DID YOU KNOW?

The origins of HALLOWEEN



Halloween's roots can be traced back to the ancient Celtic festival of "Samhain". The Celts, who lived 3,000 years ago in Central and Western Europe, celebrated the start of a new year on November 1. In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III designated the day to honour all saints. There was, nonetheless, some degree of eeriness that the date was characterised by, namely its association with human death.

This period signalled the end of warm weather and thus, bountiful harvests, and ushered in a season of dark, cold winter. As such, the Celts believed that on new year's eve (October 31), the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead was blurred, which is when they celebrated Samhain. The evening of October 31 came to be known as "All Hallows Eve", or simply "Halloween", when ghosts of the dead were believed to return to earth.

The ghosts were thought not just to cause mischief and damage crops but also to allow Druids, or Celtic priests, to predict the future. As a community that was left to fend for themselves in the face of the unpredictable natural world, the practice of prophesying was all important during a long, dark winter.

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TV SERIES

THE AMAZING DIGITAL CIRCUS

A tribute to existential defiance within an absurdist world

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR



To enter the world of Glitch Productions' *The Amazing Digital Circus* is to witness a collision between the hyper-saturated joy of a neon-soaked digital whimsy and the paralysing dread of navigating through the utter bleakness of existence. Created, written, and directed by the indie creator and musician Gooseworx, it is originally a web series on YouTube with a total of nine full episodes. After its initial debut in 2023, the show's widespread success eventually brought it to Netflix, culminating in a limited theatrical release for its finale in June 2026.

From its opening frames, the series establishes an unyielding premise: a group of human souls have been stripped of their names and autonomy, trapped inside a colourful virtual funhouse governed by Caine, an AI ringmaster whose sanity is as questionable as the reality he commands. Their entry is a one-way ticket, with no past to return to and no logical explanation for their imprisonment. The world is, by every definition, completely absurd.

The show begins as Pomni, the newest addition to the circus team and the protagonist of the story, is trapped inside the body of a cutesy cartoon jester. She is confused; at best and at worst, she turns anxious in search of an escape from this bizarre reality that she fails to understand. However, with the support of her new friends, she gradually learns the community's unwritten rules for survival. The seasoned circus members guide her through the routine adventure video games that they are forced to attend by Caine.

What makes the series immensely enjoyable, and dare I say, impossible to put down, is the characteristic depth that goes behind the curation of every character. Each character is as complex and distinguishable as the other, with heavy topics such as psychological horror, dark humour, and violence being introduced from time to time.

Gooseworx's approach to how she understands and explores numerous elements of human trauma throughout the series is one that is worthy of loud applause. She does a wonderful job depicting how abuse translates differently to every other person, not only in terms of how it shapes them later in life as an adult, but also in the fact that different people develop different coping mechanisms to deal with what they have yet to heal from.

When a circus member reaches their absolute breaking point and "abstracts" out of despair, they transform into a mindless, glitching beast that is thrown into a dungeon. This event is meant to signify self-destruction and ultimately what may translate to death in the real world. From time to time, the characters are made to process their shared grief over the loss of friends, which, for a few, acts as the binding force that ties them closer to the others. For others, the bereavement completely shatters their psyche, pulling them away into total desolation.

Throughout the episodes, many of the characters, including Claine himself, evolve through massive character development arcs, showcasing deep-seated struggles with identity and self-image. Interestingly enough, even some of the NPCs exhibit surprising layers of self-awareness and existential dread, somewhat blurring the line between programmed reality and genuine sentience. By refusing to sanitise the good and the ugly, and what it means to be human, *The Amazing Digital Circus* delivers a remarkably grounded story that is definitely worth a watch, or perhaps many.