every scene is flawless, the color is rich, the lighting is superb. The photography melds seamlessly with the CGI elements and with a relatively low budget for modern blockbusters (*Avengers: Endgame* had a budget of $356 million), this film looks better than any recent hit. The visuals are fresh and the look of the film has a distinct color palette.

The production design on *Dune* is equally outstanding. Nearly every scene has a practical set that has been intricately crafted to embed the mythology of the world into the physical surroundings. Detailed frescoes depicting sandworms, the imposing monsters of Arrakis, or carefully constructed architecture to inform the audience of the sandy environment of Arrakis make the world of *Dune* come to life.

The costumes are amazing and could rival the designs of Star Wars or Lord of the Rings. Since there are so many characters in the film, it would be reasonable to cut corners on the more secondary characters, but *Dune* does not take those shortcuts. The film goes the extra mile and gives every character multiple distinct and gorgeous outfits. From Lady Jessica's arrival dress to the water-retaining stillsuits to Paul Atreides's ceremonial outfit, everything is perfect.

The score of *Dune*, however, is the soul of the movie. Hans Zimmer's original soundtrack is one of the best parts of the IMAX experience and to hear his score shake the theater during climactic moments exponentially increases the sheer impact of those scenes. This is by far Hans Zimmer's best work (a big claim considering how amazing his previous scores have been). Overall, the sound design is a fantastic element of *Dune* and fills the world with a soundscape that is so far removed from 21st century Earth that we are transported onto Arrakis. From the shield sound effects, to the wind flowing through the sand, to the movement of the dragonfly-esque ornithopters, everything is top tier craftsmanship.

Dune is a near perfect film, the only criticism being, similar to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, this film requires a second part to feel complete. It takes its time telling the complex story (unlike David Lynch's 1984 *Dune* which rushed the nearly 1000 page book into one film) and only tells the first half of Herbert's original novel. Thankfully, due to high box office numbers its first week, Warner Brothers and Legendary confirmed that *Dune*: Part Two will be released in October of 2023, with Villeneuve returning to direct and co-write the script. The slow pace was not an issue for me as I preferred the more nuanced and fleshed out plot of *Dune*. I felt that it allowed for some great character moments and worldbuilding, so I don't consider the "incomplete" criticism to be valid; especially considering that *Dune* is really (as the title card clearly states but WB failed to advertise) *Dune*: Part One.

> That being said, Dune is part of my top ten films of all time. The film is near perfection, and a great way to end the 2021 slate of blockbusters.

Cruella

By Sarene Choudhury

If you want to see a witty and hilarious new perspective on one of Disney's most notorious villains, *Cruella* is perfect. The film is part of an upcoming genre where classic villains are painted in a new light, and viewers are able to watch their descent into darkness The trope "nobody is born evil" brings a new dimension to villains and creates a complexity that makes rewatching the original films more interesting. *Cruella* follows the success of Disney's *Maleficent*, and it provides a new perspective on the tale as old as time: Sleeping Beauty. Similar to *Maleficent*, I believe that *Cruella* refreshed the puppy-killing villain from 101 Dalmatians by adding depth to her character. As such, the movie could be just as successful without the notoriety of her story backing it up. Glenn Close was the original actress of *Cruella* and is an executive producer in this modern take, which brings the production of the story full circle.

After a series of tragic events, the young orphan Estella (Tipper Seifert-Cleveland) arrives in London, where she has to fend for herself. Estella is quickly shown to be quite the handful and constantly gets herself into sticky situations due to her rebellious artistic spirit. Her skunk-coloured hair is a physical manifestation of that rebellious spirit. Even as a child, her outfits are already strikingly fashionable and foreshadow her future career in fashion. While her mother had tried to tamp Estella's tenacious spirit down it continuously fought back, and eventually became a symbol of her character. Upon arriving on the streets of London, Estella befriends two pickpocket orphans, Jasper (Ziggy Gardner) and Horace (Joseph MacDonald). We see this trio again in their twenties, living in a ramshackle building together, and supporting themselves with the pickpocketing skills they had perfected. Even as she leads a modest life of petty thievery, Estella (now played by Emma Stone) never forgets her original dream of becoming a well-known designer. The only outlet to express her love for fashion is through designing disguises for the various thieving escapades of the trio. After landing a janitorial position in a high-fashion workplace, Estella persistently asks her boss for a job directly related to design. Shut down one time too many, Estella snaps and redoes the display for the store with her now outrageous and unique sense of fashion. While her actions get her into trouble, they also attract the attention of the most well-known designer of the moment - the Baroness (Emma Thompson). Thus begins her journey into the world of fashion, rebellion, and devious schemes.

This intriguing film will captivate you with its rich plotline, amazing costumes, and Goodfellas-esque cinematography, and will have you begging for more. Stone flawlessly captures the defiant, glam-rock schemer in *Cruella* that we didn't know we needed. Her portrayal of this witty fashionista not only allows viewers to understand how she became the dalmatian-despising villain, but she also secures a place in viewers' hearts. Stone's carefully crafted accent only takes her performance over the top as she embodies the role. The other celebrity Emma (Thompson) starring in the movie perfectly matches the energy of Emma Stone (Cruella), as Thompson takes on the role of the villain. Thompson carries the energy of someone who Miranda Priestly from Devil Wears Prada would be if she had been placed in the exaggerated role of a Disney movie character. Even as her dark side is revealed, the character of the Baroness is so magnetic that viewers will find themselves still wanting her approval.

Estella is the bold character we all wanted to be growing up, but even as viewers idolize her, Stone's portrayal still lets them understand her descent into puppycide. With amazing visuals, shot composition, and an underlying black and white color scheme, you won't want to take your eyes off the screen. Furthermore, the retro soundtrack will make your heart race along with the sharp cinematography. *Cruella* provides a fresh take on an old Disney story, engaging viewers with every second of its two hour runtime.

> *Cruella* provides a fresh take on an old Disney story, engaging viewers with every second of its two hour runtime.

Critics Review: 74%
Top Critics Review: 63%

Audience Review: 92%

SPIDER-MAN™ No Way Home

By Jordan Wasserberger

Spider-Man: No Way Home is phenomenal. I could honestly end the review here. If you are a casual Marvel fan, a Tom Holland fan, or a diehard MCU aficionado, watch this movie. It is awesome. End of story.

Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021) picks up immediately after the events of Spider-Man: Far From Home (2019), where Peter Parker's identity as Spider-Man is revealed to the world, and our friendly neighborhood web-slinger is framed for the death of Mysterio (played by Jake Gyllenhaal). Parker, and by proxy the audience, are quickly thrust into a whirlwind of chaos, with Peter and those close to him being brought in by the NYPD, exonerated by none other than Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox finally making his MCU debut), and then swiftly rejected by MIT on the basis of the recent controversy. Peter, desperate to set things right, finds Dr. Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), asks for his help to make the world forget he is Spider-Man. Subsequently, they unleash the full, unbridled chaos of the multiverse in the process. While this moment has drawn warranted criticism (namely, why couldn't they have just made the world forget Mysterio and everything he said) it's serviceable enough, and I found that upon re-watching the film, it doesn't detract in a major way. What follows is two hours of epic action between a menagerie of spider-men and their villains from the past two decades, filled with moments of ecstasy and heartbreak.

Speaking of those other spider-men, Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield do make their long-awaited returns as Peter Parker, once again donning their iconic red-and-blue suits to help Holland's Peter defeat a coterie of sinister forces. All told, I think Marvel and director Jon Watts handled their return well. Aside from the albeit strange "summoning" of both Peters by Parker's friend Ned Leeds (Jacob Batalon), once Garfield and Maguire arrived, they played their roles perfectly.

Going into *No Way Home*, I believed that each Spider-Man had something to teach Holland's Peter Parker. Garfield's Spider-Man needed to impart wisdom about grief, having experienced a unique loss in the death of Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone). Maguire, as the "older brother" of the bunch, had an opportunity to show what it truly meant to be Spider-Man. Both spider-men accomplished these goals separately but poignantly, and made *Spider-Man: No Way Home* almost a coming-of-age film for Holland's Spider-Man. On that, I must say the three spider-men worked together wonderfully, playing off each other at every level. Two of the best scenes in the film are the heart-to-heart between all three spider-men on the rooftop of Peter's high school, and the final battle in which they are literally swinging off of each other to make their entrance (seriously, one of the greatest moments in MCU history). At the point where most of the internet is actively lobbying for Sony Pictures to greenlight the long-requested Amazing Spider-Man 3 (starring Andrew Garfield as Peter Parker), it's safe to say their introduction into the modern superhero era was beyond a success.

As revealed months before the film released, most of the villains from the Maguire and Garfield universes returned as well, with Jamie Foxx's Electro, Alfred Molina's Doc Oc, and Willem Dafoe's Green Goblin (otherwise known as Norman Osborn) taking center stage. Rhys Ifans's Lizard and Thomas Haden Church's Sandman also returned, but were sidelined for most of the film to give the other three villains the time and respect they deserved. Wow, did those three knock it out of the park. While Foxx and Molina were certainly great in their own right, Dafoe stole the show, and delivered a tremendous performance. At least in my mind, his Green Goblin is one of the greatest comic book movie villains of all time. He is an unabashed menace in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, putting Holland's Peter Parker through more arduous trials and tribulations than he had ever faced, and making good on Marvel's promise that this was going to be a dark, brutal, shocking film.

From Michael Giacchino's unbelievable score to Tom Holland's literal swing into the sunset, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* feels like a genuine tribute to Stan Lee, and a reminder of why Spider-Man is one of the most beloved characters in all of fiction. *Spider-Man: No Way Home* accomplishes one of the greatest Spider-Man stories to date, and encapsulates the ethos of what Stan Lee created. If you have not already done so, go watch this movie. If you have, watch it again. Seriously. It's that good.

THE Many Saints OF Newark

By Alec Greene

The Many Saints of Newark was one of the most anticipated films of 2021. It serves as a prequel to the legendary mafia series The Sopranos. Focusing on Tony Soprano's (the main character in the Sopranos) childhood, the film was an opportunity for director David Chase -- and others who took part in this project -- to give us Soprano-lovers a real backstory leading up to the show. What a wasted opportunity.

