

Stranger Things Season 3: Older and bolder

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SPOILER ALERT!

Even after two straight homeruns in previous seasons, my heart was beating real fast as I logged into my Netflix account, all ready to binge the latest season of the extraterrestrial chronicles of Hawkins. After all, it's not unheard of how a follow up season of a series fails to meet the expectations and all the hype surrounding it. But after eight straight hours of streaming and a sleepless night, one thing became crystal clear. One summer DOES change everything. And just like that, *Stranger Things* delivered its best season yet!

As Winona Ryder's Joyce Byers says, "They are not kids anymore. They are teenagers now." Truly, our favourite group of detectives is all grown up. Gone are the days when they used to spend their days in Mike's basement, playing D&D. Now they sneak into movie theatres at flashy malls through the backdoors to watch *Day of the Dead*. And it's not just them who have grown better, but the show's creators as well. The Duffer Brothers took everything that worked in the past two seasons, learned from their mistakes and created a masterpiece.

The season starts off with a bang and sets the tone of the overall storyline with-



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in the first few minutes. And it doesn't look back. The third season of *Stranger Things* feels like an eight-hour long movie. And that's a good thing. The series has become a cultural phenomenon because of all the right reasons. The not-so-subtle throwback to the generation of 80s and the pop-culture flashiness is what gave it a cult following in the beginning. And that formula reigns supreme once again in this season. This time, it's in full display. The nail-biting detective work, the grim and grotesque gut wrenching action sequenc-

es, the humour, all of it makes sure that *Stranger Things* has not lost its charm one bit.

Unless you missed the final five minutes of last season, you already know that the Mind Flayer is indeed still trapped inside this world. And it seeks revenge on Eleven and her friends. And the show builds up to that epic confrontation in spectacular fashion. But this time, it's not just El playing the role of the saviour. And that is what makes this season such a joy to watch. All of the main charac-

ters get enough screen time and more than enough subplots to work with. All of them get to play a pivotal role in the shaping of the finale. We get to see team ups where each of them commence on their own journeys to solve the mysteries at hand. And as the show proceeds, it digs deeper into the characters, the heart and soul of *Stranger Things*. We get to see our favourite characters make tough choices, learn to compromise for their loved ones and figure out who they truly are. But fret not, this season definitely has its fair share of terrifying and gross monsters. The characters, in spite of that, remain the real highlight of this season.

And where would *Stranger Things* be without all the throwbacks and references to the 80s and the feel of a classic Spielberg flick? Thankfully, there is plenty of it. And the soundtrack of the latest season strikes all the right chords.

Season 1 was a different beast in itself. Season 2, on the other hand, in its quest of moving from horror to the sci-fi genre, faced minor stumbles. But Season 3 truly gives us the best that *Stranger Things* can be.

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The Spanish Princess: A medieval fanfic

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The Spanish Princess is so fictional that it could be passed off as fanfiction written by some teenage girl whose namesake is the youngest daughter of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, two of the most powerful monarchs in Europe in 15th century. Even though it makes quite the soap opera for that very reason, it does not make a bad one.

Anyone who knows about the Tudor dynasty, which in its rather short reign made some of the biggest reformations in England, knows of the notorious King Henry VIII. The man went on to marry six women; two of whom he divorced, two of whom he had beheaded, one of whom died in childbirth, and the last of whom survived. Every adaption we have seen concerning their lives starts off with King Henry in his mid-thirties, unceremoniously bewitched by the much younger Anne Boleyn. His first wife, Queen Catherine, is portrayed as this faded beauty, who has lost the king's affection due to failing to give him a son. She is always the grief-stricken queen who fights for her much-deserved place till her very last breath. However, *The Spanish Princess* shows us Catherine of Aragon who is not forty but only sixteen, having only just arrived in England to wed the heir apparent



to the English throne. *The Spanish Princess* portrays her struggles with the foreign environment, culture clash, and the disregard she was most often treated with.

The show exhibits historic events that shape England even today in much distorted fashion. For those who avidly study British royal history, this show may be quite disappointing. When I had first learnt of it, I was intrigued despite my personal favourite of the six wives being Anne

Boleyn (the infamous home-wrecker). However, when I learnt of all the historical incongruence, I lost every regard for it instantly. Surprisingly, my interests were reignited. All I can say is, for someone who is impatient with television shows, finishing an eight-episode-series in less than a day is quite a feat. All the credits surely go to the show itself.

The concocted dissensions make the show much more dramatic than antic-

ipated. Almost all the actors are British despite more than half the characters being Spanish. However, it is undeniable that Charlotte Hope as the young Catherine is beautiful. The show is also graced by Laura Carmichael who plays Margaret Pole, one of the most significant figures in the series and history itself. Rising Irish actor Ruairi O'Connor successfully portrays the charm and zeal King Henry VIII had possessed as a young prince. Harriet Walter as Lady Margaret Beaufort was absolutely splendid. However, what really keeps viewers glued to the show till the very end is the electrifying chemistry between Hope and O'Connor. They wholeheartedly devote themselves to playing two rather lovelorn teenagers. I preferred the atmosphere of this show in comparison to other shows that are set in the same timeline. From the very beginning to end of the first season, the show manages to deliver as much excitement and intricate suspense as it possibly can.

Thus, my suggestion would be to watch this show if you cannot care less about accurate history. Again, if you love history but also enjoy alterations here and there, then watching this series would mean no harm whatsoever.

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