Jaguar designed an electric sportscar just for Gran Turismo



reader comments

7 with 7 posters participating

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- This is the Jaguar Vision Gran Turismo Coupé, a futuristic electric sports car that Jaguar has just designed for *Gran Turismo Sport*.
- The fact that car companies keep devoting the time and energy to creating these one-offs for a video game speaks to the respect that the *GT* franchise has earned in the car world.
- The front fenders are inspired by the Jaguar C-Type, and the car's profile was informed by the long-nose D-Type.
- A D-Type in Jaguar's studio.
- The interior, as rendered by the game.

- Design elements for the interior.
- Cockpit details.
- Design sketches for the cockpit.
- Did I mention there was a hologram?
- Yes, holograms from the dash.
- There are different holographic displays.
- Clay models of the avatars that can appear in the hologram.
- The Jaguar Vision GT Coupé will be a free download in November.

The Vision GT project, where real car companies design futuristic concept cars just for *Gran Turismo*, started in 2013 with *Gran Turismo 6*. The fact that, six years later, real car companies are still taking time to work on these one-offs is a testament to the impact of the PlayStation driving game. Jaguar is the latest to join the fray; it kindly sent out a bunch of images of a car it's calling the Jaguar Vision Gran Turismo Coupé.

"This was the dream project for a car designer, creating a futuristic sports car for *Gran Turismo* means our designs and ideas could be truly limitless. It has to excite future generations and most importantly, look and feel unmistakably Jaguar," said Oliver Cattell-Ford, Exterior Designer at Jaguar Advanced Design. The Vision GT Coupé draws inspiration from some of its legendary racers of old: there's some Le Mans-winning C-Type in the front fenders, while the profile harks back to the the long-nose D-Type. Meanwhile, the lightweight E-Type was on the mood board for the Vision GT Coupé's pared-back cockpit.

Chris Shaw, who led the interior design team, had this to say:

> *We've really pushed the limit to imagine how a future Jaguar sports car interior could look. The architecture is visually lightweight, simple, and dramatic; featuring advanced and experimental materials and finishes. Sitting in the*

> *stunningly considered cockpit and looking out onto the gracefully long bonnet of the Jaguar Vision GT Coupé—a view that is unmistakably Jaguar—the player will be fully immersed in the action.*

Normally with decades-away concepts like this, there's no point even discussing the putative technical specs. But in this case, the car will be drivable—in GT Sport, that is—so the specs bear some mention. The Vision is fully electric, with one motor for the front axle and then one for each rear wheel, with a combined 750kW (1,005hp) and 1,200Nm (885lb-ft). Top speed is 200mph (321km/h), and the car hits 62mph (100km/h) from a standing start in under two seconds.

To make sure the Vision is competitive in the game, Jaguar even got its Formula E racing team involved. James Barclay, team principal for Jaguar Racing, said this:

> *The opportunity to take what we have learned on the track from our time in Formula E and apply it to a futuristic Jaguar race car has been a great challenge for the Jaguar Racing engineers. With its all—electric motor design drawing on the technology from both the Jaguar I-TYPE 4 and eTROPHY race cars, we have accurately modeled the performance of the Jaguar Vision GT Coupé in the virtual world, creating a car that will be exhilarating to drive and a real threat to the competition.*

The Vision GT Coupé will be available as a free download in *GT Sport* in November.

Listing image by Jaguar

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1591193

Netflix releases first teaser trailer for Ghost in the Shell: SAC_2045

reader comments

129 with 99 posters participating

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[embedded content]
Ghost In The Shell: SAC_2045 teaser
Today, Netflix released a short teaser trailer for its CGI adaptation of the iconic manga *Shirow Masamune*, which in turn was the source material for the popular 1995 anime film *Ghost in the Shell* by Mamoru Oshii.

Netflix's new series is titled *Ghost in the Shell: SAC_2045* and will be made by *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*'s Kenji Kamiyama and *Appleseed*'s Shinji Aramaki. (*Appleseed* was also based on a manga by Shirow Masamune). Netflix first announced the series in a tweet last December, but there's still one thing that will surprise fans who were enticed by that initial announcement.

Netflix has opted for 3DCG animation and an art style similar to that of *Land of the Lustrous*—in other words, CGI that emulates hand-drawn anime. While that approach was critically acclaimed in that anime, it has been controversial in others, and it differs significantly from the artwork Netflix originally showed to promote the new series (pictured below).



Enlarge / The first key art for *SAC_2045*, revealed by Netflix on Twitter just under a year ago.

Little else is known about this adaptation, other than that it will of course focus on Major Motoko Kusanagi. And the teaser doesn't offer up too many more details, so we're still in the dark here. A more informative trailer is likely in the coming months, and the series is set to premiere on Netflix in 2020.

Also, Netflix released trailers for a few other anime projects alongside this one, including *The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.: Reawakened*, *Eden*, and *Levius*.

Listing image by Netflix

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1590185

Bethesda rolls out $100/year

subscription for Fallout 76 with private servers



Enlarge / Since this subscription service is based in the *Fallout* universe, it's radiation that has made the mascot's hand so crazy, not greed, we swear.

reader comments

141 with 98 posters participating

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As the video game *Fallout 76* approaches its first anniversary this November, its makers at Bethesda have routinely promised its online playerbase a way to pay for private servers. That promised service finally got a name (and a price) on Wednesday: Fallout 1st will become available for existing *Fallout 76* players on November 1 for either $99.99/year or $12.99/month.

