

DESTROYED CINEMA + MUSIC
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SCOOBY DOO EDITION



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*cover photo taken from Dingo's Scooby and Shag webcomic, with permission
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An Interview with WildwindVampire, creator and writer of *ScoobySnax* fan-blog
by JP Meldrum

**1. Tell us about yourself and the *Doo*. Why *Scooby-Doo*? How *Scooby-Doo*?
When *Scooby-Doo*?**

My love of Scooby-Doo started way back when I was 6. My parents had recorded a number of reruns of *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You?* and *The Scooby-Doo Show* on VHS. The first episode I ever saw was “A Gaggle of Galloping Ghosts,” and I fell in love with the franchise from there. I’ve always loved a good mystery, and I found how character-driven the series was to be really enticing. In my opinion, very few shows targeted at kids are able to create such rich and compellingly dark atmospheres. I continued watching the show all throughout my childhood.

When I got a bit older, I was interested in connecting with other Scooby fans to discuss the show. I found the ScoobyAddicts forum, which I joined in 2008. I loved getting to hear people’s diverse perspectives of the forum. I’d not had much interaction with other fans before that, so it was really cool getting to discuss the show with other people. The topics were always super interesting, and I loved reading all the different perspectives. My interactions with other fans made me think about the franchise in deeper ways than I ever would have just watching the show on my own. In 2010, I was honored to be asked to become an admin on the forum. 15 years later, I’m still an admin on the forum, and check the site every day. With the rise of social media, the forum has quieted down considerably, but there’s still some great discussions on there from a small group of fans that have remained there all these years.

In 2014, I decided to create my own Scooby fan site and blog, ScoobySnax.com. All of my interactions on the forum had only made me fall in love with *Scooby-Doo* even more. I wanted to help fans of all intensities find information about Scooby, using my own unique expertise on the franchise. I’ve always been a bit of an old soul in how I love the aesthetic of 2000s early Internet sites, so I built the site and blog with that sort of vibe loosely in mind.

The site and blog went live on September 3, 2014. Over the years, the site has flourished beyond anything I could have imagined. While the growth happened incrementally, fans slowly started finding the site and commenting on the blog. I started off just posting the latest Scooby news. In later years, the blog has turned into a creative space to share articles, news, and fun activities to bring fans together. Each month, I post some sort of

article related to Scooby. Sometimes they're rankings of episodes based around a theme; other times it's doing a deep dive on a specific aspect of the franchise; and I've also done a number of academic-style articles and research projects analyzing different Scooby-related topics.

For when news is slow, I also have a couple regular weekly posts. Every Sunday, we do a poll based around a different theme (for example, "what is your favorite *Scooby-Doo* episode that takes place in a castle?"). It leads to a lot of fun discussion, especially when fans post their rankings or in-depth thoughts about the episodes in that particular poll. On Mondays, I post a "fun fact" related to the Scooby franchise. This was a completely experimental idea at first, but I am proud to say it's been going for nearly 600 weeks and counting lol. The idea springboarded from the fact that there are tons of Scooby "fun fact" lists on the Internet designed for casual viewers and non-fans (i.e. "did you know Shaggy's real name is Norville?"). Aside from reading through Scoobypedia articles and in-depth interviews with crewmembers, there isn't really a lot of bite-sized trivia bits out there written for fans who already have a lot of existing knowledge about the franchise. My loose framework for writing the fun facts is that I try to post something that a dedicated fan might not know. A lot of times, the weekly fun facts are just me sharing cool Scooby-related facts I discover through looking into different topics related to the franchise, some of which I didn't even know before writing the post lol. After 600 weeks, I still don't feel like I'm anywhere near running out ideas. The Scooby franchise feels like it contains multitudes of cool info, and I'll often get inspiration to look into something deeper from writing about some topic for the blog, rewatching an old episode, or even from simply having conversations with other fans. Some of the regulars on my blog will also occasionally suggest or guest-write fun facts that I'll post, which has also kept the inspiration for those posts alive.

In recent years, I've also delved a bit into writing my own fanfiction. Despite the reputation fanfiction has for being super "out there" or exploring bizarre ideas, I've always tried to approach mine as writing unexplored ideas in a way that stays true to the heart of the franchise. There have been so many cool versions of Scooby over the years, many of which have only been explored minimally. I started with writing two fanfics exploring aspects introduced in two of my favorite Scooby movies in further depth. Over the years, I've branched off a bit with my fanfics and started experimenting more with different tones and elements. I've written a few sillier fanfics that go heavier on the comedy, but also have explored slightly more mature Scooby fanfics that have darker tones and heavier-feeling atmospheres.

I've been a part of the fandom for 17 years now. Although a lot of the discussion around the franchise happens across the socials now, I've never been huge into social media. I used to be a bit more active there, but in recent years, I've dialed my participation back to just messaging a few friends in the fandom on Instagram. Despite this, I've been reflecting a lot lately on how my involvement in the fandom has felt perfect for me. The blog has been a wonderful creative space to publish any projects or thoughts I have related to Scooby, and everyone on there is super sweet and supportive. As someone who has always loved creative things, writing fanfiction has allowed me to explore different aspects of the franchise that haven't been delved into deeply in the episodes or movies. I get to connect with other fans through my blog, and through the same forum that got me connected to this amazing fandom 17 years later. I honestly wouldn't have it any other way.