Many Saints, unfortunately, it contributed nothing to the overall story of the Sopranos. For starters, we learn nothing new about Tony Soprano, which in retrospect is not surprising, as his younger version is in the film for about all of eight minutes. The film's plot is centered around Dickie Moltisanti (Alessandro Nivola), the father of significant Sopranos character Christopher Moltisanti, alongside younger versions of all the old Sopranos characters we know and love. We are also introduced to a new character, Harold McBrayer, who is not even mentioned in all six seasons of The Sopranos. Harold brings a new storyline to the Sopranos's world, which was entertaining and captivating, but it begs the question: Why am I watching this? How does this new storyline factor into Tony Soprano becoming, well, Tony? The answer is that it doesn't.

There are many similar moments and scenes throughout the film that make you ask that same question. For example, Dickie goes to see his uncle in prison and they talk about jazz and Italian pastries. That's it. No further development in this relationship happens in the rest of the film! It's as if the filmmakers forgot about Tony. The scenes with him feel like an afterthought. However, it wasn't just Tony who slipped off their radar. Uncle Junior and Tony's parents were all figures who had a pivotal role in The Sopranos and played a major role in Tony's upbringing. Despite this they were barely on screen, even though top-tier actors play these roles.

Another problem with the film is that, aside from Dickie and Harold, there was practically no character development. Those are two characters who have no real role in The Sopranos, so again: why make them the center of Many Saints? Why forgo the characters we want to see, such as young Tony, Paulie, and Sil. They were all present in the film, but their roles were minimal. This film could have delivered a major nostalgic jolt, but it didn't even seem to try. Sure we were in the world of The Sopranos, but not with the characters we know and love.

As a movie, "*The Many Saints of Newark*" is solid. It checks off most of the boxes. It has superb acting, great action scenes, great cinematography, great soundtrack, and the story is interesting. But was it anything special? To someone who has not watched and lived with The Sopranos, this is a decent Italian mafia movie, but that is not what this movie was supposed to be. As a Sopranos-lover, I was eagerly awaiting Tony's journey, the journey revealing how this iconic, complex, multi-layered character became who he was in the series. I am still waiting.

By Sam Siegel

Legacy is a hard thing to fight against as you write a film. People loved The Sopranos - myself included - and *The Many Saints of Newark* was honestly a story not worth telling. It was a good movie but ask yourself: why did it have to say "Sopranos" on it? This movie was always going to be divisive, as people love the Sopranos and were never going to love a prequel no matter how good it was. I mean, come on, did we really need this? Honestly even with James Gandolfini's (the man who plays the original Tony Soprano) son taking the role I still think they could have been rebranded.

I don't hate the movie like so many of those running straight from the theater to their computers to complain loudly on the internet. "It wasn't as good as the original" "why did I waste all of my money on a ticket" they scream into the empty void of the internet, desperate to be heard over the sound of their own creative inability. That is not what this review is. On its own *The Many Saints of Newark* is an awesome movie and honestly worth my time, just not as a Sopranos story.

I understand that studios correctly assume that big names like "Sopranos" will bring people to the theater. But at what cost? They are destroying the legacy of an awesome show just to make a buck, it's a disgrace to modern filmmaking. I wish screenplay writers would hold their ground and let awesome stories tell themselves independent of the box office sales.

So to the readers out there who are still wondering if going to see *The Many Saints of Newark* is worth it, your answer is an unequivocal yes, but make sure to check your idea of the Sopranos at the door. Go into the theater ready to see an awesome and updated take on a classic mob boss and coming of age story line, but don't try to understand why the screen just cut to black all of those years ago.

THE SUICIDE SQUAD

By Owen Stafford

The Suicide Squad (directed by James Gunn) is a thrilling DC movie where a group of talented criminals are turned into an elite team put together by Amanda Waller, and sent on a mission to save the world. The team is composed of your favorite DC villains including Harley Quinn, Bloodsport, Peacemaker, King Shark, Ratcatcher II, Polka-Dot Man. Rick Flag, a soldier sent by the government,also joins the team to oversee them. First, a team of supervillains, including Harley Quinn and Rick Flag, is dropped on the coast of Corto Maltese. They are met with immediate resistance and everyone is killed except for Harley and Rick. Three days later, another team is dropped on a different coast with the mission to find The Thinker, and destroy a top-secret facility that has a weapon with the potential to take over the world. When a team composed of Bloodsport, Peacemaker, Ratcatcher II, Polka-Dot Man, and King Shark arrive on Corto Maltese, they receive orders to go rescue Rick Flag from his supposed captivity at an army camp. It is only after the team shows up and silently murders the entire camp that they realize Flag was not captured, but actually rescued by a group of rebels that had the same goal as them. After the team is forgiven much too quickly, they travel to a club in order to track down "The Thinker."They kidnap him, but before they leave the city, Flag realizes that Harley Quinn is still alive and is being held by the King of Corto Maltese. As he plans to rescue her, Harley escapes by herself, defeating all of the guards and killing the King. She then meets up with the rest of the group and they set out for the top-secret facility.

The Suicide Squad was much more successful than *Suicide Squad* which was released in 2016. Both movies essentially have the same plot, a group of villains brought together by the government to get rid of a world-ending threat. However, the 2021 edition of *The Suicide Squad* finds the perfect balance between gory violence and comedy unlike the 2016 version. *The Suicide Squad*'s characters help contribute to this balance. Their chemistry and interactions create humorous situations which *Suicide Squad* failed to do because its characters did not work well together, and failed to provoke humorous situations that did not seem forced.

Furthermore, *The Suicide Squad* has clean transitions and seamless edits. The transitions have a common theme of panning across a landscape to introduce the next part of the plot. These shots fit smoothly with the rest of the movie and help string the plot together. The action sequences are also cut together really well, with different angles displaying the whole shot. Special effects are also used in very creative ways. For example, in one scene Harley Quinn fights through a crowd of guards in a very majestic style. As she jumps around slaughtering them to a peaceful song, flowers begin growing out of her body and covering the walls and floors of the building. On the other hand, *Suicide Squad* is overly edited and the plot does not flow smoothly. It is very choppy and has subplots

that seem to be of no consequence to the movie. *Suicide Squad* is a product of a rushed production, and it did not live up to its potential, getting only 26% on Rotten Tomatoes. However, *The Suicide Squad* was very well done and succeeded in getting a 90% on Rotten Tomatoes.

Critics Review: 26%
Top Critics Review: 21%

Audience Review: 59%
(For 2016's Suicide Squad)

Critics Review: 90%
Top Critics Review: 87%

Audience Review: 77%
(For 2021's The Suicide Squad)

One aspect of *The Suicide Squad* that I disliked was the amount of main characters that ended up dying. So many characters that I was excited to watch died within a couple minutes of getting on screen, and some characters that I began to really like by the end of the movie were killed off in a really harsh way. I know the whole point of a "Suicide Squad" is that everyone on it is expendable, but did they really need to kill off so much of the cast? Many of them had the potential to be in other spin-offs, movies, or TV-shows, but they ended up dying, some of them in meaningless ways. Although I did enjoy most of the violence and gore, I found myself asking at times if they were killing people just to kill people.

While *The Suicide Squad* was not a perfect movie, it was much better than 2016's *Suicide Squad*, and the transitions, editing, comedy, and the characters helped make this a very enjoyable film to watch.

FREE GUY

By Patrick Stinebaugh

Free Guy (2021) is a newly-released 20th Century Studios film directed by Shawn Levy, starring Ryan Reynolds in the titular role of "Guy." The film tells the story of Guy, a non-player character (NPC -- a background character) in the video game Free City, who breaks free of his programming and sets out to change the world of Free City for the better.

To jump straight into the positives, *Free Guy* is possibly the film of the year, and an absolute blast through and through. The film knows that its sole purpose is to leave the audience with a grin on their face and takes every opportunity to do so. The action set pieces are large and creative, fully embracing the no-consequences setting of a video game to take every sequence to the next level of fun -- for instance, one action scene in a construction site that starts out as a simple chase and then ramps up with a transforming building and special power-ups that add another layer of thrill. The action scenes are also perfectly placed within the film -- while they're not so frequent as to be exhausting to watch, there's never so much time between them that the film drags, either.

Free Guy also benefits greatly from its phenomenal cast. Ryan Reynolds is in his bag as usual, and the film uses his comedic talents to their fullest, allowing his lively style to contribute to the film's constant energy. That was expected, though -- the cast member that caught me off guard was Jodie Comer as "Millie Rusk," a game designer who had her code stolen by the developer of Free City and is trying to find evidence for a lawsuit against them. Comer is a delight to watch each time she's on screen; her ability to balance between comedy and drama allows her to play off of everyone else phenomenally, whether it's the fun-loving Guy or the more straight-laced Keys (Joe Keery). Between *Free Guy* and her performance alongside Matt Damon and Adam Driver in The Last Duel, Comer seems like one of Hollywood's most promising up-and-coming actresses. The film rounds out its cast with a number of fun cameos all throughout, with one in particular towards the end (that I won't spoil) that left me literally laughing in surprise when it happened.

I don't want my depiction of *Free Guy* to make it seem as though it's just action, jokes, and explosions with no meaning. The film has a surprising amount of heart, revolving around several core relationships that bring heavy emotion when they get their payoffs. I'm not one to get the feels when watching films in general, but I went to see *Free Guy* twice in theaters and teared up at the same bits during both viewings. The slow, emotional moments of the film add significance to the otherwise light adventure, setting the stage for the relentless comedy and creative action. The film's message about breaking free from the path designed for oneself makes each character relationship deeply personal, which lays the foundation for the film's emotional weight as a whole.

In the mixed aspects of the film, as in neither positive nor negative, Ryan Reynolds' style of comedy simply isn't going to be for everyone. It works for me personally, but he's one of those actors that plays essentially the same character in every film at this point -- so if you don't like his style in those other films, you won't like it here either.

My only true negative of the film is that the humor is at times overdone. Don't get me wrong; when *Free Guy* is funny, it is REALLY funny. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true; the film has plenty of moments that are straight-up cringe-inducing. Many of these moments come down to Taika Waititi as the villain, "Antoine," who has an oddly bubbly, over-the-top personality that for me didn't work at all on either viewing. Additionally, the film falls into the trap many modern films do of filling itself with references to internet culture, which feels gimmicky and will date the film heavily as time passes. With so much being done so well, such easily avoidable mistakes only frustrate me more.

