CURIEUX

Issue #1
2025

FANPAGE

LITTLE MISS 'HE LOVES ME'
CAROLINE BRIGNALL

WICKED FANDOM
JACINTA ZANDER

NAMELESS, LOVELESS
SONJA DEAKIN

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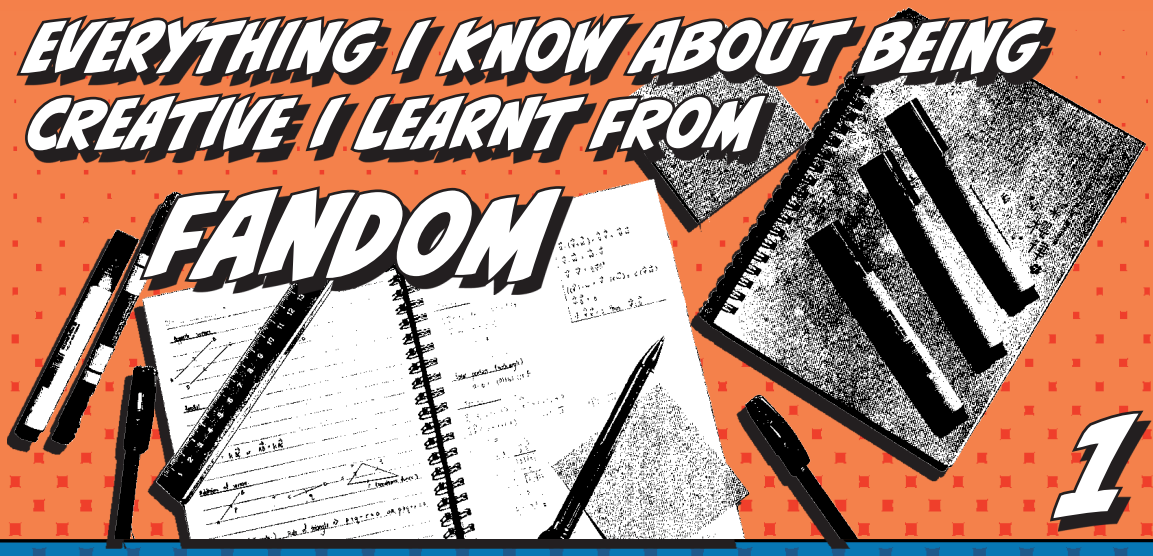
EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BEING CREATIVE I LEARNT FROM FANDOM



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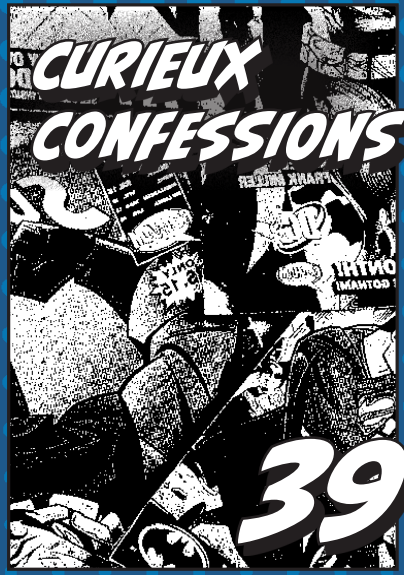

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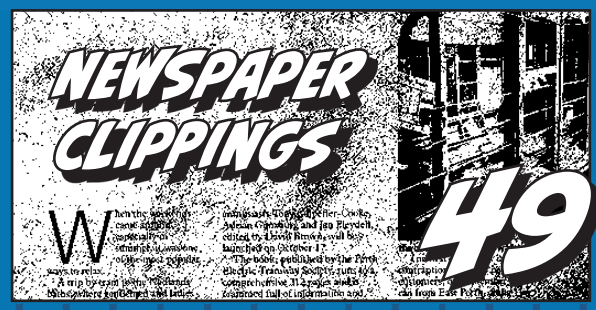


LETTER FROM THE ED

Welcome to Fanpage! This is an edition we know many Curieux readers and contributors wanted to happen. So it wasn't surprising to see lots of material come through. Looking at all of it together is a good reminder of how fluid our media landscape has become. The old pattern of adaptation from book to film or TV show continues. But then stories spill into the online space, communities form, and more and more minds set to work on interpreting the cultural artefact, taking it in new directions. As interest grows, there may bere-boots and spin offs and expansion into branded merchandise; from figurines to fast food to fragrances and all the rest.

With all this recycling of ideas, the question of originality might crop up. But that's old head thinking. It's truer to recognise that this has always been the way of myth. Odysseus was a name on the lips of illiterate storytellers long before he was the hero of Homer's Odyssey. That was centuries before James Joyce condensed his adventures to a single day in Dublin and another century passed before Jorge Rivera-Herrans adapted those same adventures to the series of nine concept albums from which Rebecca Hayward's ekphrastic poem 'Little Wolf' (see page 29) was born.

Mythology has always been a product of reinvention, it's just happening faster now. And, excitingly, new ways of reformulating stories have opened up as old categories around gender and identity are challenged.

ITORS

It's like someone's turned the heat up and the ingredients of this rich soup we're making are melting into ever greater states of harmony.

But that doesn't mean anything goes. As the work in this magazine shows, the question of duty is an important one. Duty to story. To character. To audience. To the essential core that grants an archetype its endurance. We may be drawn into arguments over this idea of duty. Our communities might threaten to splinter, but these will be flashes in the pan. Ultimately, every interpretation - from the ingeniously innovative to the blasphemously bonkers – will collapse back in, yielding to the essence that makes that idea, that character, that story an enduring cultural artefact. In other words, it's not our problem what directions our stories take. They have always been in control of us, not the other way around.

With all that said, maybe revelling in the joy of fandom is all that's left to do, as Tia Priest Willimot argues in her piece, 'Fangirl' (page 51). In this edition you'll find reviews, analytical essays, personal reflections, poetry, painting and film. They'll respond to and comment on works of literature, TV, musical theatre, pop music, manga, anime and many others. It's a reminder that amongst the obsessions, the disappointments and the clashing opinions there is comfort to be found, there are friendships to be forged, nostalgias to be triggered and passions to be shared. Thanks to all the contributors who made this edition a testament to these delights.

PETER SEARLES
RUBY THOMAS

EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BEING CREATIVE I LEARNT FROM FANDOM

Rebecca Hayward

You might be thinking – what's fandom? Why should I care? Isn't fandom full of stinky people who can't socialise, living in their parents' basements with their coveted body pillow collections? The answer is: yes. But also no. Behold, the Schrödinger's cat of living life on the internet.

"Fandom" refers to fans of a person/piece of media collectively as a community. For example, those who are fans of the tv show Lost could be referred to as "the Lost fandom". While fandom has existed for thousands of years (hello rich Romans buying bottles of your favourite gladiator's sweat), it was the creation of the World Wide Web that made it what it is today.

The list below highlights some of the lessons I have learnt through fandom that have made me a better writer and creator.

1. YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

The creative world is full of rejections.

Despite how it may seem, you are rarely alone in your thoughts or creative choices. Even if it's only a single person who sees your words in the dark ether of the internet, that's still a person you've connected to. Maybe they comment or like your post, maybe they don't, but that doesn't mean they aren't there. Even the most depraved piece of media will still have an audience. Of course, not everyone wants to see certain kinds of media or certain themes within that media. In this aspect, I believe fandom has the best system.

While there are a few good examples of this, the best in my opinion is "Dead Dove: Do Not Eat". This phrase comes from an episode of *Arrested Development* that has since been adopted by fandom. "Dead Dove: Do Not Eat" is an identifier that the reader should continue with caution. Generally used for the more "hardcore" or disturbing to some degree, it's a call to read all the tags/descriptors and know what you're getting into. If you continue to read and don't like what you've read – you were warned what was in that bag and have nobody to blame but yourself.

You will always have people who disagree with, or even hate, your work. It doesn't make you unworthy, it just gives you feedback. Besides, a publisher's rejection letter will be miles nicer than a teenage girl on the internet thinking you've slighted her favourite character.

2. ANY READING IS GOOD READING

It may be the burnt-out, late-diagnosed, ex-gifted kid in me, but I really struggle with reading at times. While I could devour a book a day in primary and high school, times have changed. I love reading, and my life has always revolved around books, but I can't seem to get into novels as I once did.

Fanfiction though? I speed through it. I've read thousands of words a day through fanfiction so why can't I do the same with novels? My theory is that it's different because there's not much exposition needed, so we don't need to use too much brain power. We know these characters, the setting, and the relationships – we can skip "ready, set" and get straight to "go!".

It's recommended for writers to read as much as possible. I can't speak for everyone, but the thought of picking up certain classics bores me to tears. I don't believe that only the classics or well-awarded are worthy of being read. Fanfiction writers have the stereotype of being thirteen-year-old girls writing self-insert characters, and that has some truth to it, but it isn't all of it. Several popular books today once started as fanfiction. *Fifty Shades of Grey* was *Twilight* fanfiction, *The Mortal Instruments* series was *Harry Potter* fanfiction, and *The Love Hypothesis* was *Star Wars* fanfiction. If we want to go further back, we could call *Dante's Inferno* fanfiction of *The Bible*. Some of the best written works I have ever read have been fanfiction; and there is no reason why we shouldn't learn as much from them as we do from other, more widely acknowledged works of fiction.

3. Any Writing Is Good Writing

Got writer's block? No motivation? Have no fear – fandom is here!

We all draw inspiration from life when it comes to creating. We use writing prompts, ekphrastic work, mirroring other writers' styles, and retellings to hone and practice our art. What is the difference between using those practices, and turning to fandom? Is writing limited to long novels, hours of screenwriting, or pages of poetry? I don't think so.

Fanfiction is the obvious choice here. Writing what you know and are interested in, with characters and a world you love. This is still writing practice and your work can be as precious to yourself and others as *The Raven* is to Poe fans. But fanfiction isn't the only way we can practice and enjoy our writing.

"Drabbles" and "headcanons" are popular short-form versions of fanfiction, mostly on Tumblr and Twitter/X. Drabbles are traditionally cut off at 100 words, but most fanfiction doesn't have set lengths. I've seen ones that are a single sentence, and others that are over a million words. There is freedom to write without enforcing a word count or sticking to a particular style or plot structure. Headcanons are character studies. In fandom, "canon" means something that is confirmed in the original work. For example, it's canon that Harry Potter is part of Gryffindor house at Hogwarts. "Headcanon" is an interpretation or wish by fans. These can have a basis in canon (eg. Draco Malfoy's animagus form is a ferret because that's what Madeye Moody transformed him into), or they could completely ignore canon (eg. Voldemort is a good guy and wants everyone to be happy and live in peace).

Cosplayers and TikTokers occupy another realm of fanfiction, one that some people may not think of as writing. While in these forms it's not the written word that the public sees, there are backstories and storylines that are being created to make the scenes shown. A cosplay TikToker that portrays a villain version of Midoriya Izuku (main protagonist of *My Hero Academia*) would be telling a new story and would therefore have created a world around the character. Is that work lessened because it's a cosplay? Is it not practice just because it's an existing character being borrowed? New worlds are created through these TikTokers – some becoming so popular that they inspire further art, fanfiction, cosplays, and headcanons; essentially becoming a fandom themselves within the larger fandom.

Writing something short or silly doesn't mean you're not a serious writer – practice is still practice and it's better to have fun with it! Writing is not purely words on a page either, it can be approached in cosplay, song writing, and so much more.

4. COLLABORATE, COLLABORATE, COLLABORATE!

We all dread the pain of group-work, but collaboration isn't always a scene straight out of a horror movie!

Working together is very popular in fandom. Sometimes it's planned – various celebrations and challenges may group creators together, or creators may be friends and decide to work together. Other times, it can be spontaneous – technical collaboration such as translation, video editing, podfic creating (essentially an audiobook). Or it can be on the creative side with artists surprising authors with artwork, writers taking someone's headcanon/drabble and writing a story with it, or a cosplay group performing a skit based around a headcanon/story.

Another popular form of collaboration in fandom is roleplay. There are Tumblr blogs written from a character's point of view, with stories written in threads between other character blogs. There are the Instagram/Tiktok videos of characters interacting and creating storylines. There are specific websites with forums and plenty of other visitors (eg. Hexrpg.com). There are also chatroom roleplays on websites such as Omegle (RIP) or Rolechat. Writers can roleplay with whoever they choose and write their own stories together, sometimes forming friendships outside of the internet at the same time.

It's through these activities that we learn how to work with each other and experiment doing the things we love. All of this, without pressure from the "real world" about what will sell or what will be popular. It's for the joy of creating and nothing else.

5. LABOUR OF LOVE

We all know the saying "do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life". For those who haven't already realised it – this is bullshit. Love isn't easy. Love is hard, and with enough pressure, it can turn to hate.

I won't lie and say that doesn't exist in fandom, but it feels different. Nobody is getting paid for uploading fanfiction to AO3, artists may have merch for sale but it's not enough to make a living. Travelling and attending conventions are expensive, shows and movies with dedicated fanbases are cancelled, original authors and actors are revealed to be scum of the earth, official merchandise or books and DVDs can be expensive or impossible to find. Hearts get broken every day, so why do we bother?

We bother because we love it. Even when we can't stop the tears or the anger, there is always that love that we can feel. There is always that feeling that says we are not alone.

Writing is important because we love it; because we have stories to tell and things to say. Even if it's never a career or particularly lucrative, losing that love would hurt more than any rejection letter.

Nobody exists alone in a vacuum. In fandom, we're all there with each other. Even if there are subgroups within a fandom, in the end we all come back to a circle of creativity, bouncing off and inspiring each other. The same can be said for writing and creating in general. None of us are better than the other, no matter the prestige we may carry.

The first step is never an immediate Penguin Classic.

But it could be wondering what would happen if Merlin and Arthur finally kissed.

LITTLE MISS 'HE LOVES ME!'

Caroline Brignall

'I'm going to Seoul!' I announced one day to my mum who looked as if she regretted ever letting her daughter browse the internet unsupervised, 'I'm going to become a K-pop idol who will win SOTY awards and have as many encores as BIGBANG, if not more!'

In hindsight, I do understand why my sister ripped up my poster shortly after with the intention of shutting me up for the night. But did she really need to remind me that BIGBANG are likely never going to make music again?!

This was my life as a delusional K-pop fan who was deprived of the typical teenager experience because of the pandemic. I would wake up in the morning, turn on my online classes, then immediately switch the tab to search up whichever group released an album that day. Considering how oversaturated the industry was at the time, comebacks were more frequent than you'd think.

The K-pop fan graduated high school despite all of the classes she skipped to stream MVs and she thought, *you know what? Maybe this is the point when I start to consider the adult things in life… Like taxes!*

In fact, I was very close to reaching this milestone in my life. That was until I had discovered you can simultaneously obsess over a band consisting of 23 Korean men and have a perfectly healthy social life. What more did I need? It was also vindicating for eighteen year old me to find a boyfriend who was perfectly okay with half of my phone gallery consisting of Pinterest idol edits. The relationship didn't last long but it established a standard for me when choosing men in the future.

