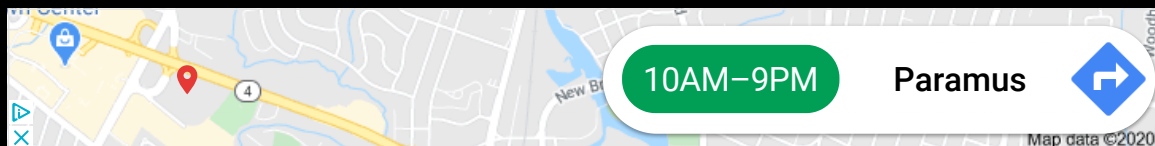


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# I'll never forget watching Inception in theaters

2019-06-19 14:00:00   by [Chris Compendio](#)

## School sucks, summer movies rock!

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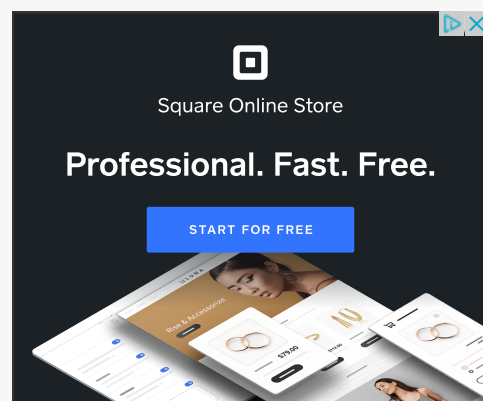
Children know that when school is over, it's time for the good movies. Superheroes, robots, aliens, and other out-worldly forces take over movie theaters to provide relief, escapism, and as we learn later in life, nostalgia. It is these summer blockbusters that stick out to us in our memories—we can remember who we were watching with, where we were in life, what our fashion sense was back then, and so on. Movies might be memorable, but the experience of watching them is something we can't forget.

With that, I have very distinct memories of knowing nothing about *Inception* before seeing it, and maybe Christopher Nolan's dream heist isn't the best summer blockbuster I've ever seen, but it's the one I'll never forget watching.

Before seeing the movie, all I knew about it was that it came from the dude who made *The Dark Knight* movies and *The Prestige*, Leonardo DiCaprio was in it, and there was a shot where Joseph-Gordon Levitt was thrown through a trippy hallway. With so many people in tune to the latest trailers online, it is always refreshing to go into a movie blind, and doing so enhanced my experience.

My high school friends and I were captivated by the concepts and world-building, and the precision in which Nolan presented all of it. Hans Zimmer's booming musical score is easy to make fun of, but it defined the action set pieces to us. The layers and dreams within dreams were a lot to take in, but this didn't turn me or my friends off—rather, it galvanized us to watch it even more.

