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From the Editor

There was a plan. Honest.

And as plans go sometimes, there have been hiccups and obstacles and all sorts of reasons why the first one back felt like the *only* one back. For a while. But fear not! For herein is a new collection of reviews, essays, and articles all for you to peruse and ruminate upon.

I know I asked in ish 18 how often you'd like to see *Films Fantastic* in your in-box. I did *not* intend for the interval to be eight months! So I owe everyone an apology for the tardiness of this second issue since the 'zine was put into my hands by the very patient Mr. Phillies.

As always, I welcome your feedback and review. If you'd like to send a Letter of Comment, I'll gladly start including them in this publication along with our keen insights and pithy observations about things cinematic.

So now, in no particular order, roll 'em!

~ Jason

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Contributors (alphabetically)

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Contributions welcome.

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Deadpool & Wolverine is Cathartic

James Hunt

(originally published at SciFi4Me.com)

Deadpool & Wolverine (2024)

Written by Ryan Reynolds & Rhett Reese & Paul Wernick & Zeb Wells & Shawn Levy

Based on characters created by Rob Liefeld and Fabian Nicieza

Produced by Kevin Feige, Shawn Levy, Ryan Reynolds

Directed by Shawn Levy

R, 2hr 8m

Deadpool & Wolverine offers a cathartic, chaotic and charming ending to the legacy of 20th Century Fox while opening a door to the future of the now, cemented, shared universe.

The opening gives us a very satisfying — and long overdue — answer to the ending of *Deadpool 2*, and I was worried about how it would be handled given how much ground this movie covers, but it's handled quite nicely. This time out, we go on an adventure following Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) on a quest to save his universe after agents from the Time Variance Authority (TVA) attack and pull him into the agency, where Mr. Paradox (Matthew Macfadyen) tells him he can die with his universe, or join the TVA to help prune the various divergent timelines, and that includes his own universe, which is dying backwards from the events of *Logan*. Turns out, our favorite angry Canadian was the anchor being for that universe, and his death is causing things to unravel.

Except "Marvel Jesus" has a few ideas of his own, refusing to accept the ultimatum from the TVA. His option is to find another Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) and make him a new anchor being for his universe. Pulling various disparate parts into the main MCU, Wade's quest leads to variants, multiversal madness, and cameos that made watching *Loki* even more rewarding.

The much-anticipated meeting between Wade and Logan goes about how you'd expect, delivering a few fan-pleasing fights before introducing Cassandra Nova, and I have to admit Emma Corrin stole the show whenever she was on screen, giving us a very fun and truly warped villain.

Spoiler time.

What can I say? It's amazing. I, along with EVERYONE, was concerned with how they would bring Logan back, because it's a pretty big deal to undo that ending. Ryan Reynolds even said they wouldn't disrespect Logan's ending. So how do they start the movie? With Deadpool using all 206 bones of Logan's corpse to kill the TVA as we hear NSYNC's "Bye, Bye, Bye". And I have to admit it works. It was a very funny, very smart way of ripping off the Band-Aid. Jackman's return as Logan has been a touchy subject for some, so Reynolds & Company's antidote is to make the audience laugh as much as they can so they can enjoy the desecration of Logan's body.

The story overall is solid. Deadpool's goal is pretty loose enough that you can fit in all kinds of cameos, action scenes and subplots, and boy did they do that. We get a whole slew of Wolverine comic cameos from mini-Logan to his alter ego Patch. But of course, we have to talk about the ~~Man of Steel~~ adamantium, Henry Cavill. Best. Cameo. Ever. 10/10, the whole theater was screaming. Most likely he's not coming back, and if that's the case, that was the best throwaway gag ever. But if there's more, as Deadpool says, it just feels right.

The way they get Wolverine into the MCU, is probably the best way. This is a Logan that's familiar enough to the one we've watched before, but he has enough unexplored backstory to offer all new possibilities. For example, this Wolverine knows who the Avengers are. (Side note, hearing the word Avengers come out of Hugh Jackman's mouth was just the coolest.) I loved this take on Logan, especially the redemption arc because in a way it shows us a soft reboot of the character, going from much more dark and gritty to eventually becoming a better man that gets a family at the end.

I have mixed feelings about the Cassandra Nova character. On one hand, Emma Corrin killed it and felt like she could just chew scenery with either Patrick Stewart or James McAvoy. She's a dangerously fun villain that you just enjoy watching. She can snap at any second, but you also feel for her because she's an estranged child stuck in the void. I quite enjoyed her getting a small redemption arc and helping Deadpool and Wolverine get back. But the character would have been served better with an appearance by Charles Xavier. I mean, as pleased as I am with all the cameos and guest stars we did get, Cassandra Nova — the sister of Charles Xavier, who keeps mentioning Charles Xavier, keeps asking Logan what Xavier's love is like — she should have met some version of Charles Xavier.

I was having a discussion with my brother when leaving the theater that in the scene where Cassandra dives into Logan's memories, Professor X should have appeared there so Cassandra could see how loving her brother was. I just thought that would've made for some more interesting character moments. Instead, we have a small redemption arc followed by her learning of the timeline killer, and she decides, oh yeah, I'll just destroy the whole universe. That was the moment I could start feeling the runtime starting to wrap up.