2. How would you describe the fandom of *Scooby-Doo*? What facets of the series are they most preoccupied with?

The *Scooby-Doo* fandom is amazing. Everybody is usually very welcoming and accepting of different perspectives. Many fandoms struggle with gatekeeping and the dichotomy of being a "real fan," but for the most part, everyone is very respectful of each other's opinions. What makes the Scooby fandom so special is that most fans don't get overly bogged down in negativity or drama. There's a general aura of openness and respect for everybody's opinions, regardless of what series, movies, characters, etc. you like best.

The Scooby fandom is also super creative! There are so many different ways that fans express their love of the Doo, through websites, podcasts, social media, fanfiction, YouTube channels, and other creative projects. There isn't any pressure within the fandom for fans to be engaged to a certain level, or to have to collect all the latest merch. Everybody is super respectful of whatever levels and ways that fans want to be engaged. Some fans are super heavy into collecting the merch, others want to create content, and others are just interested in watching and discussing the episodes and movies. There's never usually any pressure for people to feel like they have to participate or be a part of a certain in-group in order to be included. There's a wonderful energy of authenticity, and embracement of whatever way fans want to involve themselves. It's one of the things I love most about this fandom.

Another thing I've loved about interacting with other Scooby fans through the forum and my blog is getting to hear the rich diversity of opinions out there. There have been a number of times where somebody's brought up loving a certain element of an episode that I may have overlooked, and I'll go back and watch the episode with a whole new appreciation for it through that lens.

Although there is a rich diversity of opinions out there, I would say most fans like adherence to the classic mystery solving format. Series like *Shaggy & Scooby-Doo Get a Clue!*, the *Scrappy-Doo* shorts, and *Velma* are generally disliked by a lot of fans, since they stray so far from the typical formula. There is some level of disagreement on other small aspects of the fandom (i.e. fake vs. real monsters), but for the most part, there isn't really a preoccupation with specific elements of the franchise.

3. How has it evolved? In terms of characterization, politics, style, story, soul, etc.?

Over the years, the writers have adapted the classic formula to put more focus on different aspects. A few series have experimented with darker tones, others were heavier on the comedy and antics, and others explore the formula from a unique angle. The franchise has also begun exploring a wider variation in the types of lore they're pulling from to create the monsters and mysteries.

The creative direction has ebbed and flowed quite a bit as different voices have been in the writers' room. The style and storytelling is heavily dependent on each series, but it seems the writers have increasingly realized that the formula is flexible and open to experimentation. There have been a few series that a majority of fans consider misses (*Shaggy & Scooby-Doo Get a Clue!* and *Velma*), but the vast majority of attempts to try different things within the classic framework have been very successful.

While there hasn't been a linear evolution, the gang's personalities have definitely become more fleshed-out. We've seen Daphne move away from the traditional "damsel in distress" stereotype, Velma become more witty and well-rounded, and Fred becoming more goofy and awkward instead of a stoic leader. Shaggy and Scooby have stayed pretty

close to the same, but there have been some minor changes that have come with their voice actors shifting (due to Don Messick and Casey Kasem's passing). I think these changes within the characters are the most prominent way the franchise has evolved over the years. The characters feel a lot more well-rounded, and they've been developed in much greater depth than they ever were in those first few series.

4. What is your most recommended *Scooby* series and movie?

Fans who are familiar with the blog will know that I'm one of the biggest advocates for *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* lol. This was one of the first series I grew up watching, and I have such nostalgia over the unique tone of the show. For those who don't know, the series involves Scooby teaming up with a different guest star to solve a mystery. Each episode puts the guest star in an odd situation that's a bit out of their normal environment. The tone is quirky and a bit campy, but in a super fun way! The series has a unique brand of dry humor that works surprisingly well. There's a lot of variation in tone and atmosphere, but I feel it makes the series stand out significantly. The guest stars also often have great chemistry with the rest of the gang. It makes for a very interesting dynamic when they're teaming up with somebody different every episode.

Most fans would probably pick *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island*, which is typically the universal fan favorite. I'm going to have to go with an unusual favorite though, *Scooby-Doo and the Ghoul School*. The film involves Shaggy, Scooby and Scrappy-Doo becoming teachers at Miss Grimwood's Finishing School for Girls. However, little do they realize, it is actually a school for girl *ghouls*. These aren't the typical *Scooby-Doo* monsters, though...to Shaggy and Scooby's surprise, these ghouls are actually friendly! Throughout the first half of the movie, Shaggy and Scooby have to face their fears around monsters, and learn to trust the girls. While the first half is quite feel-good and lighthearted once they warm up to the students, the second half takes a dark shift when an evil witch kidnaps the ghouls. Shaggy, Scooby and Scrappy are forced to save the girls, and push past their fears for the sake of their students. Arguably, no other Scooby film has a plot structure that is unique in this way. The contrasting tone of the two halves, where the film goes from light to dark, makes for such an interesting film. And for those casual fans who might have cringed when I mentioned Scrappy, he is significantly more toned-down than the feisty pup stealing Scooby's thunder that you might remember from the early series. He's actually relatively calm in this film, but I feel this film (and the other two 1980s films) are overlooked by some casual fans simply due to Scrappy's presence. This is evident from Scrappy being excluded from the DVD covers of all three

'80s films, despite him being a main character in all of them. This is a great hidden gem within the franchise that a lot of casual viewers probably aren't familiar with, but it's a wonderful watch and a highlight of the franchise for me.

