

Netflix's *Locke & Key* is a serviceable adaptation

Keizer author reads, signs

By T.J. REID

On April 24, Disney will release *Black Widow*, the twenty-fourth movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Two months later, *Wonder Woman 1984*, the ninth movie in the DC Extended Universe, will hit theaters courtesy of Warner Bros. Although such film and TV adaptations of comic book properties have been around almost as long as the funny books themselves, their popularity practically exploded in the 2010's, and they have not showed any indication of slowing down now that we've hit a new decade. Even non-superhero, non-Marvel and DC comics have been getting in on the fun and making the jump to the big and little screens in this exciting era, and IDW Publishing's *Locke & Key* series is one of the latest to do so. It is, however, not one of the greatest offerings out there.

Written and co-created by Joe Hill, prolific novelist and son of the great Stephen King, *Locke & Key* (the comic) is the story of a small family who, after witnessing the brutal murder of patriarch Rendell Locke, decide to make a fresh start by moving to their ancestral home in Lovecraft, Massachusetts. They are not in Key House for long before magical, spooky things begin to happen, all tied into mysterious keys with equally mysterious powers.

Locke & Key the television



Submitted
Emilia Jones and Jackson Robert Scott as Kinsey and Bode Locke hide from a very real threat in *Locke & Key*.

show, on the other hand, is the story of the Locke children and mother coming to grips with their tragedy while simultaneously getting involved in and dealing with some messy new relationships, romantic or otherwise. Oh, there's also some supernatural adventures that exist on the periphery as well. They also change the name of the town to Matheson for... some reason.

As a fan of the original comic, that was my biggest problem with season one of *Locke & Key*: a slight yet noticeable shift in focus from the source material. This in and of itself is not a bad thing, of course; it was just unexpected. The acting is well done (outside of a couple of child actors who get a pass because they're kids), and the characters' reactions to trauma are believable if not always pleasant. In a way, the show

reminded me very much of a teenage-aged drama that you would find on the CW or even ABC Family.

The other sizable issue I had was the writing. I couldn't put my finger on it at first, but eventually it occurred to me that sometimes the characters in *Locke & Key* said things in ways that no human would ever do naturally. The actors do their best to sell this occasionally off-putting dialogue, however, and they do it well. You won't even notice anything 95 percent of the time. But that 5 percent had a tendency to draw me out of the story whenever

it was noticeable. In addition to the dialogue, some motivations seemed murky, and the villain had some seemingly random and therefore silly moments of violence just to remind you that yes, she is the villain.

But maybe I'm just being spoiled in a world where you can't swing an enchanted Asgardian hammer without hitting hundreds of comic book

adaptations. There is a lot of good to be found in *Locke & Key* season 1, after all, but close your eyes for five minutes and ten better adaptations will steal your attention. The potential to reach greatness is there ... Season two just better reach it if it wants to keep up in today's world of capes and gods.

Locke & Key season one is now available on Netflix.

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