Hugh Jackman is phenomenal, no question, but this delivery is hands down one of his best performances. The scene in the van where he dresses down Deadpool was genuinely hard to watch; you could feel the discomfort in my theater when he screamed at Deadpool. His scene with Laura, where he explained why he wears the suit, had me in genuine tears. This Logan is a man who lost so much, and you feel every ounce of it.

Credit also to Ryan Reynolds. He's an incredible talent, and he really got to show his acting chops in this Deadpool movie a bit more than the other two. That whole opening sequence felt so relatable. It was rough seeing Wade so depressed and lost. And it was heartbreaking to know that he went through all of *Deadpool 2* to save Vanessa (Morena Baccarin), just to push her away. Going back to the scene in the van, where Wolverine just verbally obliterates Deadpool, Wade's "I'm going to fight you now" had to be one of the best deliveries of the film. I've never heard Ryan Reynolds sound so coldly defeated. Jackman and Reynolds together are perfection; their overall chaotic blooming of a friendship they hate was a joy to watch. I think probably my third favorite scene was Wade and Logan at the dinner table, and Wade is so

distracted by the dog that Logan takes Dogpool and makes him talk to Vanessa. Everyone was choked up, because we got to see them earn this friendship.

When Channing Tatum was cast as Gambit, I was twelve years old. Now I'm 22, and it was the best thing ever seeing him finally play the part. He sold it, and though there were a couple points where he felt a bit over the top, it worked. He also felt right at home. He was Gambit, not Channing Tatum playing Gambit. Perfect casting. I was pretty happy that it was more than a cameo as well, that we actually got to see a full display of Gambit's powers and fight skills. It felt respectful to the character.

Now, I don't like the Daredevil movie, but I will admit, I freaked out over Jennifer Garner. She deserved so much better than the Elektra solo movie, and then she was kind of just forgotten in the superhero world. For her to get both a heroic entrance and a grand farewell was both unexpected, but so very welcome. She absolutely killed it, and it's a shame we may not see her again, but she got more respect in about 20 minutes than she did in two movies, and yeah, I love that.

I'm actually about to watch *Logan*, so I don't have much to say about Laura. Daphne Keen was outstanding in the movie and, come on, cutting off Juggernaut's feet? Cool. Her relationship with Hugh Jackman was so natural and familial that I was disappointed we didn't get more, but seeing her at the dinner table at the end gives me hope that we're not even close to done.

There's only one Blade. That's it.

Jimmy Durante's "I'll be seeing you" is the best needle drop ever. As Deadpool and Wolverine jump through the portal after the absolute mind-blowing fight between the mutants and Elektra, Gambit, X-23, Blade and our guys, "I'll be seeing you" plays, and I know I've already mentioned my theater felt this or that, but when the words "I'll be looking at the moon, but I'll be seeing you" played as we got to see these long lost heroes for one more moment, painfully bittersweet, everyone was on the edge of their seats, and I can still feel the lump in my throat.

The final nail in the emotional coffin were the credits. I never realized how much of the Fox universe I really grew up on, and going over the past twenty-four years of films, it hit me pretty hard. I remembered seeing an early screening of *X-Men: Days of Future Past* with my dad when I was little, or sitting on the couch watching *X-Men Origins* when the Fox channel was still a thing. Getting excited to see a new Fantastic Four with my dad, and then hating the new Fantastic Four with my dad. The movies weren't necessarily as important to me as the MCU, but the experiences were. And I'm grateful to my dad for making me a fan, even though DC's better. It was goodbye, and it hurt, but it was earned, and it was needed.

Thank you, to everyone who made this experience possible. And most importantly, thank you to production designer Ray Chan for getting to be the best fan ever.

Good movie. Go See it. "He has risen baby girl."



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***Moana 2* Is a Struggle**

Review by Leon Schwartz

(originally published at SciFi4Me.com)

***Moana 2* (2024)**

Screenplay by Jared Bush and Dana Ledoux Miller

Story by Jared Bush & Dana Ledoux Miller & Bek Smith

Produced by Christina Chen and Yvett Merino

Directed by David G. Derrick Jr., Jason Hand, Dana Ledoux Miller

PG, 1hr 40m

As soon as *Moana 2* trailers began, my daughter was begging me to see the movie. What's a Thanksgiving holiday without a good movie to watch? Because of my daughter, I had watched *Moana* so many times, by then even I was looking forward to the sequel. But now I am struggling to write this review because in my opinion, *Moana 2* is not a very well-made film. My daughter still loved it and I assume most kids will enjoy it as well, but I don't have the heart to tell her that I didn't. I wonder if *Moana 2* will become one of those movies you watch over and over as a kid, but then later you watch it as an adult and realize, hmmm this movie is not very good, why did my younger self watch this all the time.

I had a hard time pinpointing exactly what it was about this film I didn't quite like or why I realized it was not a good movie. When it comes to animated films it is always harder to judge. Usually, the animation is good and there are no live actors on screen to critique, so I find even the most mediocre animated film is usually a cut above a mediocre live action film. Sadly, that is not the case with *Moana 2*. If I had to boil it down to one statement or phrase, the movie lacks the magic of the original.