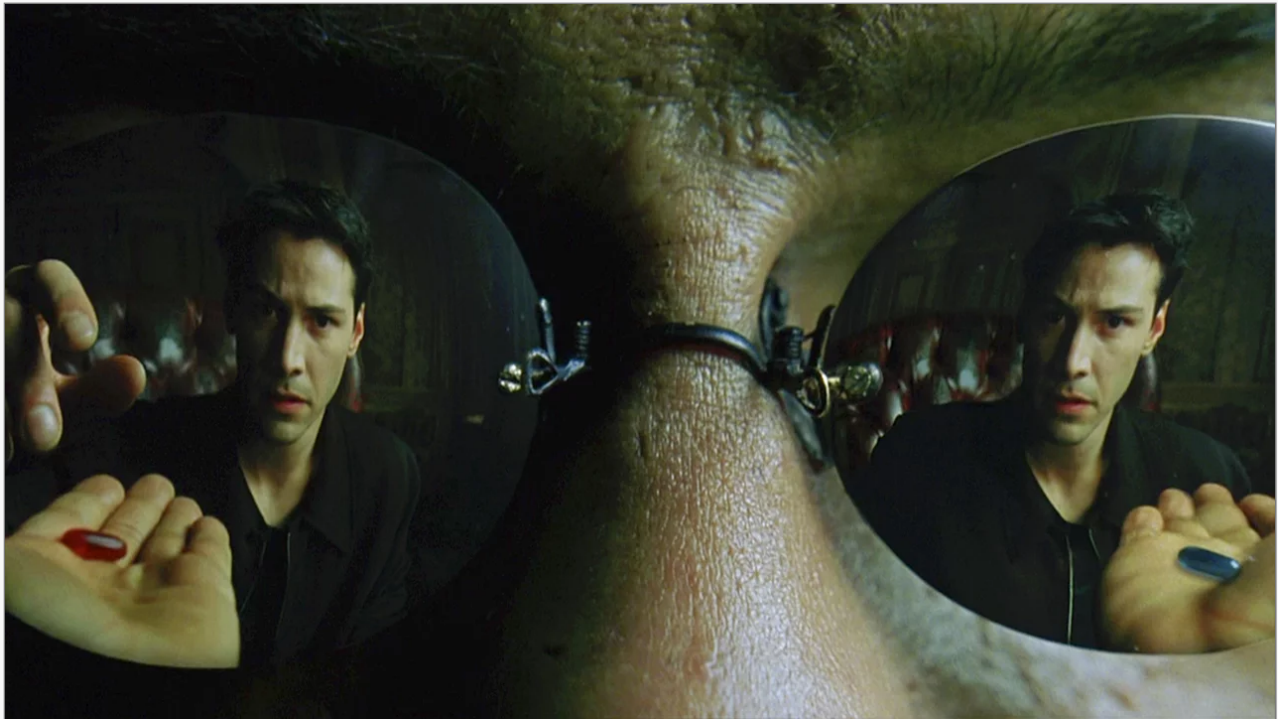
I often watch my favorite summer blockbusters multiple times in theaters, but usually to experience them with different groups and combinations of friends and family members. *Inception*, as far as I remember, is the only movie I've ever gone to the theater for several times with the same people. I still remember the pure excitement by the time the film reached three layers. I still remember the audience



reactions to the top spinning in the film's final shot. And I remember the distant and muffled sound of a witch cackling.

That last one wasn't in the actual movie, by the way. The third time we saw *Inception* was at the New Jersey boardwalk, and the theater there happened to be next to some sort of haunted house. During the most dramatic moments in the movie, a mechanical witch from said haunted house would begin laughing, prompting laughter from me and my friends, who were in the theater alone. Like I said, with these movies, you'll remember everything else around it too.

### ***The Matrix***



Believe it or not, in the time before social media and the Internet as an all-knowing-all-seeing behemoth, you could head to the movies and be surprised. Yes, there was still hype that abounded but you mostly saw a scattering of movie trailers here and there and then read one or two reviews before seeing a movie—and that's only if you were already excited for that film. I say this to give some understanding to how I could walk into seeing *The Matrix* completely unprepared for the revolution my eyeballs were about to experience. Now, we think of the film as a cultural and cinematic touchstone. When I went to see it, I just thought it was an action movie. My nostalgia stems far more from the latter than the former.

In high school, I was in a few AP classes and near the end of the year, you have to take AP exams. These are part of a half-day sometimes and, to the excitement of anyone taking them, you got to leave school early. On one of these days my best friend and I, basically on a whim, decided to go see *The Matrix* at DC's Uptown theater. If you don't know The Uptown, and you probably don't, it's the only remaining single-screen, old-school movie theater in DC. It has balcony seating and a massive screen, unrivaled, at the time, by any other theater in the DC area. If you were going to see a big movie it was where to see a big movie, plus it has a tinge of the golden age of Hollywood cinema to it that just makes the entire experience more magical. In short, it boosts nostalgia in a big way.

The point is, I was there with my best friend after being up all night studying for an exam. I was exhausted. When the lights went down I was barely able to keep my eyes open through the trailers.

Then the film started and suddenly I was wide awake. By the time Neo was dodging bullets in slow motion, I'd completely forgotten about the concept of sleep. My friend and I could not believe what we had just seen. Sure, we'd seen plenty of classic Kung Fu films and enjoyed plenty of action cinema, but this was something different. This was new and we couldn't stop talking about it. It was one of the films that made me decide to study movies in college.

