

# Daily Planet



## ***Legacy no more***

James Gunn's new Superman movie gets a new suit and a new name

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## **Comics in Ukraine**

In war-torn Ukraine comics are gaining popularity

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## **The man who brought back Superman**

An interview with Robert Venditti

ISSUE 007 • WINTER 2024

# Heroes were born and the story continues to continue

Zack Benz

Almost every letter I ever start feels wrong if I don't include "dear reader," so, dear reader, welcome to the Planet. The real Daily Planet. Like we're legit as of this instance. I'm making the decision with this, our first ever winter magazine. The Daily Planet is real, and you're reading it.

2024 is a massive year for us. It marks a decade since I first started this digital news organization in Northern Minnesota. Specifically, I made the Twitter page with Rylee Appleman, Emily Anderson, Abbie Mobberg and Abby Newman in my pastor's van on the way back from a Grace Lutheran Church of Chisholm family trip to The Edge Waterpark in Duluth, Minnesota. Once home on the farm, however, I obsessed over the interactions with fellow nerd accounts and played Twitter like it was my Game Boy.

The account soon grew faster than a speeding bullet amassing thousands of followers in the first year alone. The concept of the original Daily Planet Twitter page was centered around fiction. It reported on the roleplay accounts inspired by the same characters the Daily Planet of DC Comics reported on. I soon intertwined the roleplay reporting with the DC Extended (Cinematic) Universe and the Arrowverse on The CW, creating the first online edition, then called e-editions, in June 2014.

My first time reporting on actual news was when I interviewed "Advocate Monster Truck" that same year. It was an anti-bullying advocacy group that drove monster trucks to local schools in an effort to prevent bullying. I'm still in awe of that. The Daily Planet enabled me to do that and I still can't believe it. We reported on them two more times afterwards, and I've just decided to revisit them again while writing this.

Anyways, as you can probably tell my brain goes all over the place when thinking of the Daily Planet. The lateral lines across the

The lateral lines across the globe on the logo actually represent my thought patterns you know (just kidding). This attention deficit disorder came in handy whilst trying to build the Planet as a hobby in the early years. It was a place to escape from my troubles, and I soon found that it was a place for others to escape to as well.

By 2019 to 2020 the Daily Planet was attracting many talented writers who faced self doubt. They were fresh off recent writer rejections, and I wanted the Daily Planet to rejuvenate them just like it does for me every day. So I created the contribution program to bring in outside work. The website's conception in a journalism class in 2018 at the hands of Addie Marzinskie, Brianna Taggart and myself certainly helped enable that capability.

Today, the Daily Planet fosters the creative talents of over 30 people from across the globe while still continuing to grow. We are backed with tremendous support. I look at every person who interacts with the Daily Planet as the god Atlas holding up the world. Each reader, watcher, listener, podcaster, writer, contributor, editor, etc., hold the gilded golden globe up like Superman himself. The Planet is where heroes are born and the story continues after all. I'm just so proud that this thing I've built has shown that to everyone. There are heroes out there. You have to be in today's world.

***"In this world, there is a right and there is a wrong, and that distinction is not difficult to make."***

Superman's words from "Kingdom Come" no.3 (1996) always echo in my brain. In this, our first winter issue, you'll find stories of Superman, stories of entertainment, tales of community and most importantly stories of perseverance.

I couldn't be happier to share,  
Zack Benz

Art by Alex Ross

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# Contents

## Legacy no more: James Gunn's Superman project gets new suit and name

By **Brendan Rooney**

## Cover 16

### 04 We are not broken

By **Abbie Wells**

In a candid testimonial, Twin Cities Metro resident Abbie Wells shares their coming out story about asexuality.

### 10 The man who brought back Superman

By **Daniel Sanchez**

Super-author Robert Venditti talks about bringing new Christopher Reeve stories to modern audiences, and what might be in store for the future of "Superman '78"

### 20 In war-torn Ukraine, comics are gaining popularity — as it should be

By **Oleksiy Pryimak**

In 2016 buying a comic book was quite a challenge. There were barely a dozen comic shops all around Ukraine.

### 22 The art of yearning: Netflix's 'One Day' joins list of classic love stories

By **Brianna Taggart**

A winding trail up Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh. Flowing green grass and yellow flowers dancing in the breeze. Blue skies. A red hair tie in curly dark hair.



# We are not broken

I was seventeen, it was summer, and I was scrolling through Hulu looking for a documentary to watch (just as every teenager does on their summer vacation). That's when I came across a title that looked interesting. (A)sexual. I pushed play without any idea of how one word would go on to define a huge part of who I am.

Abbie Wells

The Documentary centers on the story of a man named David Jay - just your average guy. Except, we soon learn, that David isn't interested in sex, in fact, he has no desire to experience sexual intimacy ever. Throughout the documentary, we learn more about David, the ins and outs of asexuality, and meet lovely other individuals who identify as part of the community. When the documentary came to an end, I felt so seen, so understood, but it would still be four years before I came out as asexual.

The Trevor Project defines asexual as a term "commonly used to describe someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction." What asexuality is not defined as, is:

1. A religious thing
2. Broken
3. Having standards

...and more.

Identifying as asexual simply means that I am not sexually attracted to people. I don't see people and get that \*tingly\* feeling. Before coming out, peers would marvel at my lack of lusting or praise me for my strength in remaining celibate, but inside, I was screaming.

In high school, it seemed like everyone around me was bursting at the seams and ready to put their raging hormones to good use. I was never too fond of the idea of sex and anytime anyone would bring it up I would shrug and say something to the tune of "I don't know, maybe." But I didn't really care.

Enter: the documentary. Suddenly, things clicked and my laissez faire attitude relating to sex, made sense. Well... not completely.

