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Review: "Mythic Quest: Raven's Banquet"

Maxwell Patton

July 13, 2020

"Mythic Quest: Raven's Banquet," a new television series, debuted on the AppleTV+ streaming service on Feb. 7, 2020. Created by Rob McElhenney, Charlie Day and Megan Ganz, who are all well-known for their work on "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia," the series focuses on a video game company behind the fictional MMO game "Mythic Quest."

I binge-watched the entire series in about a week, and I believe that it's a well-executed workplace comedy that doesn't take itself too seriously and boasts stellar comedic performances from a quirky cast of characters mostly centered around the company.

"Mythic Quest"'s main two characters are the company's founder, an egomaniac named Ian Grimm (played to perfection by McElhenney), and the game's lead engineer, Poppy Li (portrayed by Charlotte Nicdao), a graduate of MIT who constantly has to put up with the shenanigans that the company's staff engage in. The chemistry between the two is palpable; they play off of each other quite nicely and often exchange witty banter along with a host of pop culture references.

Executive producer of "Mythic Quest" David Brittlesbee (David Hornsby) is not often taken seriously even though he does have high authority, while the company's sociopathic head of monetization is Brad Bakshi (Danny Pudi). Rounding out the main cast of characters are game testers Dana and Rachel (Imani Hakim and Ashly Burch), washed-up head writer C.W. Longbottom (F. Murray Abraham) and David's psychotic assistant Jo (Jessie Ennis).

Much of the show's content is incredibly realistic, partially due to Apple partnering with game studio Ubisoft to create the show. Many of the show's writers are hardcore game enthusiasts, and experts from Ubisoft and other game companies were brought in to assist in creating both the in-game and real-world environments.

I think that really works to the show's advantage, as viewers get a glimpse into a gaming world that doesn't feel cheap or inauthentic. I also really like how many of the small decisions that occur on the show have large consequences.

For example, one of the first game ideas that the viewer is introduced to during the pilot is a shovel created by Li that she wishes to include in the game's upcoming expansion "Raven's Banquet." This shovel has the potential to change the in-game environment around "Mythic

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Quest” players; however, Grimm wants players to be able to employ it as a weapon (to Li’s disgust).

The working relationship between the two is handled very well as this conflict sets up a season-long storyline that I won’t reveal. Another issue that the show’s creators handle well, particularly in the latter half of the season, is the lack of diversity in the video game industry.

I am quite fond of how the show develops its characters and invests the audience in their stories. While some don’t get enough screen time to fully shine (such as the head writer), every one of the show’s characters feel authentic and receive moments of glory in the overarching narrative.

This development isn’t rushed either, as one of the crowning moments of the main storyline comes near the tail end of the season during a battle sequence. It’s astonishing to watch and kept me on the edge of my seat the entire time. The show’s soundtrack is also a highlight, utilizing popular tunes and lesser-known tracks to enhance the moments presented.

While the show mainly focuses on comedy, it does have its fair share of dramatic moments. Throughout the season and especially near its end, we do learn about Ian and his relationship with his family and those who help create “Mythic Quest,” and seeing some of these struggles is heartbreaking.

My personal favorite episode of the season, which features dramatic elements heavily, is “A Dark Quiet Death,” a tale featuring almost none of the members of the main cast. Instead, it focuses on a husband and wife, played by Jake Johnson and Cristin Milioti, who create a successful video game company together that is based around the episode’s namesake game.

However, things take a turn for the worse, and the story featured emotionally hits hard as the duo encounter various obstacles regarding their game’s development and their differing philosophies on how it should be run. I am also a fan of the quarantine episode, which sees the characters struggle with working from home during the pandemic and delivers an emotionally satisfying epilogue to the season.

However, the show isn’t without its faults. A few of the show’s conflicts, some being a branch of the episode’s main conflict, get solved without any lasting issues or discipline. A glaring issue in the game or company might receive a solution in the blink of an eye. There are also a few instances when the drama and epicness of an event can be almost ruined by a moment attempting to be equally comedic, but for the most part, the tone of the show is kept in balance.

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If you're looking for a new series to binge-watch during the pandemic (or just in general), I would recommend taking a look at "Mythic Quest: Raven's Banquet." There's a whole new world within that must be seen to be believed.

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Retro Rewind: “Moving Pictures” by Rush
Maxwell Patton
July 14, 2020

Have you ever had an album in your collection that you’ve been dying to listen to, though you’ve never gotten a chance to take it in? A work by one of your favorite artists that has eluded your eyes for quite some time?

It doesn’t matter whether that work is on a vinyl record, a CD or lurking in a Spotify playlist somewhere, but I’m sure that everyone has at least one of those records. In my case, that record has been “Moving Pictures” by the rock group Rush, one of my favorite artists.

Though I’ve listened to some of the tracks often (including the popular tracks “Tom Sawyer” and “YYZ”), it’s been sitting in my Spotify playlist for a couple of years without a full listen-through. However, this week’s Retro Rewind will be talking about the album.