The service's headline feature is "private worlds," though these don't quite operate the same way you might expect from a

paid, private-server service like Minecraft Realms. Instead of having one person pay to operate a specific, always-online server, a paying member will be able to create a private *Fallout 76* instance, then invite up to seven other players (including non-subscribers) to join that instance. For that gameplay instance to persist, however, at least one of its players must be a paying Fallout 1st member; as soon as all subscribers log out, the instance will disconnect.

It's unclear whether Fallout 1st instances will hold onto progress in the cloud. We'd like to know whether JonSub can log in, play *Fallout 76* in a private instance for a while, then invite JaneSub to play, leave the instance, and come back in a few days and still see the fruits of JaneSub's progress in that shared instance.

Existing *Fallout 76* players expose their average online gameplay to random, unknown players. During a preview event in October 2018, for instance, Ars Senior Gaming Editor Kyle Orland noticed the game's griefing potential—balanced with one of Bethesda's assurances about private servers—before the game had even launched:

> *The potential for these kinds of negative experiences, combined with the general lack of positives we can see from having a wider server population, already has us looking forward to the planned post-launch rollout of private servers that we can roam alone in small, unbothered cooperative teams.*

However, that "planned" support pledge went unfulfilled for nearly a year, even as Bethesda continued adding free quest and quality-of-life updates for all *Fallout 76* players. This week's announcement has also piled on another pledge for a feature coming at an undisclosed date: mod support. You'll need to be a paying Fallout 1st member to access mods, however, and no other information about how they'll work or

how players might create them or share them between platforms has yet been disclosed.

What else comes with Fallout 1st?

- It comes with everything seen here. More info on the updates in the gallery.
- Want unlimited storage in *Fallout 76*? You can now pay for it, only as part of the Fallout 1st subscription service.
- Fallout 1st subscribers also get exclusive access to a quality-of-life update: a hub tent you can pop up anywhere in the game.
- And, of course, exclusive outfits for subscribers.
- How "Private World" will look in the game's menus once Fallout 1st goes live.

The biggest additional feature for this paid service is a bit concerning: storage space for in-game items. Continuing in *Fallout* game tradition, players can only store so many items in their "backpacks," whose storage amount can be increased in the course of gameplay. But the game's increased focus on crafting (which had been hinted at in *Fallout 4*'s "settlement" system) means players have a lot of smaller items they may want to stock in a non-backpack storage container, dubbed the Stash. Fallout 76 puts an artificial cap on that storage: 800 units of weight.

Paying Fallout 1st subscribers, on the other hand, will have access to an unlimited storage container dubbed the Scrapbox. (Got that? The free one is a Stash; the paid one is a Scrapbox.) There's no other way to access or pay for an unlimited storage box in the game, and this feature is arguably targeted at the game's most engaged, craft-crazy players.

Subscribers also get a serious quality-of-life boost with the

new Survival Tent, which will let players magically drop an outpost in the game's world that doubles as a few things: a Scrapbox, a Stash, a cooking station, and a fast-travel point. That sure seems like a handy perk to get by default, if not as a reward for beating a major quest. But hey, what do we know?

The rest of the paid subscription package includes a monthly drop of microtransaction currency (1,650 "atoms," which normally cost $15 as a real-world purchase), discounts within the game's atom-currency store, and a few exclusive cosmetic items.

Head-to-head

For comparison's sake, EA and DICE launched a paid private-server service for *Battlefield 1* in 2016. Its one-year price teetered around the $300 mark, though that cost comes with an expectation of a specialized, location-specific server rental for the lowest-latency online combat possible. (Curiously, last year's *Battlefield V* still hasn't gotten its "Private Games" update, which was meant to offer both paid and free "private" server options.)

A more comparable price point is probably Minecraft Realms, which hovers around the $99/year mark and lets players create a private, cross-platform *Minecraft* world for up to 10 online players. This cost is simply for the dedicated server shard, and so long as anyone has that shard's login credentials, they can get in and build within its private world. They don't need to worry about which paying members are or are not online.

Bethesda's announcement also lands two days before the launch of a very *Fallout*-like game: *The Outer Worlds*, from Obsidian Entertainment (which includes members of the original Fallout development team). For roughly the same subscription price as Fallout 1st, interested fans can subscribe to Xbox Game Pass and access the offline, single-player adventures of *The Outer Worlds* (not to mention Obsidian's beloved *Fallout: New Vegas*)

on Xbox One and Windows 10 devices, in addition to other games.

Today's news comes nearly a week after Bethesda announced a delay to the game's first "free" expansion pack, Wastelanders, now landing in "Q1 2020." That delay came only days after another major delay to a Bethesda game expected by the end of 2019, *Doom Eternal*, which is now slated to launch on March 20, 2020. https://arstechnica.com/?p=1590163

Study casts doubt on value of WHO's "gaming disorder" diagnoses



Enlarge / Two gamers with obvious unmet psychological needs.

reader comments

41 with 35 posters participating

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Since the World Health Organization proposed new diagnoses for “hazardous gaming” and “gaming disorder” last year, there’s been an ongoing scientific debate about which way the causation for these issues really goes. Does an excessive or addictive relationship with gaming actually cause psychological problems, or are people with existing psychological problems simply more likely to have an unhealthy relationship with gaming?

A recent study by Oxford’s Internet Institute, published in the open access journal Clinical Psychological Science, lends some support to the latter explanation. But it also highlights just how many of the game industry’s most devoted players may also be driven by some unmet psychological needs.

