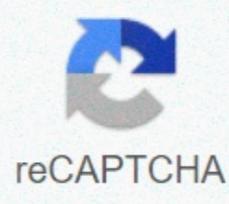




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Super mario bros 2 japanese box art

All information on this site is through my own findings and is believed to be correct. Any corrections, errors or admissions that need to be made, or artists that would like to be involved in BOX=ART, please feel free to contact me. BOX=ART copyright ©2013 Adam Gidney. All rights reserved. Hosted by Dathorn. About BOX=ART BOX=ART is a site dedicated to the history of video game box art/ cover art and the artists responsible for them. Box arts are profiled from a variety of angles using high quality scans and with the intention of acknowledging the men and women who have played such a major role in shaping our gaming experiences. Not only for video game enthusiasts, BOX=ART is for all who enjoy quality artwork. Series box arts 1985 >Super Mario Bros. (JP) Famicom, (SM) 1986 >Super Mario Bros. 2 (JP) Famicom Disk System, (YK) 1987 >Super Mario Bros. (EU/ NA) NES. 1988 >Super Mario Bros. 2 (EU/ NA) NES. (SM) >Super Mario Bros. 3 (JP) Famicom, (YK) 1989 >Super Mario Land (worldwide) Game Boy, (YK) 1990 >Super Mario Bros. 3 (EU/ NA) NES, (YK) >Super Mario World (JP) Super Famicom, (YK) 1991 >Super Mario World (EU/ NA) SNES, (YK) 1992 >Super Mario Land 2 (worldwide) Game Boy, (YK) >Super Mario USA (JP) Famicom, (YK) 1994 >Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 (worldwide) Game Boy, (YN) 1995 >Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island (JP) Super Famicom, >Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island (EU/ NA) SNES, 1996 >Super Mario 64 (EU/ NA) Nintendo 64, (YN) 1999 >Super Mario Bros. Deluxe (EU/ NA) Game Boy Color, (YK) 2002 >Super Mario Sunshine (worldwide) Gamecube, 2004 >Super Mario 64 DS (EU/ NA) Nintendo DS, >Super Mario 64 DS (JP) Nintendo DS, 2006 >New Super Mario Bros. (worldwide) Nintendo DS, 2007 >Super Mario Galaxy (worldwide) Wii, 2009 >New Super Mario Bros. Wii (worldwide) Wii, 2010 >Super Mario Galaxy 2 (worldwide) Wii, 2011 >Super Mario 3D Land (worldwide) Nintendo 3DS, 2012 >New Super Mario Bros. U (worldwide) Wii U, 2013 >Super Mario 3D World (worldwide) Wii U, Series box artists >Shigeru Miyamoto (SM) >Yoichi Kotabe (YK) >Yusuke Nakano (YN) BOX=ART series >Super Mario Overview. In Nintendo's portly plumber, video gaming had its first mega star, and the Super Mario series would be home to his most iconic box arts. Mario's global endurance can be partly accredited to his strong characterisation designed in the mid-80's by the legendary Shigeru Miyamoto. The debut box art, on the Famicom, would almost have Mario's look pinned down, but it would take the famed animator, Yoichi Kotabe to set it in stone by changing the plumbers colour scheme. Yoichi's redesigns for Princess Peach and Bowser would end up being more radical, and have been the template ever since. No other character of such longevity in gaming has retained his original design like Mario, and it is testament to the strength of design by Miyamoto in creating such a globally appealing and brand- centric character. Super Mario's debut box art in the States - Super Mario Bros. - would use the same pixel design all in-house Nintendo titles were using at the time, and so it would be Super Mario Bros. 2 in 1988 that the West got to see Mario's Japanese characterisation on a box art for the first time. It would be a direct lift from the Famicom debut set against a bold background and really expounded the difference between American (direct, clear, larger than life) and Japanese (chaotic, cluttered, character heavy) cover art design at the time. Box arts since Super Mario 64 (1996) have all been designed around the in-games use of 3D (or not). Cover arts for full 3D games such as Super Mario 64 and Super Mario Galaxy depict a depth of field that isn't there in box arts for 2D games such as the New Super Mario Bros. Series and Super Mario Bros. Deluxe. In between the two are the 2.5D games Super Mario 3D Land and World, both with a slight isometric view to their respective cover arts. The clean, simple design of Mario, and most of his contemporaries, would carry well when series box arts made the jump to computer rendered art with Super Mario 64. Other than Super Mario Bros. Deluxe, in 1999, all box arts post 64 have been computer generated. Notable Super Mario box arts. Updated - 31/8/15, by Adam Gidney Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 1985. Designed for the Japanese Famicom market. Also available on na. >Debut box art. >The only series box art to be designed by the legendary, Shigeru Miyamoto. >Introduced stable series characters, Toad, Bowser, Koopers, Goombas and Peach. >The cluttered art design would be replicated for both Famicom sequels and would influence the handheld covers. Further influencing can be found in Rock Man's Famicom box arts. Super Mario Bros. by Shigeru Miyamoto Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 1989. Designed for the worldwide Game Boy market. Also available on na. >The first handheld Mario box art would carry on the character heavy look that the Japanese had now become accustomed to. >It would be the first box art in the series to be used worldwide with no changes made to the art design. > Super Mario Land by Yoichi Kotabe Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of America in 1990. Designed for the EU/ NA NES markets. Also available on na. >This iconic and highly recognisable box art would stylistically carry on in the vein of predecessor Super Mario Bros. 2, giving clear emphasis to Mario fixed on a bright background with a bold title. >The Mario characterisation would be directly cut from the Japanese version. > Super Mario Bros 3 by Yoichi Kotabe/ NOA Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 1991. Designed for the Japanese Famicom market. Also available on na. >The artwork would originally be designed for the game, Yume Kōjō: Doki Doki Panic sans Mario characters. This original was also a Kotabe artwork. >BOX=ART review HERE. Super Mario Bros. USA by Yoichi Kotabe Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 1996. Designed for the worldwide Nintendo 64 market. Also available on na. >Debut series box art by Yusuke Nakano. >The first cover art to be designed using computer art. Super Mario 64 by Yusuke Nakano Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of America in 1999. Designed for the worldwide Game Boy Color market. Also available on na. >Possibly the final series box art by Yoichi Kotabe. >The game would not see a physical release in Japan making it the only game in the series to miss out on a Japanese box art. >Final box art to date to be designed without the use of computer renders. Super Mario Bros. Deluxe by Yoichi Kotabe Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 2007. Designed for the worldwide Game Boy market. Also available on na. Japanese artwork, first published by Nintendo of Japan in 2012. Designed for the worldwide 3DS market. Also available on na. North American artwork, first published by Nintendo of America in 1987. Designed for the EU/ NA NES markets. Also available on Game Boy Advance. >Debut western box art. >The iconic design would in it's simplicity be a reaction to the overly complicated and misleading cover arts of the period pre-video game crash of 1983. >More information available HERE. Hot on the heels of our popular dive into The Legend of Zelda franchise, we now jump, stomp, and dive into the most iconic and popular video game franchise ever, the Super Mario Bros. series. Each week, we'll take a unique look at each game in the series, and discuss aspects you may not have considered. This week we look at the Japanese version of Super Mario Bros. 2 for the Famicom, a maddeningly difficult game that is in many ways an anti-Nintendo game. Chalk It Up To Mario Madness Maybe it was all a dream. Maybe there never was an adventure where the brothers Mario went off to some dreamland called Subcon, to fight an obese frog, with his friends. Maybe none of that happened—even though Shy Guys were still a thing afterwards. Oh well, best not to think too deeply on all this. I assume even now when people think of Super Mario Bros. 2, they still think of Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool, and Toad all having the same dream about pulling veggie's out of the ground, fighting egg-producing champion, Birdo, and seeking Wart—the one-time only Big Bad of the Mario franchise. I'm paraphrasing the plot, but the part about them all A Nightmare on Elm Street-ing the same dream is true. While some are aware the sequel we got in America was actually a reskinned version of a Japanese game called Doki-Doki Panic, except with Mario characters replacing the original playable characters, that's only part of the story. There actually was a true sequel to Super Mario Bros., and it was only released in Japan. It was deemed too hard for Western audiences and was even rejected by Nintendo's official president of mirth, Howard Phillips (the bow-tie guy from Nintendo Power!), for simply not being fun to play. While some may think they've played The Lost Levels via the SNES version from Super Mario All-Stars, they haven't gotten the full experience Japanese gamers got back in 1986. The original version is something altogether different. It's the Same, but Different Super Mario Bros. 2 looks a lot like the original game. Sure, the shrubbery is teased out a little bit more, and the clouds all have these silly grins now, but this is still Super Mario Bros. If you look at the start screen, the level format, the Koji Kondo score, it's all the same. Mario still runs and jumps just like he did in the last one, which means he doesn't have his helpfully-tweaked, 16-bit-remake moves that provide a bit more margin for error. Nope, these are good old fashioned original-recipe Mario controls. I don't know about you, but I still have no idea why sometimes I'll bounce off something and shoot 50' into the air and sometimes I just go plopp and barely get any height at all. "Uh, hold the button!" – some speedrunner reading this, I'm holding the button in. Hypothetical Speedrunner Know-It-All! Whether, it doesn't matter. The point is, this version of the game is a beat to control and the people who designed the levels knew that. At every turn this game is trying to sucker you into a trap. It's trying to subvert your every expectation and lure you into certain death. Then, the game tries to make you feel like it's your fault. Merciless unfair gameplay and possible emotional manipulation? I'm not the fun police, but that doesn't sound like a good time to me. This game was marketed as a game for "Super Players" in Japan and was designed to be a sort of Hardcore Mode, or whatever they call the really tough modes in games I'm not good at. I played this game for the first time when it came out on the WiU. I had played through the Super Mario All-Stars version on the SNES, and I remember not having too difficult of a time. This, of course, was because that version had a lot of little helpful tweaks the original game doesn't, such as being able to adjust your jumps on the fly, as the SMAS game uses the same basic physics as Super Mario Bros. 3. Like Ms. Jackson says, it's all about control. First World Problems Usually, the first few levels of a game are spent getting the player acclimated to their surroundings. Even in a sequel, where the assumption is the player knows the basics from having played the previous game, you usually get a slow drop into a warm bath reintroduction to the game world. Not so in Super Mario Bros. 2. The opening game of the level is on par with a late level in the original. You got your poison mushrooms, both above and below in so-called Bonus Areas, which were considered safe zones in the original. Are those clouds smiling? What's there to smile about? These Scarface mushrooms are made of poison! Right from the jump, you get the vibe that this game not only doesn't come with training wheels, but it's also offended you would even suggest such a thing. Where Super Mario Bros. was all about establishing clear rules and testing your knowledge of those rules, SMB2 is more like a pop quiz with all trick questions. Or would you prefer an analogy where I compare swimming lessons to your dad just tossing you into the lake? My point being, NES era games had a difficulty curve, yes, but they all obeyed certain rules of fairness. This game cares not for such rules. Some subversions are not troll jobs. Take World 1-2 for example, which features multiple Warp Zones. You can jump over the exit wall (akin to SMB) and proceed to a Warp to World 2, but there is also a pipe you can go down that leads you to a sub-subterranean section, where a Warp Zone takes you to World 4 instead. This is a clever move as it expands on an idea from the first game. Any Mario gamer worth their salt knows of the Warp Zones hidden over the exit in World 1-2. What they don't immediately think is that there is another potential step to discovering something even better. The game rewards you for thinking outside the box, which is a mindset this game doesn't always hew closely to. Kaizo Mario and the Super Mario Maker Effect No, we're not gonna talk about Super Mario Maker at all, we're gonna leave that game out of this. [Author proceeds to talk about Super Mario Maker] I mean, it's hard to talk about SMB2 without thinking of the Super Mario Maker series a little. There are so many little "traps" this game sets for you; it's hard not to see the person behind the level design snickering and laughing when you waltz right into a precarious situation and have an "Oh [expletive-of-choice deleted]!" moment. Mario discovers a poison mushroom and runs into a tricky obstacle trying to avoid it. While not "unfair", the level design is often deceptive, cruel even. Were it not for the rewind feature I had access to playing this game via Nintendo Switch I probably would've just watched a long play of this game online to refresh my memory. Far too often you are caught midair in a situation that spells unavoidable death. Usually, I would rewind the game and discover that to successfully progress, I would have to come to a full stop and slowly inch forward to trigger certain off-screen hazards. Or to reveal a turtle I needed to jump on at just the right height to bounce to a tiny platform (Ah! But not so fast that you overshoot the tiny platform, or slip off!). I would certainly be turned off playing this having to repeatedly play through levels just for another, singular chance at success. There is an early Mega Man vibe to the deaths in this game. You have to die a lot of times to learn the layout of the level, recognize the patterns, and then retry. That vibe doesn't mesh with what we know Mario games to be. Sure, as the series progressed, later levels (and more so, post-Bowser levels, Star Roads) up the difficulty and offer a challenge for gamers of all skill levels, but there is a gradual uptick in that difficulty, whereas here it's more like this game is less a sequel to the original game, and more like mean-spirited DLC. You see the wall. You know what will probably happen. But you leap nonetheless. Kaizo Mario is a well-known unofficial mod of Super Mario Bros. where the levels made are intentionally maddening. Mario Maker content creators have run with this idea, and there have been some truly inspired levels made because of it. However, there are still unofficial rules one must abide by. I suppose the best example of not playing by the rules of fairness would be having Mario go down a pipe that, unbeknownst to the player, drops you into a room of spikes. Does Super Mario Bros. 2 make such callous choices? Not exactly... Welcome to Prawn Zones, Where You Go Backwards So there's this Warp Zone. When I encountered it during my playthrough for this article, I chuckled. "Oh yeah," I said to myself. "I remember this." I smiled and held down the L and R triggers on my Nintendo Switch and went back in time right before I made that fateful choice. It's in World 3-1. The location: A pipe, one that leads to a secret area mind you. A place one could only find by being curious and thorough, both admirable traits in a video gamer. It's something that is usually rewarded, whether it be with coins or a power-up. It almost certainly never leads to a Warp Zone that sends you back to the beginning of the game! OK, maybe