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THE BATMAN

By Sophia Liu

From the film's first announcement to its release day, Matt Reeves's The Batman has been no stranger to high expectations. The trailers promised intriguing changes from previous Batman films, featuring a darker, noir-style story, and after numerous delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my excitement for The Batman was through the roof. Thankfully for me, The Batman did not disappoint. The film follows Batman (Robert Pattinson) through his second year working for the Gotham PD as he and Jim Gordon (Jeffrey Wright) track down a mysterious serial killer called the Riddler (Paul Dano), known for killing high-profile figures in Gotham and exposing their corruption. Almost like a detective movie, the Riddler leaves behind clues for Batman to find, leading Batman to understand his motives and intentions. Despite some flaws, Matt Reeves has delivered one of the best Batman films ever, full of gorgeous visuals, incredible performances, and a captivating story. After years of formulaic, predictable superhero movies, I felt like I was fully immersed in the city of Gotham, and never truly knew what would happen next. The Batman is a welcome addition to the Batman franchise, and paints a bright and optimistic picture for the future of blockbuster superhero films.

Firstly, the best aspect of The Batman overall was its cinematography, especially in terms of light and color. Every shot provided something interesting to look at, and even the most mundane scenes managed to amaze me. In particular, the film characterizes the city of Gotham perfectly. From the very beginning, the amount of shadow used throughout the film gives Gotham a dark, gritty ambience, befitting of the corruption lying beneath the surface. The use of silicone on the camera lens helps give Gotham a greasy look, blurring the objects on screen and making the viewer feel at one with the constant pouring rain. The red, cyan, orange, and yellow tones make Gotham look like a real gothic city, adding to its sinister and unpredictable nature. Compared to the commercial gloss and low-contrast cinematography of other modern superhero films, The Batman makes Gotham seem like a real, tangible place.

The action sequences also completely blew me away, and kept my eyes glued to the screen the entire time. One technique the directors and cinematographers used repeatedly throughout the film was limiting the viewer's ability to see everything that was happening, creating a sense of instability and chaos. For example, one scene that particularly impressed me is in a hallway, which is lit up only by the flashing of machine guns, making it difficult to see Batman or what he is doing. Additionally, while the Batmobile chases the Penguin (Colin Ferrell), a crime boss Batman believes to be one of the Riddler's targets, the directors placed cameras on the sides of the car to simulate looking through the sideview mirrors. This, like the hallway scene, helps to place the viewer amidst the action and simulate the chaos created by the fast-paced movement. The action scenes kept me fully engaged in the film, and it felt like a breath of fresh air to see them filmed in such a unique way.

Although every member of the cast gives a solid performance, Robert Pattinson in particular is excellent as both Batman and Bruce Wayne, providing a new, more tragic side to the character. Unlike previous Batmans (Batmen?), Pattinson plays Bruce Wayne like a reclusive, brooding homebody, often conveying messages and meaning without even speaking, and making him seem younger and more immature than the rich playboy he ends up becoming. Pattinson and the story characterize Batman's inexperience extremely well; throughout the film, Batman makes numerous mistakes, whether it be overlooking the Riddler's clues or getting punched across a room. Batman also receives more of a personal story arc compared to previous iterations of the character, something that has rarely occurred since Batman became so iconic. Beginning as a figure of vengeance and fear, Batman's encounters with the Riddler and his followers shows him how his vigilante antics have become a negative inspiration, leading him to become a figure of hope instead. Batman's transition from emerging ominously from the shadows in the first scene to staring up into the light without squinting for the first time in the last scene perfectly captures this character development.

Furthermore, The Batman has incredible rewatch value, just like a detective movie. Rewatching The Batman for the second time, I was extremely impressed by the filmmakers' attention to detail, and how many clues and easter eggs they left behind to indicate how the Riddler managed to pull off his master plan. For example, in the very beginning of the film, as Batman walks around the mayor's apartment, one of the newspaper clippings boasting about the mayor's successful drug bust features a smaller headline about how reinforcements to Gotham's seawalls had been halted. Although I never even noticed it on my first watch, this is a subtle indication of why the Riddler is able to destroy the seawalls so easily later on. Similarly, as Batman exits the Iceberg Lounge for the first time, a wide shot of the club reveals a lit window in the building across the street, with a silhouette taking photos of the street below. Not only does this explain how the Riddler manages to take incriminating photos of the corrupt Gotham officials, but it also foreshadows the location of Riddler's apartment. Finally, one last detail I noticed was that in the Riddler's apartment, there is a paparazzi photo of Bruce Wayne on the wall, and right behind him is someone with an eerie resemblance to the Joker (Barry Keoghan). Although this did not end up being relevant to the plot, I wonder if it will carry more significance in future sequels. Unlike so many other superhero movies, this attention to detail made me excited to watch The Batman again, and made me even more appreciative of the film's cinematography every time.