‘I’m going to Sydney for the weekend!’ I announced to my mum and dad who were one step away from yelling at me about the stack of albums scattered on the coffee table. ‘Chen from EXO is going to perform and I have never seen an idol in person!’

After scrolling on Twitter in the middle of a tute and finding out about HallyuPopFest, the first K-pop concert in Australia since pre-pandemic times, my best friend and I decided we were going no matter what. I had prepared a trusty PowerPoint to argue my case but to my surprise, I didn’t need it. My parents had already bought me a ticket. For once they felt guilty for making fun of my starry eyes. They swore it was the only K-pop gift they would ever buy me but regardless, I was over the moon.

Our seats were in the nosebleeds but it was still a magical night. My treasured memory from that night, aside from seeing my childhood idol Kim Jongdae, was when we snuck into the stalls after hearing Kep1er rehearsing for a performance that we would miss.

‘Are you sure this is okay?!’ my friend asked in a hushed and concerned tone, scanning the door for security.

‘*Wa da da*,’ Yujin from Kep1er sang.

‘Absolutely,’ I assured my friend after being assured by the poetic lyrics being presented to us. ‘Queen Yujin told me it is.’

This may sound more delusional than anything else in this story but on the drive back from the concert to my hotel, I swear I saw a shooting star in the cloudy sky. The saying goes that you can't reveal your wish or it won't come true. So I stayed silent and made the wish that had stuck with me ever since that one day F(x) popped up on SBS PopAsia when I was a child. I then laughed at the pure audacity of my wish. After all, I was just a delusional K-pop fan.

HALF A YEAR LATER...

'I'm going to find work!' I announced to my parents who were almost certain that I had finally reached the stage of my life where my frontal lobe developed. 'I need to see every group that comes to Melbourne.'

Despite the pure delusion that fuelled me over the next couple of months, I fondly remember this era of my K-pop fan days. They were the days when my biggest concern was not maintaining a good GPA, but whether I would be able to get enough hours at Maccas to buy tickets for a music festival.

A particularly memorable moment was when my hard earned money enabled me to attend a concert for the first time. I recall choosing the second best seats to treat myself and luck was on my side that night, when a simple conversation with barricade security had me generously upgraded to the front row.

It was surreal to be up close to the artists that high school me had adored from a distance. However, I do wonder if I got too close.

The moment Henry Lau looked into my eyes and reached out for my hand, it was the beginning of a spiral. A very odd and embarrassing downward spiral I'm afraid.

'I'm going to marry him!' I announced to my parents who were fully regretting ever supporting my hobbies. 'He's just waiting to confess his undying love at first sight!' The night after I made my grand confession, I hid inside my room to avoid the judgement of the outside world. After all, how delusional is it to believe that he, a 34 year old K-pop idol, loved me, a delusional teen in Melbourne?

Sadly, this era was as short lived as I expected it to be. After many barricade seats at concerts and even more albums, it was time for me to say goodbye to the bachelor K-pop fan life and say hello to full-time study once again.

The first couple of months at uni were relatively relaxed. Most conversations about my favourite bands were with the kind UniLodge receptionist, who specifically noticed the ZEROBASEONE photocard I had attached to my lanyard. It's crazy to think how scared I was of publicly admitting I even liked a K-pop song when, on my first week away from home, an RA complimented my BLACKPINK hoodie. I went to a concert here and there, bought an album once in a blue moon and even wrote my first article about my niche interest in TVXQ, a group that had recently reached its 20th anniversary.

Then I turned twenty years old and my days as a delusional K-pop obsessed teenager were officially over.

'I'm going to Seoul!' I announced in tears to my parents who wondered if they accidentally tripped into a time machine and were being subjected to my rambling about becoming an idol once again. Luckily that was not the case! 'I got accepted into the international internship program in my uni!'

Remember the shooting star from that day many years ago? Even though I acknowledge that hard-work and preparation helped me achieve my dream trip to my dream destination, the speck of delusion that survived my 20th birthday still believes that my wish was a hug for the young girl who was told to 'face reality'.

As of writing this short story, it has been eight months since my inner child sobbed the happy tears I'd been holding inside for years. Prior to writing this article, I counted. I now have a whopping *ninety five* albums in my collection (not even including my TVXQ collection)!

It's very odd to realise that I have reached the end of the obsession tunnel. While every second song in my playlist is in Korean, my first thought in the morning is no longer about whether I will run away and audition for SM Entertainment. Even if the K-pop fan era of my life has officially ended, I still spend afternoons discussing the glorious return of BIGBANG with my best friends.

What a nice way to say goodbye to over a decade dedicated to a fandom.

'OH, SO YOU'RE A FAN?'

Helly Nayak

Being crazy about gaming,
Or replaying those movie scenes,
Is this what true fandom really means?

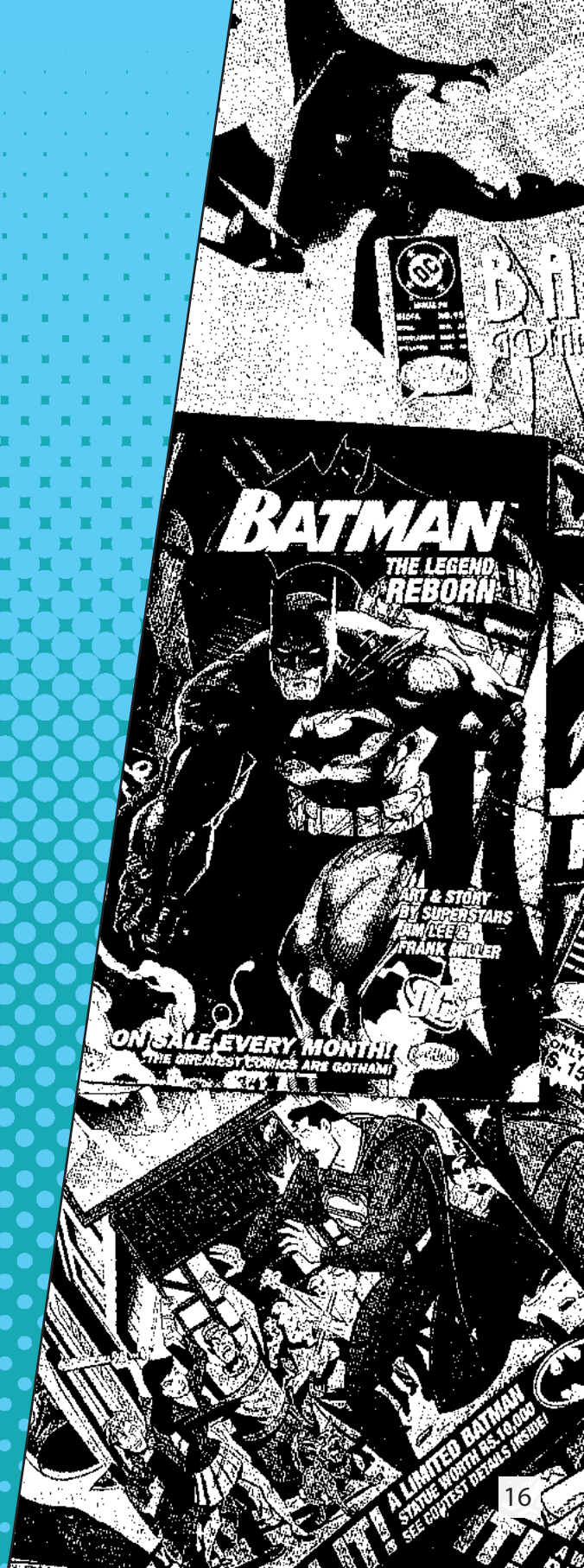
Admiration, affection, and fiery flames of passion,
Fangirl about anything: books, candies, or fashion!
I found a friend who loves Thai curry like me,
A Thai food fan club is on its way, all of us agree.

But, wait a minute! Did you check that weird Bumble profile?
Someone named Emily is looking for a 'fictional boyfriend' smile.
Inspired by K-drama men, her list is never-ending.
Gosh, did she really succeed, or is her date just pretending?

How do I know what a fan looks like?
Is it written in their CV?
And do they genuinely love that show?
Or it's just an expensive TV?

Exhausted from my fandom research,
I am willing to now give up.
All that matters to you does count,
Guilty pleasures, comfort shows, or a painted cup.

Just circle back to one message, very teeny tiny,
Enjoy being a fan of whatever you like,
But please do quit being whiny!


BATMAN
THE LEGEND REBORN
ART & STORY BY SUPERSTARS JIM LEE & FRANK MILLER
ON SALE EVERY MONTH!
THE GREATEST COMICS ARE GOTHAM!
A LIMITED BATMAN STATUE WORTH RS.10,000
SEE CONTEST DETAILS INSIDE!

PERSONAL AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS: THE SIDEMEN

Rosie Desmond

The 'Sidemen' are a group of seven social media influencers, who create weekly videos on their YouTube channel, 'Sidemen.' The channel has amassed just over 20 million subscribers, and collectively, between each of their solo channels, they have reached over 130 million subscribers.

Using their success from YouTube, the group decided to expand their brand beyond an online presence, starting many successful companies. They own a very successful clothing brand called 'Sidemen Clothing' which has collaborated with well-known brands such as 'Hot Wheels' and 'SpongeBob.' 2021 was a big year for the Sidemen as they announced their fast food chain 'Sides' which has multiple locations across England and the UAE. Also in 2021, they released a Vodka brand called, 'XIX Vodka' which ships all throughout Europe and the US. Lastly, they launched their personal subscription service 'Side+' which allows subscribers access to unseen content and giveaways.

The Sidemen became an increasingly established brand as they approached their tenth anniversary. Their audience remained captivated and engaged, as I did myself. I started watching the Sidemen back in 2019, and I have since watched nearly all videos on their main channel, as well as most of the videos on their other two channels. I have been a big consumer of their products, spending well over $500 on their brand, including multiple articles of Sidemen Clothing, a year of Side+ subscription and a bottle of XIX Vodka.

In 2019, I had an intriguing video pop up in my 'Recommended' feed called 'Sidemen: Box of Lies.' After watching that video, I went back and watched some of the Sidemen's previous uploads, which I also found really engaging.

Photo: Calfreezy (Youtube) 2014, Wikimedia Commons 2021

I quickly became a fan of their weekly main channel uploads, and I soon became part of their fandom.

As previously mentioned, the Sidemen created their own spin on YouTube's paid subscriptions. They created their own subscription app 'Side+' in 2022, where there was not only exclusive content – there was now an easy way for fans to connect with one another through an exclusive Discord server. I purchased a 12-month subscription when the membership was first created, which allowed me to connect virtually with other members in the audience. I have also bonded with people in my social circles through the Sidemen. We discuss recent uploads or merchandise drops, which further connects me to the community.

I would describe the Sidemen as my 'comfort creators.' This term is used to describe creators that help you calm down when you're stressed, or comfort you when you're down; an effect due in part to a sense of familiarity. Despite being included in the fan base of many other YouTube creators, I tend to find myself watching the Sidemen more often as I continue to find their videos relaxing and engaging. I would call myself an 'insider' or active fan, however, many of my peers who also watch Sidemen videos could be described as 'outsider,' or passive fans as they only watch and engage with the select videos that pique their interest. In comparison, I watch any Sidemen upload as I find their personalities just as engaging as the content they are creating.

I would call myself an 'insider' or active fan, however, many of my peers who also watch Sidemen videos could be described as 'outsider,' or passive fans as they only watch and engage with the select videos that pique their interest. In comparison, I watch any Sidemen upload as I find their personalities just as engaging as the content they are creating.

The Sidemen also evoke nostalgia for me. As previously mentioned, I have been a heavy consumer of YouTube for years. When watching the Sidemen, it brings back memories of engaging with content from similar creators such as Casper Lee and Joe Sugg. It feels familiar, whereas people who did not engage with YouTube at such a young age may not feel the same way as they can't make similar connections. My engagement with Sidemen content started as simply watching their weekly uploads, but it has since grown into actively engaging with their content and products. You can be a low engager: somebody who views and likes the content, a medium engager: somebody who shares the content, and a high engager: somebody who comments on the video in response to others, or the video itself. This study expanded on two types of engagement: passive and active. I quickly became somebody with active and high engagement with Sidemen content. I actively either comment, like or share on all of the content uploaded by the Sidemen. Over the past four years of being in this fanbase, I have moved from being a fan with passive engagement, to one with active engagement. When I started being a fan, I started by only watching their main channel, ... however I now also engage with their two Sidemen channels, and each of the .. individual members' channels.

Gage Skidmore, Flickr, 2014

I have always thoroughly enjoyed the content they were creating, but I have also become interested in each of their individual personalities. By actively engaging with their content, I am avoiding being part of the 'imaginary audience,' where creators have limited information about the people consuming their videos.

The Sidemen changed the culture of YouTube massively three years ago during the COVID-19 lockdowns. During the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns, they continued weekly uploads, whereas other big YouTube channels, such as the Eboys, could not maintain that same consistency. They proved that despite the social and technological changes that had to happen, they were dedicated to continually engaging their audiences. They chose to continue producing videos they knew would succeed inside YouTube's algorithm as they made spin off versions of their major videos. They uploaded online versions of their biggest videos such as 'Sidemen Tinder in Lockdown' and 'Sidemen Go Back to School,' which they knew already engaged their audiences, but they had to fight the battle of technological changes. Despite all this, the Sidemen have continued to thrive past lockdown, never missing an upload on their main channel in the past four years.

The Sidemen themselves have said that they always aim to engage many different demographics. Tobi and Vikram said in an interview with the BBC earlier this year, "No matter how we're perceived, we just try and convey good positive energy to our audience…I think we're in a lucky position where we can pick and choose every week and everything's a bit different… That's what allows us to keep engaged and have fun and hopefully is for the audience too."

It is the Sidemen's ability to use technology so effectively that has seen the group rise to prominence in the international cultural landscape both online and offline. They decided to use their success to grow their brand into many different business ventures, however, they have also used their reach to give back to the communities that put them in their position. The Sidemen have hosted many charitable football matches, which have seen great success both online and in person. Earlier this year they managed to sell out London stadium for their charity match, and raised over two million dollars to donate to four different charities. They have expanded their brand from just online, into the real world and are succeeding in both ventures.

WHALES IN CLOUDS

Ryza Isabel Gloria

I was watching a show called *Blue Period*. The protagonist essentially finds his love of art and chases his ambition to become an artist. Contrastingly, during this time I was preparing myself to end my painting hobbies to prioritise more important studies. This painting was a little goodbye gesture. I started to paint it during quarantine when I felt at my most lonesome. The painting helped me through the stresses of my academic endeavours through high school to graduation. Of course, I could not have done it without my friends and family, but nonetheless, painting helped me through my blue period. Indeed, this is the only painting of mine that properly expresses this time in my life. Without *Blue Period* or my blue period, this painting would not exist.