I'm over-blown this whole thing. It's not as if you aren't given a choice. If you don't want to go back to the beginning of the dang game, you can always let time expire, or hop into the conveniently placed pit in the corner of the Warp Zone. "Choices". That's not even the half of it. If you don't take the pipe, there is also a trampoline near the end of the level that launches you in the air. If you push right and keep pushing, you will proceed over the end level flagpole and find yourself arriving at the same pipe that leads you to the Warp Zone that sends you back to the beginning of the game. So basically, there are two ways to be punished for doing something most games would reward you for accomplishing. Eat your heart out, Super Mario Maker content creators. Nintendo is the Original Gaming Troll. That is some Jigsaw bull right there, where your "choices" almost always somehow involve maiming yourself before ultimately dying anyway. "Hello, Mario. For years you've circumvented channels in order to cheat time. Now, time will cheat you. Before you is a pipe. Enter the pipe and you'll return to the beginning of the game. If you choose not to, you can always jump into the bottomless pit that I intentionally placed there. Or, you can let time itself kill you. You have 279 seconds...live or die...make your choice..." Oh, brother. Speaking of flawless, not-forced-at-all segues... The Luigi Factor Luigi was just a palette-swapped version of Mario in the original game, but in SMB2, he actually acquired some trademark traits that would continue throughout the series. In this game, and in the US version, Luigi has a better vertical leap and has less traction than Mario. Flagpole Skipper After completing the game as Mario, I restarted as Luigi and found it to be an interesting and smart choice to make since his move set unique. There are many situations where jumps are difficult for Mario, whereas Luigi can reach them without much difficulty. However, those same jumps were often two singular blocks hovering in midair over bottomless pits, so Luigi is much more apt to reach the landing, but not stick it. While Mario can only jump over a few flagpoles, Luigi can overshoot a bunch of them. Again, no promises you're going to want to see what's beyond the normal exit. That sort of positive reinforcement happens later in the series. I personally love Luigi as a character and am currently playing the exceptionally fun Luigi's Mansion 3 on Switch, but I've never been a fan of playing games as him. He's too slippery. To each his own, Luigi just hits a little different. Random Acts of Cruelty Playing Super Mario Bros. 2 with an open mind, and a preexisting knowledge of what it's like will go far in enjoying the game much more. Risk vs. Reward is a recurring theme. This block contains a Super Mushroom, but could just as easily contain a Poison one. World 2 brings back janky trampoline jumping, only now you're required to execute jumps with airtight precision in life and death situations. You will die. The game also introduces gusts of wind in certain areas, making already frustrating jumps just that much more maddening. Death is inevitable. And let's not forget World 8-1, that has you discover a hidden area that leads to a Warp Zone back to World 5. Notice the lack of a bottomless pit. You'll have time to think about what you've done this time. "So it is more or less cruel without a pit?" I guess would be the question. The Ending Defeating Bowser at the end of World 8-4 will lead you to a door. Inside, Princess Toadstool, still her ginger-haired self, rewards you with a clumsy poem, and a potential mild seizure from a flashing screen where all 7 Mushroom Retainers return to celebrate your accomplishment. Welcome to Friend Zone. We Present You New Worlds Bypass all Warp Zones, and you are rewarded access to "9 World". Beating Super Mario Bros. 2 will net you some fairly decent rewards for such an old game. Playing through the game without using Warp Zones will net you a trip to World 9, where you will play through 4 extra levels. The challenge of these levels is actually not too steep, and the final stage 9-4, is basically a curtain call, where you swim through the level as all the enemies in the game pass by. The blocks in the level spell out "Arigatou!" in Japanese, or "Thank You!". Before I looked up what the blocks were spelling, I just assumed (based on the tone of the game) that it spelled out "Bad End. You Sicken Me." If you beat the game eight times (if that's something you're into), you can access four whole bonus levels from the start menu by holding in the A button and hitting Start. Levels A, B, C, and D play very similar to the other levels in the game but are a healthy mix of fun levels peppered in with the more rage-baiting ones. Every time you beat the game, a star will be added to the title screen of the game, and you can – and should – use Warp Zones. In some ways, Super Mario Bros. 2 has more of a replayability factor than the original. The challenge is frustrating, but for those gamers that relish such things it's a welcome change from the original game. I would say this game is worth a playthrough. You may not beat the game, depending on your threshold for pain, but you will find it to be a unique experience. The game is currently available for the Nintendo Switch Online to anyone with an active membership. And use the rewind function, no judgment. Lost Musings Previously, we looked at the influence of the original Super Mario Bros. and its masterful level design. Takashi Tezuka, who worked on the original game, took over the reins of this game, while Shigeru Miyamoto worked on a little game called The Legend of Zelda. Mentioning Howard Phillips, the bow-tie clad Nintendo Fun Club president, has got me thinking, 'What happened to Nester?' Remember, Nester, the wild-haired, wisecracking sidekick from Nintendo Power? I suppose once Ness from the Mother/Earthbound series became well known, there was no room for him. Next time, we'll travel to Subcon and explore the American Super Mario Bros. 2, which began the NES tradition of making direct sequels wildly different from the classic games they followed up. Page 2 This story doesn't begin with a live recording of a podcast like it should. Instead, it begins in a 1993 Toyota pickup truck, attempting to climb its way through the Sierra Mountains. What should have been a four-hour drive from Reno to San Francisco turned in to an eight-hour snowy trek through the mountains. It was only by some small miracle that my partner and I arrived just as the show was beginning. Behind The Bastards is a comedy/history podcast produced by iHeart media. According to its website "Behind The Bastards dives in past the Cliffs Notes of the worst humans in history and exposes the bizarre realities of their lives. Listeners will learn about the young adult novels that helped Hitler form his monstrous ideology, the founder of Blackwater's insane quest to build his own Air Force, the bizarre lives of the sons and daughters of dictators and Saddam Hussein's side career as a trashy romance novelist." The podcast is typically split up into two episodes which air weekly on Tuesday and Thursday. It is hosted by journalist and author Robert Evans who is joined in the sidebar by a stand-up comedian. This results in an entertaining show which combines strange history and comedy. On January 26th, Behind The Bastards hosted its second ever live show at the 19th annual SF Sketchfest, a comedy festival based in the greater San Francisco area. In this episode, Evans is joined by David X. Cohen, who wrote for The Simpsons, Beavis and Butt-head, served as the head writer and executive producer of Futurama and helped produce Disenchantment. The focus of this episode was Robert Brown, creator, editor and publisher of the Soldier of Fortune magazine. The episode focused on Brown's work creating the magazine, and the controversies surrounding it. The episode is wonderfully in-depth and sheds light, not only on how awful Brown was but the crimes the magazine effectively endorsed through its classified ads section. Evans' work putting together all of the information contained within the episode should be commended. It's a comprehensive piece of work, with every claim backed by reputable sources. Cohen adds some much-needed lightness to the episode and is consistently hilarious throughout. Both keep up their pace for roughly an hour and a half, putting together a wonderful show. The show ended with a light-hearted game of Bagel Tennis, which is featured below, and encouraged the audience to participate in Machete-Bagel Skeet. There's a lot to be said about watching a person responding to such a horrible thing not only with comedy but repeatedly, twice a week for the past TWO YEARS. Behind The Bastards releases episodes consistently, which requires a large amount of dedication from its host. The amount of research that goes into each episode is staggering, and Evans has repeatedly stated that it's drawing on his mental state. And yet, he meets this with comedy. This dedication to a task brings to mind the play Waiting For Godot by Samuel Beckett. If you don't know, Waiting For Godot is a short two-act play that details two men complaining about how their legs hurt and swapping bowler hats. It makes light of the tragedy of their two lives. It's widely considered the defining play of the absurdist theater. Perhaps Evans would be frustrated at being called an absurdist. Beckett despised being called an Existentialist and seemed to be frustrated at being pigeonholed into any genre. In the episode of the This! podcast he guested on, Evans described himself as a "Cheerful Nihilist", and he has repeatedly claimed that the purpose of the creation of Behind The Bastards was not merely to inform his audience, but to bring them to the conclusion that it is not people who are inherently evil, but power. He also suggests that society can be changed, and we are not condemned to endure the bastards of history forever. This philosophy fits well into Absurdism, which suggests that the world is inherently absurd as it exists, but that absurdity can and should be challenged. Within this view, Behind The Bastards is not only a comedy podcast that deals in history, or vice-versa, but a form of Absurdist performance art. The idea of repeatedly facing the awful facts of the world not just to entertain, but to encourage others to change these things fits neatly into the Absurdist canon. Evans' dedication to the telling of these awful histories mirrors the mission of the Absurdist philosophy through theater. It is to hope for an end, but given all context surrounding both, hopes do not seem to have any chance of coming to fruition without audience intervention. Waiting For Godot pleads with its audience, begging that they don't waste their lives on monotony. Behind The Bastards does something similar, asking its audience to recognize the traits which create the bastards the podcast focuses on, and do their best learn from history's mistakes. Both force the audience to plunge into the Absurd headfirst, and come out recognizing the ability of comedy to help people face the evil in the world earnestly. A note: To SF Sketchfest, thank you for providing me with tickets for the event. To the readers, thank you all for standing by and watching while I crawled up my own ass while writing this article. Hopefully, I'll be able to find my way back out. Page 3 Hey, remember last week when I was all "Who knows where this season of Doctor Who is going?" And the Master's warning at the end of "Spyfall Part 1" about how everything the Doctor knows is actually a lie? About that: Chibnall didn't come to play this season and I'm shook even if I'm not sure where we're headed or how this will change Doctor Who canon (which, let's be honest, is a loose concept at best). But I'm getting ahead of myself. "Fugitive of the Judoon" starts out simply enough and opens on the morning of Gloucester tour guide Ruth Clayton's (Jo Martin) birthday. Her husband Lee (Neil Stuke) promises to make good on getting her a cake and all's right with the world—until the Judoon show up. Meanwhile, the thirteenth Doctor is having a bout of doubt and still trying to find signs that the Master has escaped. The TARDIS fan is waiting for her to snap out of her funk when she hears the Judoon's call and she springs into action, with her faithful companions up for another adventure. Looks like the Judoon are out to capture someone. At first, it seems that they are after Lee (who seems to have mysteriously popped up in Gloucester with no previous history.) The Doctor does her best to stall for time and figure out what's going on, but it doesn't help that her companions get snatched up on a shoddy spaceship by a very familiar face. Graham is the first to get beamed up and that's when we hear that voice—the one and only John Barrowman. That's right, it's Captain Jack Harkness, back at last after how many years and news cycles of rumors. Of course, he mistakes Graham for the Doctor, which Graham quickly clears up and Jack's reaction is 100 percent fan service and in character: "This I've got to see." Ryan and Yaz are next because Jack can't get a lock on the Doctor, who's helping keep Ruth safe. Although there's a moment where another personality breaks through and Ruth attacks a bunch of Judoon, including ripping off the leader's horn (a massive sign of disrespect.) It's also a good time to mention that Lee's toast, but before he's killed, he sends Ruth a cryptic message and she has a vision of where she needs to go (an abandoned lighthouse). So that's where we're off to next. Meanwhile, Jack is losing control of the ship so he decides it's time to cut the Doctor's companions loose, but he leaves them with a warning: "Beware the lone cyberman." (As if the Master's "timeless child" riddle wasn't enough!) Once at the lighthouse, Ruth mentions she'll get a fire going and the Doctor decides to check out the property for clues. She comes across a blank gravestone. As the Doctor digs through the unmarked grave, I got the biggest Ashes to Ashes feels (and I really hope that was a hat tip because it took me emotionally to the place I needed to be for the next moments to play out and I need more people to watch that show). There's not a body in the grave...it's a TARDIS. And it's Ruth's. Because Ruth is the Doctor, too. Confused? So am I. (Feel free to grab a drink, I'm having a bourbon, neat.) It turns out this Doctor became Ruth to hide from the Master in a different universe? Another yet-to-be-known adversary in this timeline? Gat is also who killed Lee, who we can assume was Ruth!Doctor's companion. (Think Martha Jones in "Human Nature.") Speaking of Gat, she and the Judoon find Ruth!Doctor and the two face off, but not before Thirteen shows her a destroyed Gallifrey (via that mind trick we saw in "Spyfall Part 2"). Gat decides it's time to take Ruth!Doctor out except the laser gun backfires (just as Ruth!Doctor wanted it to). Afterwards, Ruth!Doctor drops a shell-shocked Thirteen off and it's up to the TARDIS fan to pick up the pieces. Chris Chibnall and Vinay Patel packed a huge sucker punch with this episode. I took a look over at Twitter after the episode aired in the UK and everything was burning. (And there was the usual yelling about ruined childhoods. To quote the War Doctor, for God's sake...Galifrey Stands...just not in this universe.) The best part, though? The return of Jack Harkness was the red herring. There's a joke in there somewhere. (I'm too blindsided to make it.) Things that aren't a joke: We have two female Doctors now, and one is a woman of color. And she's the exact opposite of everything the Doctor we've slowly been getting to know over the past two seasons and it's amazing and confusing. (Cue more fanboys crying about destroyed childhoods. Deal with it, lads.) Now, don't trip—there are plenty of times I watched Steven Moffat be clever for the sake of showing off cleverness, but it's almost always paid off. Can Chibnall spin this twist? (And that's not to say Moffat always succeeded. See the end of Series 4 of Sherlock and the third episode of Dracula as examples of spun out insanity.) While "Human Nature" (the Russell T Davies-era episode and New Adventures novel) introduced the concept of Time Lords becoming human, it was the New Adventures novels that wove the concept of pre-Hartnell Doctors through its backstory. (Let's not forget the Morbius Doctors from the classic series.) Add in the fact that Ruth!Doctor's outfit recalls not only the current Master but the various Doctors from "The Curse of the Fatal Death" (