Admittedly, The Batman is not entirely perfect. I enjoyed the story and how it gave Batman a much-needed personal story arc, but at times, the pacing of the story was not particularly smooth, and it was unclear when the movie was going to end. The middle act, where Batman and Gordon chase down the Penguin, drags on for far too long, and the final act, where Batman fights with the Riddler's army of aggrieved Redditors, feels sudden and much too short. I also disliked the romance between Batman and Catwoman (Zoë Kravitz), which despite featuring in several Batman comics, feels out of place in this film, as well as the scene between the Riddler and the Joker, which takes way longer than it needs to. The number of unnecessary scenes and plotlines in the film eventually became detrimental, as it made the film insanely long. Before watching the film, I had noted how the runtime was almost three hours long, and despite my amazement over the incredible cinematography, it definitely felt like a three hour-long movie. Cutting down the movie by even half an hour could have made me more engaged in the final act, and could have made the plot a little less complicated.

Still, I could talk about The Batman all day. I could probably write an article the length of this Cinemann issue about it. For everything The Batman gets wrong in terms of plotlines and pacing, it gets five things right in terms of cinematography and characterization. After so many predictable, boring-looking superhero movies being released over the past few years, The Batman has knocked it out of the park in practically every aspect.

> I can confidently say that The Batman is one of my all-time favorite superhero movies, and I eagerly await its sequel.

Akira Kurosawa

By Jack Chasen

ヤロジンボ

Yojimbo, directed by renowned Japanese director and filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa, was the first movie to pop up when generated on www.bestrandoms.com movie generator. And yet, the movie perfectly represents the unbelievable ability for the film industry to blow me away with a hidden gem yet again.

The movie begins as a wandering samurai, Sanjuro Kuwabatake(Toshiro Mifune), trudges through a bare Japanese countryside, when he stumbles upon a farmhouse. In the farmhouse, a father argues with his son who is an aspiring gambler and is tired of the farm life. He wishes to get rich quick in the town, which is divided into factions by criminals. The samurai travels to the town where he sees the division and the violence first hand. He learns from Gongi (actor's name), a restaurant owner, that two criminal bosses, Seibei and Ushitora, are fighting over a large scale gambling trade based in the town. Ushitora used to work for Seibei, but when he found out that Seibei would give the business to his son, who Ushitora considered to be incompetent and inferior to him, Ushitora rebelled. Sanjuro, who gets hired by Seibei after killing Ushitora's men swiftly, is immediately threatened by Seibei's wife and son, who want to kill Sanjuro so that they don't have to pay him. Sanjuro realizes that the only way to free the town is to have both sides kill each other, and this becomes Sanjuros mission throughout the movie.

The film, while entirely in Japanese, was highly entertaining. The shot selection, engaging fight scenes, realistic combat, and a plot full of alliances and betrayal. Kurosawa did an excellent job with the set design, as the village felt like its own little world. I was fascinated by the individual character relationships, yet always felt compelled to side with Sanjuro throughout the entire film. The choreography was fantastic, as each gang moved in unison yet each member could be recognized individually. Shot selection was Kurosawa's chef kiss in this movie. When Ushitora and Seibel faced each other, separated by a windy road, a wide shot cut to overhead as they began moving closer to each other, gangs behind them. The suspenseful Yojimbo theme song played and I got the chills. All in all, the shots were masterfully done.

The film, however, is really similar to countless westerns, often where a lone vigilante makes his way into a town struggling under gang violence or other issues. The outlaw comes in, makes friends with common people and defeats the antagonist. The towns people are happy and the vigilante either stays as a local celebrity, or walks away into the desert as intense western music plays and the credits roll. However, renowned western directors such as Clint Eastwood have stated that a lot of their movies were greatly influenced by Kurosawa. Kurosawa also inspired countless American film tactics, such as rain in intense sequences, large scale battles and even the mentor character archetype. In the end, I really enjoyed this film, and I think I am going to explore more of Akira Kurosawa's movies in the future.

Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore

By Patrick Stinebaugh

Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore (2022) is the third film in the Harry Potter prequel series, continuing the story told by Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them and The Crimes of Grindelwald of oddball magizoologist Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne), who is swept up in an epic battle against evil wizard Gellert Grindelwald (Mads Mikkelsen). Newt must work with friends and Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law) to stop Grindelwald from gaining power and starting a war between wizards and muggles (non-magic-users).

Starting off positively The first thing I can happily say about The Secrets of Dumbledore is that it is a successful course-correction from The Crimes of Grindelwald as itthat chroniclestells a coherent and, most importantly, focused narrativestory that sets up a clear direction for the franchise to go forward. While Crimes of Grindelwald couldn't seem to figure out whether it was telling a whimsical story between Newt and his beasts or a dark epic about the battle to stop Grindelwald., Contrastingly, Secrets of Dumbledore manages to successfully walk the line between the light-heartedfun and the darkness in a way that I think works better than either of the previous two films, since in this film the beasts themselves play a large part in Grindelwald's greater plan. In my opinion all this is the way these stories should be told this way -- finding a balance between the whimsy of the first Fantastic Beasts and the obscuritydarkness of the second, so that we get to see the battle against Grindelwald while not losing the magic of the Harry Potter universe.

