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Punisher Season Two Carefully Balances Frank's Humanity, but Struggles With Dual Conflicts



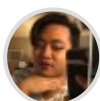
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Daredevil Season Three: The Netflix Universe's Last Stand



The Gifted: Magneto Was Right



Published 1 year ago on October 10, 2018

By **Chris Compendio** [Twitter](#)

There's been something missing about "so-good-it's-bad" cinema as of late. Because of "hits" like *Sharknado*, platforms like Netflix and the Syfy channel are full of so-called "bad movies" that are specifically designed to be garbage. Gone are cult classics with the feel of Tommy Wiseau's *The Room*, a genuine attempt that became a fascinating and compelling wreck, a cult classic in the making.

Sony's *Venom* is like a high-budget return to *The Room*, and it is objectively terrible—I loved it.

The movie is predictable in that it follows the same plot structure as most movies of its genre and unpredictable in that you never know what strange, out-of-place moment or line of dialogue will come next. It is funny in its own weird, morbid way, but it is also funny unintentionally from serious moments that come across as absurd. I haven't laughed this hard at any other film this year—it felt like the filmmakers had accidentally created a superhero movie parody.



I question perhaps every single major creative decision that lead actor Tom Hardy made as Eddie Brock. Every second he occupies the screen gives off this bizarre aura, in a role that feels like something Nicolas Cage would have taken in the 1990s or the 2000s. Much has already been said about Hardy's accent of unknown origin, and many of his physical mannerisms are overplayed as well.

But I simply had no grasp on Eddie Brock's personality—there's a combination of humor and determination from this maverick reporter, that eventually turns into a constant cynicism after his journalistic career is ruined. Even so, Hardy operates at the same, almost-bored wavelength throughout this portion of the story, mumbling from scene to scene.

By the time we get to Brock's obtainment of the Venom symbiote, Hardy transitions into a one-per comedy routine with his inner voice of Venom. The symbiote is characterized as sadistic and cruel way that when it actually does crack a joke, it unexpectedly fits with the tone the film establishes. That doesn't mean that there still aren't several eye-raising moments where we can't figure out if it's a joke or not—take the scene in which Venom explains to Eddie how he is “a loser.”

Venom's motivation is unclear for most of the film before it takes a jarring shift near the end. Despite lacking any sense of consistency or common sense in this combination character arc of Eddie Brock and Venom, the sheer absurdity of their fun and hilarious dynamic (whether it is intentional or not) made the otherwise painful film bearable.



The supporting cast was dead weight. Riz Ahmed is an actor that I very much admire, but with the dialogue fed to him as Life Foundation founder Carlton Drake, he is laughably bad. Drake is meant to be an Elon Musk-like character, with large ambitions that may come at the cost of the lives of underprivileged people. We are meant to believe that Drake is determined enough to the point of bypassing ethical standards, but he instead comes across as irrational and just plain stupid.

The usually-amazing Michelle Williams is wasted in the same manner several actresses have been in older superhero films. As Brock's ex-fiancee Anne Weying, Williams is unconvincing as someone actually in love with Hardy's unsettling Eddie Brock and spends the latter half of the film blindly accepting the madness around her. While she does play a key role in certain sequences, the movie treats her like a plot point than an actual character.

There aren't too many other people to mention besides Jenny Slate as a Life Foundation scientist who recruits Eddie Brock against her own boss, and it is disappointing seeing yet another up-and-coming performer being underused in a big blockbuster that should have instead propelled her to another level of stardom.



In fact, nothing feels “right” in ***Venom***. The way people talk to each other in this movie does not feel like how actual people talk not only in real life but even in below average films. Characters say lines that are complete non-sequiturs and raise confusion, until whatever that line was is lost in the following stream of exposition. The movie has a similar structure to other blockbusters with the necessary set-ups, scenes of exposition, and inciting incident, but all of these essential scenes are rushed and feel like someone hitting fast-forward on the remote control. It is a mess that is too fascinating to ignore.

At worst, blockbuster movies feel like they were written by committee—***Venom*** feels like it was written by a bot that has seen every single superhero movie, and produced its own automated screenplay that replaced the word “cape” with “creepy goo with a big tongue.” There is no consideration that this robotic screenplay gives to emotion or rationality, with crazy tonal shifts going to the final scene in the movie, which might as well have ended with a cartoonish, Looney Tunes “That’s All Folks!”