slapped together. The show could have run another two or three seasons with its original plot as the central story of the show. Plans for a reboot have not been discussed, but with Victoria's Secret in financial decline, that is the final nail in the coffin for Veronica's Closet. Like Cheers, Veronica's Closet was an ensemble-style show that focused too much on one character in the later seasons. In Season 1, there was a plotline about Leo being engaged and breaking up with his girlfriend Tina after she isn't sure she can go through with it. And where did Olive suddenly get an Internet company? There are several parts of the characters' lives that are never truly uncovered or told. Veronica's Closet had a great deal of potential that was wasted on taking the easy way out. In some shows, like Seinfeld or The Newsroom, season-long arcs can be effective plot devices to enhance the show's plot, but in this case, it's the opposite. Veronica's Closet suffered from using the same season-long arc that didn't have enough power to sustain the series. Page 6 The Films of Tim Burton are a part of me. He's not even my favorite director by any stretch of the imagination, but I do respect his work. I've read books on him, and I've seen every movie. Starting with Pee-wee's Big Adventure, to Beetlejuice, Batman, and Edward Scissorhands, his style made an imprint on my mind. These were images, sets, and characters like nothing I had ever seen before. I had already gravitated to the man-child that was Pee-wee Herman, watching his playhouse every Saturday morning, playing with the action figures, and buying the stuffed dolls. It was easy for me to love and laugh at Big Adventure. It was Beetlejuice that truly had me take notice. It was strange. It was dark, original, and helped me develop a crush on Geena Davis. I was probably too young to see it the first time I did. Then Batman took off, putting a spin on the caped crusader like never before, and cementing a director that had made four fantastic movies in a row. That's something that not many directors can say. Then the dust settled. Burton made more great films in the coming years, arguably his best in Ed Wood, but then came critical flops such as Mars Attacks! and Planet of the Apes and the shine of Burton had seemed to wear off. Maybe audiences grew tired of the style? Or had Burton just become a massive sellout? Making Disney movies (Alice in Wonderland) with large budgets, too much CGI (Charlie and the Chocolate Factory), and no substance was where he drifted. Either way, things changed for Burton and his popularity faded. Although that love and general respect among film critics became damp, I've still gravitated to Burton's entire body of work. Although few seem to notice, Burton has made three films in a row in the back half of his career, each one impressive, still flawed, but uniquely connected to the tall man from Burbank, California. Big Eyes, Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children, and Dumbo has been a crescendo of cinema. Starting with doubt, running away to escape, and rising to top again, and it has all been done in the Tim Burton way. Big Eyes — Hiding Behind the Eyes of an Artist There's a scene in Big Eyes where Margaret Ulrich (played wonderfully by Amy Adams) is selling her art on a gravel path in San Francisco. A cacophony of artists surround her, each person passing her work by without a glimpse. Yet, it is the work of Ulrich that is the most unique, entirely her own. The man selling his art next to her, Walter Keane (a slimy Christoph Waltz) expresses, "You're better than spare change, shouldn't sell yourself so cheap", which Margaret responds with, "Oh, I'm just glad they liked it". It's in that moment where Tim Burton seems to be commenting on himself, wanting his work to be liked, but fighting not to sell himself in the process. In Big Eyes, Burton is the devil and the angel, both Keane and Ulrich. He is the artist and the salesman. He is a magnificent painter of odd-looking children and also a fraud. Big Eyes seems to be the first film in his career where he is confronting this demon and in the process made one of the best films of his career. Big Eyes is easily one of Burton's most accessible films, called "strangely conventional" by Sheila O'Malley of RogerEbert.com, but a story ripe with controversy, and still made in Burton's auteur style. It begins in suburbia, a woman escaping her husband, protecting her child, and doing things in her own courageous way. In her pursuit of freedom, however, she forgets herself, loses sight of what has made her special, and allows her greedy husband to take credit for her art. The narrative of Big Eyes makes it impossible not to look at the subtextual psychologically, a window into the mind of all artists, and the struggle that pushes Burton to be himself. In any directors process of filmmaking, he/she is always searching to find that initial punch audiences got, and for Burton, it is no different. His is a style that separated him from the conventional, leading him to bigger budgets, larger scales, and more commercial productions. All of those goals still didn't come without seeking the praise of critics and his peers. With more money came greater risks, with a higher chance for self-doubt, more money in his pocket, no doubt, but at what price? Who was this Tim Burton? What had he become? That's why Big Eyes was an awakening, a new first step — starting with him brightening up his pallet and casting Amy Adams as his lead. You could mention that it was Big Eyes is lacking in shades of the gothic black and grey. You could mention that it was the first film void of death or the oddities of Edward Scissorhands, but the biggest change in Big Eyes was the absence of Johnny Depp. Burton had made five films in a row with the Pirates of the Caribbean star, and the two have made a total of eight films together. They are practically synonymous with one another, a bond that is part of Burton's auteur style, but something that had become incredibly stale. Big Eyes has Amy Adams and her performance is a vision, earning her a golden globe award, bringing Margaret Keane's struggle to life, in her face, in her quiet strength. And each Tim Burton film is a character that is representative of himself. He is Margaret Keane. A person that doubts their art, hiding behind the facades of makeup, and feeling the sting when critics call his work commercial. Then he turned a corner, making this fresh, bright film, California sunlit, with pastel-coloured sets, gorgeous costume design from Colleen Atwood, and that dash of Tim Burton strangeness in the eyes of the children in a Keane painting. The third act is where Margaret Keane finds the ability to stand up for herself, speak her truth, and be the artist that she always was. Big Eyes was a revival for Tim Burton's career, but like any conflicted artist, he still needed to escape. He would find a fresh new place where outcasts such as himself could go. Burton would take his talents to the home for peculiar children, Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children — Back at Home With All My Misfit Friends Before Big Eyes, Burton directed Dark Shadows. Based on the 1960's TV show, which lasted for six seasons, and he makes it in 2012 when general audiences had no idea the movie was even founded on something from prime-time television. It just looked like another Burton movie, once again starring Johnny Depp. Although the narrative of that film never gelled, the one thing that rose to the top was the performance by Eva Green, which was both deliciously wicked, and delightfully funny. You might call it a blessing in disguise. Amy Adams rightfully had the role for Big Eyes, but Green had truly cemented herself as a muse for Tim Burton. Finding the right vehicle for Green did not take long, as Burton had read Ransom Riggs's novel, about a home of children with odd-like abilities, and nobody better could play the title role of Miss Peregrine. Yet, similar to all of Burton's films before, he would need to make sure the themes still aligned, telling a story that begins in the Florida suburbs, with mint-green homes, and follows a high school boy that always feels out of place. Asa Butterfield is Jake, a boy that grew up listening to stories from his grandfather (played by the legendary Terrence Stamp). Tales about a home off an island in Wales, with children that can float away, one that has bees in his stomach, or a headmistress with the ability to turn into a bird. The character of Jake is the voice of Burton — a boy that wishes to be acknowledged. Noticed by his peers, his parents (Chris O'Dowd playing a perfect afoof father), or anyone who is just like him. Jake's search becomes his journey to find that home, to discover if his grandfather's stories are even true, taking him to a place of mystery, a bit of time travel, and running from haunting tentacled villains. This was another Tim Burton movie, yes, but a picture that combines all of the styles in Burton's past works, while right in step with his new direction. It is the dark mixed with the colorful. It is a path between the past and the present. It's disturbing in nature and whimsical like a fantasy. Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children might be the most fun Tim Burton has had since making Beetlejuice. And it shows. It starts with a bigger cast of actors, including new faces that add energy to a Burton film. The likes of Samuel L. Jackson playing the villainous Barron—with teeth as sharp as razor blades, and Judi Dench, later adding her grace to any role she is in, all bringing a matter of respect to the film. It's especially important to have the right cast when dealing with a story that involves time travel. Most movies, no matter how you slice it, have continuity, or paradoxical issues when time travel is involved. In Miss Peregrine's story, the element of time travel is a major plot point, but evidently a constant argument in Tim Burton's head. Does he want to stay in the past? I think that's true. The majority of his films involve escape, an ability for him to get away from the things that disappoint. It's not a far stretch to say that Burton wanted to escape the conventional ways of living, making it more apparent that Big Eyes was a new beginning. A reset to his career, allowing him to find room for a film of this nature. Having not read the source material, there still seems to be a bit of originality in Burton's portrayal of this universe. He's making a film with similar themes, but with a clearer mind of what he wants. If the Asa Butterfield character is a representation of Burton, then it makes sense. The person that Jake is at the beginning is timid, shy, afraid to get out of the doldrums of life. By the end, he is a leader, someone just as peculiar as the next person, both inside and out. Eva Green is his muse, but Burton is ready to take the baton and draw inspiration from everything that is a representation of his present. What was interesting to me was how much more I enjoyed the Home for Peculiar Children on second viewing. Granted, I still think the third act is messy, but even that part makes sense when you study Burton's influences. If you were going to compare it to any of Burton's other films, the obvious answer is Edward Scissorhands. A welcoming home that takes in the peculiar person would certainly find a place for a man with cutting shears for paws, but it's not as in your face for Burton's influences are in the details. Miss Peregrine's home is similar to the castle where Edward was created, including massive topiary trees, and one character that likes to put hearts into things, which makes them come to life. Along with similar details from past works, Burton uses most of his cast of production teammates, with costumes designed by Colleen Atwood, consistent editor Chris Lebenzon, and cinematographer Bruno Delbono, who had worked with Burton on his last three films, all bringing something to the table. What they have a grasp on are the things that inspired Burton as a director. Various scenes with claymation figures and an army of skeletons are direct reminders of Burton's love for visual effects legend Ray Harryhausen. The climactic battle between the peculiar children and the long, slenderman-like creatures known as Hollows, all takes place at a theme park, reminiscent of classic films such as Carnival of Souls or Disney's Pinocchio. Unlike Big Eyes, this is far from conventional, its spot-on Burton, made in his fresh new way. As for that ending taking place at a carnival, well that was just a hint from Burton on where he was headed to next, putting his own spin on the flying pachyderm—Dumbo. Dumbo — Joining the Circus and Tearing It Down I think a few film critics and those that know the work of Tim Burton will see the irony in his production of Disney's Dumbo. Others will be blinded by the glitz and glam. Critically panned and brushed aside by anyone who holds the 1941 version in their heart, this was not a movie that should have been expected to fly. There is already a major problem with Disney hoarding all of their properties and then re-doing them simply for the sake of adding money to their overflowing pile of profits. It is because this is only slightly like the others and because it has a sliver of originality to it, Dumbo might be one of the best of the Disney re-imagined bunch. Burton takes his money and then puts his thumb in the eye of his financiers; making a story that is not entirely about the flying, floppy-eared elephant, but about a misfit circus family coming together, all at the expense of burning down the evil corporate machine. If there are constant complaints about the originality of Jon Favreau's Lion King or the mangled re-creation of Guy Ritchie's Aladdin, so it's odd to see that Disney for once let a director have creative inspiration for this version of Dumbo. It's a combination of being lightly Disnified while being entirely Burton. The cast—filled with Burton regulars Eva Green, Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito, and Alan Arkin; The sets grander than ever with large scale circus tents. The costumes once again beautifully constructed by Colleen Atwood and a score by Danny Elfman that could be some of his best work with Burton. It also became Tim Burton's most poetic film in years. Starting with Big Eyes, Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children, and now Dumbo, there was a complete transformation of what this director is. Long gone are the weights of the Burton-Dept partnership. This was the unveiling of a Tim Burton we had never seen and a recharge of excitement for what movie will come next. Dumbo is not a glutinous Tim Burton project (This is not Charlie and the Chocolate Factory), but it is a journey back in time when the circus wowed us as children, or the concept of a flying elephant was as believable as Santa Claus. The star of the show is Dumbo and Burton has him soaring higher than ever. Before Dumbo could soar, Burton had to make sure he destroyed the very thing that was trying to create him. It's extremely strange that anyone in Disney approved the final cut of this movie, but I am glad it was made. It's not giving too much away, but the climax involves the entire group of Max Medici's Traveling Circus bonding together to destroy the corrupt, greedy Dreamland amusement park. There lies the conflict of Tim Burton. He wants to make movies that harness his appreciation for stop-motion animation. Films with beautifully constructed sets, whimsical magic, and unique looking characters. All of that comes at a cost. He wants the luxury of making his films easily, without the criticism of being called a sellout. That's why Dumbo is a story that suits him. He feels like a weirdo with big ears, some people laughing at him, critical of him for tripping over himself. In reality, he is a prime example of an artist. Someone that must take great risk, with the possibility that he might not actually fly. He might need a feather. Or maybe he just needs to let his true nature glide. While watching and writing about the last two films—Big Eyes and Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children—it was obvious which character was a representation of Tim Burton himself. Big Eyes was the Margaret Keane character, feeling like a phoney, pushed around by others, and afraid to stand up for her own work. In Miss Peregrine, it is Asa Butterfield's Jake, a lonely boy, looking for his place, friends that can be just as peculiar as he is. In Dumbo, it took me quite a long time to find out which character was the representation. Was it Max Medici (Danny DeVito), the vaudevillian circus owner, hoping to come up with anything that will keep his traveling troupe afloat? Holt Farrier (Colin Farrell), the once horse riding superstar that lost his wife, lost his arm in WWI, and then lost his pride to be a good father? Or maybe it is Keaton's V.A. Vandevere? He's the creator of a massive amusement park called Dreamland, filled with everything a child could want, including an attraction called Nightmare Island, floating elephant bubbles, and more glamour than a New York fashion week. And in the end, it hit me. It was none of those people. It wasn't a person at all. It's the name up in lights—Dumbo. Here is a little boy that has his mother ripped away from him, with no clue as to why, and now finds himself divided between the two worlds of entertainment—the old school of entertaining people vs. this new wave of the future, an elephant soaring to new heights. This has always been the conflict for Tim Burton. He's made movies with no risk, no budget, and had enormous success—Pee-wee's Big Adventure, Beetlejuice. He's made movies with massive budgets and fallen flat on his face—Planet of the Apes and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. He's the main attraction for his films, expected to fly, and if he does not perform the audience is going to want their money back. This is what makes Dumbo Tim Burton's consummate topper film; it's a big scale production rooted in the past and flying off to a whole new level. I might be in the minority of finding these last three Burton movies to be some of his best work. Many people will disagree. I am willing to step to the edge and take that leap. That's what a great artist does. Page 7 "He was never looking to be compared to any other lyricist." James Dean Bradfield "I'd forgotten how much I missed him as a lyricist, how much a fan I am of his intellect, his fierce, rigorous critique of culture." Nicky Wire "Youth culture has always been controlled by the same people, selling the same goods at inflated prices – just more created products all the time. If you're told what youth culture is, it's not much use. Everybody knows what they want to do and then they're told to do something else and they do it. Youth is the ultimate product. We just wanna mix politics and sex, look brilliant on stage and say brilliant things." Richey Edwards on Snub TV, 1991 On February 1, 1995, Richard James Edwards, aka Richey James (like Rusty James in the pantheon of existential heroes) and Richey Manic, lyricist, clothes horse, Minister of Propaganda and (arguably) guitarist with the Manic Street Preachers, famously disappeared without giving any clue to his location or motivation for leaving. February 1, 2020 sees the 25th anniversary of Richey's disappearance. But rather than wallow in the mire of the details surrounding the disappearance—something that understandably still strongly impacts on his family (and something that we're unlikely to receive a definite conclusion on anyway)—I want to celebrate what made Richey such a unique figure in popular music and, apart from the disappearance, why he is still a figure of such fascination for so many people, myself included. A working-class autodidact from Blackwood, a mining town in South Wales, he gave hope to people like myself who felt isolated from their own backgrounds by their love of literature, ideas and politics. I would come to realise later that working-class culture is a lot more complicated than that, but as an alienated teen, I needed the inspiration. His intimidatingly wide and varied reading (he was said to be reading six books a week by 1994) was demonstrated in quotes used to illustrate lyrics on album sleeves and setlists. It introduced me to such wonderful, brave writing as that of Camus, Kafka, Sylvia Plath, Philip Larkin, Harold Pinter and Octave Mirbeau. A door was opened, and a world of ideas spilled out before me. Rock music became my secondary education and Richey was my favourite teacher. Treating rock music as an equal art form with equal potential for intelligence as literature, theatre and film, without losing its populist appeal, excitement or form (a technique known as 'estrangement'), his lyrics began as a cut and paste of Beat Generation stream of consciousness and tabloid sloganizing and became multiple-sourced, richly researched cultural and political dissertations, condensed in the flame of the form of the rock song and made streamlined and solid as tungsten. To see Richey's typewritten pages from this time, you could equally believe you were reading experimental prose or free verse poetry; such is the high volume of ideas and the lack of regard for rhyme, metre or rhythm. As best friend and bandmate Nicky Wire stated, "He wasn't looking for an Ivor Novello, was he, the boy? He was looking for a Pulitzer Prize...he just wanted to be J.G. Ballard." Such ambition, intellect and creativity should be celebrated. The Manics have often made a point of separating Richey the artist from Richey, the myth of the tortured artist, and I aim to do the same here on the 25th anniversary of his disappearance. It's not always easy to do so, as any writing can lend itself to its writer's introspections, but certainly, the artistry still shines through. So, in celebration of one of the greatest and perhaps most underrated legitimate artists in the pantheon of rock music, I present to you, dear reader, some of my favourite Richey writings and moments. I eat and I dress and I wash and I still can say thank you / Puking / Shaking / Sinking / I still stand for old ladies / Can't shout / Can't scream / Hurt myself to get pain out (from "Yes," 1994) From the opener to arguably the Manics' greatest album, 1994's The Holy Bible, the chorus from "Yes," a song equating prostitution with the idea of prostituting yourself in other ways—by being in a band for example and allowing yourself to be exploited by the accompanying media—offers one of the most concise descriptions of internalising mental pain or illness and presenting an image of 'normalcy' to the outside world as a coping mechanism. As someone with my own, 'mild', mental health issues, I can relate to being able to function and generally keep to my commitments and keep to a routine and go about my everyday life. I can relate to the internal clawing of my emotions by my internal chemistry as I go about these things and the anxiety that jitters just under the surface, undetected by the public. The mundanity of imagery of standing for old ladies on the bus perfectly demonstrates that ability to function in the everyday, while inside... "You know how Catholics always hate every other religion, or Baptists more than those that hate the Devil? Well, we will always hate Slowdive more than we hate Adolf Hitler." The Manics were known for their vitriol early on, but not necessarily for their sense of humour. Here, Richey's disdain for shoegaze's drifting, apolitical ambient noise finds perfect expression in one of his most vicious, over-exaggerated put-downs ever. Apparently, quite a few bands wanted to fight the Manics in the early '90s. It's no surprise after perfectly formed verbal grenades like this. Oh the joy, me and Stephen Hawking, we laugh / We missed the sex revolution when we failed the physical (from "Me and Stephen Hawking," 2009) The Manics' 2009 album Journal For Plague Lovers was made up entirely of lyrics Richey left for the band just before he disappeared. The new lyrics intriguingly seem to be less angry than the lyrics written for the previous album Richey had written for, The Holy Bible. They also have some surprising and refreshingly humorous lines, such as this one. On a track referencing Preachers, famously disappeared without giving any clue to his location or motivation for leaving. February 1, 2020 sees the 25th anniversary of Richey's disappearance. 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I am an architect / They call me a butcher / I am a pioneer / They call me primitive / I am purity / They call me perverted... I know I believe in nothing / But it is my nothing (from "Faster," 1994) It's one of the great self-manifestos wrapped inside a mantra of opposition, and one of the most astonishingly direct assertions on the rights of the individual as to be found in pop and rock music ever. Defining himself in opposition to how his detractors describe him, his references to himself as an architect, a pioneer and purity suggested a high-functioning ego indulging in the inevitable crash, something we know was sadly a reality. I always assumed his references to being a pioneer were in his high art approach to his lyrics, and purity a reference to his fascination with puritanism (he couldn't decide ultimately if he was a puritan or not, but the concept obsessed him). But architect is a bit unclear. The opposite given—a butcher—is usually taken as a reference to his self-harm. How could he be perceived as an architect in this respect? It's still unclear to me, but the language and blunt declarative force of his proclamations here remake his conflicts as poetry. By 1994, Richey was questioning everything, looking for worth and meaning in everything and finding it nowhere. "I know I believe in nothing" is the nihilistic summary and admission to self of this process. But at the time of writing "Faster," Richey was not in the mood for people's pity. "But it is MY nothing," he spits, affirming the right of the individual to believe in nothing if that is their conclusion. Strangely terrifying and life-affirming at the same time, never had an assertion of self been so powerful in rock music before. I would prefer no choice / One bread, one food, one milk, one food, that's all / I'm confused, I only want one truth / I really don't mind being lied to (from "All Is Vanity," 2009) For a confused, anxious mind, one that cannot discern any concrete truths in the world, the idea of having one truth to focus on, to cling to as a way of making sense of the world, is highly attractive. To suggest that to accept such a truth, even if it was a lie, betrays a sadness and desperation at the heart of the desire to rid oneself of such confusion. Richey nails such desperation here in clear, concise lines that paint a picture of someone so overwhelmed by the many, many consumerist options available in the capitalist world that they would rather be reduced to a quasi-communistic state where there is no choice, and everything is decided for them. Such longing may seem reductive, resigning oneself to the erasure of individualism, but for Richey, it was about reducing the overload of choice that made straight thought impossible. One man's Communism is another man's safe space; it would appear. Regained your self-control / and regained your self-esteem / and blind your success inspires / and analyse, despise and scrutinise / never knowing what you hoped for / and safe and warm / but life is so silent / for the victims who have no speech / and their shapeless, guilty remorse / obliterates your meaning / obliterates your meaning (from "Mausoleum," 1994) Never had a middle eight in a rock song been so articulate before, so precise in its language and so judgemental too. Richey was afflame with fury at the time with popular historians of the time who were releasing books that argued that the holocaust of World War Two didn't happen or was at least greatly exaggerated. Rightly angered by such harmful nonsense, Richey wrote not one but two songs about the holocaust for The Holy Bible. The first song, "Mausoleum," contained this damning indictment of everyone who got to live some form of everyday, normal life after the war. And that the mere fact of the dead, the victims of the gas chambers, the enormity of such barbarity, is enough to obliterate any importance or meaning we attach to our own lives. An existentialist crisis is all well and good for example, but how can you feel such despair in the face of what the victims of the holocaust suffered? This is a sobering piece of writing that never fails to put me in my place. Shards on chards / the androgyny fails / Odalisques by Ingres / extra bones for sale / Born-a-graphic vs. Pornographic from "Prevention/Repulsion," 2009) Demonstrating Richey's uncanny ability to apply a historical story he found through his reading, however obscure, and then apply this to (then) contemporary culture, linking the relevance across time in exciting ways through his lyrics. The above chorus, from "Prevention/Repulsion," is a prime example. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' 1814 painting Grande Odalisque infamously depicted a concubine in what was said to be an unrealistic anatomical state. Ingres was said to have "favoured long lines to convey curvature and sensuality," while also adding in supposedly five extra vertebrae than was normal. While the controversy then lay in the fact that Ingres was engaging subtle sensual fantasy as opposed to accurate representation and imitation of form, as it was argued painting was supposed to do, Richey Edwards was able to see in the story that arguments about body modification and representation had not changed in the 180 years since the painting was made. As James Dean Bradfield put it, Richey, writing this in

doesn't care if she lives or dies, as long as she takes out Scar. She is willing to go out in a blaze of glory, as *Top Gun*, because she has nothing else. Just as the two are near the collision point, time stops in the narrative and we see Starbuck thinking about Anders and the promise she made to him. The camera lingers on a close-up of Starbuck's face, with a few flash-cuts to scenes from "The Farm," as she comes to the realization that she does not need to die here. Kat is close enough that she can put Scar right in front of her. It means giving up the glory (and the title of *Top Gun*), but Starbuck realizes that she wants to live. Deep down, she is still holding on to the hope that Anders could be alive, and if she dies killing Scar, she will never be able to keep her promise to him. And so she breaks off, and she lets Kat take out Scar and get all the glory that goes with that. Of course, Kat is arrogant and obnoxious about it later on in the mess when Starbuck has given her the *Top Gun* mug and has to pour her drinks, but Starbuck—although she hates to lose—knows that she made the right call in calling in her wingman. Starbuck does manage to steal Kat's moment, though it's not in a spiteful way. After pouring Kat's drink, she raises a bottle and takes the opportunity to salute everyone they have lost. One by one, she says the names of the fallen pilots, and Lee realizes that she was lying when she callously stated she didn't remember their names. In fact, she knows every single one of them, and it is deeply moving to everyone in the room to see her finally embodying the kind of leadership that Kat has so desperately wanted her to take. In this moment, Starbuck has brought them all together as a team—a family even. Despite their many differences and interpersonal problems, they are all pilots of the fleet, and that experience is something that no one else in the universe can understand except the people in that room. Even though her long-time enemy, is visibly moved by her and truly respects her in that moment. Starbuck is determined to live now, but before she does, she must honor the dead. She starts to falter towards the end, though, and when she can no longer remember names, Lee steps up to save her: "To all of them," he says. So say we all. Page 9 *PopCulture25YL* looks back at the music and shows from the month that was January of 1995 to explore why they're still relevant to us 25 years later. This week brings us the last episodes of *Liquid Television*, *WWF Royal Rumble 1995*, and *Leftfield's album Leftism*. *VHS In The VCR Liquid Television* by Rob King *Liquid Television* ran for three seasons from 1991 to 1995 on MTV. It