

METEOR

ISSUE 2 | AUGUST 2020

PLUS

Studio
Ghibli
Ranking
&
Graeme
Norgate
Interview

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

**Lost Boys
Press:**
“I think
it’s a very
challenging
time to try
and start
anything right
now, but the
world is what
it is.”

THE PS2'S 20

We asked what
your favourite
PS2 games
were, see inside
for your top six.

Designing a Zombie Apocalypse

EULYN HUFKIE: “I WOULD WEAR A TIARA AND KICK-ASS BOOTS”



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"A CONVERSATION STARTER"

"TOSH... BY DIVERSITY
MYOPIC MARXIST PEOPLE"

"FUNNIEST THING TO COME
OUT OF LOCKDOWN"

"CRINGE INDUCING"

BAMEless focuses on the panic within one uninspired boardroom as they fear they are going to be on the wrong side of history.

Inspired by the real experiences of Black and Asian workers, and starring This Is England actor Kieran Hardcastle, writer Derry Shillitto and producer Leon Hady have created a short comedy WEB SERIES that will spark conversation around the true meaning of diversity of thought.

You can watch every episode online at www.derryshillitto.com/bameless.

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A WORD FROM one of our editors

It's hard to believe that we've already reached our third issue of Meteor Magazine. The journey from us first banding together to make this idea of ours a reality, to the growing platform we've created with your help has been crazy.

The best thing about creating Meteor every other month, is seeing just how many ideas our contributors have, on topics that even our all-seeing, all-knowing editorial didn't think of. Issue three is no exception, once again our writers have pulled through with an awesome line-up of articles.

Amy Smith has an insightful piece using the brilliant Bojack Horseman to discuss animation being used to convey dark topics, our film editor George White takes us through Lost in Translation and there's an interview with Timesplitters composer Graeme Norgate - written by yours truly.

As always, follow us on our social channels for regular content and consider supporting us on Patreon. *N. Warby*
Nathan Warby, Gaming Co-Editor



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Rebecca isn't your average rom-com

BOOKS TO GET YOUR SPOOK ON

A Deadly Education by Naomi Novik. Darker than Hogwarts, Scholomance is a school where you either graduate, or you die. Sounds intense, right? Join El Higgins, the magically gifted student taking on this odd, monster-filled school.

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier. This classic Gothic novel is sure to give you spooky vibes as you join a heroine thrown through a psychologically intense adventure. There's plenty of buzz about this book with the release of Netflix's adaptation, so why not check out where it all began?

Pet Sematary by Stephen King. You can't have a Halloween book list without including at least one book from the 'King of Horror' himself. *Pet Sematary* is a gruesome classic.

JAMES BOND: A BETTER TIME TO DIE

Universal Pictures recently announced their decision to move the release date of *No Time to Die*, the latest instalment in the 007 franchise, to April 2021 - over a year after initially planned. Just a day later and Cineworld decided to close its doors until further notice. Bond wasn't the only cause of the chain going into hibernation, but it was the final nail in the coffin. It was a sad day for the silver screen, and plunges the future of the film industry into darkness for the foreseeable future. Will fellow chains follow suit? Will arthouse cinemas keep their doors open? Will the big screen even be an option for studios come April? No one knows. But one thing's for certain - the loss of cinema would be a tragedy for staff, filmmakers and movie fanatics around the world. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.



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GAME OF A GENERATION: READ IT, BOY

With little over a month to go until we meet the next step in gaming evolution, I thought it would be fun to talk about the game of all games. The one that can be crowned king of its generation and sit above the rest.

It's worth saying this was not an easy choice and an honourable mention has to go to latecomer *Ghost of Tsushima*. A title I really didn't think I'd enjoy but ended up falling in love with.



God of War was back with a bang in 2018

That said, there can be only one winner and that is *God of War*. This record-breaking monolith was a joy from start to finish. With its refreshingly enjoyable combat, unique one-shot storytelling and a truly family tale it was an incredible journey.

Kratos' adventures into Norse mythology are only just beginning and I can't wait to see what is next for the slayer of Olympius and dad of the year 2018.

WHY PETE CAMPBELL NEEDS A BREAK

When you think *Mad Men*, you naturally think of the suave star, Don Draper, or the determined underdog, Peggy Olson. But the series punching bag, Pete Campbell, is just as deserving of your love as anyone else on Maddison Avenue. Why? Because he's us.

Yes, he's slimy, he can be entitled and his hairline melts away quicker than the ice in an old fashioned. But he's the closest *Mad Men* gets to an average Joe.

Pete just wants to be recognised for his

hard work, something I think everyone can relate to.

While the Dons of the world cause chaos, Campbell quietly goes about his work and deals with the backlash. All he's asking for is a pat on the back.

So, spare a thought for Pete Campbell. He's just misunderstood and he is one of us in this world of mad men.



Pete's just an average Joe

IS A BOOK BEST LEFT ALONE?

Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, and even Shrek were all adapted from books. Faith Pring asks if they're really worth it.

Films, TV and books - these days the three seem to go hand in hand. We've reached the point where books are being adapted for the screen even before publication. What happened to creating original content instead of crushing the dreams of book readers everywhere? I can count on one hand the number of times that I've preferred an adaptation over the original source material - *The Martian* being the standout example - so why do production companies persist?

It's simple. Most of the time these books already have a following, either they are written by a well-known author and they can use the name to help with publicity, or the book comes with a sizeable fanbase who will almost certainly tune in to an episode or queue to buy tickets at the box office. Even when an adaptation

has been unfaithful, readers are still thankful that they've seen their favourite characters come to life. It's almost as if readers these days lack the imagination to create the movie inside their heads. Upon reading, I would always picture a scene and a character, but now, do we really have to?

Regardless of how many novels and manuscripts we would love to see adapted for the big or the small screen, it seems Hollywood is stuck in a never-ending cycle of remakes and reboots. I hold a bad book-to-film adaptation responsible for my love of books; I was so intrigued by the story that despite the mediocre film they created, I read the entire series in a matter of days.

This is the kind of consequence I like to see. Film watchers reading the books afterwards, or book readers watching the film and re-reading. It's a cycle, and a beautiful one at that. It's perfect promotion and more than the publishing industry could ask for.



© 20th Century Fox

I HATE HALLOWEEN

by Polly Harrison

I don't know what it is, but there's just something about Halloween that sends chills up my spine, and not in the way the rest of the world seems to enjoy.

My hatred of Halloween started at an early age. I have been trick or treating exactly once in my life and enjoyed the experience so much (not) I decided never to do it again. It's the fake spiderwebs and various goo's of the season that just really turns my stomach.

Along with my anti-halloween stance, I also hate most Halloween films. Well, that would be a lie really, as I have seen hardly any of them. There has been exactly one spooky film I have ever enjoyed, and that was *Halloweentown High*, the Disney channel classic.

I just don't like scary movies. I have to hide behind a pillow otherwise I will have nightmares for at least a week. I think the scariest film I've ever seen is *Final Destination*, or maybe *Zombieland*. Yes, don't worry, I hear your laughter - I know that these films are categorically unscary, but tell that to the many sleepless nights I had after watching. I take absolutely no pleasure in being scared and don't understand anyone who does. I'd love to be able to sit down and see these films, there are many I've heard about where the stories sound amazing or they've been written/directed/star people that I enjoy. But I really cannot bring myself to do it.

And then when it comes to the more kid friendly versions I just simply have no motivation to put them on. *Hocus Pocus* is a prime example of this. I hear constantly from all areas of my life, whether in person or across social media, that *Hocus Pocus* is an amazing film. It looks interesting too I guess, I'm all about funky looking witches singing a well covered 50s rock song. But I just really can't be bothered. I saw the highlights through gifs on Tumblr, I don't think I need to invest the full 90 minutes.

I know this makes me sound like an utter killjoy, but the spooky season is just not for me. I black out most of October and just head straight to Christmas. After all, the Grinch could take Michael Myers any day.

00H • 24M • 36S

UNTIL THE DOORS OPEN

A SLIGHTLY TERRIFYING WELCOME TO THE BLUMHOUSE

© Amazon

Charlie Vogelsang was invited to take part in Amazon's Welcome to the Blumhouse event. Filled with premieres, DJs and the puzzling mystery of a missing girl. It was truly eventful.