But almost everyone had that experience seeing *The Matrix*; it's nostalgic to me because of all the surrounding factors. The big, empty, classic theater. My best friend seeing it with me. The relatively new freedom of being able to head to a movie theater on our own in the middle of a school day. Our high school life nearing its final year. And part of the nostalgia I feel the most for the film is that feeling of being stunned and amazed and surprised. It's nearly impossible to capture anymore, especially considering the fact I have to be plugged into the industry to write for this site. The film holds a special spot in all of cinema, of course, and sparked the beginning of a new era in cinema, but for me it was also an end to the sort of innocent excitement you could have walking into a movie theater blind, with your best friend, a bucket of popcorn and no idea you'd be changed by the time you came out. — *Matthew Razak*

### ***Star Trek* (2009)**



It was a Friday night in 2009, and I was distinctly unhappy about being dragged to the cinema on short notice to a late-night film I had no interest in seeing. As a teenage girl, it didn't matter that we had visitors to keep entertained—I'd rather have been hanging out with my friends. Nevertheless, having no choice and under firm instruction from my parents, I sat and sulked in my chair in the darkness and waited for the opening credits.

It's funny how things work out. For all my reservations, I remember being floored by its larger-than-life visuals and the sheer cinematic spectacle. The sound system in our pretty average small town cinema somehow did the SFX and Michael Giacchino's score justice. I'd always dismissed *Star Trek* as something for actual nerds, but this slick, fast-paced reinvention of the series made it seem almost cool. Zoe Saldana's role as Lt. Uhura really inspired me, not to mention the rest of the fantastic cast, including pre-Thor Chris Hemsworth as George Kirk, Chris Pine, and the frequent appearance of Zachary Quinto's

fabulous facial expressions. The tundra scenes with Simon Pegg were so completely unexpected for what should have been a dry sci-fi that I found myself gripped. Even subordinate characters like Spock's mother (Winona Ryder) seemed so well-formed that I couldn't help but want to see more of them.

When my brother got the DVD as a Christmas present that same year, we didn't stop watching it, and now, 10 years later, whenever we both happen to be back together, it's a no brainer. Scratched and low-res as it seems now, it's still a staple. We used to listen to the end credit sequence on its own on repeat on our iPods (probably along with other, less memorable 2009 fare.) Don't even ask us about the blooper reel in the special features: we could probably recite it to you. "The statistical likelihood that this plan is going to work is less than 4.3%!" is still a household catchphrase. If I told you that *Star Trek* was the reason I started writing about film, you'd probably argue that there are so many other decent films out there that could have been more of an inspiration. Yet it became the subject of one of my first film essays, and a few years down the line, here we are. Don't dismiss the films that grab your attention from a young age—they can stay with you for years afterward. — *Sian Francis-Cox*

### ***Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones***



Well, the sun's out, my ice cream's melting, and the streets are loud with children—must be summer! What better way to escape it all than some air-conditioned movie-going! Big summer movies, even if they end up being awful, are always such tremendous tentpoles of the movie nerd experience, though there's one blockbuster that I'll always particularly cherish.

Flashback 17 (~~17!~~) years ago. Sam is six years old. He was Boba Fett last Halloween. Where did you think this was going? Hindsight might chuckle at *Attack of the Clones'* CG-overload and whiny Anakin (I hate sand too, pal), but honestly? *Episode II* holds up.

Right off the bat, you get iconic setpieces, with Zam Wessel's assassination attempt, the awesome Obi-Wan/Jango tussle, and then all of Geonosis. How could a hoard of droids squaring off against the *oh my god this is an amazing* reveal of the Clone Army not thrill you? It certainly blew my little mind, and the huge influx of great Jedi characters descending on the coliseum was pure bliss. And as an additional plus, *Attack of the Clones* sets up so much of what made the now-defunct Extended Universe amazing, with Genndy Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars* series spinning off, and video games like *Republic Commando* telling other sides of the conflict. *Episode II* gets by on nostalgia, but also the massive era within the Star Wars canon it establishes. — *Sam van der Meer*



When you're a kid, dinosaurs are one of the biggest revelations you can have. "You mean to tell me there's one with spikes on its tail? Another with three horns? Wait, how many teeth did that one have?" Wrapping a young mind around the plethora of dinos lead me to pre-Internet research in sets of books that eventually spawned Wikipedia. Times were tougher then.