heralded Avant-gard American adult animation at a time when *The Simpsons* (1989–present) had only recently picked up the torch from the last syndicated adult sitcom in memory, *The Flintstones* (1960–1966). *Ren and Stimpy* (1991–1995) was testing the waters of Nickelodeon's evening audiences alongside *Liquid Television*, but MTV was looking for a different demographic. *Liquid Television* was bringing their Avant-gard sensibility cut with the lowest-brow postmodernism to the last bastion of Generation X. Notably, *Ren and Stimpy*'s John Kricfalusi was solidly rooted in the classical schools of Filmation and the Ralph Bakshi schools of animation, whereas Matt Groening earned his chops cartooning for *Wet: The Magazine of Gourmet Bathing and animation for The Tracy Ullman Show*. *Wet* was a magazine that incorporated innovative graphic art stylings to portray cultural issues imaginatively, and there was inevitable overlap with the new wave underground comix movement as seen in Art Spiegelman and *François Mousley's Raw* comic; they shared talent. In the summer of 1991, MTV's *Liquid Television* was being billed as "an animated variety show." [1] and while that sold well in the television 'zines, MTV creatives were allowing a more unique show that looked to the talent of this comix movement and post-modern literature. It is well-documented that David Lynch said his inspiration for directing his earliest short films came from an experience where he saw them as moving paintings. If we can separate that notion from general movie or television production, we could then begin to see *Liquid Television* as an anthology of moving new wave comix, comix literally animated. The first season of *Liquid Television* boasted the talents as seen in "Stick Figure Theater" shorts, Bill Plympton shorts, Peter Chung's *Aeon Flux*, and the serialized *Winer Steele*. Season 2 doubled down on talent from Art Spiegelman and *François Mousley's Raw* comic introducing Mark Beyer's "The Adventures of Thomas and Nardo" and Charles Burns' "Dog Boy" cited in an early article as "Raw Dog." [2] *Aeon Flux* returned, and the world was introduced to the cartoons of Mike Judge with *Office Space* and *Beavis and Butt-head*. In its final season, Season 3, most of the notable titles above were gone. "Stick Figure Theater" would continue to run the course of the series, and the notable additions were "Crazy Daisy Ed," "Brad Dharma: Psychic Detective," and "The Blockheads." *Aeon Flux* and *Beavis and Butt-head* would go on to their own highly popular series, but those who caught *Liquid Television* late at night, changing the channel over from TNT's *MonsterVision* or USA Network's *Silk Stockings* or simply awaiting the *Headbanger's Ball* with Matt Pinfield would probably remember the more obscure shorts in their memories. Those obscure shorts borrowed heavily from *Raw* as can be seen in comparison illustrations included. [3] Another famous short is titled "Human Bomb," which is narrated by Mark Leyner, who was making a reputation on college campuses with his short story collection *My Cousin, My Gastronterologist*. "Human Bomb" was adapted from his story "I was an infinitely hot and dense dot." Ultimately, *Liquid Television* confused critics but remains uniquely its own, and while we now have *Adult Swim* and innumerable adult cartoons spun out of *Janimation*, no following animated series has been successful in imitating the plotless inventiveness of the anthology series. [1] Solomon, C. (1991, Jun 01). MTV's 'Liquid' A Cut Above Saturday Cartoons. *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995) Retrieved from [2] Rhea, M. (1992, 10). Animation Highlights Television Production. *American Cinematographer*, 73, 14-21. Retrieved from [3] Kelly, M. (2008, Spring). Art Spiegelman and His Circle: New York City Comix and the Downtown Scene. *International Journal of Comic Art*, 10, 313-339. *WWF Royal Rumble 1995* by Chris Flackett 25 years ago, on 22nd January 1995, the WWF presented arguably their second most important event of the wrestling year (with the winner of the Rumble traditionally getting the main even slot at Wrestlemania, although not so generally with the early Rumbles). It's an interesting event in hindsight. 1995 saw the WWF have a poor year in terms of product, the superstars of yesterday having moved on (to WCW in a lot of cases) and quality replacements—outside of Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Diesel and Razor Ramon—were had to come by. This was the year of awful gimmicks like Bob "Spark Plug" Holly (a racing driver) and Mantaur (well...you figure it out). Vince's obsession with monsters (any big, imposing men, regardless of talent) led to jobbers like Mabel headlining major Pay-Per-Views, to mass apathy and a major drop in profit. There was a period of time, in fact, at least for a couple of years, where the WWF were dancing on the edge of collapse. The Attitude era would save the company but before then we had this, "The New Generation," to contend with. The worst of the worst is The Undertaker, back when he was a better gimmick than wrestler, sleepwalking through a stallfest with everyone's favourite taxman(!) gimmick, IRS. That the match led to King Kong Bundy stealing Undis' urn, setting up a Wrestlemania match between the two, is just sour icing on an already burnt cake. Razor Ramon's intercontinental title loss to Jeff Jarrett showed a commitment at least to building new stars, even if interference runner The Roadie (later Road Dogg) drew more heat than Jarrett did. New WWF champion Diesel took on former two time champion Bret "The Hitman" Hart in the best match of the night. Part of the failure of Diesel's reign is that he often had poor opponents that failed to elevate him. You are only as good as a babyface champion as your heel opponents, to paraphrase Adrian Street. It also didn't help that while Diesel's face turned at the end of 1994 got him over with the fans, he lost the edge that had piqued their interest in the first place (see also: Roman Reigns). Being forced to utter banal babyface platitudes did Diesel no favours. Thank God for Bret. He always had great chemistry with Diesel, and while this is not their finest hour, due to an overbooking of interference that leads to a no contest, it is still a compelling contest that demands another look. The Rumble match itself is memorable for being the only Rumble to have 60 second intervals between entrants, leading to an over-quick match that only highlighted the lack of depth on the roster at the time. Hell, they brought back Dick Murdoch for God's sake! The lack of big superstars hurt any excitement there might have been and the 60 seconds idea was scrapped for future Rumbles. The eventual winner though, Shawn Michaels, was the right call on the day. He entered at number one and hung on until the end with number two entrant the British Bulldog, "skinning the cat" to avoid elimination by mere inches of space between foot and floor and taking Bulldog by surprise to eliminate him and claim his spot in the main event of Wrestlemania. This was a big moment for Michaels, starting the wheels moving towards his face turn and becoming the face of the company the following year. In the meantime, the Rumble exposed a classic Vince tactic, one he uses often but was more noticeable here due to the poor roster. Celebrity involvement. Pamela Anderson, hot on the heels of her success in *Baywatch*, engaged in some "titillating" skin (changing behind a screen whilst interviewer Todd Pettengill laughed nervously, anyone? Jesus...) but otherwise looked awkward and like she'd rather be anywhere else. There to promote that she'd walk the winner of the Rumble to the ring at Wrestlemania, she added nothing of value to proceedings at all. Laurence Taylor on the other hand... A legendary footballer, he was by no means the first celebrity to involve him physically in a wrestling match or angle, but in his pull-apart confrontation with Bam Bam Bigelow, furious at having lost his match and lashing out at Taylor, it led to the first celebrity to ever wrestle in a singles main event headliner at a Wrestlemania. It was big news at the time and was repeated later in *WCW* with varying results. CDs On Rotation In Our Six-Disc Leftfield- Leftism by Laura Stewart The '90s brought alternative music of all styles together. It was great for us teens as clubbing covered every genre. Skaters, goths, punks, indie kids and ravers were all friends and had a real sense of community and enjoyment of everything that came within the culture together. When Leftfield released their debut album in 1995, it changed dance music and the clubbing scene forever. Leftism never settled on a single genre. Instead, it was an eclectic mix of tribal, trance, dub, house and ambient music. The quality never dipped, proving that a dance record—one that worked as a coherent album of music rather than a collection of 12-inch singles—was possible. It was among the first British albums to bring the club into the living room, along with *The Chemical Brothers*, *Underworld*, *Goldie* and *The Prodigy*. The two men behind Leftfield, Neil Barnes and Paul Daley, had started out in punk bands, and lived by the ethos that "music that takes from other places but moves on". To that end, they borrowed from *Afrobeat*, indie and rock—itself—even seducing former Sex Pistols John Lydon into singing the album's breakout single "Open Up". I preferred PIL to the Pistols, and I think Lydon's voice works perfectly for dance music. I remember hearing it for the very first time on the dancefloor and everyone rejoicing. Timeless albums like Leftism have a rare thing in common; fearlessness to bring a brand new sound and without it then sounding dated. That's certainly not what you'd expect from most dance albums as they are founded on what feels fresh at the time and using current instrumental sounds. There's no denying that elements of acid house, jungle and big beat still sound fantastic... but they're coated in nostalgia, taking us back to a place in which they first emerged. It's unusual to discover a dance album that sounds just as relevant today as it did decades ago. There are few that manage it, Tricky's *Maxinquaye* remains a hypnotically seductive listen, with enough sonic curveballs to prevent it from getting stale. Portishead's *Dummy* has similar DNA, it's cinematically intense atmospheres still difficult to define. Yet, as enduring as they both are, they're not exactly albums you can dance to. Leftfield's Leftism is the exception. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the opening track "Release the Pressure". It begins strikingly, like an awakening in space, before beaming down the velvety reggae tones of Earl Sixteen. As each minute layers sound after sound, the quest for peace and unity leaves you with an impression there's a cosmic fuse out there waiting to be ignited. Another single, and probably my favourite track of the album, is "Original", featuring Toni Halliday of the band, Curve. I loved Curve, and Halliday was my girl crush back then so to see her on the album was a real treat. "Melt" does exactly what it says on the tin, and melts you away into cosmic space. Come down music for sure. Leftism was definitely an after-party album as much as it was a club album. It gets the balance of the evening's festivities just right. There is a confidence to the album, too, which seemed to grab you by the ears and demand that you listened. This brashness sat well with the era in which Leftism was released. The 1990s were a good time to be British, as rave's optimism fed into political change and the Conservative Party's decrepit leadership finally breached its last in May 1997. You can feel this optimism surge through Leftism, an album that seemed to know instinctively you were going to like it and wouldn't budge an inch even if you didn't. Leftism felt like rave's burly big brother. This was rave that had grown up, bought a solid pair of shoes and a warm jacket but still liked to party; rave you could listen to while washing the dishes or in the car with your mum. Leftism was a hit in middle-class dinner parties, dingy student digs and big house clubs, at home in all three without ever really belonging to anyone. Leftism was re-released in 2017 with eleven "brand new" remixes, which all sound superb and add a sprinkling of modern magic to the sound. There's no doubt that this album will still be sexy in 25 years time. Page 10 It is the dreaded (but very clean) year 2018. The world is run by corporations and all is organized and prioritized according to business models and efficiency reports. Male human assets are assigned women when the company sees it as beneficial to public perception and in said male's best interest. Television is state-run and there is only one event that matters to the people of the entire, united world: the bloody *Rollerball* league. *Rollerball* is yet another '70s science fiction dystopian film that manages to predict, almost to the date, the value of bloodsport and corporation in entertainment in the United States. But unlike other dystopias we've looked at in the previous entries of this column, *Rollerball* is shown from the shinier, cleaner side of metaphor: the perceived utopia. For the world of *Rollerball* is one of pristine towers, lovely gardens, and streets that haven't seen a drop of blood in ages. But it all seems a bit too perfect. So inoculated to the machinations of corporate governance are the people that violence has become one of two things: either a hysterical pastime worth giggling over and/or the sport of choice on TV with *Rollerball* matches. In one scene, a rich man at a party shows off his antique gun. Most stare in wonder, marveling at the alien nature of the item, and later go out into the backyard and shoot some trees, obliterating them into balls of fire, reveling at the destructive power of such a small object. First-hand violence is certainly a thing of the past for the population, but this scene reminds us that it is something that keeps the people's interest when seen from the outside looking in and unable to feel its effects. Nothing speaks more to this than the USA's obsession (though it is implied that it is worldwide) with the fictional *Rollerball*, a sport where men can assault each other in order to score points (their uniforms include spiked gloves and live motorcycles). The rules are barbaric enough as is (in brief, in order to score points, one must go through rollerskating marauders and motorcycled goons that protect a tiny hole where the titular rollerball goes) but when the corporations decide to take out penalties, which previously curbed players' intentions to literally maul their opponents, literal lives are on the line. The players of *Rollerball* are mostly anonymous cannon fodder, but Jonathan E (James Caan) has become a superstar for the Houston team. He is revered worldwide and Energy Corporation Chairman Bartholomew (John Houseman) not only wants Jonathan to retire but to go out with a worldwide reality show depicting his final days in the league. For the corporations, any sign of cult personality that is not them is to be smashed and since Jonathan won't retire... and is too good to be killed under the traditional rules... They'll keep upping the ante on *Rollerball* until all signs of individuality are erased. *Rollerball's* explosive climax is not only an adrenaline-packed thirty minutes of rollerskating mayhem but is also the perfect metaphor for corporate cynicism vs individuality. Though *Rollerball* sputters in its quieter moments, the film's three exciting *Rollerball* sequences provide thrills as well as something worth talking about. In a time before Carter's "malaise" speech and the self-indulgent economy of the 1980s, there was fear of the future. *Rollerball* are those fears made flesh. And also, shockingly, mostly made true. It is the dreaded... well, more spoiled... year 1983. Any pleasure wham can conjure in their minds can be purchased for the right price. Got a few grand to spend? Go to one of the highly specialized theme worlds provided by the Delos corporation. Fancy a joust and a roll in the hay with a lecherous queen? Go to Medieval World, where knights and vassals serve you drumsticks of turkey while you play your next sexual conquest. Perhaps too Renaissance Faire for you? You can always engage