

SHOWRUNNER EXCLUSIVE

# Paint It Black

The *Orphan Black* story continues with **Echoes**, a new series set 30 years after the original

WORDS: STEVE O'BRIEN

Amanda Fix as Jules gets herself into the spotlight.

→ THERE AREN'T MANY TV SHOWS that can boast a following so great that its fans even have a name. Clone Club has been the label for devotees of cult Canadian drama *Orphan Black* since it made its small screen debut in 2013. The series – about a human clone by the name of Sarah Manning – hoovered up a host of awards during its original five-season, 50-episode run, including a Primetime Emmy and a Peabody.

Now, seven years after that final episode, comes *Orphan Black: Echoes*, a sequel that, while it's a distinct series in its own right, also promises to feel comfortingly familiar to old-time Clone Clubbers.

"We wanted to give the fans of the original show something to sink their teeth into," *Echoes* showrunner Anna Fishko – a former writer and producer on *Fear The Walking Dead* – tells Red Alert, "so we're using some of the characters from the original. We talked a lot about which characters the Clone Club had really latched on to and felt strongly about, and

that was very informative in terms of how I shaped the story. At the same time I also wanted people who hadn't watched all five seasons of the original show not to be lost in the weeds."

Certainly, there are characters that fans of the original show will recognise in *Echoes* – among them Jordan Gavaris as Felix Dawkins (though aged up 30 years) and Evelyne Brochu as Dr Delphine Cormier. But the central focus of the new series is Krysten Ritter's Lucy, a thirtysomething woman who discovers that she's a synthetic, a "print-out" based on a real human being, but sharing none of that original person's memories.

While Fishko is keen for *Echoes* to feel part of the larger *Orphan Black* story, she says she didn't feel beholden to the style and pace of the 2013-2017 series.

"I wanted to make sure it felt like contemporary television," she says regarding the stylistic differences between *Echoes* and the original. "Part of that was choosing a slightly different visual style and a slightly slower kind of storytelling. The original show moves like a freight train all the time, and that

Jules with "print-out" Krysten Ritter as Lucy (right).







Lucy and Jules: they'll never feel the benefit.



Xander (Vinson Tran) can't find the light switch.



Kira Manning's not much better at it, either.

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felt part and parcel of the time in which it was made. We had more leeway, I think, to spend a little bit more time with the characters and dive a little bit deeper into some of the big questions that the show asks.”

Beyond the fact that Sarah Manning is gone, the biggest difference between the original series and *Echoes* is that this is set 30 years into the future, meaning advancements not just in the cloning technology, but also in the larger *Orphan Black* world.

“We wanted a near-future environment so that we weren't dealing with everything being wildly different,” the writer says. “I'm always more engaged by sci-fi when it's not so hard as a viewer to place yourself in that world, where it feels familiar enough.”

What Fishko found especially fascinating, she tells us, is the research she undertook in preparation for the series. She reveals she knew “a little” about tissue printing before she

started work on *Echoes*, but what she uncovered about the subject as she got deeper into the project shocked her, in terms of how close we really are to the science laid out in *Orphan Black*.



Kira Manning (Keeley Hawes) has a chat with Lucy.

“We were put in contact with a tissue printing expert who runs a lab at [research university] Johns Hopkins,” she says, “And he said, ‘All of these things that you're playing with are not that far off.’ Right now, they're printing an amazing variety of things – little tiny hearts that beat, brain tissue and cartilage and skin tissue for burn victims.”

“I mean, we thought we were going to get on the phone with this professor, and he was going to be like, ‘That would never work, that would never happen,’ but instead he was so thrilled. It made us feel better about the way we were approaching the story.”

Fishko hopes that *Echoes* has a long future on AMC, and says she has Lucy's arc “pretty much mapped out”. As for a second season, “we're starting to get all of the pieces in place to start moving forward,” she tells us.

“I was very lucky to work with a lot of really lovely people on this show,” she smiles, “and it would be such a pleasure to come back together – it's always fun to go back to camp for another summer!”

*Orphan Black* is on ITV X from 16 May.

► **SCI-FACT!** Krysten Ritter is also a published author. Her debut novel, a psychological thriller titled *Bonfire*, came out in 2017.