*Jurassic Park* hit at the right time for me. Dinosaur interest was at its peak, and excitement was only multiplied by the fact it was the first PG-13 movie I saw. From the opening scene to the heart-pounding escape through the park, I was hooked. Even if at the time I didn't understand the science behind the cloning process, it didn't matter. There were dinosaurs and they *looked real*. Lex and Tim—who weren't much older than me—were running for their lives and getting sneezed on by a Brontosaurus. What's not to love?

And the end. The cat and mouse game with the raptors in the kitchen replete with a T-rex deus ex machina turned death into life, not just for the humans, but for the dinos themselves. "Life, uh, finds a way," as the chaos mathematician Ian Malcolm reminded us. In its victory, the T-rex lets out a triumphant roar that, to this day, gives me chills. There are a handful of movies that take me back to another time, but *Jurassic Park* succeeds beyond measure. — *Nick Hershey*

### ***Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone***



When the *Harry Potter* series of books first came out, I was completely captivated. You can't even imagine my excitement when I found out it was being made into a film. To see it come to life was amazing and I was filled with wonder seeing the trailer and then heading into the theater to see it back in 2001. The cast that brought Harry, Ron, and Hermione to life was exactly as I imagined—it was as if everything I had read was lifted right from the pages of the book onto the screen in front of me. Warner Bros. and J.K. Rowling did me well as a kid and right up until my late teens when the film franchise sadly ended. Now I had no idea when this first installment came out it would be a blockbuster, but it of course did.

Some of my favorite memories of this film include when Harry gets his wand, seeing Diagon Alley and the breathtaking journey to Hogwarts Castle itself. The Quidditch match itself was also amazing to witness. It was love at first sight for me watching this film and I continue to watch it over and over again. Sure, it had some really cheesy silly lines and scenes such as Harry sticking his wand up the Troll's nose, Fluffy's drool on Ron, etc. This film was designed for kids but it captivated adults as well. We grew up with the trio of actors as we watched them grow on screen. There's something to be said about films like this where the actors mature throughout the franchise. *Harry Potter* will probably go down in history as the best film franchise of our generation, it certainly deserves that title. I encourage anyone who hasn't actually sat down to watch these films to do so. It's a truly magical (no pun intended) experience, and one you won't regret. — *Tarah Bleier*

***The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring***



It turns out that I am a heathen when it comes to classic fantasy novels. I was vaguely aware that *The Lord of the Rings* was a series of novels, but not much beyond that and an article I had read about how insane the magnitude of the production leading up to this movie was. This was back when I went to the theaters a few times a year instead of a few times a month, so I tried to pick my movies carefully. This movie that had swords and sorcery looked interesting enough. Why don't I give that one a whirl?

I was pinned to my seat from the opening narration and prologue. I had never seen anything like this. The scale on hand, the amazing world that these characters were living in, the beautiful score, and the iconic characters themselves. Aside from mixing up Sauron and Saruman's names, I absorbed every frame of this film with a hope that it would just keep going and it just about did that. I had no idea going into this thing that it was 3 hours long. The cousin I talked into taking me didn't either. She has not gone to a movie with me since. Aside from my perturbed cousin, I couldn't believe that 3 hours went by so quickly. It was 3 hours of being introduced to Tolkien's world and I wanted more.

This was the first movie that I saw a second time in theaters. I had to show my friends and what family would listen to my ravings about the one ring. I love this movie. Frodo's quest to destroy the one ring with his friends by his side, Aragorn struggling to come to terms with the legacy of his ancestors, and Boromir losing himself to temptation and finding redemption. These all resonated with me and clearly with many others. I watched my DVD copy of the movie three times back to back when I first got it. I didn't want to lose that feeling that came from watching it and it is one of the few movies that still brings that feeling of wonder right back when I pop it in now. — *John Morey*

### ***Batman (1989)***



The hype was real. Everything that summer was *Batman*.