Another improvement this film makes over its predecessors is finally creating a believable relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald. For anyone who doesn'tdon't know, in the first two Fantastic Beasts films, Johnny Depp played the role of Grindelwald, but in Secrets of Dumbledore he was replaced by Mads Mikkelsen replaced him. after being fired for legal disputes between himself and his wife Amber Heard. The internet is currently in debate over this up in arms over this decision.n,ired, Although I want to stay neutral, However,but I will say that Mikkelsen plays is a much better casting for Grindelwald in a more appealing way than Depp did. ever didwas. Thus, oOone of the many problems with Crimes of Grindelwald's many problems was that highly unbelievable that I foundromantic relationship between fundamentally could not believe that Depp's strange, creepy version of Grindelwald and was ever in a romantic relationship with Jude Law's Dumbledore. With Mikkelsen there's a noticeable chemistry between himself and Law, and the conflict Dumbledore feels as a result of their former relationship is therefore much more noticeable and effective.

Speaking of Dumbledore's conflict, my favorite aspect ofthe best thing Secrets of Dumbledore is the explorationsdoes is deliver on the premise of this film being an exploration of of Albus Dumbledore's mistakes, regrets, and growth. Those who have read the Harry Potter books know about the death of Dubledore's sister and the role Grindewaled played in it of Dumbledore's tragic past with his sister's death and how Grindelwald played into it, but it previously had not been explored in the films. In Secrets of Dumbledore, however, the film places Dumbledore and his brother Aberforth (Richard Coyle) at the forefront emotionally, and liln doing so forcingforces Dumbledore to confront his guilt-riddenthe past that he had been refusing to forgive himself for for so long. We also get to seeso see Newt finally come into his own and give Dumbledore some much-needed advice in what is easily one of the more emotionally resonant moments in the Fantastic Beasts franchise thus far. Between that and Aberforth's interactions with Credence (Ezra Miller), this film finally makes us understand the flaws of the Dumbledore family, a realm previous films had mentioned but never ventured into.

In the mixed aspects of the film, as in neither positive nor negative, but things you should be aware of going in, the first 20 minutes of the film contains has some on-screen violence towards tha and deaths of that culminates in the death of a few animals. It's not something I knock the film for at all, but watching animals get hurt is very difficulthard for me and I know it is somethingknow is something others might want to be aware of going in as well.

Director **David Yates** and star **Eddie Redmayne (Newt)** talk on set

The biggest issue with Secrets of Dumbledore, which doesn't necessarily feel fair to point out, is that it suffers greatly from being a follow-up to Crimes of Grindelwald. As I said in the positives, the film does as good a recovery job as possible, but that doesn't mean it's perfect. Firstly, the reshuffling to recover certain characters', such as Queenie's, reputations from where Crimes of Grindelwald left them, lets those characters off the hook much easier than they should have been given theirthe actions they took in the previous film. Second, one of the big problems with Crimes of Grindelwald was that it was not just a poorly madebad film, but a forgettable one. Two of the six main heroes in the Secrets of Dumbledorethis film, not counting Dumbledore, were characters that I had completely forgottenforgotted existed.n the existence of ofrom in Crimes of Grindelwald and Tthis This film unfortunately also doesn't do much to make them memorable or emotionally relevant, someaning most of their a lot of their on-screen time left me wondering about the significance of their presence why they were part inof the film at all. Third, the film attemptstries to make people forget about Crimes of Grindelwald by simply avoiding talking about it, which for the most part works, but in cases where suchthe discussion cannotcan't be avoided, it makes some scenes play out in a very cumbersome mannerclunkily.

All in all, Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore is exactly the life-support the franchise needsed. It's not a flawlessperfect film, but most of its issues comecomes down to the ever-present faults of its predecessor, making them which was essentially unavoidable. Warner Bros has stated that the performance of this film will determine whether the franchise will stay as a trilogy or follow the original five-film plan, and the ending is open-ended enough that either path could be followed. I, for one, am certainly back on the Fantastic Beasts train, and hope that Newt and his friends get the true conclusion that they deserve.

DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS

By Sarene Choudhury

The first Doctor Strange film may only be the sixteenth highest grossing Marvel film, but with the central part the sequel promises to play in Marvel's phase four, it may well top that list. Thus far, installments of phase four have included Black Widow, Eternals, Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings, and a few miniseries, most notably WandaVision and Loki. However, none of these can compare to the outstanding success of Spider-Man: No Way Home, the third highest grossing Marvel film, making $1.69 billion in the box office. It is partially due to this triumph that Multiverse of Madness is so highly anticipated, as the events set up to take place are of the same caliber as when the three generations of Spider Men appeared in No Way Home.

The first and most important part to look forward to in Multiverse in Madness is the involvement of the Multiverse. This may sound quite obvious, but the multiverse opens up such a wide variety of possibilities that Marvel will be able to continue on its path of unpredictability. With the ability to cross between film franchises (ex. using Sony's Spider-Men), as well as with a multitude of other devices such as time travel (think Avengers: Endgame) at their disposal, Marvel now has an extensive catalog of characters to choose from. In the end tag of No Way Home, Eddie Brock (Tom Hardy) and his pal Venom were featured right before Eddie was transported into a different universe, presumably one with characters we will be familiar with, if not the home universe of Cumberbatch's Doctor Strange. Additionally, Loki's show (Tom Hiddleston) introduced the concept of variants, which are alternate versions of beings from branching timelines. The theoretical concept of branching timelines is too complex to cover in this article, but is something I certainly expect to appear in Multiverse of Madness. In the trailer for the film, at least one variant of Doctor Strange is shown to have a potentially important role: Dark Strange, who was first pictured in animated miniseries What If?. As a whole, the ideas related to alternate universes, time, and the multiverse, explored in both No Way Home as well as Loki, are sure to appear in the upcoming Doctor Strange sequel. However, the most elusive concepts to look forward to are those concerning Wanda Maximoff (Elizabeth Olsen).

