

= Stakes ( miniseries ) =

Stakes is an American animated miniseries based on the show Adventure Time by Pendleton Ward . It aired as part of the show 's seventh season from November 16 , 2015 to November 19 , 2015 on Cartoon Network . Adventure Time follows the adventures of Finn ( voiced by Jeremy Shada ) , a human boy , and his best friend and adoptive brother Jake ( voiced by John DiMaggio ) , a dog with magical powers to change shape , grow and shrink at will . In this limited event series , Princess Bubblegum ( voiced by Hynden Walch ) removes Marceline the Vampire Queen 's ( voiced by Olivia Olson ) vampiric essence , which unleashes five recently resurrected vampires onto Ooo . Marceline , Bubblegum , Finn , Jake , and Peppermint Butler ( voiced by Steve Little ) are forced to deal with the fallout .

The miniseries ' story was developed by series creator Pendleton Ward , showrunner Adam Muto , head writer Kent Osborne , and staff writer Jack Pendarvis . The eight episodes were storyboarded by Ako Castuera , Jesse Moynihan , Muto , Hanna K. Nyström , Herpich , Seo Kim , Somvilay Xayaphone , Emily Partridge , and Luke Pearson , whilst Andres Salaff , Elizabeth Ito , and Muto handled supervising direction . Former Adventure Time storyboard artist Rebecca Sugar returned briefly to the show to voice Marceline 's mother , and to contribute a song , entitled " Everything Stays " . Stakes was a ratings success , and was met with mostly positive reviews , with Sugar 's song in particular being met with critical applause . With that being said , a few commentators felt that the miniseries did not meet expectations . Stakes was released on DVD on January 19 , 2016 .

= = Plot = =

Told in eight parts , Stakes documents the reemergence of five of Marceline the Vampire Queen 's most powerful vampiric foes : the Fool ( voiced by Ron Funches ) , the Empress Eyes ( voiced by Rebecca Romijn ) , the Hierophant ( voiced by Paul Williams ) , the Moon ( voiced by Beau Billingslea ) , and the Vampire King himself ( voiced by Billy Brown ) . The quintet reemerges after Bubblegum tries to extract Marceline 's vampiric essence , in an attempt to return Marceline to her normal half @-@ demon state . The reappearance of these vampires forces Marceline , Bubblegum , Finn , Jake , and Peppermint Butler to stake them one @-@ by @-@ one .

= = Production = =

Stakes was announced in February 2015 alongside news of Long Live the Royals , a separate miniseries created by Sean Szeles , at an upfront regarding Cartoon Network 's programming for the 2015 to 2016 television season . Writing for Cartoon Brew , Amid Amidi speculated that both were commissioned following the success of Over the Garden Wall , the network 's first miniseries created by Patrick McHale ( a former writer for Adventure Time ) . Michael Ouweleen , the chief marketing officer of the network , later said that " miniseries provide the network with more opportunities to try different creative textures and give new properties a chance to get on air . " Despite being touted by some outlets as a " spin @-@ off " , Adventure Time showrunner Adam Muto later clarified that Stakes would air as part of the series ' seventh season .

At the 2015 New York Comic Con , Muto revealed that the miniseries originated with ideas that were initially developed during the show 's second season . He remarked , " There was this idea from season two about Marceline and ... how she got her powers to begin with . We kind of rolled with that and expanded that into eight episodes . " When Olivia Olson , the voice actress who plays Marceline , was informed that the show would be making an eight @-@ part series about her character , she reportedly cried because she was so excited . Due to the Marceline @-@ centric nature of the miniseries , a new opening was created that features Olson singing the theme song . This intro was storyboarded by Tom Herpich and animated by Masaaki Yuasa 's company Science SARU .

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Moynihan , Muto , Hanna K. Nyström , Herpich , Seo Kim , Somvilay Xayaphone , Emily Partridge , and Luke Pearson . Andres Salaff , Elizabeth Ito , and Muto served as the miniseries ' supervising directors . Notably , the miniseries saw the return of several artists who had previously left the series , like Castuera ( a storyboard artist who had left the series after storyboarding the fifth season finale " Billy 's Bucket List " ) , and Rebecca Sugar ( a storyboard artist and songwriter , who had left the series after storyboarding the fifth season episode " Simon & Marcy " ) . Castuera storyboarded the first , sixth , and seventh parts of Stakes alongside Moynihan , and Sugar wrote a new song for the miniseries entitled " Everything Stays " and voiced Marceline 's mother .