For years I'd devoured re-runs of *Batman* '66 on the Bay Area station KOFY channel 20; on their radio station (KOFY 1050 AM), they'd play *Batman* '66 episodes on the air like a radio play in between their solid rotation of golden oldies. But this was *Batman* '89. It was darker and weirder and less overtly camp. I was the right age to buy into it without question, much the same way I'd later fall for the marketing behind Warren Beatty's *Batman*-inflected version of *Dick Tracy*. My family had the Taco Bell collector cups. One of my classmates got a Batman symbol shaved into the back of his head. My brother and I collected the trading cards, which seemed to be made of the lowest-grade cardboard possible (sub-toilet paper tube). I knew the entire plot of *Batman* '89 ahead of time because of a sticker activity book that I'd read to my mom while she was cooking dinner or just trying to get a moment of peace and quiet for once.

In retrospect, *Batman* '89 isn't a great Batman movie since the Caped Crusader feels more like a silver spoon version of The Punisher. It's a good Tim Burton film, though, since The Joker is an artsy weirdo trying to make art on his own misunderstood terms. But I was young and didn't have critical faculties yet. What I did know then, and what I still know now to be true, is that Prince's "Partyman" is a banger and I probably love the artist Francis Bacon because of the museum vandalization scene. Ah, to have the eyes of youth again. — *Hubert Vigilla*

### ***The Dark Knight***



Imagine it's the summer of 2008. You're in a traveling camp for the summer and you were supposed to go to some outdoor adventure... place for the day, only it's raining. Since you're out of state and there's nothing open, the guy in charge decides to go to the local movie theater and have every teenager watch *The Dark Knight*. We came in a little bit late, just after the bank heist scene, but we were glued to our seats for the entire movie. I wasn't that big of a Batman or comic book fan up until that point and no, *The Dark Knight* didn't make me into a Batman fanatic, but instead, it left me with a weird impression that what I saw was a dream.

For over a decade, whenever I watch *The Dark Knight*, it comes across like a hallucination that everyone seemed to remember except for me. I know the scenes as they happen and I can quote the plot without even trying, but the movie always seems fresh to me. That bank scene that I missed out on the first time? Despite seeing it plenty of times afterward, it still feels like I'm watching it with new eyes. Even the smorgasbord of classic moments seemed so new. It was just such a strange set of circumstances watching it that first time that I'll always remember that spur of the moment rainstorm that resulted in me being in a movie theater watching *THE* movie of the summer without even knowing what it was. A weird sense of nostalgia, but a sense none-the-less. — *Jesse Lab*

***Holes***



People like R.L. Stine and Louis Sachar get surprisingly little attention for how massively influential they've been on children. Sachar is particularly impressive because his *Wayside School* series actually managed to make dumb kid me laugh at a book, and books are lame! Those sideways stories aren't even his biggest claim to fame, though, as *Holes* managed to win the Newberry award, the tippy top of children's literature prizes. Even more impressive than that, the movie adaptation, which Sachar wrote the screenplay for, not only stars a young, in-form Shia LeBoeuf but the entire film is actually really fun.

*Holes* definitely doesn't compare to the spectacle of any other movies on this list, but it serves an even greater nostalgic purpose as it was the first movie I got to see *without* my parents. Seeing Stanley Yelnats IV being sent away to a juvenile detention camp to dig a buncha holes for Sigourney Weaver (!) and Jon Voight (!!!) felt oddly similar to the new experience I was braving by myself. Yes, eight-year-olds are bad at comparisons, but for the first time, it felt like / liked a movie myself rather than being told to like it by my parents or sister. It certainly helped that the movie is still good fun to this day, relaying a fun treasure hunting western with loads of character. In no other movie will you see Sigourney Weaver slap the absolute pants off of Jon Voight with rattlesnake-venom coated nail polish. I remember way too much about this movie, like reciting the entire **rap** from memory, because of how dang impressive I thought it was. My nostalgia for this little 2003 Disney movie eclipses so many great movies, including some on this list, because it's much more personal, and something I can truly appreciate as an early progenitor to my love with movies. And onions. — *Bradley Sexton*

