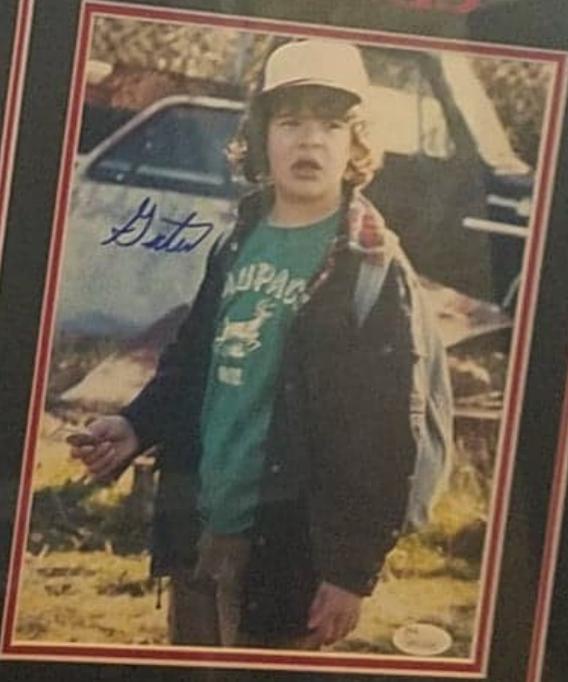


THE
DRINK TANK



STRANGER THINGS



Galen Matarazzo
"Dustin Henderson"



The Drink Tank 412

Alissa says—

I was intrigued by the *Stranger Things* trailer. The day it came out, I was house sitting for three amazing dogs. I sat down in the living room of the house, and I watched the first episode...and then the second...and then the third...before I knew it, I had watched the entire season! I loved it! I urged so many people to watch it, and guess what? They loved it, too! This show is something special. It's nostalgic, it's SF, and it speaks to so many people. Also, I felt like Dustin reminded me of someone I knew...I can't remember when I finally put my finger on it that he is a young Chris Garcia! I even got Chris Dustin's Hawkins Middle School ID...it just seemed an appropriate thing to do.

If you haven't seen this show, you really should.