DUNE ON FILM

Peter Searles

Criticism & Commentary

'Can you remember your first taste of spice?'

'It tasted like cinnamon.'

'But never twice the same,' he said. 'It's like life – it presents a different face each time you take it. Some hold that the spice produces a learned-flavour reaction. The body, learning a thing is good for it, interprets the flavour as pleasurable – slightly euphoric. And, like life, never to be truly synthesised.'*

The universe Frank Herbert dreamed up when writing the landmark sci-fi novel *Dune* is many things – vivid, idiosyncratic, politically complex, culturally diverse, rich in mythology, deeply spiritual. But when it has come to adapting *Dune* to film, one of its characteristics has historically held greater significance than all the others – its trippiness.

At the centre of the *Dune* universe is the substance Melange. A spice that grants heightened awareness and, in large enough quantities, can activate genes to awaken prescience in the person who ingests it. It's a psychedelic drug and the most valuable substance in the universe. It is the spice that unlocks the latent potential in *Dune*'s hero Paul Atreides and starts him on the path to becoming Paul Muad'Dib, leader of the Fremen people in the uprising against their oppressors, the Harkonnens.

If it weren't for the spice's centrality to the story and the prominence of altered states in Herbet's text, I'm not sure *Dune* would have had quite the same appeal to the first tripper who tried to bring the story to the big screen.

THE VERSION WE COULDN'T HANDLE

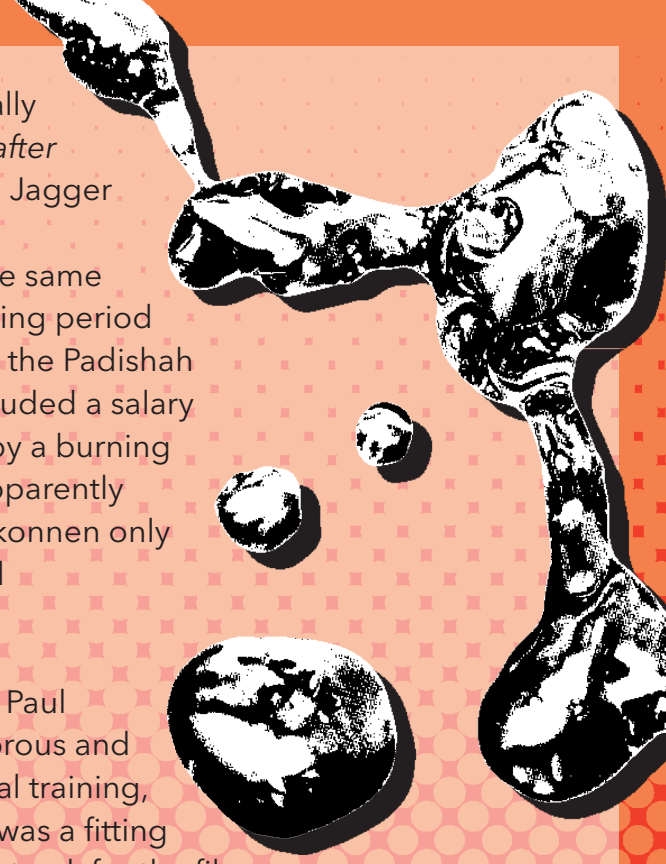
In the fantastic documentary *Jodorowsky's Dune*, Alejandro Jodorowsky explains what he hoped to achieve by adapting Herbert's novel. In his mind, he wasn't just making his fourth feature film, he was creating what he called a 'prophet' – a film that would fabricate the effects of an LSD trip and open the young minds that encountered it. He said his goal was to conquer the world, a task that he knew would require madness.

Looking back at his career, you can see Jodorowsky had been building up to this. Ramping up the psychedelic potency of each successive film (reaching the almost unimaginable heights of 1973's *The Holy Mountain*). Watching him explain his approach to adapting *Dune*, it's clear that his ambition had ballooned beyond what could ever be achieved on this lowly plane of reality. Jodorowsky's *Dune* was doomed to failure. But a mixture of madness, charisma and determination got him further than anyone would think possible.

Jodorowsky's crew were his 'spiritual warriors'. It's easy to conceive of them less as a film production team and more as a tiny cult with Jodorowsky as their cherished leader. Jean Giraud (Mœbius) storyboarded the entire film and contributed character and costume design. Dan O'Bannon signed up to create the visual effects. Chris Foss was on spacecraft and planet design, with input from H.R. Giger to achieve the creepy look of the Harkonnens and their home planet. Michel Seydoux was producer, having previously helped to bring Jodorowsky's *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain* to French audiences, he was perhaps the cult's most loyal convert. But with the charismatic Jodorowsky selecting and seducing each member, there was an unusual level of devotion among many in the team (O'Bannon and Foss, for example, had both agreed to leave their homes indefinitely and relocate to Paris to work on the project). Jodorowsky remarks upon the way 'everything became magic', claiming several fateful coincidences took place during pre-production.

*Herbert, *Dune*, 69

He and Mick Jagger were magnetically drawn together at a crowded event *after* Jodorowsky had decided he wanted Jagger for the role of Feyd Rautha. A similar coincidence found Jodorowsky at the same hotel as Salvador Dali, where a courting period began for Dali's commitment to play the Padishah Emperor (Dali's list of conditions included a salary of $100,000 per hour and a cameo by a burning giraffe). Meanwhile, Orson Welles apparently agreed to play the obese Baron Harkonnen only if he received all the food he desired during production.



Jodorowsky cast his own son to play Paul Atreides and subjected him to a rigorous and potentially abusive regime of physical training, claiming that the sacrifice of his son was a fitting cost for the spiritual bargain he had struck for the film.

At the end of pre-production, the crew/cult had the script and storyboard for the entire film. They delivered a copy to each of the major Hollywood studios in the form of an enormous hard copy tome. All they needed was $15 million US to make the film. They were denied by every studio.

Jodorowsky's Dune lays out a few possible reasons for the rejections:

1. The studios didn't get it. They were businessmen, not spiritual warriors
2. They were scared of the film, cautious of unleashing its power to change minds and conquer the world.
3. They were worried the film would go over budget and run too long for audiences to sit through it.

The pain and humiliation Jodorowsky suffered when his insane dream was shot down in flames was only exacerbated when it was announced another mad genius had been chosen to direct *Dune*.

THE VERSION WE COULDN'T STAND

The next failed adaptation of Herbert's novel was actually made and is genuinely loved by many. Some days I'd include myself in that many. Mostly though, all I see in the film are its flaws. To keep this on the short side, I'll mention the main reasons I think of *Dune* as a failed adaptation. And to make it clear that I don't blame the director David Lynch for the film's failure, I'll comment on the extended version, which surely is the best representation of the production studio's vision for the project.

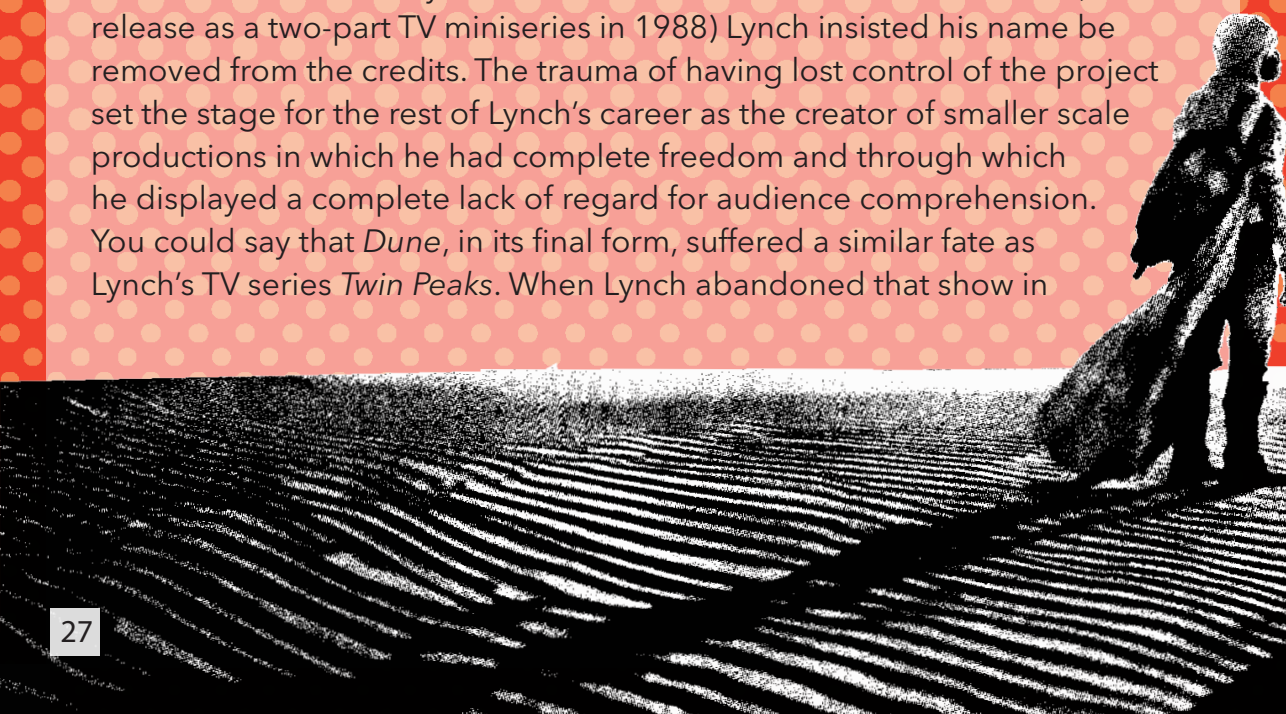
The extended version of the film *Dune* (1984) begins with a slow zoom onto the cover of the novel *Dune*. This opening shot sets the cheese level high, where it remains for the next three hours. But this opening also says a lot about the film's ill-conceived screenplay. The creators of *Dune* seemingly granted themselves absolute freedom to deliver expository information in words, as if they were writing a piece of literature and not a film. In the prologue, a narrator delivers backstory for nine straight minutes while the camera pans across a series of oil paintings which were created as the concept art for the film. When we eventually move on to the action, the opening scenes are interrupted several more times so the narrator can chime in, delivering the names and biographies of major characters as the camera hovers over their blankly staring faces. We also get character specific narration in the form of voiceover thoughts, or as we watch them mutter to themselves the story details the writers weren't creative enough to work into the scenes. Some of the more important plot points are not just stated once, they're spoken through the screen again and again to make sure we got it ("Why Paul killed?", "The tooth! The tooth! The tooth!").

The film does away with surprises, preferring to explain where we're going before we get there. We hear of the Emperor's plot to destroy House Atreides in partnership with the horrible Harkonnens during the prologue, 90 minutes before we finally see their plans in action. While a similar observation could be made of the novel, this is not a matter of the film staying close to the source material.

When Herbert reveals the story's events in advance, it is because his characters are too astute to be caught by surprise, they have considered all possibilities and arrived at accurate assumptions about their enemies' plans before they unfold (or, in the case of Paul, the gift of prescience has made the likely course of future events known and he is dared to manifest a different path). Nothing as interesting as this is taking place in Lynch's *Dune*. The film's events aren't predicted by its insightful characters, they are whispered into the viewer's ear, so afraid are the filmmakers to hide any of the details in case we get lost.

Dune turns out to be the filmic equivalent of your parents reading to you from a picture book at bedtime. But a poorly written picture book with a story completely lacking in suspense or momentum. Events are lined up and ticked off one by one, with no sense that one thing leads organically to the next. This happens, and then this, and then this – like laying down the bricks of a tomb to house the withering corpse of Herbert's story.

To be fair, *Dune* is a complex story and it's easy enough to understand how the spoon-feeding approach took hold. While the studio was aiming for a two-hour film, Lynch's rough cut apparently ran over four hours. Heavy voiceover became one tactic to make sure the $40 million US investment resulted in a marketable product. And Universal was very much in control of the production, which famously pissed off Lynch and led to him distancing himself from the film. By the time the extended version was created (for release as a two-part TV miniseries in 1988) Lynch insisted his name be removed from the credits. The trauma of having lost control of the project set the stage for the rest of Lynch's career as the creator of smaller scale productions in which he had complete freedom and through which he displayed a complete lack of regard for audience comprehension. You could say that *Dune*, in its final form, suffered a similar fate as Lynch's TV series *Twin Peaks*. When Lynch abandoned that show in



its second season, audiences watched his charmingly quirky vision degenerate into goofy rambling at the hands of its network TV studio. That same goofiness infects *Dune* and may be the main reason it still has so many fans – at least it's fun to laugh at. But you can still see Lynch in *Dune*. He's there in the exquisite set design (neither the ornate gold and green of the Emperor's throne room nor the grotesque Guild Navigator in its enormous iron tank would feel out of place in the third season of *Twin Peaks*). Lynch is there in the dreamy interludes and the occasional deeply immersive sound design. In short – he's there in the film's strangeness.

A prime example: where the novel reads that Thuffir Hawat is delivered poison in his food and becomes reliant on the Harkonnens to receive a steady supply of antidote, the film translation involves Thuffir milking the antidote from a conjoined cat/rat creature. It's weird stuff, but the truly Lynchian aspect of the scene has nothing to do with its bizarre conceptualisation of the plot, it's the sight of Jack Nance (in the role of Nefud) standing in the background throughout, with a pained expression, squeezing more and more and more marshmallows into his mouth. I'm speculating, but looking at *Dune* alongside the rest of Lynch's work, it's easy to imagine that, like Jodorowsky, it was an opportunity to explore the strange and surreal that drew Lynch to the project.

This is an excerpt of a longer article published on the Curieux website.

Click here to continue reading the article, including an analysis of Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* and *Dune: Part 2*.

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LITTLE WOLF
(INSPIRED BY EPIC: THE MUSICAL)

Rebecca Hayward

EPIC: The Musical is a series of nine concept albums ('sagas') created by Jorge Rivera-Herrans based on Homer's *The Odyssey*. *EPIC* follows the very end of the Trojan war, Odysseus' journey back to Ithaca after the Trojan war, and the obstacles he faces trying to return home. His main motivator is to return to his wife Penelope and their son Telemachus, who was only a baby when he first left for war ten years beforehand. *The Wisdom Saga* (album seven) gives us our first look at what is happening in Ithaca while Odysseus has been gone, the first three of five songs featuring Telemachus' perspective. The second song in the saga is titled '*Little Wolf*' and is what the suitors call Telemachus as they degrade and bait him to fight them. Telemachus has grown up without his father and with suitors trying to gain his mother's favour, the task of protecting her often falling to him while he wonders if he could ever live up to his father's legacy.

