

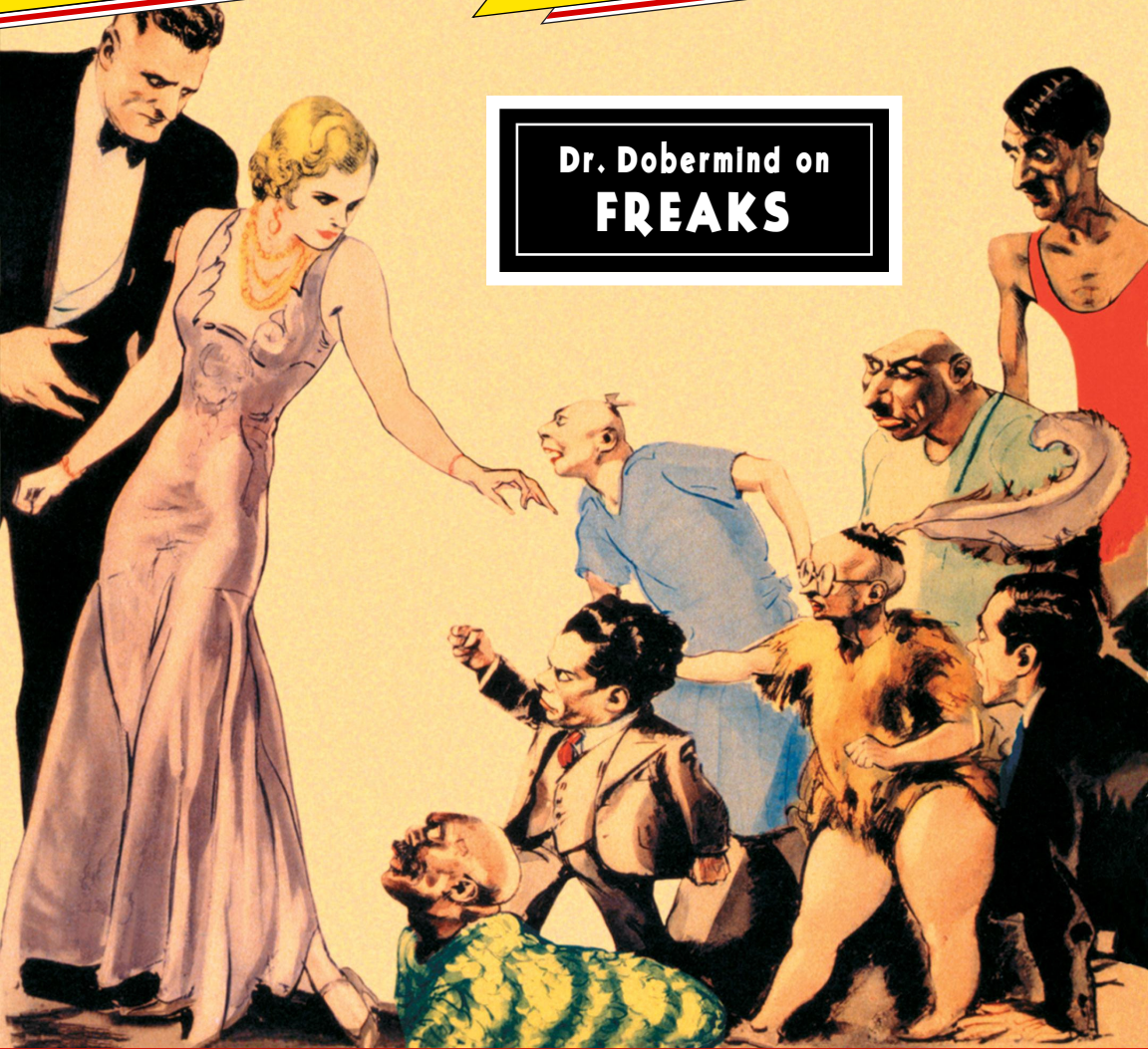
ISSUE 66

# EXPLOITS

an **UNWINNABLE** publication

SEPTEMBER 2023

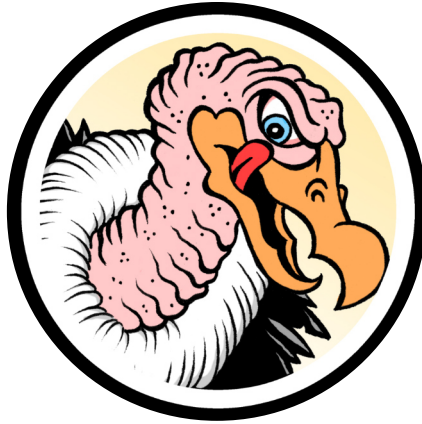
Dr. Dobermnd on  
**FREAKS**



**LOST SAVE FILES • MIROTIC**

**• ENDLESS FRANCHISE CONTENT •**

**VIDEO GAME of the YEAR • NOSTALGIA**



*Publisher* | Stu Horvath

*Vice Publisher* | Sara Clemens

*Editor in Chief* | David Shimomura

## **EXPLOITS**

A MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO THE REASONS WE LOVE THINGS

*Feature Editor* | Melissa King

*Music Editor* | Ed Coleman

*Books Editor* | Noah Springer

*Movies Editor* | Orrin Grey

*Television Editor* | Sara Clemens

*Games Editor* | Rob Rich

Copyright © 2023 by Unwinnable LLC

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Unwinnable LLC does not claim copyright of the screenshots and promotional imagery herein. Copyright of all screenshots within this publication are owned by their respective companies

Unwinnable  
820 Chestnut Street  
Kearny, NJ 07032

[www.unwinnable.com](http://www.unwinnable.com)

For more information, email:  
[info@unwinnable.com](mailto:info@unwinnable.com)

[Subscribe](#) | [Store](#) | [Submissions](#)

This machine kills fascists.

# THE HIGH-STAKES DRAMA OF LOST SAVE FILES

by Jaclyn Lewis

I began the evening of February 11 like any other: preparing a snack, petting my cat and settling down with my laptop to continue Cloud's adventures saving the planet with his friends. This gaming session was particularly exciting; I had finally obtained the rare Golden Chocobo, which allowed me to freely travel to all of the regions of Gaia. With one hand in a bag of chips and one hand on my keyboard, I repeatedly pressed Enter and found myself at the start of a