Overall, *Free Guy* is an almost-perfect summer film: an action-comedy packed with copious amounts of heart that would've been flawless if it could've reined itself in just a bit more. While the film is enjoyable no matter what, I'd especially recommend watching it with a group of family or friends for the best viewing experience possible.

Free Guy is available to watch on Disney+ on February 23rd -- if you're a fan of Ryan Reynolds, this film is an absolute must-watch. Even if you're not, I'd still advise you to give *Free Guy* a fair chance if you have the time. It's that good.

ETERNALS

By Ethan Fry

Eternals is an action-packed Marvel movie about a race of immortal beings (the titular Eternals) with superhuman powers who have secretly lived on Earth for thousands of years. The Eternals were assigned to Earth to fight off the "deviants," who invade Earth and try to destroy it and all of humanity. The Eternals were created by god-like figures called Celestials. On Earth the Eternals consist of Ikaris, Thena, Sersi, Sprite, Gilgamesh, Kingo, Druig, Makkari, Phastos, and Ajak. When the Eternals become aware of a coming disaster for planet Earth, they must overcome the parameters of their mission and disobey the Celestials in order to protect humanity.

To start off, I think that *Eternals* displayed many positives, such as an insanely diverse cast, new superheroes, and a new direction for the MCU. Firstly, the movie consists of actors from multiple ethnic backgrounds: Salma Hayek, Kumail Nunjani, Gemma Chan, Brian Tyree Henry, to name a few. Furthermore, Makkari is played by Lauren Ridloff who is actually a well-known deaf actress, meaning that the movie even includes sign language, which each of the Eternals use to speak with Makkari. In addition, Phastos is portrayed as an openly gay black man, and the movie even goes so far as to show a kiss between him and his partner, marking the first ever significant homosexual relationship in a Marvel movie.

This introduction of many new superheroes in *Eternals* gives Marvel fans a new and refreshing experience. The character that stood out to me the most was Sersi (Gemma Chan). Sersi exemplified the constant dilemma of being an Eternal but also falling in love with humanity on Earth, as she is in a relationship with human Dane Whitman (Kit Harrington). Furthermore, her dilemma is shown even more by the fact that it is she who brings up the idea to band all of the Eternals together to defeat Arishem. This commitment to her love for Earth is what ultimately becomes the deciding factor in her power in the final battle to stop the end of humanity on Earth. Lastly, the new and intriguing plot of *Eternals* may be enough to bring the otherwise-obscure comic group to the fans' attention. Despite the Eternals comics coming out in the mid 1970s, the majority of movie fans have not read the comics, making this their first experience with these heroes. For years on end, the MCU has been mostly focused on the Avengers, their individual stories, and the family of some of those characters. As a result, a complete diversion from that path will be extremely beneficial to the experience of MCU fans.

Despite there being many positives to the movie, there were also some negatives; particularly, the difficulty to both understand the plot and relate to the characters. While the brief synopsis above gives a general description of the plot, when watching the movie, the viewer becomes aware that the film's plot is difficult to put in a few sentences because it's simply too hard to follow. Furthermore, each character is quite unique and has a different background which makes them great characters, but these characters are also immortal gods that were made by a Celestial and were not sufficiently humanized throughout the film's runtime. This makes it difficult for the viewer to relate to and empathize with all of these characters because they don't share the same human-like qualities that the Avengers have that makes them so relatable.

Overall, I feel like *Eternals* was enjoyable to watch and I would recommend you to see it. Despite the negatives that I found in the movie, I still believe that the goods outweigh the bads.

> In conclusion, I think that Eternals will give a great and refreshing taste to all MCU fans with a new plot that can hopefully be as successful as the Avengers plot.

Critics Review: 48%
Top Critics Review: 37%

Audience Review: 76%

The New York Times

FRAMING BRITNEY SPEARS

By Tali Chudnoff

The docuseries *Framing Britney Spears* offers a broadly chronological account of Britney Spears' life. It is told through archival interviews, film recordings, concert excerpts, and photographs, as well as conversations with those who know her. There is undoubtedly a deep sadness in the juxtaposition of the late teenage Britney, her gleaming smile, radiating warmth, and exuding good humor, and the fragile, tearful Britney of 10 years later, caught in the spotlight of fame. Early in Spears' career, her image was a tightly controlled marketing experiment: She was a cool older sister to young women who bought her records, but to many men, she represented a darker sort of fantasy.

Within a few years, the control Britney and her team had on her image was breaking down, and the media took over her image and portrayed her in various negative ways. They called her immoral, insane, a terrible mother, and much more. What especially surprised me from the film is how the same media publications that followed her and destroyed her life and career are now spreading stories about how terrible it was for the media to go after her life and career. They benefited from over exaggerating every paparazzi photo, rumor, and piece of gossip. But now, they benefit again from telling stories about how wrong they themselves were.

Framing Britney Spears cleverly highlights the cruelty of celebrity and paparazzi culture and asks serious questions about how young women are treated as fair game by interviewers and those looking to make a quick buck off a photo in a parking lot. The documentary takes the popular notion that Spears, as a woman, is unable to fend for herself, and presents evidence that said notion is the end product of her lewd and critical treatment by the media and her conservators

Thinking that there is someone following you at all times, that all your movements are recorded, and that all your words are heard are typically seen as signs of madness. However, in Spears' case, it was the truth and her reality. The documentary highlights Spears's infamous head shaving, which at the time was seen as further proof that she had lost her balance. Misogyny is one of the lenses through which Spears' abuse can be viewed, but not the only: Spears's social class is also in key factor to consider when examining her abusive conditions. The documentary has sparked a discussion on Twitter about how cruel celebrity culture has been since the early 2000s, when paparazzi culture was at its peak. There has been a noticeable shift in public attitudes towards celebrities, which has resulted in invasive voyeurism that has given way to a more severe and adoring 'stan' culture.

Framing Britney Spears is a depiction of how Britney Spears was a victim of our harsh culture, where the media and her family controlled her as a puppet. It brings to light the seemingly "new" idea that as much as artists and famous people are revered by society, they are still human and need to be treated as such. This docuseries sensitizes people on what and how to behave regardless of if someone is famous.

> The film's popularity has helped Britney gain the much needed financial freedom and autonomy from her father and family and has offered her the chance of a new beginning.

SEX EDUCATION

By Sophia Liu

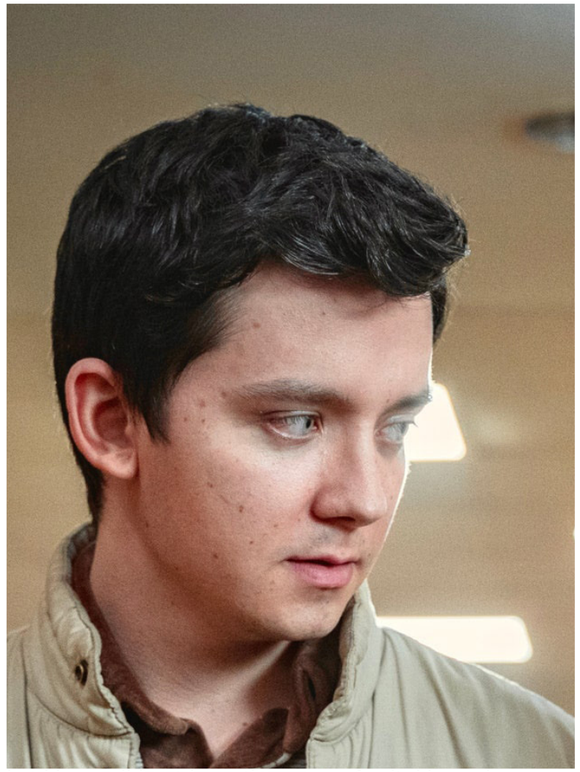
After months of waiting and an additional nine-month postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I finally got the chance to watch the third season of *Sex Education* on September 17, 2021. *Sex Education* follows Otis Milburn (Asa Butterfield), his best friend, Eric Effiong (Ncuti Gatwa), his business partner/friend/love interest Maeve Wiley (Emma Mackey), and a large cast of main characters, as Otis and Maeve run a business selling sex advice to their classmates at their school, Moordale High (recently renamed Sparkside Academy). Witty in its storylines and dialogue, full of surprisingly nuanced personalities, heartwarming character development, and completely energetic, *Sex Education* is one of my favorite shows of all time. Following the wild ending to season Two, featuring a deleted voicemail, several new relationships, and a surprise pregnancy, I was excited to see where the show would go next, and thankfully, despite some minor flaws, *Sex Education* Season Three does not disappoint.

Like the first two seasons, *Sex Education* Season Three is full of surprises. In particular, the third season takes a deeper dive into the stories and personalities of many of the side characters. After beginning a relationship with Eric at the end of Season Two, ex-school bully Adam (Connor Swindells) grapples with balancing his personal struggles and voicing his feelings while Eric grows impatient with Adam's reluctance to come out to his mother. Although Adam and Eric's relationship ends after Eric cheats on Adam while in Nigeria (an unnecessary, uncalled for, and truly questionable decision on his part), Adam opens up to his mother about his sexuality and begins to gain more self-confidence. After starting a relationship with Otis, popular girl Ruby (Mimi Keene) accepts her modest home life and opens up to him about her father's multiple sclerosis. Although the relationship ends because Otis cannot bring himself to say he loves her, Ruby learns to lean on her friends and let go of her mean-girl attitude. After being fired from his job as headmaster, Adam's father, Michael (Alistair Petrie), finds new meaning in his life through cooking. Michael is able to reflect upon his shortcomings in his relationships with his family, standing up to his older brother's bullying and taking the initiative to become a better man to his ex-wife and son. *Sex Education* continues to be a masterclass in taking basic archetypes (the school bully, the mean popular girl, etc.) and turning them on their heads to show more complicated, nuanced characters.