5. What is the series biggest misstep?

I have to go with the obvious answer of the recent *Velma* adult series, but for a different reason than you might think. Many fans were frustrated with the idea of getting a *Scooby-Doo* series with adult humor. Despite this, I did give the series a chance and have seen all 21 episodes. Unlike a lot of fans, my issue with the series isn't because I'm offended by it, or because I don't think *Scooby-Doo* should be targeted towards an adult audience. My issue with the series stems from the fact that the writing is just really, really poor.

At its core, this series is heavily based in troll humor. Because of this, there's nothing that really grounds the show. The writers often focus on inserting edgy humor at the expense of developing the plot properly. The characters are also written to be very selfish and unlikeable. Instead of character development, the show consistently provides character regression. The gang is often so unlikeable that by the end of the episode, you don't want to root for any of the characters, because they consistently treat each other terribly. The show also has the odd need to assert that it is an "edgy show" in nearly every episode, despite that this had been well established in the first episode. The series finale sets up what is admittedly a very neat plot involving a zombie uprising. However, instead of properly developing it, the plot is derailed by a weirdly trollish social commentary about how "everybody finds different things in life sexy," and a scene where a character starts twerking in a cemetery. Stuff like this made the series feel *really* cheap.

In my mind, the misstep wasn't making an adult *Scooby-Doo* series in the first place. It is that the writers thought they needed to rely on cheap raunchy gags in order to adapt *Scooby-Doo* for an adult audience. This completely disregards the core of why the *Scooby-Doo* formula has continued to appeal to adults and kids alike for nearly 60 years. Personally, I think it would have been much more interesting to see a mature *Scooby-Doo* series taking inspiration from shows like *Wednesday* or *Stranger Things*. From the opinions I've seen, I think most fans would be open to getting a mature *Scooby* series in this vein. If we get another adult *Scooby-Doo* series someday, I hope that the writers learn from the mistakes of *Velma*, and write a show that actually attempts to stay true to the heart of the franchise.

6. Where do you want to see the franchise go?

I say this quite a bit on my blog, but I will always prefer a creative take on the franchise to one that plays it overly safe. Like I mentioned previously, *Scooby-Doo* is such a unique franchise in how it's remained popular for over five decades by adapting the same formula in different ways.

The two most recent series present an interesting dichotomy. The 2019 series *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* features Scooby teaming up with various guest stars. There's an intentional focus on making the series "nostalgic," by giving it a similar feel to the classic '60s and '70s shows. The gang had relatively limited characterizations, just like they did in those early shows. This series played it quite safe, using an adaptation of the formula that had been done before in *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*. As discussed above, the 2023 series *Velma* completely disregarded the Scooby-Doo formula. The series was mainly based around raunchy humor and making social commentaries, with a loose overarching mystery throughout the season. Besides using the characters and having them solve a mystery, no aspect of the *Scooby-Doo* formula was utilized in *Velma*.

Although *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* is obviously a hundred times better, I wouldn't say either of these series represent my ideal direction for the franchise. *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* had some fun episodes, but it didn't adapt the formula in any significantly different way. The episodes felt stale at times, because it didn't feel like a fresh take.

In my opinion, the key to keeping the franchise popular is continuing to adapt the formula in different ways (keyword being different). The hugely successful *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated* added an overarching mystery, and had a much darker tone. *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* emphasized comedy within the classic *Scooby-Doo* formula. *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* rebooted the series by giving it a modern feel, and introducing modern technology into the franchise. All of these are slight adaptations, but it's kept the franchise feeling fresh.

My answer is very broad, but what I'd most like to see in the franchise is a continual evolution of the classic formula. As someone who has researched a ton into the behind-the-scenes stuff in the franchise, there have been a few recent examples of writers having rigid mindsets that *Scooby-Doo* should only feature fake monsters, or must maintain the exact same "classic tone" from those first few series. Personally, I think

fixating on small details like this undermines the potential that the *Scooby-Doo* formula has. The franchise wouldn't be where it is today if we were on season 56 of *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!*. There are so many different ways that the formula can be changed, and that's what's allowed it to remain popular after five decades and counting. As long as the writers remain open-minded to exploring the formula in unique ways, I think the franchise will continue thriving for years to come.

7. What is the scariest piece of *Scooby-Doo* media? The funniest?

The scariest piece of Scooby media is easily *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island*! Not only is the film's aesthetic easily the darkest in the franchise, but the plot is also extremely dark. It only gets more intense once you delve deeper into the mystery, and discover the real reason the zombies are haunting the island. You can tell that the writers put a ton of effort into crafting a strong atmosphere in this film, and it works so well. This is a fan favorite for good reason.

The funniest Scooby series is one that I consider to be extremely underrated. Many people ignored *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* because the art style was a bit strange. However, the comedy of this show is genuinely some of the best humor in the entire franchise. The writing is super witty and clever. Although I do like some of the corny humor of the early shows, *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* has so many moments that make me laugh out loud. The series masterfully is able to balance staying 100% true to the classic *Scooby-Doo* formula, while also adding in a lot of attention to comedy. What I love most about this series' humor style is that it appeals to all ages. The writing doesn't talk down to kids, and there are so many jokes that broadly appeal to adult and kid fans alike. If you haven't checked out *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* already, I highly recommend you give it a chance. Yes, the art style does take a bit of adjusting to, but every other aspect is so excellent that I promise you won't regret it.