***Wall-E***



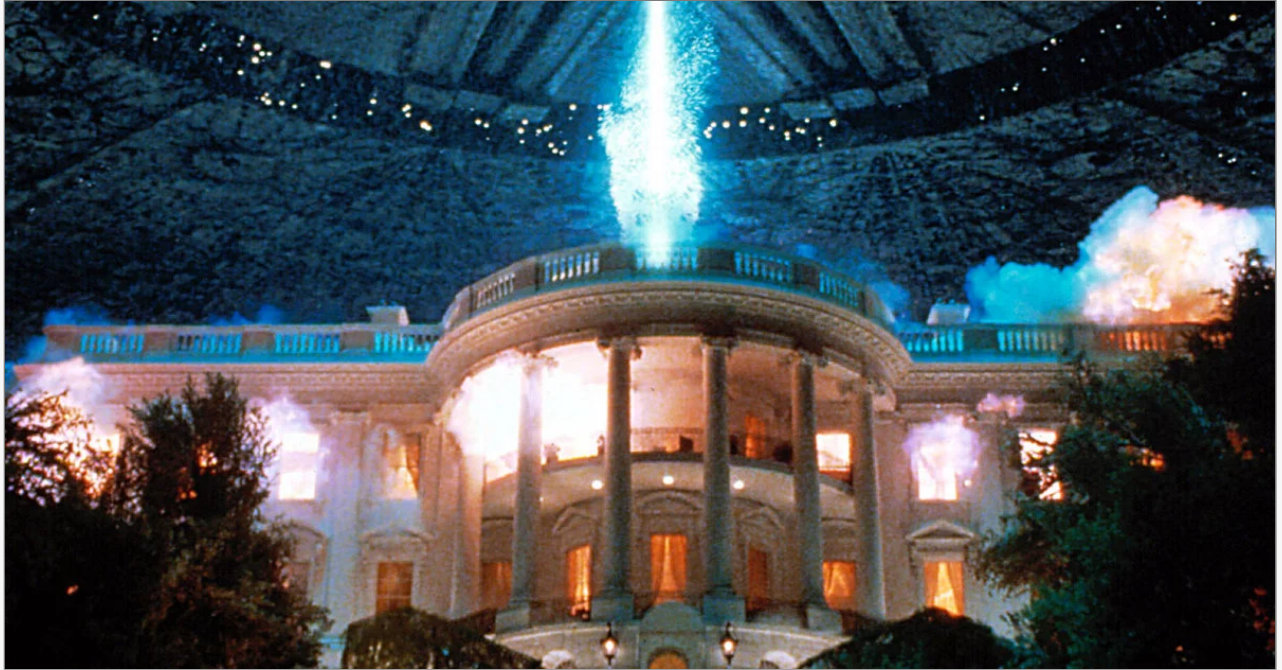
I suppose I've become the resident Flixist hipster because I don't have that many big memories of summer blockbusters. While I know I've enjoyed them in my youth, I became a very cynical teenager that went out of his way to avoid major tentpole films. I've obviously seen some of those "larger than life" films (including *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Dark Knight*), but the films that stuck out to me the most were always ones with deep messages, intriguing imagery, or very self-reflective themes.

The one studio I used to have an immense love for was Pixar. To me, they were the perfect animated film studio and I was there every summer for their new releases. While *Cars* was disappointing, there wasn't a film in the studio's catalog that I didn't enjoy. I think that is what took me by surprise when I first saw *Wall-E*.

2008 was a pretty solid year for films, in general, but *Wall-E* has quickly become one of my favorite films ever made. I distinctly remember the scene where Wall-E and EVE are floating through space, sharing a dance together and how I started to cry at it. There was something so magical about the mixture of atmosphere, music, and near silent storytelling that made me see the beauty that film can capture. Pixar would do just that a year later with *Up*, but *Wall-E* was the film that made me realize how poignant media can be.