CHARLIE VOGELSANG CONTRIBUTOR

WELCOME

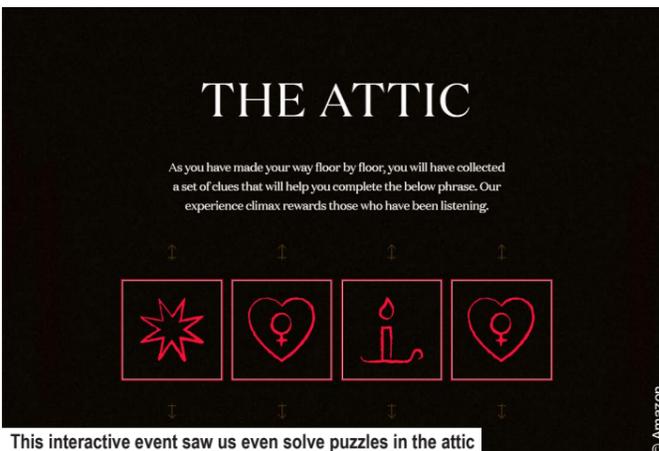
As we dive deep into the spooky month of October, it's only right to prepare for the horror season. Blumhouse Television and Amazon Studios teamed up to form the juggernaut that is Welcome to the Blumhouse. It's a collaboration between the two studios to create a line of eight thrillers, with four being released this year and the next set of four released in 2021.

The launch event hosted a virtual premiere of either Black Box (directed by Emmanuel Osei-Kuffour Jr) or The Lie (directed by Veena Sud). It was then followed by a one-of-a-kind experience with an interactive after-party event. Honestly, it was the perfect way to start Halloween - and in a socially distanced climate.

It all started with the film screening beginning at 6:00am PT (2:00am GMT - meaning a pretty late night for us), and started with an eerie virtual lobby that left guests waiting for the ominous doors

to open. Before the film started, all the fans got to communicate and express their excitement in a chat box and a photobooth. The premiere of Black Box started 30 minutes afterwards and didn't wait around, as this once in a lifetime event got properly underway.

After the film ended, the live DJ set kicked off in the basement. DJ Dirtyfinger set a chill mood to relax and decompress



This interactive event saw us even solve puzzles in the attic

© Amazon

after the horror. However, the mystery didn't stop there. If you stayed long enough, you would receive a hint towards one of the clues needed to reach the attic and uncover the mystery of a missing girl, Erin Templeton.

That was the goal of the interactive house - solve the mystery of the missing girl, gain the password and reach the attic. There were five levels to explore, with each one inspired by one of the four movies released by the studios in 2020. Starting at the basement with the DJ, and then progressing to the first floor, it became clear that it was inspired by Evil Eye, and contained The Kitchen and The Garage. Both of these rooms had live-interactive mysteries that were waiting to be solved.

After conquering these floors, you reached the second tier, inspired by The Lie. This one contained Auntie's Room and The Darkroom. The first one presented a tarot card reader who helped you solve the mystery with special guest TJ Miller, while The Darkroom provided you with pictures to help solve the mystery of this bizarre family and their missing child.

The third floor was inspired by Black Box, with its own consultation room that offered a 360 degree view of the mind-altering machine. It was both terrifying and amazing at the same time. This was accompanied by The Lab, which had live actors reacting to the chat. They used their knowledge to try and help you solve the case to gain the hidden code and unlock the attic.

Of course, the fourth floor was inspired by the fourth film released by Welcome to the Blumhouse - Nocturne. This level contained a Ballet Studio in which you can relax, making the most of a break from the intensity of the other floors, before entering The Bedroom with all the twin sister's hidden secrets. After you've finally obtained the final code, you are allowed to proceed to The Attic.

Due to connection issues and limited time, I never reached the final stage. I came so close and worked together with others in the chat, but I just didn't have what it took to solve the case. I found the

BLACK BOX *Review*

Black Box follows a man named Nolan (played by Mamoudou Athie) who loses his wife and memory in a car accident. After struggling to cope as a single father with constant job rejections, he undergoes an experimental treatment - called Black Box - that's supposed to help him. Things don't go as planned, and he soon begins to question who he really is and what exactly happened after the accident.

If you are bored of the same old horror films that you can literally fall asleep to, then fear



no more. Black Box is a movie that not only genuinely scares you, but makes you reflect on your own life.

There are many twists and turns, and they are totally worth it. By the time you reach the end, there are so many reveals that'll leave you with plenty of questions and theories. Black Box is a thought-provoking film that is cleverly done and isn't predictable.

It's no surprise that Blumhouse would release such a unique and creative horror film. Founder Jason Blum has produced some of the most classic and iconic films of the past 10 years. With titles such as Insidious, Get Out and Happy Death Day, Blumhouse is clearly at the forefront of horror. This successful event with Amazon will hopefully lead to more collaborations between the two - as they continue to revolutionise horror as we know it.

code with too little time left and never uncovered the final mystery. Sigh.

Despite this, the experience was incredible and completely exhilarating. I was so impressed that the event used live actors for most of it that actually responded to the chat. This shows how much effort was put in and made the experience worth it. From a live DJ, tarot readings, an escape room and unsettling twists, this was truly an event to remember - and an ingenious way of hosting exciting premieres in the era of Coronavirus. The different rooms just made me even more intrigued for the later releases, and I honestly can't wait to see what else Welcome to the Blumhouse does in the future. 🍿

WHAT IS GHIBLI'S GREATEST FILM?



RYAN HUTTON
CONTRIBUTOR

RANKING

Studio Ghibli may be the greatest film studio ever created. I tell no word of a lie. Pumping out hit after hit, with most of their filmography ranging in quality from good to masterpiece, you can always turn to Studio Ghibli to comfort you on a rainy day. Whether you are looking for a soaring adventure epic or a small, quiet comedy about life, they can deliver -- hard. In this issue, I

will be taking a look at -- and ranking -- all theatrically released Studio Ghibli films (all of which can be found on Netflix in the UK) and what makes the majority of them so great.

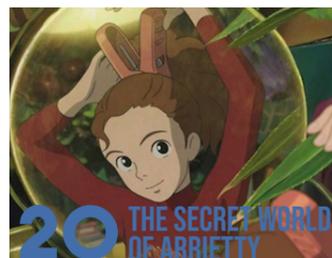
Please note that I watched the dubbed versions of all these films, so any comments on voice acting will pertain to the dubbing.

With all that out of the way, let's dive into the wonderful world of Studio Ghibli.

All images: © Studio Ghibli



21 TALES FROM EARTHSEA
It must be said - I hate Tales from Earthsea. Its worst crime is that it's incredibly dull, despite having dragons at its disposal. I found myself asking "wait, what's the plot of this film?" Really, I should have asked "what's the point of this film?" Stay away at all costs.



20 THE SECRET WORLD OF ARRIETTY
It's the burrowers, but anime! The Secret World of Arrietty is a serviceable enough children's film that boasts some gorgeous visuals and music. However, you might struggle to find much entertainment in it if you're over the age of thirteen.



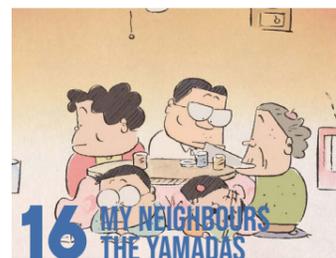
19 PONYO
Like The Secret World of Arrietty, I am not the target audience of Ponyo. That said, this film is beautiful. It's the perfect film for young Ghibli audiences. Ponyo is an excellent film and it being this low on the list is a credit to the rest of Ghibli's filmography.



18 NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND
Ghibli's first theatrical outing, Nausicaä certainly has the building blocks for a lot of Ghibli's future films. It's bold and epic, with a surprisingly strong female protagonist for 1982. Though slightly dated by today's standards, Nausicaä is a must see.



17 POM POKO
The raccoons glide using their scrotums! Pom Poko is hilarious... except for when it's not. That's Pom Poko's problem: it's tonally a mess and is never quite sure what it wants to be. That doesn't stop it from hitting home when it matters. You'll need a few tissues for this one.



16 MY NEIGHBOURS THE YAMADAS
Slice of life at its best. My Neighbours the Yamadas is a quietly brilliant film, telling ordinary tales of the Yamadas that everyone of all ages can relate to. The MVP here is the simple animation, which allows the film to pop in all the right ways. A true gem.



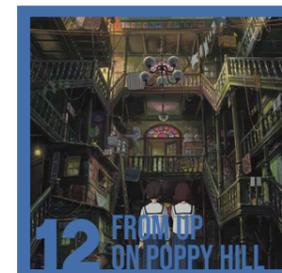
15 THE CAT RETURNS
A spin off of Whisper of the Heart, The Cat Returns is utterly bombastic. Cary Elwes and Tim Curry both voice cats and both sound sexy while doing so. This film really has it all: adventure, comedy, heartfelt moments - you name it!

14 WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE

Some films live and die on their ending. When Marnie Was There fits into this category well, with the first 90 minutes being some of Ghibli's most ambiguous. The ending ties it all together wonderfully, though. To make a truly magical film. It's certainly Ghibli's most postmodern film and is an indicator that the studio is still willing to try something interesting. Until a year or so ago this was to be Ghibli's final film, and it makes a touching swan song.