Sex Education Season Three also has the most educational moments of any season yet, and demonstrates that a show about sex can be informative, rather than just prurient. Instead of forgetting about the ramifications of Aimee's (Aimee Lou Wood) sexual assault during Season Two, the series explores how therapy can help someone process and recover from trauma. The show also addresses *Sex Education* itself, and criticizes the current state of many schools' health education programs. Moordale's new headmistress, Hope Haddon (Jemima Kirke), arrives to end the school's reputation as the "sex school," She tries to do this by introducing abstinence-only *Sex Education*. However many of the main characters, such as Maeve, and a number of the school's teachers, give valuable lessons to the viewers and their fellow classmates about where to access accurate information for safe sex practices. None of these lessons feel out of place in the story or condescending to watch; rather, they remind the viewers of the fact that *Sex Education* is more than just a raunchy teen drama.

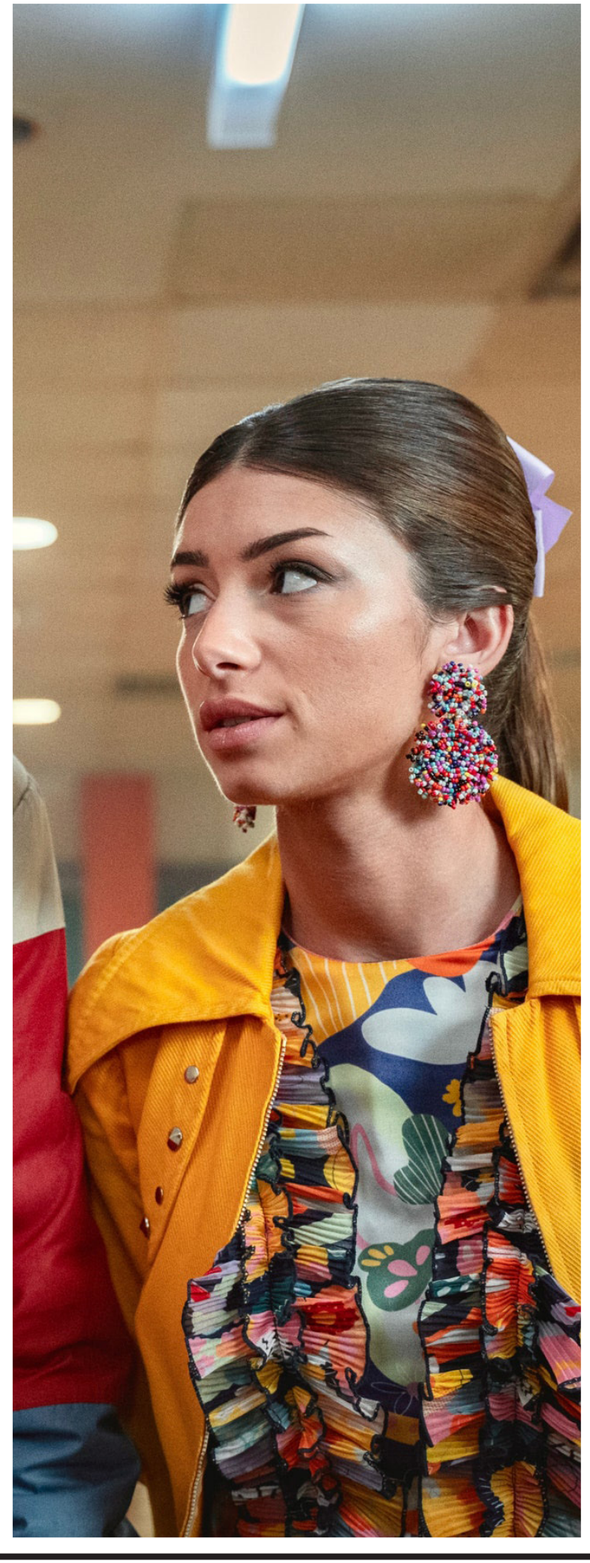
However, *Sex Education* Season Three is far from perfect. One particularly glaring issue is that the main cast of *Sex Education* is becoming too large, with Season Three having a staggering seventeen main characters. With only eight episodes per season, there is simply not enough time for all seventeen characters to have detailed setups, conflicts, and resolution. Additionally, there are many subplots involving secondary characters, which also takes a significant amount of screen time. Thus, the only solution is for some of the main characters to have less importance in the story and take a backseat. This can be quite normal for TV shows with lots of main characters across many seasons, and I enjoy seeing lesser main characters like Adam, Ruby, and Aimee getting more of the spotlight. However, the characters most affected happen to be the main three: Otis, Eric, and Maeve. These three characters are so uninvolved in the main plot, it almost feels like they are extras in their own show. In fact, for a large chunk of the season, Eric is not even with the main cast; instead he travels to Nigeria for a family wedding. With Otis, Eric, and Maeve so removed from the central story, the bulk of the action and drama gets placed on other characters, which only exacerbates the issue of having too many secondary characters without the screen time to give each one the story arcs they deserve.

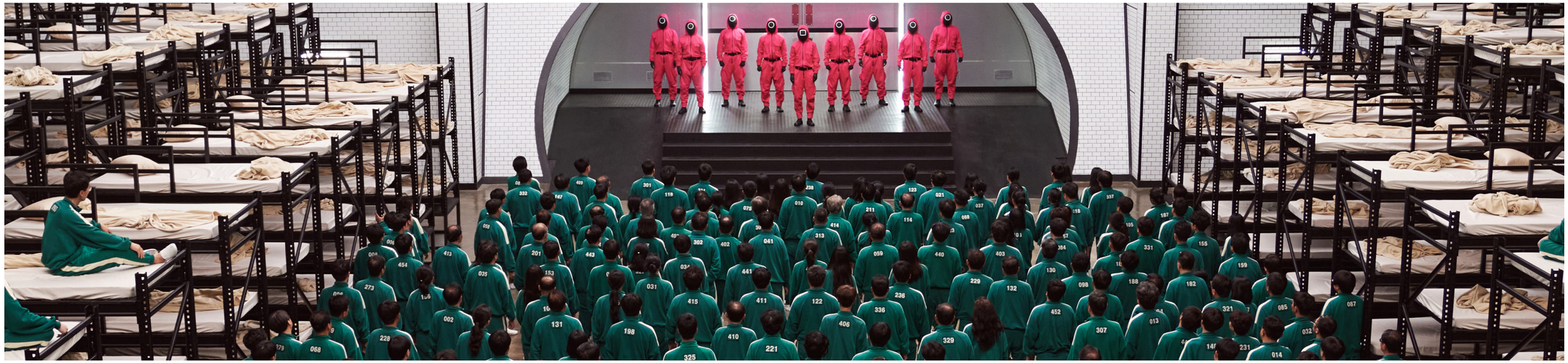
Another flaw is how *Sex Education* is becoming extremely repetitive. Two of Season Three's biggest offenders are Jackson (Kedar Williams-Stirling) and Maeve. During Season Two, Jackson learns how to overcome his anxiety and explores what he wants to do with his life, but during Season Three, Jackson relearns his lessons with a new love interest, Cal (Dua Saleh). While his character development in the previous season is a refreshing take on the popular jock archetype, his character seems much more boring in Season 3, since he is simply learning the same lessons he already learned. Similarly, Maeve spends all of Seasons 1 and 2 learning to trust and open up to others after spending the majority of her life alone. However, her Season Three character arc is practically identical to her previous ones, and she seems to forget all of her growth. For example, after Aimee reveals to Maeve that she paid for Maeve's travel fee for a school trip, knowing Maeve did not have the money for it, Maeve becomes furious that Aimee damaged her pride by helping her. They eventually make up and Maeve learns to trust others, just as she did in the previous two seasons. Although I still love both Jackson and Maeve for all of their character depth and clever dialogue, seeing them make the same mistakes and learn the same lessons over and over makes me more exasperated than happy for them. Without new, original character arcs for many of the characters, I find Season 3 to be slow and bland at times, which should be impossible, considering how few episodes there are in each season.



Overall, I generally enjoyed *Sex Education* Season Three, and I would recommend it to those who liked the first two seasons. Despite its flaws with its many characters and the repetition of themes, the show continued to be hilarious and serious in exactly the right moments, with many relatable and three-dimensional characters. The show has already been approved for a fourth season, and I am excited to see what will happen next at Moordale High, or what's left of it, at least.

> However, if the writers of *Sex Education* do not try to solve some of the main issues I have with the show, I worry that the fourth season may further an already-observable decline in quality.





SQUID GAME

By Liv Dwyer

Squid Game currently stands as Netflix's most popular show, being watched by 111 million households since its release. The show's success was unpredictable. It was not based on a popular intellectual property, it was not in English, and it was released during mid-September when people were returning back to work and school. However, its success is beyond well deserved. *Squid Game* is an excellent show, featuring well-done characters, and a compelling plot that makes the viewer question the ethics of capitalism.

The story depicts 456 individuals carrying an incredible amount of debt who are given the opportunity to compete in six rounds of children's games. If they win, they receive a portion of 45 billion won (around 38 million dollars). If they lose, they die.

Squid Game does an excellent job of developing its characters so the games have real stakes. The first episode is solely focused on learning about the protagonist Gi-Hun (Lee Jung-Jae) and showing why he would accept the offer to compete in this sadistic contest. The other characters are Sae-byeok (Jung Ho-Yeon), a North Korean refugee who needs the money to bring her mother over to South Korea and get her brother out of an orphanage. Ali (Anupam Tripathi) is a Pakistani migrant worker trying to win money for his wife and child. Sang-Woo (Park Hae-soo) is a childhood friend of Gi-Hun, and a former investment head who made bad investments and is under investigation for embezzlement. Once these characters form an alliance with each other, their relationships evolve as they share their personal struggles. Seeing the relationships grow makes the emotional moments that happen later in the season really deliver.

Squid Game is set in present-day Korea. While the events are slightly fantastical, there are many people around the world, not just in Korea, who would risk their lives to win that amount of money if given the opportunity to do so. One of the reasons why the show has resonated across the world is because the message it conveys is relatable.

On a technical level, *Squid Game* is impressive. The actors' performances are excellent and draw the audience in; we sympathize with all of them. The set and costume design give the show a specific look. The costumes clearly differentiate the players from the guards and other characters. The sets are all colorful and intricate, giving the dark subject matter a more disturbing tone. Finally, the soundtrack heightens the emotions of the story and adds to the weight of each scene.