The beginning of the film finds Moana (Auli'i Cravalho) looking for other people from the ocean. There are none to be found, but she holds out hope that one day they will be. Moana returns to her island where life is a paradise and everyone looks up to her, including a new addition to her family, her baby sister

Simea (Khaleesi Lambert-Tsuda). The interactions between the two sisters are some of the better scenes in the film. Meanwhile, Maui (Dwayne Johnson) is off somewhere else fighting against a god and trying to settle an old score. Quickly we discover that Maui's quest and Moana's desire for finding other people are connected.

The plot has a very slow and unsure start. It relies heavily on call backs to the original and rarely introduces new jokes or material to discover. The awkward beginning leads to a second act that is very much like the original film. Moana has to be helped to find Maui. She descends to a nether region for a big musical act and rescues Maui. Then Moana and Maui set off together to break the curse that is keeping humans apart. The disappointing beginning failed to pull me in, so when Moana sets out for her quest, I was never as invested as I was with the original. Neither did I ever feel at any time the urgency or danger that necessitates Moana and Maui's undertaking. I just didn't care as much, nor did I ever feel that their quest truly mattered or that they wouldn't succeed.

In this sequel, new characters were added to the story: three villagers set out with Moana to help her on the quest. However, they really don't do anything nor add to the plot, and if they hadn't come along, nothing would have changed in respect to the main storyline. Except for a couple short funny scenes, these new characters don't even provide the intended comic relief.

The final act of the movie picks up the pace and is done well. It also leads into an after-credit scene that sets up for a third film.

Finally, the musical score is not as good as the original, which is a big failure for me. The music is always a big draw for any animated film, but in *Moana 2*, the Polynesian style is pushed aside for some more standard Disney animated musical style.

In summary, watching *Moana 2* is like meeting an old friend that you haven't seen for a while. Then one day, you bump into them and there is an awkward moment where neither one is sure how to proceed. Eventually after a bumbling greeting you begin to fall back into that old feeling of friendship, and the conversation becomes less forced and more natural. You walk away after exchanging numbers and you are looking forward to a future get together. Let's hope *Moana 3* will rekindle the friendship.

2 stars out 5



We welcome your feedback!

If you have comments, suggestions, or articles to share please send an e-mail to jphunt@scifi4me.com and let us know how we're doing!

Thank you for taking the time to read and respond.



Saturn Award Nominees Announced

Jason P Hunt

(originally published at SciFi4Me.com)

The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror has announced the nominees for the 52nd Annual Saturn Awards, recognizing extraordinary programming, performances and special effects in genre entertainment within the Film and Television categories.

Warner Bros. leads the way with a total of thirty-five nominations between their main studio and Legendary Pictures, with *Dune: Part Two* pulling in a total of fourteen nominations. Disney, Marvel, and Lucasfilm garnered eleven nominations, ten of which went to *Deadpool & Wolverine*. Amazon and MGM+ took in seventeen nominations.

The winners will be revealed during the awards ceremony at the Hilton Universal City Hotel in Los Angeles on Sunday, February 2, 2025. The event will be streamed live on both ElectricNOW and The Roku Channel. This year's show is dedicated to the memory of producer Jon Landau, most well-known for such films as *Avatar* and *Titanic*. Landau passed away in July after a battle with cancer.

BEST SCIENCE FICTION FILM:

- *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes* (Lionsgate Films)
- *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (20th Century Studios)
- *Megalopolis* (Lionsgate Films/American Zoetrope)
- *Venom: The Last Dance* (Sony Pictures/Marvel)

BEST FANTASY FILM:

- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (Sony Pictures)

- *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* (Warner Bros. Pictures/Legendary)
- *My Old Ass* (Amazon/MGM)
- *Poor Things* (Searchlight)
- *Wonka* (Warner Bros. Pictures)

BEST HORROR FILM:

- *Abigail* (Universal Pictures)
- *Alien: Romulus* (20th Century Studios)
- *The First Omen* (20th Century Studios)
- *In a Violent Nature* (IFC Films)
- *Longlegs* (Neon)
- *A Quiet Place: Day One* (Paramount Pictures)
- *Smile 2* (Paramount Pictures)

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE FILM:

- *Argylle* (Apple Films/Universal Pictures)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- *The Fall Guy* (Universal Pictures)
- *Fly Me to the Moon* (Apple Films/Columbia Pictures)
- *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare* (Lionsgate Films)
- *Twisters* (Universal Pictures)

BEST THRILLER FILM:

- *Blink Twice* (Amazon/MGM)
- *Civil War* (A24)
- *Saltburn* (Amazon/MGM)
- *Strange Darling* (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)
- *Speak No Evil* (Universal Pictures)
- *Wolfs* (Apple Films)

BEST INDEPENDENT FILM:

- *Dream Scenario* (A24)
- *Late Night with the Devil* (IFC Films/Shudder)
- *MaXXXine* (A24)
- *The Substance* (Mubi)
- *Thelma* (Magnolia Pictures)
- *The Thicket* (Tubi Movies)

BEST INTERNATIONAL FILM:

- *The Animal Kingdom* (Magnet Releasing)
- *Godzilla Minus One* (Toho International)
- *Kill* (Lionsgate Films)
- *Monkey Man* (Universal Pictures)
- *Oddity* (IFC Films)
- *Society of the Snow* (Netflix)

BEST ANIMATED FILM:

- *The Boy and the Heron* (GKIDS)

- *Despicable Me 4* (Universal/Illumination Entertainment)
- *Inside Out 2* (Pixar/Walt Disney Studios)
- *Kung-Fu Panda 4* (Universal/Dreamworks Animation)
- *Spy x Family Code: White* (Crunchyroll)
- *Transformers One* (Paramount Pictures)
- *The Wild Robot* (Universal/Dreamworks Animation)

BEST ACTOR IN A FILM:

- Tom Blyth, *Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds Snakes* (Lionsgate Films)
- Nicolas Cage, *Dream Scenario* (A24)
- Timothée Chalamet, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- David Dastmalchian, *Late Night with the Devil* (IFC Films/Shudder)
- Kyle Gallner, *Strange Darling* (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)
- Michael Keaton, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Ryan Reynolds, *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)

BEST ACTRESS IN A FILM:

- Willa Fitzgerald, *Strange Darling* (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)
- Demi Moore, *The Substance* (Mubi)
- Lupita Nyong'o, *A Quiet Place – Day One* (Paramount Pictures)
- Winona Ryder, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Naomi Scott, *Smile 2* (Paramount Pictures)
- June Squibb, *Thelma* (Magnolia Pictures)
- Anya Taylor-Joy, *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (Warner Bros. Pictures)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A FILM:

- Josh Brolin, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- Austin Butler, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- Nicolas Cage, *Longlegs* (Neon)
- Willem Dafoe, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Hugh Jackman, *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- David Jonsson, *Alien: Romulus* (20th Century Studios)
- Owen Teague, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (20th Century Studios)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A FILM:

- Emma Corrin, *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- Rebecca Ferguson, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Barbara Hershey, *Strange Darling* (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)
- Juliette Lewis, *The Thicket* (Tubi Movies)
- Margaret Qualley, *The Substance* (Mubi)
- Cailee Spaeny, *Alien: Romulus* (20th Century Studios)
- Zendaya, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros./Legendary)

BEST YOUNGER PERFORMER IN A FILM:

- Freya Allan, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (20th Century Studios)
- McKenna Grace, *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (Sony Pictures)
- Kaylee Hottle, *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- Calah Lane, *Wonka* (Warner Bros Pictures)

- Jenna Ortega, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Alisha Weir, *Abigail* (Universal Pictures)
- Rachel Zegler, *Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes* (Lionsgate Films)

BEST FILM DIRECTION:

- Fede Álvarez, *Alien: Romulus* (20th Century Studios)
- Wes Ball, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (20th Century Studios)
- Tim Burton, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- Shawn Levy, *Deadpool & Wolverine* (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- J.T. Mollner, *Strange Darling* (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)
- Denis Villeneuve, *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- Takashi Yamazaki, *Godzilla Minus One* (Toho International)

BEST FILM SCREENWRITING:

- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Alfred Gough, Miles Millar (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine*, Shawn Levy, Ryan Reynolds (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- *Dune: Part Two*, Denis Villeneuve, Jon Spaihts (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Godzilla Minus One*, Takashi Yamazaki (Toho International)
- *Longlegs*, Osgood Perkins (Neon)
- *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, Josh Friedman, Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver (20th Century Studios)
- *Strange Darling*, JT Mollner (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)

BEST VISUAL/SPECIAL EFFECTS:

- *Alien: Romulus* (TBD) (20th Century Studios)
- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Angus Bickerton, James Brennan-Craddock, Neal Scanlan, Stefano Pepin) (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine* (TBD) (Marvel/Walt Disney Pictures)
- *Dune: Part Two* (Paul Lambert, Stephen James, Rhys Salacombe, Gerd Nefzer) (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Godzilla Minus One* (Masaki Takahashi, Tatsuiji Nojima, Kiyok Shubuya, Takashi Yamazaki) (Toho International)
- *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (Erik Winquist, TBD) (20th Century Studios)
- *Twisters* (TBD) (Universal Pictures)

BEST FILM MUSIC:

- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Danny Elfman (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Dune: Part Two*, Hans Zimmer (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*, Dario Marianelli (Sony Pictures)
- *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*, James Newton Howard (Lionsgate Pictures)
- *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, John Paesano (20th Century Studios)
- *Smile 2*, Cristobal Tapia de Veer (Paramount Pictures)

BEST FILM PRODUCTION DESIGN:

- *Alien: Romulus*, Naaman Marshall (20th Century Studios)
- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Matt Scruton (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine*, Ray Chan (Marvel/Walt Disney Pictures)
- *Dune: Part Two*, Patricia Vermette (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Longlegs*, Danny Vermette (Neon)
- *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, Daniel T. Dorrance (20th Century Studios)

BEST FILM MAKE-UP:

- *Alien: Romulus* (TBD) (20th Century Studios)
- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Neal Scanlan, Christine Blundell, Lesa Warrener) (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Dune: Part Two* (Donald Mowat and TBD) (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Longlegs* (Felix Fox, Madelaine Hermans) (Neon)
- *Smile 2* (TBD) (Paramount Pictures)
- *The Substance* (TBD) (Mubi)

BEST FILM EDITING:

- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Jay Prychidny (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Civil War*, Jake Roberts (A24)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine*, Dean Zimmerman & Shane Reid (Marvel/Walt Disney Pictures)
- *Dune: Part Two*, Joe Walker (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, Eliot Knapman & Margaret Sixel (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Strange Darling*, Christopher Robin Bell (Miramax/Magenta Light Studios)

BEST FILM COSTUME:

- *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Colleen Atwood (Warner Bros. Pictures)
- *Deadpool & Wolverine*, Graham Churchyard & Mayes C. Rubeo (Marvel/Walt Disney Studios)
- *Dune: Part Two*, Jacqueline West (Warner Bros./Legendary)
- *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*, Alex Fortes & Ruth Myers (Sony Pictures)
- *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*, Trish Summerville (Lionsgate Pictures)
- *Wonka*, Lindy Hemming (Warner Bros. Pictures)

BEST SCIENCE FICTION TELEVISION SERIES:

- *3 Body Problem* (Netflix)
- *Ahsoka* (Lucasfilm/Disney+)
- *The Ark* (Syfy)
- *Dark Matter* (Apple TV+)
- *Fallout* (Amazon)
- *Star Trek: Discovery* (CBS Studios)

BEST FANTASY TELEVISION SERIES:

- *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (Netflix)
- *For All Mankind* (Apple TV+)
- *House of the Dragon* (MAX)
- *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Amazon)
- *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (Disney+)
- *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (Roku Channel)

BEST HORROR TELEVISION SERIES:

- *Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire* (AMC)
- *Creepshow* (Shudder)
- *Evil* (CBS Studios)
- *From* (MGM+)
- *Grotesquerie* (FX)
- *Teacup* (Peacock)

- *The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon* (AMC)

BEST ACTION/THRILLER TELEVISION SERIES:

- *Bosch: Legacy* (Amazon Freevee)
- *Cobra Kai* (Netflix)
- *Found* (NBC)
- *High Potential* (ABC)
- *Presumed Innocent* (Apple TV+)
- *True Detective: Night Country* (Max)
- *Tulsa King* (Paramount+)

BEST ADVENTURE TELEVISION SERIES:

- *La Brea* (NBC/Universal)
- *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* (Apple TV+)
- *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* (Amazon)
- *Reacher* (Amazon)
- *Shōgun* (FX)
- *Sugar* (Apple TV+)

BEST SUPERHERO TELEVISION SERIES:

- *Agatha All Along* (Marvel Studios/Disney+)
- *The Boys* (Amazon Prime)
- *Loki* (Marvel Studios/Disney+)
- *The Penguin* (MAX)
- *Superman & Lois* (Warner Bros. Television)
- *The Umbrella Academy* (Netflix)

BEST TELEVISION PRESENTATION:

- *Apartment 7A* (Paramount+)
- *Don't Move* (Netflix)
- *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Netflix)
- *Fargo* (FX)
- *Ripley* (Netflix)
- *Salem's Lot* (Max)
- *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (AMC)

BEST GENRE COMEDY TELEVISION SERIES

- *Chucky* (Syfy/Universal)
- *Ghosts* (CBS)
- *Only Murders in the Building* (Hulu)
- *Resident Alien* (Syfy)
- *Ted* (Peacock)
- *What We Do in the Shadows* (FX)

BEST ANIMATED TELEVISION SERIES:

- *Batman: Caped Crusader* (Amazon Prime)
- *Gremlins: The Wild Batch* (Max)
- *Kaiju No. 8* (Crunchyroll)
- *Star Trek: Lower Decks* (CBS Studios)

- *Star Wars: The Bad Batch* (Disney+/Lucasfilm)
- *X-Men '97* (Disney+/Marvel Studios)

BEST ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Colin Farrell, *The Penguin* (Max)
- Walton Goggins, *Fallout* (Amazon)
- Jon Hamm, *Fargo* (FX)
- Andrew Lincoln, *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (AMC)
- Harold Perrineau, *From* (MGM+)
- Norman Reedus, *The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon* (AMC)
- Kurt Russell & Wyatt Russell, *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* (Apple TV+)

BEST ACTRESS IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Emma D'Arcy, *House of the Dragon* (Max)
- Rosario Dawson, *Ahsoka* (Lucasfilm/Disney+)
- Jodie Foster, *True Detective: Night Country* (Max)
- Danai Gurira, *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (AMC)
- Kathryn Hahn, *Agatha All Along* (Marvel/Disney+)
- Melissa McBride, *The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon* (AMC)
- Ella Purnell, *Fallout* (Amazon)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Matt Berry, *What We Do in the Shadows* (FX)
- Lamorne Morris, *Fargo* (FX)
- Aaron Moten, *Fallout* (Amazon)
- Matt Smith, *House of the Dragon* (Max)
- Antony Starr, *The Boys* (Amazon)
- Henry Thomas, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Netflix)
- Brandon Scott Jones, *Ghosts* (CBS)