13 WHISPER OF THE HEART
Film portrayals of love are often eye-rolling, though Ghibli always seem to make it a magical thing. Whisper of the Heart is a love story for all generations and one that will make you want to fall in love all over again.



12 FROM UP ON POPPY HILL
Gorō Miyazaki, son of Hayao Miyazaki, redeems himself after his disastrous debut, Tales from Earthsea, with this fun little story about connecting with relatives that have passed without the use of ghosts. Our two leads are extremely likeable and are written with enough childhood

innocence and passion to be considered realistic (a rare feat in this medium). It's an incredibly down-to-earth story that I have a lot of time for, even if things start to get a little questionable at the halfway point. If you know, you know. But that doesn't stop it deserving its rightful place just outside the top ten.

I've seen people online criticise Only Yesterday for featuring a ten-minute-long scene revolving around a family trying pineapple for the first time. But I think those people misunderstood the scene. That scene is a microcosm of Only Yesterday; a slow, deep dive into

the introspections of a twenty-seven-year-old woman looking back on her childhood and discovering how it shaped her, as well as how much she has lost her way. Its excitement lies in its mundanity, offering at least one thing that we can each relate to.



10 KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE
Watching Kiki's Delivery Service is like receiving a warm hug. Truly, the best way to experience the film is to wrap up in a blanket while it's cold outside and sip at a hot drink. Focussing on a coming-of-age witch, Kiki's Delivery Service is as Ghibli as Ghibli gets, though seldom feels tired.

Sabrina the Teenage Witch's Salem is a direct homage of Kiki's wisecracking cat, Jiji, and highlights that Kiki's Delivery Service was a source of inspiration for many great things to come, and rightfully so. It's a fantastic coming of age story that stands out despite Ghibli's love of this format.

Castle in the Sky is a hidden gem in Miyazaki's filmography. It's beautiful, boasting (like most Ghibli films) strong themes of peace and nature. These themes aren't all that Castle in the Sky has to offer, however. The movie's sky pirates are hilarious and fill the story

with a heart that is found in the most unexpected of places. Best of all though is that the film makes you care. More than any other Ghibli action/adventure flick, you want the protagonists to win, and that makes it special.





8 HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

Of all Joe Hisaishi's Ghibli scores, this one might evoke the most magic. Howl's Moving Castle is a fan favourite, for sure, and it's easy to see why. The film oozes charm, with some absolutely loveable characters driving the story along. Kind-hearted Sophie makes a strong protagonist, with Howl providing an even better foil. It's a perfect film to throw on and get lost in during a long afternoon.

7 GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES

Do you like crying? Do you like heartbreak? Do you like long films that show you how miserable life once was for a certain group of people? If you've answered yes to all these questions, then Grave of the Fireflies is for you! Centred on two orphans in war torn Japan, Grave of the Fireflies is a harrowing tale that truly promotes the studio's anti-war sentiment in an unforgettable fashion.



6 SPIRITED AWAY

Spirited Away is the only Ghibli film to win an Oscar; it really is that good. While not a personal favourite of mine, I cannot deny how masterfully told the story of young Chihiro lost in a magical bathhouse is. Standing at 125 minutes long, Spirited Away is perfectly paced and over in a flash, though despite this will leave you with some of the most memorable characters in animation history.



3 PORCO ROSSO

Porco Rosso is Ghibli's most entertaining film. It has everything. Action! Romance! A talking anti-fascist pig! This film has something for everyone and that's why it lands at #3. Not to mention, Michael Keaton voices the titular pig to perfection, capturing the gruff yet loving nature of our hero. He shines in a cast rammed with fantastic characters. Porco Rosso is a must see for anybody seeking a good time.

2 THE WIND RISES

Miyazaki's swan song, and what a way to finish your career! The Wind Rises follows the life of Jiro Horikoshi, designer of Japan's first fighter plane, with a focus on his doomed love life and his conflicted nature of creating something that Japan can be proud of yet is also a tool of destruction. The animation. The music. The writing. It's all perfect. There's no greater compliment to give this film than that it is one of Ghibli's finest. A masterpiece with everything coming together to make for one of the best films of all time. One of. But not quite.



5 MY NEIGHBOUR TOTORO

If you thought that Spirited Away featured some of Ghibli's most memorable characters wait until you watch My Neighbour Totoro. The film is iconic, and with good reason. Perhaps my favourite thing about the film is that it is simultaneously about nothing and everything at once. The plot? Two sisters discover magical creatures living near their new home. That's it. Yet, the film still manages to capture the importance and wanderlust of childhood innocence in a way that every other children's film envies. As a watch, My Neighbour Totoro is simply a delightful time for young and old.

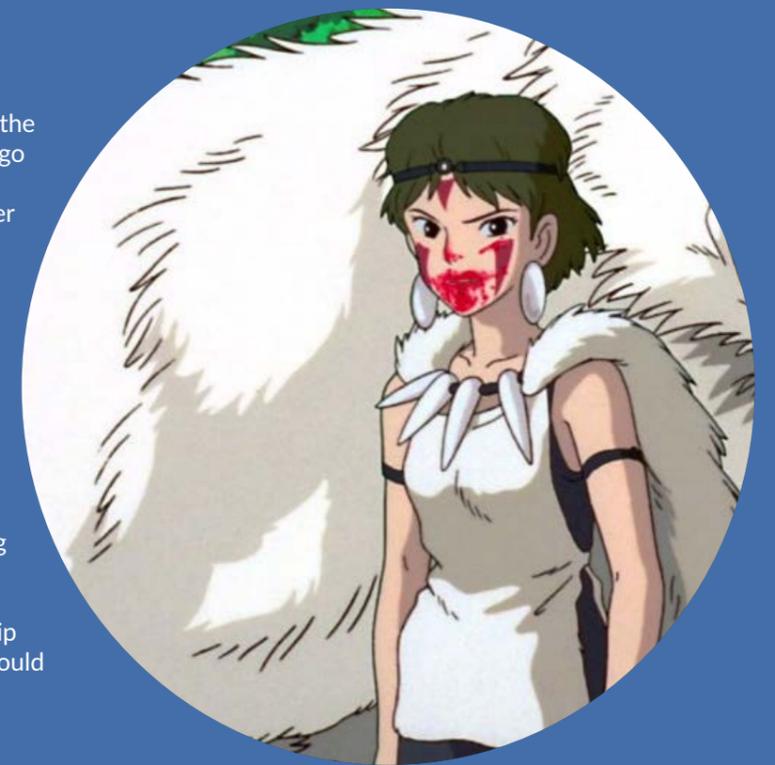


4 THE TALE OF PRINCESS KAGUYA

There's a scene in The Tale of Princess Kaguya in which the striking watercolour animation bleeds into one and becomes something ethereal. That's the best word I can use to describe Princess Kaguya: ethereal. Like all films on this list from this point onwards, this movie is a masterpiece. Tracking the titular princess from birth, the film focuses on the hardships of being a high-class female in Japan, though still finds moments to be incredibly funny. It's a tale with an incredible amount to say and best embodies Ghibli's love for the simpler, more rural times in Japan. Big Hero 6 beating it for the Best Animated Feature Oscar may have been humanity's greatest sin.

1 PRINCESS MONONOKE

Epic fantasy is hard to get right. I mean, look at the bottom of this list. Yet, Princess Mononoke will go down in history alongside The Lord of the Rings as one of the greatest pieces of epic fantasy ever created. Miyazaki was at the peak of his powers when whipping up this one, with his hatred for war and imperialism on full display, and his tender love for peace also creeping its way into the mix. Despite this, it isn't our titular hero who steals the show, nor protagonist Ashitaka, but antagonist Lady Eboshi, who shows that not all strong female characters have to be good guys. Eboshi represents the greed of humanity, willing to destroy an ancient forest for her own needs. She's a caricature that still rings true today. Yet she is only one of the small cogs that will grip you and wish that this two-hour masterpiece would never end.





DANIELA
LOFFREDA
CONTRIBUTOR

REELSTUFF

BREAKING THE RULES

Why Wes Craven's *Scream* is more than just a typical slasher trash and still a cult classic.

Scream is undoubtedly a film I've watched too many times. Rather embarrassingly, I can recall the dialogue from that infamous opening scene almost word-for-word. So, with October finally here and Halloween knocking on our door like a group of menacing teens, it seems like the perfect opportunity to talk about this cult classic.

The 1980s gave us a plethora of questionable trends. Spandex, neon leg warmers and mullets are fads which I - like many - am relieved we left in 1989, but that's not to say the 80s gave us nothing worth keeping around. Any horror movie fanatic will know that slasher films dominated the scene and gave us some of the most well-known titles in the genre, such as *Friday the 13th* and *Halloween*. But as quickly as the subgenre rose to mainstream success did it fall.