new game. Confused because that usually fired up my latest save, I restarted the game and looked carefully at the menu screen. I was aghast to find that the highlighted NEW GAME option was the only one I could select. After frantic searching of computer files and Reddit threads, I finally admitted what I had begun to fear: my precious *Final Fantasy VII* save data . . . was gone.

This was, as you might imagine, a genuinely frustrating experience. But I got a certain amount of glee from sharing this mishap and adding to the story when my *Chrono Trigger* file got deleted a few months later (Pro tip: don't play Square Enix ports on PC). Regaling other gamers with the tale often led to sharing other stories of lost save files from years gone by. Until then, it hadn't fully hit me how much the gaming landscape had changed since my youth: not just in graphical improvements or in the homogenization of AAA gameplay, but in how the game information itself was stored: securely attached to accounts in the cloud, available on any console after a quick login.

Growing up, I held fast to those few precious things in a household of seven I could call my own, particularly the few videogames I had to myself: the GBA (and, later, DS) cartridges that I stored carefully in plastic cases and lent to siblings with strict instructions *never* to save the game. When I had gotten all that I could out of *Pokemon Sapphire*, I gifted it to one of my siblings with the caveat that my first starter Pokemon be preserved by trading it to my brother's *Pokemon Emerald* game. That Swampert lives on to this day:

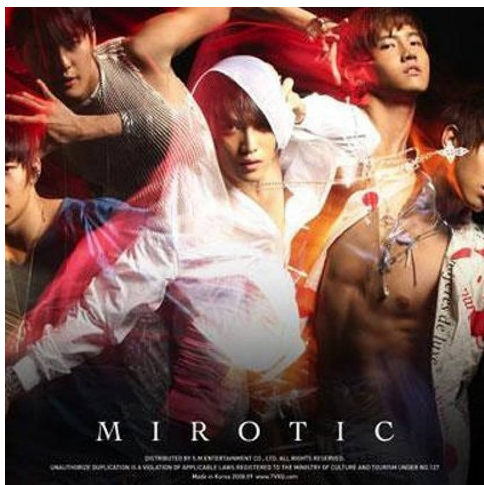
not in Nintendo's servers, but in the tiny chips embedded into his translucent-green cartridge.

