

Halo star Pablo Schreiber is excited for a darker season 2

From the first trailer alone, I could tell *Halo* season 2 would go in a different direction than the first. Where season 1 was bogged down in strange storytelling choices that didn't leave much room for its characters – namely, the Spartans – to do what they do best – namely, kick Covenant ass – season 2 feels more in line with what a *Halo* show should be about.

According to Pablo Schreiber, the difference mostly comes down to tone. “The biggest place where we succeed on a level that we didn't quite reach in season 1 is that I think the tone of this season feels darker,” he said in an interview with *The Verge*.

Schreiber, who plays Master Chief Petty Officer John-117, thinks the action has gotten better, too – I agree – and attributes these improvements to *Halo*'s new showrunner, David Wiener.

“This year, we're living in David Wiener's world,” he said. “[His] vision, I believe, matches the tone of the *Halo* franchise in a way that may be more fitting than the first season, and it's incredibly successful.”

The first two episodes of *Halo*'s second season are out now, and they're damn good. I've already shared my thoughts on episode 1, “Sanctuary.” While episode 2, “Sword,” is far lighter on the action, it more than makes up for it with how it reintroduces us to Riz-028 (Natasha Culzac). In the previous season, only half of Silver Team, Kai-125 (Kate Kennedy) and the Master Chief himself, got screen time devoted to their character development. Schreiber said that one of his

great joys of this new season was correcting that.

“Early on in the second season, we start to find ways to differentiate everybody, give them a little bit of personality,” he said. “Getting to see all of these people that I’ve worked so closely with over the past almost five years have their moment in the spotlight was something that was really fulfilling for me.”

a: hover]: text- gray- 63 [& > a: hover]: shadow- underline- black
dark: [& > a: hover]: text- gray- bd dark: [& > a: hover]: shadow-
underline- gray [& > a]: shadow- underline- gray- 63 dark: [& > a]: text-
gray- bd dark: [& > a]: shadow- underline- gray” > Photo: Adrienn Szabo
/ Paramount Plus

In terms of the Master Chief’s other relationships, Schreiber has said previously he wasn’t fond of the bewildering-but-brazen sex scene between John and Makee (Charlie Murphy), a human member of the enemy Covenant aliens. Schreiber would have preferred a more subtle approach.

“The more in your face you get with any elements of romance or sex, the less grounded it feels in the franchise,” he said. But Schreiber also doesn’t think the Master Chief, as a character, is too serious for romance; it’s just that he’d prefer another partner: Cortana. “There’s plenty of romance in *Halo*. It just happens that it’s between John and Cortana, you know.”

Of course, it’s not a new idea that John loves his AI copilot. (Whose personality was cloned from Dr. Halsey, the woman who essentially created John and all the Spartans and is thought of as a mother figure for them all – make of that what you will.) She all but confesses her love for him in *Halo 4*, and in *Halo 5: Guardians*, he goes AWOL for the first time in his life in order to bring her back. However, one could read that as fierce loyalty – a trait Spartans are known and beloved for – with Chief considering Cortana as a member of the team.

So it was interesting to hear Master Chief himself describe the final moment of “Sanctuary” as romantic. In the scene, John visits a VR parlor and talks to a hologram that comes close to looking like Cortana but misses the mark. John says to not-quite-Cortana (Christina Bennington) that he feels like part of him is missing and that he hears sounds that he thinks might be her.

Though I’ve never had a sentient, autonomous AI implanted in my brain, I can imagine if I did, and it was subsequently taken away like Cortana was for John, I, too, would feel like something was missing. But I may have been a bit too literal. “If you didn’t hear romantic undertones in that scene, then I’m not sure how to spell that out for you, but I definitely thought that was,” Schreiber said.

Of course, if you’re not a Chief / Cortana shipper (personally, I’m a Tom-B292 / Lucy-B091 girl) or think of them as merely friends, that’s valid, too.

“It depends on your concept of romance,” Schreiber said. “When you’re talking about life partnership, you’re talking about somebody that adds to you, somebody that completes you, somebody that makes you better than you were. That’s certainly what Chief has seen in Cortana.”

Sounds a lot like love to me.

<https://www.theverge.com/2024/2/10/24067616/pablo-schreiber-halo-season-two-paramount-plus>