In the final episode of WandaVision, Wanda was revealed to be the Scarlet Witch, something that fans had suspected since her introduction to the MCU due to previous comic knowledge. The significance of this is that Wanda now officially is the wielder of chaos magic, an extremely rare form of magic. The limitations of chaos magic are practically limitless, as they can alter the very fabric of reality, which viewers got a taste of during WandaVision and the events in Westview. In the trailer for Multiverse of Madness, we see that Wanda has left her self-imposed exile after the Maximoff-Anomaly, and is shown to be practicing her newfound chaos magic while decked out in her full comic Scarlet Witch regalia. Her goal will continue off from WandaVision, which is to say, finding her children in the multiverse. However, her status as an Avenger doesn't secure her position as a hero, as in her quest to ensure the safety of her twins, she will stop at nothing. This could bring her head to head with magical of mystic arts Doctor Strange, whose goals align more with keeping the integrity of the multiverse intact. We also are confirmed to see some sort of interaction between Strange and Wanda, as we see them together in some altered reality in the trailer, which could be a result of Wanda's new control over her chaos magic. Either way, I do expect the goals of the two magic-wielders to at least chafe in this upcoming film, and whether they look past their differences and join together remains to be seen.

Sam Raimi, Benedict Cumberbatch, and **Rachel McAdams** talk on set

Besides Wanda, we will see numerous exciting characters brought into play this film including returning characters from previous MCU blockbusters and the original comics. Xochitl Gomez is set to enter the MCU as America Chavez, a young girl with the ability to navigate through realities, a skill that will undoubtedly come to be helpful considering the state of disarray the multiverse is expected to be in following the events of No Way Home. Additionally, Rachel McAdams is set to return as Doctor Christine Palmer, Strange's previous love interest. We will also see Benedict Wong (Wong) and Chiwetel Ejiofor (Mordo) reprise their roles. One of the most interesting new additions to the Marvel universe has been Professor X. The X-Men lie in a gray area as to where they stand in relation with the Avengers, but Patrick Stewart has confirmed his appearance in the upcoming film. With his powerful telepathy, he is sure to be one of the main additions to watch out for, unless of course the rumor about Tom Cruise playing a superior Iron Man variant is true. Overall, this film is expected to be full of surprises and may end up becoming an even bigger blockbuster than No Way Home.

MOON KNIGHT

By Jack Komaroff

Hesham Nazih's royal Egyptian score fills your ears. Oscar Isaac's and Ethan Hawke's masterful performances grace your screen. Inventive and cinematic shots present themselves in glorious 4K quality. Free from the ubiquitous MCU unfunny jokes or the callbacks to prior films, Moon Knight is a wholly original and masterful Disney+ series that sets a new bar for Marvel Studios's television series.

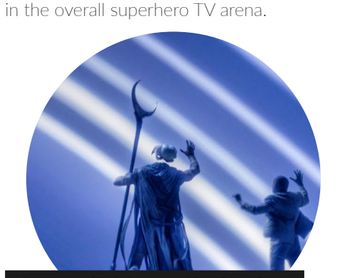
In a show that presents itself as a fusion between Fight Club and Indiana Jones, Oscar Isaac plays the titular character who happens to be the avatar for the Egyptian god of the moon, Khonshu. The only problem is that the cult leader Arthur Harrow (Ethan Hawke) is trying to release the evil goddess Amit from her tomb. With Moon Knight as his avatar, Khonshu must stop Harrow in his evil plans before he releases Amit. Did I mention that "Moon Knight" is the alter ego of the British gift-shoppist Steven Grant AND the American mercenary Marc Spector AND taxicab driver Jake Lockley? Yeah, it's complicated. But that's why it's so interesting. The story unravels itself slowly and never lets the audience know too much about the reality of Moon Knight as he suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder while being forced to be a "fist of vengeance" for a thousand year old Egyptian god.