In regards to the miniseries ' song " Everything Stays " , Nyström revealed that , during the storyboarding of the episode of the same name , she found herself unable to write a lullaby for the scene between Marceline and her mother . She relayed her issue to Muto , who contacted Sugar and asked if she would be willing to pen the song . Sugar agreed and based the song on an incident in which she lost a stuffed animal in a garden . A year later , she found it ; the sun had bleached the exposed surfaces , but the underside was still the same . She explained , " [ The stuffed animal ] wasn't better , or worse , just different . It was the first time I realized that things will change no matter what , even if they're left alone , and stay completely still . " Muto was excited to have Sugar return to work on the show , and noted at the 2015 Adventure Time San Diego Comic @-@ Con International panel that " because [ Stakes ] was a Marceline miniseries , it wouldn't really feel complete unless Rebecca Sugar wrote a song for it . "

Ghostshrimp , a background artist who worked on the series during seasons one through four , also returned to draw around 70 background pieces for this miniseries . Ghostshrimp , who had left the series during the middle of season four , noted : " I was super pumped that they wanted me to work on it , [ and ] it was great to return to that world for another go around . "

= = Cast = =

The miniseries features vocal performances courtesy of the show 's regular crew : Jeremy Shada ( who voices Finn the Human ) , John DiMaggio ( who portrays Jake the Dog ) , Olivia Olson ( who portrays Marceline ) , Tom Kenny ( who lends his voice to the Ice King ) , Hynden Walch ( who voices Princess Bubblegum ) , Steve Little ( who plays Peppermint Butler ) , and Pendleton Ward ( who voices Lumpy Space Princess ) . The Adventure Time cast records their lines together in group recordings as opposed to different recording sessions with each voice actor . This is to record more natural sounding dialogue among the characters . Hynden Walch has described these group recordings as akin to " doing a play reading ? a really , really out there play . "

The miniseries also features several guest actors lending their voices to various characters . Sugar , in addition to her role as songwriter , was also brought on board to voice Marceline 's mother ; this role marks her first foray into voice acting . Other guest stars include Rebecca Romijn as Empress Eyes , Billy Brown as the Vampire King , Paul Williams as the Hierophant , Ron Funches as the Fool , Beau Billingslea as the Moon , Kyle Kinane as Cloud Dance , and Ava Acres as Young Marceline and the rabbit @-@ hatted child .

= = Release and reception = =

= = = Broadcast = = =

Although several sources suggested that the miniseries would air in October 2015 , the miniseries instead debuted on Cartoon Network on November 16 , 2015 . An exclusive sneak peek was screened at the New York Comic Con on October 9 . The first two episodes of Stakes debuted on November 16 , and , following this , two episodes aired every day for three days . On November 20 , the entirety of the miniseries re @-@ aired . On January 18 , 2016 , preceding the miniseries ' January 19 , 2016 , DVD release in the United States , Cartoon Network aired Stakes as an 88 @-@ minute standalone movie .

The miniseries made its international debut on Cartoon Network in Australia and New Zealand on January 18 , and concluded airing on January 21 , 2016 . Stakes premiered on Cartoon Network UK and Ireland on March 14 , 2016 , and concluded on March 17 , 2016 .

### == Ratings ==

According to a Cartoon Network press release distributed prior to Stakes being available on DVD , the miniseries was a " phenomenal success , ranking as the # 1 program in its time period with all key kids and boys audiences . " The premiere episodes , " Marceline the Vampire Queen " / " Everything Stays " , were collectively watched by 1 @. @ 87 million viewers and they both scored a 0 @. @ 45 in the 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ old demographic according to Nielsen ( Nielsen ratings are audience measurement systems that determine the audience size and composition of television programming in the United States ) ; this means that 0 @. @ 45 percent of all households with viewers aged 18 to 49 years old were watching television at the time of the episodes ' airing . This made the two episodes were the most @- @ watched installments of the series , in terms of viewers , since the sixth season episode " The Diary " , which was viewed by 1 @. @ 91 million viewers . The miniseries ' finale , " Checkmate " / " The Dark Cloud " , was viewed by 1 @. @ 7 million viewers , and scored a 0 @. @ 4 in the 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ old demographic .