Chris notes—

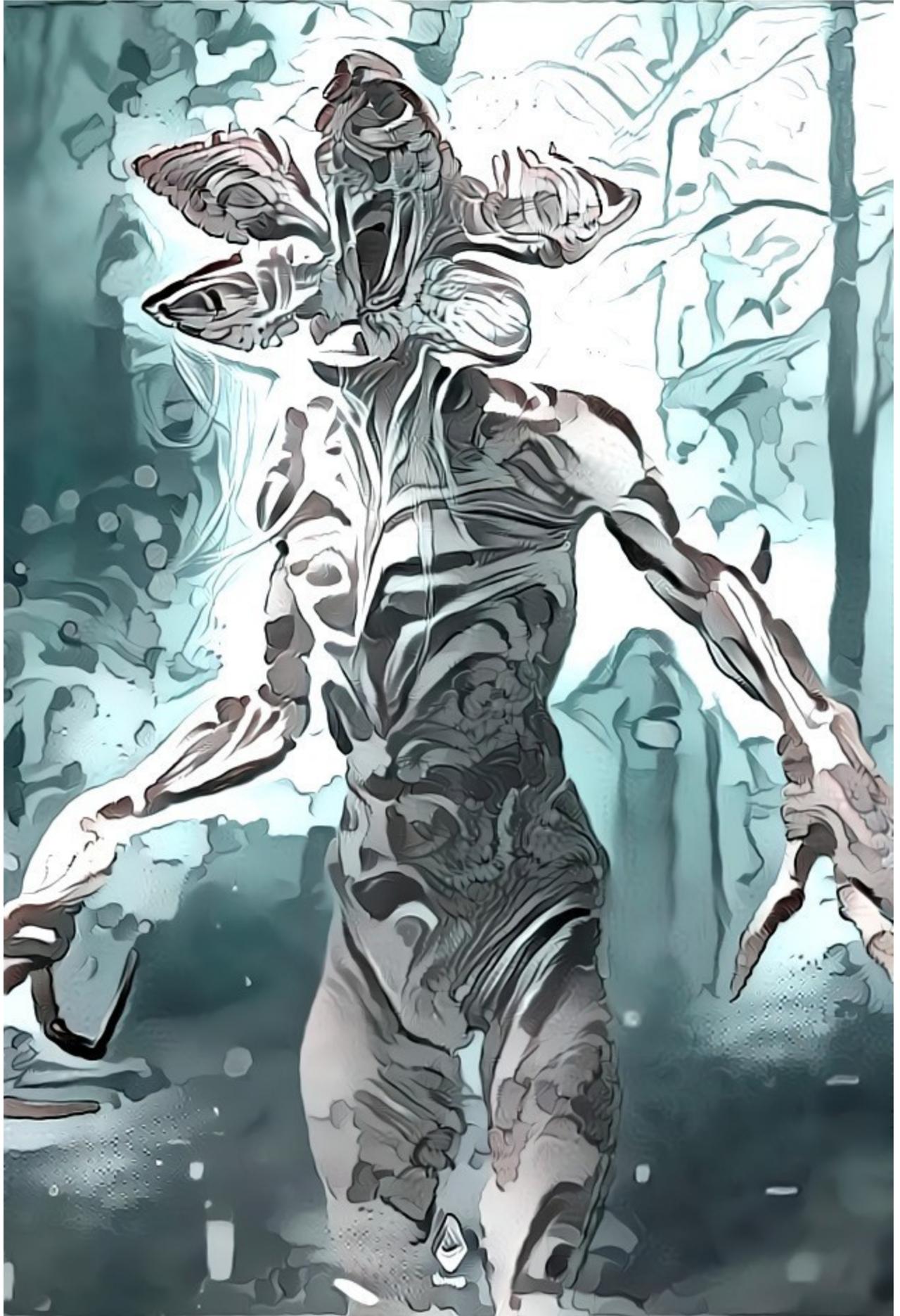
I remember hearing everyone raving about *Stranger Things* on Facebook and not getting all the hype. Vanessa and I had, I believe, one year olds slithering around the house, and thus it were difficult to get the time to actually watch. We finally managed to, during Penguin naps and after bed-time, and wow, was I wrong to question the hype.

I immediately started writing about the show. As in the second episode wasn't even 1/2 over when I began the first word docs with pieces in it. One I fully developed into a piece for *Klaus at Gunpoint*, and it turned out to be a fairly popular piece, still regularly one of the top-ten posts for the site all these years later. The second season did not disappoint. The third season looks more like a period piece than the homage to the film/television that the first two did, which could be very very cool!

Editors

Alissa McKersie ~ Chris Garcia

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Stranger Things & The VHS Tradition

BY Chris

Dear Readers, I beg you to look at two parts of my film blog/zine that you may have missed - <http://klausatgunpoint.weebly.com/100-sci-fi-classics.html> klausatgunpoint.weebly.com/100-sci-fi-classics-2.html

They are the results of a project I undertook to watch every movie on a set of DVDs I got for Christmas one year. These were, for the most part terrible, terrible movies, several of which had been MST3Ked over the years, and some of which qualify in the race for Worst Movie Ever. That said, I suffered through them and I learned something: there are always nuggets of good.

If you listened to my *52 Episodes to Science Fiction Film Literacy* piece on *Robot Monster*, you'll know that in the B-movies of the 1950s and 60s, producers had to call their shots. They might choose to put whatever money they had into a couple of good effects, or a costume, or paying a real composer to create their score, or getting one real, amazing actor. That was the methodology, and it's usually those elements that the *Creature Features*-era fans (myself included) held so dear, and the reason so many of us would defend films that are otherwise indefensible.

Watching the Netflix Original *Stranger Things*, I have determined that this is the end product of the breeding program of those films.