By the time of *Scream's* release in 1996, the idea of 'killer stalks and kills attractive groups of teens' had become predictable and, quite frankly, pretty boring. So what makes this film so different? And secondly, how do we view it now, over 20 years since its release?

Essentially, director Wes Craven sets out to do two key things with this film - acknowledge, yet also destroy the subgenre in which it exists. It is firstly important to consider the context in which the audience exists. At a quick glance, *Scream* just appears to be another slasher movie. Set in a small town in

California, Woodsboro High School becomes plagued by a series of gruesome murders. The cast are picked off one by one until the killer is finally apprehended and revealed at the end. So, as I said, nothing revolutionary.

Yet Craven capitalises on his conceited audience. By 1996, people thought they had seen pretty much everything that slasher movies have to offer - but little did they know, Craven had a few surprises up his sleeve.

From the very off, Craven wastes no time letting the audience know that this isn't just another teen slasher movie. Not even fifteen minutes in and Ghostface takes his first major victim in a spine-chilling attack. But what's arguably more shocking is Craven's choice of victim. With her face on every billboard advertisement running up to the film's release, the perceived main character and much-loved child star Drew Barrymore is killed off before the film has even begun.

Of course, Craven was not the first director to kill off a main character so soon - Alfred Hitchcock did just that to Janet Lee in probably the most iconic scene in horror history. Nevertheless, it serves as a chilling reminder to the audience that this is not just another horror film that will conveniently wrap its main characters in plot armour. In Woodsboro, nobody is safe.

Craven sets out to create a self-aware slasher movie where the characters acknowledge

their predestined fate. Jamie Kennedy's character, Randy, is the epitome of this. Not only does he explicitly discuss his theories on Ghostface's real identity and the order that he'll pick the cast off, but he does this with explicit reference to the slasher genre tropes. His predictions, for the most part, are pretty accurate too. Randy reminds the teens that if they want to survive, they can't have sex as only the virgins ever live to tell the tale.

Again, while Craven acknowledges this stereotype by keeping Randy alive, Sydney does potentially the worst thing she could have by having sex with the

killer. The audience assumes that this has sealed her fate as Ghostface's next victim but, surprisingly, Craven keeps her alive. This constant shift between adopting and rejecting slasher tropes keeps the audience guessing right until the very end.

It's worth noting the comedic value of this film. If you really know your 1980s horror, there is a lot to unpack here. A personal favourite moment of mine is Craven's dig at the successive directors of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise. It wasn't subtle, but it took some horror knowledge to figure out what he was implying.

Not only does the film mock the genre as a whole, though - it also ridicules itself. Screenwriter Kevin Williamson makes constant references to how predictable the slasher sub genre had become over the years. Just think about Sidney's phone conversation with Ghostface where she mocks the stupidity of horror movie victims, or even Ghostface's almost comedic antics and clumsy falls.

But, just as quickly as this film will make you laugh will it terrify you. Craven only almost lets us forget just how utterly menacing Ghostface is. This film finds the perfect balance between amusing and a little terrifying. So how does *Scream*

hold up today?

24 years since its release, I'd say it's still a 'must watch' in the build up to Halloween. Apart from the odd jump scare, it's definitely not the scariest film you'll watch this October, but it's definitely one that changed the game. *Scream* simultaneously acknowledged and destroyed everything that slasher fanatics thought they knew about the genre and, in doing so, became a cult classic. ■



(Right): Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles), Sam Winchester (Jared Padalecki), Castiel (Mischa Collins), and Crowley (Mark Sheppard).

After 15 years of the Winchester brothers fighting supernatural entities, the show is finally coming to an end. Supernatural began as two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester (played by Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles), tracking down their missing father. The focus soon shifted when demons killed their mother.

Their father, John (played by Jeffrey Dean Morgan), teaches them to become hunters but Sam decides to pursue his education. Fast-forward to John going missing and Dean recruits Sam to track him down. Reluctantly, Sam agrees but only after his girlfriend is brutally murdered by the same demon that killed his mother.

While the characters aren't fully developed in the first season, we get a glimpse into what the show could be. There's Dean's much-beloved Chevy Impala, the bond between Sam and Dean, and the Road So Far season recap with Kansas's Carry On My Wayward Son, all encompass the spirit of Supernatural. The heart of the show are the characters.

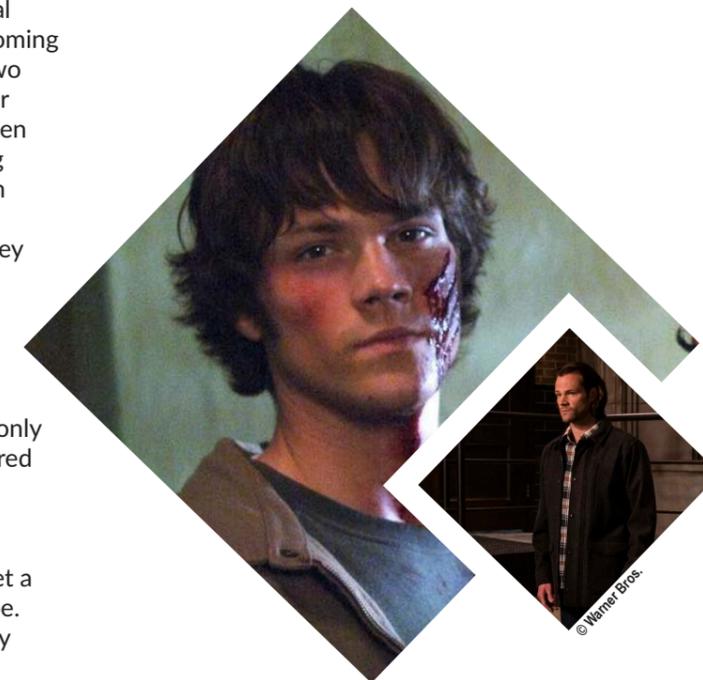
Season one is a complete anomaly compared to the others. It's very episodic. Each episode has a "monster of the week" which the brothers have to defeat and that was that.

Towards the end of the season, Supernatural begins to develop a recurring story of finding a specific weapon, Colt, to defeat a powerful demon.

From season one to four, the show followed a simple formula of good versus evil in the form of the Winchesters battling demons. It had epic finales but had yet to add anything unique to this genre. The biggest change in season four was the introduction other creatures into the mix.

No longer just about demon hunting - the stakes were raised to include angels as well. Fan favourites Castiel and Crowley (played by Mischa Collins and Mark Sheppard) were introduced after the fourth season and opened up the lore in Supernatural.

Who would've thought the Winchester's would need help from a demon and an angel?



We'll just skip seasons six to eight as Supernatural hit a low with boring storylines and overused tropes.

Thankfully, after that Supernatural went from strength to strength with each new threat being as epic as the last. Each season saw a new challenge for the Winchester brothers to overcome, but fans came back each time. Despite repetition, the constant draw was Sam and Dean. Their relationship is one of the best parts of the show.

The chemistry between the two is critical as the bond builds the show and the tension. You feel the brotherly love between and the lengths they'll go to protect the other. It's fueled most of the seasons as one of the Winchester brothers will make a huge sacrifice to save the other and it's always painful to watch.

Supernatural has managed to keep the show interesting and vibrant throughout the 15 year run on the whole. The showrunners have constantly expanded the diverse universe with Sam and Dean at the forefront. How the show will end is anyone's guess - but the everlasting legacy of Supernatural will stay with fans forever.

Supernatural's final season is now live and we're ready to cry. 🥺



CHARLIE VOGELSANG, CONTRIBUTOR



SIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

We talk to The Walking Dead Costume Designer Eulyn Hufkie about her time on the show and her dream outfit for a zombie apocalypse (spoilers: tiaras are involved).

Designing costumes in a world where society has broken down sounds like a challenge. Did you find it difficult or quite fun to navigate?

Eulyn Hufkie: I loved it! It was definitely challenging, but in a great way. We shot a film quality episode every 8 days. In a way, The Walking Dead became a period piece, as their civilisation ultimately stopped after 2010.

I do an intensive character study and then I receive a brief from the director or showrunner and then the actor weighs in, so it's a puzzle and I love collaborating with everyone. I definitely dealt with a group of passionate people on TWD, we were always excited to discuss ideas when new scripts came out.

How much creative licence did you get from the comic books? Was there much freedom to mix things up?

EH: In the beginning I had a lot of freedom, but with different showrunners there were different briefs and

expectations. Glen Mazzara could not have been more excited about Laurie's wedding dress. Scott Gimple was passionate about paying homage to the graphic novels - I dyed the Negan scarf to exactly match the graphic novel. But I also added my own spin on other characters like Michonne, for example, in particular with the 'M' necklace - I believe that every superhero needs an emblem.