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Jennifer Connelly, *Dark Matter* (Apple TV+)
- Jennifer Jason Leigh, *Fargo* (FX)
- Pollyanna McIntosh, *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live* (AMC)
- Cristin Milioti, *The Penguin* (Max)
- Elizabeth Saunders, *From* (MGM+)
- Anna Sawai, *Monarch: Legacy of Monsters* (Apple TV+)
- Rebecca Wisocky, *Ghosts* (CBS)

BEST GUEST STAR IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Mark Hamill, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Netflix)
- Matthew Jeffers, *The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Lived* (AMC)
- Martin Kove, *Cobra Kai* (Netflix)
- Kyle MacLachlan, *Fallout* (Amazon)
- Andrea Martin, *Evil* (CBS Studios)
- Aubrey Plaza, *Agatha All Along* (Marvel/Disney+)
- Ke Huy Quan, *Loki* (Marvel/Disney+)

BEST YOUNGER PERFORMER IN A TELEVISION SERIES:

- Zackary Arthur, *Chucky* (Syfy/Universal)
- Hannah Cheramy, *From* (MGM+)
- Cameron Crovetti, *The Boys* (Amazon)
- Rhenzy Feliz, *The Penguin* (Max)
- Joe Locke, *Agatha All Along* (Marvel/Disney+)
- Xolo Maridueña, *Cobra Kai* (Netflix)
- Louis Puech Scigliuzzi, *The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon* (AMC)

Best 4K Home Media Release:

- *Conan the Barbarian* (Arrow Video)
- *Crimson Peak* (Arrow Video)
- *The Crow* (Paramount)
- *Face Off* (KL Studio Classics)
- *The Monster Squad* (KL Studio Classics)
- *Saw X* (Lionsgate Home Entertainment)

Best Film Home Media Release Collection:

- Batman 85th Anniversary Collection (Warner Home Video)
- Nature Run Amok Collection (Kino Cult)
- OSS-117 Five Film Collection (KL Studio Classics)
- Republic Pictures Horror Collection (KL Studio Classics)
- *Rocky*: Ultimate Knockout Collection (Warner Home Video)
- Sci Fi Chillers Collection (KL Studio Classics)

Best Classic Film Home Media Release:

- *I Walked with a Zombie / The Seventh Victim* (Criterion Collection)
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (KL Studio Classics)
- *The Lady Killers* (KL Studio Classics)
- *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Warner Home Video)
- *Repo Man* (The Criterion Collection)
- *Reptilicus* (Vinegar Syndrome)

Best Television Home Media Release:

- *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet: The Complete Series* (MPI)
- *Columbo: The Return* (KL Studio Classics)
- *Farscape: The Complete Series* (25th Anniversary Edition (Shout)
- *Interview with the Vampire* (Season 2) (RLJ Entertainment)
- *La Brea: The Complete Series* (Universal)
- *Star Wars: Andor – The Complete First Season* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment)

The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror is a non-profit organization founded in 1972 by film historian Doctor Donald A. Reed and is supported by several hundred genre enthusiasts and professionals who have participated in the ongoing efforts of the Academy to promote genre film production and television programming since 1972. The organization is currently headed by President Robert Holguin and Saturn leaders Bradley Marcus and Kevin Marcus.





Wolfman

Review by Heath Row

(originally published in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #137, Nov 2024)

Wolfman (1979)

Written by Worth Keeler

Produced by Earl Owensby and Martin Beck

Directed by Worth Keeler

PG, 1hr 42m

This perplexing oddity was a pleasant surprise. A 1979 regional horror movie produced by Earl Owensby, the film was released on VHS by Raven Video in 1995. Owensby got his start in pneumatic tools before opening his own production company that made low-budget action movies such as *Death Driver* and *Seabo*, as well as sf and horror fare including *Tales of the Third Dimension* and *Hyperspace*. *Wolfman* was his first horror movie, and his production company was most active between 1974-1987.

Written and directed by Worth Keeler—and somewhat awkwardly starring Owensby—*Wolfman* is a period piece, reportedly set in 1910 Georgia. The movie was filmed in Shelby, N.C. The mood and tone are slow and somewhat somber, and the period costuming and decor helps amplify that aspect of the movie. (The scenes in the antique store with all the clocks are especially cool.) It's relatively impressive for a low-budget production in 1979, even if power lines are briefly visible in a graveyard scene late in the movie.

Returning home after years of travel and entrepreneurialism, a man learns that his inheritance—his father recently died—requires him to spend some time in the ancestral home. Unbeknownst to him, that's so the family curse of lycanthropy transfers from his father to him during the full moon. His siblings are involved in the plot, having imprisoned his mother in an upstairs room claiming illness, as is a churchless minister who maintains an evil influence on the family.

After a couple of fitful nights of sleep—I can only imagine the direction: “Act like you’re having a nightmare.”—the man turns into a werewolf and goes on the prowl. Even once he realizes what has happened, he claims that he didn't kill his victims. A werewolf did. Area townsfolk hunt for him in the

woods. He rekindles a romance with a childhood friend. And he confronts the minister. Both come to appropriate ends.