Getting at the problem

To study how so-called “dysfunctional gaming” relates to psychological needs and behaviors, the Oxford researchers surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,004 UK adolescents and their caregivers. They asked the caregivers to evaluate their adolescents’ levels of “psychosocial functioning:” how well the adolescents are able to internalize or externalize problems in their lives as evidenced by their behavior.

The adolescents, meanwhile, answered a 24-item survey focused on whether their psychological needs are being met in daily life (e.g., “I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake” vs. “My daily activities feel like a chain of obligations”). The adolescents were also asked how much and which kinds of video games they played and took a survey

regarding nine potential indicators of “Internet Gaming Disorder” (e.g., “I felt moody or anxious when unable to play,” or “I felt that I should play less but couldn’t”).

Of the 1,004 adolescents surveyed, 525 said they played online games daily for an average of about three hours per day. Among that group, over 55% showed at least one of the nine indicators for Internet Gaming Disorder, and even 23% showed at least three indicators.

Those reported “dysregulated gaming” effects showed a significant positive correlation with the amount of time spent playing, as well as a significant negative correlation with the reported psychosocial evaluations from caregivers. In other words, those with “dysregulated” gaming habits were more likely to spend more time playing each day and less likely to be able to handle problems in their lives in a healthy way.

Which way does the causation go?

That on its own might suggest there’s some value in studying this kind of dysregulated gaming as its own disorder. Crucially, though, the measured effect of the dysregulated gaming variable in the study “accounted for a practically insignificant share of variability in key outcomes… as compared with the role played by basic psychological needs,” as the study authors write. “This evidence suggests that having information about the extent to which an adolescent’s video-game play is dysregulated provides no practically useful incremental information when viewed in light caregivers’ assessments of emotional, behavioral, peer, or conduct difficulties.”

So while so-called adolescent “problem gamers” are more likely to show behavioral problems, that fact in and of itself is much less important in predicting those problems than other measures of whether those adolescents’ psychological needs are being met, according to the study. That suggests that both

dysregulated gaming and psychosocial behavior problems are both potential signs of more fundamental underlying psychological frustrations rather than excessive gaming causing problems in and of itself.

Addressing the value of WHO's potential gaming diagnoses directly, the authors say their work "strongly suggest[s] that dysregulated gaming is unlikely to be a practically significant route by which psychological-need frustration undermines psychosocial functioning."

The researchers conclude by asking rhetorically "if the attention that researchers and clinicians give this immensely popular activity is empirically justified. Judged on the basis of the evidence reported in this study, we would conclude it is not."

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1589633

Final trailer for Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker plays up the "Reylo" angle



reader comments

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[embedded content]
It’s here: the final trailer for *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.
Disney finally dropped the hotly anticipated final trailer for *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, during the Patriots vs. Jets game on Monday Night Football. It’s the third installment of the *Star Wars* sequel trilogy produced, co-written, and directed by J.J. Abrams, following *The Force Awakens* (2015) and *The Last Jedi* (2017). Disney’s timing is extra special, because today was also the late Carrie Fisher’s birthday, and this film was her final role. (Fisher’s daughter, Billie Lourd, plays Lieutenant Connix, a resistance officer, in the new trilogy.)

Disney has been holding their cards pretty close to their chest when it comes to details about *The Rise of Skywalker*, but we do know it is set one year after the events of *The Last Jedi*. The few surviving remnants of the Resistance will be facing the First Order once again, and the “ancient conflict

between the Jedi and the Sith" will reach its climax.

We got our first teaser back in April, at the annual Star Wars Celebration event. It gave us a few *Millennium Falcon* flights and some desert-speeder combat, plus a brief glimpse of Princess Leia, thanks to footage shot in 2016 before Carrie Fisher's untimely death. It closed with the new trilogy main cast members staring at the wreckage of a Death Star, followed by the sound of Emperor Palpatine's evil laughter (even though he's supposed to be dead). We also learned that BB-8 has a new robotic buddy—a one-wheeled junk-heap character named Dio.

A second teaser screened at Disney's D23 Expo in August opened with a montage of scenes from the original trilogy, then more recent *Star Wars* films, set to a haunting variation on John Williams' score. Then came roughly 30 seconds of new footage, beginning with Rey, Finn, Poe, Chewie, and C-3PO on a desert planet. Rey follows in Luke's footsteps with a bit of Jedi training on Endor, and then locks light sabers with Kylo Ren on a stormy seaside. There's a brief shot of C-3PO with glowing red eyes, sparking speculation as to whether there might be a bit of reprogramming in store for our favorite protocol droid. And fans are still puzzling over the final shot, which seems to show Rey in Sith regalia.

- Chewie and Rey, back in the Millennium Falcon
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Finn, Poe, and Chewbacca make a great team
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- R2-D2 has a new droid buddy.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Billy Dee Williams is back as Lando.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Nobody understands her.
- Hey girl. I know you.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Every relationship has its issues.

YouTube/Star Wars/Disney

- Teaming up
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Looks like C-3PO will be reprogrammed.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Could this be the Ghost?
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- Resistance fighters on horseback.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- One last look at our Princess.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- We feel you, Rey.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney
- The Force will be with you. Always.
  YouTube/Star Wars/Disney

And now we have the final trailer. It opens with a shot of Rey's Jedi training, with a voiceover talking about the Force: "It's an instinct. A feeling." A shot of her jumping across a jungle ravine cuts to her executing the same move on a mission. We see the few remaining members of the Resistance coming together, and what sounds like Finn's voice declaring, "We're not alone. Good people will fight if we lead them." There are several shots of space battles, including a glimpse of one ship that just might be the Ghost—a customized VCX-100 light freighter featured in both Star Wars Rebels and *Rogue One*. And yes, it does look like C-3PO is going to be reprogrammed, albeit deliberately by his own allies.