**Continued on Page 6**







Shortly after I came out and started posting asexual content on YouTube



Abbie Wells holding an asexual flag

#### ***Continued from page 4***

One documentary on a subject is not a plethora of knowledge in that category. I thought identifying as asexual meant that I wanted no part of any kind of intimacy. A few months later I had a PG-13 make out session and was devastated that that meant I wasn't actually asexual. That clearly couldn't be the case if I just kissed this boy for an hour. I wasn't aware of the nuances of the sexuality. I didn't completely understand the difference between sexual orientation and romantic orientation. I didn't realize that the identity was a spectrum and an umbrella term for the sub-identities underneath.

Though I didn't (and don't) feel sexual attraction, I did (and do) feel romantic attraction. And, not to brag, but I'm really good at feeling romantic attraction since I can romantically be attracted to a person of my gender and other genders (biromantic). I'm also a sucker for a good romcom, but that's not the point.

Some asexuals do feel small amounts of sexual attraction. It is, however, predominantly less than our allosexual (someone who regularly experiences sexual attraction) peers. Someone who identifies as Gray-Sexual may experience a very low amount of sexual attraction or experience it under specific circumstances, while someone who identifies as Demisexual may experience sexual attraction, but only after a strong bond is formed.

Once I was in college and learned more about these sub-identities, I was back aboard the asexual train, but this time, identifying as Demisexual (demi).

You see, I had a good friend that I was romantically attracted to and I thought, "Hey, I think I could have sex with this guy." (The key word here is *\*could\**. Remember that for later.) Since I thought I was experiencing sexual attraction to someone that I had formed a strong bond with, I claimed the identity of demisexual.

This was still only internally. I was just beginning to understand it for myself and had no idea where to begin explaining it to my friends. The people I surrounded myself with were cool people. People who were involved in the GSA (Gay Straight Alliance), were openly out themselves, or in the theatre department, which is basically the same thing.



Their knowledge was neatly tied up in the four main food groups: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. And after their countless questions of how I couldn't possibly want to sleep with the hot guy on stage, how was I supposed to tell them that I didn't feel those kinds of things?

It turned out to be shockingly easy.

My junior year, I was living with my best friend. We were having some kind of discussion about boys, the details of the "moment before" (a theatre term) are fuzzy. I had recently been attempting to drop in more hints about my sexuality, hoping that one day someone would ask, but not knowing how I would act when someone finally did.

And that was that. I was finally out to someone. A few weeks later I started dating said boy from the previous conversation and came out to him. Roughly three months later I posted a video on my YouTube channel coming out to everyone else. Then, in about a year, I re-came out as just plain asexual. (Turns out "I could have sex with them" is not the same as "now that we have an emotional bond, I feel an attraction of a sexual nature towards you.")

From then on it was smooth sailing. Easy peasy. Effortless.

You know I'm just messing around right?

Coming out can be a strange process. It's not a one time thing either. When you identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community (which I do), you continue coming out the rest of your life. We've reached a point in our current culture where the four big identities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) are more common. Whether people are welcoming or understanding is one thing, but they at least can give you a basic definition of what those mean.

When you tell someone you're asexual they assume that you are some kind of self reproducing starfish that lives in a pineapple under the sea. And though I wish that could be the case, it's not. Which means that I'm often left educating people on my sexuality.

**Continued on page 8**



Abbie Wells, Jon Quigley, and their friend who asked if Abbie was Ace. Photo by Abbie Wells

*I present to you,  
Abbie's Coming Out: A Retelling.*

**Abbie's Friend:** "Just be careful. Don't want kids."

**Abbie:** "Eh, don't want kids, don't want sex. Shouldn't be an issue."

**Abbie's Friend:** "Are you asexual Abbie?"

**Abbie:** \*asexual panic\* "No, yes, yes, maybe. I don't know." (I did know.)



Abbie Wells



Abbie Wells at the Minneapolis Pride Festival

*Continued from page 7*

No, I don't feel sexual attraction.

Yes, asexuals can still have sex.

No, that doesn't equal celibacy.

Yes, we can still have a healthy, intimate, and loving romantic relationship.

The list goes on. For a sexuality that doesn't really care too much about sex, we sure end up answering a lot of questions about it. Not just the light fluffy ones either, but deeply personal ones as well. If I had a dollar for every time someone asked me if I masturbated, I could at least pay off my student loans. (Please feel free to leave tips at the end of the story.)

In a sex focused world, asexuals are a bit of an enigma. We stand out and that can often be very isolating. It can become even more isolating when you're not sure where you fit. People who identify as asexual will often get pushback not just from the "straight community", but also from the LGBTQ+ community.

"You don't have to fight to exist," is a common narrative when discussing whether or not asexuality is a part of the LGBTQ+ community. While I understand the sentiment behind this argument, it's not the full picture. The LGBTQ+ community is more than a "who has it worse" battle royale. It's in its name. It's a community. A group where people who share similar life experiences gather and connect.

While we may not have to fight to exist, we do often have to fight to exist as we are. From people pressuring us to have sex to telling us we haven't found the right one yet to sharing absolutely vile ideas of how to "fix us" that I don't care to repeat, being asexual is its own kind of battle. As a content creator who shares education about asexuality on the internet, I've seen it all.

And though I've seen it at its worst, I've also seen it at its best.

*"You give me hope!"*

***"Finding out about asexuality helped me to find others like me."***

***"We are not broken."***

I am not broken. I think back to teenage me, how she didn't understand why she didn't feel the same way as other people, why she was different. For so long, I felt like something was wrong with me. Like I was broken. But there was never something wrong. There was just something missing. A word. Asexual.