The story of *Stranger Things* could easily have come from one of the scripts for those terrible flicks. It's your basic "Government is trying to make a new killing machine, small town is accidentally in the way" stories, but the writing is incredibly smart. The story unfolds at an even pace, the small jumps that need to happen to make an individual episode seem important in the context of a longer story work perfectly, and the art direction, set design, costuming, and effects work are all really strong. All the elements that often hampered films like *Horror High* or *The Crater Lake Monster*, but it's managed to synthesize all of those elements. If those filmmakers had been given access to today's effects, and especially the budget that this obviously had, this may well have been what they came up with.

Many of the negative reviews I've read from folks have claimed that the only reason so many people like me like *Stranger Things* is the nostalgia factor. Yes, I was around and watching tons of VHS tapes of films that would have influenced creators The Duffy Brothers in the 1980s (I would be a little younger than the kids in *Stranger Things* in 1983) but at the same time, this isn't a nostalgia piece. It may explain the unbridled love of many, many folks seems to have for it, but it's not all. This story works no matter what era you put it in (so long as it's after the Cold War...) and the 1983 wrapper is strong (though, apparently, somewhat flexible as there are a few out-of-time music choices) and gives it a sense of dislocation. In 1983, it was easy to make a movie that was set in 1983; in 2016, it's hard to make a movie set in 1983. They do it beautifully, and create a work that is not so much about being a 1980s work, but a work that utilizes the 1980s sensibilities perfectly within the production environment of today.

So many folks, including the writers/directors, I believe, say this is the end result of the 1980s works of John Carpenter, Steven Spielberg, and Stephen King. Disagree. This series is the grandchild of directors like Don Dohler, the product of ingesting films like *The Day Time Ended*, *Brain Twisters*, *The Crater Lake Monster*, and *Bloodtide*, only done with the resources that could have made those films great. Yes, there are marks of Carpenter and Spielberg all over the thing, and Stephen King is specifically called out in the series, but *Stranger Things* isn't an homage to them. Watch the somewhat under-rated *Super-8* to see what an homage to Spielberg and the works of King looks like. Remember that the films of a lot of 1980s directors we consider great were influenced by B-Movies like *Robot Monster*, or any number of films that played as the second half of a double-feature. Carpenter, Landis, Dante, Spielberg, and so many others took those concepts and polished them, putting out their own version of those stories, but with then-modern sensibilities. *Halloween* owes much more to William Castle and Roger Corman than Alfred Hitchcock and Michael Powell. If you want to see what happens when you understand what the VHS-era of filmmaking meant, and the lasting positive influence, watch *Stranger Things*.





IS STEVE HARRINGTON JEAN-RALPHIO SAPERSTEIN'S REAL FATHER?

Another Take on the Popular Stranger Things/Parks and Recreation Fan Theory

By: Audrey Byrnes

A popular theory amongst fans of both *Stranger Things* and *Parks and Recreation* is the theory that Steve Harrington from *Stranger Things* is the biological father of *Parks and Recreation* character Jean-Ralphio Saperstein. One of the first questions that arises is how was this theory born? Both shows reside in fictional cities in the state of Indiana, Hawkins (*Stranger Things*) and Pawnee (*Parks and Recreation*). *Stranger Things* takes place in the early to mid 1980s, (1983-1985 so far), while *Parks and Recreation* takes place in present day (2009-2015). Steve Harrington is seventeen in the first season of *Stranger Things*, while Jean-Ralphio is twenty-three in his first appearance in Season two of *Parks and Recreation*. In addition to the time frame, actors from each series, Joe Keery (Steve Harrington) and Ben Schwartz (Jean-Ralphio

Saperstein), have similar hair and facial features. Although both actors, as well as *Parks and Recreation* creator Michael Schur, have jokingly confirmed this theory's validity; could this theory be truly accurate? The theory was initially instigated in 2016 after the release of the first season of *Stranger Things*, and although there have been changes to the story, the plausibility of the Steve Harrington/Jean-Ralphio theory may still have merit.