Anthem Records released “Moving Pictures” on Feb. 12, 1981 with three singles to support it: “Tom Sawyer,” “Limelight” and “Vital Signs.” It is Rush’s most commercially successful album in the United States, selling over four million copies.

The Band

Canadian progressive rock band Rush was founded in Toronto in 1968 by guitarist Alex Lifeson, drummer John Rutsey, and bassist/frontman Jeff Jones. Jones was replaced by Geddy Lee within the first few weeks of their formation, and drummer/main lyricist Neil Peart replaced Rutsey (who left due to health problems) two weeks before they embarked on an American concert tour.

This lineup continued until the band ceased activity in 2018. Two years later, Peart passed away from brain cancer at the age of 67. Between 1974 and 2015, Rush released a total of 19 studio albums, 11 live albums and 11 compilation albums.

Known for numerous extended tracks as well as popular classic-rock-radio material, each member of the trio is considered among the best musicians in their respective fields.

Rush became a member of the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1994 and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2013.

The Tracklist

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Opening up the first side of “Moving Pictures” is one of Rush’s most popular tunes, “Tom Sawyer.” Co-written by Pye Dubois of the band Max Webster, Lee plays a fender jazz bass on the track instead of his usual Rickenbacker 4001.

Next is “Red Barchetta,” a dystopian rock song inspired by the short story “A Nice Morning Drive” written by Richard Foster. The instrumental “YYZ” (pronounced as why-why-zed) takes its name from the IATA airport code for Toronto Pearson International Airport, and begins with those letters being played on various instruments in Morse Code.

Meanwhile, “Limelight” deals with the difficulties of fame and the absence of privacy in the life of a rock star. Lifeson has often cited the guitar solo in “Limelight” as his favorite to play live.

Side two begins with “The Camera Eye,” which runs for over ten minutes. The piece was referenced by name on “Limelight,” and contains two distinct sections: “NewYork” and “London.” Peart took a stroll in each of those cities and wrote lyrics based on his observations and the rhythms that he felt.

After “The Camera Eye” is “Witch Hunt,” a component of the “Fear” series which features a heavy synthesizer. Also featuring synthesizer is the album’s closer, “Vital Signs,” which takes influence from reggae music.

The Production

Rush agreed to start work on the follow-up to their 1980 album, “Permanent Waves,” while they were in New York City to support the album. Working at Phase One Studios in Toronto as guest artists on the Max Webster song “Battlescar,” Pye Dubois suggested a song for the band to record, which became “Tom Sawyer.”

Much of the record was written in Story Lake, Ontario, with demos completed back at Phase One with producer Terry Brown. A few of the album’s tracks, including “Limelight” and “Tom Sawyer,” were premiered prior to release during Rush’s live sets.

“Moving Pictures” was recorded in October and November 1980 in Quebec at LeStudio. This was Brown’s first digitally-produced record. The studio contained a new digital 48-track machine, which was foreign to the trio.

They also used a pressure zone microphone, fastened to Peart’s chest as he played, during recording to pick up direct sound. The guitar solo for “Tom Sawyer” was composed of five separate takes, while “Red Barchetta” was completed in a single take.

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However, problems with equipment caused the band to finish recording three days later than expected.

What Critics Thought of “Moving Pictures”

Greg Prato, in a review for All Music, praised the album as “undeniably one of the greatest hard rock albums of all time.” He wrote later in his review “Rush proved with ‘Moving Pictures’ that there was still uncharted territory to explore within the hard rock format, and were rewarded with their most enduring and popular album.” Calum Slingerland, writing for Vice, also rated the album highly.

Kerrang! placed the album at number 43 in their list of the best metal albums, and Rolling Stone ranked it as the third greatest progressive rock album (behind “In the Court of the Crimson King” and last week’s subject “The Dark Side of the Moon”).

“Moving Pictures” was also voted the greatest drumming album in the progressive rock genre by readers of Rhythm magazine. It was included, along with the Rush album “2112,” in the guide “1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die.”

What I Think of the Album

I have been listening to Rush’s music since before I could talk, and its fascinating to me hearing all of these longer tracks like “The Camera Eye” or “Red Barchetta” coupled with the radio hits like “Limelight.”

What’s interesting as well is that the band manages to keep these longer tracks from turning stale and monotonous with complex rhythms and stellar instrumentation.

The production on the album is also very intricate, creating a layered soundscape that the band fully takes advantage of. On “Moving Pictures,” Rush showed that the world is indeed their stage.

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Dining on Campus: Differences this Fall

Kyle Jackson

July 15, 2020

Wright State's Hospitality Service, Chartwells, is working hard to implement new safety protocols while also using pre-existing services to allow faculty, staff and students to dine safely.

Preparedness

With the uncertainty of the virus, Chartwells has created a plan to open for all scenarios.

"Whether we are in a tier one or tier three scenario, we have planned to ensure that, no matter what, we will be able to safely provide dining services to the campus community," said Nicholas Paige, marketing director, and other Chartwells members.

Familiar Dining Experience

Chartwells is making sure that they operate safely while providing as close to a similar dining experience as always to their customers.