Who was your favourite character to design and why?

EH: I loved designing for all of the characters. But my group of super heroes was my favourite - Michonne, Rick, Daryl, Carl, Maggie, Glenn and Herschel. They all had such distinctive styles and colours - I believed that they chose their looks, like one would choose an avatar in a video game. I often wondered what I would wear... There would definitely be a tiara and ass kicking boots!

The Governor also had a lot of interesting, slick looks. The bad guys always do!

How often were you on set, and what was that experience like? Do you have any stand out moments?

EH: I was on set most days, I always tried to start my day there. I would 'bless' all the walkers, as my team would call it. They would line up and I'd check each and every one of them. Add blood, shredding, tweak and so on.

I was always on the ground dusting zombie shoes, covered in dirt and sweating, wearing a mask and gloves, so when journalists came by to 'meet the designer', I yelled, "I'M OVER HERE" from under a cloud of dust. The look on their faces was priceless!

Obviously it's been a few years now since you worked on the show. What did it mean to yourself and your career, and do you miss it?

EH: I am eternally grateful to Frank Darabont and Gale Ann Hurd for the opportunity. It was life changing.

#eulynsarmy is a group of cosplayers who follow me and my career. I was invited to judge a comic con costume competition in Paris. I was nominated by the Costume Designers Guild.

I'm a brown immigrant from South Africa who grew up through apartheid. I'm extremely fortunate to get to do what I love. I hope to inspire other young women of colour, especially little girls like me growing up in the Cape Flats.

Do you still keep in touch with anyone from the cast?

EH: The Walking Dead family is real. I'm currently helping out Amy Lacy with a great short film, she was the script supervisor for years! I've since worked with Gale Ann Hurd, Jolly Dale [producers] and Matthew Goodwin [assistant director] on a film called Hell Fest. My costume crew left with



From comic to reality

me and we still work together often. I recently texted with Lauren Cohan [Maggie] and Michael Cudlitz [Abraham] Norman Reedus [Daryl] checks in from time to time - I am so proud of him! Danai Gurira has always been very supportive and we were all set to work together just as COVID hit.

10 years since it first kicked off, why do you think The Walking Dead has remained so popular for so long?

EH: The Walking Dead explores relationships, love, humanity in an extreme crisis situation. Gosh, in the time of COVID it seems even more relevant than ever!

I said it then and it still rings true We have to make it believable - people have to believe that zombies exist and we have to see ourselves in the characters. We then ask ourselves, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?!

Finally, how did you come to work on these Welcome to the Blumhouse projects, and how has it felt to be part of this impressive event?

EH: I worked with Blumhouse on The Purge where I created masks for purgers and protective gear for suburbanites. Every episode was a thrilling adventure.

The Welcome to the Blumhouse movies are unique and unsettling, they're meant to tap in people's deepest fears. It's really cool that they have diverse casts and emerging filmmakers. I was thrilled to continue my relationship with Blumhouse and offer my experience and expertise to these up and coming directors. 🍷



GEORGE WHITE
FILM EDITOR



Abraham Ford side by side



© AMC/Eulyn C Hufkie

ADULT ANIMATION

Why BoJack Horseman is more than just an animated and how it uses its cartoony style to cover dark topics.

Whilst most people would associate the animation style with children's entertainment, there has been a rapidly growing rate of animated TV shows purely targeted for the adult demographic. The most famous examples, The Simpsons and South Park, have been on our televisions for decades. A lot of these shows exist to show extremely raunchy and dark humour, and that trend has continued recently with the creation of Rick and Morty. However, one show that takes the idea of the adult animation and uses the format for a completely different reason is the Netflix original series, BoJack Horseman.

In case you are not familiar with the show, here is what you need to know. Airing on Netflix, BoJack Horseman ran for six seasons from 2014 up until 2020. Created by Raphael Bob-Waksberg, it stars the voices of Will Arnett, Amy Sedaris, Alison Brie, Pau F. Tompkins and Aaron Paul. The show follows BoJack Horseman, who was the star of the hit television show "Horsin' Around" in the '80s and '90. Now, he's washed up, living in Hollywood, complaining about everything, and wearing colourful sweaters.

What makes this show stand out in comparison to every other adult animation series is the tone and themes of the show. Other shows use the format for jokes and explicit content, but BoJack Horseman is a show that deals with very serious issues. This is a show that tackles mental health issues, such as depression and PTSD. This is a show that talks about



BoJack's not your average cartoon

the true lifestyle of Hollywood, and how the glamorous life there is not as it seems. This is a show that takes real life issues such as alcoholism, suicide, pregnancy, obesity and so much more and doesn't glamourise them or use them for punchlines, but starts a conversation about them.

These topics can be very hard to digest, especially on television. Netflix is a company that takes more risks than most in picking up shows talking about tough subjects. They had a discussion about suicide with 13 Reasons Why (whether it was successful is another decision). They had a discussion about sex with Sex Education. Netflix being the company that produced and distributed BoJack Horseman is no surprise, as the show was allowed to be explicit and dive in deep on these societal issue.

If a show like this would have been live-action, it wouldn't hit in the same way.



Who knew a talking horse would touch on such human topics

The animation is very much an identity of the show, and allows the audience to take these subject matters in a consumable format. It would be a lot tougher to watch six seasons of a show like this if BoJack Horseman wasn't half-horse, but completely human. These shows handle completely human issues, but doing so with a layer of fantasy allows the audience to separate their own struggles with the one of BoJack.

We are still a long way away from normalising some of these topics, but I will always appreciate the way that BoJack Horseman tackles them. This is not just with the character of BoJack himself but with numerous side characters. One storyline that developed over the series to become a major plot point focuses on BoJack's manager, Princess Carolyn. It focuses on the struggles of not only getting pregnant, but also raising children as a single parent.



They even cover the tragic reality of dementia

It is hard to see true representation of a mother's struggles through the pregnancy phase. This storyline is also supported by the fact that throughout all of this, she is ambitious and works incredibly hard in her career. To see something like that represented on TV is incredible, and more shows should aspire to do the same.

Of course, a show like BoJack Horseman is not just made to be informative or to have these conversations, but it is to entertain. If the tone was dark the entire way through, then the animation style wouldn't be enough to lighten the mood. There's still plenty of animal-based puns to keep the laughs frequent, including a few celebrities being given the BoJack treatment.

Whilst it is sad that there will never be another episode of BoJack Horseman, I want to thank everyone who worked on it for the past six years. So many shows handle these subject matters badly, and using colourful animation helped in tackling these subjects with no filter. Yes, we can have TV shows that are entertaining and mindless, but I also want shows that speak to me and try to relate to me.

That was what BoJack Horseman was - and I hope to find something else like it again.

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**USING
 COLOURFUL
 ANIMATION
 HELPED
 IN TACKLING
 THESE
 SUBJECTS
 WITH NO
 FILTER**



AMY SMITH,
 CONTRIBUTOR



Three Key Scenes:
LOST IN TRANSLATION



GEORGE WHITE
 FILM EDITOR



PINK HAIR, DON'T CARE (52 MINS)

In arguably the most iconic scene of the film, at least stylistically, Bob and Charlotte sit outside a sleazy karaoke booth and share a cigarette. After a hectic night filled with drinking, singing and getting kicked out of a bar by an angry man with a BB gun, the serenity of this moment provides a tranquil paradox to their exciting adventure, and gives the characters a chance to reflect - on themselves, on their lives, and on their relationship with each other. As Charlotte rests her head on Bob's shoulder, the duo realise that - finally - they're not alone.



PILLOW TALKING (70 MINS)

When insomnia prevents the pair from sleeping one night, Bob joins Charlotte for some sake (in some of the coolest square cups of all time), and they end up lying together, discussing the future and things to come. Charlotte talks of her desire for meaning, claiming that she doesn't know what she's supposed to be. Bob opens up on the difficulties of marriage and having children, claiming that the life he once knew was gone the day the first was born. It's a beautiful dichotomy of two people at different stages of their life chasing the exact same thing - a sense of purpose.



THE WHISPER (93 MINS)

Bob is travelling by taxi to the airport, resigned to returning to the emptiness of real life, and spots Charlotte in a busy street. He runs over and embraces her, saying the proper goodbye they didn't manage back at the hotel. As they hug, Bob whispers something to Charlotte, out of earshot. To this day, only Murray, Johansson and Coppola know what was said - although enhanced audio suggests it was, "Promise me, that the next thing you do, is go up to that man and tell him the truth." Regardless of the line, I agree with Family Guy's Peter Griffin: I bet it was perfect.