In order to approach this theory, we must first approach the potential identity of Jean-Ralphio's mother. *Stranger Things* Season one takes place in fall of 1983. In a conversation between Steve Harrington and his new girlfriend Nancy Wheeler (Natalia Dyer), it is revealed that Steve has had several sexual relationships with other female students. In the beginning, it appears that Steve might be trying to make Nancy another of his sexual conquests but throughout the course of Season one, Steve becomes increasingly more attached to her. After their sexual encounter, he shows little interest in helping Nancy find her lost friend Barbara Holland (Shannon Purser) and even spray paints cruel messages throughout the city about Nancy after he believes that she is cheating on him with Jonathan Byers (Charlie Heaton). He eventually shows dedication towards Nancy by rejecting his friends for not liking her, and reconciling their relationship by the end of Season one. In accordance to the initial fan theory, by the conclusion of Season one, Nancy appears to be the ideal candidate for Jean-Ralphio's mother, but Season two turns that prospect completely upside down.

Season two of *Stranger Things* begins in fall of 1984 where Nancy and Steve have a steady relationship. At a Halloween party, a drunken Nancy reveals to Steve that she doesn't love him. In order to counter this statement, Steve prompts Nancy to tell him that she loves him while she is sober, and she is unable to do so. When Steve learns that Nancy has skipped classes with Jonathan Byers, he tries to reconcile the relationship with Nancy; but is instead recruited by Dustin Henderson (Gaten Matarazzo) to take care of his pet Demodog D'Artagnan. During Steve's interactions with Dustin, Steve reveals his secrets to both hair care and getting girls. Steve's method of treating his female relationships as though he doesn't care indicates that he is not quite out of the dating game permanently, just on hold for Nancy. Nancy does not confess to Steve that she and Jonathan slept together at the conspiracy theorist Murray Bauman's (Brett Gelman) house, however, while scrounging for heaters to burn the Mind Flayer out of Will Byers (Noah Schnapp), Steve accepts that she is with Jonathan. The conclusion of Season two has Steve seeing Nancy at the *Snow Ball* and accepting their failed relationship. Nancy is not going to be Jean-Ralphio's mother, but there is still hope for this theory.

According to Wikipedia, Jean-Ralphio Saperstein and his twin sister Mona-Lisa (Jenny Slate) were born March 12, 1986. Season three of *Stranger Things* takes place around July fourth of 1985, with a teaser trailer revealing that Steve has a job at an ice-cream shop next to a new female character. According to Parents.com, twins are usually born around four weeks early, with a thirty-six-week gestation period. March twelfth is only eight months away from July fourth. A study performed in Japan from 1995-1998 shows that a greater than twenty-eight-week gestation period is ideal for twins. In order for Jean-Ralphio and Mona-Lisa to be born healthy, while avoiding infant mortality and developmental issues; they would need to be conceived between June and August of 1985. Nancy and Steve's relationship is over by the end of 1984, but there is a six to seven-month difference between Season two and Season three. During Season one and Season two, Steve shows to have a knack for being a lady's man, but is working towards being both a role model and father figure for Dustin. This reformation of Steve's character makes him unlikely to return to a life of superficial relationships

with women. The successful potential of this theory relies on Steve never knowing that he is a father of twins, with the Saperstein twins never knowing that Steve is their real father.

In order for the Steve Harrington/Jean Ralphio Theory to hold, the mother would have to leave Hawkins before showing signs of pregnancy. Steve is shown to be more upstanding in the second season, so he would likely be in a long-term relationship with a new girlfriend. The new girlfriend would potentially be a teenager, under the rule of her parents who have already planned to move to Pawnee. Before the new girlfriend can tell Steve that she is pregnant, a threat from the Upside Down may distract Steve away from his new relationship, and she moves to Pawnee before the threat is resolved. The threat could also cause a misunderstanding with his new girlfriend, for which she angrily leaves to Pawnee with her family. If an Upside Down threat causes the separation between Steve and his new girlfriend, then the Saperstein twins would most likely be conceived around the beginning of July, or the end of June.