Pixar has since fallen from grace, but right before the turn of the decade, they created some absolute magic. *Ratatouille*, *Wall-E*, and *Up* are all incredible in their own right, but I'll never forget the impression that plucky little robot left on me when I first saw the film. — *Peter Glagowski*

***Independence Day***



So yeah, I believe *Independence Day* is easily the most influential, revolutionary film of the past 30 years. It was the first of the massive apocalyptic, special-effects loaded, disaster porn films that we seem come out just about every single year. Without *Independence Day*, there probably wouldn't have been *Armageddon*, *Deep Impact*, *2012*, *San Andreas*, or any *Transformers* movies.

And besides all the explosions and destruction, the movie is actually pretty good. Will Smith was introduced to the world as the coolest dude on this entire planet. Jeff Goldblum is almost just as cool, Harry Connick Jr. is the man in this movie and then Harvey Firestein shows up and everything seems right in the world. And can we just talk about Bill Pullman (not Paxton) and his incredible speech. The greatest Presidential moment in the history of cinema.

I watch this movie about once a year and each time I realize the brilliance of it. It is a massive disaster film but with a ton of heart. It is led by great performances and real emotional weight. Maybe it was because it was something we haven't seen before that made it seem fresh. But it stands the test of time, and it is the best Blockbuster of all of them! — *Nathan McVay*



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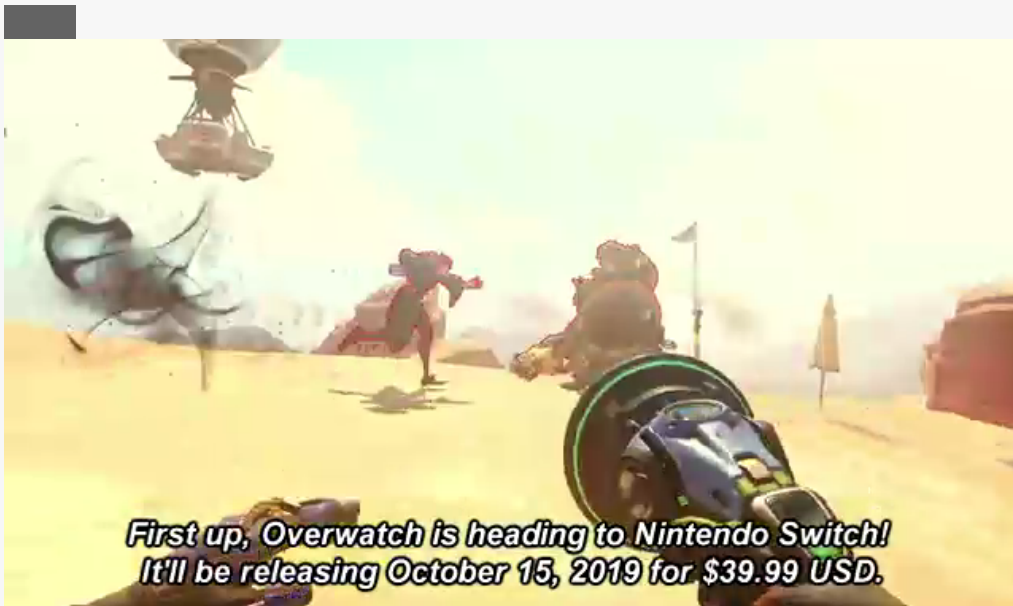
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## Disney reveals launch windows for Marvel Disney+ shows, second season of The Mandalorian

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yesterday afternoon, Disney led when fans can expect to upcoming slate of Disney+ ason, likely in an attempt to *alcon and Winter Soldier* for off with *WandaVision* in

e second season. That could l as that, Iger said that the ow and whenever the next /.

I kind of expected *WandaVision* to launch in December. The project was originally slated for 2021 and releasing it in December would still technically count as 2020. That's kind of a dick move, but I'd also rather Disney take the time to make sure that show is solid. Same goes for *Loki*, which was conspicuously absent from this earnings call.

As for *The Mandalorian*, I have a feeling Disney is going to drive that series into the ground. Just call it a hunch, but Iger talking about "more" doesn't fill me with confidence.

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