One of the downsides of the success of *Squid Game* is that it has become a global representation of Korean television when it is not a K-Drama. The series was produced by Netflix and while it does feature well-known Korean actors, it does not have the same limitations and style of typical K-Dramas. The majority of K-Dramas are 16, 20, or 30 episodes long at about an hour each. They have more strict censorship rules, meaning that most of the time the two leads only get to kiss once or twice. The typical character tropes that K-Dramas follow, including the Male Lead, the Female Lead, the Second Male Lead, and the Second Female lead, are non-existent in *Squid Game*. Furthermore, the majority of K-Dramas don't receive a second season, unlike *Squid Game* which recently announced a second season.

> Hopefully, *Squid Game*'s success will inspire Western audiences to explore other K-Dramas.

DEAR WHITE PEOPLE

By Sam Siegel

I remember about a year ago in the height of the pandemic I sat down to watch a show. It was a rainy Monday afternoon– back then I had the time to watch TV on a Monday– so I sat on my bed and opened up Netflix. Back then, I was motoring through shows, binging at a rate of one per week without giving them much thought, but this one was different. My sister had originally recommended *Dear White People* to me, but I was unsure if it would really be the show for me. I typically believe important conversations regarding race are best handled in places other than the vacuum of a tv show, with actors delivering scripted lines, but in the real world where a more natural and fulfilling conversation can be held. When considering a show whose main mission – aside from providing entertainment – is to address real and pressing issues of race, I want to state that my perspective is that of a white male. However, while it is my goal to make this review as objective as possible, just know that I approach these issues of race as someone mostly unaware of the realities of living as a person of color. To that point, *Dear White People* had previously done an amazing job of breaking down the struggles of Black Americans for those who are less knowledgeable on the subject. Unfortunately, Season 4 really did let this amazing show down completely.

I binged the entirety of seasons 1-3 in a matter of days,glued to the screen as the characters fought to make their school a more equitable place. Not only was I treated to the profound lessons of the struggles of African-Americans, but they were shown in an interesting and comedic way; I felt as if I was being taught by a close friend as opposed to a lecturer. However, Season 4 was a tragedy. I waited so long for this fourth installment of such an amazing show, but oh my I could not have been more disappointed. The major racial issues were still represented, alongside the amazing character development, but in song. Like WHAT?

In what world can a show that used to be so good decide to incorporate song and dance into its central plot out of the blue? It was honestly hard to watch. It felt like a legacy destroyed with every passing dance and song number. Actors with previously phenomenal performances are suddenly forced to sing, and the sound produced was something more akin to nails on a chalkboard than a real professional singer.

Certain plot points that were developed extensively in other seasons were simply left behind. Sam (the main character) had an extremely emotional moment in the earlier seasons where her father tragically passed away, leaving her with her mother - whom she had trouble getting along with. However, both that storyline and Sam's mother were completely missing from this season. Again, WHAT? Season 4 felt as if it was written by someone who had never seen the earlier seasons and has an unhealthy obsession with musicals.

So to you the reader I say, watch – even binge – seasons 1-3 of *Dear White People*. They are filled with the type of intriguing and well written interpersonal stories and important lessons that are sorely lacking in modern television. But steer clear of season 4. It is honestly not worth the time or effort trying to understand the story while attempting to skip through the musical aspects. And to Netflix I say, do better in season 5 and simply remove season 4 from your site, I will pretend it never happened if you do.

RANKING THE Harry Potter Collection

By Eliza Becker

Twenty years ago on November 14, 2001, the film, *Harry Poter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, was released, marking the beginning of the best movie series of all time. To celebrate this anniversary, I'm ranking the eight movies. Although they're all works of art since the books they are based off of are masterpieces, I'll be critiquing them on how well or poorly they were adapted from the books. To be clear, this is not a ranking of my favorite movies, but of how well the directors and screenwriters adapted the text to the film.

#8 -- *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* (Dir. by David Yates)

At number eight, I have *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1*. Whenever I watch this movie, the end leaves me feeling unsatisfied. This is simply because it ends in the middle of the Deathly Hallows book, so there's a film's worth of setup with no true climax or payoff. The movie attempts to make the climax be when Bellatrix kills Dobby, but that scene was not written to be anything like a climax in the books. There's not enough build up, and although I like Dobby, he's a pretty minor character to make an entire climax out of his death. The choice to split Deathly Hallows up into two parts made it pretty difficult to make a successful movie adaptation. Since this movie can't stand on its own, it comes in last place.

#7 -- *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Dir. by Mike Newell)

The Goblet of Fire is one of my favorite movies, but considering how amazing the book is, the film should have been so much better. Much of this comes down to director Mike Newell seeming to not understand how to accurately adapt a book series as detailed as Harry Potter to the screen. One of the best aspects of this book is its many mysteries; however, Newell ruined so many crucial mystery scenes. For example, Newell cut the scene in which an insane Barty Crouch Sr. shows up at Hogwarts speaking nonsense to Harry and Krum about a grave mistake he made. As a result, we don't get nearly as interesting of an explanation or reveal of how Crouch Jr. stayed alive, a fascinating moment in the book. There are also a number of nonsensical changes made to the source material. For example, in the first task the dragon chases Harry out of the arena, and in the third task the film makes the maze itself come alive as a replacement for the maze's magical creatures in the book. Furthermore, in the books, Dumbledore is almost always calm, so when he raises his voice or shows signs of anger, it is a significant moment and an implication that something is really wrong. In the movie, Dumbledore is angry in almost every scene, a choice untrue to his character that takes away from the film. I know this movie is a fan favorite for non-book readers, but when compared to the book, the film infuriates me.

#6 -- *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (Yates)

Although it's one of my favorite books and movies, Half Blood Prince is number six on my movie ranking. The book is the darkest in the series so far; the movie, however, is a rom-com. The main plot and the most compelling aspect of the book is Harry's investigation of horcruxes and the backstory of Lord Voldemort. The book shows seven memories of Voldemort's past that explain why Voldemort hates muggles and obsesses over immortality; the movie only shows two of these due to its focus on the less-compelling romance storylines. Due to this choice, we also lose a lot of Harry and Dumbledore's relationship, which is really crucial to Dumbledore's death in the end, and Harry's struggle with it in the next book. Additionally, if you don't read the books often, you may have forgotten how dark it is; for some context, muggles were being killed at large and students were constantly hearing about deaths of their friends, or even family. David Yates had never directed a comedy before and said he chose this movie to see if he could do it well. Although the movie is quite funny sometimes, this was the wrong book to try it with.

#5 -- *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (Yates)

If you've never read the books (shame on you), you probably think I'm crazy for this ranking. What I love about Harry Potter is that Rowling doesn't rely on the magical world alone to captivate the reader; she also creates ingenious plots with enormous payoffs. The movie simply cut so much backstory crucial to the entire series' plot. Possibly my favorite scene in the whole book series is when Harry explains to Voldemort why he's destined to win right before he defeats him, a moment that was built up since the very first book. In the movie, they completely cut this conversation and instead replaced it with Harry and Voldemort just jumping off of a tower together before the final duel. They cut so much of the scene after Harry "dies," where Dumbledore explains his whole backstory with the Deathly Hallows and Grindelwald, why Harry can come back to life, why his wand produced golden flames on its own, and Voldemort's great flaw of never understanding love. I understand that in movies action scenes are necessary to keep many viewers entertained, but the backstory was simply too important to be replaced with those scenes. Yates did an incredible job showing the war from all perspectives, when in the books we only get Harry's perspective. The rest of the film is pretty accurate to the book, the action is amazing, and the entire film is a suspenseful masterpiece; however, due to such critical parts of the entire series being cut, I had to place it lower on my list.

#4 -- *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Dir. by Chris Columbus)

Usually ranked lower on fans' lists, The Chamber of Secrets is number four on mine. Although this movie is sometimes thought to be the least memorable of the films, I still rank it higher up. The book didn't have too much going for it, and director Chris Columbus did really well with what he had. I don't mean to make this book out to be bad – it's one of my favorite books to exist – however, it's often outshined by book one. I was particularly impressed with how strongly the film was able to keep the mystery aspect of the book; for example, including every basilisk attack except one. The movie is filled with so much suspense: when Harry and Ron figure everything out, when the spiders attack them in the Forbidden Forest, and when Tom Riddle reveals his identity in the chamber. It also included Harry's struggle with whether he belongs in Gryffindor or Slytherin, which is impressive considering they can't just say what Harry is thinking.

#3 -- *Harry Poter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Columbus)

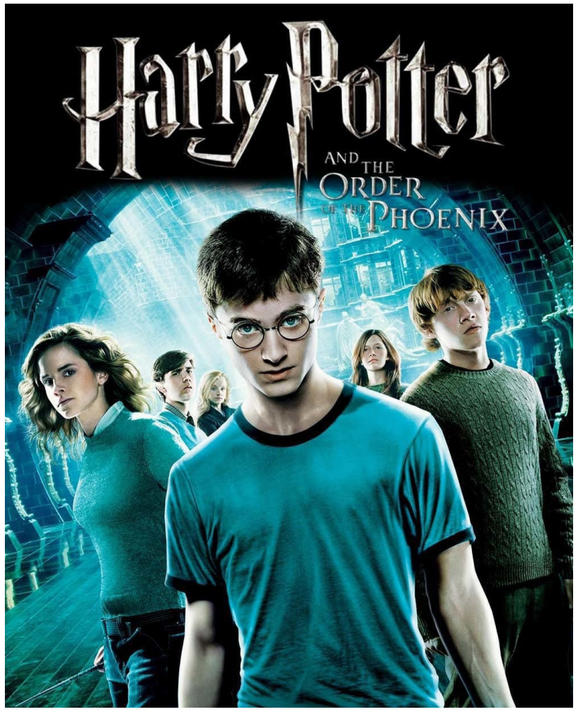
The Sorcerer's Stone is number three, again in large part due to Columbus' directing. Columbus had the most responsibility out of all of the directors, with the burden of a seven book series resting entirely on his shoulders. It would have been easy to mess up (as we saw him do with the first Percy Jackson film); however, thanks to his love for the series, he perfectly introduced Harry Potter to the big screen. Columbus had to set everything in the series up, from what casting a spell looked like to the casting of eleven year old kids that would play the main characters for the next ten years. He encouraged set designer, Stuart Craig, to take the risk of going big and spending more money, which paid off since Craig perfectly brought my dreams of Hogwarts to real life. As far as the plot goes, Columbus followed it thoroughly, making certain changes necessary to adapting a book to a movie. Columbus worked really hard for this film, and I'll be forever grateful to him for setting the rest of the series up for success.