Shortly after moving to Pawnee, the young mother-to-be learns from a young obstetrician (Dr. Lu Saperstein) that she is pregnant with twins, having been confirmed from detection of two heartbeats. Being only a teenager, her parents decide that she is too young to be a mother. WebMD indicates that the fetal heartbeats in twins is usually detected around ten to twelve weeks of gestation, so it is too late to terminate the pregnancy. The parents and Mother-to-be decide that the babies will be given up for adoption. A logical question could be “why adoption?” “Why not theorize that Dr. Saperstein (Henry Winkler) marries the mother-to-be?” The answers to these questions rest in the interactions between Dr. Saperstein and his twins in *Parks and Recreation*. During the course of *Parks and Recreation*, there is zero mention of a Mrs. Saperstein. Dr. Saperstein and Mrs. Saperstein could have divorced, or Mrs. Saperstein could have died, however, Dr. Saperstein shows no affectionate remembrance towards Jean-Ralphio and Mona-Lisa’s mother. In relation to the Steve Harrington/Jean-Ralphio Theory, this brings the impression that Dr. Saperstein really didn’t know their mother outside of being a former patient. Neither of the Saperstein twins make any reference to a mother, either because they did not know her or she was never in their lives. These facts bring the impression that Dr. Saperstein was a single father of twins.

With a thirty-two-week gestation period, the mother-to-be goes into labor earlier than expected. Dr. Saperstein, being her obstetrician, is called in to deliver the twin babies. Complications arise during labor and an emergency Caesarean section is performed. Both babies are born underweight and taken directly to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). When Dr. Saperstein learns that the twins will be put up for adoption, he is completely heartbroken to know that they are unwanted and unloved. Dr. Saperstein spends weeks taking care of the newly orphaned twins in the NICU and starts to develop an attachment towards them. He decides to adopt them and, thanks to his successful business investments throughout Pawnee, which are mentioned in the *Parks and Recreation* Sixth Season finale; he proves that he is financially able to support two babies as a single father. Once the adoption papers are signed, Dr. Saperstein vows that they will never know sadness and will always be happy, even at the expense of their social development. In Season six and Season seven of *Parks and Recreation*, Dr. Saperstein acknowledges that the twins are perpetual liars, and not good people overall, yet he continuously indulges their every whim just to keep them happy. Dr. Saperstein wants his newly adopted infant twins to always feel loved and he names them Jean-Ralphio and Mona-Lisa.

This fan theory originated with the notion that Nancy and Steve would be the biological parents of the Saperstein twins. The second season of *Stranger Things* has shown that Nan-

cy is not the mother, but there is still hope of Steve fathering twins who live in a separate county of Indiana. The *Stranger Things/Parks and Recreation* cross over regarding Jean-Ralphio's parentage is an enjoyable theory to see unfold. As *Stranger Things* continues, this theory will constantly be put to the test. Will it stand? Will the writers of *Stranger Things* allow this cross-over to be a true possibility? At the writing of this article, Season three of *Stranger Things* has yet to be released. On July 4, 2019, we will all see if this theory can still remain as strong as it currently stands.