The unusual connection between Rey and Kylo Ren also plays a big role in the trailer. Daisy Ridley has already hinted that "Reylo" will be a big part of the film's narrative arc. "People talk about toxic relationships and whatever it is," she said. "It's no joke and I think it's dealt with really well because it's not skimmed over."

In the trailer, we hear Rey confess that people think they know her, but nobody really does. "But I do," we hear Kylo Ren

say, as he looms into view, light saber at the ready. The footage plays up their complicated relationship: one minute they”re crossing light sabers in battle, the next they’re teaming up to destroy a common enemy. There are hints that this is all part of Palpatine’s master plan: “Long have I waited. And now your coming together is your undoing.” Or maybe Destiny has something entirely different in store for these two.

Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker hits theaters December 20, 2019.

Listing image by YouTube/Star Wars/Disney

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1584941

Coast-to-coast in under 33 hours? Apex: The Secret Race Across America



reader comments

35 with 33 posters participating

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- Roy and Maher used a BMW M5 as their continent-crusher.
- However, a fuel filter stymied their first attempt.
- The pair had friends in a spotter plane and added stripes to the M5’s roof so it could be seen from altitude.
- The duo, making time.
- Remember the pre-smartphone days?
- No, we don’t condone these speeds on US highways.

There’s a joke that the first motor race was held shortly after the second automobile was built. Humans (some of us, at least) are like that; we see someone going somewhere, and some urge—a voice deep down inside you—says, “I think we need to get there first.” This urge predates the car—Romans were partial to chariots—and it will survive into a post-automobile, mobility future. It’s a broad church of a sport, encompassing everything from big-factory racing programs to like-minded people hanging out at weekends, often in the

middle of nowhere, frequently with beer afterward.

And then there's the unofficial side. Like the people who race from coast to coast, just to see who can do it faster. That's the subject of *Apex: The Secret Race Across America*.

We've delved into the world of coast-to-coast speed runs before. Earlier this year, Gareth Jones tried to set a new record across England and Scotland in an electric vehicle. And a few years back, we told you the tale of Alex Roy reaching Los Angeles from New York in record time in a Tesla. This record has since been broken three times by Model 3s; once by Roy and co., then twice on the same day.

Alex Roy features in *The Secret Race Across America*, but he's a younger, less sagacious Alex, and he's engaged in a much more antisocial effort. This is the story of the pre-electric Cannonball.

As a way of demonstrating the ability to cover long distances with as little time as possible spent stationary, coast-to-coast endurance drives could be tailor-made for our early era of electric-vehicle evolution. Fighting over Nordschleife lap times is all well and good, but imagine if Tesla and Porsche were competing to show whose car needed to sit still, charging, for less time as it crossed from sea to shining sea? Electrify America's network should even make that possible by the time production Taycans start getting registered over here at the end of the year.

But the coast-to-coast challenge is more than just charging time. Efficiency in an EV drops off rapidly above 70mph (113km/h), and as Roy told me in 2016, "there was nothing to be gained by going much faster."

In the olden days of internal combustion, however, racing coast to coast meant high speeds, on public roads, as outlaws. *The Secret Race Across America* is the real story of the Cannonball and the US Express, the real underground events of

the 1970s and 1980s that inspired the Burt Reynolds movies. It's also the story of how Roy and Dave Maher broke a 1983 record in 2006, armed with a BMW M5 that did the job on its second attempt.

You'd be forgiven for thinking you've heard this story already. Roy wrote about his and Maher's adventure for our sister publication Wired, as well as in a popular book. You may even have seen some of the footage before; the pair was joined on the attempt by filmmaker Cory Welles, who put out her own account in 2013 following some acrimony between the parties involved.

But it's taken until 2019 for Roy's version to make it to the screen, broadcast this past Sunday night by NBC Sports. "I feel like Roger Bannister did 10 years after he broke the four-minute mile, except I've never been that fit in my life," Roy told me when I asked how he felt about the film finally seeing the light of day.

Regardless of your take on illegal motorsport—for the record, it's not something we endorse here at Ars—*The Secret Race for America* is an enjoyable documentary and worth your time. For one thing, it provides a previously unseen look at the racing world's counterculture in the years before Reagan. Even 2006 feels like a bygone era, before GPS and Waze and adaptive cruise control and cars with built-in night vision became a real thing. For another, the documentary secured Ice-T as the narrator. Yes, that Ice-T, who is as good as you might expect.

Apex: The Secret Race Across America comes to iTunes in December.

[embedded content]
Listing image by Apex

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1589007

Watchmen on HBO trades the Cold War for the culture war, keeps superheroes



reader comments

66 with 46 posters participating, including story author

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[embedded content]
The trailer for HBO's new *Watchmen* series.
In 2019, it might be impossible to convey how groundbreaking the original *Watchmen* comic series felt and eventually proved to be. Three decades after its release in the mid '80s, unorthodox superhero pop culture has become commonplace. There's superhero fare that asks "…but what if superheroes are bad?" like *The Boys*. There's superhero fare that applies some version of the complicated anti-hero trope to a caped

crusader, like *Legion*. And thanks to the fervor and discussion over some clown, you may be aware superhero movies can *really* be about something else or *really* be a different type of movie dressed in a mask.