That's my story. Life as an asexual isn't always unicorns and rainbows, for many reasons (Have you been on dating apps?). And sure, it comes with way too many questions, a lot that even I don't know the answer to (I'm not an expert). But it does come with a deeper understanding of who I am and a community that I'm proud to be a part of.

And loads of cake.

\*cue 90's sitcom outro music\*





*Where heroes are born and the story continues*

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and learn more about how you can share  
what's important to you.

# The man who brought back Superman

Super-author Robert Venditti talks about bringing new Christopher Reeve stories to modern audiences, and what might be in store for the future of “Superman ’78”

Daniel Sanchez

I first met *New York Times* bestselling author Robert Venditti through his work, then in person at the Christopher Reeve Legacy Reunion in 2022, where he and “Superman ’78” co-collaborator/artist Wilfredo Torres were special guests (along with almost every surviving main cast member of the original Reeve films).

Our tables were side by side. He and Wilfredo met fans and signed books, I had the honor of promoting (in costume) the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation and raising awareness for Valerie Perrine’s film, “Valerie” — the proceeds of which fund her Parkinson’s treatments.

For three whirlwind days we got to be around legends. More than once Robert and I exchanged glances of “wow.” His 6-issue comic book series “Superman ’78” had been revealed to the world to overwhelmingly positive response from die-hard Christopher Reeve Superman fans online and now in person at his table.

It was no surprise we did not have a lot of time to talk.

Two years (and a second “Superman ’78” series) later, we made up for that with what is hopefully a swell thing to happen to any Superman writer — a one-on-one interview with a reporter from the *Daily Planet*.

**Daniel:** How has the fan response been for you?

**Robert:** It’s been one of the most positive fan bases that I’ve ever interacted with. The fans who liked the film really seem to embody that positivity and hopefulness that the whole creative team and all the actors conveyed in those films.







I was very nervous when I got the gig and wrote the project. This is such a beloved property and if I got it wrong I was going to feel really bad because it was something that was very personal to me too.

For Wilfredo and I to be able to be stewards of that and to do something that that fan base reacted well to, and feeling like we hit those notes, was just a great feeling because it *is* very personal. The film is very personal to Wilfredo as well. So, yeah. Couldn't have asked for it to go better.

**Daniel:** Did you have a moment where you had a sigh of relief, "I didn't mess it up! I think I may have stewarded this well!"

**Robert:** I really felt like we hit it when I was writing the first issue. On page 10, you get the first "S" moment. It's just two panels. The first is the shirt ripping open. You see the "S" and then the second panel is just Superman flying at you.

Normally when I write a comic book, I would put special effects there of some kind. But when I wrote the script I said to Wilfredo, "I want to try to go silent here. I want to see if when people see this, they hear the Williams score," which is very hard to do in comics.

And sure enough, when that first issue came out, there were a lot of people that picked out that page and said, "I can hear the score." And that was when I felt like we got it. We hit it.

**Daniel:** Series one, when Brainiac is threatening everyone and Superman says, "Take me," and then has to say goodbye to Lois — with that "I *have* to do this" moment you could hear the Williams music. You could feel that tear between the two of them. That goodbye was heart-wrenching. It was every bit as Reeve and Kidder and Donner as if it had been filmed.

**Robert:** I appreciate that. So much of it — I can't say it enough — comes down to [artists] Wilfredo Torres, and now Gavin Guidry, capturing the acting of those characters to help convey it. Because if the acting didn't match those iconic versions, then I think the dialogue would probably fall flat.

I also think it says a lot about the films that you go anywhere in the world and you ask somebody on the street and they'll know who Superman is, and they're probably going to think of the Christopher Reeve Superman — almost 50 years later.

**Continued on page 12**

**Continued from page 11**

There's just something so hopeful and aspirational about those films and their portrayal of Superman. There's a tendency in a lot of the newer stuff to darken Superman up. To me, those efforts fall flat because they kind of missed the point.

The point is that he's incorruptible. He could do wrong if he wanted to and there's no way anyone could do anything to stop him. But instead, even though he can do anything, he always chooses to do the right thing.

As a kid when I saw the films, I wanted to believe in a world that was that way — that people would do things because they're the right things to do.

**Daniel:** I think what really resonated for a lot of readers is that when we think about Reeve's Superman, we like to think we know him so well we know what he would do in a situation, which is: the best thing, the right thing, the gentle thing, the reassuring thing, the loving thing.

You were somehow able to create these new situations that still felt like, "Yes, *that's* what he would do here. *That's* how he would talk to Lois in this goodbye. *This* is how he would be."

**Robert:** To me, you do always know that Superman is going to do the right thing. The trick of Superman is coming up with situations where it seems *impossible* for him to do the right thing.

"The Metal Curtain" is a cold-war story. But Superman is not the kind of guy that would go to Russia and just beat up the Soviet Union. There's *people* there, you know what I'm saying? He just wouldn't attack it that way, but in the new series he's fighting an enemy that very much attacks it that way, so how is he going to deal with that?

There's a moment in the final issue — it's a big splash page of Superman — and he says something there that to me perfectly encapsulates who that version of Superman is as a character and everything that he stands for and his approach to everything and his approach to the world, and if *nothing* else except that one page exists — to me, I'm happy.

**Daniel:** Where do these stories fit into the movie continuity?



Robert Venditti, Daniel Sanchez and Wilfredo Torres at the Christopher Reeve Legacy Reunion, 2022. Photo by Daniel Sanchez

**Robert:** The stories that we're doing take place after "Superman II" and before "Superman III."

In "The Metal Curtain," Superman takes Lois to the Fortress of Solitude and she has no memory of having been there before because there's already been the super-kiss at the end of "Superman II."