Aside from the plot itself, Moon Knight contains technical mastery not found in shows like Hawkeye or The Falcon and the Winter Soldier. Writer-Director Mohamed Diab brings an Egyptian authenticity to the show that is unique to his talents as a storyteller. With him, he has recruited a group of talented artisans who add their own fresh styles to the MCU. After composing a ceremony for an museum unveiling of mummies, composer Hesham Nazih brings his authentic Egyptian-style music to the MCU in a rare change of pace for Marvel shows (as they usually hire repeat composers who turn in similar music each time). Additionally, the music team has selected some incredible Egyptian trap and street music to use in the end credits. These songs are really catchy and help to add further levels of originality and style to a show set in a very "cookie-cutter" franchise. Costume wise, Moon Knight knocks it out of the park as it delivers incredible looks for Moon Knight, Mr. Knight, Khonshu, Arthur Harrow, and (briefly) Jake Lockley. It is, of course, Oscar Issac who perfectly brings them to life in a fun and entertaining manner. The character always looked a bit gimmick in the comics so i'm glad the costuming team was able to adapt the look successfully while staying truthful to the spirit of these beloved designs. The cinematography is inventive for a Marvel show and plays with darkness and shadows expertly. As the show's title suggests, the creators don't hesitate to take advantage of a perfectly timed shot of the moon or night sky. There is also some very creative work done with mirrors, reflections, and shot types; an auteur approach to filming this show can certainly be detected as it stands apart from the visuals of Agents of Shield or Hawkeye. With most of their budget being spent on the two lead actors, Moon Knight's VFX suffers heavily. While I typically excuse TV VFX due to budget and timing constraints, this is a Marvel Disney+ show that does not have the same fiscal limitations like Agents of Shield (which aired on ABC weekly). As such, I can't ignore the laughably bad animations found in the truck chase in episode 1 or the full CGI costumes in episode 6. They distract the viewer and suggest an improper allocation of funds considering how little action Moon Knight actually does have (as compared to Loki or What If).

One of the many problems with the MCU is that movies/shows often use the connected universe as a crutch. It's easy to get away with an uncompelling story if you can constantly make throwaway references to Thor, Iron-Man or Spider-Man. As evidenced by many of the weaker Phase 4 Marvel entries (Black Widow, for example), Marvel has gotten all too comfortable using the MCU as a fallback for unoriginal ideas. Moon Knight goes in the opposite direction and has not made a single (important) MCU reference or had any cameos from other Marvel heroes. As evidenced by Eternals sub-par reception, if a project doesn't have major MCU reveals and lacks a compelling story, audiences wont react positively. That's why it is so impressive that Moon Knight has proved itself a worthy MCU title without relying on the overused "Marvel formula" nor the typical bells and whistles of a Marvel show.

A prime example of Moon Knight's originality comes in the shape of its depiction of visceral violence. When watching episode 3 especially, I was shocked that Disney/Marvel allowed this to premiere on their platform. These fight scenes featured a main character clearly murdering someone with a knife. Other times a hero was impaled with a spear. Moon Knight did not hold anything back from its audiences and went for a more realistic and brutal approach to superhero action. I greatly enjoyed this change as Marvel has always been lacking the type of gritty violence found on the Marvel Netflix shows or in DC films.

Even if Marvel shows haven't been your favorite recently, I'd highly recommend giving Moon Knight a try. It tries to be original in a crowded superhero landscape and that is something that we should all commend Mohamed Diab and Jeremy Slater for doing. Given that Phase 4 is already in full swing, I think it's clear to say that Marvel fatigue is a real phenomenon and there is an overflow of MCU content. With this in mind, Moon Knight successfully delivers quality entertainment that has its own identity. I don't think it too far of a stretch to call it the best (or second-best) Marvel Disney+ show and certainly an impressive contender in the overall superhero TV arena.



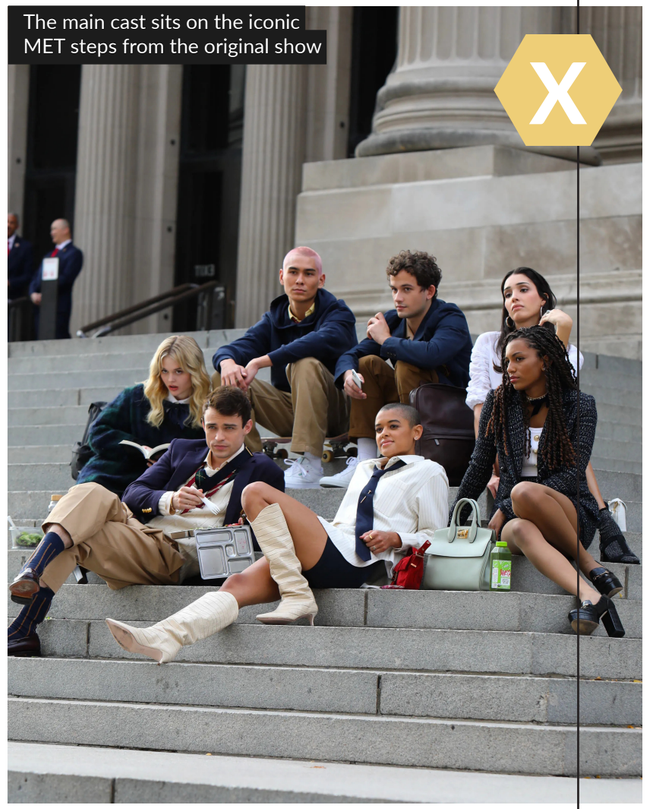
Khonshu **(F. Murray Abraham)** and Mr. Knight **(Oscar Isaac)** turn back time