Mother sa
Her suitor
Mother sa
Her suito

Did they
Can I eve
Could I e
Of a man

Your stor
Your nam
Your sha
Your love

How I wi
To feel y
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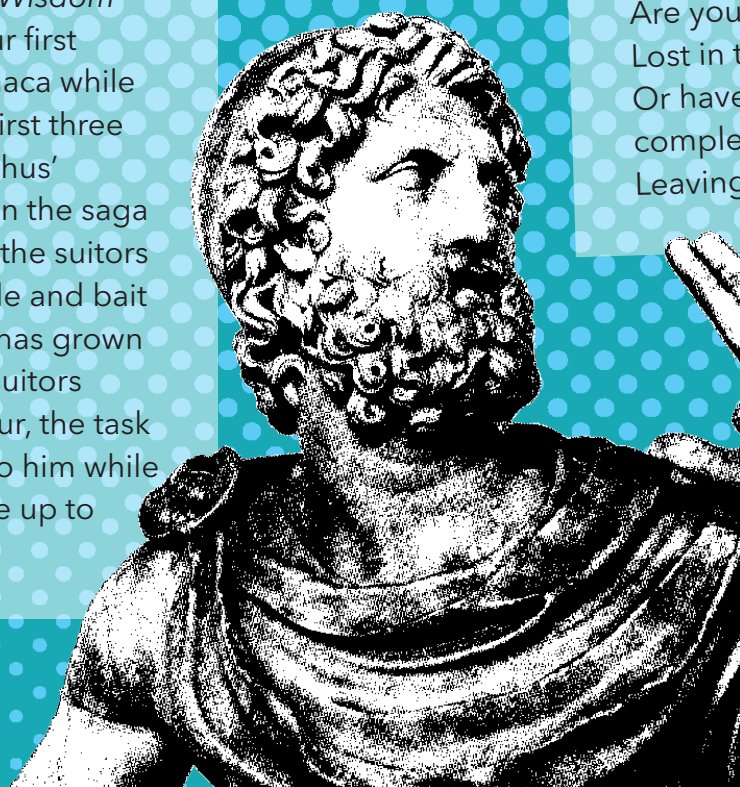


ays I have your eyes
rs call me small
ays I was your joy
rs mock it all

ever think you little?
r grow to you?
ver have the strength
I wish I knew?

ies guide my footsteps
ne echoes these halls
dow keeps the sun at bay
e etched in these walls

ish to hear your voice
our warm embrace
our smile and our shared

de upon your face

really out there?
the unknown
e you left this world
tely
g an empty throne?

An empty throne, an empty home
With Mother standing tall
Your bow remains unstrung
Your son waits for your call

Little wolf, they ask me
Why not accept defeat
Is the fighting worth it
To join the king's dead fleet?

I may be small but I am quick
This little wolf has bite
Why should I dwell in darkness
When I can bring the world some light

Father, if you hear me
I'll make you proud, I swear
Your little wolf will fight
Not cower in despair

Athena, guide my body
Gods, keep us from harm
Father, return safely
Greet us with open arms

Father, please, I beg you
Come home and see your son
Mother and I are waiting
Please let your war be done

Image: Ergisto Sani, Flickr, 2013

WICKED FANDOM

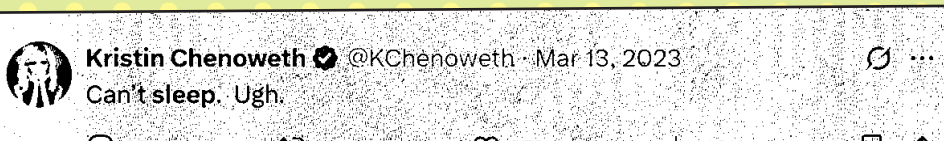
Jacinta Zander

The film *Rent* opens with the song "Seasons of Love", that asks:

Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes.
How do you measure,
Measure a year?
In daylights?
In sunsets?
In midnights?
In cups of coffee?
In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife?

How about in passions, obsessions and fans? I'm a person with the tendency to lean into big emotions, for me it's all or nothing. So my inclination is to delve deeply into exploring EVERYTHING that I can about my passion.

Wicked the musical was my lifeline through my teen years. I never felt like I fit in at high school and Elphaba was a character that I could see myself in. She was judged for having green skin and I (as a sad, awkward unknowingly gay girl in a heteronormative school) subconsciously attached herself to Elphaba. *Wicked* empowered me to see that the things that made me different might be my strengths too. And maybe I wasn't the problem – maybe it was the system that was problematic.



After school, I'd sink into the world of *Wicked*. My mum and I didn't have a computer so I would go to my grandparents' house to surf the net, listening to different productions and connecting with other fans through Tumblr and the Twitterverse. Something serendipitous that came from my *Wicked* obsession was meeting my Twitter friend Holly from New Zealand. We both loved Kristin Chenoweth (who played Glinda in the original Broadway cast). All of us Twitter fans knew that Kristin suffered from insomnia and at night she'd take Ambien to get to sleep. As she was falling asleep she'd be tweeting. So, at nighttime (New York time) we'd amuse ourselves with her non-sensical tweets and sometimes she'd tweet us back (this was very exciting for us!).

Holly and I met up in Melbourne one day to see the musical *Promises*, that Kristin Chenoweth had starred in on Broadway. It was a great night. We sat in the front row and met the cast at the stage door afterwards. Holly and I would have phone calls and exchange tweets regularly. I look back fondly at our fan-based friendship and I'm glad that I got to share my *Wicked* obsession with her.

Kristin Chenoweth @KChenoweth · Nov 13, 2015
Why can't. I ever. **Sleep**. It's not fair. Turn off your brain Cheno! Quite designing, and singing, and writing and creating.

The internet was much more subdued in 2010. Fast forward fifteen years and a friend sends me ONE *Wicked* related reel through Instagram. Suddenly my feed is inundated with *Wicked* content. No deep diving necessary. I trawl through the reels. In less than five minutes a crazy amount of content flashes before my eyes. Ariana Grande posts a video of her and her 99-year-old grandmother (who was fourteen years old when *The Wizard of Oz* came out) watching the film. Cynthia Erivo advocates for Elphaba to have long nails and micro-braids. An African salon in London claims it was given less than a week to make the micro-braided wig for the film. Videos of Jon M Chu talking about his passion for storytelling. Bowen Chen opens up about studying medicine because of Sandra Oh in *Grey's Anatomy*, only to then end up as an entertainer. Interviews of Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo talking about the strong friendship cultivated from the beginning of working on *Wicked* together. I know Ariana Grande's brother has seen the film twelve times and that Michelle Yeoh was nervous about singing and this is only scraping the surface…

Jon M. Chu, the director of the film version of *Wicked*, likens our connectivity through social media to us being roommates with the rest of the world. And that's what it feels like: fan videos, comments, reactions, fan accounts… But it's a noisy place to belong. I can't imagine forming another friendship online like the one I have with Holly. The internet just feels too big and loud for that now and content goes as easily as it comes.

I left *Wicked* behind me in my late teens; life went on and new passions took over. My friend tells me that they had to beg me to see the film in November. So it came as a surprise for both of us when I could sing and speak along to most of the lines in the cinema. I hadn't thought about this story for over a decade, but it still lay nestled in my brain. It makes me think of Alzheimer's patients who've lost their memories but can still recall and react to the music that they were fond of in their earlier lives.

Entering my twenties, I felt like I left a part of myself behind me. I've travelled and ended up in places far from the familiarity of home. Seeing the film *Wicked* was like coming home. Was this because I obsessed over it at such a foundational time in my life? Stories have power to show us the world in a different way. *Wicked* shaped my world view for the better and affirmed my own lived experiences. For me it's about the profound impact friendship can have on our lives (I still don't believe there are enough stories about friendship!), that kindness is an ESSENTIAL in life and that maybe following the yellow brick road isn't what it's made out to be. Drawing on our inner strengths to defy gravity, and finding our own path to our heart's desire is just as important. I think that's pretty damn cool.

I've watched the film thirteen times so far and each time I take something more out of it. I've known it for half of my life and now it's my home. And there's no place like home.

WICKED REVIEW

Angela Kagucia

I grew up in suburban Nairobi, and because of my older sisters, I was exposed to more TV shows and animated films than my contemporaries. A lot of what I know about the Western world was learned by watching shows and reading novels. I gleaned bits and pieces of pop culture from repeated references in all the media I consumed. This is how I first came to learn about *The Wizard of Oz* and the *Wicked* musical. After watching the *Wicked* episode of *Glee* (Season 2, episode 22) I understood that *Wicked* was an epic musical with an incredible score and amazingly talented cast. I'd never watched either of the shows and only knew of the songs from pop culture, American shows, and social media.

It was with this blank slate that I went to watch the new *Wicked* movie. I'd been watching Ariana and Cynthia do the rounds with their press tour and as I witnessed the chemistry between them, I couldn't wait to watch the show. Their promos and the movie's trailers had me chomping at the bit, waiting for the movie to be released. I briefly toyed with donning a pink frock for the movie but quickly dismissed it as 'too much'—this wasn't Barbie, after all.

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The movie tells the story of Guh-linda and Elphaba, the Good and Wicked witches, and how their paths crossed while still at school, before Elphaba became the Wicked Witch. Elphaba, born with green skin, is ostracized from a young age but possesses immense magical talent. Her sister is sent to Shiz University, and Elphaba ends up going there as well, where she is reluctantly paired with the bubbly and popular Glinda. Over time, an unlikely friendship forms between them. However, their differing views on morality and justice begin to push them apart, especially when Elphaba discovers corruption in the government of Oz and refuses to conform to the Wizard's demands.

Ariana and Cynthia were great together. Watching Ariana in this role was like swallowing bubbles and snorting sugar. Her energy pops out of the screen, and her flirty and playful approach to the role comes across as fresh and sweet. She's a spoiled brat who I loved to love.

Left: © 2011 20th Century Fox. All Rights Reserved

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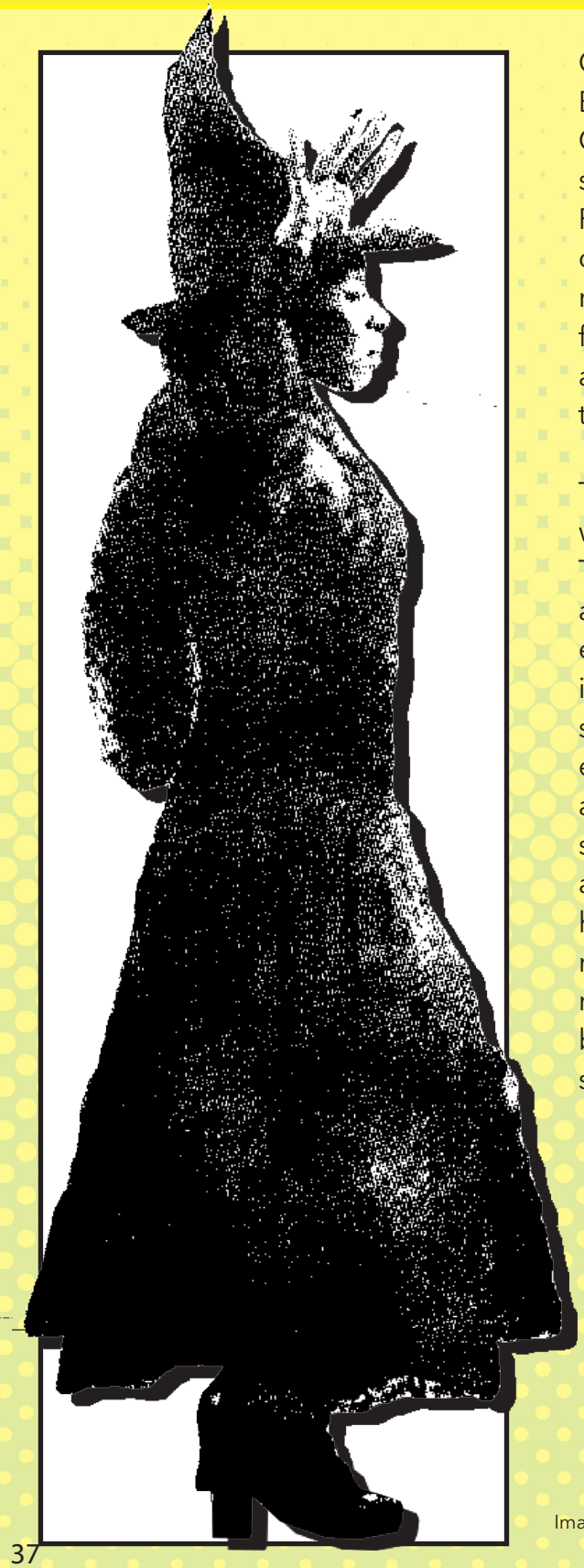

Cynthia was magnetic as Elphaba. Elphaba is serious and sad, and Cynthia captures Elphaba's heavy spirit beautifully. I love, love, LOVE Fiyero because he's just the fun bit of fluff this movie needs. The dance number had me dancing, and his flirtatious banter with both Ariana and Cynthia had me blushing—thank God the theatre is dark.

The sets were magnificently built with amazing attention to detail. The world of Oz felt tangible and immersive, a feast for the eyes with its whimsical yet lived-in aesthetic. The costumes were stunning, with Glinda's sparkling ensembles contrasting beautifully against Elphaba's darker, more somber wardrobe. The score was, as expected, phenomenal. Songs I had only heard in passing on social media or in TV shows took on a new life when performed on the big screen. Ariana's "*Popular*" was a sugary delight, and Cynthia's "*Defying Gravity*" was a powerful, chill-inducing moment that had me gripping my seat.

Images: © 2024 Universal Pictures. All Rights Reserved

At its core, *Wicked* challenges the notion of good versus evil. The film demonstrates how perception can be manipulated, and how those in power dictate narratives that serve their interests. Elphaba is vilified not because she is truly wicked, but because she refuses to conform to corrupt authority. Meanwhile, Glinda, who enjoys privilege and status, must choose between her personal integrity and societal expectations. The story ultimately suggests that true evil often lies not in the individual but in systemic oppression, fear-mongering, and the refusal to question established norms.

I walked into *Wicked* with little more than cultural osmosis as my guide, and I walked out with a newfound appreciation for this story. The chemistry between the leads, the dazzling visuals, and the sheer spectacle of it all made for an unforgettable experience. Whether you're a long-time fan or a newcomer like me, this film is a magical ride worth taking. I am eagerly awaiting the second movie, which will be released later on this year – and I will be wearing a sugary pink contraption to watch the movie.

CURIEUX CONFESSIONS

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE A FAN OF SOMETHING?

"When I really like something – suppose it's a video of a singer or a dancer – you'll see me watching the same reels 1000 times a day."

"I like it and I want to buy something related to it. For me if I like some soccer star, I will buy the clothes or shoes he represented."

"When you like someone, you just like to see their work, how they're doing it. For example I love cricket and I love Virat Kohli. How he bats, how he plays. That's how I think a fan is made up."

"When it reduces your stress levels and increases the level of your happiness. I'm a fan of dancing. I used to be a dancer but I left that because I was diagnosed with dengue last year and I felt very weak while dancing. So I hope to get back on track as soon as possible."