Others have less positive stories, foolish younger siblings who deleted hours of progress in *Advance Wars*, a terrible crime that will never be understood by parents. Still more have tales of obtaining NES rentals for a single glorious weekend, crafting their party in *Dragon Quest III* and hoping against hope that their save would remain on the cartridge by the next rental. For a **deep dive** into *Boku No Natsuyasumi*, Action Button's Tim Rogers bought old *Dōbutsu no Mori* N64 cartridges (the first *Animal Crossing*) from eBay and explored the 2001-era homes and towns from childhoods long past, saved for as long as the tiny capacitors would last.

Doubtlessly, the modern era of online accounts and cloud saves has alleviated disappointments like the one I experienced at the hands of *Final Fantasy VII*'s PC port, but at the same time, I can't help but feel a pang of loss: that same pang I experienced upon the phasing out of stamped library due-date cards or VHS tapes in chipped plastic cases. I suppose, in the end, both the potential frustrations and the dramatic charm are lost when your PlayStation account does all the work for you. 🐇







**MIROTIC** – Around September 2008, the five-member K-Pop group, Dong Bang Shin Ki (or DBSK for short), was making their next move to come back that autumn with a fifth album. I remember being so excited, as it was going to be the group's first album that I would be listening to in real-time.

Music in Korea during the late 2000's was fast changing by the time I had declared myself a fan. Yearly albums by K-Pop groups were the norm. If you were gone longer than that, the next album had to be a chart-topper. Something that would stand the test of time.

For DBSK, that album was *Mirotic*. Released on September 26th, the album ended a one-year and seven-month break for the band and would break records left, right and center.

*Mirotic*, released in three versions – A, B and C – sold over 500,000 copies in 109 days and became the best-selling album of 2008 in Korea. Even as an international fan outside of Korea, I could feel the impact of what it was like to be living in the *Mirotic* era from my family computer. Watching DBSK on variety shows and live performances on Veoh and playing Limewire's game of downloading the right track or getting duped with a Rick Astley

file were memorable experiences from my teenage days.

What made *Mirotic* so impactful was the group's move to a more mature pop/R&B sound with each member – Kim Jaejoong, Jung Yunho, Park Yoochun, Kim Junsu and Shim Changmin – participating more directly in this album.

When I finally got all 16 tracks of *Mirotic* on my iPod, I discovered an album that, to me, was on another level of artistry.

The opening track, "Mirotic," is often described as the "National Anthem of K-Pop." The moment the song's slow build picks up into a club beat, you're really feeling it. It's a classic and easy to understand why it won nine number one trophies on Korean music shows like Music Core and Inkigayo. The song's provocative lyrics also caused controversy, testing Korea's music industry and leading to it being rated 19+.

Joyful, upbeat tunes such as "Rainbow" and the funky, retro "Crazy Love" make you think of those long summers of your adolescence. Then there's the delicacy of "Flower Lady," which is more of a bright, spring bop.

The album also features a broad range of ballads, which DBSK has always excelled at. From the romantic – "You're My Melody" and "Picture of Your" (with the latter song written by Junsu) – to the emotional and heart-wrenching – "Don't Cry My Lover" (written and composed by Jaejoong) and "Forgotten Season," a remake of the 1982 hit by singer Lee Yong – the band's harmonizations on every song are incredible.

To me, the album's standout ballads include "Wish," featuring Junsu and Changmin singing along with labelmates Kyuhyun and Ryeowook of Super Junior, and "Love in the

# MUSIC

Ice.” Originally recorded for DBSK’s Japanese album, *T*, “Love in the Ice” goes down as one of the group’s most recognized songs, from the duets to the high notes sung by Junsu and Yoochun before the last chorus.

There’s something very calming and comforting about *Mirotic*’s R&B-inspired songs, namely “Paradise” and “Love Bye Love,” which was written, composed and arranged by Yoochun. There’s also “Wrong Number,” featuring a more dark-pop/R&B fusion with lyrics that send a clear message to their sasaengs (also known as obsessive fan stalkers).

In contrast, a lot of their choreography-heavy songs, like “Hey!” (Don’t Bring Me Down),” fuse pop with a hip-hop influenced beat, which was a departure from their past dance tracks. “Are You a Good Girl?” is an electronica dance tune that works well with its catchy melody.