GOSSIP GIRL

By Alara Yilmaz

For those of you who are fans of the original Gossip Girl released in 2007 and set in NYC, you might have been happy to hear they created a reboot. Yet again, this new season is based on the children of elite New Yorkers and their secrets hidden behind luxurious wood and gold-laced high-floor apartment front doors. In the original show, Constance Billard and St. Jude were two separate "sister" schools, Constance being the all-girls school and St.Judes all boys. In the reboot, they were updated as one singular co-ed school, Constance Billiards, St. Jude. A website called Gossip Girl is created, by an unknown person, to expose the lives of these students. In the final episode of the original, we find out the creator and author of the website Gossip Girl. Essentially, the whole show revolves around these teenagers and the drama created by Gossip Girl so identifying the creator provided a plot twist and the perfect ending to the original series. The reboot branches off the original website and creates a whole new Instagram page dedicated to exposing the lives of these teenagers. In the reboot, the audience knew that the owners of the account were teachers taking away that previous sense of mystery, and in my opinion, ruining the new show. While the reboot contained some exciting character and plot parallels, I couldn't overlook the unsettling behavior of the adults and would overall, not recommend it to anyone seeking the iconic vibe of the original.

The original Gossip Girl was released in 2007 and contains a total of 121 episodes spread out over 6 seasons. The story begins in the high school careers of the main characters: Serena VanderWoodsen, Blair Waldorf, Dan Humphrey, Chuck Bass, Nate Archibald, and Jenny Humphrey. Similarly, the main characters of the gossip girl reboot are Julien Calloway (Serena's counterpart), Audrey Hope (Blair's counterpart), Otto Bergmen (Dan's counterpart), Max Wolfe (Chuck's counterpart), Aki Menzies (Nate's counterpart), and Zoya Lott (Jenny's counterpart). This friend group has been tied together since middle school and continuously stays together, even through their mutual "back-stabbing". The only character who's new to this society is Zoya who was brought to the city by her half-sister Julien. They share a mother which is explained through the past generations, Julien and Zoya's, parent's conflicts. The element of past "flames" and romances in older character's youths is also evident in the original show through Lily VanderWooden (Serena's mother) and Rufus Humphrey (Dan and Jenny's father) who have a parallel storyline originating from their teen years and evolving into multiple marriages and divorces. Similarly, in the reboot, Julien's mother leaves her father to be with Zoya's father and dies during childbirth. Another similarity is the idea of an outsider in the friend group, someone who didn't fit in economically and socially. Before it was Dan and Jenny, and now it's Zoya. All three of these characters share economic problems, showing that money still plays an important role even in the 21st century. This new character started her journey by moving from Buffalo NY to the Upper West Side and has multiple financial issues threatening her education, housing, and relationships. She is most similar to Jenny Humphrey who also experiences similar problems such as never fitting in and not being able to afford school tuition without a scholarship. They even have similar nicknames -- Jenny is referred to as "Little J" and Zoya as "Little Z". Otto, relatively the wealthiest character in the reboot, lives in Brooklyn. Ironically, in the original show, the least wealthy family had a flat in Brooklyn, the Humphreys, while the Bergmen currently live in a designer penthouse. The new penthouse is a considerable improvement to the flat which barely had walls and seemed to be falling apart. Another parallel worth noticing is that Dan dated both Blair and Serena who were best friends similarly to how Otto dated both Julien and Zoya, who were considered very close and half-sisters.



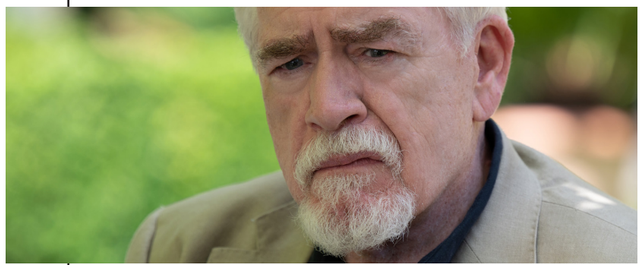
The main cast sits on the iconic MET steps from the original show

Differently, the new show draws much more attention to the adults. Both the teachers and parents face crises of their own. For example, Zoya's father and one of the teachers have a slow-burning romantic relationship creating tension between him and the school. The original show had a teenager running the Gossip Girl page and a character who aged and matured along with the other protagonists. In the reboot, the gossip girl page is run by teachers which in my opinion didn't really sit right. The whole idea behind starting the account stemmed from teaching the students a lesson but instead turned into a fight for power and leadership. The dedication and curiosity these adults had for minors' personal lives seemed concerning.

In my opinion, apart from the clever parallels, the show overall didn't achieve its potential. The adult characters seemed boring and drew attention away from the teenagers. The show also did not capture the same old-school, "preppy", and glamorous vibe the original had. The way the characters conversed seemed forced rather than natural. They didn't sound like teenagers and it was obvious. It was upsetting to watch the show and be let down after the advertising and suspension build-up. Overall, the reboot didn't capture the same aesthetic and felt ingenuine. Regardless, the show is expected to return for season 2 in September 2022 so brace yourselves for a whole new year of drama and overhype for the Gossip girl reboot.