There are moments in the dialogue where you can kind of see that I'm pointing at that. Like, Superman knows she's been here before and he remembers it very fondly and Lois has no memory of it whatsoever. Those kinds of moments, for me, that's where the continuity fits in.

**Daniel:** Are there any times you have to work with the actor or the estate of an actor to use the likenesses?

**Robert:** That would be all stuff that would happen, or not, on the publishing side. As creatives, that would never be something that we would be a part of.

**Daniel:** So Helen Slater's Supergirl might make it onto the pages of a future story? That's not off the table?

**Robert:** Not as far as I know. I haven't been told we couldn't. I've definitely got some plans for some other things that I want to do. I've got at least two more story ideas that I would hope to get to. We'll have to see how the second series does. If these things keep doing well, they'll keep doing them.

I also don't want to just put Helen Slater in the book so that people can be like, "Helen Slater!" I didn't need Otis in the Brainiac story. I didn't need Otis in "The Metal Curtain." As tempting as those things are, I want to do what's going to make a good story first.

**Daniel:** As much as we would all love to see a Robin Williams Mr. Mxyzptlk, it has to be in service of the story.

**Robert:** Yeah. Who knows? Maybe we'll see that someday. Maybe we'll see Otis someday. I don't know.

**Daniel:** I'll speak for everyone when I say we wouldn't mind seeing Non and Ursa.

**Robert:** Yes, I have an idea of how I can get them in there.





Art by Wilfredo Torres. Courtesy of DC Comics



**Daniel:** Will there be a series three or four? For how long could you enjoy writing them the way you've enjoyed the first two?

**Robert:** It's hard to say. You always want to say "forever," but I imagine at some point the ideas run out.

I couldn't sit here and say I have a dozen "Superman '78" stories lined up. I don't. But I feel like if they kept coming back to me 10 more times, every time I'd come up with one.

**Daniel:** I'm so heartened seeing all the different collector's editions that have come out. It's included in the metal ultimate 5-movie box set. It's been reprinted. It's been hardbound. It's not even in paperback yet. What does that feel like?

**Robert:** It's unfathomable. All I ever wanted to do my whole life was to be a writer. Every time somebody asks me for an autograph it sincerely never doesn't surprise me, because I just don't come from a background where I knew anybody who did anything artistic for a living. It's inconceivable that I would grow up and do this one day.

**Continued on page 14**



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There's definitely that sort of Mount Rushmore of projects that I have for myself. Of the five faces that are on *my* mountain — my top five projects — this is definitely one of them. I'm going to be hard-pressed to knock this one off the mountain when I'm 80 years old and my grandkids don't believe that I wrote comic books. [laughter]

And I wrote about *Superman!* This will be one of the things I hand them proudly, because I feel like even then it will still be a good book. And so I'm incredibly grateful for it. I don't take it for granted. I don't feel like I deserve it any better than anybody else. I feel very fortunate to be able to do what I do and to have people respond well to it.

**Daniel:** Well, we are *anxiously* anticipating issues five and six. It feels almost like when it was 1979 and 1980 and another movie is coming and that delicious feeling of knowing "another one is coming." I encourage *everyone* — if you haven't already started to read "Superman '78: The Metal Curtain," pick up the first four issues.

There are two more where none of us know what's going to happen yet. But apparently we have it on good authority there's a heck of a line at the end of issue six.

**Robert:** Towards the end, towards the end.

**Daniel:** Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me and all the fans. This was beyond enjoyable. I feel like I'm just lucky to live in this Reeve Superman renaissance you've helped create, and on behalf of all of us — our deepest, sincerest "thank you."

**Robert:** I appreciate it. Thanks. Thanks to everyone for reading. I can't thank y'all enough for supporting it. Have a wonderful night.

