

'Batman: Year One' 'Ceremonials' falls flat

By Erik Johnson
STAFF WRITER

Batman: Year One is a newly released film in the DC Comics Animated Universe (DCAU) and joins the ranks of Gotham Knight, Under the Red Hood, and many other mature animated titles from DC.

These made for DVD animated films have been consistently great and consistently superior to the animated films that the competing Marvel comics has released (excluding, perhaps, Hulk vs. Wolverine).

Year One is a retelling of the story arc of the same name by comics legend Frank Miller. When released, Miller's reimagining of Batman rocked the comics world. It was gritty, nasty, and dark - and people loved it. Year One became a highly influential work and aspects of it can be seen in many pieces of Batman media including Christopher Nolan's recent Batman blockbusters.

This animated release of Year One is true to the comic, nearly panel for panel. This is good, since comic fans are easily upset

if a reimagining "defiles" their favorite work or hero. However, the panel for panel retelling is almost a little boring - if one were to read the comic and see the film in close proximity, there'd be little difference. Considering the quality and significance of the original story arc, it's still a really enjoyable film, there's just nothing particularly new.

That's not to say that the DCAU Year One is without merit. It's really well animated, and the animation brings the art of the comic to life, creating a really stark and brooding atmosphere.

The film features a star-studded voice cast as well. Eliza Dushku voices Catwoman, but perhaps most significant is Bryan Cranston's performance as Commissioner Jim Gordon.

Cranston, known for his performances in Breaking Bad and Malcolm in the Middle, is fantastic as always.

Overall, this is definitely a film worth checking out, particularly if one isn't familiar with the source. Either way, Batman: Year One, is a tasteful and faithful rendering of the original plot arc.

By Ryan Kamphuis
A&E EDITOR

Most people have heard Florence + the Machine at some point, even if they didn't realize it. The band, led by frontwoman Florence Welch, has enjoyed lots of mainstream success after the release of their 2009 album, "Lungs," with some of their songs being featured on popular TV shows such as "Gossip Girl," "Skins," and "Community." Florence + the Machine just released their sophomore effort, "Ceremonials," in the US on November 1. Resisting pressure from her producers and record label, Welch worked to maintain her artistic integrity with "Ceremonials," attempting to make a better version of "Lungs" as opposed to working with American pop music writers to create a new direction for her band.

When listening to "Ceremonials," it is evident that Welch achieved her vision of improving upon "Lungs." The hooks, overpowering vocals, and soulful style that made Florence + the Machine achieve fame are back in full force on this new album. It's actually too much for me. The strength of Welch as a

singer is her ability to belt out almost anything, but that's all she does with "Ceremonials." The album seems to be one long scream, as Welch belts each song. Nothing is slow, nothing is reserved. There are no ballads, only loud belting. That seems to be what people want to hear, though, as any singer who can hold a high note for a few seconds is lauded as one of the best.

The album has its high points. The track "Shake It Out" is a rocking anthem that oozes adrenaline and drive. It's exciting and fires up anyone listening to it. The problem is that while "Shake It Out" is one of the best tracks on the album, that's not because it is different from the rest of the tracks on the album—it merely takes the formula that the rest of the songs on the album follow and does it with a little more zeal.

Ultimately, "Ceremonials" is only good in small doses. It is easy to admire the strength of song's lyrics and the power of Welch's voice when you only listen to a few tracks. But, if you ever try to listen to "Ceremonials" as a whole, it loses all of its good qualities and eventually degenerates into track after track of shrill singing.

IndieRoyale website brings alternative packages to gamers

By Erik Johnson
STAFF WRITER

Distribution of indie games using alternative pricing schemes has become quite popular in the last couple years. Perhaps most widely known is the Humble Indie Bundle,

which has facilitated the re-releases of many quality games at "pay what you like" pricing. Now, a new site, IndieRoyale (www.indieroyale.com) is doing something similar.

Opening with the "Launch Bundle" (which contains A.R.E.S. Extinction Agenda, Gemini Rue, Sanctum, and Ninbus), IndieRoyale operates on a pricing model that differs even

from the newly popular "pay what you like." Users of IndieRoyale participate in sales sensitive pricing. A bundle begins with a cheap price, in this case \$1.99 and as copies are sold, the price of the bundle increases. Users that beat the average price get a special thank you, and users that meet certain pricing benchmarks actually lower the price by a penny each time

they pay more.

The purchased games are made available via direct download, as well as the option to tie them to digital distribution services Steam and the indie/mod friendly Desura. Only time will tell how successful IndieRoyale is - hopefully users contribute and support the indie gaming scene.

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