It is a movie that almost feels like it doesn’t know how to justify its own existence, so it doesn’t even try. We are left wondering what motivations, besides box office returns, the filmmakers had while putting this weird Frankenstein’s monster of a film together. It may be terrible, but I cannot stop thinking about it or talking to people about it—it’s a strange Rorschach test where people will see something different from it. ***Venom*** feels like a shaggy dog story, a long-running joke with a bad Eminem song as a punchline. I should also mention that I laughed the hardest at the mid-credits scene, which I predicted the dialogue of verbatim before the scene even started.

Venom, as I said before, is a terrible movie, but not only did I love it, I want them to make more.

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Chris Compendio



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Punisher Season Two Carefully Balances Frank's Humanity, but Struggles With Dual Conflicts



Published 1 year ago on January 11, 2019

By Brooklyn Wallace



PUNISHER SEASON 2 REVIEW

On January 18, *The Punisher* will be back on Netflix, with **Jon Bernthal** returning to keep the character alive on a platform where Marvel shows have been producing great quality, but still haven't been able to survive. Fans were first introduced to the character in *Daredevil* season two, where fans learned the backstory of Frank Castle, a veteran and father, whose family was killed in front of him after returning from war. When Castle returned to Netflix for his stand-alone series, we got a slightly altered background story, focusing on his war buddy, Billy Russo, played by **Ben Barnes**, as a force behind the killing of Frank's family that day by the carousel.

Season two of *The Punisher* has some strong moments, particularly in the beginning. While season one hinted that Castle's fighting days may be over, as he took the identity of Pete Castiglione and sat in on some group therapy, season two shows that Pete is just as much of a fighter as Frank.

The first three episodes are the best of the season. These could stand-alone as a new series about Pete taking the world by storm and taking on a normal life, but he's a fighter, and he's not done.

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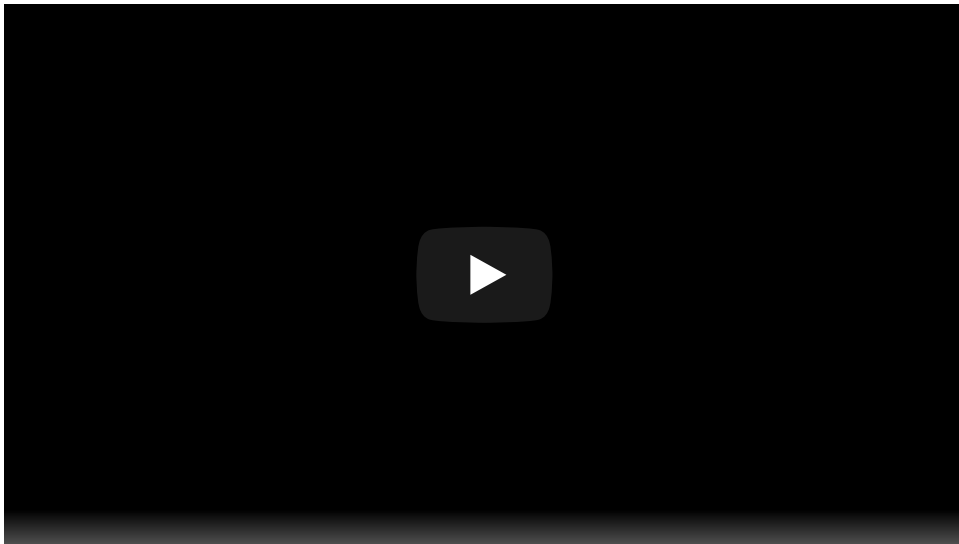
FEATURES

Runaways Season 2 Feels Like A Step Back



Published 1 year ago on December 14, 2018

By **Caleb Borchers** [Twitter](#)



Runaways Season 2 is an unusual show to review, in that it is not often a sophomore effort is the first to truly live out the premise of the show. With the so called Runaways staying at home for most of

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AP MARVEL

AP Marvel Episode 20: Making Sense of Venom



Published 1 year ago on October 18, 2018

By **Chris Compendio**



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After a read of [Chris's *Venom* review](#), they, Izzy, and Anthony are joined by returning guest Sam Riordan ([@JustSamPlease](#)) and total rando Peter in discussing Sony's "Marvel" "film" at length, topics including its production history, character arcs, choices of accents, and overall genre weirdness. Like the movie itself, this episode is a mess, but expect to hear a lot about Tom Hardy's old MySpace profile and the wonderful Eddie/Venom fanart the crew has found.

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