Into this muddled landscape comes the latest unorthodox superhero take from HBO: a new version of *Watchmen* from Damon Lindelof, the critically beloved TV scribe behind two deeply engaging and enigmatic series that ended with vastly different levels of success. (And if you've read about TV on the Internet, there's no need to clarify *The Leftovers* and *Lost* any further).

Lindelof has gone to great lengths to make sure viewers know ahead of time that this *Watchmen* should *not* be called a reboot, adaptation, or even a reimagination. You've read his *five page essay* on why he chose this project, right? And this series may not necessarily do anything new in the unusual-superhero story realm, either. But Lindelof has an indisputable track record of being able to build engrossing worlds that ask massive philosophical questions, and last night's *Watchmen* premiere indicates that viewers have another highly dissectible and discussable journey ahead.

- Meet Angela Abar (she's a cop, see the badge?)
- In the premiere, the show abruptly cuts to an estate where Jeremy Irons is riding a horse, celebrating an anniversary, and has some pretty but a bit confused servants.
- A small army of Rorschachs.
  YouTube/HBO
- Don Johnson's Chief Judd stops by for a chat about the pending end of the world.
  YouTube/HBO
- This is Wade, another cop. (Though based on pre-series details, I'm guessing this is Looking Glass, played by Tim Blake Nelson.)

YouTube/HBO

Minimal groundwork to lay

In this *Watchmen* universe, President Redford (presumably Robert) has been in office for decades. Among his policies, he has awarded Black Americans some form of reparations (snidely referred to by some as Redfordations), annexed Vietnam as a state, and altered the process of acquiring firearms so it has more steps than it does in our current reality.

The other big alternate dimension changes all seem to center on law enforcement. After an incident known as the White Night (cleverly explained to an elementary class during a career day presentation on baking… in a sequence that succinctly distills the show's tone), attacks on law enforcement have become a societal concern. The police have thus been instructed to wear masks and adopt cover stories, hiding their identity from those who might attempt to target them during downtime. To theoretically encourage peace and deescalation from the other side, too, more parameters and policies have been put in place to limit the police's use of force. But for every remotely locked gun that requires sign-off from HQ, it seems authorities have also evolved and learned how to circumvent the new restrictions when they perceive force as necessary.

There are other real world tweaks and analogues (instead of *Game of Thrones,* does the *Watchmen* Internet recap each episode of *American Hero Story*? Its ads are at least all over buses in the show). But *Watchmen* really starts when a routine traffic stop in Tulsa, Oklahoma, goes horribly wrong. Suddenly, authorities in the city are mobilizing to take on a white nationalist group called the 7th Kavalry, who deploy militia tactics against cops and hide behind what, to many, will be a familiar Rorschach mask. And our hero (or at least POV character), cop Angela Abar (played by Oscar-winner Regina King), suspects the 7K may be cooking up some kind of

explosive-driven larger act of violence.

Ambitious in theme, ambitious in TV making

Somewhat miraculously considering the complex source material, *that's it* for background and buildup. Based on last night's episode, no one needs to worry about whether or not they've read (or viewed the Zack Snyder adaptation of) the original *Watchmen*. Presumably, that background knowledge will lend itself to Easter eggs and identifying parallels, but Lindelof has set up a contained universe we can understand because of how it plays with present-day society, not the world of a classic comic.

And, boy, does *Watchmen* steer straight into some of the toughest topics of 2019: white nationalism, police brutality, race relations, doxing and targeting, solving problems with tech, how to address history's bad behavior, etc. The phrases "liberal tears" and "race traitors" are uttered, and Abar explains an ignorant elementary school kid's provoking behavior to her son succinctly: "He's not racist—but he's off to a good start."

This may be the show's most explicit tie to the comic—in the way that Alan Moore and his team examined the complexity of the Cold War in America, Lindelof has a similar desire to think through this moment in American history. Again, Lindelof is no stranger to grappling with these sorts of heady topics, but the amount of information or resolution his work has traditionally provided can result in dramatically different levels of satisfaction.

Here's one micro-example: it feels odd to start this series with a historical flashback to the Tulsa Race Massacre on Black Wall Street. That tragedy certainly still resonates (and left open wounds) nearly 100 years later. But there are so

many modern examples of violence involving race and authority—although the series was obviously written long before, just last week, a Fort Worth police officer was charged with murder for fatally shooting Atatiana Jefferson at her home while she played video games with a young nephew. So why does *Watchmen* draw from the past instead?

But Lindelof clearly has some idea he's preparing to unfold about how we view the past. He teases this with the premiere's reimagining of the musical *Oklahoma* (which has a fuzzy view of history, if you're unfamiliar) or an *American Hero Story* trailer dripping with nostalgia about heroes of the past (who happen to be referenced in the canon *Watchmen* universe). Some major TV critics have already watched to the season's midway point, and their reviews tend to leave readers with the impression that the premiere episode's disparate parts—the historical flashback, some cutaways to Jeremy Irons in a castle, and the main thread following Abar—will eventually come together in an informative, earned, satisfying manner. (Rolling Stone's Alan Sepinwall offers an opinionated but non-spoiler look at the series informed by six of nine episodes, for instance.)

