"Harry Potter" spin-off disappoints loyal fans

"Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" falls short of fan hype

by Tia Rotolo

The new "Harry Potter", but not "Harry Potter" movie, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" lacks cinematic magic, banking too much on the wizarding world and neglecting a solid plot.

When I heard they would be releasing a new "Harry Potter" movie, I grabbed my wand (Laurel wood with unicorn hair core 10" and solid flexibility, mind you) and put on my cloak (Hufflepuff, obviously) and practically ran to the movies.

Harry Potter has been engrained into my being since I was a child. I've seen all the movies an obnoxious amount of times. I've read all of the books.

Anything with even the mention of Harry Potter excites me, but walking out of the movie theater last Saturday, I only felt disappointment.

The story revolves around Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne), a wizard from England, coming to America to document and discover fantastic beasts.

He carries a briefcase filled with such beasts and expects absolutely nothing to go wrong.

The first scene entails one of Scamander's friendly creatures escaping the bag in a bank, since they don't create monster-proof luggage in the wizarding world, I guess.

The shimmer-obsessed-four-legged friend runs around the bank, silently stealing coins and jewelry, creating a giant mess.

Scamander gets mixed up with a "No-Maj" (the American version of a muggle, or "Non-Magic"), Jacob Kowalksi (Dan Fogler), and among many other mishaps they end up switching suitcases. Obviously this is an issue as a No-Maj now has a briefcase filled with magical beasts from which he has no safety, but it's also a tired plot point. Immediately I knew, Harry Potter could do better.

As if this wasn't an already big enough issue, the fact that Scamander is from England shakes everything up. In England, the relationships with No-Maj's is much more lax. In America, wizards are still living underground and in secrecy.

There is prejudice among some of the No-Maj's. Mary Lou Barebone (Samantha Morton) leads an effort attempting to expose wizards and their danger. She also has an orphanage and is essentially a evil-wizarding-hating stepmother to all of them.

Magical Security, Percival Graves (Colin Farrell), has a special interest in one of the adopted sons, Credence (Ezra Miller), for a magical quest of his own to aid the Magical Congress of the United States of America (MACUSA).

Besides Scamander and Kowalski's beast dilemma, there is a much larger issue. New York is being terrorized by an extremely violent wind-spirit, an Obscurus, that is collapsing buildings and turning-up sidewalks. Seriously though, what do muggles think this is? A slight breeze?

So, the MACUSA is trying to keep the wizarding world under wraps while Scamander is on the search for his little-beast-friends. He's also being followed by a woman, Tina Goldstein (Katherine Watson), exiled from the ministry but determined to regain her position. Foreseeing the

"Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" lacks strong plot and Harry Potter nostolgia according to fans | **IMDb**

problematic nature of Scamander, she accompanies him in the search for the briefcase.

Luckily, they find the suitcase, but only after the beasts have half-demolished Kowalski's apartment building and are now running rampant in New York City.

The band of misfits take to the mysterious and eerie streets to find their newly lost beasts and discover what's ailing New York City while avoiding the MACUSA which is on a similar quest.

As I said, I love "Harry Potter." That's why I found this movie somewhat offensive. Yes, the world is the same. Yes, they keep the title sequence. And yes, it's seventy years earlier. But the movie simply lacked any of Harry's (and all of his fans') version of the wizarding world.

They name-dropped Albus Dumbledore once, but then they brushed it off as if it were nothing. I wanted a flashback! I wanted an appearance! Anything to make me reminisce about the days of drawing lightning bolts on my forehead in sharpie to my mother's dismay.

That's what this movie needed: nostalgia in the details. Selfishly, I was looking forward to eyeing all the first-time fans with superiority as the movie mentioned a name only an authority like myself could know. But that time never came.

Just as any Potterhead, I'd like to believe that J.K. Rowling is a magical human being that can do no wrong. Unfortunately, I found that screenwriting isn't her strong suit. The plot of the entire film simply lacked coherence.

With too many storylines in the revival and predecessor of the series,

it just became confusing. There were an abundance of storylines, but absolutely no character progression.

The ending goes against nearly everything family-friendly Harry Potter ever attempted. Most importantly, there were too many cheap movie tricks.

I don't want to see another briefcase get mixed up and cause a stir. I just don't.

So yes, the movie has a visual magnificence if CGI is up your alley. I found myself in pure awe just by being back in the world of Harry Potter.

Merely hearing the opening song fills my heart with glee. But even with the magic, the plot wasn't there and the characters lacked dimension.

Overall, if you want to satisfy your Potter needs, just wait until ABC Family is hosting another Harry

"Black Mirror" highlights technology overload

Britian's "Black Mirror" premiers on Netflix for it's third season

by Beth Wall

The premise seems like something straight out of your dad's Facebook feed. Technology is evil and kids are addicted to their iPhones and our near-future is a dull, disjointed, digital dystopia.

This is how technology can (and will) go wrong.

Yet, "Black Mirror" defies all expectations.

Instead of proposing a tired story concerning the digital world that young-adults are already berated with constantly (you're addicted to your phone, online communication is fraudulent communication, technology is turning your mind to mush), Black Mirror raises questions that endure, no matter what technological tools we're equipped with.

