

Predator: Killer of Killers is a short and sweet joyride through the franchise's secret past



With *Prey*, director Dan Trachtenberg revitalized the *Predator* franchise and showed us all how wildly thrilling its central conceit could still be with just a little bit of reworking. *Prey* took the classic *Predator* story and made it feel new by focusing on the past and framing its alien characters' excursions to Earth as part of a much older deadly tradition. Expanding the *Predator* series with even more *Prey*-like narratives seemed like a no-brainer for 20th Century Studios.

Though it's a leaner, meaner feature, Hulu's *Predator: Killer of Killers* takes everything that worked about *Prey* and condenses it into short and sweet exploration of other chapters from the franchise's past. The animated anthology's *Arcane*-inspired visuals are gorgeously gory, and its action set pieces are incredibly sharp. *Killer of Killers* isn't exactly trying to reinvent the wheel, and if you've seen a *Predator* movie before, little of it will take you by surprise. But as a bloody amuse-bouche meant to whet our appetites

before *Predator: Badlands* hits theaters later this year, *Killer of Killers* absolutely gets the job done.

Set at three different points in human history, *Killer of Killers* tells the familiar tale of how unsuspecting warriors from Earth find themselves being hunted by members of the alien Yautja race. Viking warrior Ursa (Lindsay LaVanchy), twin Japanese samurai Kenji and Kiyoshi Kamakami (Louis Ozawa), and American World War II pilot Torres (Rick Gonzalez) have very little in common. But in each of them, different Yautja see embodiments of humanity's technological prowess and fighting spirit. The aliens have respect for their prey, and they make a point of studying the various ways in which humans have learned to wage war with one another. But the Yautja still see humans as animals meant to be killed for sport, and their targets have no idea what they're up against when the two species first make contact.

While each of *Killer of Killers*' three chapters – “The Shield,” “The Sword,” and “The Bullet” – have their own narrative arcs, they all follow the same general beats that served *Prey* and other *Predator* movies well. After introducing their human heroes and showing us what they're capable of in battle, *Killer of Killers*' stories turn the tables in bloody, hyper-violent showcases of the Yautja's brutal power. It's not exactly a knock against screenwriter Micho Robert Rutare, but there's an undeniable formulaic quality to *Killers of Killers* that's rooted in the fact that there are only so many ways that *Predator* features can logically play out. Characters are always shocked when the Yautja turn off their cloaking technology because they've never seen anything like it before. And they're understandably scared shitless when the aliens start dog-walking (read: eviscerating) them with weapons that seem almost like magic.

Though its stories aren't exactly groundbreaking, *Killer of Killers* presents them beautifully and with a kind of heightened action that simply wouldn't be as effective if this

were a live-action project. These heavily-stylized Yautja are bigger, stranger, and more monstrous than any of their silver screen cousins. And they move with a sickening swiftness that makes you feel how terrifying it would be to see one materialize out of thin air. It's also very nifty, but unnerving to see how the aliens have adopted certain human folkways (one of the cooler Yautja basically styles itself as a shinobi). But as alarming as the monsters are, *Killer of Killers* also does a stellar job of presenting its human characters as uniquely capable fighters who could manage to hold their own and win with a bit of luck and quick thinking.

If *Killer of Killers* were longer, its similarities to past *Predator* features would probably be a bit more of an annoyance. But Rutare's script keeps things moving in a way that makes the movie's hour-and-a-half runtime feel like a breeze. Right when things start getting full-on batshit (in a very good way), *Killer of Killers* tidily wraps things up and closes out with a swiftness that's meant to leave you wanting more. It's easy to imagine 20th Century greenlighting another anthology like this to keep *Killer of Killers'* larger story about what the Yautja yearn for going. But whether we get a sequel is probably going to depend on how *Predator: Badlands* does when it hits theaters this fall.

Predator: Killer of Killers also stars Michael Biehn, Doug Cockle, Damien Haas, Lauren Holt, Jeff Leach, Piotr Michael, Andrew Morgado, Felix Solis, Britton Watkins. The movie is now streaming on Hulu.

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