The final track, “Don’t Say Goodbye,” perfectly wraps up *Mirotic*. This slower ballad gives the vocals of Yoochun and Yunho more of a push. Cassiopeia is the name of DBSK’s fans and as a fan myself, the last refrain of the lyric, “Cause you are my everything to me” feels like a subtle and comforting way to express that their fans mean the world to them.

So, 15 years later, does *Mirotic* live up to the impact it had when it was released?

For me, the answer is definitively, “Yes.” There are a lot of sentimental feelings listening back to this album and all the songs are replayable to this day, despite the band’s eventual split. Many fans and idols have covered/danced to songs from the album over the years, from Australian dancer kaotsun, **who covered “Mirotic”** when the album first came out, to, most recently, boy group NCT 127 **covering “Love in the Ice.”** The album still

holds up as Album of the Decade amongst 2nd generation K-Pop idols.

*Mirotic* defined an era that’s now known for bringing forth a distinctive look and sound which is still quite common in K-Pop today. The album was mature and sexy. It elevated the expectations of what future K-Pop albums could be and stands as a true classic of the genre, continuing to enthrall listeners even today.

– NYASHA OLIVER

## PLAYLIST

"Wrong Number," by DBSK

"Don't Cry My Lover," by DBSK

"MIROTIC," by DBSK

"CRAZY LOVE," by DBSK

"Hey! (Don't Bring Me Down)," by DBSK

"Wish," by DBSK

"You'Re My Melody," by DBSK

"Picture Of You," by DBSK

"RAINBOW," by DBSK

"Love Bye Love," by DBSK

"PARADISE," by DBSK

"Are You A Good Girl," by DBSK

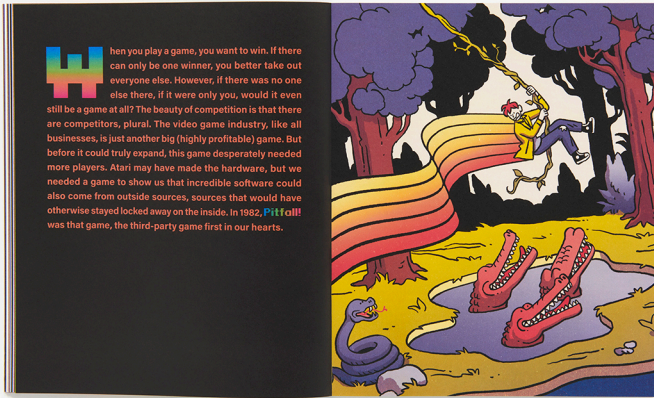
"Flower Lady," by DBSK

"Don't Say Goodbye," by DBSK

"Forgotten Season," by DBSK

"Love In The Ice," by DBSK

**LISTEN ON SPOTIFY**



**VIDEO GAME of the YEAR** – I won't lie – I love a good videogame book. I can get down on some theory, some design and some phenomenology when the mood strikes. But I also enjoy a good history, and Jordan Minor's new book, *Video Game of the Year (VGotY)* offers an inviting look into the history of the genre since *Pong* popped into people's homes all the way back in 1977.

In what can only be described as a lavish presentation with hand-drawn illustrations by Wren McDonald and a custom book design by Heesang Lee, *VGotY* earns your attention on every page. Whether Minor is talking about the first JRPG (*Dragon Quest* from 1986) or the rise of the GTA franchise or the takeover of *Minecraft* in 2012, he brings thoughtful analysis and perspectives to a wide swathe of genres and playstyles. Although I don't always agree with his choices (I'm currently squinting my eyes at the *VGotY* for 2010), his justification is always reasonable and well considered.

Plus, in his effort to bolster more than *just* 25 games, Minor also enlisted some of the best game writers in the business to offer a few words in each chapter about other prominent releases related to his *VGotY*. From Austin Walker's brief essay on *Umurangi Generation* to Nick Capozzoli on *Disco Elysium*, these little add-ons wrap the whole ecology of videogames together, tying up threads and influences. If you look just right, you'll also be able to see a few of your favorite Unwinnable writers making appearances too!