#2 -- *Harry Poter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Dir. by Alfonso Cuarón)

The Prisoner of Azkaban is the example of the Harry Potter film that most benefited from its direction. This film stands out the most, because Cuarón added his own unique style to it. Through skillful cinematic techniques, he made the film much darker than the previous two. An example of this is the one-shot at the beginning of the movie, in which Arthur Weasley first tells Harry that Sirius Black is trying to kill him. The scene begins showing the entire bright and busy pub, and as Arthur and Harry continue moving locations, it transitions to a darker, more confined space, conveying the shift in narrative tone. He does a brilliant job of foreshadowing by repeatedly showing the Whomping Willow (seemingly just to indicate a change in weather) and the big clock (seemingly just focusing on Harry).

#1 -- *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Yates)

Finally, the best movie adaptation in the entire series is Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. This is my least favorite book because of how slow it is at times, so the fact that director Yates was able to make it into one of my favorite movies is impressive. Michael Goldenberg managed to cut many unnecessary scenes while still including all of the book's important information. Editor Mark Day used montages to create an effective progression in Umbridge's takeover of the school and Dumbledore's Army's improvement in a much shorter time than the books. Harry goes through so much internal character development in this book; he worries that he is becoming like Voldemort and shifts from having a negative outlook on the war and himself to a positive one. Like Columbus in Chamber of Secrets, Yates impressively was able to convey these inner thoughts by emphasizing his isolation and slowly progressing his anger until its climax, where he screams at Dumbledore. The fight scene between Voldemort and Dumbledore was some of the coolest use of special effects I have ever seen. Yates and the rest of the film crew truly took advantage of a movie's ability to enhance the physical world of a novel. Order of the Phoenix is the only movie that I think improved the source material, and for that, I applaud this movie.



NO TIME TO DIE 007

Examining the BOND GIRL

By Tali Chudnoff

No Time To Die was one of the most highly anticipated films throughout 2020 and 2021. It follows James Bond (Daniel Craig) coming out of his post-Spectre retirement to prevent the deployment of an unstoppable bioweapon. The film is Craig's last outing as Bond, and sees him ushering in a new era in the 007 legacy. The legacy of Bond films has been tied with the representation of women on screen since its inception as Bond is presented as irresistible to women with his classy demeanor and machismo. Conversations about his sexual appeal arise from the countless intimate scenes in the action-filled movie franchise.

With *No Time To Die*, viewers get to see a different side to Bond. We see loving intimacy and deep emotions in his encounters with his love interests, particularly his relationship with Madeleine Swann. *No Time To Die* decreased the amount of sexual intimacy by replacing it with more meaningful, personal interactions.

Another example of the differing direction *No Time To Die* takes is in its depictions of "Bond Girls". Paloma, one such Bond girl, is a prominent character in the film, a spy who lived in Cuba and helped Bond in a dangerous situation. Throughout her sequence in the film, she displays excellent fighting skills and an ability to use her guns and weapons with style. Interestingly, the film never explores a romantic relationship between her and Bond. This is in direct contrast to older Bond movies, which would have included a romantic scene between the two. However, in a misguided attempt to make Paloma more "feminist" by removing any scenes of intimacy between her and Bond, *No Time To Die* cuts down her already short amount of screen and dialogue time, even though she was one of the few female characters. Her sudden exit in the film was another unwelcome surprise, removing an intriguing character who had the potential to form a compelling and amicable friendship with Bond. Her subversion of expectations about the role of a "Bond Girl" is not sufficiently explored due to her departure.

Bond's competitor for the 007 title, "Nomi" (Lashana Lynch), is a more exciting introduction in the film. Compared to Paloma, it is evident that Nomi is more experienced and has been in the game for much longer. However, the lack of uniqueness in her fighting skills meant she was also unable to live up to her full potential as an action character; they even made it hard to tell what made her qualified to be a 00.

It has been said that the Bond movies are making an effort to represent women better in their films, but *No Time To Die* fails to portray women outside of the one sided dimension of their sex appeal. Such examples include his intimate relationship with Madeleine, who serves the purpose of being Bond's obligatory sexual interest.

The new direction the film has taken intends to portray women in more varied roles, with characters foregoing romantic connections to Bond. It was evident that the guidelines for incorporating women into the film in a non-romantic way were not explicitly defined. We watched fewer intimate scenes, but the female characters should have also been given more substance. In a movie with a runtime of just under three hours, you would expect for directors and screenwriters to find enough time to incorporate women into the film in a more meaningful way. The filmmakers seemed to have taken a surface level feminist approach to the film, especially visible in a scene where Paloma fought enemies in a long black gown. The media has used this scene as an example of the film's revolutionary approach to Bond, as Paloma was still able to somehow incorporate her femininity into the "manly" action of fighting, as she was wearing a dress.

Even though the franchise has come a long way in their transformation of 'Bond Girls,' it is still far from perfect. Like director Cary Fukunaga states, "you can't change Bond overnight into a different person. But you can definitely change the world around him and the way he has to function in that world. It's a story about a white man as a spy in this world, but you have to be willing to lean in and do the work to make the female characters more than just contrivances."

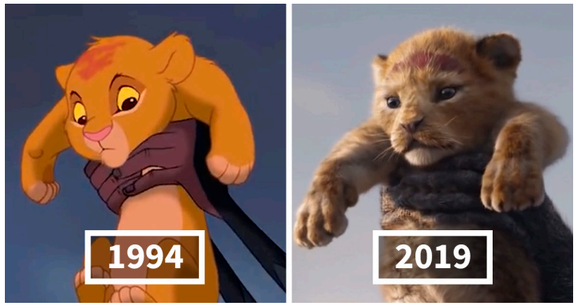
Should Disney Keep Making Live Action Adaptations?

By Sarene Choudhury

Over the past decade, Disney has gone into a phase where most of their new movies are live action adaptations of iconic Disney movies, with varying degrees of success. These movies are mostly remakes, but there are also a number of twists on classic stories. Either way, the concept feels fairly lazy, considering Disney doesn't have to worldbuild again, and any new story or perspective would still have a baseline of events guiding the production process. Most of these live action adaptations rely heavily on the massive budgets, Hollywood A-listers, and beautiful CGI to carry the movies in the box office. When you combine these remakes with Disney's reputation and huge fanbase, they no longer need to craft new plotlines to draw in a huge audience, ultimately resulting in subpar movies that feel more like cash grabs than the magic of Disney.

A prime example of this is the *Beauty and the Beast* remake from 2017, starring Emma Watson and Dan Stevens. The CGI was extraordinary and the whole movie was overwhelmingly aesthetically pleasing. Furthermore, stars such as Emma Watson made the movie highly anticipated, not to mention all the other A-listers ranging from Ian McKellen to Josh Gad. However, this was one of the least exciting movie experiences I have had. The only good parts were the aesthetics and star studded cast in this unoriginal remake of a Disney classic. It was completely unnecessary, and did nothing for the viewers, except perhaps get rid of any possibility of Emma Watson having a singing career. There is no question in my mind about the superiority of the original animated version in comparison to the live action adaptation. Although the *Beauty and the Beast* remake may be bland, it ultimately lies in the middle of the Disney live adaptation spectrum as it was completely average and brought a new meaning to the term cash grab.

On the worst side of that spectrum lies the 2019 *Lion King*, as nothing can compare to the overhyped monstrosity of this adaptation. This movie had such amazing potential - the world of the *Lion King* is a completely separate animal from that of Disney Princesses, and I personally preferred the former growing up. Not only that, Beyonce was to play a major part in the role of Nala which indicated a truly incredible soundtrack. In a confusing move by Disney, their most significant change in the 'live' adaptation was to replace the original, heartfelt animation with CGI, a decision that was mainly overlooked until viewers actually watched the film. The juxtaposition of the rich music with the complete lack of emotion on the character's face was the film's biggest failure as well as the lack of any originality in comparison to the source material. Unlike Beauty and the Beast, where it was bland because it lacked originality, this movie had other factors actively working against it. Watching CGI animals sing and live life was supposed to evoke the same if not greater amount of emotion and joy that one experiences during the 1991 *Lion King*, but (not so surprisingly) it didn't.



I have come to the conclusion that all of the live adaptations that are simply remakes of another classic movie cannot surpass mediocrity, and are often much worse than their original counterpart. We see this in the previously mentioned movies as well as in examples such as Cinderella, the Jungle Book, 101 Dalmatians, Aladdin. Besides these, there are three other types of movies in the realm of Disney live action adaptation films: those focusing on the experiences of a character in an iconic Disney film like Alice in Wonderland and *Mulan*.

Mulan had a pretty terrible response from viewers, as many expected a simple remake when what they received was a historically accurate story that was almost completely different from the story that many associate with the title *Mulan*. This was an admirable attempt on Disney's part to remove the racist and sexist undertones of the original movie, as well as to tell the real story of *Mulan*. As a movie marketed as the true story of everyone's favorite Disney princess, I believe it would have done really well. Unfortunately, it came across that it was going to be a remake in the way that *Beauty and the Beast* was a remake. So, audiences were surprised when the story was completely different, much more serious, and missing fan-favorites Mushu and Li Shang. Those characters did further the original racist and sexist undertones, but unfortunately most viewers couldn't get past their omission and so *Mulan* fell flat, even with so much potential.

The other two types of movies may have still had generally average box office response by Disney's standards, but the originality is what made them worth the watch. *Maleficent* and *Cruella* were two of the best Disney movies I've seen in a while because they brought an actual fresh take on the classic stories. The character development and background of villains in both films provided a more enthralling and fleshed out depiction of their distinct personalities, and so when combining the thrilling plot with the Disney budget, soundtrack, and stars, this type of movie is phenomenal. Alice in Wonderland did have the same main character, but the film was set years after the original and managed to provide a new, entertaining plot to viewers. Overall, Disney should keep making live action adaptations only if they provide a fresh and exciting take on their source material, instead of producing unoriginal and bland remakes.