8. What have you learned from creating ScoobySnax.com?

There's been so much I've learned from the site and blog these past 11 years, both informationally and about hosting a community of Scooby fans. One of the things I loved about in those early days on the ScoobyAddicts forum is that everybody was always on the same level. Some fandoms seem to have hierarchies, where the well-known fans are more respected than those with less expertise. The Scooby fandom isn't like that at all. It's been important to me from the start to ensure my blog was a community where

everybody feels equal. Although being a part of the fandom for 17 years does probably make me an “expert,” I’ve always approached my role on the site and blog as just being another fan sharing info and my perspectives. I try to respond to most comments left on my blog, and often get into really interesting conversations with other fans. There have been a number of discussions where somebody’s brought up loving a certain element of an episode that I may have overlooked, and I’ll go back and watch the episode with a whole new appreciation for it through that lens. I feel this approach is what’s made the site so enjoyable. Positioning myself as an “expert” sharing information with my followers wouldn’t be anywhere near as fulfilling for me. It’s that sense of shared community and bonding over our love of *Scooby-Doo* that has made the site so enjoyable to run.

On a more personal note, I think the site has also helped me grow in a creative sense as well. I’ve always been a creative person, and have loved writing since I was a kid. In recent years, I’ve experimented a lot with writing different styles of articles. I’ve shifted from writing more informational and news-based articles, to reviews, rankings, in-depth analyses, and even a few academic-style research projects. Between the blog and my fanfiction, being a part of the *Scooby-Doo* fandom has allowed me to grow significantly as a writer. Having a creative space to create cool projects and share pretty much anything I want related to Scooby has been so fulfilling to me. It’s taught me a lot about the franchise, and is a major source of creative expression in my life.

9. Are there any other fandoms or franchises you’d compare to *Scooby-Doo*?

I’m not sure if there’s any other fandom that quite compares to *Scooby-Doo*! From everything I’ve experienced, it’s the most welcoming fandom I’ve ever been a part of. As mentioned in my response to the second question, nearly everybody is super sweet and respectful of however people want to contribute. I haven’t really ever come across a fandom that is so kind and accepting of everybody else’s perspectives.

I think there are quite a few franchises that are similar to *Scooby-Doo*! *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is the first to come to mind, which also uses a similar monster-of-the-week formula that involves teenagers and mystery-solving. There’s also stuff like *Stranger Things* that isn’t necessarily inspired by *Scooby-Doo*, but has a similar mystery-solving aspect. I’ve not watched it myself, but I’ve also heard *Gravity Falls* has quite a few similarities to the *Scooby-Doo* franchise. There are also of course the “Scooby clones,” which were a bunch of short-lived series that Hanna-Barbera made based off of the smash

success of the *Scooby-Doo* formula. My favorite of them is *Goober and the Ghost Chasers*, but some episodes of *The Funky Phantom*, *Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels* and *Josie and the Pussycats* are also quite enjoyable!

10. In brief, how would you describe the personalities of the main gang?

Scooby-Doo may be mostly known for being constantly hungry and cowardly, but he's one of the most lovable, kindhearted dogs you'll ever meet. Similarly, Shaggy's cowardice and love of food is what often rises to the surface as his main personality traits, yet he's got an unmistakable aura of being goofy and young-at-heart. Velma is the witty brains of the operation, who is almost always a warm voice of reason during the gang's sleuthing. Fred was once the stoic leader of the gang, but in recent years, he's shown a sillier, slightly more awkward (yet endearing) side of himself. Daphne is the compassionate, kind fashionista of the group. She was once a bit self-conscious and clumsy, but in later years, she's grown into her identity more, and turned her insecurities around fashion into a hobby.

11. What are the unsolved mysteries of the *Scooby-Doo* franchise?

For such a hugely popular franchise, why hasn't WB made all the episodes available on DVD yet? lol Jokes aside, one of the biggest unsolved mysteries is the franchise's canon. A number of the more drastic changes to the formula were never explained in-universe. Why did the gang disband during the *Scrappy-Doo* years (and again during the *Get a Clue* years)? With the gang being a different age in many series, what is the canon order of the series? Do some series take place in alternate timelines, or is everything in all the series and movies considered canon?

Another interesting "unsolved mystery" I've learned about in recent years is that a handful of episodes from *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* had several scenes that were cut for commercials back in the 1980s. These scenes were never restored after being cut from the master tapes, not even for DVDs or streaming. They have not been seen by fans since the 1980s. A handful of episodes from season 1 are a few minutes shorter than the standard runtime, implying that there are still a few missing scenes that have become lost media. Two of these scenes have been found in recent years (including a delightfully quirky one-minute sequence involving Batman lecturing kids on the dangers of counterfeiting lol), but there are still up to five episodes that have lost scenes. The mystery of if these missing segments will ever be seen by fans again remains unsolved.

IP Exploitation, Franchise “World View(s)”, and the “Grand Narrative” of Scooby-Doo by JP Meldrum

I watched *Men in Black 3* for the second time recently - about as good as a season finale to a high-concept network sci-fi romp. I had wrongly assumed that *MIB* had reached true franchise status - one with an IDW comic, a CGI Netflix spin-off, a mobile game, that sort of thing. The franchise is solely composed of the original 6 issue comic, a one season cartoon on Kids WB, a PS1 game, and four movies. A universe with unlimited alien lifeforms and secret societies and buddy cops and memory erasing gadgetry begs to be exploited/explored more; I'd watch the hell out of a four-hour video essay about *MIB* lore, and skim the hell out of an *MIB* manga. Not every mega-franchise, however, has the narratological guts of a 'universe', but they always have an easily identifiable physiognomy - a formula and characterization - across entries, which, perhaps, *MIB* lacks.