SUCCESSION

By Eliza Becker



The plot and the drama of the HBO original Succession, is enough to keep viewers entertained, but what truly makes the show deeply fascinating is the complex and horrifyingly cruel relationships between the members of the Roy family. Succession is far from just another streaming platform's original series full of shallow drama. It has some of the best acting in modern television thanks to the entire cast, but especially the renowned Brian Cox, who is able to convey the explosive tempered, soft manipulative, silently brooding sides of Logan Roy. Season 3 of Succession, which HBO released at the end of 2021, maintains the themes of cruelty, betrayal, and complicated relationships of the past two seasons, without being repetitivemaking the viewers feel like they're watching the same season over and over again.

The show season picks up following the season two finale cliffhanger: Kendall's (Jeremy Strong) betrayal of his father, Logan (Brian Cox). Brilliantly, the viewers of Succession are almost never roouting for anyone; each character is crazy in their own way and either deserves or is bound to failure or is bound to it.

The biggest payoff of this season is the three siblings's character development, which culminated in an unprecedented move to unite with each other against their father. However, each character's narrative enabled them to reach that point.

ABut at the start of season three, I was finally roouting for Kendall. He had finally stood up to his fatherdad and done the right thing, and I wanted him to beat Logan by being the nobler man. But Kendall's previous character development deteriorates throughout season 3. He continuously fails at defeating his dad due to his ego and incompetency,because of hishe's egotistical and incompetent, and he has absolutely no supportone truly there for him to help him cope with his depression and trauma. Kendall's character development diversion was crucial to season 3 as itto further hookedhook theits viewers. The complicated and devastating psyche of Kendall Roy is arguably the most captivating part of Succession, and the show wasn't ready to shift away from this yet.

Throughout the season Roman (Kieran Culkin) finally begins proving himself to be a competent businessman. In the end, he is competent enough to set up a deal with Matsson (actor) and then recognize that the deal will fall through. But more importantly, he finally realizes that he can never truly trust his father. When his father fights back, he doesn't back down like he did in season 1, but he stands his ground, which shows his increased maturity and love for his siblings.

Kendall finally realizes that he can't hold onto his secret anymore, and he can't go through life without anyone by his side. After he chooses his siblings to be by his side by confessing the secret to them, he remains by their side in their attack on their father, despite his saying earlier in the episode that he didn't want anything to do with the business anymore.

In my opinion, out of the three siblings, Shiv (Sarah Snook) is the most selfish. She learned her lesson that Logan can never be trusted in season 2, and she knows both of her brothers are incompetent. Throughout all three seasons, she does anything she can to obtain power within the company, including screwing over her brothers and even her own newly-wed husband. She leads the season 3 finale coupe which fails because her husband betrays her. I see these two events as markers for the negative character development Shiv's had throughout the three seasons.

In addition to the three Roy siblings, one character who subtly has subtly possibly developed developed possibly the most—marked by the biggest betrayal of the season— is Tom Wamsgams (Matthew Mcfayden). Succession has begun to parallel Tom to Logan Roy. Unlike the Roy siblings, but like Logan Roy, Tom is rational and calculating, and he doesn't come from a wealthy background. In all the miniature fights within the Roy family, Tom avoids interfering at all costs and stays neutral up until the last second. Although he remained loyal in his marriage with Shiv for the last three seasons, he finally betrays her, and follows Logan's footsteps of disloyalty to family members. Tom finally chose himself over his wife, and I'm curious to see if he'll be rewarded or punished— continue to parallel Logan or contrast him— in season four.

Although the season 3 finale wasn't as big of a cliffhanger as the previous two finales, it still masterfully sets up the next season. Logan Roy's decision to sell the company doesn't immediately screw over the kids, but rather sets up a season's worth of exciting content. While I'm not craving to see the very first episode of season 4, I cannot wait to see how the entire season 4 will play out. Now that Logan's three children are finally all teamed up against him, I think it's possible that Logan may be permanently overthrown, and perhaps season 4 will be the last one.

In so many ways I hate the three Roy siblings and want them to learn their lesson for being so arrogant, spoiled, and cruel, but at the same time I want to see them succeed. Succession has blurred the lines between the classic terms of "protagonist" and "antagonist." Do I want the kids to overthrow Logan? Do I want Logan to show them their place for good? Do I want everyone to lose? I don't know. But after season 3 of Succession, I desperately want to see how the Roy family war will end.

THE BATMAN

By Sophia Liu

From the film's first announcement to its release day, Matt Reeves's The Batman has been no stranger to high expectations. The trailers promised intriguing changes from previous Batman films, featuring a darker, noir-style story, and after numerous delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my excitement for The Batman was through the roof. Thankfully for me, The Batman did not disappoint. The film follows Batman (Robert Pattinson) through his second year working for the Gotham PD as he and Jim Gordon (Jeffrey Wright) track down a mysterious serial killer called the Riddler (Paul Dano), known for killing high-profile figures in Gotham and exposing their corruption. Almost like a detective movie, the Riddler leaves behind clues for Batman to find, leading Batman to understand his motives and intentions. Despite some flaws, Matt Reeves has delivered one of the best Batman films ever, full of gorgeous visuals, incredible performances, and a captivating story. After years of formulaic, predictable superhero movies, I felt like I was fully immersed in the city of Gotham, and never truly knew what would happen next. The Batman is a welcome addition to the Batman franchise, and paints a bright and optimistic picture for the future of blockbuster superhero films.