So in this vein, maybe *Watchmen*'s first season leans more *Leftovers* than *Lost*, and viewers rightfully nervous about how a piece of fiction deals with these very real-world issues can breathe easy for the moment. Some kind of point looms.

For now, no one should be nervous at least about the quality of TV on display with *Watchmen*. To tackle its big issues, the show deploys an even bigger amount of talent on- and offscreen. Lindelof trusted director Nicole Kassell (*The Americans, The Leftovers*, and one-offs on *Westworld* and *Better Call Saul*) with the first hour, and the result is striking. Some of these sequences—cop cars navigating claustrophobic streets from above, Abar walking the modern Black Wall Street from a low angle, a final set piece staged among cattle grazing at night—can be in the running for the most visually

rich things you'll see on TV this year. The pulsing soundtrack pulling everything together might sound familiar to David Fincher fans, as Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross are at it again here. And King as Abar and Don Johnson (yes, *that* one, of *Miami Vice*) as Police Chief Judd keep you glued to and a tad suspicious of each sequence that unfolds. Cast members like Irons and Jean Smart can't lay low forever, either.

After watching the debut, *Watchmen* leaves a lot of questions. Are these masked cops any better than the masked extremists they're targeting? How the heck do the glimpses we get of Dr. Manhattan on Mars and the Archie aircraft factor in and tie the superhuman to the human? What caused the white nationalists to adopt Rorschach imagery, and do they have a big plan in waiting? Does HBO finally have a post-*GoT* signature show? (And are the DC Comics offices celebrating indefinitely and forgetting about MCU misery for a while?)

No matter how those threads play out, the curiosity and craft displayed in this first hour should encourage anyone to buckle in for *Watchmen*'s initial nine episodes—even if it eventually involves Smoke Monsters and multiple timelines.

Watchmen *airs Sundays on HBO.*

Listing image by HBO

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Magic: The Gathering pro uses win to show Hong Kong protest

support



Enlarge / Lee Shi Tian pumps his fist during an interview in which he highlighted the ongoing protests in his native Hong Kong.

reader comments

80 with 63 posters participating, including story author

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Magic: The Gathering pro Lee Shi Tian used a major win at this weekend's Mythic Championship V event in Long Beach, California, as a chance to call attention to protesters in his native Hong Kong.

"Life has been very tough in my hometown in Hong Kong," Lee said in an emotional, livestreamed post-match interview after reaching the Top 8 in the digital *Magic: The Gathering Arena* event. "It feels so good to play as a free man" he added

later.

Lee wore a dark red scarf as a mask over the lower half of his face during the match and interview, because “we wear [masks like that] when we go on the street,” as he told *Magic* site Hipsters of the Coast. Lee also covered one eye during his entrance to the tournament, an apparent show of support for a nurse who was hit in the eye with a beanbag during a recent protest in Kowloon.

While a recent *Hearthstone* tournament quickly cut away from a similar on-stream show of support for Hong Kong protesters, the Mythic Championship broadcast didn’t edit Lee’s statements or stop him short in any way. And while Blizzard quickly punished Ng “Blitzchung” Wai Chung for similar statements after a *Hearthstone* tournament win earlier this month, there has thus far been no indication from *Magic* owner Wizards of the Coast that Lee will receive any official sanction for his statement (a representative for Wizards of the Coast was not immediately available to respond to a request for comment from Ars).

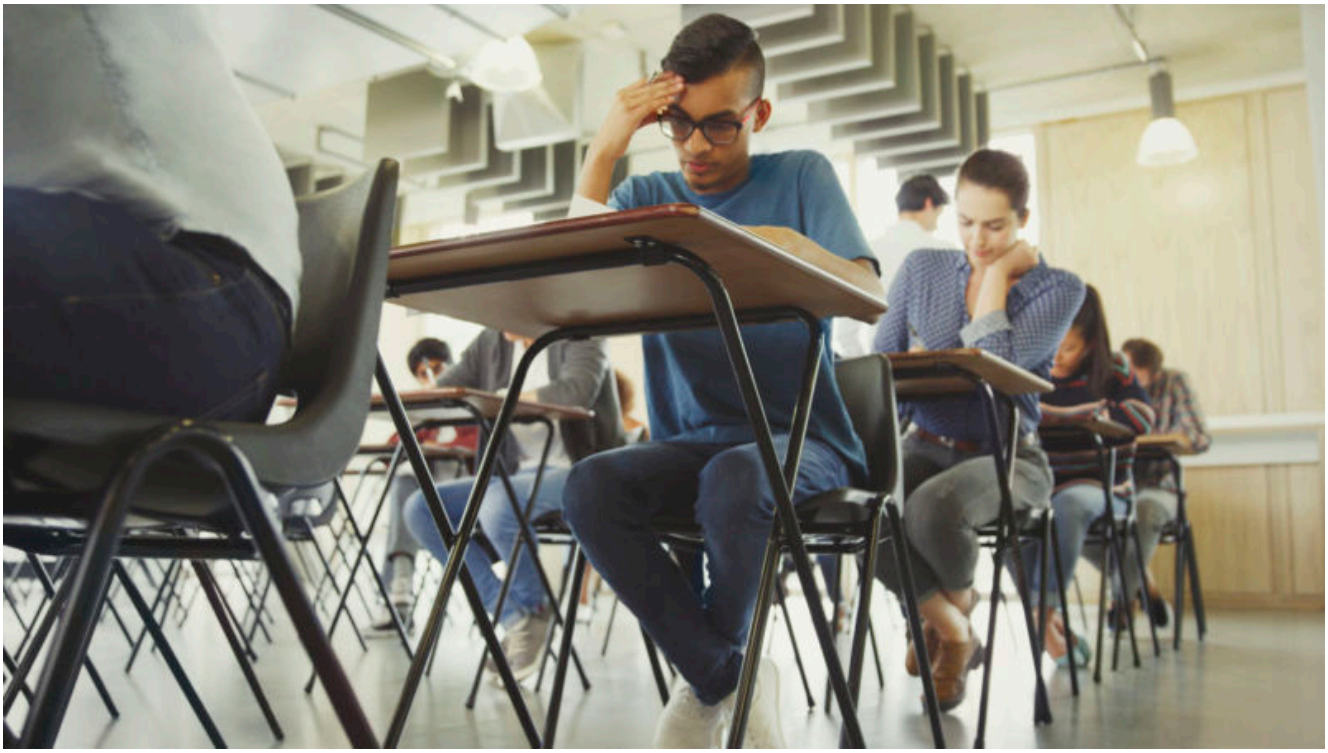
To the contrary, *Magic* esports Twitch chat moderator Ian Dixon noted on Twitter that “mods actually had instructions to *allow and not touch* any and all of those kinds of mentions of [Hong Kong].” That forms a stark contrast to the situation in *Hearthstone* tournaments, where Blizzard has recently started handing out 24 hour suspensions to Twitch chatters that express support for Hong Kong during matches.