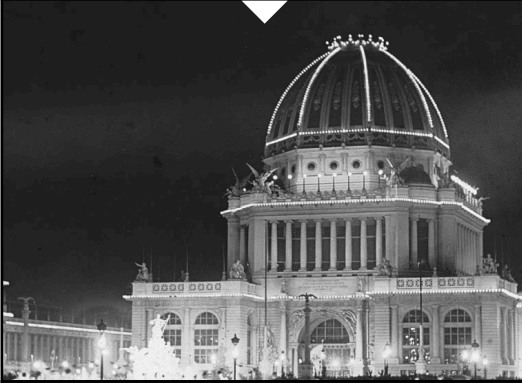
All together then, the combination of these elements makes for a wonderful book! Whether you haven't picked up a joystick in decades or you just put one down for the first time in ten hours, *Video Game of the Year* will make you want to pick it up again and dive back into one of the classics. Personally, I'm contemplating where to buy a guitar and drum kit so I can kick out some sweet *Rock Band* jams ASAP, but I just have to get up the momentum to put this book down first.

– NOAH SPRINGER

# BOOKS

**The DEVIL in the WHITE CITY** – Erik Larson writes compelling nonfiction - his book on the sinking of the *Lusitania* is a must read if you're interested in nautical disasters – but *The Devil in the White City* manages to juggle several competing narratives to tell the story of the 1894 Chicago World's Fair in a way I'm not sure anyone else could.

– AMANDA HUDGINS

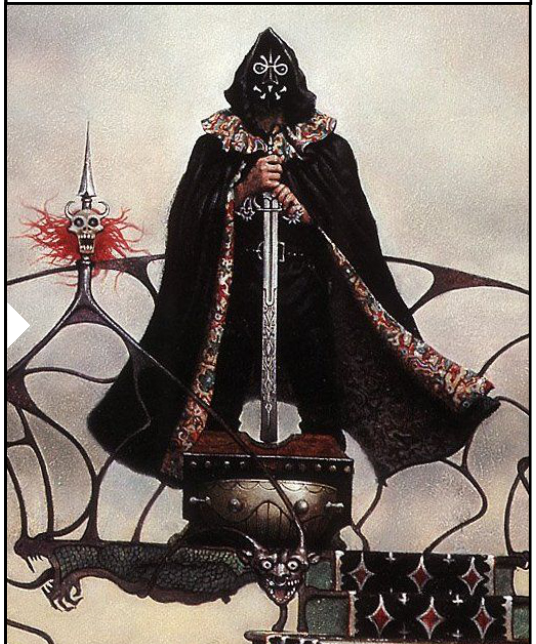


**The CLAW of the CONCILIATOR** – Following along with the *Shelved by Genre* podcast, which just happens to coincide with a good friend passing the first two volumes of the *Book of the New Sun* by Gene Wolfe my way. Written in a future so far along that the madness just feels like an evolved form of existence, tying all sorts of sci-fi and fantasy conventions together that it feels like a yarn-bombed tree-trunk of disparate points. Methinks the torturer Severian doth protest his perfect memory too much, as he crashed through a world built on Catholic puns that feels spun out on its own intergalactic history, in decline with an aging sun. Wild, funny as hell, with inscrutable character motivations, half the fun is catching up to Wolfe, though it's not a book to be "solved". Leave that to space pirate cyborgs or future plant-people.

– LEVI RUBECK

**ALL THIS COULD BE DIFFERENT** – Sarah Thankam Mathews' 2022 novel about a woman who moves to Milwaukee for a new job and the good life, only to be overturned by her boss and her own frosty, trauma-laden impulse to be alone. It starts out as a story of the millennial grindset and ends by overturning that as well, showing characters who see collective living and mutual aid as the only path forward in their lives. Resonant and quick; I read it in 48 hours, so you know it's good.

– EMILY PRICE





# MOVIES



**FREAKS** – “You laughed at them, shuddered at them. And, yet, but for the accident of birth, you might be one as they are.”

So bellows a sideshow barker at the start of 1932's *Freaks*, though his words go unheeded. Today, *Freaks* is rightfully seen as one of the most thoughtful and earnest pictures of its time. Upon release, though, it essentially ended the career of director Tod Browning.

Loosely adapted from the Tod Robbins story “Spurs,” *Freaks* introduces us to Hans and Cleopatra. He's a dwarf in a carnival sideshow; she's a beautiful trapeze artist who wouldn't normally give him the time of day. That changes when she learns of an inheritance that would make Hans (and anyone he marries) independently wealthy.

