

The best TV adaptation of a video game

NAFIS IMTIAZ ONISH

Netflix has just released the first season of *Castlevania*, an animated TV show based on the classic series of horror-fantasy themed action-adventure video games created and developed by Konami. Like most of the recent Netflix shows, *Castlevania* certainly did not disappoint.

Castlevania is an adaptation of the 1989 video game "Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse". The story is set in 1476 and follows Trevor Belmont, a reluctant hero and vampire slayer, who rather unenthusiastically sets out to defend the country of Wallachia from Dracula and his army. The show features all the major characters from the video game including Sypha Belnades, a speaker-magician and Alucard, the "dhampir" (half human half vampire).

You can easily see the heavy influence of animes on the artwork and animation style of *Castlevania*. Netflix's biggest success with the show, for me, has been giving the pixelated sprites from the video games distinctive characteristics and clear motivations.

The show turns the age-old concept of "Evil do evil, good do good" concept on its head. Unlike the games, Dracula does not terrorise Wallachia just because he is evil. Similarly, Trevor does not save humans just because he is the righteous hero. This is probably the most intriguing part of the plot. The show gives Dracula a legitimate background for the wrath that he brings forth and 10 minutes into the first episode, you can truly feel for him. On the other hand, Trevor does not seem

to take a lot of pleasure in saving humans or champion his moral codes while doing so. He does it because that gives him an identity, his family's identity. That is what the Belmont family has done throughout history- protect humans from vampires. As a matter of fact, the show questions whether Dracula is even the true antagonist, depicting the backward misdeeds of the Church to ignite the havoc.

Castlevania's gritty animation works really well to emote with the viewers. The show is neither unnecessarily dark nor redundantly light-hearted. Trevor is probably the most charismatic protagonist of the show. There are some pretty good fighting sequences though the violence seems borderline flashy at times.

But like any other adaptation, the show has its flaws. Sypha and Alucard could get a bit more screen time. Also, persuasion in every step of the way seemed a bit too easy. It takes very little effort from the Elder of the speakers to turn the seemingly super reluctant Trevor into a decisive, determined savior. However, considering Netflix crammed the whole season into just 4 episodes, there was not much time to spare.

So the burning question, should you watch it if you are not a fan? The answer is, yes. The directors are aware that not many of the current viewership had an NES or was even born in 1989. Sure, if you have played through the originals, you will notice subtle references and easter eggs like how the characters dress according to their colours in the game or the road-signs reading out different *Castlevania* game



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titles, but the story is pretty well articulated for new experiencers. So even if you have never picked up a *Castlevania* game, you can easily binge-watch the roughly 100 minutes of engaging action.

Adi Shankar, the executive producer of *Castlevania* promised the fans that *Castlevania* will be the first Western TV show that does justice to a video game. Judging by the first season, the show pays enough respect to its source material. However, instead of blindly following the origins, it deviates from the source to give more depth to the plot. Yes, it is not an

exact adaptation of the game cause hey, plates of chicken popping out of random walls may seem fine in video games but not very compelling on TV.

To sum up, while *Castlevania* is not a perfect adaptation, it is undoubtedly the best video game adaptation on tv till date and promises a lot more in the seasons to follow. So happy binge-watching!

Nafis Imtiaz Onish believes grinning is the answer to everything and avidly loves art, astronomy & all things nerdy. Send him Carl Sagan fan art at nafisimtiaz17@gmail.com

MUSICALS IRL

VERONICA GOMES

The following is a description of a regular day in my life narrated as a musical for the sole purpose of appreciating all that is good.

For all we know, having to wake up at 7:30 a.m. for class is a task appointed to us by the devil himself. However, this being a musical, there is no ordeal that can't be handled with a smile on our faces. I would personally wake up with 'Houdini' by Foster the People as my opening act—firstly because I get to choose my own soundtrack and secondly because I just love it so much. Chanting "focus on your ability" over and over I'd dance over to my car and brace myself for the following one-hour joyride—which if I were in any other city by the way, would've taken me about 15 minutes but that's okay right? Of course it is (smiley face).

The one-hour joyride would obviously turn into a carpool session on steroids, with the surrounding crowd of people you

never met before, joining in a dance number that they would all automatically know the steps to, that too, in the middle of the road in perfect harmony. For this number I shall choose a crowd favourite: *Despacito*. Needless to say, someone would overhear the infamous instrumental intro playing in a neighbouring car and break into dance moves with others eagerly joining in. Moreover, this song would perfectly relate to the people's cluelessness as to why the traffic is taking so long with most of their inability to interpret a single lyric of the catchy tune.

Moving on, upon finally reaching my university, I'd have to deal with the incoming plethora of classes and by the time I'm done with half of them, the existential crisis would hit me and the scene would shift to me singing a rendition of Gary Jules' 'Mad World'. This would be accompanied with the contemplation of how oblivious we all are about our life goals and looking around I'd come to the conclusion that many others felt the same way. To top it all off,

the 'what ifs' would take over, drowning me in a pool of endless possibilities that could've been and leave me in this torturous cycle of oblivion. This would conveniently check off the "depressing turn of events" intermission part of the musical.

As the next half of the day will be dedicated to fixing the aforementioned melancholy mood, class would end by then and it'd be time to go out for lunch or just hangout with friends. As writing this musical also allows me to be the scene-setter, I would choose a nice rooftop chill with friends by the sunset. 'Beautiful Day' by U2, coupled with a sense of appreciation for everything and everyone we've been gifted with shall pose as the perfect components of this feel-good scene. Sitting together under the breathtaking sky, those frequent outbursts of laughter and smiles on everyone's faces will dig up their places, as memories in our hearts forever. As a result, gratefulness shall be the ambiance we all get to go home with.