Blizzard said earlier this month that “the official broadcast needs to be about the tournament and to be a place where all are welcome… we want to keep the official channels focused on the game.” But that was before a bipartisan group of US lawmakers sent a letter urging Blizzard to reconsider their stance, expressing worry about “the Chinese government’s growing appetite for pressuring American businesses to help stifle free speech.”

Blizzard also recently cancelled a planned promotional event at the Nintendo World NYC store and faces planned protests at next month’s Blizzcon fan gathering over its stance on this issue.

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1588755

How meme culture changed the PSAT



Caiaimage/Paul Bradbury/Getty

reader comments

42 with 36 posters participating

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Thank you for coming and welcome to the College Board’s

Preliminary SAT and National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, the Internet Age edition. You must bring two No. 2 pencils, a photo ID, and an approved calculator. You must not smuggle in a protractor, or scarf down a sandwich, or post memes on Twitter that reveal test content. No, really: the penalty for such illicit memes could be the cancellation of your test score. And now, an inspiring message from Youth Icon, former boy band member, and British person Harry Styles:

All over the US, high school juniors and sophomores are now taking the PSAT, which has been the norm for the past half-century. The contemporary trouble for test administrator the College Board is that the test's ubiquity, the age of participants, and the high emotional stakes these days make the details of the exam guaranteed meme fodder—and, well, standardized tests are standardized. Posting memes about them could lead to teens getting hints about their contents. So the organization has taken to Twitter to try to salvage some semblance of their normal testing conditions. Teens are, as always, unimpressed.

The College Board has been on meme watch for years. The earliest signs of PSAT meme movements likely date back to 2014, when users on subreddit r/teenagers decided to "illegally discuss the PSAT," and others took to Twitter and Tumblr to post their own reactions to test questions. The College Board has made it clear that it disapproves, sometimes posting stern messages warning test takers about the potential consequences and making frequent requests for students to delete tweets pertaining to the test.

The College Board's efforts are a bit of bizarro, "how do you do, fellow kids?" corporate memeing—not much better than the cringey clunkers people have come to expect from fast food companies' Twitter accounts. The posts are no deterrent for test takers, who have flooded Twitter with #psatmemes this past week. Truthfully, none of the students' memes seems like

it’s an especially helpful covert cheat sheet. If this year’s PSAT were a movie, I’d remain unspoiled—all I know is that mathematical constants and ambiverts came up, that somebody named Ruth read Nao’s diary, and that babies will get dirty if their mothers leave the house to vote. (That last one seems very weird out of context, College Board. What are you making the teens read?)

As someone not employed by the College Board, it’s hard to begrudge the teens their fun as long as they’re not explicitly handing out answers. Nationwide teenage levity at the expense of a dull standardized test (that potentially reinforces economic disparity) is quite a bit better than other teenage trends, like slurping Tide Pods or bullying their peers. It’s almost a little hopeful—an example of the Internet bringing people together for casual fun in a time of stress, rather than creating new areas for public cruelty.

Besides, the youngsters show no signs of stopping. The savviest teens already know how to ensure their scores remain uncanceled: just hide the memes from prying adult eyes by annually blocking @CollegeBoard on Twitter.

This story originally appeared on wired.com.

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1588305

Redemption not guaranteed: El Camino is a fitting coda to

Jesse Pinkman’s story



Enlarge / Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul) must elude capture and get out of town in *El Camino*.

reader comments

34 with 27 posters participating

Share this story

The series finale of *Breaking Bad* has been touted as one of the best series finales of all time by critics, as former high school chemistry teacher-turned-meth manufacturer Walter White faced the inevitable reckoning for his many crimes and misdeeds. But it left other narrative threads unresolved, most notably the fate of Walter’s former student and partner in the meth business, Jesse Pinkman. Series creator Vince Gilligan had long wanted to finish Jesse’s story, and the result is *El Camino: A Breaking Bad Movie*, which debuted on Netflix last

week, six years after the series concluded.