I wrote a (as-of-yet) unpublished book about *Sonic the Hedgehog* wherein I consumed every piece of *Sonic* media from its naissance period through to 1999. The book is fiction, though with a significant digression serving as a draft to a potential master's thesis - I was *not* inspired by E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* though I did read it during the writing process by happenstance; I'm more fun than Doctorow, though not as 'historiographical' nor Jamesonian. My thesis argues that the makings of a perennial multimedia propriety are largely not related to narrative, but instead subsist off fan-made narratives superimposed onto its other qualities such as stark aesthetics or characterization; this idea being an elaboration on the Eiji Ōtsuka's "Narrative consumption" theory wherein the viewer consumes little pieces of a larger body of media in order to manufacture a "Grand narrative" or "world view" of their own. Narratively, *Sonic* has very little to build from, despite its attempts at forming one via transmedia exploitation, which I argue is why the fandom is so frantic; its strong characterization implies greater lore that fans than expound upon, which is then either made canon by SEGA, or contradicted by them much to the chagrin of its fandom. *Sonic* was oversaturated because it was not ubiquitous at the outset. By 1995, only two years into *Sonic*'s life, two Saturday morning cartoons ran simultaneously, many-a Game Gear demake flooded the market, and multiple publishing companies were running comic book series. *Sonic*'s transmedial texts were distinct from the games in setting, character, and sense of humour. One might hope this dynamic franchising would be interesting, but really, it's just confusing and reeks of desperation, which led to the development hell of *Sonic Chaos* and the first dark ages of the franchise from 1996-1999 wherein the Sega Saturn was released without a mainline entry from its mascot. The narratological problem with *Sonic* is also why it's so compelling: the fans manufactured the defining traits, while its canonical-self is ill-defined; they feel betrayed when its essential parts are missing, despite its essential traits being obtuse, nebulous, disparate and/or non-existent.

Sonic has finally found itself now, largely thanks to the live-action films and the work of Christian Whitehead, as much as I long for an era of decade-spanning Furry Operas running concurrently against self-aware hangout sitcoms. Nonetheless, *MIB* would be more interesting if it went the Sonic route. That's not really what I'm here to talk about though; I'm interested in IP exploitation at its most refined, and the top dog of IP is a Great Dane: Scooby-Doo.

For this bizarre, hyper-specific, Halloween issue of *Destroyed Cinema + Music*, I speed-ran through the history of *Scooby-Doo* in order to form a “grand narrative”, or “world view” of my own to appraise the quality of this IP's exploitation thus uncovering the rather labyrinthine essence of its nearly 60 years endurance. I consulted *ScoobySnax* auteur WildwindVampire alongside their contemporaries on Reddit, and ScoobyAddicts forums to form a distilled syllabus of its 15 distinct TV series, 30+ films, video games, and comic books, and went to town in an effort to publish this zine in time for Halloween.

This issue was produced on whim using my two-sleep creative rule - if It's still exciting after two-sleeps, you gotta see it through, however long it may take; unfortunately, this one has a deadline - before Halloween...

In his review for the 2002 live-action film, *Washington Post*'s Hank Stuever argues that “Scooby's worldview [suggests that] kids should meddle, dogs are sweet, life is groovy, and if something scares you, you should confront it”. Stuever's thesis is correct, but incomplete - his focus is too thematic, rather than looking to form, atmosphere, characterization, and the political climate for deeper meaning behind its enduring appeal. Stuever also suggests *Scooby-Doo* is “subliminally black”, which is a ridiculous thing to say in 2002, let alone now.

Scooby-Doo is by design episodic; it is an integral progenitor to the freak-of-week Saturday morning cartoon, so much so that Hannah-Barbara produced countless *Scooby-Doo*-likes wherein four teens and a pet solve mysteries - like *Goober and the Ghost Chasers*. *Scooby* remains above the rest because of its stark characterization; you want elaboration on its “world view” because these are characters you want to know better; you want to hang out with these lovable suburban teens, and those moments exist in brief pockets between the steadfast formula playing itself out week-after-week. I use the word formula intentionally; it's the key to unlocking the sempiternal qualities of Scoob; fan site champion WildwindVampire used ‘formula’ exactly 20 times in our interview. Formula, alongside stark characterization, an orderly use of genre-trope, and an adaptable, inoffensively centre-left Americana, one in step with any given President, is what keeps *Scoob* imperishable.