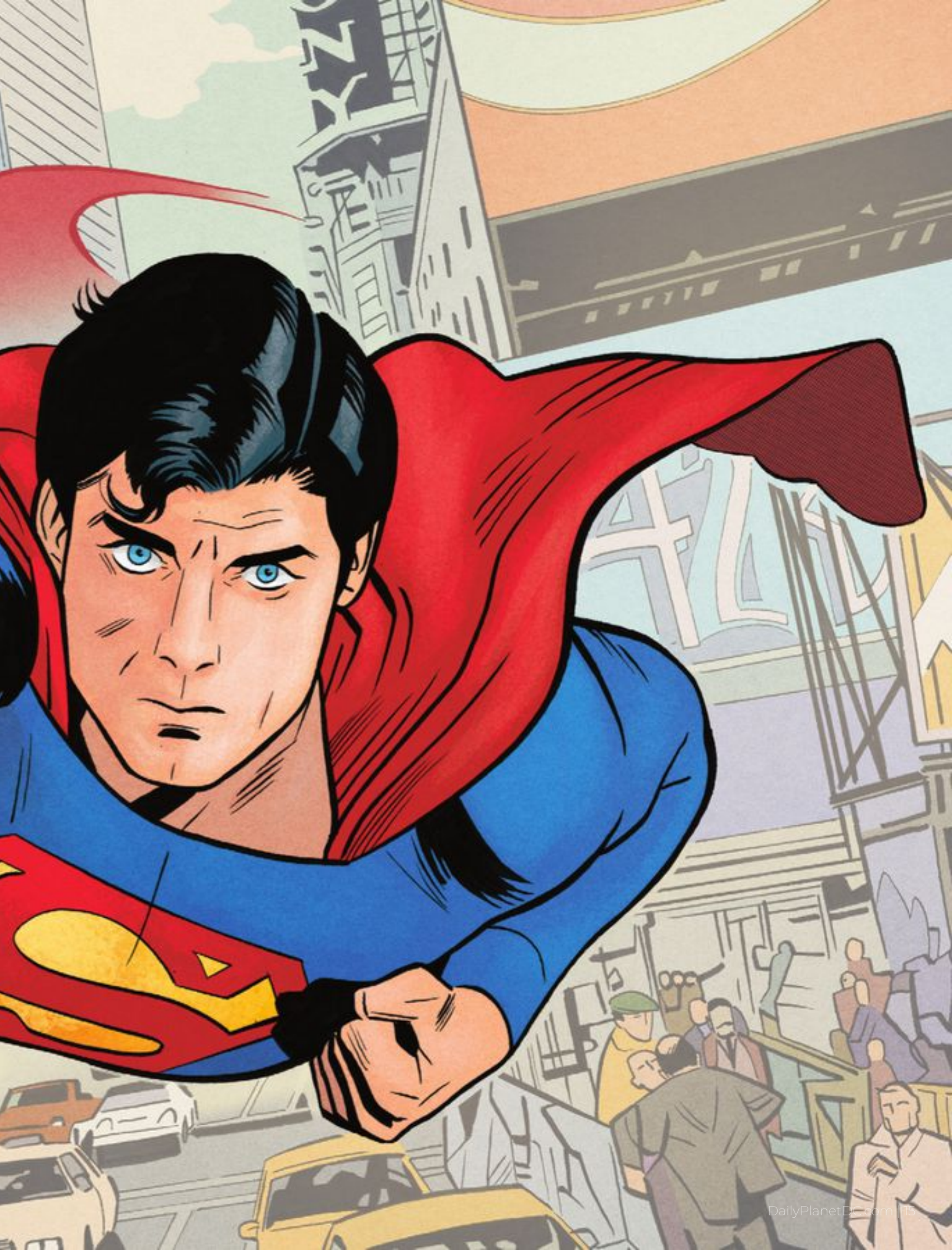
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*Author's note: At this point, Robert told me "the line" from the upcoming finale that made the whole series worth it. It took me a moment to process all the feels from hearing it. What was the line? I will never tell.*

*But you NEED to buy this book.*















# Legacy no more

## *Superman movie gets new suit and name*

On Feb 29, Director and DC Studios Co-CEO James Gunn took the internet by storm when he revealed the first official look at the new Superman suit while acknowledging that cameras are now rolling on the latest DC Comics reboot film and remains on track to reach the film's slated July 2025 release.

**Brendan Rooney**

**T**he latest DC Comics reboot will be the first film under the newly established DC Cinematic Universe (DCU), which Gunn will be lead along with longtime producer Peter Safran.

In addition, the director also confirmed via social media that the tagline "Legacy" has been dropped from the title. Gunn offered reasoning for the title explanation when a fan on social media asked.

*"It felt like the right name," said Gunn. "And when I brought it up everyone agreed. And there really hasn't been a movie titled 'Superman' since the 1979 movie was solely promoted as 'Superman: The Movie.'"*

The cast is led by David Corenswet, who is playing the Man of Steel, while Rachel Brosnahan has been tapped to star as Lois Lane. Other recent casting additions include Isabela Merced as Hawkgirl, Edi Gathegi as Mister Terrific, Nathan Fillion as Guy Gardner, Anthony Carrigan as Metamorpho, Gabriela de Faría as The Engineer, Sara Sampaio as Eve Teschmacher, Skyler Gisondo as Jimmy Olsen, and Nicholas Hoult as Lex Luthor.

Recent additions to the ever growing ensemble are Terence Rosemore as Otis and Wendel Pierce as Perry White, respectfully.

***Continues on page 18***





James Gunn shared the above selfie after the first table read for "Superman." Featured in the photo: Sara Sampaio (Eve Teschmacher), Edi Gathegi (Mr. Terrific), David Corenswet (Superman/Clark Kent), Terence Rosemore (Otis), Nicholas Hoult (Lex Luthor), producer Peter Safran, Skyler Gisondo (Jimmy Olsen), Anthony Carrigan (Metamorpho), Rachel Brosnahan (Lois Lane), Isabela Merced (Hawkgirl), writer and director James Gunn, Nathan Fillion (Green Lantern/Guy Gardner) and María Gabriela de Faría (The Engineer). Photo courtesy of Gunn

#### ***Continued from page 17***

As of this moment, Gunn and the cast are in Norway hard at work, but the reason behind the location has yet to be revealed; except filming is going strong. Further confirmation that cameras are now rolling was that co-star Rachel Brosnahan, who has been tapped to play Lois Lane, released a viral TikTok clip of her hanging out with a newly bald Nicholas Hoult, signifying that this variation of Lex Luthor will be comic-accurate. In addition, David Corenswet was also seen in the video, hanging out with his co-stars. Brosnahan commented on her post, "A supervillain, journalist, and an alien walk into a bar."

One element that many are still waiting for and expressing a variety of reactions is the latest super suit. Now, Gunn did confirm that the suit is heavily inspired and pulls creative inspiration from artist Alex Ross.

To many, the first impressions of the new insignia yielded the reception that fans felt the logo was quite similar to the Kingdom Come symbol, with a blend of the iconic bright yellow along the lines of the animated series "My Adventures with Superman" costume.

Sticking with the theme of optimism and the hope that the cast possesses, Brosnahan revealed her excitement by stating that she had seen the suit and expressed "I was blown away!"

In addition, the frozen tundra will be the first of many locations where the latest reboot will be utilized for principal photography and on-location shooting. Other locations attached to the project that have been confirmed are Atlanta, Cincinnati and Cleveland.