"If I want to spend a lot of time on something, then I will say I'm a fan of it. My hobby is buying stocks like Tesla and Google and Bitcoin (BTC). So normally I spend a lot of time to see if it's increased or decreased."

WHAT'S BIG IN YOUR WORLD RIGHT NOW?

"Back home I started dancing from 4 years old. I stopped it because of my studies and moving to a new country. So for me a big thing would be my dance. It's something that I really miss."

"Probably Messi. I've loved Messi for a long time and I always buy his soccer clothes. I also buy the soccer player cards, the signed ones. In the second-hand market they're worth $1,000 or $2,000. So not only do I like it, it can also make money for me."

"Cricket is the one thing I have followed from my childhood. Unfortunately Virat Kholi has retired from two of the major formats of cricket and he will be playing only the One Day Internationals. But I'm looking forward to seeing how he plays the rest of his time in international cricket."

"I left dancing so I don't know much about it for now. I've searched Facebook and all the groups for people who dance but I've found not too much. I'm looking for the type of dance I used to do (a mix of freestyle and contemporary) here, but I'm not being able to find it so I'm thinking about doing it at home."

"I think BTC now is about $100,000 so I think it's a bit too high. I will buy if it will decrease."

Clone Wars Season 7: A Warning of Things to Come

Criticsm & Commentary

Lloyd Ducksbury

In early 2020, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* released its seventh and final season. The series, which had originally aired on Cartoon Network, was cancelled in 2013 after Disney's purchase of Lucasfilm. The show was beloved among fans for its ability to expand upon characters and concepts that had only received brief touches in the original prequel films. And with this seven year hiatus, the hype for the show's return was palpable. Unfortunately, there are a few small issues that keep these episodes from being a truly perfect finale and, in my view, they represent the earliest instances of what would become some of the most damaging problems with modern *Star Wars* media.

Among the most prominent issues with this season are the actual episode choices.

The season consists of three 4-episode story arcs: *The Bad Batch* – which follows a group of Clone Troopers with unique genetic defects, *The Martez Sisters* – in which Ahsoka Tano teams up with a pair of spice mules to escape the criminal Pyke syndicate, and finally *The Siege of Mandalore* – in which Ahsoka helps take back Mandalore from Darth Maul (who is revealed to have survived the injuries he suffered in *The Phantom Menace*). In a vacuum, these seem like good choices and there are some genuinely good story moments that come from them.

The problem is that we have a very clear view of what we could have gotten instead, had Disney not ended the show in the first place. Shortly after the original cancellation, several of the show's story arcs were posted online with incomplete animation. Among them was the aforementioned Bad Batch arc, with minimal differences, as well as Crystal Crisis – which saw Anakin and Obi-Wan defending giant kyber crystals from

General Grievous, and Bounty Hunters - which featured a teenage Boba Fett facing off against Cad Bane.

The consequences of choosing the final episodes over these in development ones are several fold. Most prominently, the characters featured in this season feel very disconnected to the previous six. Both the *Bad Batch* and *Martez Sisters* arcs feature villains who have either never appeared in the show before or only had minor appearances beforehand. Meanwhile, the Siege of Mandalore finale places Darth Maul as the main villain, although he was only reintroduced at the tail end of season 4. This means that the series' main villains, Count Dooku and General Grievous, appear only as a brief mention and a 5 second cameo respectively. Additionally, the aforementioned Cad Bane, who was among the breakout characters of the show's original run, never appears at all. This makes Season 7 feel oddly out of step with the rest of the show, yet this problem could have been easily mitigated had one of the first two arcs been replaced with either *Crystal Crisis* or *Bounty Hunters*. This then begs the question of why these episodes were left out in favour of the final ones. And the answer came a little over a year later with the release of *Star Wars:*

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The Bad Batch. Yes, in 2021, the eponymous Bad Batch from season 7 of *Clone Wars* received their own spin-off series. Later that same year, *The Book of Boba Fett* was released, with the final 2 episodes featuring Cad Bane. So to answer the question of why season 7 featured the stories it did: maximum spin-off potential.

By prioritising *The Bad Batch* over the other stories, it set them up to get their own show. And by sparing Cad Bane, it left him free to show up in other projects for fans to get briefly excited for. And this overreliance on the inclusion of pre-existing characters in new shows has since become an even more pervasive part of *Star Wars* media.

2019's *The Mandalorian* began as a breath of fresh air, featuring original characters in a mostly unexplored point in the *Star Wars* timeline. That was until season 2, in which every episode included a guest appearance from some pre-established *Star Wars* character. *The Book of Boba Fett* was an even worse offender, completely giving up on its title character for two of its seven episodes, to focus on guest appearances by the Mandalorian instead. While seeing these characters again may have been exciting the first time, they ultimately distract from the original stories which should be the focus. These episodes feel less like *Star Wars* and more like *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*. When are we getting 'Boba Fett meets the Harlem Globetrotters'?

More subtly, this focus on fan service over originality extends to the formatting of *The Clone Wars*. One of the most unique aspects of the series was the opening to its episodes, which featured a small 'fortune cookie' of wisdom related to the story, followed by the booming voice of a narrator giving a WW2 newsreel style introduction. For the final episodes of season 7 however, these motifs are dropped and replaced, for some baffling reason, with the 1970's Lucasfilm logo.

Presumably, this revival was made for the people who were watching the show when it was originally airing, and a majority of that audience would be people who were kids in 2008 when it first came out. Those people grew up with the prequels and the special edition versions of the original trilogy, all of which used the modern Lucasfilm logo. They would have never seen the old one associated with a *Star Wars* movie. At best, this callback will mean nothing to them and at worst, they'll see it as a distracting, out of place *Indiana Jones* reference.

This weirdly boomer-centric piece of nostalgia bait may not have been so egregious had it not come at the expense of one of the things that made *The Clone Wars* unique. This decision only felt worse shortly after when Tom Kane, the voice of the narrator, suffered a stroke which took away his ability to speak. While a tragedy like this isn't foreseeable, it further highlights that the show missed its final chance to embrace what made it special.

With major characters sidelined in favour of fodder for spin-offs and a focus on out of place nostalgia bait instead of the unique aspects that defined the series, *The Clone Wars* season 7 feels less than fitting for such an anticipated finale. While these issues are not as easy to spot in this show as later ones, I can still firmly say that this season should have been a warning of things to come.

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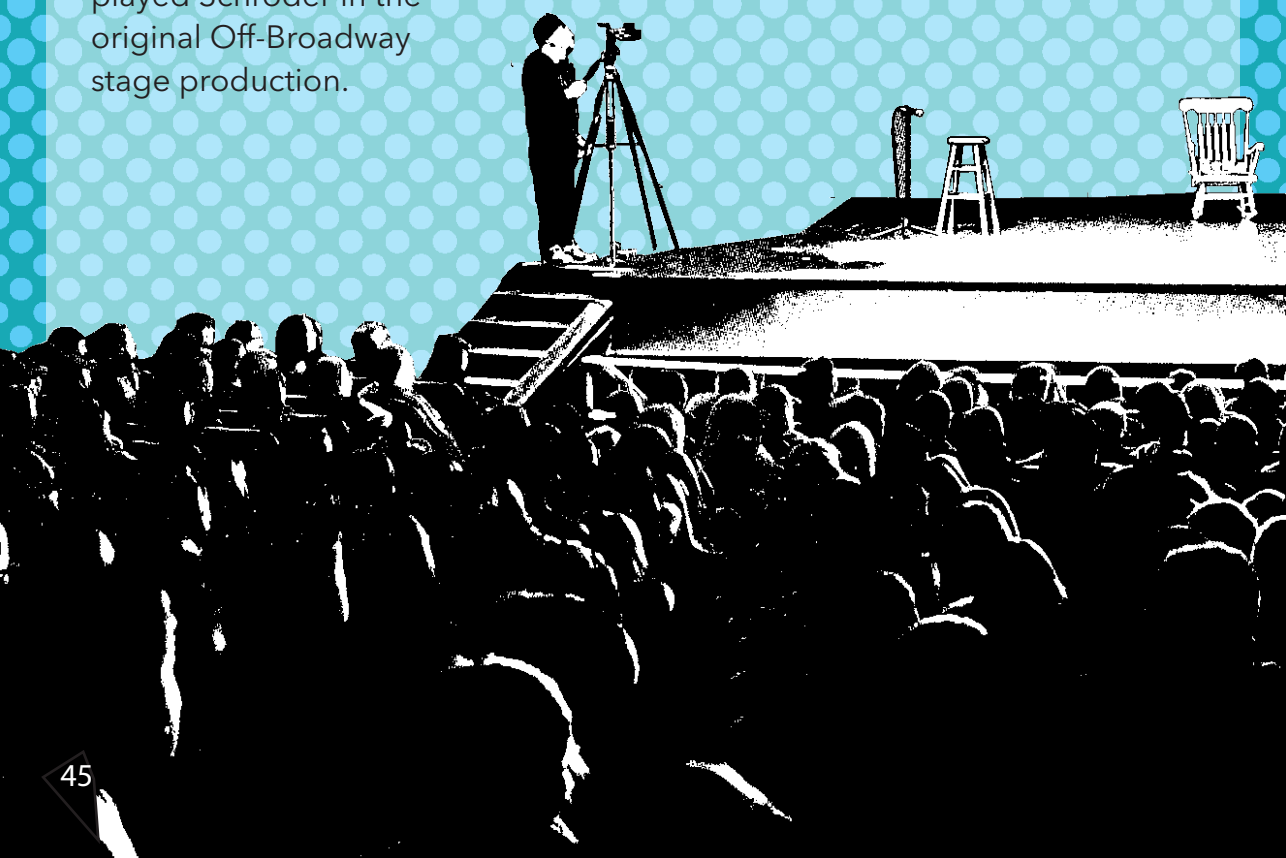
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN

Shantleen Kaur Dhanoa

BURGMANN ANGLICAN COLLEGE PRODUCTION REVIEW

You're a Good Man Charlie Brown originated as a concept album recorded in 1966 adapted from the hugely popular comic strip *Peanuts* by Charles Schulz. The concept album set the basis for an Off-Broadway musical which debuted in 1967. The musical adaptation received two film adaptations in 1973 and 1985.

William Hinnant was the only person to have starred in the concept album, the original Off-Broadway stage production and the 1973 filmed production. In all of these productions of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, he played Snoopy. His brother Joseph "Skip" Hinnant played Schroder in the original Off-Broadway stage production.

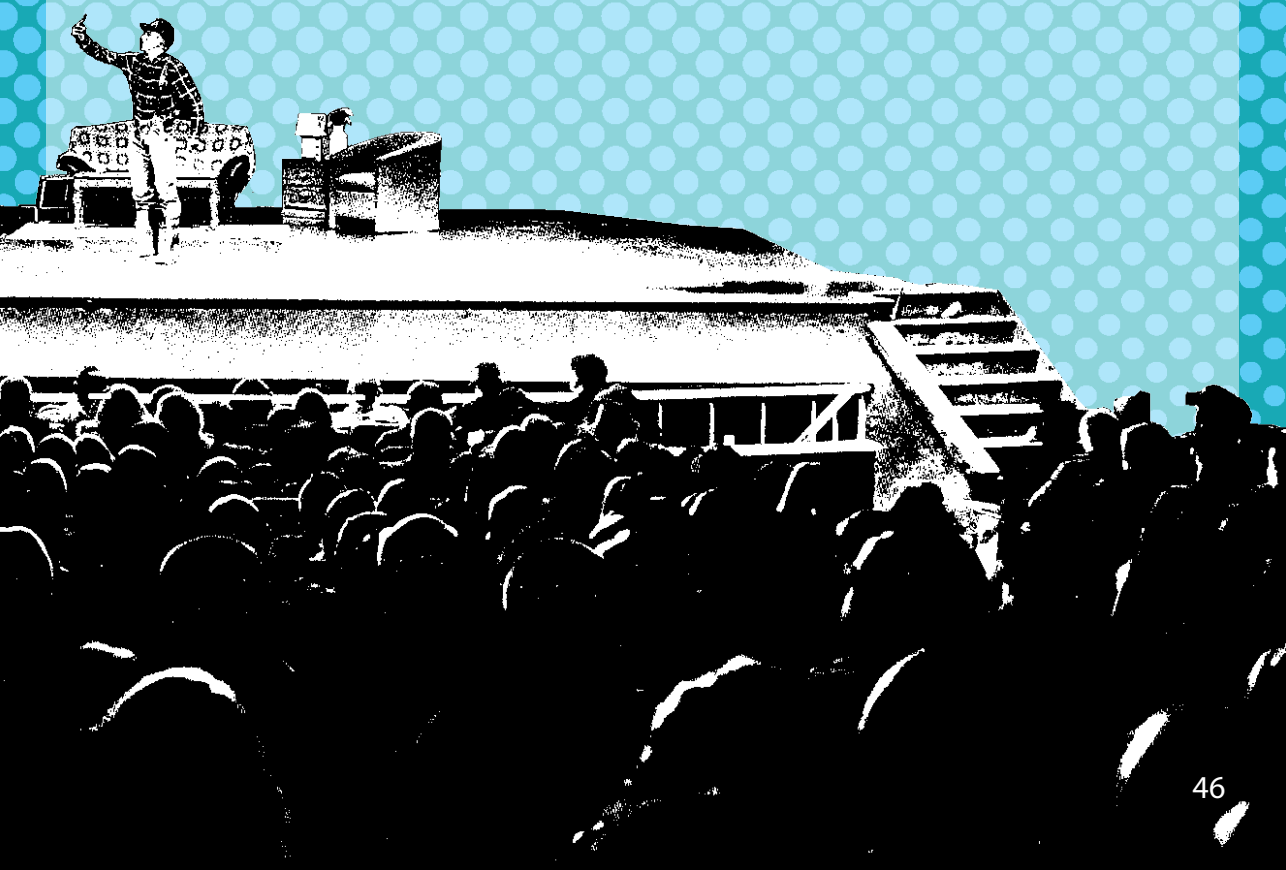


The musical was heavily revised in the critically acclaimed 1998 Broadway production where Patty was replaced by Sally Brown (like in the 1985 animated film, which is loosely based on the original 1967 version of the stage musical). New songs were added and most of the original songs were either rewritten or given new verses. This version is now far more commonly performed by both professional and amateur theatre groups.

Burgmann Anglican School performed a highly revised rendition of the 1998 version of the stage musical (with a larger cast including an actress playing Charlie Brown's love interest). This is my review of the production, which ran from July 24th to July 27th last year at Burgmann Anglican School's Ian and Margaret Hall in Forde.

PREMISE

The story revolves around Charlie Brown's quest to discover what it means to be a "good man," as he struggles with his place in the world and his crush on the Little Red-Haired Girl. The musical is presented in a series of comedic sketches and songs resembling variety show acts.