in a Senate debate, complete with toga and grape-serving pleasure maids, in Roman World where political machinations and sexual intrigue take precedence over historical accuracy. Far too civilized? Of course, if you are really looking to rough it, hitch over to the nearest Brothel/Inn in West World on your best steed and face off with the best sharpshooters in the world. I'm sure you don't mind shooting robots but are you okay with sleeping with them? Of course you are. *Westworld* (1973) is an exciting sci-fi/fantasy film that takes a look at a more ethically bankrupt world, a moral dystopia, where the upper crust of society can escape to literal fantasy worlds and indulge themselves in untoward pleasures denied them in reality. Man's inherent quest for bloodshed and sex is a simmering reality in this film where those desires can be acted out on unfeeling, unknowing robots. And while there is a metaphor for man's baser nature on the overt surface of *Westworld*, the more subtle allusions are to class warfare. The robots are basically servants and they continually get shot or screwed to literal death. *Westworld's* big twist is when the robots' restraints come off and they start to really kill those that threaten them. It becomes a bloody Upstairs/Downstairs with androids and the mother of Trick's child, by the time *Maxinquaye* was released. Topley-Bird deserves nearly as much credit as Trick for how potent *Maxinquaye* turned out. She has all the most piercing and evocative moments, like "I think ahead of you / I think instead of you" on "Suffocated Love." For much of the album she reduces Trick to a mumbbling hypeman. But then, murmuring and gazing at your shoes is kind of the point of *Maxinquaye*. It's an album of enchantment mixed with creeping dread. Trick worked with samples and live musicians, and nobody ever used Isaac Hayes' tingling oft-sampled "Ike's Rap II" better than Trick on "Hell Is Round The Corner." Trick recruited co-producer Mark Saunders because he'd worked with The Cure, and the album's smothering atmosphere has a lot more to do with The Cure's gloominess than it does with any rap music that's ever been made, before or since. Samples are eeked out, time-shifted until they become otherworldly moans and death-rattles. For most of its hour, *Maxinquaye* is a pure apocalyptic mood piece. For a few years after *Maxinquaye*, Trick really did seem to be the future. He dated Björk, which seemed perfect and which maybe would've been if Trick hadn't been a terrible boyfriend—something he later owned up to being. (If the Trick/Björk/Goldie love triangle happened today, it would set the internet on fire.) But trip-hop, as it morphed into vaguely hip boutique music, turned out to have little use for an artist as grim and messy as Trick. Portishead and *Massive Attack* at least held onto their audiences. Trick, wary of labels and distrustful of his own fame, made music that was increasingly intimidating and paranoid. He made one or two more great records—*Pre-Millennium Tension* and *Angels With Dirty Faces*—but he wasn't interested in holding on to the vibe he'd conjured on *Maxinquaye*, and before long, he had disappeared from view. A revival of that early, wacky strain of trip-hop could come along at any second and Trick is still out there, still making records, still refusing to acknowledge anyone else's expectations. *Maxinquaye* is still one of the most gorgeous albums of the '90s and still sounds as seductive today. The Fall—Cerebral Caustic, Reviewed by Laura Stewart Genre-blurring seemed like a revolutionary thing in the '90s. "Alternative Music" bled from rock to rap to reggae. Beck and the mid-'90s Beastie Boys and the Orange-era Jon Spencer Blues Explosion all made great music, but at that time, they were a bit of a novelty. Trick's Bristolian pals *Massive Attack* and Portishead merged their styles, too. Dub was mixed with Bondeque strings with breathtaking results. Blues and punk mixed together like coffee and cream. But there wasn't anything fun about Trick, and there didn't seem to be anything calculated about his fusions. It might have seemed like an attention-seeking move to cover Public Enemy's "Black Steel In The Hour Of Chaos" as a damaged postpunk hymn, with a sultry woman whispering where Chuck D had boomed. But from Trick, it felt like something that had bubbled up from a fertile subconscious. And *Maxinquaye*, Trick's first album, released 25 years ago, remains Trick's defining work because it's the purest dive into that mind. Trick's mystique is a great place to start. He had grown up in a white Bristol ghetto and spent time in prison. He wore dresses and smeared eyeliner. Onstage, he looked like he was built of pure sinew, and he'd do whole shows without looking at the audience. His was the most oppressive, dark voice on *Massive Attack's Blue Lines*, an album full of heavy and dark voices. It wasn't what Trick said that mattered; it was the way he used his voice—murmuring and rasping, creeping and insinuating, like the devil talking you into selling your soul. The things he said were so layered with ambiguity that they seemed to radiate mystery, "Reduce me, seduce me, dress me up in Stussy." He met Martina Topley-Bird—the singer whose soft and intimate notes gave *Maxinquaye* much of its dynamism—when she was 15. She was still a teenager, and the mother of Trick's child, by the time *Maxinquaye* was released. Topley-Bird deserves nearly as much credit as Trick for how potent *Maxinquaye* turned out. She has all the most piercing and evocative moments, like "I think ahead of you / I think instead of you" on "Suffocated Love." For much of the album she reduces Trick to a mumbbling hypeman. But then, murmuring and gazing at your shoes is kind of the point of *Maxinquaye*. It's an album of enchantment mixed with creeping dread. Trick worked with samples and live musicians, and nobody ever used Isaac Hayes' tingling oft-sampled "Ike's Rap II" better than Trick on "Hell Is Round The Corner." Trick recruited co-producer Mark Saunders because he'd worked with The Cure, and the album's smothering atmosphere has a lot more to do with The Cure's gloominess than it does with any rap music that's ever been made, before or since. Samples are eeked out, time-shifted until they become otherworldly moans and death-rattles. For most of its hour, *Maxinquaye* is a pure apocalyptic mood piece. For a few years after *Maxinquaye*, Trick really did seem to be the future. He dated Björk, which seemed perfect and which maybe would've been if Trick hadn't been a terrible boyfriend—something he later owned up to being. (If the Trick/Björk/Goldie love triangle happened today, it would set the internet on fire.) But trip-hop, as it morphed into vaguely hip boutique music, turned out to have little use for an artist as grim and messy as Trick. Portishead and *Massive Attack* at least held onto their audiences. Trick, wary of labels and distrustful of his own fame, made music that was increasingly intimidating and paranoid. He made one or two more great records—*Pre-Millennium Tension* and *Angels With Dirty Faces*—but he wasn't interested in holding on to the vibe he'd conjured on *Maxinquaye*, and before long, he had disappeared from view. A revival of that early, wacky strain of trip-hop could come along at any second and Trick is still out there, still making records, still refusing to acknowledge anyone else's expectations. *Maxinquaye* is still one of the most gorgeous albums of the '90s and still sounds as seductive today. The Fall—Cerebral Caustic, Reviewed by Chris Flackett What do you do if you're The Fall: You're just a couple of years shy of your 20th year and you've hit a bit of a slump. No, Mark E. Smith didn't fire his band, not this time. Instead, he brought somebody back to "The Group" (the word "band" was forbidden). Not just anybody, either. This was somebody MES knew intimately well. His ex-wife, Brix Smith. It's funny to think that for all the talk of firings (exaggerated to a point; a lot of people like Steve Hanley, Craig Scanlon and the last Fall Group were there for years), a couple of people were actually invited back. Tony Friel, the group's first bass guitarist, came back for a spell in the early '90s. And now here was Brix, rejoining her former spouse against the odds. The first fruits of the reunion were 1995's *Cerebral Caustic*. MES had a fascinating attitude toward sound. He believed in feel and instinct; he knew when something sounded right. Influenced by '70s German sound experimenters Can as much as by the tough, working-man rock 'n' roll of the likes of Link Wray, he abhorred slick, shiny, radio productions, happy to embrace the murk and strangeness if it sounded right. Which is a shame for *Cerebral Caustic*. Because the sound here isn't experimental or strange (with one exception, which we'll come to). No, the record sounds paper-thin and flat. While the guitars have a little bit of bite on occasion, the whole effort is pulled back by the production, like a straining dog being held back by a firm and insurmountable hand. Regardless, how about the songs themselves? Honestly, a mixed bag. While an improvement on the previous year's *underwhelming Middle-Class Revolt*, the album underwhelms as much as it excites. Brix brings a welcome alt-rock/college rock feel to proceedings, which, while not in line per se with a good chunk of her previous work in *The Fall*, was a natural progression from her work in the late '80s with The Adult Net, slotting nicely alongside the feminine L.A. power-pop work of The Bangles and *The Go-Go's*. Yet the songs don't always have the quality you would hope for. When the songs hit the target, an argument can be made for *The Fall* to soften their more obtuse edges and play to the college rock crowd; there's an aptitude for it. "Feeling Numb" has a great singalong chorus that soars from the tension of its verses. "Life Just Bounces," a re-recording of a slightly older song, sees MES revel in the excitement of its dizzying ascending and descending guitar lines and relay an obscure tale of "Doctor Boring" and the pharmaceutical industry. But safe college rock is not what many people listen to *The Fall* for and, when married to weaker material, such as "Pearl City," "The Aphid" and "I'm Not Satisfied," it presents a forgettable collection that is not bad as it is inoffensive—a larger crime in the world of *The Fall*. Divisively, MES tried to shake things up by taking one of Brix's favourite songs from the sessions, "Shiny Things," a slow, anemic strumalong with a big chorus, and proceeded to pitch shift Brix's vocal to chipmunk levels, put strange phase effects all over the music and add his own description of a mundane music festival ("Would all people who want vegetarian burgers go on the left and those who want meat burgers on the right"), naming the resulting experiment "Bonkers in Phoenix." Bonkers indeed. But would you have expected anything less from *The Fall*? Page 13 Welcome to What's the Buzz, 25YL's feature where members of our staff provide you with recommendations on a weekly basis. In our internet age, there is so much out there to think about watching, reading, listening to, etc., that it can be hard to separate the wheat from the chaff, filter out the noise, or find those diamonds in the rough. But have no fear! We're here to help you do that thing I just described with three different metaphors. Each week a rotating cast of writers will offer their recommendations based on things they have discovered. They won't always be new to the world, but they'll be new to us, or we hope new to you. This week, Stephanie Edwards is watching *Cheer* on Netflix, Hawk Ripjaw is enjoying *Harley Quinn*, and Jason Sheppard recommends the latest season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Cheer Stephanie: Since we are currently in the height of Oscar season, it takes a lot for me to divert my attention away from film and turn it towards television during this time. When I saw a mutual of mine of Twitter post about how they'd just finished binge-watching a show about competitive cheerleading on Netflix, I knew I had to check it out for myself. That show is *Cheer*, a six-part Netflix documentary series that follows the Navarro College cheerleading squad as they prepare to win their 14th national title. I have always been a fan, never a participant, of competitive cheerleading so this show was right up my alley. I expected to see cheer squad rivalries, gravity-defying stunts and enough drama to keep me satisfied. What I didn't expect was to be willing to give my life for Navarro coach Monica Aldama and her squad of misfit kids by the end of the series. Yes, the show is about cheerleading, but it doesn't sugar coat the sport and instead showcases those who participate as the elite athletes that they have worked their whole life to be. Cheer could easily be classified as body horror with all of the falls, breaks, tears, fractures, and screams of pain that echo across the series' run-time. It left me wincing in my seat multiple times and by the end I could swear my ribs felt every basket toss. One of the most impressive aspects of the show is how director Greg Whiteley and his crew masterfully and subtly weave in commentary on a number of issues like mental health, social class, homophobia and suicide. The editors do a spectacular job

studio's second in command: Isaho Takahata, who co-wrote and directed this beauty. Once again, sadly, it would be his last role as Director before his death from lung cancer at the much more acceptable age of 82, though still sad nonetheless. He was honoured in the Ghibli Museum by his colleagues, one of the first places I recommend anyone goes to if they visit Tokyo. Based on an oddly anonymous literary tale titled: "The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter," it became Japan's most expensive film to date and also secured an Oscar nomination. The story follows the life of a baby girl who appears in the bamboo one day through some kind of divine power along with gold and fine clothes in much the same way so she can dress like a Princess. Her father uses the wealth from these resources to move their family to the city so she can become a real Princess, tearing her away from her friends and all she knows. She struggles with being thrown into nobility headfirst from one day to the next and resents its restrictions. After being named Princess Kaguya, she has many male suitors who come calling, including the Emperor himself. The story becomes about how she tries to avoid an arranged marriage and whether her auspicious origin will come back into play. This is possibly the studio's film that has the most depth and deals with real, heart-wrenching situations. It becomes a commentary on how childhood should be spent, the trappings that wealth can entail and true happiness. It's hard for me to convey just how tragic this story is, yet it's told in such a beautiful way. The animation is made entirely from watercolours in a very abstract and minimal style. The definition and detail of each frame also fluctuate in response to the content of the scene, a genius idea that's executed perfectly. Takahata deserves a lot of credit for his ambition in trying something so radically different and fresh. Miyazaki is a master at what he does, so it's only through this daring attempt to push boundaries in both story and animation that this film shoots up the list straight into the upper echelon. The English voice cast is the most impressive yet and includes a pitch-perfect Chloë Grace Moretz, with James Caan, Mary Steenburgen, Lucy Liu and James Marsden. 