Scooby-Doo, Where are You? - the original 1969 series - is as fully formed as a Hannah-Barbara cartoon from the Nixon era can be. The tie-die soundtrack shoved up next to whole-tone scale Bernard Herrmann avant-garde. Rube Goldbergian physical comedy bouncing against a nearly-anthropomorphic dog and a waifish hippie munchin' giant sandwiches, paired with a cheap pastiche of *Leave it To Beaver* quips and a zero IQ rhotacized dialect. The altruistic-though-naïve Fred, the useless-yet-shrewd Daphne, and the smart-but-clumsy Velma. It's quite a 'dark' show, atmospherically speaking, because it's utterly committed to an ultra-pulp Universal monster mystery veneer; which is the weakest point of the original Doo. The series is nothing more than gossamer 5¢ comic-book mysteries taking place in repetitive, banal haunted house settings, though the occasional episode has some regional intrigue - a folktale, a myth, or a local legend is exploited by the villain, which reflects certain breed of small town Americana and small business woes of classic small-government Republican. One could reckon that the gang are metropolitan yuppies imposing their values upon those less privileged. One of Dicken's primary preoccupations was the city's overreach towards the country in the midst of mass industrialization, and succeeding the Victorian era which continued in America's partisan preoccupation with how politically isolating its hegemonic metropolises are from the small-town. *Scooby-Doo*, then, may be a utopian vie for big government interventionism, or free market vigilantism (?). The gang comes in to solve what the civic officials can not, to weed out corruption, and then leaves them to their own devices without enforcing any policy change or asking for anything in return. It's a socialist ideal - wherein there is competent intervention that costs the affected party nothing - as much as it's a libertarian one - they are *not* state actors, only acting in good faith as seemingly untouchable vigilante forces. It's said that the gang is from Ohio in later series, though from the outset they have an explicitly SoCal 'Surfer USA' feel, with Fred having a touch of Minnesota in his accent. Most of the *Where are You!* mysteries take place in a quasi New England and/or generic small-town America but expands globally as the franchise expands. I personally settle on SoCal as the canonical hometown for the Mystery Gang, and from that my two-headed thesis stands - these are metropolitan teens inserting themselves into the woes of others, usually one-upping older authority figures. Doo's adaptable Americana adds meat to its flower-power bones; think Grant Wood's American Regionalism imbued with the album of art *Odessey and Oracle* by the Zombies. Imagine *American Gothic* zoomed out with a Mystery Machine parked near-by; this is the essence of *Where are you!*'s aesthetic, politics, and its formula.

Despite my previous sentiments, there's a political neutrality to the gang; they are interested in the mystery unto itself and not so much the moral backbone of the villain's crimes; - that's a matter for the police. This is parodied in the opening of *Straight Outta Nowhere: Scooby-Doo!*

Meets Courage the Cowardly Dog wherein Scooby is suddenly afflicted with Courage's psychedelic paranoia thus running off in search of whatever haunts him as the gang is apprehending a bank-robber clown; more intrigued by the Scooby-related mystery, they leave the villain behind with all of his stolen cash at his feet, much to his joy. It's not *really* about crime, it's about solving them; the high of the chase. *Scooby-Doo* isn't really ACAB, either, though it is deeply secular, or Old Testament-y. False idols are tarred-and-feathered, revealed as frauds, thus dissuading the masses from believing in g-g-g-g-g-ghosts! It's hard to gauge whether *Scooby-Doo*'s creators Joe Ruby and Ken Spears were taking the piss out of hippie-culture, condoning it, or simply exploiting the popular aesthetic of the time; Shaggy gives way to reading it as anti-hippie: he's a scaredy-cat, blatantly high-as-hell, and largely incompetent, though in one early episode Fred gets Shaggy to scale a tower and slide gracefully its top window because he's a skilled gymnast. Little moments like this elaborate on the world-view, and are rarely contradicted in later series; it's in this sure-fire characterization that the viewer pines for more hang-out vibes, but that's not the mode this era of TV is written for - it's pure Genre play, and for that, it's obvious how the iconography was established in the imaginations of the American baby boomer, but begs to be explored with more joie de vivre than the stringent episodic formula at hand.

The franchise evolves and adapts the gang's relationship to its suspect with the times, notwithstanding its tenet formula. I would label adjustments to *Doo* as tweaks, or elaborations, rather than departures (with the great exception of *Velma*, which I *have* seen the first few episodes of, and may write about later on). The successor to *Where are You?*, *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* re-tools a number of essential elements - for one, Scooby talks more, and him and Shag are at the centre of the series with the rest of the gang as cursory aids. It bolsters the franchise-y capitalist endeavour by putting a cross-over in every episode; the ones I watched included the Three Stooges, Laurel & Hardy, and the Harlem Globetrotters (probably the best episode) but in return we get more diversity in setting, character, and more involved mysteries - plus, these are 'movies', apparently, because they run 44 minutes a piece. Even beefed up, these are pretty banal, too; I'd much rather read pulpy comic-book versions of these stories than sit through the painfully unfunny canned-laughter humour. There is, as WildwindVampire elaborates in the interview above, a certain Sontagian camp factor about *The New Scooby Doo Movies* that gives a bit more pliability to the franchises formula; one that cements certain parts so strongly that they become camp, if not bordering into self-parody; to quote "Notes on Camp" by Susan Sontag. "Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a 'lamp'; not a woman, but a 'woman'."; Fred is becoming "Fred" and *Scooby-Doo* is becoming "Scooby-Doo", as is its celebrity guest stars; Mama Cass infamously become "Mama Cass" through cheap body-shaming humour in which she is rode in on a fork-lift. I'd argue *Sonic* didn't become

“Sonic” until *Boom*, though one could argue that Ken Pender’s blockbuster Furry-Opera storytelling is as about as camp as it gets.

Politically, we’re still in this agnostic-libertarian-socialist territory; I noticed the humour was bit more adult, such as Dick Van Dyke telling a keen Velma that a “man should take the lead” though made satirical when he tells Fred to go ahead instead of him. Velma and Daphne have quite a bit more to say, too; Velma’s science babble is refined and played for laughs while Daphne’s token ‘hot-girl’ fallibility is brought up a notch, though not without contributing to the narrative. The series rarely loses its etiological edge; wherein its moral lesson, outside of politics, is to not be scared of things-that-go-bump in the night, and to stand up against injustice in your community, although occasionally... the monsters are real; but not yet, not before Nixon’s been tarred-and-feathered and Jimmy Carter’s surrendered the Iran Hostage situation to Reagan¹.