Cleopatra's attempts to seduce and murder the diminutive millionaire are hampered by her own revulsion toward his friends, including “Half-Boy” Jonny Eck, “Living Torso” Prince Randian and conjoined sisters Daisy and Violet. When her plot is exposed, the freaks seek righteous vengeance, fomenting one of the most gruesome examples of body horror from the pre-Code era.

Before becoming a filmmaker, Browning had been a carny, traveling the country as a roustabout, contortionist and clown. *Freaks* was a passion project, a chance for him to portray his beloved sideshow family as sympathetic human beings, not just oddities to be gawked at.

Alas, MGM advertised the film with offensive, othering taglines like “Can a full-grown woman truly love a midget?” and “‘We'll make you one of us.' From the gibbering mouths of these weird creatures came this frenzied cry. No wonder she cringed in horror!”

Critics clutched their pearls. Theater-goers walked out in disgust. At the box office, *Freaks* flopped. Hard.

The things that made the film a commercial failure, however, keep it resonant and relevant today. It was ahead of its time, calling out the privileges of mainstream audiences and the capitalist exploitation perpetuated by the status quo. *Freaks* is a film that reminds us of our own cruelty, and of how thin the line separating “us” from “them” truly is.

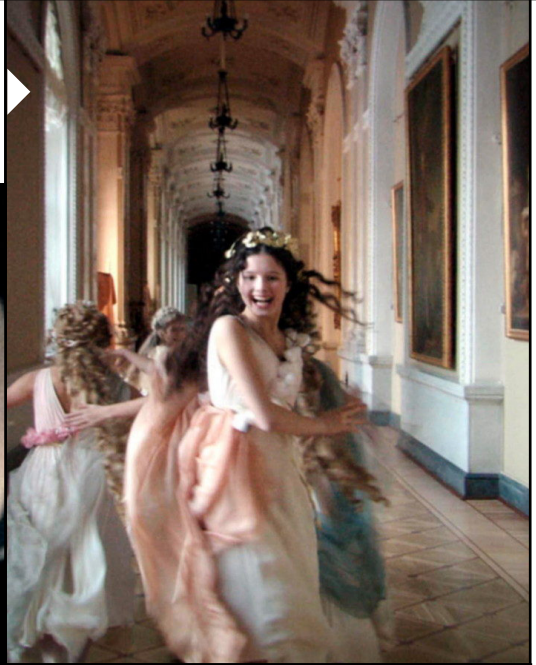
No wonder people in 1932 cringed in horror.

– DR. DOBERMIND

# MOVIES

**RUSSIAN ARK** – At this point a nearly yearly rewatch, *Russian Ark* is a meditative experience of Russian history that feels like a oneiric dream.

– AMANDA HUDGINS

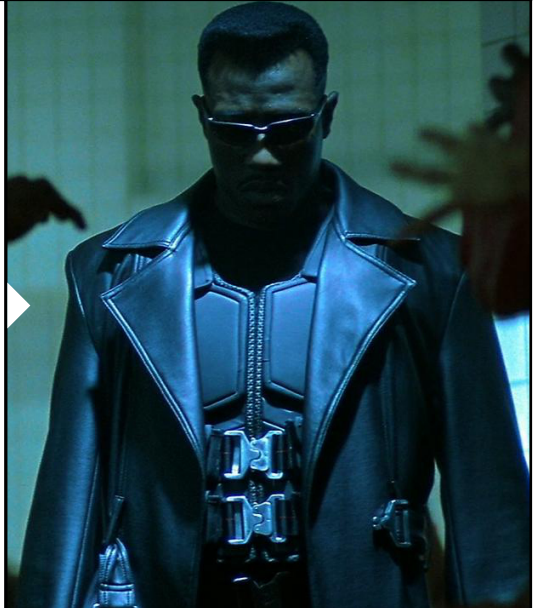


**1984** – I finally got a chance to watch Michael Radford's *1984* and honestly it made me like and understand the novel more. Also mad it took me this long to watch this movie, but maybe I watched it right on time.

– PHOENIX SIMMS

**BLADE** – Happy 25th anniversary to *Blade*, the peak of Marvel cinema. Unabashedly blaxploitation, with Snipes chewing scenes and necks, pushing Dorff to peak Gen X evil as he tells the IT vampire to die with some dignity after Google Translating some blood god shit and then telling the boomer lizard vampire to enjoy the sunrise. All in a city more lived-in than the most meticulous digital paintings, plenty of '90s fried frames swirling around, double-bladed boomerang 360 shots, Donal at peak stoner bro, and more "fucks" dropped than seeds on an everything bagel.