The transformation scenes are effective, though Owensby himself is quite hirsute. His back and chest are quite hairy even when in human form. To his credit, he readily removed his shirt. Even if the movie isn't very good—mostly because of the acting—it's professional enough and obviously honest and heartfelt. The filmmakers meant what they were doing. Owensby, however, is unconvincing as a hero, Edward Grady's Rev. Leonard is occasionally over the top, and the actor playing the protagonist's brother is impressively wooden. Most of the actors have southern accents, though a couple—including Sid Rancer's Dr. George Tate—have thick New York accents.

James O'Neill's *Terror on Tape* unfavorably claims that *Wolfman* "isn't even up to the worst of Paul Naschy's Spanish werewolf flicks." Regardless, the Charlotte Observer profiled Owensby in 1977 (<https://tinyurl.com/Owensby-profile>), and Brian Albright's Regional Horror Films, 1958-1990 references Owensby or E.O. Corporation on every page of the section on North Carolina. A filmmaker friend grew up in North Carolina; his parents lived in Shelby briefly. I emailed him to ask whether he was aware of Owensby's work. "Absolutely," he responded. "[H]e was regionally a famous guy. I didn't see any of [his movies], but I read every article in every newspaper about him. I think my parents didn't want me to see his films—not sure why!" I would definitely watch other Owensby movies and look forward to exploring his productions. A friend and I think *Death Driver* seems worth it for the title alone.



Films Fantastic is a fanzine collecting reviews of movies and mini-series in the science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres. If you'd like to submit your film review for inclusion in our pages, please send it to Jason Hunt: jphunt@scifi4me.com.



Stop Killing My Favorite Franchises

Jim McCoy

(originally published in *Jimbo's Awesome Science Fiction & Fantasy Reviews*, Apr 2024)

Listen folks, We've reviewed a few movies and TV shows here at Jimbo's, and something we've seen a lot of lately is movies that don't live up to what came before them in their franchises or sometimes even in print, and I'm not just talking about the whole "The Book is Always Better" thing. The fact of the matter is that, in far too many cases, movie studios have made movies where they've placed the emphasis on effects and not story.

Don't get it twisted. I love a beautiful movie. I've had many conversations with all kinds of people regarding older stuff that I love that just doesn't look right anymore because the effects are so dated. I grew up on *Star Trek: The Original Series*, but if I watch it now, the only part that still looks futuristic is when the crew uses the transporter. I love watching *Babylon 5*, but it's gotten to point where I almost have to watch the space battles with my eyes closed. Watch *Robocop* at some point and tell me the Point of View shots don't look stupid and old. I get the importance of special effects, especially in the Science Fiction and Fantasy that I love so much, but that's not all there is to a flick or series.

Seriously, I watched *Game of Thrones* later than everyone else (life sucks when you don't have HBO) but I get why everyone was upset about the last episode. There was no reason to have Cersei burn all of King's Landing down. The latest iteration of *The Flash* had amazing effects but the script was amateurish. Don't get me started on the *Star Wars* prequels that were entertaining individually, but went together like oil and water. Seriously, I could have conceived a better story arc than they did. As a matter of fact, I did "write" my own outline of how the next two would go in my head. It was better than what they came out with, and it didn't even include Emperor Palpatine.

Seriously Hollywood, explosions, camera flare and ripping off *The Matrix Reloaded* aren't the keys to making lots of money.

And, before you criticize me for thinking I know more about how to make money with a movie than a Hollywood executive, you may want to realize that movies like *Matrix Resurrections*, *Green Lantern*, *The Flash*, *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindlewald* and *Star Trek: Nemesis* all lost money. The reason wasn't bad special effects. My reviews of *The Crimes of Grindlewald* and *The Flash* both indicate how

impressed I was with the way they looked. The reason all of those movies failed is simple: They were poorly written.

Yes, movies and TV are visual mediums, but at the end of the day, they're stories. Story telling is something humans have been doing literally (and I mean literally literally, not literally figuratively) since time immemorial. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the oldest known written story in history. It was written almost four thousand years ago. I can guarantee you that it wasn't presented with visual effects by Industrial Light and Magic and didn't come in THX sound. It still exists because it was a good story.

Think about it: Other than simply being authors, what do the writers of *Gilgamesh*, Homer of *Illiad* and *Odyssey* fame, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Mark Twain, Jules Verne, Mary Shelley and Charles Dickens have in common? They all lived, worked and wrote in an era with no special effects and their stories will all be remembered by generations who won't even know that *Wonder Woman 1984* ever existed.

Frankenstein has been put on film a bunch of times, but when it was written, there was no such thing as a video recording device. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* was eventually adapted into a movie version, but not until decades after it was written. *Romeo and Juliet* was written before the founding of the United States. So was *Don Quixote*. The reason that you can still buy a copy of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* a hundred and thirty-four years after it was written and couldn't get a ticket to *The Flash* a month after it was released in the theater is because *ACYIKAC* is a good story and *The Flash* reads like it was written by an amateur. A good story lasts. A pretty movie with no story behind it doesn't.