Laff-a-Lympics fits better into the ‘IP exploitation’ of my thesis; its this weird physical comedy crossover series that ran for way-too-many episodes and exclusively features every-single Hannah Barbara IP duking it out in Olympic sports. My research suggests this is a cross-over first, as a long-running thing mixing and matching a studio's entire oeuvre, comparable to what *Smash Brothers* did some twenty years later. It's surprisingly funny, in an old-man guffawing at Buster Keaton manner, though it's *not* Scooby in the slightest.

At the end of the 70s, the series began to regularly reformulate; an annual tweaking. First, *The Scooby-Doo Show*, which only modified things to open up the setting more; less New England graveyards and more bright pizza restaurants. The theme song - hot take - is much catchier and timeless than *Where are You?* too; in fact, it unlocked the core-memory that this may have been the show I saw in syndication the most. Comedy is emphasized above mystery, and the hang-out-ability is expounded upon without leaning on the guest-star gimmick of its predecessor. Scooby himself is thrust into the center for the first time - he’s articulate now; *Show* tones down the monsters and mysteries and amps up the characterization to a serviceable easy-listening equivalent to *Where Are You’s* Surf-rock.

Then, in 1979, we introduce the much maligned *Scooby-Doo And Scrappy-Doo* who’s fatal misstep is more so the removal of Fred and Velma than the addition of a feisty precocious little Dane.

Onwards, the *Scooby* IP tweaked the formula to include the much maligned *Scrappy-Doo* as an attempt to capture a new generation of children whilst alienating its aging audience. I’m not

¹ My favourite *Simpsons* joke is calling the “peanut farmer” Jimmy Carter “America’s favourite monster”.

particularly fond of these shows, though I appreciate how much more comedic they are than previous series, if not straying even further into gossamer mysteries. Largely, the show strays from any semblance of political “wordview” in favour of pure, childlike hijinks in the 80s before the edgy, backwards hat 90s forced them to make the monsters real. However, I stand with my friend WildwindVampire that the *Ghoul School* special is quite fabulous.

Scooby-Doo and the 13 Ghosts is the biggest departure from the formula; largely because the monsters are real, if not as goofy as their costumed counterparts, and the story is serialized. Shag and Scoob have accidentally let 13 ghosts loose, and it's up to them to send them back to their super-natural world at the behest of Vincent Price. I think the moral framework remains intact here: Scooby fucked up, and he's taking accountability for it by picking up the pieces; you'd hope a vigilant detective would be able to take responsibility for their missteps. Really, though, the politics haven't changed much, but the hippie-edged stick-to-the-man reads as much more law-abiding and complacent than before; Scooby and Shaggy are following the rules instilled by mythical patriarch Vincent Price rather than acting altruistically as a vigilante rag-tag gang of detectives. Daphne sticks around, with a new haircut, alongside the mish-mashed gang of Scrappy, Scoob, Flim-Flam (unintentional racist caricature of an 'eskimo', but attempting at some form of Indigenous integration?) and a red-shirted Shaggy. If my reading is correct, it's implied that Daphne and Shaggy are dating; they share a lengthy embrace in the pilot episode that doesn't have the bescares quality of a Shag-Scoob leap-hug. An interview with creator, Tom Ruegger (also the fan responsible for Scrappy Doo), suggested that a large-part of Scooby Doo's universal Americana was its inoffensiveness towards Evangelicals - the supernatural is *always* proven to be false, except this time. It's a pretty good series, largely thanks to these ultra-silly ghost bad-guys Weerd and Bogel. Apparently, a small but impassioned letter writing campaign from the Christian Right put a quick end to the *13 Ghosts*, resulting in a pivot back towards their child-friendly audience with the prequel series *A Pup Named Scooby-Doo*.

Zombie Island is where my generation enters the foray. We understood *Scooby*; I know my brother and I had seen a ton of the original series as it rerun alongside other Hannah Barbara cartoons from father's childhood. It's cute-meets-creepy atmosphere resonated in the 90s/early-00s far better than *The Flintstones* 'Honeymooners for Kids' modus-operandi, though we'd much rather watch *Johnny Bravo*, *Dexter's Lab*, and *The Powerpuff Girls* than anything from that bygone era. However, a VHS clamshell of *Zombie Island* was omnipresent in the tape-deck from 1999 onwards. I believe there was a trailer for it on a Looney Tunes compilation we had kicking around my Grandma's house, and the logline “This time: the monsters are real!” is forever burned into my cerebellum. *Zombie Island*, alongside *Witch's Ghost*, *the Alien Invaders*, and *Cyberchase* were staples of our early cinephillia. This era is held-up by

Scoobiphiles as the golden era, or the post-Scrappy renaissance; I'd wager that people in-and-around my age are the most active in online circles that share opinions about children's media from 30 years ago rather than a proper litmus for best the series has to offer, but I'm hard-pressed to disagree after this deep-dive. In the 90s, *Scooby* adapted the formula to pivot toward the normalized secularism of Clinton's America while retaining a nostalgia for its flower-power origins and pulp-novel mysteries.