RETRO REVIEW

BRONTE'S BEST BOOK

Why Wuthering Heights will always be my favourite book

The first time I read Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, I was 14 years old. I had stumbled upon it in the library. The cover looked beautifully dreary, so it makes perfect sense that I took it home with me. However, I managed to get through only 10 pages of the book. Nothing pulled at me, there was no urge to ravage my way through this book. I returned it and forgot all about it.

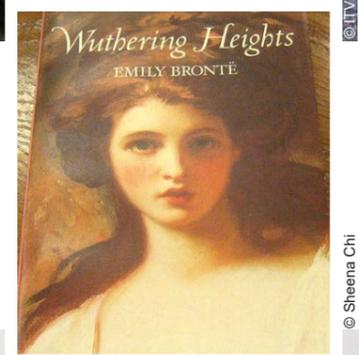
I encountered it again 5 years later, while I was waiting for University to start. It was on a trip to a second-hand bookstore that I discovered it again, and I stared at it for a long while, not knowing why it was so familiar to me. It wasn't until I had bought it and brought it home that I realised it was the boring book from a few years ago.

But I was stuck with it, since there was nothing else to read. As the rain raged all around me, and I nursed a hot cup of tea, I entered the world of Wuthering Heights, a gothic world of romance, ghosts, hauntings and the supernatural. It was also a commentary on social class and status. There is recognition from Cathy that Heathcliff is the man she desires to be with, because he is the only man who understands and knows who she is, yet she cannot bring herself to marry him because he is her social inferior.

It is heart-breaking to see the despair that encases Heathcliff from then on, with Cathy's decision leading him down a path of dark revenge, wreaking such devastation



Tom Hardy's TV Heathcliff



© Sheena Chi

on the family. It is not a love story to be admired, or to emulate - it is a warning on how powerful and all-consuming love can be. Once it has you in its passionate grips, you are a madman that will serve it till the ends of the earth.

Heathcliff was unable to let Cathy go, not even after her death. It was an experience I couldn't understand at the young age of 14, but on the brink of adulthood I couldn't forget his rage, and the bleak despair that followed.

Falling in love should come with a warning attached, but then again, don't we all know that?



Kaya Scodelario brought Catherine to life

© Film4



NAT ALVAR
 BOOKS EDITOR

MASSIVE EFFECT

How Bioware's desire to keep making Star Wars games spawned a whole franchise



GAMING



JAMES MASON, CONTRIBUTOR

Bioware is a company known for making very well received Role Playing Games and the equally beloved Star Wars RPG "Knights of the Old Republic." In the early 2000s they found themselves unable to make Star Wars games. So what would you do when facing no longer being able to play within a rich, deep detailed sci-fi universe? You make your own.

And so Mass Effect came to be. Its visual look inspired from a "what if Syd Mead designed the Star Trek Universe" musing was complimented by a deep lore and wonderfully varied group of alien races.

Playing as a human called Shepard, (you can pick your gender) you are pulled into a galactic mystery that has you not just navigating space but also political factions on The Citadel; a sci-fi UN hub. You command The Normandy and assemble some of the most memorable characters in gaming throughout the series. Being an RPG their impact on you depends on how you interact with them. In the first game if you don't make certain choices you'll not see them again and possibly will deal with a replacement character in the sequel. Your choices truly matter.

Characters like, Garrus Vakarian, a Turian that's on your crew quickly became a fan favourite with players. Urdnot Wrex, a Krogan (think Klingon with more tank like physiques) was a personal fave of mine and the race's story arc across the trilogy was extremely well handled as there's a lot to like when pursuing the Krogan missions. Liara T'Soni is an Asari. They are a matriarchal race with biotics abilities



Biotics are essentially Force powers but with a more technological spin than the religious/spiritual leanings of Star Wars. Mass Effect and its sequels are full of fabulous characters. Making this series perfect in gathering a passionate and large fanbase.

A fanbase not afraid to let its voice be heard. The initial conclusion to the Mass Effect Trilogy was met with some disappointment, mainly because it didn't meet the promise of your choices mattering. Bioware quickly did a director's cut ending which mostly addressed the problems and added a DLC expansion which let fans say goodbye to a lot of characters in a satisfying way.

Sadly the same vocal fans may have contributed to the entire series being benched with their borderline vitriolic and toxic reaction to Mass Effect: Andromeda. An admittedly problematic entry known for its turbulent development and being released in quite buggy state. Later patched (just like ME3) to being more acceptable to play. Sadly, we're unlikely to see it continued.

What we may yet see is a remaster of the Trilogy which could reignite this franchise. If it does happen, and I really hope it does, then I strongly suggest you pick up as the mixing of RPG and 3rd person shooter is sci-fi heaven. I'm James Mason, Mass Effect fanboy and endorse these games. ▣



RANKING

HAPPY BIRTHDAY PS2

The PlayStation 2 is turning 20, yes it really is that old. We take a look back at this historic console.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the PlayStation 2's release. With 155 million units sold, the PlayStation 2 is the best-selling console of all time. It was a trailblazer due to its revolutionary ability to play DVDs - but mainly down to the impressive library of games.

To celebrate this milestone and honour this beloved console, we asked you, the readers of Meteor Magazine for your help. We wanted to know what is the best game for the PlayStation 2 and why it was so special. And you didn't disappoint. So, without further ado, here are the results.



With 10% of the votes, Crazy Taxi just managed to drive onto our list. Originally released in arcades in Japan, the game was eventually ported to PlayStation 2 and was instantly a fan favourite. "I love the wildness and the

overall craziness of the game," said Paige Howard, 24 from Sheffield. "There's a scene where you could drive under water and a random orca. I drove under water all the time, and would be in real life if it was possible."

5 CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX



© ProsaifaGaming

After the success of the PlayStation titles, fans were desperate for a Crash game on the next-gen console. Clearly, this game made an impact on fans as 12% of our votes said this was their favourite game. "So many memories with this game and you'd be a fool to not love Aku Aku," wrote Chloe Harvey, 21 from Nottingham. "Coco was always my favourite character and her section was the best. There was no other platformer out for the PlayStation like Crash and it was completely unique."



4 TIME SPLITTERS 2

TimeSplitters 2 completely changed the landscape of first-person shooters. The game added so many unique game modes that are commonplace in this genre now. "From the interesting story to the amazing multiplayer modes, it had everything," said Ky Salisbury, 25 from Sheffield. "I remember the characters and the setting so vividly - there was nothing else like it. This is a game that needs to be remade, can you imagine it on the PlayStation 5?!"



3 GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

From the cinematic story to the vibrant soundtrack, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City ranks number three on our list with 16% of the votes. "I love this game because it made me into the gamer I am today and impacted me so much," wrote Tahlea Smith, 30 from Nottingham. "My favourite part was taking over the game like a boss and being a badass. It became my happy place and allowed me to take control of the game."

2 THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

"No other Sims game had the whole exploring lots or driving cars yet - so this one was legendary," said Kevin McFarland, 24 from Chesterfield. "I still remember the story of Malcolm taking all my stuff! It was so satisfying when I finally reached the top of my career and managed to move into a mansion. It's a fantasy simulator at it's best." Bustin' Out revolutionised the Sims and for that reason you say it deserves second place.



© Longplayarchive

1 THE SIMPSONS: HIT AND RUN

Who would've thought that a Simpsons' game would allow you to explore Springfield and tear stuff up? The Simpsons: Hit and Run received the most votes from readers with 20% of the votes. "I spent hours playing this game, and I just loved the story and overall action that it presented," wrote Harry Downing, 23 from Sheffield. "It was brilliant to play all my favourite characters in a GTA style." We hope the rumours that this classic is finally get a remake are true. Is it too much to ask to terrorise Springfield one more time!



© BLG

THE HARDEST THING IS SPACE

We talk to Graeme Norgate, the in-house composer behind Timesplitters and Golden Eye.



NATHAN WARBY
GAMING
CO-EDITOR

INTERVIEW

The video game industry has an illustrious history of stellar soundtracks. Quirky earworms that fully encapsulate a level or, in some cases, an entire game. We spoke with Graeme Norgate, the brains behind the music of Timesplitters, Goldeneye 007 and many more, about his work, how it ended up as game composer and even a little bit of technical stuff.

Was it always games that you wanted to work on?

Graeme Norgate: Video games were more of a 'wish list' career, I never thought it would actually happen. It was games that got me into music in a big way, because like so many of us I was obsessed with them, but I had no idea how to get into it as a career. Instead I joined a couple of bands and wrote music for that. And in my spare time just for the love of doing it. Hopefully, nobody gets to hear that early work – it's pretty terrible.

So, how did you wind up working on video game soundtracks?