British broadcaster Charlie Brooker created the show in 2011, commissioning a three-episode season 1, each episode developing its own, independent characters, plot and universe.

The drama also attempts to answer this central question: "If technology is a drug – and it does feel like a drug – then what, precisely, are the side-effects?" according to Brooker in a 2011 Guardian article. It examines how we use (and abuse) the

technology we create, and the human instincts that are enabled by these creations.

After being dropped by the British Channel 4 broadcaster, Netflix picked up "Black Mirror" for a third season, which was released in late October, and drew the most attention the series has seen.

Although the season boasts some of the show's best work, ("San Junipero" and "Shut Up and Dance", especially), in my opinion, most episodes stray from the unique "Black Mirror" brand established in the preceding seasons.

'If technology is a drug, and it does feel like a drug, then what, precisely, are the side-effects?'

Most TV shows and movies raise must-be-avoided-at-all-costs stakes for their characters. Black Mirror, alternatively, raises enormous stakes, and has no fear of actually meeting them. This is especially true of the first two rounds of episodes (see: *spoiler alert!* a gruesome incident with a pig, broken marriages, a dystopia run by a blue cartoon bear and general unhappy endings).

Season three has a much more Hollywood approach, introducing a character that is somehow wronged by its world, only to, by some chance incident, overcome, and see the world for what it is.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the first two seasons was that they were from the perspective of corrupt-able, real, participants in the societies they created. And most of the time, their endings were dim, or descents into digital darkness.

This atmosphere forces viewers to witness the inescapable consequences, and to question the circumstances which allowed these consequences to flourish.

Season three also edges closer to the anticipated thesis-based commentary mentioned earlier.

The first episode, Nosedive, depicts a future world where status and opportunity are achieved via social media stats.

Strangers can rate other strangers, which may bump or drop the average (publicly displayed) score of either. The lower your average, the less respected you are, so you'd better make your life appear to be as pristine as you want others to think it is.

We get it. Our social media feeds are driving us up-the-wall with their constant demand that we update them, purify them. Social media forces compulsory maintenance, rather than allowing an outlet for real expression.

Although it speaks to (likely) a very valid truth, "Nosedive" is too on-the-nose, so much that were it not for the talented cast of actors, and stunning cinematography, the hour-long episode would nearly not be worth watching.

Many episodes in season 3 follow suit.

If immensely disheartening
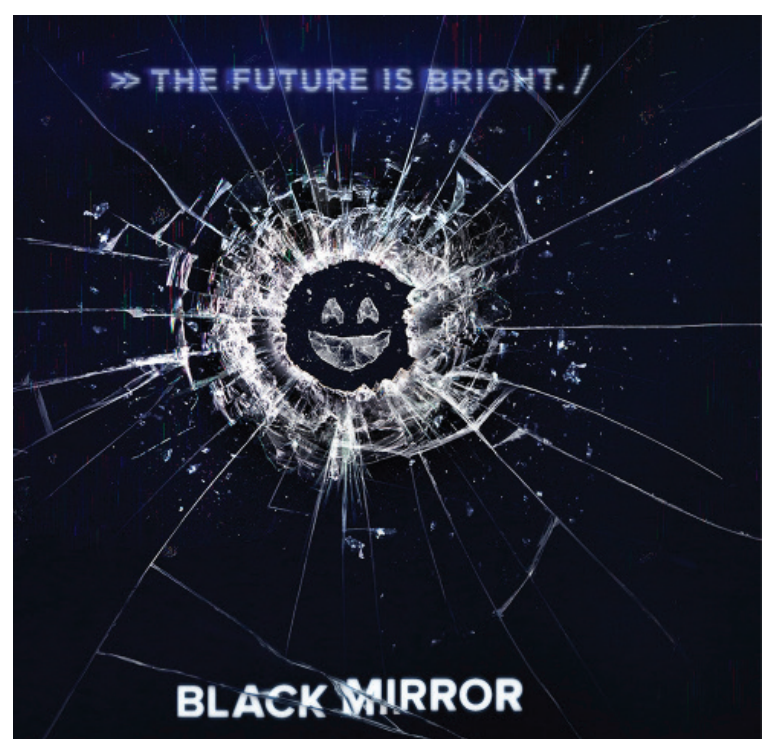
"Black Mirror's" new season may not live up to its expectations | **Netflix**

concepts aren't within your lane, season three might be the best option for you.

I don't mean to tear season 3 to shreds. In fact, I did enjoy watching most of it.

The writing is just as clever as any other. No matter which year it was released, each release of the program displays an immensely creative power, one that has been compared to "The Twilight Zone."

But I would be a disappointed fan if I learned that the creators were looking to stray from the tone they

created in the first two seasons.

Luckily, as each episode is a stand-alone, it's easy to watch episodes out of sequence. For interesting, disturbing, feel-bad, transformative television, I urge you to check out "The National Anthem", "Fifteen Million Merits", "The Entire History of You", "White Bear", "White Christmas" (a Christmas special which features Jon Hamm), and "Hated in the Nation." The rest is just good television.