If these movie and television studios want people to spend money on their product, they're going to need to come up with some better stories. That's the key here, folks. It's not making your movie look fancy. It's not substituting demographics for story. Marketing helps, but it's not the end all be all either.

Unless you're James Cameron. I don't get the success of the *Avatar* movies. They're not good and they succeeded. I'm wondering if perhaps Mr. Cameron hasn't sold his soul to Satan or something, because those movies are drek and they sold massive quantities of tickets. I freely admit that that guy is the exception to the rule.

That's not to say that there are no good new stories. *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* was amazing. *Black Panther* was even better. I loved all of the *Harry Potter* movies even if they weren't as good as the books. *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *House of the Dragon*, *The Last of Us*, and even *The Big Bang Theory* (admittedly more SF/F related than true SF/F) were all well written and entertaining.

And there are more ideas out there. There have been plenty of works reviewed by yours truly right here at Jimbo's that would make excellent movies.

Why yes, I am trying to get some truly talented authors paid exorbitant amounts of money. That's so they'll keep writing. I mean, honestly, the best way to encourage your favorite author to keep writing is flat out bribery. Give them money to write and they'll keep freaking writing. And, let's face it, Hollywood's ability to pay my favorite authors is far greater than mine.

Seriously Hollywood, do the right thing. Get some writers that are good at their craft. At the end of the day, they're every bit as important as your on screen talent. Your livelihood and my entertainment depend on it.





***Transformers One* Has a Lot of Spark**

Leon Schwartz

(originally published at SciFi4Me.com).

Transformers One (2024)

Screenplay by Eric Pearson and Andrew Barrer & Gabriel Ferrari

Story by Andrew Barrer & Gabriel Ferrari

Produced by Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Tom DeSanto & Don Murphy, Michael Bay, Mark Vahradian, Aaron Dem

Directed by Josh Cooley

PG, 1hr 44m

When I saw the first trailer for *Transformers One*, I made a snap judgment and said to myself, this movie is not for me.

Cue the defeatist attitude. It's ok, not every movie is for everyone. My daughter loves *Frozen*; I have seen it many times and can say it's a good movie, but I will never sit down in my free time and put *Frozen* on.

So, I had some trepidation when my son saw the *Transformers One* trailer and asked if we could watch it. Imagine the swell of pride in my heart to see my child is a son after my own heart and imagine my fear of seeing a new Transformers movie, where it seems that based on the trailer, everyone is a comedian. Too many of my childhood shows have been ruined by Hollywood with mediocre to just plain bad adaptations and I didn't have much hope for *Transformers One*. I called a friend who is a fan too, and told him we were taking the plunge and he came along, too.

Wow, Wow, Wow! Did I say Wow?

Spoiler-ish from here on out.

This movie blew me away. It started exactly like I thought it would, with our main character, Orion Pax (Chris Hemsworth), being this goofy quick witted Transformer with a joke a minute. Yet, at the same time

the jokes were funny enough to make me laugh and story elements were immediately introduced in the opening scene that peaked my interest. Next we are introduced to Orion Pax's best friend D-16 (Brian Tyree Henry). This is where the story drew me in. Orion is the kind of friend who always gets you in trouble but is loyal and kind hearted. D-16 is the friend who always has to bail Orion out of all the trouble they get into and is annoyed but possibly grateful to have a friend like Orion.

As the story unfolds we find out Orion and his fellow bots have all been born without a Cog, which is required to for them to transform. Without the cog Orion and D-16 are used for menial labor. All the Transformers are living underground on Cybertron after they were attacked by an enemy known as the Quintessons. The Quintessons defeated the original Primes, the first Transformers created by Primus, the creator of Cybertron. The Quintessons have destroyed the surface of Cybertron and caused the rivers of energon that Transformers need to function and live to dry up. Orion, D-16 and other Transformers born without a cog work in the depths of Cybertron mining the energon needed for daily function.

We find out when the Primes were defeated by the Quintessons, an artifact known as the Matrix of Leadership was lost. All the Cybertronians believe finding this artifact is the key to restoring the rivers of energon and defeating the Quintessons. Sentinel Prime (Jon Hamm), the leader of Cybertron, is leading expeditions to the surface to find the artifact. Orion, who believes he is destined to be more than a miner, also wants to do his part to help find the artifact.

I guess at this point you can guess what will happen. Orion's hijinks will lead them to find vital information about the artifact and even lead them to the surface to retrieve the artifact. There are also some twists along the way. But it all works because the movie is grounded in the friendship of Orion and D-16. It is the friendship of the two Transformers and the eventually destruction of their friendship that is the true driving force of the movie. Everything else is second fiddle to the true story. The movie made me believe two hunks of metal were true friends who cared for each other and the falling apart of their friendship is adequately moving.

Transformers One made me believe these machines have heart and that's what movies are all about. When I walk into that theater and the lights dim, will you draw me in and make me forget the world before my eyes is make believe? Yes, they did and I can honestly say this is the best Transformers movie since *Transformers 1984*. This movie has spark.

On a scale of 1 to 5, I give the movie 4 sparks out of 5. Go see this movie and spread the word because as a fan, I want to see more this universe.