MAIN CAST

- Navin Singh Dhanoa as Charlie Brown
- Isabella Crocker as Snoopy
- Mayurica Jeevaranjan and Summer Saunders as Sally Brown
- Mitchell Green as Schroder
- James Larkings as Linus Van Pelt
- Tyra Haskard and Kenisha Gaind as Lucy Van Pelt
- Isobel Killesteyn as the Little Red-Haired Girl (*ensemble member of the* "Blankies")
- Benjamin Archibald as the Teacher (*ensemble member of the* "Kite Kids")
- Jasmine Terron as "Dreamtime Snoopy" (the second Snoopy who appears in the fantasy sequences during the songs *Snoopy* and *The Red Baron*)

PRODUCTION CHANGES

The students took some extra creative liberties with the material. The musical opened with a voiceover recording, which was done by my brother, where Charlie Brown advises the audience not to use electronic devices or to take photographs and videos during the musical. My brother hated how his voice sounded in the recording.

Most of the cast (excluding Charlie Brown and Lucy) spoke in Australian accents despite the musical's American setting. On the last night of the show, the students made a particularly hilarious change to the original script. In the original version of the 'Glee Club' scene, Lucy tells Sally that her little brother Linus called her an 'enigma.'

Sally and the others argue over the meaning of the supposed insult, interrupting the glee club's rendition of *Home on the Range* (1873).On the show's last night, however, the students changed the scene so that Sally would interpret the insult as the contemporary slang term 'sigma.' My brother Navin, who played Charlie Brown, laughed hysterically after quickly leaving the stage.

PRODUCTION VALUES

As for the actual production, the sets, props, costumes, instrumentation, acting and singing were overall very good despite some (quickly corrected) flat notes. There were, however, some flaws with the sound system during the show's premiere night, all because of the mediocre sound systems guy! For example, and this was on opening night, there were moments where the actors' voices were overshadowed by the orchestra!

LEGACY & EPILOGUE

This musical led to an obsession with Peanuts spreading all over Burgmann in the weeks following the musical's performance! For the 2024 Book Week Parade, 2024 Spring Concert, 2024 School Foundation Day and 2025 School Picnic, Navin Dhanoa (my brother) reprised his role as Charlie Brown. Several other students, including those involved in the musical, also dressed up as *Peanuts* characters.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Interesting find

I see you every second day, when the clock strikes eleven, I see your face.
Little lies fly little ways.
Your body looks contorted, your arm is twisted north.
Your face flashes red with abandon.
You can hear them.
Everywhere you go is a place to behold.

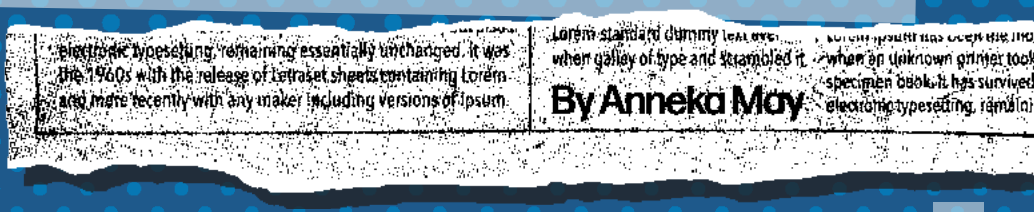
Tiny pinpricks cover your spine, bruise on your right thigh, scar on your left middle finger.
All licked with honey.
Commitment hairlines, lofty aspirations, only carry you so far, flightless birds scattered in highrise apartments.
I hear there is a civil war in Texas.

Did you think you were to blame while you were parading covered in glitter?
Did you tell the wrong boy you loved him, did the right boy run away to London?
That heartbreak lives permanently on your left cheek and in glossy picture frames.
Perhaps you found another boy in Kansas. Or is he from Iowa? A classy small town in New England even?
Sources say he's the right boy to end all 'right' boys.
We've been told that soon enough kisses will have healed all wounds.
Even the self-inflicted ones.
Miracle Boy or Resourceful Girl. The knife cuts both ways.

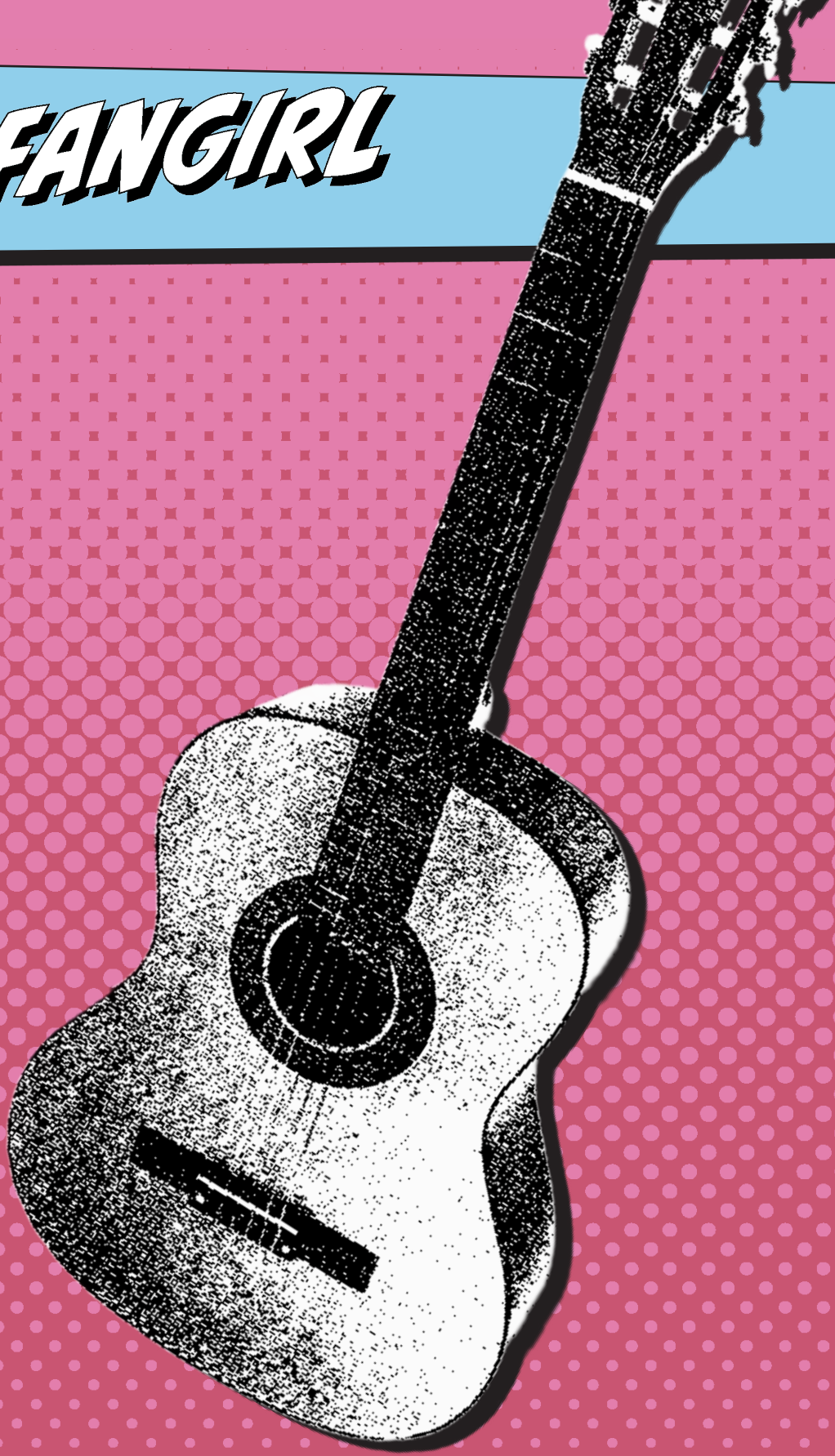
I hear you solved an economic crisis in your new hometown, politicians sneer at you.
You must be doing something right.
Your old hometown is dwindling but a new life is slowly crawling up from ashes.
It's 4 pm, your time is chosen again.
Your scratches get covered in diamonds.
A doll never breaks.

In the dining room, no one is watching now, perhaps a bottle of Merlot to calm your nerves.
You poor sweet baby lamb.
You're a mourning lamb.
I saw you kiss the fox. He cut out your tongue. Cost your good name a pretty penny.
You polish up nice and sweet when you chew the fat.
You poor sweet thing, you innocent thing.
Dry your cartoon eyes.

You know they live to break you, so testify. Stand before and give your penance.
One sweet day, you're going to forget their names and the sound of their cameras clicking.
One sweet day, you're going to walk down streets as an uninterrupted girl. The girls wear their hair like you. Same lipstick too.
Fear is only in your mind if you let it live there.
Fear only takes over when it lives in your gut, your gut has been empty since 2008. You can collect crowns like postage stamps.
You poor sweet innocent thing, carve your knife and testify, they're too weak to survive their mistakes. You know the next steps.
Slaughter the wolf, you sweet mourning lamb.



FANGIRL



I wouldn't call myself a fangirl. It's just that I have multiple books about the history of ABBA, the influence of Taylor Swift, and many posters of the artists I listen to.

I'm not necessarily a fangirl. It's just that I follow several fan accounts dedicated to their work, and I also check out influencers who create book covers and outfits inspired by Taylor Swift's songs and clothes.

But it's not my entire personality. Sure, my love of these artists and music has contributed to who I am and how I think, but it's not all of me.

It's a fascinating thought – the influence these absolute strangers have on so many lives, simply because of their success in the industry.

Taylor Swift has amassed an incredible following worldwide and yet she knows so little of who we all truly are.

But her fans know her birthday, her cat's names, her middle name and so much more.

If I sent her a DM on Instagram, I could almost guarantee that I wouldn't get a response from her (there's still a tinsy tiny part of me that can hope).

But, if she sent me a message, best believe I would be replying as soon as I could.

I recently read an article about why we're so obsessed with celebrities. What I read made sense and was something I had known, without actually knowing it.

This article said we monitor and follow celebrities so closely because we are constantly searching to understand how to improve our lives so we won't be ignored.

Makes sense if you pause to think about it.

These people are so well known, and so loved, that it's easy to try and subconsciously understand what led them to where they are today.

In my role as a fan, I follow these artists on social media and stay up to date with what they're doing and sharing. I follow secondary accounts analysing these moves, to a level I couldn't even imagine doing myself.

But I think being a fan is also about the connections it opens up.

I've formed connections with people simply because they were wearing merch of an artist I like, or because they were wearing a friendship bracelet (if you know, you know).

These little hints have helped create friendships.

Sometimes it's more obvious than a small accessory.

When I went to Harry Styles' concert, I was waiting in line to get in, standing behind a girl who was by herself.

Clearly, we have one thing in common – a love for the music we were about to see performed.

So, we started talking.

Turns out we have a lot more in common than we originally would've thought.

This girl is now a good friend – we're each other's concert friend.

If I hadn't been a fan of Harry Styles, there's a very likely chance we never would've met.

Perhaps we would've sat next to each other in another concert and started talking then, but even then, we would've met because we're fans of something.

When people criticise ‘fangirls’ and call them obsessive, hysterical or unable to control their emotions, I feel sorry for them. Clearly, they’ve never let themselves feel the excitement and joy of being a fan of something.

This is the era for fangirls to claim back the title. Make it something to be proud of, not something that they cower behind.

Make it the thing you proudly love to talk about, without fear of being shamed for it.

After all, the people we look up to – whether someone we know personally, or the celebrity who you may never meet – has someone that they idolise and are inspired by.

Why can’t fangirls proudly do the same?

So maybe I would call myself a fangirl. I’m proud to say I know fun facts about the artists I love listening to on repeat.

I am a fangirl, and I’m so grateful for the friendships I’ve made from fandoms.

A Personal Audience and Engagement Anaylsis

Whats the Sitch With Banana Fish?

Yasmine Killeen

The 2018 anime *Banana Fish* is based on a manga originally written by author and manga artist Akimi Yoshida in 1985. It was loosely inspired by a short story by J.D. Salinger *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, about a 17 year old gang leader falling in love with a Japanese photographer and their struggle to stay together in the violent landscape of New York City. Each episode pays homage to a classic novel or short story, such as *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, or *The Catcher in the Rye*. Despite being written almost 40 years ago, it manages to depict an LGBT relationship, while also tackling confronting and taboo topics like sex trafficking and male sexual assault. I first watched the show back in 2018, and even though it has been roughly seven years since then, I still think about it every day. I found its themes to be extremely depressing, yet very beautiful. The relationship between the two main protagonists was depicted in such a unique way; I carry it with me when considering what I value in a relationship. I engage with the fandom both online and in clubs. Within the fan community, I read fan fiction, and admire the art done by fans based on their personal interpretations of the show.

I became a member of the *Banana Fish* audience after hearing about it on social media. At the time, I ran a popular fan account for another anime, and would receive many messages from people who were recommending it to me after seeing many clips go viral on Instagram. In the wake of social media, hearing about shows from word of mouth and participating in "water cooler moments" is a practice that has not gone away, just changed its form.

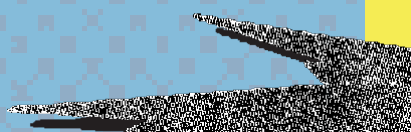
In the 2013 book *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*, Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das contend the internet has not diminished the participation of audiences in the changed media landscape: "The internet is no more killing off audiences than did television replace reading or cinema destroy the art of conversation. Rather, changing social and technological conditions drive the evolving contexts within which people engage with and through media and, therefore, they also drive the ever-new (yet often strangely familiar) claims about the status and significance of audiences."

My relationship with other members of the audience is fairly strong. Due to the show's sadder elements I have created unique bonds with other fans as we share the same feelings of anguish and can relate to one another's "pain." As a show depicting two same-sex love interests, *Banana Fish* has created an inclusive landscape for audience members who identify as LGBTQI+. The anime has opened a safe space on social media to discuss these topics without the same judgment from the outside world, where fans can relate to one another. Back in the 80s, when the original *Banana Fish* story was written, this would have been extremely rare, but today we are seeing more diversity than ever. As explained by Graeme Turner in his 2020 article *Dealing with Diversity: Australian Television, Homogeneity and Indigeneity*, the changing media landscape has expanded opportunities for embracing diversity. The multiplatform environment has significantly increased the amount of content available, meaning there is more opportunity for audiences to be exposed to a diverse depiction of people as well as a broad array of producers of this content.

To me, *Banana Fish* sends a strong message to victims of sexual assault to keep going. I have always had a huge fear of being subjected to sexual assault, so I am inspired by the way the show's main character, Ash, goes through so much, yet has such a strong will to keep going despite his trauma. I think the meaning of these events is different to me compared to other audience members because this fear is my own and I'm sure that most audience members don't let their fear consume their life as much as I do. And even if they did, I doubt they would watch this show as the themes may be too triggering.

Banana Fish forces the audience to confront some of the most difficult problems in society, encouraging discussion about how we treat the issue of sexual assault. In this way, *Banana Fish* shows how media can set the agenda for the issues at the forefront of our minds. In his contribution to the 2018 book *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies* Henry Jenkins explored the intersection between our public discourses and media products as an aspect of "…participatory culture, one which facilitates the social negotiation of the meaning and value of popular texts, enables grassroots creative responses, and provides a context for debates about issues of representation, diversity, and inclusion" in the digital age.