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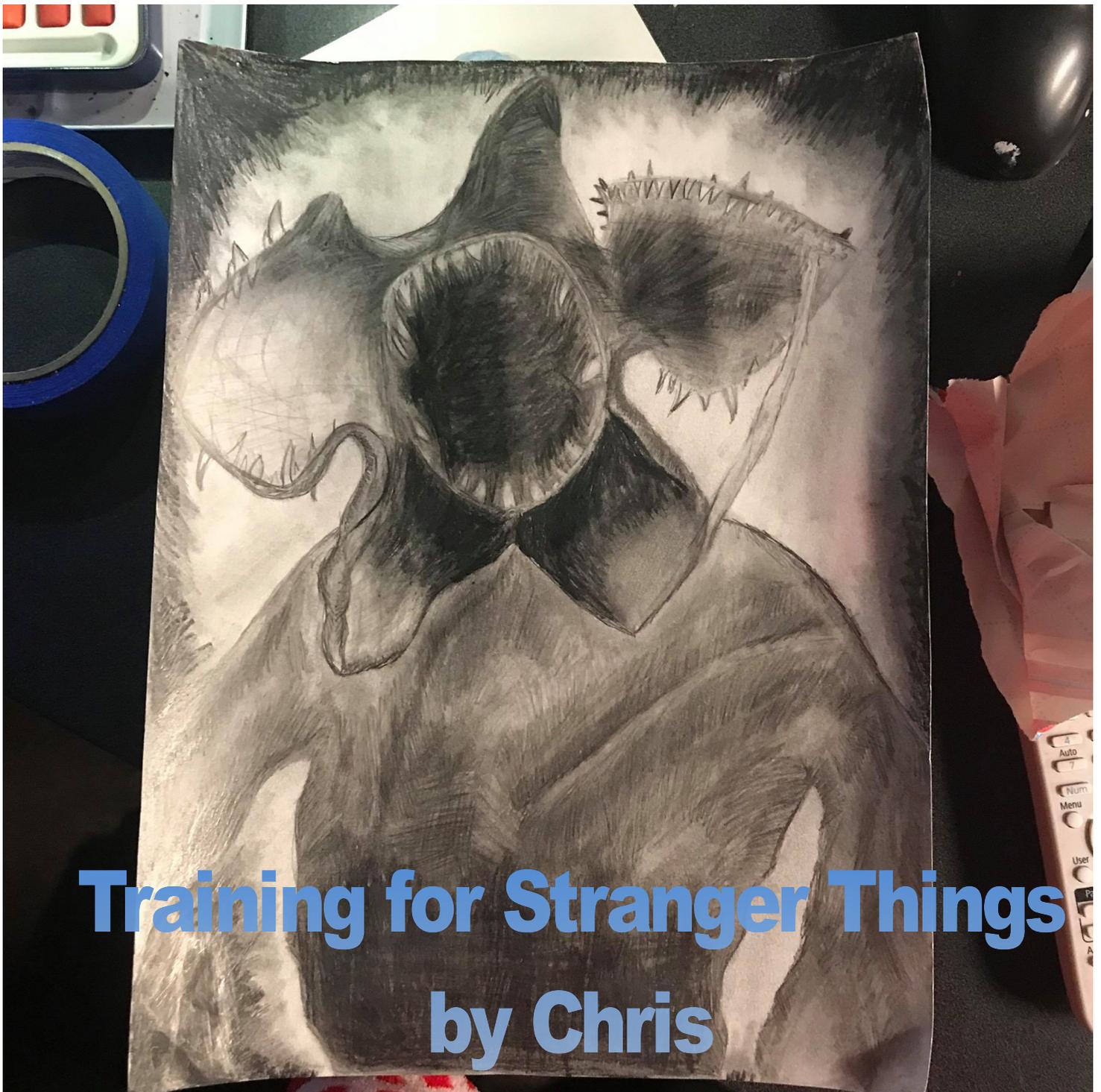
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Training for Stranger Things

by Chris

Go in cold, you're likely to hate it.

That's the problem with the television of the post-garbage era. You've got to have something to connect with. The Duffy Brothers are, in a way, horror culture cannibals, eating the brains of the greats of the 70s and 80s, then choosing an aesthetic that maximizes the ability of those brain droppings to become legend. The best way to really get ready for *Stranger Things* is to actually get ready for *Stranger Things*!

Here's my guide!