– LEVI RUBECK



# TELEVISION



**NOTHING is BETTER than SOMETHING** – The jury is still out on if you can have too much of a good thing but you can absolutely have too much of a mediocre thing. That’s where we’re at in the current era of Disney Star Wars and Marvel products. Too much of just “more” without any real quality backing it.

A show about Boba Fett sounded cool! Until the execution proved that the execution really is everything. I liked *Loki*! But watching the latest *Doctor Strange* and realizing that *Wandavision*, a show from a year prior, was required reading began to reveal that there are no longer discreet instances, just “content.”

Everything felt fresher, more exciting, and more vital when there just wasn’t so much of it. Having to wait a year or more between entries helped build anticipation. Now, it feels like there is just always more around the corner, and most of it not particularly high quality.

Disney only cares about selling subscriptions to Disney+. Naturally. But we’re long

past franchise fatigue and burnout. Things that were once exciting are now just droll beats on the march to the next earnings report. It’s time to stash all of this in the Disney Vault. It’s time to give people something to look forward to, not something to stumble across as they scroll the infinite tiles of streaming.

The model for this is plain to see. In 2004, Toho announced they were shelving *Godzilla* for a decade. A bold move, even for a company that tried it 20 years prior. Putting *Godzilla* into hibernation proved to be well worth it. The character only awakened from his slumber with the right combination of story and creative time going on to win several awards at the Japan Academy Film Prize.

It’s time to put things to sleep, make them scarcer and bring them back when they can be rejuvenated.

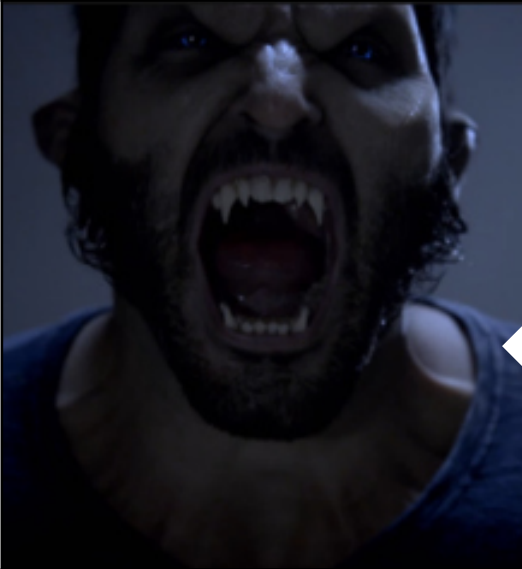
– DAVID SHIMOMURA



# TELEVISION

**BLACK KNIGHT** – An incredibly dumb action series with solid set-design and word building, this is basically perfect for hitting that vibe of "corporations are evil organizations that would set your corpse on fire just to stay warm."

– AMANDA HUDGINS



**TEEN WOLF (S3)** – I've been catching up on the show Tumblr couldn't stop flooding my timeline with gif sets from. The third season is easily the weakest of what I've watched so far. Happy to see Gideon Emery (Fenris' voice actor) get screen time, but geeze the writing for his part is laden with problematic tropes. Another fun piece of trivia: Tyler Hoechlin (Derek Hale in the show) is Sephiroth's voice actor in the *FFVII* remake.

– PHOENIX SIMMS

**WHAT WE DO in the SHADOWS (S05)** – I didn't think this season had aired yet! Where's the chatter and the gifs. I must not be online enough, or it's the collapse of the bird site, but whatever – Season 5 of *What We Do in the Shadows* hits the gas, and it works. Outing themselves on local TV and busting into the studio to finish the broadcast so no one realizes they were hypnotized as the weather reporter is drained and dragged off-screen, it's beautiful chaos, which is when the show is at its best. Still love me some Guillermo but am a little tired of the will they won't they with Nandor. Colin's a precision instrument masterfully deployed. Two Nadjas riffing with each other for half an ep, no other show has the tubes, all cowards.