"By and large more things on the food service side of things will remain the same," said Paige. "I would say more things will be remaining the same rather than changing."

Customers will still be able to use services that have already been in place to order their food safely like GrubHub, at many food locations on campus.

"We are also currently looking into other options to expand mobile ordering," said Paige.

It is strongly recommended that customers pay with a card if possible to ensure a safer transaction.

"Additionally, all of our locations are able to take contactless payment with Apple Pay and Samsung Pay," said Paige.

At this point, there have been no closures of any dining locations on campus or any big changes that normally would not occur before the start of a new semester.

"Every semester we take a look at the variety of dining options on campus and evaluate them," said Paige. "This semester is no different in that regard."

Visible Changes

Dining services will be following all protocols and recommendations including Wright State's protocols.

"Wright State has taken care of the seating arrangements and has limited the number of tables and seats to ensure social distancing and ensure the safety of the community," said Paige.

Customers will also see visible changes that they should be familiar with seeing in other public places such as floor stickers to mark six feet of distance.

"Most of the changes will come from the operation or logistical side like mentioned before, the floor stickers, limiting guests, plexiglass shields and more," said Paige.

All dining locations will be controlling the amount of customers inside each location.

"We will limit the number of customers who can enter the dining locations and have one-way-in and one-way-out traffic flow, all of which are for the safety of the customers," said Paige.

Wright States Hospitality Service, Chartwells, is making sure they are prepared this fall to serve customers safely and provide a similar dining experience.

**Information included in this article was communicated from Nicholas Paige with contributions from other Chartwells members.*

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Dayton Dragons 2020 Season Canceled

William Baptist

July 16, 2020

The Dayton Dragons 2020 season will be canceled, due to Major League Baseball deciding not to provide its affiliated Minor League Baseball teams with players for the 2020 season.

“These are unprecedented times for our country and our organization as this is the first time in our history that we’ve had a summer without Minor League Baseball played,” said MiLB President & CEO Pat O’Conner in a press release.

The Dayton Dragons announced a new naming rights agreement to their stadium in January with Day Air Credit Union. It will now be named the Day Air Ballpark, but fans will have to wait until the 2021 season to enter the stadium.

“This is a disappointing day for many. We have worked very hard during the off-season to make the 21 season of Dragons baseball a great one here at Day Air Ballpark,” said Robert Murphy, Dragons team president.

What’s next for the Dragons

The season was originally supposed to begin in April, but the coronavirus pandemic forced them to delay the start of the season.

This announcement to cancel the season removes any uncertainty and the Dragons can now look forward to the 2021 season.

“We will now work with our state government, local government, public health directors, Major League Baseball, Minor League Baseball, and the Midwest League to ensure that we are prepared to open the ballpark for our 21 season next year in 2021,” said Murphy.

It still isn’t necessarily a guarantee that stadiums will allow full capacity for fans next season, but the Dragons are remaining optimistic.

“There are still many unknowns moving forward on large mass gatherings, but we will work tirelessly to ensure that when you come to Day Air Ballpark, not only will it be fun, affordable, and exciting, but also very safe,” said Murphy.

Impact on WSU

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The Wright State baseball season coincides with the Dragons season, so this doesn't directly impact WSU.

With the Dragons being a professional team, there is a multitude of moving parts that go into their season as opposed to the WSU baseball team.

"I do know from experience that there is a lot that revolves around minor league baseball, not just the players and the workers, but the communities as well," said Alex Sogard, WSU head baseball coach.

It does however, create some obstacles that WSU will have to overcome and adjust to during their next season.

"Next year will likely be different than it has ever been from a day to day standpoint. We may have to wear masks on the field, be more aware of spreading guys out in the dugout, and even focusing more on individual groups in practice," according to Sogard.

As of now, there hasn't been any indication on next season being canceled or delayed, but they are definitely preparing for changes in a lot of aspects.

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Fall Sports Delayed Until October
Makenzie Hoeflerlin
July 16, 2020

The Horizon League Council decided Thursday, July 16 to delay the competition of all fall sports until at least Oct. 1, according to a press release.

“The delay in competition includes all exhibition, League and non-League contests in all sports (championship and non-championship),” according to the press release. “Decisions related to training and practice will be left to members’ discretion.”

Each individual school will have the authority to reschedule any non conference contests impacted by the delayed start.

This decision comes with the assumption that this situation is fluid and more changes could be expected.

“The Horizon League’s Council will continue to monitor developments related to COVID-19, and will evaluate fall schedules and competitions with the understanding that there may be future changes,” according to the press release. “The Council will continue to be guided by our top priority: the health, safety and well-being of our student-athletes, coaches, and staff.”

Wright State released a statement following the announcement that aligns with the values of the Horizon League.

“Wright State Athletics remains committed to the health, safety and wellness of our student-athletes, coaches, staff and fans as our top priority,” according to WSU’s department of athletics. “While many uncertainties still exist, today’s decision by the Horizon League provides the opportunity to adjust as needed based on the most up-to-date information.”

Wright State has not released any further updates regarding athletics for the upcoming 2020-21 academic year.