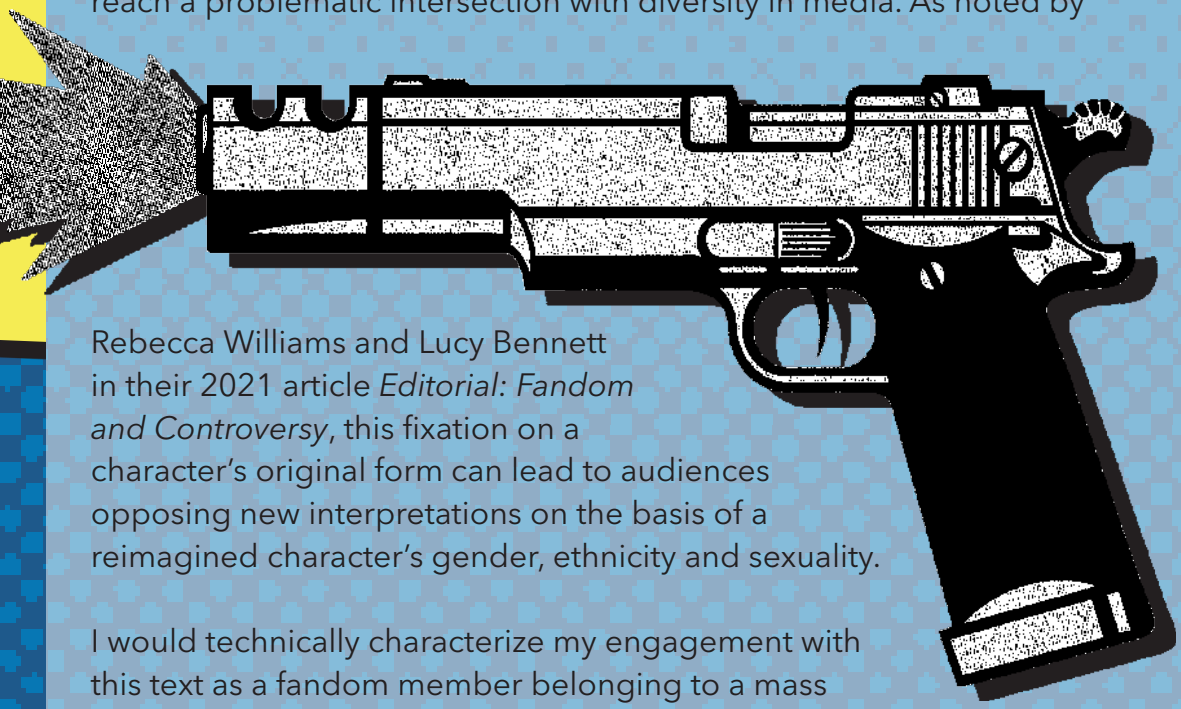
Even if the creator has a set meaning in place, actively creating your own meaning is a significant part of being an audience member. This extends beyond the individual, as audience members bring their own



interpretations to other people, perhaps debating these individual meanings to create a more inclusive interpretation. This is captured by the 'active audience theory,' which is defined in the 2011 *Dictionary of Media and Communications:* "…scholars cannot assume that the meaning of a text is fixed in advance of its reception because meaning is the product of a negotiation between the audience and the text in a particular context of reception." This plays into my role as an active audience member, not a passive one. When engaging with *Banana Fish*, I actively seek to glean a unique meaning for myself, without entirely dismissing the author's, but by collaborating with them, and evaluating what lenses I see the work through - whether that is a feminist lens, class lens, or any number of potential angles. I work through this process in order to reach an interpretation that aligns with my beliefs, and matches at least somewhat to what I see as the author's intentions. Art is subjective and unique to us as individuals. As we may struggle to come to the same conclusions on any given text, we must remember that all opinions are valid.

The biggest change in my relationship to *Banana Fish* has been around the pleasure I feel watching the show.

When it was airing weekly, I had no idea how it would end. I enjoyed waiting to see how Ash and Eiji's relationship would develop. I had a sense of hope that it would amount to a happy ending, but after watching the finale, I very much struggle to watch it again. Instead of receiving comfort from the show, I feel a strong sense of dread whenever I try to rewatch difficult episodes. This brings into question as to whether my engagement with *Banana Fish*, similar to many other fans, is on the obsessive side. While it can be perfectly normal to enjoy a show to the point where you feel personal connections to the characters or celebrities, this attachment to these personalities can become problematic. Fans developing an obsession with a character can result in an intense desire for characters remain as they were originally conceived. Once some fans start to feel this way, different interpretations or re-imaginings of characters can be met with hostility. This phenomenon can reach a problematic intersection with diversity in media. As noted by



Rebecca Williams and Lucy Bennett in their 2021 article *Editorial: Fandom and Controversy*, this fixation on a character's original form can lead to audiences opposing new interpretations on the basis of a reimagined character's gender, ethnicity and sexuality.

I would technically characterize my engagement with this text as a fandom member belonging to a mass audience. *Banana Fish* has a global, dispersed fandom of which I am a part. My engagement with this text from a cultural perspective is influenced by being an Australian. Despite my lack of familiarity and comfort with Japanese conventions and the American lifestyles depicted, my engagement with *Banana Fish* is deeply personal to me in its themes. While I connected to Banana Fish as an individual, the show also connected me to an online community of people where our experiences of the text were continuously shared and negotiated.

Appetite in Fandom
Hannibal

Christina Sun

An appetite in fiction very rarely refers to physical hunger alone; Shakespeare writes of an appetite for power, an ego-fuelled greed demonstrated by Claudius in *Hamlet*. In the Greek myths, Zeus is plagued with an insatiable appetite for lust and sex which he attempts to quell through countless affairs. It should not be unusual then, to consider Hannibal Lecter an individual of enormous appetite. In all representations of his character, it remains true that Hannibal has a large ego, coupled with a ravenous urge to exercise power over others. He is appetitive, consumed by a desire to satisfy his bodily needs, so much so he goes to the lengths of not only murdering anyone who disrespects him, but also cannibalising them afterwards. The TV show *Hannibal* first debuted in 2013 and has since gained a cult following, a fandom with an equally unquenched appetite for the macabre. The fixation among fans on disturbing themes in the media is not a contemporary issue, but the concept of an online fandom itself is a uniquely 21st century phenomenon.

When NBC first released *Hannibal*, social media was still somewhat new; Twitter had only been active since 2006, and Instagram had just come online in 2010. Although these were dominant platforms, Tumblr emerged in 2007 and became a prominent website for fandom communities, including the mass of *Hannibal* fans. The content shared on Tumblr was uncensored, graphic and so clearly demonstrated the fandom's appetitive nature, just like its main character, Hannibal Lecter.

This contemporary manner of participating in a fandom is at its core, an attempt to consume more, to create more and to envelope yourself in the content. The continuous burgeoning of the fandom is not at all dispelled by the graphic essence of *Hannibal*.

To the contrary, there's a rising trend of 'edits' on TikTok and Instagram. What is it then, that appeals to so many fans? How does a TV show as unsettling as *Hannibal* manage to dig its roots deep into the minds of fans, despite the controversial depiction of inhumane acts such as cannibalism and murder?

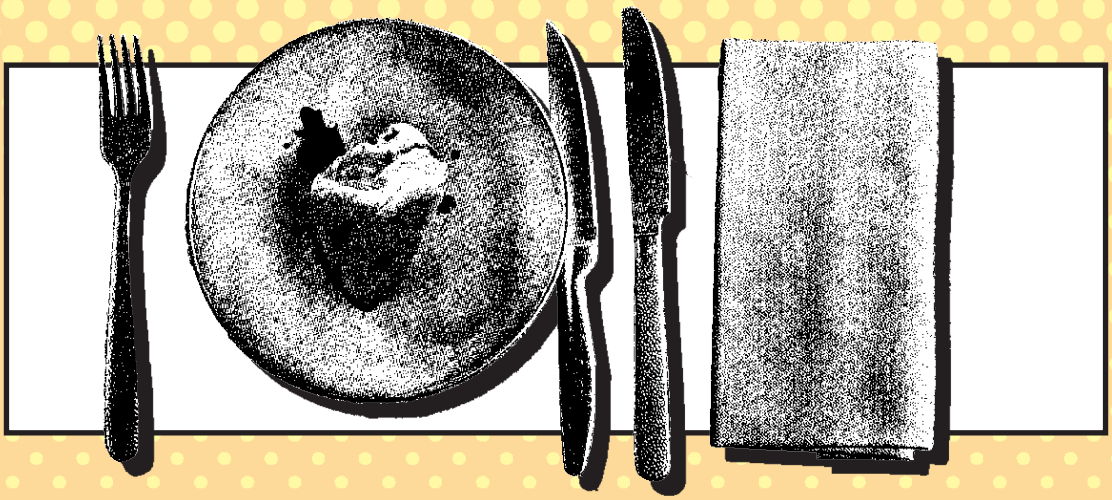
Hannibal was a show unparalleled in aesthetics, story and character.

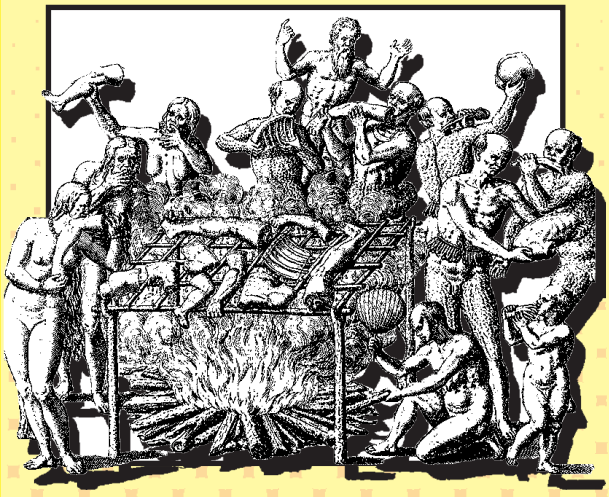
Despite it being a remake of the preceding *The Silence of the Lambs* movies, the character of Hannibal Lecter is executed faithfully and extraordinarily so. It would only be natural that the fandom remained fixated on the show, fascinated by and yearning for the artistic presentation of the grotesque. Much like its predecessors (*The Silence of the Lambs*, *Red Dragon*, etc.) the show is not solely focused on Hannibal Lecter. The character of Clarice Starling from the 1991 movie is emulated in Will Graham, an FBI profiler who eventually devolves into madness as a result of Hannibal's manipulation. The ambiguous, distorted nature of Hannibal and Will's relationship is a driving force behind the fandom's voracious consumption of the show and related content: the romantic implications of their relationship is not only alluded to, but confirmed. Hannibal's love for Will is kryptonite for the fandom.

Popular fan fiction website 'Archive of Our Own' or simply 'Ao3' is home to over 30,000 works relating to **Hannibal**, with 29,000 of those works tagged as 'Hannibal Lecter/ Will Graham.' Amongst the other tags are 'cannibalism,' 'murder,' and 'blood.' The fandom is in no way deterred by violence and immorality; in fact, fans seem to have an appetite for it. It is unlike the gluttonous and lustful appetite portrayed by Zeus, or the tyrannical appetite in Claudius. It is another appetite of its own, one uniquely associated with fandom: an appetite for the unrealised, the missed potential and the theoretical.

Hannibal was cancelled after the third season, leaving the fandom with, for the most part, an unsatisfactory conclusion. In employing their appetite for the unrealised, fans were able to create alternative imaginings of a following season, with some fans even distorting the storyline beyond recognition. This was not a phenomenon reserved for the *Hannibal* fandom. Plenty of older shows and films have received the same treatment, whether it be for a lack of satisfactory ending, or, as seems to be increasingly true, a demand for more diverse relationships. While *Hannibal* has a smaller fandom than most fictional works, its size is not indicative of the fandom's dedication or quality of fan fiction.

Exploration of cannibalism is regarded as perturbing, and rightfully so. It is against our very nature to partake in the consumption of another, to consume the flesh of a human being. And yet, from centuries ago to present day, cannibalism remains a relevant topic to our cultures and societies.





In Titus Andronicus (first performed in 1594) the character Tamora is fed the remains of her two sons in a pie, and in the 2022 film *Bones and All*, two lovers practice cannibalism together as a metaphor for shame, for wanting something you should not. *Hannibal*'s portrayal of cannibalism is done so in an artful manner, a fusion of the comfortable and the discomforting. Whether this alters the severity of Hannibal's abhorrent acts is debatable, but it is entirely true that his disturbing disposition, the morally fragmented psyche of his counterpart Will, and the censured acts they commit together is appealing for the fandom.

Morbid curiosity is often a term used to describe the impulsive urge to consume content of a graphic nature; it is an innate aspect of humanity, one that we may choose to give in to, or resist.

Seeking out or enjoying media relating to macabre themes does not assume that the individual is alike what is depicted in any way– fans of *Hannibal* are fascinated by the grim subject matter of the show and the eloquent presentation. There is a curiosity, an urge to satiate an appetite, to find answers to questions we dare not ask. Why does Hannibal cannibalise his victims? Why is he composed yet impulsive? Why does he so despise human folly? His psychopathic actions captivate fans, enticing them and drawing them inwards, just enough so that they are teetering between fully understanding and observing from a distance. *Hannibal* is an appetising show, and not in the sense that it induces feelings of physical hunger in fans. The show has curated a fandom who wish to quell their appetite for answers, for the unknown, and for the disturbing. It is ironic that such a cruel, wretched man who eats others so wickedly should attract such an appetitive fandom.

NAMELESS, LOVELESS

AN EKPHRASTIC POEM RESPONDING TO MARY SHELLEY'S 1818 NOVEL FRANKENSTEIN

A sudden shock, he draws first breath,
First sound – a gasp, the taste of death.
No bosom for warmth, no mother's gentle hum,
Just the cold. A deep darkness. Numb.

Not even a name, nothing to his claim.
Simply stitched together, a borrowed frame.
A doll, a thing, a hideous child made.

The babe fled into starless night,
His father's fear still burning bright.
With clunky uneven steps, like a newborn deer.
Limbs entangled, pitiful and queer.
Hands both too small and too large,
Legs mismatched thin,
Limbs unsure of the skin they're in.

Through pages worn, through words alone,
He sought a world he would never know.
Of heroes adored and embraced,
Of hands that held, of love un-chased.

Reflection revealed a face that repulsed,
A wretched shape that made others run.
An amalgamation of people, of past.
A reminder of his accursed birth, ever-present.

So onward he wanders, through endless night.
Forever bound by his father's fright.
A shattered heart, evermore displaced.
Chasing love, never to be embraced.