4. Nausicaä of The Valley of the Wind ('84) Although not strictly a Ghibli film as it was made by the same team before the studio was founded, it's considered as such and has been included in releases of their full collection. Nausicaä of The Valley of the Wind was written and directed by Miyazaki and also produced by Takahata. It was based on the Manga of the same name that Miyazaki wrote and illustrated himself. It really ticks all the boxes as it's a post-apocalyptic, sci-fi, fantasy, adventure film. The duo chose a smaller studio, Topcraft, whose work they were familiar with and who they knew had the talent to translate the sophisticated Manga to full effect. This team included Hideaki Anno, who was assigned the task of drawing the difficult God Warrior's attack scene, one of the most important parts of the film. He would later go on to write and direct Neon Genesis Evangelion. The whole film was made in just nine months with a budget of only \$1 million. The film was critically acclaimed and a commercial success. It would go on to be a seminal piece that informed anime going forward and spawned several studios, including Ghibli. It often tops polls of the best anime films, especially in Japan. The story's set after an apocalyptic war, that's left the land as a poisonous jungle. Some are doing all they can to carry on the fight and finish it, despite the damage already done. Nausicaä explores the jungle and tries to connect to its creatures in hopes of finding a way for them to co-exist. In doing so, she discovers something revelatory that could restore the environment to its former glory, if only she can put a stop to the politics and battles of the powers that be first. Many of Miyazaki's film address man's relationship or lack thereof with nature. As this was one of his first projects, the message is less subtle or nuanced and more direct than in his later projects. I think of it as Ghibli's answer to Star Wars by way of Dune, which is ironic as Rey from the recent instalment The Force Awakens is very similar to Nausicaä. There are also many scenes from that film that are strikingly similar to this one as well. Also, the gliders used in the film are so slick, even for a sci-fi film, so much so that they've even been developed in real life. The film is the foundation of not just Studio Ghibli, but anime in general, the intricate detail and hard work shows in every frame. A monumental achievement, especially for the time. The English voice cast includes Uma Thurman, Patrick Stewart and Shia LeBeouf. 3. Spirited Away (2001) Spirited Away was the film that announced the studio to the rest of the world. Written and directed by Miyazaki yet again from his original ideas, it won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature (still the only foreign and hand-drawn film to do so), is frequently ranked among the best animated films of all time and was the highest-grossing Japanese film in history upon its release. It was voted the fourth best film of the 21st century in 2016, in a poll of hundreds of critics from around the world, making it the top animated entry in that list. It's the ninth-highest rated film ever on Metacritic, again making it the top animated entry on the site. It also won all but a few of the numerous accolades that it was nominated for. The story is about a young girl who accidentally enters the Japanese world of spirits and Shinto folklore with her parents. Due to their rude and greedy behaviour after trespassing, their folks are turned into pigs, and it's up to their daughter, Chihiro, to get by in this alternate reality until she can find a way to transform her parents back and return to the human world. The narrative can seem deceptively simple but is actually a very layered exploration of themes such as consumerism, capitalism, corruption, generational differences and environmental issues. I believe it's from this ambiguous depth that it's universal appeal stems. The spirits represent all the living things and parts of the environment in our world. Most of the story takes place in a Bathhouse for them, where they can come to clean away the filth of pollution and refresh themselves. How the establishment is run ruthlessly to benefit from the wealth is what ties all the themes together. The film contains one of the studio's biggest icons in the form of the mysterious spirit No Face and also one of its most memorable scenes, where Chihiro travels with him by train further throughout this surreal world. It's visually stunning, and the magical ability it has to capture dreamlike scenes is enchanting. The scores for Ghibli films are always brilliant but this one, by Miyazaki's regular collaborator Joe Hisaishi, is particularly exquisite. Quite simply, it has it all and it needs to be seen to be believed. This may be the studio's best film, but it relies mainly on visuals and its ethereal dream world, as well as falling in the aforementioned kid's category. In this respect, it acts as the Japanese answer to Alice in Wonderland but with more substance. However, the remaining two films on the list have these qualities as well as epic stories to tell. 2. Laputa: Castle in the Sky (1986) Laputa: Castle in the Sky is the first official film from the studio with the same dynamic duo of Miyazaki on writing and directing duties, with Takahata producing. It encapsulates everything Ghibli's about, while also showcasing their incredible talents. It remains one of their most unique, as its story combines elements from their coming-of-age and more adult titles. The central characters are two young teenagers who find themselves embroiled in a conflict between a military force and pirates. The boy, Pazu, comes across the girl, Sheeta, while she is being pursued relentlessly by both parties, as she holds a special amulet that can lead one to the legendary castle in the sky. The story is fairly classic, fantasy fare but the way in which it's told is so rich and textured in both plot and presentation. It was a critical and commercial success, won numerous accolades, as well as often being voted one of, if not the best animated film of all time (something you may be getting tired of hearing in this list but tells you something in itself). However, the film's true success lies in how influential it's been in anime, video games and indeed film in general. With its perfect use of retro-futuristic steampunk technology, it's considered to be a milestone in the genre and its first modern classic. This sits in a rich tapestry of styles that includes medieval castle architecture, Gothic buildings and Welsh mining towns. After visiting Wales and witnessing the miner's strike firsthand, Miyazaki admired them and was inspired to tell a story about this strong, dying breed of fighters. The film even makes use of the Sumerian script Cuneiform, the earliest system of writing for Laputa's interactive panels and also references Hindu legends. A genius move when you think about it, as it adds substance to the castle's ancient, mythical status. The film also boasts one of the studio's most iconic creations in the form of the Laputa robots; they're equally badass as they're zen, depending on the situation. They also seem to be a strange hybrid of technology with emotions combined. This is just one example of mixing the old with the new that's the trademark of the film and adds mystery to the lore of the story. In essence, this is what makes the film so appealing. The English voice cast includes Anna Paquin and Mark Hamill. 1. Princess Mononoke (1997) Princess Mononoke was the first Ghibli, and I should think one of the first anime films in general that I saw. Even then, at an early age, it blew my mind. I remember watching it in awe and thinking that I'd never seen anything like it before, it was like being able to watch a dream back at your leisure; as bizarre as it was engrossing. The film's set in a period when humans are starting to have a damaging effect on the environment, due to the increased consumption of its resources. The main conflict is between the Forest Spirits and a flourishing settlement called "Iron Town," that manufactures weapons. Our protagonist, Prince Ashitaka is trying to find a way to weather the storm and also connect with a girl raised by wolves, the iconic San, who acts as a human embodiment of the forest's fury. Everything builds to a climactic final battle between the town, a clan of boar and samurai. It's just as awesome as it sounds and the stakes are high. Things aren't so black and white however, there's no clear hero or villain and both sides are complex characters with shades of grey. The film also contains more memorable characters than any other in the series including the Great Forest Spirit (in both forms), the Wolf Goddess Moro and my own personal favourite of all the Ghibli creations: the adorable, yet very cool Kodama. Written and directed by Miyazaki (one last time), it was the highest-grossing film in Japan upon its release, a title it held onto until passed on to Spirited Away four years later. This was one of the studio's first to be dubbed in English and subsequently get a proper release in North America via Miramax. However, the treacherous Harvey Weinstein wanted to edit the film for the American audience. The producers responded by sending him a katana with the message: "No cuts," a brilliant, perfect riposte. This may have stunted its theatrical release at the time but, in the end, it was the right move. It went on to sell very well on home video and significantly increased the studio's popularity and influence outside of Japan. It's one of the most compelling animated films ever made and if you only watch one Ghibli film, make it this one. The English voice cast is also very impressive and includes Billy Crudup, Claire Danes, Billy Bob Thornton, Gillian Anderson, Keith David and Jada Pinkett Smith. All of the Studio Ghibli films are coming to Netflix from February 1st (not in the USA though sorry folks), released as follows: February 1st Castle in the Sky My Neighbor Totoro Kiki's Delivery Service Only Yesterday Porco Rosso Ocean Waves Tales for Earthsea March 1st Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind Princess Mononoke My Neighbors the Yamada Spirited Away The Cat Returns Arrietty The Tale of the Princess Kaguya April 1st Pom Poko Whisper of the Heart Howl's Moving Castle Ponyo From Up on Poppy Hill The Wind Rises When Marnie Was There Let us know which are your favourites, and if you haven't seen any yet, now is your chance. You won't regret it. Page 15 In The Outsider S1E5, "Tear-Drinker," the web of murders surrounding Ralph Anderson and Holly Gibney becomes even more entangled. In last week's episode, Holly connected a third murder to the mix, when she tracked down Maria Caneles in New York City. This week, she returns to Dayton, Ohio to fill in some of the missing pieces. Throughout the episode, we are introduced to a friend of Heath Hofstadter, the nurse who scratched Terry Maitland. And as it's revealed that the man has a bad case of burn blisters on the back of his neck, we now have another similarity to the story in Cherokee City. Jack has the same blisters on his neck, suffered after he was touched by the spirit in the barn. So this man in Dayton and Jack, what exactly is their role in all of this? Is it possible they are the ones who actually committed the murders? Or are they simply accomplices who planted incriminating evidence for this mysterious monster, the El Coco mentioned in Episode 4? Based on the evidence we've seen for these cases, I don't think they personally committed the murders. But what is their main purpose? Jack seems desperate to appear the invisible presence, including sacrificing all kinds of lamps and lights for some reason (what is going on with that, exactly?). We don't know what Heath's friend did, exactly. Whatever it is, he feels remorseful. We see him sweeping up and making the bed (sans mattress) in Heath's now-abandoned house. When Holly meets him at Heath's gravesite, the man tells her, "He f***ed him over good. He f***ed me over too." Having served his purpose, the man commits suicide by instigating a police shootout. With these events in mind, things aren't looking good for Jack. He's similarly exhibiting remorse for his actions, as he attempts to make amends with Ralph after Tamika's baby shower. He says he's been having personal problems lately and is looking for an opportunity to help with Ralph's investigation. I'm not sure if this is genuine or if it's simply that El Coco wants Jack to get close to Ralph and lull him into a false sense of security, but I'm leaning toward the latter. Feeding on Grief Holly identifies another constant within the different murder cases. We've already seen that these murders have had residual, deadly effects, as family members close to the murders have gone on to die as well. The Peterson family has been all but wiped out. Same for Heath's family. The monster feeds on grief, a "tear-drinker." Holly uncovers areas near the cemeteries where the victims of these cases are buried that would make ideal hideouts for El Coco. An abandoned factory. Broken-down houses. And, as Ralph, Jeannie, Glory, and Sabo discover, the barn in which Terry Maitland's clothes were found is conveniently located within sight of Terry Maitland's grave. I really enjoyed these scenes with Holly in the cemeteries, as they gave me True Detective Season 1 vibes. Holly and Andy I liked how Andy and Holly's relationship blossomed in Episode 4. But after this week's episode, it appears Andy probably can't be trusted. After they spent the night together in Holly's hotel room, Holly sneaks out early in the morning, on her way to Cherokee City. Holly leaves Andy a sweet note. "I'll always remember you, so don't forget me." Andy returns the favor by snooping around her things and uncovering some of her case notes. The notes outline how the different murder cases link together. The murder involving Maria Caneles occurred on Feb 11—23 days before the murder involving Heath on March 6. Terry Maitland's murder happened on March 30—24 days later. Holly notes that 20 days have passed between Terry's crime and the day she wrote up this outline. Seems like we're about due for another killing fairly soon then, doesn't it? Andy appears very interested in these notes, as he checks them against online stories. Who is Andy working for? Have we seen the back of his neck? Green Hoodie Man Appearances We haven't seen much from the man wearing the green hoodie since the first couple of episodes, but he popped up multiple times this week. Jeannie, while working at New Leaf Recovery Center, became very unnerved by someone wearing a green sweatshirt in the waiting room. Later, at home during the middle of the night, Jeannie is visited by the monster wearing a green hoodie. It delivers a message to her: Ralph needs to stop his investigation into Frankie Peterson's murder. This is a similar message to what we heard from Jessa Maitland, and Jeannie is now convinced of its seriousness. However, Ralph remains dubious. Jessa had a bad dream, and so did Jeannie. The Peterson murder has brought back painful feelings similar to the death of their own son, Derek. At least that's what Ralph is thinking. He has not bought into the unexplainable conclusions that Holly believes in. However, as Sabo tells Ralph, "Dreams are messages, bro." Based on what we see in the conclusion of Episode 5, perhaps we will see a shift in Ralph's belief in the Green Hoodie Man and his message. The episode ends with Ralph lying on the bed in Derek's room. Whether it is a dream or Ralph's imagination—or an actual ghost—Derek appears behind Ralph and tells him, "Dad, Look at me. You need to let me go." If Ralph is able to move past his son's death, how will that affect his investigation of the Terry Maitland case? Will he be able to stop blaming himself for his mistakes? Will he give in to his skepticism and let go of getting to the bottom of the case? Will he listen to the messages from Jeannie and Jessa? I don't think Ralph will ever forget the tragedy of his son's death, but if he can separate Derek's death from the murder of Frankie Peterson, perhaps that will help him see more clearly and figure out what really happened. Book Differences Let's check back in on how The Outsider is differing from the book thus far. Holly Gibney's background is one of the show's biggest departures from the book. In the book, Holly's character actually comes from Stephen King's Mr. Mercedes trilogy. In those books, Holly works with retired detective Bill Hodges to solve a number of crimes. Through this work, Holly is exposed to the unexplainable, which helps make her perfect for the mysterious facts of the Terry Maitland case in The Outsider. I wasn't surprised to see this change in the show, as there is already a Mr. Mercedes TV show and I figured licensing issues would prevent HBO from using the details of that story. However, based on how many names have been changed in The Outsider, I'm a little surprised they used Holly's full name from the book. Despite these changes, Holly's character in the book and show are the same at the core: she is