Currently, plot details are still limited, but a brief synopsis for the film reads: "Superman: [Legacy]" tells the story of Superman's journey to reconcile his Kryptonian heritage with his human upbringing as Clark Kent of Smallville, Kansas. He is the embodiment of truth, justice and the American way, guided by human kindness in a world that sees kindness as old-fashioned."

Gunn has been vocal and relatively consistent in debunking rumors and outlying fan theories through various social media accounts. In contrast, the director has also dropped snippets related to the project, such as sources of inspiration for the direction and execution of the story. Various comics that marketing has spotlighted have been Superman Birthright, All-Star Superman, Superman: Brainiac, and Superman: Ending Battle.

"There are a lot of elements in Birthright that inspired Legacy," said Gunn. "Just as there are elements from All Star, For All Seasons, back to the original Siegel and Shuster stories, and much, much more."





Nicholas Holt, Rachel Brosnahan and David Corenswet appeared in a TikTok that had fans reeling in Feb. 2024.

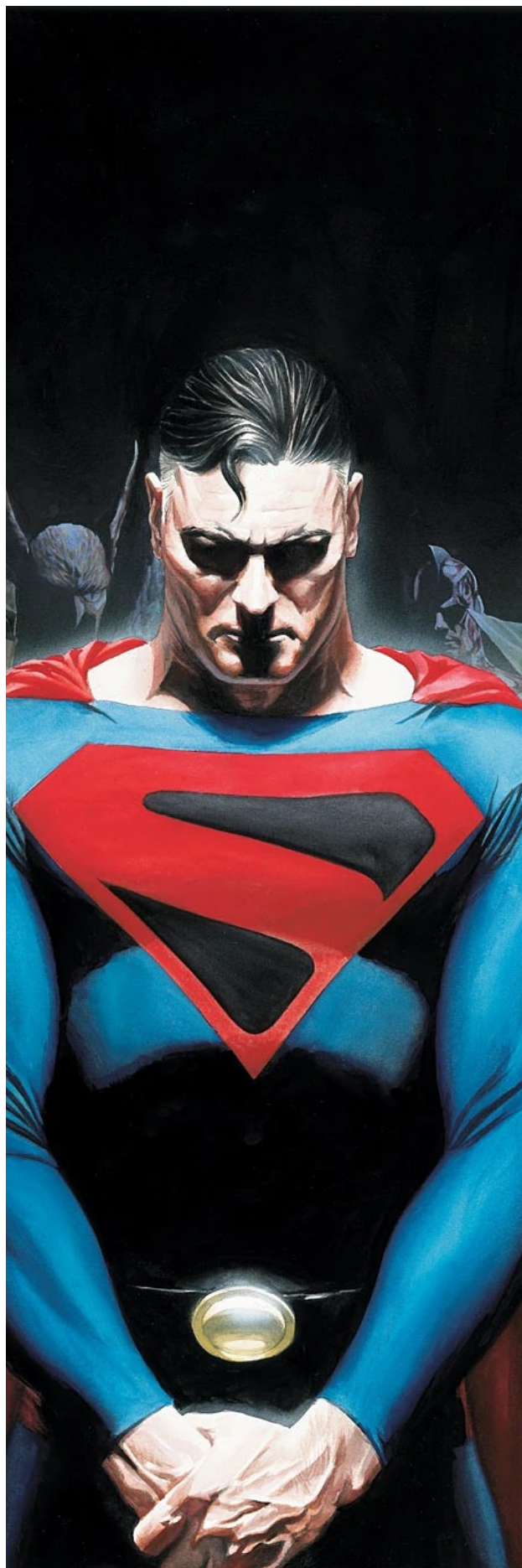
This past year Gunn expressed his excitement towards his latest project by sharing a fifth story used for inspiration on social media.

*“Just received this stunningly gorgeous Absolute edition of Superman for All Seasons, one of my favorite Superman stories & a huge influence on ‘Legacy’ (and a strangely perfect bookend with ‘All-Star Superman’),” DC Studios Co-CEO James Gunn said. “The late, great Tim Sale’s artwork & Bjarne Hansen’s watercolor work have never looked better — nor have Clark & Ma & Pa. Jeph Loeb’s elegant, confident story still sings.”*

Gunn confirmed on social media that the budget is not publicly known after fielding and debunking the latest fan question and rumor. Gunn recently said on Threads, “Absolutely not. How in the world do they think they know what our budget is?”

Superman the film carries hope and optimism into theaters next year on July 11, 2025.

Superman featured in “Justice Society of America: Thy Kingdom Come, Part One” (2008).  
Art by Alex Ross



# In war-torn Ukraine, comics are gaining popularity — as it should be

In 2016 buying a comic book was quite a challenge. There were barely a dozen comic shops all around Ukraine. Finding a graphic novel in regular bookstores was like searching for a needle in a haystack and most Ukrainian publishers wouldn't bother to print them. Thus, for me, it meant an hour-long trip all around the city to get myself a printed copy in Russian.

Oleksiy Pryimak

**I**t felt wrong. For me, for comic shop's stuff, for other customers, as Russia had been waging a proxy war in the eastern part of our country for two years already. "There is no such nation as Ukrainians, and there is no such language as Ukrainian", Russian propagandists were proclaiming daily. It was, of course, a blatant lie. Yet, there I was, struggling my way through the pages of Brian Michael Bendis's "Guardians of the Galaxy," wrestling with Russian words, some of which were unfamiliar.

Why were there no Ukrainian translations back then? Mostly because of the

prejudice of the publishers. At book festivals, they argued that the Ukrainian audience had little interest in this literary genre, deeming the publication of comic books a risky financial venture. That's why Ukrainian comic shops peddled graphic novels translated into Russian — a language more familiar to many Ukrainians than English due to Russian colonization and the centuries-long occupation of our land.