The Plucky Gang of Kids

The plucky gang of determined minors who are out there trying to save the world. Well, usually, it's the neighborhood, but stick with me. The most famous example of this is, of course, *The Goonies*. An exceptionally

fun film that took the classic 'We've gotta save the Orphanage!' concept and runs with it in an adventure mode. I love it, and the way the kids are piled in, with each playing a specific role, make the film that much more entertaining.

But, if you're looking for a slightly deeper cut, I have to say *Super 8* is the best example of the genre. If you like Spielberg, you'll love his spiritual son JJ Abrams. You see, Jack-Jack is just about the best person in the world at taking elements of past commercial success and putting it in front of your eyes with a strong hit of post-post-modernism. *Super 8* is a film that takes the ideas of films like *E.T.*, and especially *The Goonies*, and makes them feel fresh by doing damn near nothing but putting a star-filter on! That sounds like a knock, and if you're looking for Art it really is, but ultimately, it's a satisfying film that actually makes smart use of its cast.

The Monster Squad is, without question, one of the finest films of the 1980s when you're looking for absolutely stunningly entertaining fun popcorn-chewing! It's actually got a great cast, specifically getting to see Tom Noonan play Frankenstein's Monster (who, it is LITERALLY OK to call Frankenstein if you wanna because he's really Frankenstein Jr., but hates being called Junior because he feels its minimizing). It's a phenomenally fun film, with a lot of the sensations you'll get from watching *Stranger Things*, except where *The Monster Squad* is comedy adventure, *Stranger Things* is dramatic adventure.

I'm fairly certain The Duffer Brothers spent a lot of their youth with the VHS copies of every Joe Dante film. The one that gives you the best view of kids as saviors is *Explorers*. Ethan Hawke, River Phoenix, Robert Picardo, Dana Ivey, all of 'em are great, and the film is a bunch of fun. If you can find it, there's a European cut that runs about ten minutes longer, apparently.

MONSTERS!!!! Wait... No?

The monsters in *Stranger Things* are of a special variety. They aren't Frankensteins, but they are the by-product of research, not the product of that research. This is *Godzilla*, where it is the actions of the scientists that unknowingly create a monster, but when they get into a situation where they release hidden monsters.

If you're not thinking *Alien*, then you're not thinking.

Alien is basically the idea that you're drawing a monster to you, and they wipe you out. The film, a long-run ship picking up an alien and bringing it back (and that kinda being a part of the mission), is a masterpiece of the idea that we only barely understand the consequences of our importation and exploration.

The comedic take on the idea of *Buckaroo Bonzai Across The 8th Dimension* certainly plays in that realm. The idea is *Buckaroo Bonzai* is working on a car that can drive through solid matter, and what ends up happening is that he brings back a traveler, and then exposes that there are aliens among us! It's fun.

Stewart Gordon's From Beyond is an excellent example of the unintended-results form of science fiction. The basic idea is that scientist come up with a way to see evil monsters that are coming to take over. It's actually a pretty good little flick, and the kind of thing that the Duffer Brothers are likely to not only have experienced, but also have tried to work with. Creepy and awesome!

OK, John Carpenter.

The funny thing is that EVERYONE says that John Carpenter is the basis for so much of *Stranger Things*, and maybe it's just the sensation of watching it. You instantly know you're watching a Carpenter film, the weight, texture, the impressive combination of action and character. *Halloween*, *The Fog*, and especially, *The Thing* all feel like John Carpenter, and one of things that makes them Carpenter films is the attention to the idea of horror's attachment to digging into things. Ultimately, science, or more accurately investigation, is the real villain of the film. Looking into things is the real killer... with paranoia as secondary cause. Watching those three films will give you an incredible start down the road to getting what *Stranger Things* is.

But, far more importantly, it gives you an idea as to what the Duffer Bros. want you to feel. Carpenter isn't a symbol-heavy filmmaker, but he is 100% one of the best at making a sensation enter his audience and leave them changed. That's what *Stranger Things* does.

What Else is on TV?