Sonja Deakin

My Favorite Movies to Watch for Every Holiday of the Year

Shantleen Kaur Dhanoa

Commentary

Christmas & (Western) New Year

My picks:

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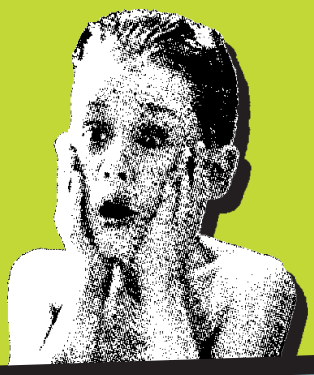
- It's a Wonderful Life (1946, USA)
- Home Alone (1990, USA)
- Home Alone 2 (1992, USA)
- Spirited (2022, USA)



These four remain my favorite Christmas movies of all time! I can't decide which one I like best.

We start with the first film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, which is about a man attempting suicide. He is rescued by his guardian angel, who shows him how horrible everybody else's lives would be if he never existed. This is perhaps the darkest, most emotional Christmas movie I've seen so far. It's not full of fast-paced violence like *Die-Hard* (1988) or incredibly crass like Dear "Santa" (2024). *It's a Wonderful Life* was made in the 1940s with lots of love! Either way, it's a very mature movie and I recommend it highly.

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While readers may already know and love the infamously overrated *Home Alone* (1990), there's also the (only canon/decent) sequel where Kevin McCallister accidentally boards the wrong flight! Complaining about the Christmas family holiday in Miami, Kevin's wish comes true when he ends up in New York City after boarding the wrong plane with his father's belongings. He initially has fun in the snowy "Big Apple" before running into the infamous "Sticky Bandits" (Harry & Marv, again!) who have just escaped from prison. While a bit formulaic, I do honestly prefer the official sequel to the original *Home Alone*. It manages to shake up the formula in a genuinely fun manner, unlike the horrible Disney+ sequel-remake from 2021.

Trigger warning: Suicide

Although I prefer older Christmas movies, there is one modern Christmas film that I've just seen and recommend. Aimed at a young, teenage audience, *Spirited* (2022) lives up to its name with its boundless energy and artistic merit. Its well-executed and well-choreographed dance sequences rival the artistic portions of Olympic opening ceremonies and Broadway musicals (there needs to be a stage version of this!). *Spirited* is a musical comedy pastiche of the classic *Christmas Carol* story from the 1840s. It's a genuinely fresh Christmas musical in every sense of the word: it satirizes classic Christmas story cliches, tastefully pays homage to its source material, has beautiful camerawork and special effects. The characterization is also brilliant, featuring likable and relatable heroes with convincing character development. It mixes vintage with modernity in a way that doesn't feel like a tacky attempt at being hip with its young audience. For a light-hearted Christmas musical, it also contains mature emotive scenes such as a mother slowly dying of cancer and a horrific dramatization of doxxing which ends with a tween's unseen suicide.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

While I have no specific recommendations for Chinese New Year, undoubtedly, I would pick any classic action-comedy movie from Hong Kong. The films in this genre produced from the 1970s onwards are unlikely to disappoint. It's tradition to me to laugh along to any of these cheesy, but critically acclaimed films to bring in the new year!

VALENTINE'S DAY

My pick:

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK (1975, AUSTRALIA)

This film probably stands out from every other Valentine's Day themed film ever made, for two reasons:

It's based on a Valentine's Day-themed mystery novel.

It's set in Australia's wilderness, more specifically at Mount Macedon's "Hanging Rock" where the film's main events take place. This is notable because not a lot of Valentine's Day films take place in Australia, let alone our exotic wilderness! The location also makes for a unique holiday film as the weather is distinctively Australian.

Picnic at Hanging Rock is a notoriously bizarre mystery-horror flick. It opens with innocent scenes of girls at a rural finishing school near Mt. Macedon reading love letters and greeting cards sent by admirers, helping to put on each other's corsets and gossiping. With the exception of a rebellious orphan girl, most of the students are due to visit Hanging Rock for a Valentine's Day picnic. The school's most popular students (Miranda, Irma & Marion) and a teacher (Ms. Greta McCraw) get lost on Hanging Rock after disregarding a warning not to climb it. Another schoolgirl (Edith Horton) also climbs Hanging Rock but returns terrified after witnessing her three classmates enter a crack in the rock whilst in a trance. The local community, including the film's detective Sgt. Bumper is baffled and haunted by their mysterious disappearances. The story is adapted from a 1967 novel of the same name. This film is now considered Australian film director Peter Weir's most famous early work and put Australia on the map of global cinema.

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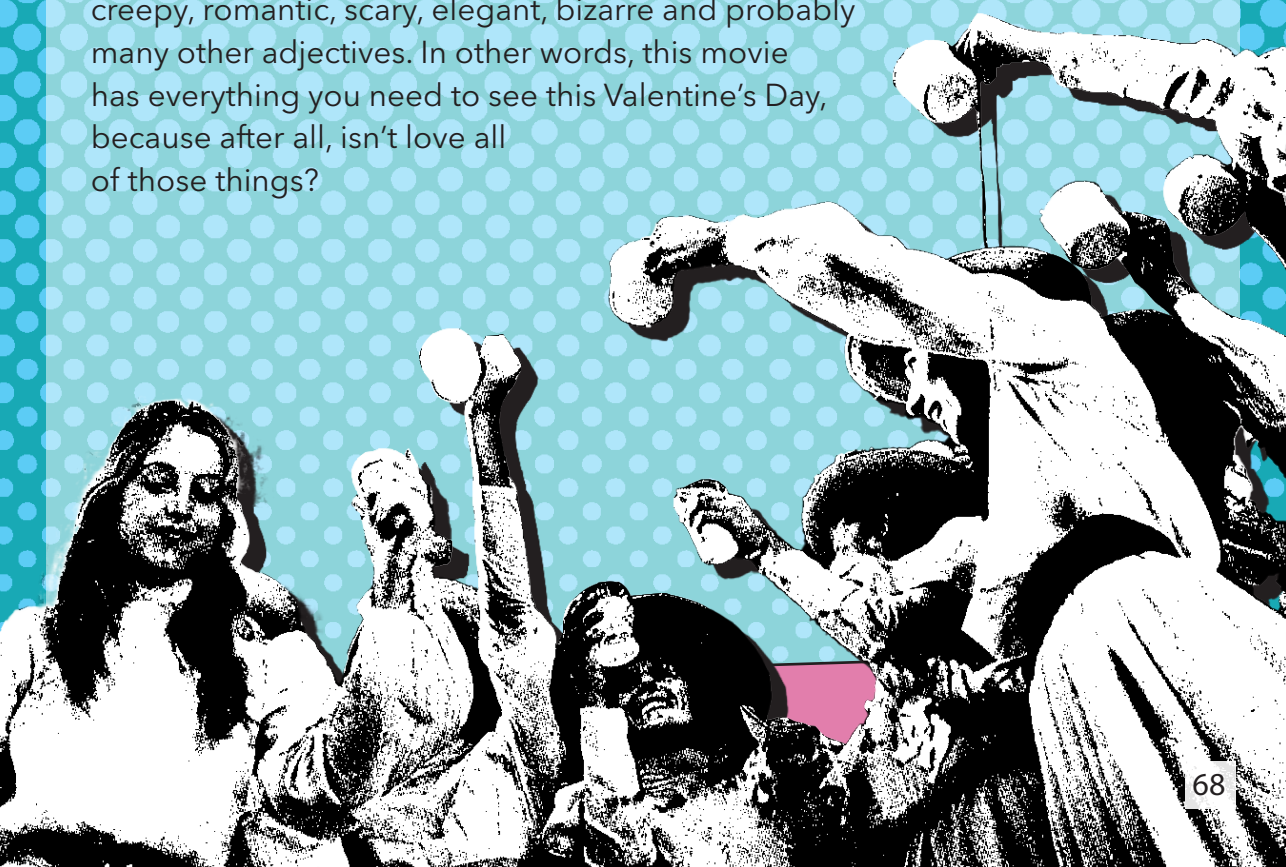
Picnic at Hanging Rock's soundtrack adds to the film's mysterious atmosphere. Many of its songs play on loop – especially the famous panpipes from Gheorghe Zamfair's Doina Sus Pe Culmea Dealului and Beethoven's "Emperor" or Fifth Piano Concerto. It should be noted that the latter is the song they play during the final scene, where it's perfectly in sync with the movie's actions, creepy much?

The costumes are also just gorgeous to look at. All the costumes, especially the dresses worn by the Appleyard College students, look like they belong in a vintage children's book or Victorian-inspired Valentine's Day cards. The colors of the characters' elegant dresses, the scenery, buildings, and the overall look of the film (the saturated tinting) all have this vintage late-19th century "Colonial Australian" look that was obviously inspired by Australian Impressionist paintings from the film's time. Interestingly, the popularity of this film along with the American historical thriller film *The Beguiled* (1971) apparently led to a Victorian/Edwardian fashion craze during the 1970s. Its artistic beauty also inspired the works of other filmmakers including the films of American director Sofia Coppola.

I have heard others say this film is a combination of pretty, creepy, romantic, scary, elegant, bizarre and probably many other adjectives. In other words, this movie has everything you need to see this Valentine's Day, because after all, isn't love all of those things?



St Patrick's Day

I don't have a favorite movie for this occasion, but I do love *The Simpsons* episode *Homer Vs. the 18th Amendment*. The 1997 episode opens with a St. Patrick's Day celebration filled with (of course) generic stereotypes of Irish people and the classic American commercialization of Christian holidays! During Springfield's annual St. Patrick's Day parade, little Bart Simpson accidentally gets drunk from beer getting sprayed into a green vuvuzela he was holding in his mouth. Bart's parents are absolutely humiliated by their own apparent irresponsibility after seeing Bart get drunk on live television! The incident prompts Springfield's women to demand a 1920s-style alcohol ban shortly after. The ban is put in place while a desperate Homer starts an alcohol smuggling business.

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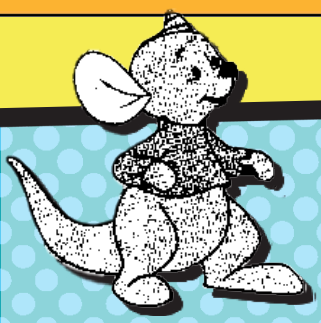
Easter

My pick: Springtime with Roo (2004, USA)



Springtime with Roo is a sweet children's film from my own childhood that's an Easter parody of *A Christmas Carol* (1843).

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On my want-to-watch list, however, is the classic Easter film and British comedy *The Life of Brian* (1979). This film is controversial as it's a risqué parody of the classic Easter story known as the Passion of Christ. The film's titular protagonist is a man who gets mistaken for Jesus Christ. In events surprising to no one, the film's release was followed by Britain and several other European countries banning the movie in the 1970s and '80s for blasphemy. Audiences were offended due to its satirical take on Christianity and Christian fundamentalism, the contemporary left-wing political activism of the late 1960s to the early 1980s, and high-budget film adaptations of the Bible (and religious texts in general). The film is also remembered for its iconic theme song: "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" (1979).

Another Easter movie on my want-to-watch list is the 1956 American film The *Ten Commandments*. It's probably one of the most well-received live action religious films (not counting that Monty Python parody flick!), but I had other reasons for wanting to watch it: admiring the beautifully accurate costumes… and laughing at outdated special effects.

MALAYSIA'S INDEPENDANCE DAY

(August 31st)

THE 29TH FEBRUARY (2012, MALAYSIA)

Even though I'm Malaysian, I barely speak Malay, and I don't often watch Malaysian or even Singaporean movies or TV programs. However, I did watch The *29th of February* (that's *29 Februari* in Malay) on Netflix back in Malaysia. You can also watch it for free on YouTube. Even though the film is (mostly) in Malay, there's versions with English subtitles.

29 Februari is considered Malaysia's answer to *Forrest Gump* (1994) but with an interesting fantasy twist, the protagonist is born on February 29th, 1896! This causes him to age once every four years. Because of this, the film has a much longer timespan than Forrest's story as it covers World War II, independence from Britain (using actual footage from 1957!), race riots and Singapore becoming an independent republic.

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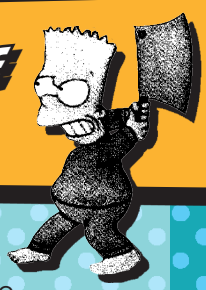
I highly recommend watching this movie on either February 29 or August 31 because of the film's interesting and beautiful take on Malaysian history.

HALLOWEEN

THE SIMPSONS: TREEHOUSE OF HORROR (2009, USA)



I can't decide the best film to watch on Halloween, but I absolutely adore *The Simpsons* ongoing Halloween anthology specials. They are hilarious, usually kid-friendly parodies (until you get to the fifth special at least) of classic horror stories. All episodes are available on Disney+, while several classic episodes have been released on DVD.

TIGER'S FURY

CREATORS

Jake Lacy – Director

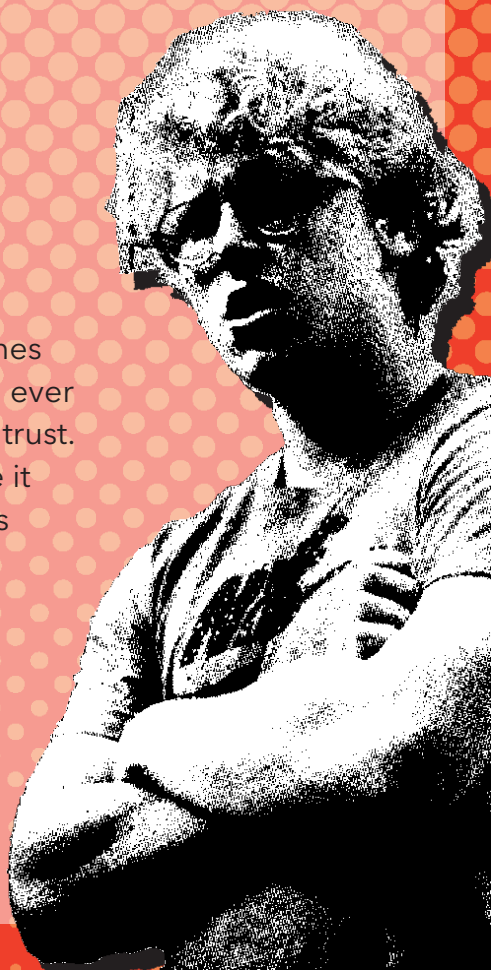
Sam Maynard – Writer

Peter Searles – Sound Technician

Inder Singh – Picture & Sound Editor

Colby Soderberg – Cinematographer

ARTISTS STATEMENT



"Tiger's Fury" has a special place in my heart. Making this film rekindled the feelings I had as a child interacting with the world of media. It touches on important themes that are more relevant than ever these days. Being a fan of something is an act of trust. We buy merch, watch all the shows and embrace it into our lives. But sometimes our heroes aren't as wonderful as they seem, and I believe that the grief effect this can have on us is real and shouldn't be diminished. I chose wrestling as the method of showcasing this as it felt like a very engaging and active way to contrast these feelings of childhood play and grief to the audience.

By Sam Maynard

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