Comic Con in  
Ukraine in 2021.  
Photo by Oleksiy  
Pryimak





Comic Con in  
Ukraine in 2019.  
Photo by Oleksiy  
Pryimak

### ***The will of the people***

Yet, despite the publishers' initial skepticism, the hunger for comic books was on the rise. Massive comic conventions had been taking place in the capital since 2015, drawing crowds of thousands. The sight of people flocking to cosplay shows, attending pop-culture lectures, grabbing snacks, geeky accessories, clothes, and, of course, comic books might have come as a surprise for the publishers.

Those conventions revealed to many of us the works of Ukrainian comic books authors for the first time. The group of those daring creators was indeed very small, but the significance of their work was grand and obvious: they were creating comic books in Ukrainian. That alone was reason enough for us to dash to the stands and grab a few copies. Historical Witcher-esque detective tales, urban spy series, and comics inspired by Ukrainian classic literature—all of it was truly inspiring.

And finally, in 2017, 26 years after Ukraine declared its independence, we got our first DC comics in Ukrainian, published by "Ridna Mova". It was the start of the chain reaction.

### ***The will of our time***

Now the second year of Russian full-scale invasion comes to an end. As Iran-made drones and Russian rockets explode all over the city each couple of days, there are no comic-cons anymore, at least for now. Holding one would be too risky. However, the love for graphic novels is flourishing.

Since 2017 many publishers have started translating and printing comic books – Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, IDW and much more. Last month it was a challenge for me to buy "Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi – most of the copies were sold out. Recently, the same could be said about the Pulitzer-

winning "Maus", and Scott Snyder's "Batman" volumes are nowhere to be found in many bookstores. The demand just keeps growing.

Several days ago, a large Ukrainian book publisher "Vivat" announced plans to release their first graphic novels in 2024. Titles include Tom King's "Batman – One Bad Day: The Riddler," Ram V's and Christian Ward's "Aquaman: Andromeda," Jennifer Muro's and Thomas Krajewski's "Primer," and more. All of this is happening amid the largest war in Europe since WWII, despite the economic and social challenges bundled with it.

It can't help but remind of the times of World War II, when stories about Captain America, Wonder Woman, Superman, Captain Marvel and others rapidly gained popularity amidst global tragedy and massive bloodshed. Back then, art mingled with propaganda, stories mirrored a selfless fight against a formidable foe, offering people a glimmer of hope.

Maybe in Ukraine today, we're catching a faint echo of those times. And, to be frank, it wouldn't be surprising.

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Ambika Mod and Leo Woodall as Emma Morley and Dexter Mayhew in Netflix's limited series "One Day."  
Photo courtesy of Netflix



# The art of yearning: Netflix's 'One Day' joins list of classic love stories

A winding trail up Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh. Flowing green grass and yellow flowers dancing in the breeze. Blue skies. A red hair tie in curly dark hair.

.....  
**Brianna Taggart**

**T**hese play like a montage in my mind – like flashes of memories that aren't really mine. I guess that's because they aren't. They belong to fictional character Dexter Mayhew. They're a repetition of memories from 1988 and 2007, the beginning and end of a love story.

How strange that clips representing both hope and sadness can exist at the same time. How strange that I've caught myself zoning out and imagining these scenes like they belong solely to me.

***Continued on page 24***



**Continued from page 23**

Every four to six years, a story so heartbreaking comes along. It's a tale as old as time for me – well, at least since I was 16.

Netflix's limited series "One Day," which premiered Feb. 8 this year, joins that list of stories that rips me apart.

After the first episode, it was an instant classic. It joins top-tier romances like "Love, Rosie" and "Normal People." It's epic in a way that these types of stories only can be.

The teenage version of me would never believe that "Love, Rosie" is the happiest out of those three either – one of the biggest plot twists, really.

In 2014, "Love, Rosie" threw me into an emotional spiral. In 2020, "Normal People" put me into a depressive episode, and now I feel totally fine after watching the first and reading the latter. Oh, the world has turned upside down.

It's heartbreaking, because it's real.

The tragedy isn't thrown in your face in these three stories (besides the final episode of "One Day" on Netflix). It's a subtle type of loss – a loss that's felt over the course of almost an entire lifetime. It's a loss of missed opportunities and the right person at the wrong time.

***"Imagine one selected day struck out of your life, and think how different its course would have been. Think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on that memorable day."***

Charles Dickens "Great Expectations" quote Emma used during Tilly and Graham's wedding toast in episode 10



Lily Collins and Sam Claflin  
in 2014 movie "Love,  
Rosie." Photo courtesy of  
Constantin Film

"One Day" is about two people's lives, Dexter Mayhew (Leo Woodall) and Emma Morley (Ambika Mod), over the course of nearly 20 years as they weave into each other's lives. We see them meet at their university graduation ball in Edinburgh and share their first full day together on July 15, 1988. After that, we met up with them on that same day each year until 2007.

I thought that day was selected since it marked their anniversary of knowing each other, but the real meaning of that day was revealed in the second-to-last episode.

I haven't cried that hard watching a show in a long time.

I couldn't help but compare "One Day" to "Love, Rosie" and "Normal People." These three stories (along with many others I'm missing) have mastered the art of yearning.

## ***'Love, Rosie'***

I was first introduced to this type of storytelling when the "Love, Rosie" movie came out in 2014 featuring Lily Collins and Sam Claflin as the leads. I literally only knew that Collins (Clary Fray from "The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones" movie) and Claflin (Finnick Odair in the "Catching Fire" movie) were in a romantic British movie together. That's all I needed to know.