(**Major spoilers for the *Breaking Bad* TV series below. Mild spoilers for *El Camino*.**)

Breaking Bad starred Bryan Cranston as Walter, who is diagnosed with stage 3 lung cancer. Assuming his death is imminent, he frets about providing for his wife and kids. So he decides to put his chemistry expertise to use making methamphetamine, with the help of former pupil Jesse (Aaron Paul). This naturally draws the attention of Albuquerque's criminal underworld. Further complicating matters is Walter's brother-in-law, Hank (Dean Norris), an officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration intent on tracking down this mysterious new player nicknamed "Heisenberg." Over the course of five seasons, viewers witnessed Walter's gradual transformation from an uptight science teacher cooking meth in his tighty-whities to a manipulative, cold-blooded killer.

Walter's relationship with Jesse was always a central component of the series, but as their relationship fractured in later seasons—a casualty of their shared life of crime and the poor decisions each of them makes—Jesse's story became less prominent. In the final season, Jesse turns on his former mentor to become an informant for Hank and the DEA. In retaliation, Walter asks a white supremacist gang called the Brotherhood to take Jesse out, but the hit goes horribly wrong. The Brotherhood kills Hank instead and takes Jesse prisoner, torturing him and forcing him to cook meth for them. A repentant Walter puts some affairs in order and sets out to rescue Jesse, rigging an M60 machine gun to open fire automatically. In the ensuing shootout, pretty much everyone is killed. Mortally wounded, Walter begs Jesse to finish the job, but Jesse refuses and takes off in a Chevrolet El Camino as sirens approach. The police arrive right after Walter dies from his gunshot wounds.

El Camino takes place in the immediate aftermath of the

Breaking Bad finale, with Jesse driving off and laughing manically as squad cars rush to the burning carnage of what was once the Brotherhood's meth lab. Jesse is still a wanted man, however, and seeks refuge with his old friends Skinny Pete (Charles Baker) and Badger (Matt Jones). They barely recognize him at first but help divert the police from his trail, as friends do. The rest of the film is Jesse figuring out how to escape and build a new life elsewhere despite all the obstacles he encounters along the way. Flashbacks are interspersed throughout as he works through all his psychological trauma.

- The manhunt continues with a long string of police cars.
- Most wanted: Jesse Pinkman.
  YouTube/Netflix
- Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul) been through a lot, y'all.
  YouTube/Netflix
- A moment of self-reflection.
  YouTube/Netflix
- Jesse's former compatriots are worried.
  YouTube/Netflix
- A clean-shaven Jesse cautiously emerges.
- A clandestine meeting.
  YouTube/Netflix
- Buried treasure?
  YouTube/Netflix
- Armed and dangerous.
  YouTube/Netflix
- Playing with fire.
  YouTube/Netflix
- Jesse is ready for a showdown.
  YouTube/Netflix

Gilligan certainly knows how to tell a compelling story, as demonstrated by the success of his spinoff series, *Better Call Saul*. *El Camino* frankly isn't quite on that level, but it's still an engrossing journey, carried by Paul's powerful

performance as the battered, bloodied, but not-quite broken Jesse. Tonally, it's very much in the *Breaking Bad* wheelhouse, alternating between violence and introspection, with unexpected moments of bleak humor mixed in. Case in point: Jesse goes to the apartment of his now-deceased Brotherhood keeper and chief torturer, Todd Alquist (Jesse Plemons), to take the cash he knows Todd hid there. He's interrupted by two cops and surrenders—only to discover they're actually thieves also looking for the loot. It's a quintessentially Jesse screwup, throwing one more wrench into his escape plan.

Several familiar faces appear via flashback, notably Mike Ehrmantraut (Jonathan Banks), whom Walter killed in the final season when Mike tried to quit their "business" partnership; Jesse's dead girlfriend, Jane (Krysten Ritter); and Walter himself, in a diner scene in which he laments that he waited until the end of his life to do something "special." He urges Jesse not to make the same mistake.

But most of the flashbacks feature Todd, a true sociopath and cold-blooded killer who was one of the standout characters of *Breaking Bad*'s final season, played to perfection by Plemons. We learn a lot more about what happened to Jesse during his year of imprisonment, giving us a bit more insight into this badly damaged character. The scars on his face and body are just the outward manifestations of how long his road to recovery might be.

Focused

The tight focus on Jesse's story, over such a short time period, is both a strength and a weakness for *El Camino*, however. Gilligan is a master of juggling multiple storylines involving many different characters—one of the most impressive elements of *Breaking Bad*, and the source of much of its rich narrative texture. *El Camino* is much more limited in scope.

The film started life as a short 20-minute mini-episode before

ballooning into a feature, and at times it feels like one-third of a *Breaking Bad* episode. Apparently Gilligan toyed with the idea of working Walter's family into the script—his wife, son, and widowed sister (Anna Gunn, RJ Mitte, and Betsy Brandt, respectively)—but ultimately decided against it. I get why he made that call. This is a standalone film within the *Breaking Bad* universe, not a continuation of the original series, so focusing on Jesse makes narrative sense. But some of that rich texture is lost in the process.

Final verdict: fans will appreciate *El Camino* as a nice addition to the franchise, even if it's not particularly necessary. It provides a fitting coda to Jesse Pinkman's story, bringing some extra closure for one of our favorite characters in the *Breaking Bad* saga.

El Camino is currently streaming on Netflix, following a limited theatrical release. It will air on AMC at an as-yet-unspecified later date.

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