Firstly, the best aspect of The Batman overall was its cinematography, especially in terms of light and color. Every shot provided something interesting to look at, and even the most mundane scenes managed to amaze me. In particular, the film characterizes the city of Gotham perfectly. From the very beginning, the amount of shadow used throughout the film gives Gotham a dark, gritty ambience, befitting of the corruption lying beneath the surface. The use of silicone on the camera lens helps give Gotham a greasy look, blurring the objects on screen and making the viewer feel at one with the constant pouring rain. The red, cyan, orange, and yellow tones make Gotham look like a real gothic city, adding to its sinister and unpredictable nature. Compared to the commercial gloss and low-contrast cinematography of other modern superhero films, The Batman makes Gotham seem like a real, tangible place.

The action sequences also completely blew me away, and kept my eyes glued to the screen the entire time. One technique the directors and cinematographers used repeatedly throughout the film was limiting the viewer's ability to see everything that was happening, creating a sense of instability and chaos. For example, one scene that particularly impressed me is in a hallway, which is lit up only by the flashing of machine guns, making it difficult to see Batman or what he is doing. Additionally, while the Batmobile chases the Penguin (Colin Ferrell), a crime boss Batman believes to be one of the Riddler's targets, the directors placed cameras on the sides of the car to simulate looking through the sideview mirrors. This, like the hallway scene, helps to place the viewer amidst the action and simulate the chaos created by the fast-paced movement. The action scenes kept me fully engaged in the film, and it felt like a breath of fresh air to see them filmed in such a unique way.

Although every member of the cast gives a solid performance, Robert Pattinson in particular is excellent as both Batman and Bruce Wayne, providing a new, more tragic side to the character. Unlike previous Batmans (Batmen?), Pattinson plays Bruce Wayne like a reclusive, brooding homebody, often conveying messages and meaning without even speaking, and making him seem younger and more immature than the rich playboy he ends up becoming. Pattinson and the story characterize Batman's inexperience extremely well; throughout the film, Batman makes numerous mistakes, whether it be overlooking the Riddler's clues or getting punched across a room. Batman also receives more of a personal story arc compared to previous iterations of the character, something that has rarely occurred since Batman became so iconic. Beginning as a figure of vengeance and fear, Batman's encounters with the Riddler and his followers shows him how his vigilante antics have become a negative inspiration, leading him to become a figure of hope instead. Batman's transition from emerging ominously from the shadows in the first scene to staring up into the light without squinting for the first time in the last scene perfectly captures this character development.

Furthermore, The Batman has incredible rewatch value, just like a detective movie. Rewatching The Batman for the second time, I was extremely impressed by the filmmakers' attention to detail, and how many clues and easter eggs they left behind to indicate how the Riddler managed to pull off his master plan. For example, in the very beginning of the film, as Batman walks around the mayor's apartment, one of the newspaper clippings boasting about the mayor's successful drug bust features a smaller headline about how reinforcements to Gotham's seawalls had been halted. Although I never even noticed it on my first watch, this is a subtle indication of why the Riddler is able to destroy the seawalls so easily later on. Similarly, as Batman exits the Iceberg Lounge for the first time, a wide shot of the club reveals a lit window in the building across the street, with a silhouette taking photos of the street below. Not only does this explain how the Riddler manages to take incriminating photos of the corrupt Gotham officials, but it also foreshadows the location of Riddler's apartment. Finally, one last detail I noticed was that in the Riddler's apartment, there is a paparazzi photo of Bruce Wayne on the wall, and right behind him is someone with an eerie resemblance to the Joker (Barry Keoghan). Although this did not end up being relevant to the plot, I wonder if it will carry more significance in future sequels. Unlike so many other superhero movies, this attention to detail made me excited to watch The Batman again, and made me even more appreciative of the film's cinematography every time.

Admittedly, The Batman is not entirely perfect. I enjoyed the story and how it gave Batman a much-needed personal story arc, but at times, the pacing of the story was not particularly smooth, and it was unclear when the movie was going to end. The middle act, where Batman and Gordon chase down the Penguin, drags on for far too long, and the final act, where Batman fights with the Riddler's army of aggrieved Redditors, feels sudden and much too short. I also disliked the romance between Batman and Catwoman (Zoë Kravitz), which despite featuring in several Batman comics, feels out of place in this film, as well as the scene between the Riddler and the Joker, which takes way longer than it needs to. The number of unnecessary scenes and plotlines in the film eventually became detrimental, as it made the film insanely long. Before watching the film, I had noted how the runtime was almost three hours long, and despite my amazement over the incredible cinematography, it definitely felt like a three hour-long movie. Cutting down the movie by even half an hour could have made me more engaged in the final act, and could have made the plot a little less complicated.

Still, I could talk about The Batman all day. I could probably write an article the length of this Cinemann issue about it. For everything The Batman gets wrong in terms of plotlines and pacing, it gets five things right in terms of cinematography and characterization. After so many predictable, boring-looking superhero movies being released over the past few years, The Batman has knocked it out of the park in practically every aspect.

> I can confidently say that The Batman is one of my all-time favorite superhero movies, and I eagerly await its sequel.