Train to Busan (and its upcoming remake)

By Liv Dwyer

Recently New Line Cinema announced that they were developing a remake of the popular Korean film *Train to Busan* (2016). *Train to Busan* follows fund manager Seo Seok-woo (Gong Yoo)'s journey to take his daughter Su-An (Kim Su-an) to see her mother (and his estranged ex-wife) for her birthday in Busan. An infected passenger ends up on their train and the father/daughter duo attempts to stay alive while on a train full of zombies.

The remake's announcement was met with an immediate outcry, with fans saying that the movie was only released a few years ago and is perfect as it is. Part of the original film's strengths was that it didn't follow the typical Hollywood formula and many fans believe changing it would ruin the story. I agree with all these criticisms of the remake but I am willing to wait until it is released before judging its quality. While the Hollywood formula is still what most films follow, movies like The Power of the Dog (2021) or The Lighthouse (2019) show that strong unconventional films can still be produced out of today's Hollywood. For now, we can discuss *Train to Busan* and see why it is considered a classic piece of modern Korean cinema.

For me, the standout positive of *Train To Busan* was the handling of protagonist Seo Seok-woo's character arc. He is not the typical action hero of Hollywood films who can fight anything thrown at him and can lead in a crisis. Instead, he is a workaholic who has no time for his daughter and constantly puts his own needs above everyone else's. The film also provides us with two examples of who Seok-woo could become: Yon-suk (Kim Eui-Sung), the businessman willing to throw anyone under the bus to save his own neck, or Yoon Sang-Hwa (Ma Dong-Seok), the action hero who throws zombies into ceilings and makes quips that lighten up an extremely dark film. Throughout the film, Seok-woo learns to both reject Yon-suk's selfishness and replicate Sang-Hwa's selflessness for the sake of his daughter, making the resolution of his arc the most impactful moment of the film.

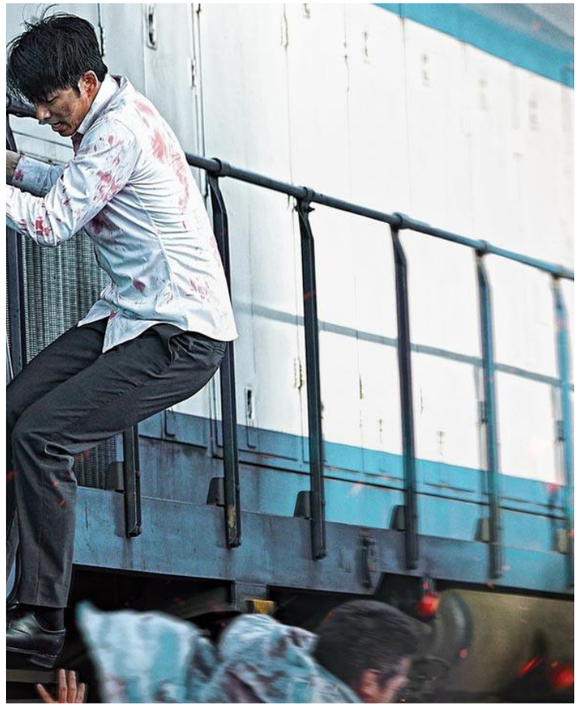
On top of Seo Seok-woo's arc, the supporting characters of *Train to Busan* further draw the audience in with their likable personalities, ability to act in a crisis, and strong relationships that grow over the course of the film. Each character contributes something different to the story and they don't always agree with each other, but they have to put their differences aside in order to survive the threat of death. Sang-Hwa starts out disliking Seok-woo, believing that fund managers are leeches off of working-class people. Once the two are forced to work together, however, Sang-Hwa sees that Seok-woo is a person he can trust. *Train to Busan* is also one of the few zombie films to feature protagonists who act intelligently and use the tools they have at their disposal. So many zombie films set in the modern-day act like the characters forget their cell phones in order for the plot to progress. *Train to Busan*, on the other hand, uses phones as a tool the characters use both to communicate with each other and to distract the zombies, making the characters feel more like real people and less like plot devices. As a result, once the zombie attacks begin the audience is on the edge of their seats, hoping their favorite characters make it out alive. Part of this uncertainty is because *Train to Busan* is a film made in South Korea, so it doesn't follow the typical Hollywood formula of good guys versus bad guys where good always wins. The "good" guys suffer throughout the film and the tragic elements of the story are what make it stand out in the zombie action genre.

On a technical level, *Train to Busan* is outstanding. The performances of every single cast member are excellent, from the daughter's actress Kim Su-an (who was ten years old when the film was released) to Ma Dong-seok (Yoon Sang-hwa) to Jung yu-mi who plays my favorite character, Sang-hwa's wife Sung-Gyeong. The visuals of the film are stunning. The zombie's disturbing prosthetics and the choreography used present them as an inhuman threat that is both an antagonist force and a terrible fate that could befall our characters. The threat of death and turning into an undead creature is terrifying for both the audience and the characters themselves, which adds to the film's tension. The director uses many long takes that give the audience the ability to see everything that is happening and sticks them in the terror without allowing them to escape. Lastly, the score is incredible, enhancing already emotionally charged moments with distinct music that doesn't distract from the scene at hand. This level of craftsmanship would be difficult to replicate in a remake.

Personally, I don't think a remake of *Train to Busan* is necessary. The film came out less than a decade ago and wouldn't be "improved" by modern technology which is an argument usually used in favor of remakes. Setting it outside South Korea also leads to problems with the story. South Korea has very strict gun laws and characters can't just shoot their way out of a situation. Setting the film in America means many characters would have access to guns thus cheapening the tension. If the main reason why this movie is being made is that Americans can't watch things in other languages due to subtitles, I think that's ridiculous. Films like Parasite (2019) and TV shows like *Squid Game* (2021) show that American audiences can handle subtitles and often prefer them over the usually badly done English dubbing. While I wouldn't wish failure on any project, I do hope that if the remake is done badly people will be encouraged to watch the original *Train To Busan* and be moved by the incredible filmmaking at work.

Train to Busan (2016)
Critics Review: 94%
Top Critics Review: 96%
Audience Review: 89%

The Last Train to New York (2023)
(Warner Bros./New Line Cinema)



Revenge is a Fool's Game:

The Unsatisfactory Aspect of Revenge in Oldboy and AlRawabi School for Girls

By Jhanae Ottey

Revenge is a subjective form of interpersonal justice– justice itself is a man-made concept, therefore, how can one person define what is a just means of revenge? In my opinion, revenge is making a person suffer emotionally or physically because they made you suffer; with this in mind, one can infer that a bitter experience is at the root of most people's motive for revenge. The 2003 South Korean film, *Oldboy*, and the 2021 Jordanian TV mini-series, *Alrawabi School for Girls*, both explore the concept of revenge in unique ways. They beg the viewer to question what defines a successful act of revenge and whether or not a person committing an act of revenge can truly be satisfied. The villain in *Oldboy*, Lee Woo-Jin (Yoo Ji-Tae), was unsatisfied with the outcome of his vengeance, and the main-character-turned-villain in *AlRawabi School for Girls*, Mariam (Andria Tayeh), was only temporarily satisfied with her revenge. Mariam and Woo-Jin's experiences prove that true satisfaction is not possible through revenge because only emotional healing can bring them true satisfaction.

Woo-Jin takes revenge on the main character Oh Dae-Su (Choi Min-Sik) for spreading rumors about him having incestuous relations with his sister, Soo-Ah, which leads her to commit suicide. The recollection of Soo-Ah's ruined reputation kindles the bitter memory of her death which is still raw and painful like an open wound for Woo-Jin. In a scene where Oh Dae-Su's friend describes Soo-Ah over the phone, he says that she is "just a filthy whore," "a total slut," and that in high school there was a rumor going around that she would have sex with anyone (*Oldboy*). Woo-Jin, listening in on the conversation, leans in, furrows his brows, and uses a broken CD to furiously stab Dae-Su's friend and choke him to death. Was the death of Dae-Su's friend an act of revenge since it was in the name of bringing justice to his dead sister? Yes. Furthermore, this murder clarifies that Woo-Jin not only wants to get justice for his sister but also wants to erase the narrative that Dae-Su imprinted on her postmortem by spreading the rumors. Woo-Jin will stop at nothing to avenge his sister's death and rewrite her story– therefore, Dae-Su, and everyone else that gets in the way, must suffer at his hands until he is satisfied.

But what if he continues to be unsatisfied after he gets his revenge? Woo-Jin's elaborate revenge scheme begins when he kidnaps and imprisons Dae-Su for fifteen years. During those fifteen years, Woo-Jin kills Dae-Su's wife secretly raises his daughter and changes her name to Mi-Do. Upon his release from imprisonment, he hypnotizes him and Mi-Do to fall in love so that they form an incestuous relationship. Before he reveals all this to Dae-Su, Woo-Jin says, "Seeking revenge is the best cure for someone who has been hurt. Try it. The loss of fifteen years. The pain of losing your wife and child. All this can be forgotten. Once again, revenge is good for your health. But what happens after you've had your revenge? I bet that hidden pain probably emerges again." This speech is a means of Woo-Jin projecting his ambivalence about the concept of revenge onto Dae-Su. When he says "all this can be forgotten" he notes that he has considered rising above his anger and forgiving Dae-Su for spreading the rumor all those years ago; yet still, he cannot because he grieves his sister's death: he wants to see Dae-Su suffer. Revenge is counterproductive to this healing process because it forces Woo-Jin to dwell on the past instead of moving forward with his life. The planning and execution of this revenge scheme have undoubtedly consumed his life: it is as if his sole reason for being is to get revenge. He acknowledges this when he says that the hidden pain must reemerge after a person has gotten their revenge. He incorporates this concept into his revenge scheme when he promises to kill himself if Dae-Su discovers his motives for imprisoning him in five days. How can a successful act of revenge end with the perpetrator's death? In Woo-Jin's case, the means of revenge itself was successful because he made Dae-Su feel the pain he felt by making him commit incest, but since he is still grieving his sister's death, he cannot be truly satisfied since all this has not healed him from his bitter memory of her death.