I run down a lot of the lower-level stuff in my other article, but it's impressive how much of the 1980s feeling they get from television. The 1980s were a great decade for TV, still at the end of the garbage era of TV, but managed to have a lot of fun stuff going on. The ones that are most interesting as for going into the series *Stranger Things* are not only the SF and Horror series, but the TV movies that it evolved out of.

The Phoenix in 1982 was an alien-comes-to-Earth story that was really dark for the television movie genre.

I watched it first-run and it was a blast. *Don't Go To Sleep* is a wonderful ghost story, and one of the best roles for the legendary Denis Weaver. There is a feeling to it that certainly comes to *Stranger Things*. The *Witch Mountain* films are certainly something you must watch to train, but the TV film entry, *Beyond Witch Mountain*, which is the worst of the films, but not without its charms.

The Government is BAD!!!

This old chestnut gets trotted out a lot. The most famous of these is, of course, *E.T.*. An adorable alien comes to Earth, the government wants to take it away and dissect it.

Oh, let's not beat around the bush... *X-Files*.

That's where a lot of the sensation of *Stranger Things* sensations comes from. It's paranoid, it's funny, it's full of characters who give in the to High Strangeness who are interacting with characters who are reluctantly coming to the High-Strangeness. While *X-Files* is about how working government adults deal with the problem of being in the midst of these sort of weirdnesses, *Stranger Things* is about how families deal with that fact. The one thing that *X-Files* does so well is gives you the impression that everything you see is real, and that reality isn't what matters, but what's behind the reality is way more important. That's what *Stranger Things* is trading in!

Baaaaad Company, Until the Day I Die!

A huge part of the third season is the idea of the death of small town America at the hands of WalMart, Target, and general Mall Culture. OK, and the Russians, which was a refreshing return to the mainstream! There are a lot of films that explore this, in various ways, but the one that I love the most, and you'll be stunned, is *UHF*.

Yes, THAT *UHF*!

The entire third season is a combination of the idea that we are defined by the ways we interact with our homes and home towns, and the ways in which the changes that inevitably come to them are actually driven



by something more sinister. IN *Stranger Things* it's all about the Cold War, as any genre dealing with the 1980s should be, but in *UHF*, it is all about media assimilation, about the rise of companies like ClearChannel. It's about the big guy swallowing up the little guy who is actually representing the feeling of the local environment. The idea of a plucky bunch of unlikely heroes going after the big bad is heavy into both.

The Sequel is better than the Original

Terminator 2. Watch it again. Then watch *The Terminator*. It's no contest as to which is better. Why? Because Cameron learned a few things in-between. The stories aren't exactly dissimilar, the idea of science that we are not currently privy to being used against us, but more importantly, they both show within an original con





Stranger Things to Eat by Chris

There is nothing that evokes time and place better than food. It's difficult to believe that a film takes place in San Francisco if there's not at least one shot containing either an Its-It or sourdough bread. I don't believe Boston without seafood; Chicago without Deep Dish (or that retched Mutogen-colored relish). It's one of the things I always judge a show by. *Stranger Things* managed to hit it out of the park with the way they used food all throughout the series.

First, there are Eggos.

If I think of the mid-west, I think of simple. The Eggo is as simple as it gets. It's tasty, maybe not delicious, but tasty. It's easy; just pop 'em in a toaster. They're almost good for you. That's the 1980s, don't you think? The fact that I I is obsessed with them is a clear sign of her foreignness to the situation. Not many people who had them available all the time would form that sort of attachment.

Season Three, though, is all about food.

You see, they talk New Coke, and one of the characters declares that it is far superior, only to get shot down. I, as well, know that New Coke was the superior Coke. When it became Coke II, I bought that. When I had to order it from Yap, I did, a couple of times.

And then, there's Scoop's Ahoy.

An analog to Baskin-Robbins and found in the Starcourt Food Court, it provides the sensation of both the strangeness of Mall culture, the lengths branding will go to capture attention in a Mall, and the importance of Ice Cream in general.