HBO’s latest terrifying trailer for Lovecraft Country couldn’t be more timely

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HBO’s new horror series *Lovecraft Country* is adapted from the novel by Matt Ruff.
With impeccable timing, HBO has dropped a new trailer for its upcoming horror series, *Lovecraft Country*. The series is based on the 2016 dark fantasy/horror novel, of the same name by Matt Ruff, which deals explicitly with the horrors of racism in the 1950s, along with other, more supernatural issues.

As we previously reported, Ruff also found inspiration in a 2006 essay by Pam Noles describing what it was like growing up being both black and, well, a hardcore nerd. *Lovecraft Country* is a gripping, extremely powerful read, which is why it was one of my choices for the Ars summer reading guide. The book’s protagonist is a black veteran of the Korean War and science fiction fan named Atticus, who embarks on a perilous road trip from his home on Chicago’s South Side to a small town in rural Massachusetts. He’s looking for his estranged father, who purportedly vanished after encountering a well-dressed man driving a silver Cadillac.

Atticus’ Uncle George and childhood friend/fellow sci-fi buff, Letitia (aka Leti), comes along for the ride. Because their

journey is inspired by Lovecraft, they naturally encounter all kinds of arcane rituals, magic, shape-shifters, monsters, and an alternate reality or two along the way. HBO seems to be sticking pretty closely to the novel, if the official synopsis is any indication:

> *The series follows Atticus (Jonathan Majors) as he joins up with his friend Letitia (Jurnee Smollett-Bell) and his Uncle George (Courtney B. Vance) to embark on a road trip across 1950s Jim Crow America in search of his missing father (Michael Kenneth Williams). This begins a struggle to survive and overcome both the racist terrors of white America and the terrifying monsters that could be ripped from a Lovecraft paperback.*

The first trailer dropped last month, essentially illustrating that premise and introducing us to the three main characters as they head out for their road trip. But we didn't get many details, apart from dimly lit shots of monsters on the attack, and a few brief Jim Crow-era scenes of escalating racially charged violence.

- Meet Atticus (Jonathan Majors).
- He's a veteran who's seen some combat horrors in his time.
  YouTube/HBO
- Planning a road trip through "Lovecraft Country" from Chicago's South Side to New England.
  YouTube/HBO
- Guilty of driving while black.
  YouTube/HBO
- Atticus senses trouble.
- The group has picked up a threatening police tail.
  YouTube/HBO
- Letitia (Jurnee Smollett-Bell) thinks it might be time to floor it.

YouTube/HBO

- There are also unnamed horrors in the woods.
  YouTube/HBO
- Waking up from a nightmare, perhaps?
  YouTube/HBO
- Yikes! Is this nightmare real?
  YouTube/HBO
- An all-too-familiar sight in the 1950s.
  YouTube/HBO
- Preparing their defense.
  YouTube/HBO
- An officer takes aim.
  YouTube/HBO
- Seeing ghosts?
  YouTube/HBO
- Something terrible is probably lurking within the walls of this lovely New England mansion.
  YouTube/HBO
- Hey, cool orrery!
  YouTube/HBO
- Let’s hope the orrery survives this little implosion.
  YouTube/HBO

This latest trailer fleshes things out a bit more, and really conveys the overall flavor and tone of the series. We open with Atticus and Letitia walking down a country road, as he waxes poetic about his love of stories. “Heroes go on adventures in other worlds, defy insurmountable odds,” he says, as we get a quick flashback of him as a soldier on the battlefield. “Stories are like a living thing.”

We learn more about the letter Atticus received from his missing father: his father writes that he has a secret birthright that has been kept from him, in Lovecraft Country. Uncle George, as publisher of a “safe travel guide” for black people traveling through the country, plots out their route, but cautions that he’s heard strange stories of travelers

being attacked in the surrounding woods. Cut to a night scene in the woods, and a creepy black mass hurtling along the ground toward the trio.

Their journey takes them through towns where the white folk really don’t like “outsiders,” and they encounter plenty of racially motivated violence, from civilians and the police. But there are also gruesome monsters lurking in the dark. “I know we are all supposed to go through trials and tribulations,” a terrified Letitia prays while taking refuge in a church. “But this world is haunting us.” Yes indeed.

There’s no official premiere date as yet but *Lovecraft Country* is set to debut on HBO this August. The events of the past week, and ongoing protests, should be evidence enough that the topic and themes the series will explore remain as relevant as ever.

Listing image by YouTube/HBO

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