Woo-Jin knows that even in the most successful outcome of his subjectively inordinate plan, he will only be most satisfied in death. At the end of the film, Dae-Su falls to his knees, sobbing, begging Woo-Jin not to tell Mi-Do that he is her father. In a moment of vulnerability and hysteria, he cries out that what he did was wrong, and begs for forgiveness. "Woo-Jin, if you want me to be your dog, I will. From this moment on, I am Woo-Jin's dog! I'm your bitch!" Dae-Su proceeds to bark like a dog, bow at his feet, and even kiss his feet all while Woo-Jin laughs hysterically. As the final act of submission, Dae-Su cuts his tongue off. Woo-Jin's smile fades and he asks Dae-Su, "Now, what will I live for?" Since revenge has not healed him from his trauma, he cannot move on with his life and begins to cry. A dark shadow suddenly grows across his face since he has nothing to live for, and he shoots himself in the head. Seeing Dae-Su in physical and emotional pain and in a state of ultimate submission is still not enough to satisfy him.

Mariam, the main character of *AlRawabi School for Girls*, on the other hand, was satisfied with her means of revenge, despite warnings from her friends that she was going too far. Mariam takes revenge on a trio of bullies who ruin her reputation. After getting revenge on two of the bullies, she is confronted by the third, Layan (Noor Taher), who begs her to halt her plans; to which she responds, "You still don't get it do you? You have destroyed me. You have ruined my life. Yet you're lecturing me saying that what I'm doing is worse?" Mariam asks. In Mariam's opinion, nothing she will do to get revenge will ever equate to the pain she suffered because of them. She sends the bully's brother Layan's location and says that she is with her boyfriend, which is highly unacceptable in Jordanian culture. After Layan is honor killed by her brother because of Mariam– although she is unaware of the recent death– she walks down the hallway with her chin held high. Mariam is satisfied that justice has been served, but at what cost? Will she still be satisfied and happy with herself when she learns that caused someone's death? The viewer is confronted with the age-old question: is death a justifiable punishment for any crime? What is the difference between Mariam, basking in the glory of her successful revenge plan, and Woo-Jin, still grief-stricken by his sister's death in the midst of Dae-Su's agony? Once again, there is no noteworthy difference: revenge is a fool's game. Although the series ends on a cliffhanger regarding Layan's death, the viewer senses that Mariam's satisfaction will soon wear off.

Many religions such as Christianity teach their followers to turn the other cheek, to rise above their anger, forgive, and be the better person when someone has wronged them. Mariam and Woo-Jin prove that revenge prevents them from moving on with their lives and forgiving the other person by forcing them to dwell on the pain of their bitter memories. In the event of reflecting on a bitter memory, for true satisfaction to take place, the person should develop strategies on how to forgive the person who has hurt them and deal with their emotions. If Woo-Jin had tried to forgive Dae-Su, Dae-Su would not have had to suffer and lose everything he knew and loved. Death, in my opinion, is not a just means of revenge for bullying Mariam, regardless of how much pain she felt – therefore she should have turned the other cheek nonetheless. In summary, revenge is a fool's game. When faced with a bitter memory where someone has hurt you, it is best to do what is right: rise above your anger and hurt, forgive them, and move on.

The Magic of Movie Theaters (Compared to Streaming)

By Sam Perlman

Much to the delight of most movie-goers, by March of 2021 nearly all US movie theaters that had planned to reopen after the COVID-19 pandemic, had reopened. Whether reopening at 25% or 100% capacity, the movie-loving community was ecstatic, as it had been a full year since anyone had last stepped foot into the magical movie-viewing, popcorn-eating, 3D-glasses-wearing, havens that we all call movie theaters. But what about the platforms that everyone used in order to get by during that year of closed theaters? Now that the theaters are open again are streaming platforms over, or will theaters see a blow to their revenue compared to pre-COVID numbers? Is it even worth mentioning the two mediums coexisting?

When movie theaters closed in March of 2020, many people, ironically, found themselves with more time to watch movies. So, the solutions were streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, and HBO Max. These streaming services provided the ability to watch thousands of films and television shows on people's personal devices. Some even had events where subscribers could watch feature films as they were "released."

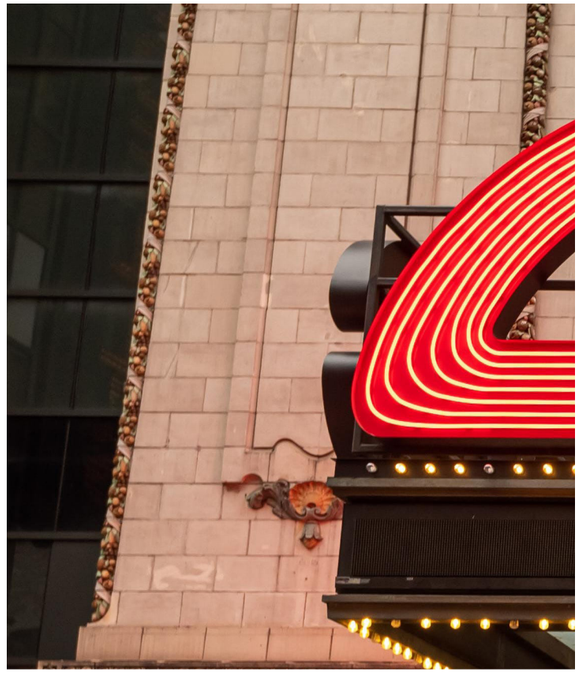
While these platforms have worked perfectly well for many, they have their flaws. The biggest downside of these platforms is their ability to "release" new films. Most of these platforms provide a library of past releases that one can watch at their leisure but lack the ability to create real buzz around a new film. When it comes to movie releases, watching a movie's release on a streaming platform, in your living room, is significantly underwhelming, especially when compared to the energy you find at a movie theater. I think back to my personal experience watching *Wonder Woman 1984* on HBO Max when it released in December, 2020. I was on the couch in my living room with my family. We were all extremely excited for the film, but then I looked around and realized that I was just at home. There was no popcorn, no soda fountains, no special snacks, no other giddy fans, no lights to be dimmed right as the movie started, and I couldn't help but wish that I was in a theater. You can't compare the feeling of watching a movie's release in theaters to doing so at home. No streaming platform's monthly subscription comes with the feeling in your stomach as the lights lower in the theater and the crowd comes to a hush.

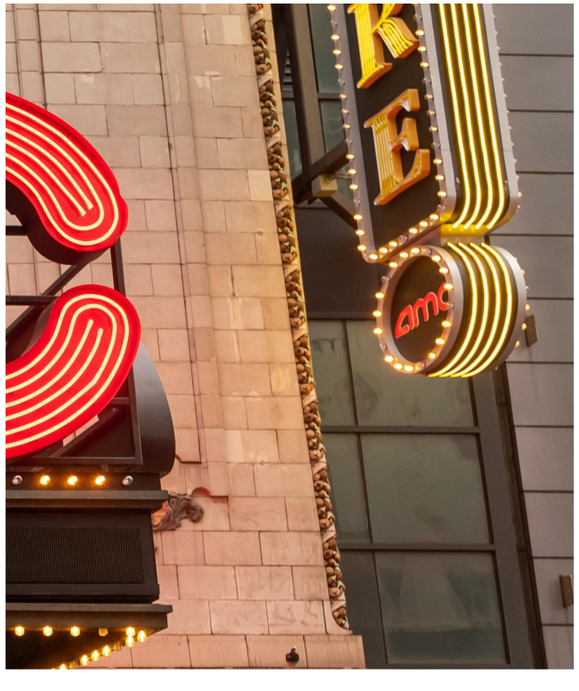
Despite the underwhelming sensation of watching a new movie on them, streaming platforms are thriving. Throughout the year of 2021, Netflix has gained an additional 6 million paid subscribers worldwide. In the same period of time, Hulu has gained an additional 3.5 million paid subscribers in the US alone. These two numbers demonstrate that even after the theaters have reopened, these streaming platforms are gaining popularity. This is a bleak fact to face as someone in favor of movie theaters.

While the streaming platforms continue to thrive even after the theaters have reopened, there are other statistics that point towards the survival of movie theaters. For example, despite the fact that in many places people are still hesitant to act in a pre-COVID manner – which includes going to movie theaters – in its opening weekend, the newest James Bond movie, *No Time To Die* grossed $56 million domestically. To put this number into perspective, this Bond movie's predecessor, Spectre grossed $70 million domestically in its opening weekend back in 2015. Although the 2021 Bond film grossed less than the 2015 installment, the gap is not as dismaying as it may seem. For starters, in 2015, the domestic box office pulled in the most money adjusted for inflation from 2013 to 2018. Furthermore, in 2021 theaters were still regaining their footing. To provide some numbers, the 2021 domestic box office has grossed just over a quarter of the 2015 domestic box office's earnings. Considering that 2015 was a good year for the box office truly shows how bad 2021 was at the box office. However, *No Time To Die* still had a competitive yield in its opening weekend, and it seems a bit more promising. If in such a difficult year for movie theaters, this Bond movie could rake in such a competitive yield in the opening weekend alone, with the world continuing to reopen there's no doubt that big movie releases have the potential to return to their pre-covid hype and box office earnings.

It sounds silly and simple, but what people need to realize is that movie theaters are not going to survive unless we all go to see movies there. Because of their business model, movie theaters rely on audiences to buy tickets, popcorn, and soda for the theater to make money. The theaters have no role in making the featured films themselves so there's no way for them to stay in business unless paying audience members attend. Because much of the population is still hesitant to conduct themselves as they did before COVID, people are scared to go to movie theaters, posing a huge threat to these movie-showing shrines. To give some numbers, over 600 movie theaters across the nation still have not reopened after closing during the initial coronavirus outbreak in early 2020, leading many to assume that they may never reopen again. A statistic such as this makes the fear of a world exclusively dependent on streaming platforms seem all the more realistic.

Despite the sad reality of theaters closing, and box office numbers in the US being nowhere near where they were pre-pandemic, that is perfectly understandable and expected. There was no way that movie theaters were going to pick right back up where their earnings left off in March of 2020. However, the promising releases, the theaters that are still holding on strong, and the indescribable affection that so many feel for movie theaters all keep the hope for movie theaters' survival alive in an increasingly streaming platform dominated world. The question of whether streaming platforms will entirely replace movie theaters cannot be answered just yet, but if I had to guess, I'd say the two means of entertainment can and will coexist for a long time going forward.





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