a quirky private investigator who is damn good at her job. Holly's trip to New York to visit Maria Caneles does not occur in the book, but I think it really adds to the story. It makes sense to try and trace things back to before the nurse in Dayton. I'm wondering if there will be any connection between Maria being in New York and the fact that the white van used in the Frankie Peterson case was from New York. It seems very possible. The Andy Katcavage character does not appear in the book, so I'm interested to see how his story plays out. I haven't quite figured out what his angle is yet. I'm not sure if there is some sort of history between Jack and Tamika. She seems very concerned about him acting distant toward her and her new baby. This relationship wasn't explored in the book, so I'm not sure if there's anything behind this. Now that we're halfway through Season 1 of The Outsider, how are we feeling? A lot was packed in to the first couple of episodes, and I worried it may lag in the middle episodes. But I think the action is still moving along nicely, and I'm enjoying the aspects of the show that were not in the book. Let me know your thoughts in the comments. Page 16 Many viewers fell in love with Twin Peaks as soon as they heard the first three notes of the now classic opening theme during the title credits—credits which during the original pilot ran for an incredible three minutes! There were many other musical pieces heard throughout the two hour episode, most notably "Laura Palmer's Theme" and vocalist Julee Cruise performing "Into The Night" and "Falling" inside the town hangout, The Roadhouse. Over the course of the original series, more than 200 pieces of music would be written and performed by composer Angelo Badalamenti who previously worked with David Lynch on Blue Velvet. So choosing less than ten out of 200 wasn't easy and while we all love "Laura Palmer's Theme" and "Audrey's Dance," for this piece I wanted to showcase more lesser known or varied selection of music. Some are light and some are heart-wrenching but each are uniquely important to the world of Twin Peaks. Twin Peaks Theme The "Twin Peaks Theme," as it's listed on the official original soundtrack album, is actually the instrumental version of "Falling," a song created in collaboration between Badalamenti and Lynch with lyrics sung by vocalist Julee Cruise from her 1999 album Floating Into the Night. The song was recorded in New York with synth music maker Kinny Landrum creating the twangy signature sound of the Twin Peaks theme using an Emulator II. Once that sound was captured, "Falling" was completed and the instrumental version was used for the show's opening credits. That theme then became one of the most best-selling TV themes in history and earned Badalamenti a Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Performance in 1991. Along with the show's soundtrack album becoming a huge seller, its music became an inspiration for artists such as Moby, Paul McCartney, Lana Del Rey and even metal band Anthrax. When Twin Peaks returned in 2017, the visuals might have changed but the theme remained and its no wonder, Twin Peaks just wouldn't be Twin Peaks without it. Dance of the Dream Man In "Zen, or the Skill to Catch a Killer," or Episode 2, Agent Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) stars restless in his bed in room 315 of The Great Northern Hotel clearly having an uncomfortable dream. This dream takes place in a room with red curtains and a floor straight out of Eraserhead. Within the room, Cooper sits in a chair and is agitated considerably. Here we are introduced for the first time to The Black Lodge, also referred to as the "red room." Inside the room, Cooper is joined by an elegant Laura Palmer and a diminutive man (Michael J. Anderson) with a penchant for speaking backwards. After a brief exchange between Cooper and Laura, music starts to play from somewhere, strobe lights flicker and the man begins to dance and with this particular music playing, who can blame him? Badalamenti's "Dance of the Dream Man" is a delicious fusion of groovy jazz featuring drums, finger snaps, bass, vibraphone and sax that accomplishes something most great visual art does: it transports the viewer into another world. This was the point in the series where audiences decided to stick with the show or not and obviously, they did—for a while anyway. Nevertheless, the music lived on and whenever this tune fills the air, it would be hard for anybody to resist the urge to start dancing. Attack of the Pine Weasel Season 2 of Twin Peaks is certainly full of some of the series most shocking and terrifying moments. However it also contains many moments of pure lunacy. One of these more outrageous moments occurs in the James Foley directed Season 2 episode "Wounds and Scars." During the Stop Ghostwood Fashion Show organized by Dick Tremayne (Ian Buchanan), a pine weasel is presented to him by Mr. Pinkel (David L. Lander) but the rodent decides to cause chaos when it bites Dick on the nose. Then the pine runs loose frightening everybody in attendance except of course John Justice "Jack" Wheeler (Billy Zane) who is happy when Audrey (Sherilyn Fenn) falls right into his arms. Badalamenti's pine weasel music is perhaps the most zany thing he's written for the series. Incorporating a kazoo underneath a pulsating baseline, the pine weasel music sounds like a comedic riff of Of Booker T. and the MG's classic tune "Green Onions" (a song actually used years later in an episode of Twin Peaks: The Return). Hook Rug Dance In this Season 2 episode titled "Drive With A Dead Girl" (Episode 15), Ben Horne is being held in a cell inside the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station under suspicion for the murder of Laura Palmer. He is visited by brother Jerry who informs Ben he will be his legal council as Ben's regular attorney, Leland, is himself charged with murdering Jacques Renault. Unfortunately Jerry is of little help to Ben legally speaking and to temporarily help take Ben's mind off his current situation, the two reminisce about the babysitter they had as kids, Louise Dombrowski (Emily Finch) who with a flashlight entertained the boys by dancing dancing in silhouette for their amusement. The visuals may look like something out of a Fellini film, but Badalamenti's music incorporates the twangy flourish of the main theme into a '50s style Doo wop. This little bit of delightful music would show up again when Cooper flirts with Annie in the Double R Diner. No wonder everybody wound up smiling by the time the song was over. Who wouldn't? The World Spins When I think of Twin Peaks (the original run), the final ten minutes of this superlative episode from Season 2 titled "Lonely Souls" is the one which encapsulates why I have loved this series so much for the past 25 years. Sure, the coffee, the pie and the donuts are all charming but for me, the real power of the series lies in its darker, even terrifying moments, and none were as dark and terrifying as the shattering revelations, surprises and horrors presented to us at the conclusion of this episode. Chances are if you're reading this article, you know exactly what I'm talking about. "The World Spins," written in collaboration between Badalamenti and Lynch was another song featured on Cruise's album Floating Into The Night (personally one of my favourite albums ever). While "Falling" moves the heart, "The World Spins" pierces it. Featured immediately after the terrifying murder of Maddy (Sheryl Lee) at the hands of BOB, Cruise is seen onstage at the Roadhouse performing this song in front of a visibly affected Agent Cooper who senses something tragic has just happened. With a sorrowful visit from the Great Northern waiter and everyone around him sobbing just from the helpless awareness of the unspeakable terror in the world, Cooper looks helplessly upon Cruise as visions of the red room fill his mind. This is Twin Peaks at its most powerful, haunting—and magical. Blue Frank (The Pink Room) Here's a song which wasn't featured in the series but was in Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me. This music plays in a dingy bar called the Pink Room where Laura and Donna joins Ronette Pulaski to take drugs and party. The sequence begins in the Roadhouse where Laura watches Julee Cruise perform the ethereal "Questions In a World of Blue." While Cruise's voice may represent an angel who watches over Laura, "Blue Frank" is the musical equivalent of the character's ultimate descent into Hell. One can almost smell the stubbed-out cigarette butts and spilled beer in the floor from listening to this music. With its thumping bass and wild guitars, the music can be seen as a representation of Laura's heart practically on the verge of exploding while the guitar represents her cries for help. As tragic as it all is, "Blue Frank" is the perfect music to accompany a soul careening towards tragedy. If Hell has a bar you can bet this is the music that plays there at least once per night. By the time the song is over, one can sense that the devil himself has gotten a hold of Laura's soul and he's not about to give it up. The only missing from this sequence is a visit from Blue Velvet's Frank Booth. Dark Mood Woods/The Red Room I have previously mentioned on this site that my favourite scenes of Twin Peaks were when we ventured inside the strange, red-curtained, other-worldly place known as the Black Lodge also commonly referred to as the "red room." In the Season 2 finale "Beyond Life and Death," Agent Cooper descends into the Black Lodge to rescue Annie Blackburn from Wilmot Earle. The Black Lodge is a place where one enters to confront their shadow self and as we learn, sometimes the shadow self is the entity which ultimately emerges. To fit the strange world visually, the music had to be strange as well but its instruments were reality-based. The sound is made up of random bass instruments plucking at various intervals. If the world of Fellini's Satyricon were to be performed by a jazz quartet it would sound like this. At times inside the Lodge, Cooper seems unaware where to turn as it is easy to find oneself lost among the intersecting halls which lead into the same rooms of red curtains and zig-zag floors. What can you do when one is in this strange world but follow the music? Occasionally, the screams of the Lodge's other inhabitants (Laura, Wilmot Earle) pierce the air but after those, the music becomes the character's guiding sound. This episode is without question, one of the most arresting hours of television in history. It redefined strange and the music accompanying Cooper's journey was no less strange. It's funny to think that in The Return, these sounds actually became a source of guidance and comfort for Cooper/Dougie Jones and it once again proves that in the world of Twin Peaks, beauty can often arise from the strangest and most mysterious of places. Page 17 In the 1990s, before MADtv premiered but during the same time Saturday Night Live was in a minor slump, in terms of viewers, one of the funniest sketch comedy shows premiered on FOX; In Living Color. While it is one of the shorter sketch comedy shows out there, in terms of how long it ran, it's widely remembered for an array of quotably comical characters and as the launching pad for several great careers in comedy, music, acting and dance. However, this show is responsible for turning the Super Bowl Halftime Show into one of the most widely watched events in television history. During the third season of the show, 1992, FOX decided to program it against the Super Bowl Halftime Show. The game was intense as it was the fourth time and final time the Buffalo Bills went to the Super Bowl. It tracked a massive audience of 79.6 million viewers, according to the Nielsen ratings. For any show to go up against the most-watched television event of the year, would be normally be considered ratings suicide, but then it was a little easier. The theme for the 1992 halftime show for the Super Bowl was more of an ode to the Winter Olympics, titled Winter Magic, which Disney helped produce. Unlike the more modern halftime shows people tune into, this style relied more on classical music and marching bands than on a single pop artist. Prior to that in 1991, the Halftime Show was led by an Elvis impersonator named Elvis Presto. Other times, the halftime show featured artists from years ago like Chubby Checker, George Burns, Mickey Rooney, Up With People, and predominantly college marching bands. The episode was called In Living Color's "Super Bowl Halftime Party" and primarily featured sketches about football or was directly about the Super Bowl. Just to make sure people knew when to turn their channels back to the Super Bowl, there was a clock put on the screen counting down thirty minutes. The episode was a hit, though, it was not without a minor controversy. It was one of the "Men On..." sketches, with that week's episode being "Men On...Football," featuring Damon Wayans as Blaine Edwards and David Alan Grier as Antoine Merriweather. "Men On..." usually had these two campy and flamboyantly gay men talking about numerous aspects of society "from a male point of view." "Men On...Football" was noted for making a joke about Olympic track and field runner Carl Lewis being gay and another about actor Richard Gere. Rumors of Lewis sexuality circulated quite a bit, at the time, causing Lewis to lose plenty of endorsements. Considering the popularity of a show like In Living Color, jokes like that made things harder for him, however, the later rumors subsided. Lewis is still remembered for his achievements as an Olympian, but repeats of the show or DVD releases featuring this episode omit that joke from the show entirely. Richard Gere's agent threatened legal action against the show, but that never materialized. If there was something to say about In Living Color it was how the show had a talent for being controversial without incurring legal action. Some people have argued this is the reason the show began to decline in later seasons. Network censors were always leery about this show, though others like Married... with Children were seen as lacking in censorship. However, after this joke, the censors were apparently around all the time. It would be in the fourth season that Damon Wayans would leave the show. After the fourth season concluded, all members of the Wayans family, including creator Keenen Ivory Wayans, left the series and had nothing to do with it. Other sketches featured on that episode include "The Homeboy Shopping Network" holding a special Super Bowl sale, Fire Marshall Bill demonstrating how to have a "safe" Super Bowl party in a bar, and Jim Carrey as "Background Guy" during a Super Bowl interview. Closing out the show was musical guest Color Me Badd, who sang their hit song, "I Wanna' Sex You Up." In Living Color's "Super Bowl Halftime Party" drew in almost 22 million viewers. 22 million people switched from the Super Bowl to Fox for In Living Color with the ratings for the second half of the Super Bowl plummeting. In 1992, the Super Bowl Halftime show was headlined by none other than Michael Jackson. Since then, every Halftime Show has featured one of the most popular artists of the time such as Katy Perry, Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, etc. For 2020, Jennifer Lopez and Shakira will be taking the stage for the 54th Annual Super Bowl Halftime Show. That was the first time that Super Bowl counter-programming was a success and since then other shows have joined in such as Saturday Night Live, Glee, Animal Planet's Puppy Bowl, The Lingerie Bowl and a variety of others. In the years since the Super Bowl Halftime Show would be the source of controversy in its own right, such as Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction during the 2004 Super Bowl Halftime Show. In Living Color was a remarkable catalyst for comedy and managed to save the Super Bowl Halftime show from the humiliating fate of remaining dull and uninteresting. Page 18 Welcome back, dear reader, as we continue to review Star Trek: Picard with Season 1 Episode 2, "Maps and Legends." As explained in several interviews, this episode is really part two of what could be viewed as a three-part pilot. As such, it is still heavy on the exposition and light on the action. There were

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