GN: Pure luck. I worked some normal office jobs alongside self-teaching myself how to compose, but they really

weren't for me. I saw an advert in Edge Magazine about a vacancy at Rare, who were really at the top of their game at the time (1990's). I sent off my CV and some demos, but I never expected to hear from them, it was like saying you wanted to be a footballer it was so unlikely.

But, they picked me and here I am.

Our readers are interested in the actual process of adding music to a game, how far along into development is it made?

GN: When you're an in-house composer like I am, you have the benefit of being involved early so you have more time. The downside is that you only get to run through a basic build of the levels before you start making music. I remember, on

Timesplitters, just being given a piece of paper with locations like 'Egypt' or 'haunted house' written on it, that was my brief! **I imagine that means that things change quite a lot throughout development?**

GN: Absolutely and it's heart-breaking. A lot of time and effort goes into these projects and sometimes somebody will say 'it's just not working' and that's it.



Graeme Norgate



Timesplitters brought multiplayer to a whole new level

On Timesplitters, did you attack each piece with certain feeling you want to evoke?

GN: For those games is very much down to location. They offer a lot of variety in that sense, whether it's a Martian planet or a Siberian Dam. So, it's about capturing the feeling of really being there. For example, in the mobster levels I wanted the player to feel like they were in 30's Chicago.

It was almost cliché, but because Timesplitters is a cartoony game, we could do pastiches of well-known situations.

Is it restricting when you work with existing material, like with Goldeneye?

GN: That was great because the hard work was done for you. But yeah, by tune 30 it was like 'what can I do?' Thankfully, the James Bond theme has so many motifs that you can just use a snippet, like the brass tabs or the bass line, and people know what you're alluding to. There was a lot less time being sat with an empty arrangement, you always had a leg up.

What's the biggest change been in how video music is made over the years?

GN: Space!

The cartridges on the N64 were so small, we just had a bank of instrument sounds saved as MIDI files. Plus, the samples were really short so you had to find little tricks to make them sound realistic.

Now, there's no confines, the skies the limit. It's like choose your own adventure, but with music. It's great from our point of view.

Here's the techy bit, how does a game know what piece of music to play when you're getting shot at?

GN: I think so, it's much harder with these bigger modern games because it's more like scoring a TV show or a film. It's mirroring the action but not getting in the way. There's more smaller pieces of music that suit every little bit of the game but it's jumping all over the place as you move around, so it's hard to get something that you'd call a structured piece of music.

Do you have a favourite project that you've worked on?

GN: It's always mixed emotions when you finish a project, and you always look back at them more fondly.

I remember when we finished Timesplitters: Future Perfect I said that I enjoyed it, but it nearly killed me. More recently I did some work on some mobile games.

Because my day job is making these interactive soundtracks for games with thousands of lines of dialogue and sound effects, going back to the simplicity of banging out a catchy tune to match a level has been a lot of fun.

Finally, what are your personal favourite soundtracks?

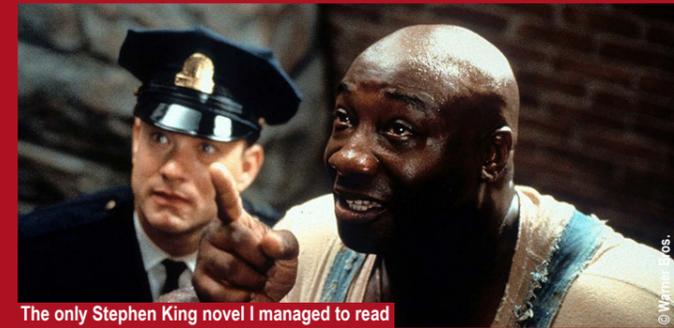
GN: The Mario games – you'd be a monster not to like those. 🍄



The name's Bond, James Bond

WHY I CAN'T READ HORROR BOOKS (BUT WANT TO)

It's the time of year to get spooky but I just can't bring myself to enjoy that feeling...



The only Stephen King novel I managed to read

Somehow, I am less squeamish about horror movies, which technically, should be more horrifying since now you have actual footage for your nightmares. I do remember asking my parents whether I could sleep in their room after watching *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, and this was as a full-fledged adult, so yeah, it's not like I can completely stomach horror films.

But it's different with a book. It gets to me more because you have to conjure the world by yourself. As you read, you are using the descriptions the writer gives to help you build the world you are going to be visiting while you engage with the book. It requires a greater sense of internalisation (hence the use of devour when one describes reading a book), which means the images stay with you far longer.

I do think about horror books all the time, because it is the one genre that I haven't been able to conquer. How can I claim I am a versatile book reader when I shy away from ghouls, monsters, and all things that go bump in the night? I also can't do fantasy novels, but that's a story for another time.

Over time, I have been able to forgive myself for my incapacity to digest horror, mainly because I realised that I have a limit, and I should respect my inability to carry on. Just like how I can't watch movies about demonic possession, and how certain romance stories are not for me, I shouldn't be too hard on myself for not properly getting into the horror genre. It's all about small steps.

Right now, I am reading *My Best Friend's Exorcism* by Grady Hendrix, and I have surprisingly gotten quite far into the book despite it being about one of my taboo topics. I hope that I will finish it, but am not going to sweat it if I don't.

It is the spooky month of October, and as is part of the season, this is the time of year to indulge in creepy books, the kind that makes your skin crawl and has you looking for demons in the corner of your room. While some truly delight in partaking in this month of horror, I can't really say the same.

It's not for lack of trying. I started Laurell K Hamilton's Anita Blake series, but managed to only get to book six before all the blood, death, and sex got to me (the books became quite pornographic, and there is a limit to how much smut one can take). I tried Anne Rice's *Sleeping Beauty* series, but once again, the transgressive spaces of the book were just a bit too much for me. Unfortunately, I could bear the *Twilight* vampires more than Rice's darker counterparts, and that should tell you everything you need to know about my taste in books.

I have thought about starting a Stephen King book many times, but the only one I ever managed to get through is *The Green Mile*. I tried his collection of short stories, the one entitled *Full Dark, No Stars* (this should have been enough for me to stay away), however after the first story I full on wanted to vomit, and couldn't get the woman's horrifying visage out of my head for days. I returned the book and aspired to get over it.

I tried again with Chuck Palahniuk's short story collection *Haunted*, and I was enjoying myself until I reached the story about the guy in the pool. I think I lost my lunch after that one, and when I say lost, I mean regretting the chicken pie and hot chocolate I had before starting the collection. I'm sure you can guess what happens when you combine food choices like that and a vomit-inducing story.



Frankenstein took the National Theatre by storm



NAT ALVAR
BOOKS EDITOR

BOOKS



HELEN RODGERS, CONTRIBUTOR

REVIEW

CORONA FICTION

Kissing the Coronavirus is what you get if a global pandemic met erotic fiction for 99p. And yes, it's as bad as it sounds.

Corona-romance: The next big thing?

Warning: this article contains green men with python-like appendages and small bumps called spike proteins. Read at your own risk.

Coronavirus lockdown and furlough left people with oodles of time that they didn't have before to do whatever they pleased and people across the globe took up new creative hobbies that allowed them to explore new and forgotten skills.

M.J. Edwards took this spare time to write the ground-breaking masterpiece that is *Kissing the Coronavirus*.

With a name like that, it's no surprise to anyone that *Kissing the Coronavirus* has blown up over the past few weeks and, as can only be expected of a novel where the coronavirus is described to be as exciting as 'a pulsating, erect penis', it has become a meme.

When I initially came across the story on Facebook I was amused and quite disgusted – the idea of sexualising a disease which completely devastated

the country I live in was unfathomable and just a bit too close to home. But, as an avid reader who likes to explore all kinds of literature good or bad, my curiosity got the better of me and I found myself settling down on a Saturday afternoon to read *Kissing the Coronavirus* on the Kindle app.

It's clear from the very first page that Edwards was not even slightly serious when she decided to write this smutty tale. From 'the lace glided across her skin like a fat man on a water slide' to 'the virus made her ovaries clash together like cymbals', Edwards has a way with words that perfectly intertwines hilarious and vivid imagery with stereotypical romance genre cliches that makes the story both entertaining and gross.

Edwards language choices are constantly questionable – she definitely wins the award for the most uses of 'pop' in a short story – but they turn ordinary anecdotes into sentences that actually make you laugh out loud. Take the protagonist Alexa's heart



Yes, this really is where romance literature has led us

hammering 'harder than the time she was hammered by the carpet fitter when he came to fit the carpets in her country manor' for example – the devil is in the excessive detail.

Cutting to the chase, this 16-page wonder is about a woman getting down and dirty with a physical manifestation of the coronavirus. A manifestation that comes in the form of a man with big shoulders, six-pack abs, 'striking eyes like a goat' and 'a bulge in his trousers the size of a medium-length python'.

Oh, and he's green.

And he has little green bumps covering his body.