– LEVI RUBECK





# GAMES



**VIDEOGAME NOSTALGIA** – I have been playing videogames for as long as I can remember. Coming home from school, I kicked off my shoes and fired up *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* for the Nintendo 64. My dad would get back from work and play it with me, and we would read the strategy guides on how to beat the current boss we were on. Much later on I would have LAN parties in *Halo 2* with my friends from the swim team, and we would stay up until the wee hours of the morning, fragging each other.

More recently, my wife and I will spend hours playing games like *Mario Party* or *Diablo 2* together after we put our daughter to bed. I think a big reason why a lot of us still game is because we are trying to recreate those simpler days when everything didn't feel so chaotic and crazy. Before bills, a mortgage and the cares and worries of adult life. I find that one of the times when I am the happiest is when I am gaming with my wife and daughter, and building new memories with them.

Life can seem challenging sometimes – whether it be a family crisis, a situation at work or just getting older. The world has a way of weighing us down, and we all have ways of coping with that fact. We tend to go back to what is familiar, for the most part. I and many other people tend to lean on nostal-

gia for R&R, whether that means watching an old '90s movie or playing a video game we haven't played in a while. Nostalgia is that feeling you get when engaging with something that remains from a bygone era, when things didn't seem so crazy.

At 17, I joined the National Guard in my home state and went to basic training between my junior and senior years of high school. This would be my first taste of adult life. After BCT, I finished high school and went to AIT (Advance Individual Training) for my military job. Right after that, I got deployed to Afghanistan for nine months.

The years following Afghanistan were rough: Having to learn to pay rent, hold a job, pay bills and enroll in college were things that I never learned how to do while in school. It was very taxing. I remember the forlorn feeling and despair for “the good old days.” The weight and burdens of life took a toll on me, as it does for almost everyone. I so badly wanted to return to the days when I would stay up late with my friends playing *Halo 2*, or *Castle Crashers* with my dad.

Gaming has always been a sort of time capsule for me. Even today, when I play *Ocarina of Time*, I feel like a kid again. The only worry is the amount of magic I feel for the boss coming up. I think a big reason why I continue to

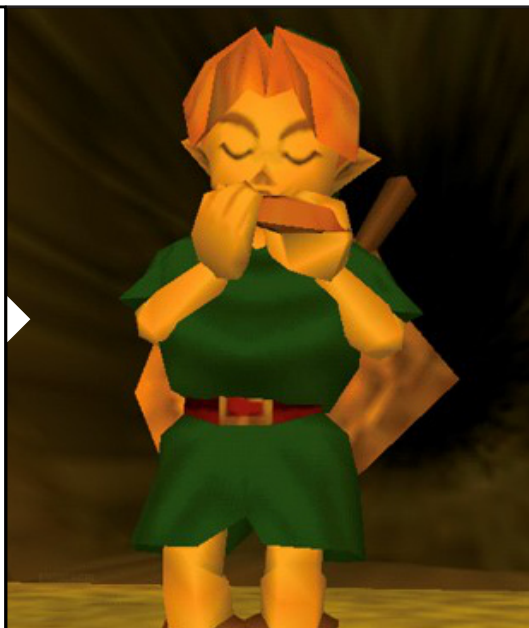
# GAMES

(continued from previous page)

game is because of that feeling of nostalgia, I so badly want to re-create that feeling again. I think many people share this feeling of wanting to return to a simpler era, where everything seemed so new. A time before deployments, school, and jobs.

Truth be told I think those days are done and gone. We will never get the Master Sword for the first time again, and we will never save the princess for the first time again. But don't let this truth cause you to despair; we have the present, and a chance to create new and incredible memories with the people we are with.

— ANDREW BRISTOL



**DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN** — Incredibly slick, one out of three storylines is actually engaging to play and the politics in this are half-baked at best. Worth checking out for the narrative design, probably worth flying a pirate flag for (considering the accusations against the studio).

— AMANDA HUDGINS

**VENBA** — Play *Venba*, you dorks. Who cares that it's short, weren't you just yelling about wanting shorter games with worse graphics? That being said, it's not like *Venba*'s graphics are "worse" by any stretch of the imagination. And the story is poignant and relevant, especially for those who wonder what Canadian immigration (both first and second generation) is like. It's also just a lovely tale of how our daily mundane rituals help carry us through.

— PHOENIX SIMMS



# HOROSCOPE

EVERY DRESSING ROOM LINED  
WITH MIRRORS IS A CHANCE  
TO REFLECT MY ASS OUTTA  
HERE. 🍑