Unfortunately, it was much harder in the 2010s to have access to international media than it is now. I had to wait for it to come out on DVD, so I read the book during that waiting period called "Where Rainbows End" by Cecelia Ahren.

Their story was written over the course of decades and told completely through written correspondence to each other. I've never felt so smart and pretentious in my life than I did reading that book at 16. It's been 10 years, and I'm still not over it.

I've been trying to rewatch this movie for nearly five years but struggled to get through it again, because Rosie (Collins) and Alex's (Claflin) miscommunication hurt too much to watch. I had a breeze rewatching it the day after I finished watching "One Day" though. This was like a fairytale in comparison.





Paul Mescal and Daisy Edgar Jones in the 2020 adaptation of "Normal People" by Sally Rooney. Photo courtesy of Element Pictures

## 'Normal People'

I had "Normal People" during my final spring semester of college in 2020. It was yet another heartbreaking series of missed opportunities that I'm still not over. To be fair though, I'm not sure I've gotten over a single thing in my life.

Connell (Paul Mescal) and Marianne's (Daisy Edgar Jones) relationship was fascinating to watch, and even more interesting to read. The story follows them from their final year of high school through university at Trinity College in Dublin.

The story by Sally Rooney is truly just about "normal people" and how our own insecurities and anxieties can get in the way of what we truly want. The book even goes so far as to not use quotation marks at all in order to visually express their lack of communication. It was a bit tricky to read, but it was the perfect narrative device to use (though I do recommend the audio book if it's too annoying for readers).

These are the stories for different generations, and all three are absolutely brilliant in the way they captivate that love.

## A rainy July 15th

This isn't the first life of Dexter and Emma's love story, and it isn't even the second. The book by David Nicholls came out in 2009, and a movie featuring Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess came out in 2011. Despite me being so sad, I'm so happy to have 14 episodes of this story.

It was heartbreaking, and I was shouting "no" at my TV when the real meaning behind the one day was revealed to be Emma's death day in the penultimate episode.

*"There was yet another date of greater importance...her own death. A day which lay sly and unseen," Emma read to Dexter from a Thomas Hardy novel in episode 14.*

Dexter told Emma on July 15, 1988, that it was St. Swithin's Day and that if it rains on that day, it's supposed to rain all summer. Every day we met them on July 15, it was sunny except for the day Emma died in 2002. I should've known something bad was brewing when I first saw the raindrops fall.

Dexter's depiction of grief when he was losing his mom to cancer in episode five and then losing Emma from the accident in episode 13 shattered me.

## More than a footnote

I love the way "One Day" sets up Emma not wanting to be a footnote in Dexter's life in the very first episode to show how she actually became his entire story, an entire book.

We see Emma say this to Dexter when they're hiking Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh that first full day together in 1988.

"I'm not being a footnote.... In the story of your life," Emma told Dexter, hiking down Arthur's Seat.

Dexter returns to Arthur's Seat with his daughter Jasmine in 2007 to relive his first memories of Emma in the final episode. Everything comes full circle at that moment.

He ensures that Emma is way more than just a footnote in his daughter's life as well by sharing these memories with her. They climb to the top together (though there are fewer yellow flowers the second time around), and he points down below where he first met Emma.

I was ugly sobbing the entire time watching this.

**Continued on page 26**

## ***Continued from page 25***

The episode ended with Dexter and Jasmine walking in the same footsteps as he previously did with Emma, the two scenes overlaid one another. We see 2007 Dexter look up the steps at 1988 Emma as she's stopped by the old version of him calling out her name. A montage of all their kisses throughout the years starts and then ends with their kiss on the steps Dexter's on now.

## ***The art of storytelling***

It was the perfect way to close out their story.

It's also probably one of the hardest types of stories to come to terms with as people, because we can't blame that hurt on life getting in the way. Though a freak accident killed Emma, Dexter and Emma lost nearly a decade of time they could've spent together due to miscommunication.

It's a hurt of "what ifs" that we blame ourselves for. "One Day," "Normal People," and "Love, Rosie" are all stories that really resonate with me and audiences. Everyone has things they wonder about – whether it's a missed romantic connection or dream we let slip aside.

It's the art of storytelling, and it's the art of captivating such a normal human experience with characters who are so well fleshed out. We see their flaws but we don't villainize them for it. It only adds to the depths of their characters.

Dexter, if poorly written, could've easily been an antagonist with his outbursts, privilege and his whole "I want to be rich and famous when I'm 40" conversation. But he's not. He's beloved because he is real. After only seeing him on one day each year, we somehow manage to get such an incredible grasp on who he is as a person.

The same goes for Emma. She literally had an affair and stayed in relationships that she didn't necessarily want to be in. However, we love her anyway.

It's easy to stereotype characters like Dexter and Emma and put them in a box, so it's a real feat and accomplishment to have them as strong and complex as they are. I think everyone can find something relatable in each of them despite living in different circumstances.



Dexter's anxieties. Emma's insecurities. These are the types of feelings that swirl around in each of us.

"One Day" captures the human experience of what it feels like to be lost in our twenties. I finished the show with a weight on my chest and tears streaming down my face. However, after reflecting back on it days later, I feel validation lifting me up.

I think there's a lot of pressure in our twenties and early thirties to have our entire lives together and immediately know what we're supposed to do. Emma and Dexter's characters really normalizes what it actually feels like in that early stage of adulthood.

Maybe one day I'll be able to move on from this story but not today.

Ambika Mod and Leo Woodall break hearts in "One Day" series finale. Photo courtesy of Netflix





## *Tune in*

Here's a playlist I think really captures that whole "sad love story montage" feeling I get when thinking of "One Day."