Sounds attractive, right?

The story is as strange as you'd expect from a woman whose bio states lives with her husband and nineteen ferrets but it's uncomplicated and witty. *Kissing the Coronavirus* is definitely worth the 10 minutes it takes and the 99p it costs to read.

And, if you loved *Kissing the Coronavirus*, then I have some good news for you: it's not the only one of its kind.

Courting the Coronavirus: A Positively Viral Love Story was released in the midst of the *Kissing the Coronavirus* hype at the start of October. And it's pretty much the same story, only this time the coronavirus comes to life when it (or should it be he?) is thrown back in time to the 19th Century by a hadron collider and he's given the fancy title of *Count Covid*.

The synopsis for *Courting the Coronavirus* appeared to have a more adventurous plotline and I wondered whether we would get more than your usual coronavirus romance story. But, sadly, no. Though it's longer than its predecessor (I was still able to finish it in

the half an hour it took my boyfriend to go fetch McDonald's breakfast), *Courting the Coronavirus* is a blatant rip-off of *Kissing the Coronavirus*, just with less comedy.

The protagonist Joan is a clone of Alexa – and almost every other female lead in romance books – with a voluptuous-yet-petit body and a fatal flaw of being attracted to diseases. And this green man is just as stereotypically handsome as the last one – although this one has manor house and a fancy costume.

The stand out moment of the entire story was when *Count Covid* was revealed and he had a dry and wheezing cough. Call it karma!

So, it goes without saying that you don't need to read both of these stories, just one will suffice.

But, it makes me wonder if we'll be seeing more of these coronavirus romance novellas Or, dare I say it, a novel like this?

With thousands of people writing like they never have before during lockdown, are we destined to see months of green, diseased men on the covers of books lining the walls in Waterstones?

My hope is that the answer is no.

Kissing the Coronavirus is the perfect story to consume if you want a distraction from the morbidity of this pandemic as it makes a change to laugh at the situation rather cry about it.

But, we don't need more of these stories. Just like we don't need another *Cats* film with the same terrifying CGI.



What a COVID romance should actually look like



DEWI HARGREAVES, CONTRIBUTOR

INTERVIEW

BRAVE AND BOLD FICTION

How daring new press, Lost Boys, launched despite lockdown and COVID-19.

Despite the publishing industry being thrown into chaos by the coronavirus, Chad Ryan and Ashley Hutchinson are continuing with their plan to launch Lost Boys Press – an indie publisher for brave and bold works of fiction. We managed to sit them down (in a social-distancing-appropriate way) for a quick interview about why they're doing it, and the challenges they've faced along the way. **What made you decide to become an indie publisher, rather than self-publishing or pursuing traditional publishing?**

Chad Ryan: Besides being our own bosses, I enjoy the creative freedom of being able to explore topics and interests that aren't dictated by sales or cultural trends. Also, gatekeepers make it hard for risk-takers in traditional publishing. Many 'bestsellers' these days are ghost-written books for celebrities and politicians, or the same bedrock names in fiction we've seen for 20 years (King, Steele, Grisham, etc). We're interested in the new voices.

Ashley Hutchinson: Having worked in the publishing industry for a few years now, I've witnessed how influential market trends can be, sometimes to the detriment of the industry itself. Starting a publishing company means we can avoid being in the service of market trends and lets us give a platform to authors who might otherwise be ignored.

Was it as hard as you expected?

CR: Quite, as we're building something from scratch. Writing our books was one piece of the puzzle. Now we have to flex our muscles a bit, reach out,



Chad Ryan, co-founder of Lost Boys Press

and build an infrastructure of support. Marketing. Learning the ropes by doing. We're both hands-on and work well that way. Sure, we'll chase some rabbits down wrong holes, but that's how we learn.

AH: It was harder. Having worked only in editorial, my experience with marketing and administration was zero, so I've had to rely on Chad to fill in those gaps. I'm sure he's felt that when it comes to editorial, and in that way we work well together.

Lost Boys aims to pick up books that traditional publishing overlooks. Do you think this is the main advantage of indie publishing? What else does indie publishing excel at, in your opinion?

CR: For me, I love having the freedom to tell bold stories without fear. When indie-published or self-published titles really knock it out of the park, it's something special. Also, I love how indies play with the rules of storytelling. You can experiment more, and I think



Launching through a global pandemic was never going to be easy

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IF
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that's the future of keeping the written word fresh.

AH: I agree with Chad on this 100%. We get to break publishing standards, not only in the content of what we publish, but also the structure and format. For example, most traditional publishers will tell you that a book in a certain genre needs to be x amount of words, and that can be so constraining. If an author were to come to me and say, "I have this idea for a fantasy and I want to present it in thirty-thousand words," I'd tell them to send it to me. You can't judge how impactful a work will be by its word count.

Do you think the coronavirus crisis will have an impact on indie publishing?

CR: I think it's a very challenging time to try and start anything right now, but the world is what it is, and there's no time like the present. We can't predict the future, but we can choose to do nothing right now - and that's just not a viable choice for us.

AH: Over the course of the pandemic, I have read articles saying that the book industry is thriving and that it's flailing. No matter what, the industry will always be in flux, and we have to take our chances. Virus or not, we want to put in the work and bring stories to people.

What would be your one piece of advice for someone looking to follow your footsteps and launch their own publishing house?

CR: Check back with us in a year. Ha! Seriously, find a team or



Ashley Hutchinson, co-founder of Lost Boys Press

somebody you can work with and know what your strengths are. Don't try to be all things for all people. You'll find your niche and then you'll find your audience. At least, that's our plan.

AH: What he said. Doing this alone would be nearly impossible. It's the effort that we both put in and our individual skills that have made this work. But if something is your dream, your passion, your reason for living, then go for it.

Finally, where and when will we be able to pick up your debut novels?

CR: A Map to the Stars, Ashley's brilliant creative non-fiction memoir about her harrowing childhood, and Ghost River, my tour de force of the weird and macabre happenings in a cursed ghost town in the middle of the desert, are both available in Kindle editions for pre-order on Amazon right now. Paperback options will become available closer to the full launch. They're dropping on October 31st, 2020. 📖

HERE TO HELP

With streaming services like Netflix constantly adding new and nostalgic Korean dramas to their roster, it's easier than ever to find yourself transported into the slightly-magical world of these dramatic TV shows. However, for those who have never experienced the joy (and heartbreak) of an excellent K-drama before, it can be hard to know where to start.

K-drama expert Helen Rodgers breaks down the top 6 K-dramas that you can stream on Netflix right now.

BY HELEN RODGERS

THE BEST K-DRAMAS



(Left): Seon-Mi finds herself in a world of mystery after she becomes bound to modern-day versions of The Bull Demon King and The Monkey King as a child.

6 MOON EMBRACING THE SUN

Love triangles, enemies-to-lovers plots and forbidden romances are rife in K-dramas and this royal drama expertly creates a romance that will break and warm your heart. Set in the Joseon dynasty, Moon Embracing the Sun will teach you a little about Korea's history and have you crying by the fourth episode.

3 DESCENDANTS OF THE SUN

As the winner of the Grand Prize at 2016's 52nd Baeksang Arts Awards - basically the Korean Oscars - Descendants of the Sun is filled with exquisite cinematography as well as a tragic plot that tells the story of a soldier who falls in love with a surgeon but their professions keep them apart.

5 W: TWO WORLDS APART

After her father suddenly disappears, Yeon-joo is kidnapped and transported into another dimension and finds herself in the middle of a murder mystery. Centred around a webtoon entitled 'W', this thrilling drama is perfect for anyone who has ever wished they could travel to the fictional world of their favourite TV show or comic.

2 STRONG GIRL BONG-SOON

Descended from a line of women who were born with superhuman strength, Do Bong-soon is the female protagonist we've been dreaming of after she is hired as a bodyguard to the CEO of a gaming company. Masterfully combining absurd Korean humour and mystery, Strong Girl Bong-soon will keep you on the edge of your seats.

4 HELLO, MY TWENTIES

Hello, My Twenties is one of the only shows in Korea that has multiple seasons and this bright, slice-of-life K-drama is impossible to watch without wishing that each of the five protagonists could be your friends as you watch them juggle the obstacles of adult life.

1 A KOREAN ODYSSEY

Adapted from the 16th Century Chinese novel Journey to the West, A Korean Odyssey follows Jin Seon-mi (Oh Yeon-seo) as she explores a world where evil is everywhere. This epic slowly builds to a complex and eruptive finale that will leave you wanting more.

WANT TO BE A CONTRIBUTOR?



Do you like writing about games, film, TV, and books as much as you do reading about them?

If you have an idea for our website or magazine, please contact us at meteoreditorial@gmail.com with a short pitch and we'll be in touch.