### == Critical reception ==

Stakes was met with mostly positive reviews , although a few commentators felt that the miniseries did not meet expectations . Charlie Jane Anders of io9 applauded the miniseries , noting that it 's an interesting meditation of the concept of change , as well as the philosophical idea that everything is cyclical . In regards to the art and direction of the miniseries , Anders wrote : " There is so much insane gorgeous imagery in this [ miniseries ] , including a ton of really fantastic dream sequences . This show is really pushing its limits in terms of pure visual artistry . " Anders noted that , while some fans of the show have been suffering from " Adventure Time fatigue " ? largely based on the belief that the show has not moved forward since Finn met his father ? Stakes " really feels like a rejoinder to the people who complain the show isn ' t moving fast enough with its plots " . Writing for Vox , Todd VanDerWerff wrote highly of the miniseries , arguing that it was an excellent example of the coming @- @ of @- @ age story that " shows off the kids series ' emotional maturity " . He did note that the miniseries is " less a cohesive whole than a bunch of short stories that feel as if they accidentally add up to something bigger " , and that the need for every installment to exist as a self @- @ contained unit made Stakes " a little clunky " . With that being said , he felt that it ended up being " suitably epic " and " rich with metaphor " . Ultimately , VanDerWerff felt that the moral message of the miniseries was : " Change is good . Growth is good . Supporting others ' growth is good . And accepting others when they need to change is the best thing you can do . "

Heather Hogan of Autostraddle lauded the miniseries for " color [ ing ] in some of Marceline 's past , answer [ ing ] lots of questions about her relationship with Bonnie , and promis [ ing ] her a richer future . " She argued that the miniseries as a whole was a commentary on depression , and that at the conclusion of Stakes , while Marceline had not vanquished depression , " fighting it helped her grow . " Brandon Russell of TechnoBuffalo wrote , " The miniseries does an excellent job of exploring themes of depression , change , and forgiveness . " Russell praised the miniseries for showing Marceline 's emotional transformation , noting that Marceline 's momentary depression in " The Dark Cloud " at the futility of her plight is " a reminder that , although change is hard , it 's necessary for growth . " However , Russell critiqued the fact that , due to the individual episodes ' lengths , some of the miniseries ' more poignant material was not explored to its full extent .

Oliver Sava of The A.V. Club awarded the miniseries a " B " , noting that the event " loses steam when it moves away from the introspective personal elements of the past to detail Marceline and her friends ' vampire hunting adventure in the present . " He also bemoaned the fact that only " Everything Stays " features flashbacks , arguing that " rushing through those past events is a missed opportunity to offer a more comprehensive look at where Marceline comes from and how those

circumstances have shaped her ". With that being said , Sava was highly complimentary towards the voice acting , with praise being directed towards Olson and the actors who voice the villains ; Sava wrote , " The new characters ' personalities are quickly solidified by the guest stars ' expressive performances . " Eric Thurm of Pitchfork Media opined that Stakes " includes all sorts of cool action sequences and , best of all , it focuses on the backstory of the show 's most musical character : Marceline [ ... ] But Stakes , as fun as it is , ultimately fails to fully deliver , mostly because of a lack of , um , stakes . "

Sugar 's " Everything Stays " was met with critical praise . VanDerWerff described it as " beautiful " . Russell argued that it is " arguably the most beautiful and poignant song in the Adventure Time canon . " Sava called it " poignant " , noting that " Olson brings a mournful quality to the song when Marceline reprises it later , and the combination of her somber vocals with Sugar 's delicate songwriting gives the song a quiet power that highlights the importance of this melody in Marceline 's story . " Likewise , Thurm called it the " most exciting moment " in the miniseries and that the song " is pretty much a perfect Adventure Time song . It 's quiet , beautiful , and heartfelt ? a lullaby for children at heart , no matter their age . "

= = Episodes = =

= = Home media = =

Warner Home Video released the entire miniseries on DVD on January 19 , 2016 . The individual episodes can be downloaded from both the iTunes Store and Amazon.com.

= = = DVD release = = =