*i've ran out of time... halloween is upon us... my deep dive is deep enough
for more insight into the 00s and onwards, read the succeeding article by WildwindVampire*

I conclude that the franchise's evolution simply reflects a barometer for the centre-left, middle-brow American Overton window. During the Biden administration, the frumpy, smart, educated-yet-undersung Velma takes a front-seat in her eponymous show; one that fails to deconstruct *Scooby* and instead inserts buzzwords, lazy misunderstood diversity, and cynical politics, or makes her an outward lesbian in the pretty-fun *Trick or Treat*, before undoing it a year later in *Scooby-Doo and Krypto Too*. Fred, the de facto straight-man, transitions from stoic leader in the 60s/70s to doofy and conspiratorial in the 80s before disappearing from the franchise for a hot minute and returning increasingly fixated on his Rube Goldberg traps as the 00s roll on - with an added penitent for mystery novels. Finally, he's written as borderline autistic² in the 10s and onwards. I'd argue that you can map Fred onto the generic conception of a 'dad' at any given epoch. The father of the 60s is quiet and difficult to talk to, but now we have broader associations with 'dad' that transcend leadership - think 'model train', 'New York Times Bestseller', 'mansplaining', and Homer Simpson. Daphne, honestly, just gets quirkier as the series goes on; she's the 'hot girl' and there's no shaking that out of the formula. She simply represents *how the media's* representation of women has evolved; she's entitled to interests outside of fashion now, to contribute to mystery solving, and to love guys who aren't Fred (including Paul Stanley! What the hell!). Shaggy is steadfast, although he's pretty fleshed out in *Mystery Incorporated*. Scooby is your calling-card, your characterization, and he's simply ageless; dog years be damned.

MIB hasn't been exploited because it sits awkwardly between *Sonic* and *Scooby* - it is neither nebulously fast-and-loose nor staunchly defined and formulaic; though it has the capacity to be either. It lacks the merchandise-friendly iconography of an edgy blue hedgehog or stoned Great Dane. The rights-holders could easily lean into contemporary *Info Wars* brained masses and exploit the 'new conspiratorial Americana' of the now, but what studio is willing to risk that? I

² Mitch Watson, head writer for *Mystery Incorporated*, claims that Fred was written as "slightly on the spectrum" and "a little Asperger-y" during his appearance on "The Unmasked History of Scooby Doo"

would, personally, but that Overton window could shut right-quick should the winds blow once-more towards normalcy. *Scooby* and *Sonic* are perennial because they are pliable enough to weather the storm of a cultural moment by adapting to larger cultural change - technology, humour, aesthetics - while ignoring broader social optics altogether. *Velma*, of course, is the exception; regardless of missteps and tribulations, *Scooby-Doo's* Americana is eternal.



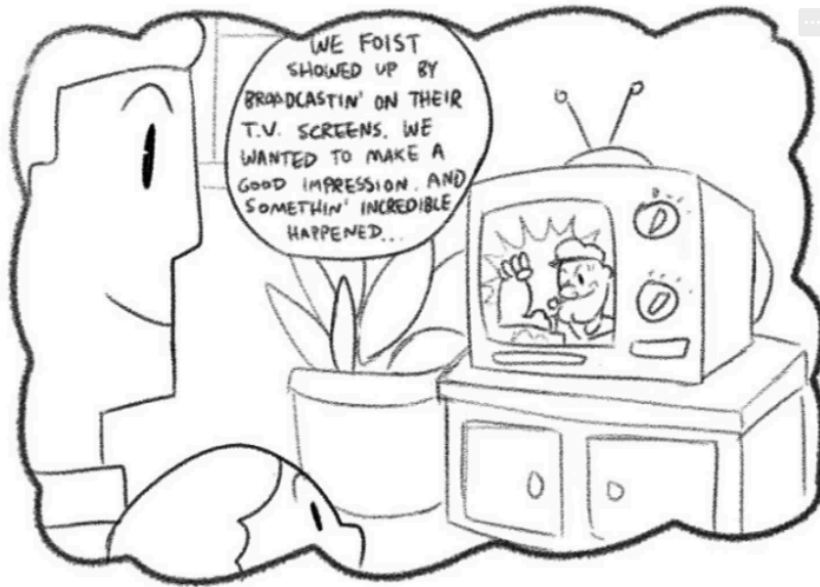
On Scoob and Shag by JP Meldrum

Parody, intertext, and nostalgic aesthetics are shortcuts to meaning. At its most tasteless, it's a terrible *Family Guy* cut-away gag wherein Foghorn Leghorn says a racial slur. At its most sublime, its *Paradise Lost* weaving the Greek myth and the Christian bible seamlessly into a treatise on free speech. At its most corporate, you get a 'crossover event'; *Marvel Vs. Capcom*, *Super Smash Brothers*, or *Cartoon All-Stars to the Rescue*. A crossover *can* be meaningful in its own right - *Smash Bros* succeeds because it channels the essence of its characters into unique fighting styles and pits them against each other in a tangible meeting of worlds. A crossover can also reduce the essence of a character to an neigh-pornographic fan service - simply revelling in soy-ish joy of seeing Scooby-Doo rug shoulders with Batman and Robin without elaborating on how these two disparate universes could intermingle; Bruce Wayne growls something about "meddling kids" as Scooby and Shaggy enjoy snacks prepared by Alfred the Butler. This kind of crossover is no different from the referential parody humour of the *Family Guy* cut-away gag. It does nothing to elaborate on characterization, or to weaponize our foreknowledge of one-or-more of these properties to skip to something meaningful and dynamic sans exposition. A crossover entitles the creator to dodge the platitudes of character development; or, the graphic design nightmare of designing a stark enough character that they feel lived in. I struggle to dig into a contemporary Shōnen manga because I have to learn to love another Goku; I gave *My Hero Academia* a go some years back, and beyond the underdog heroism of Deku and the Superman-like gravitas of All Might, I could be damned to get to know the rest of 'em.

Hiroki Azuma calls crossover fan-fictional stuff like *Tails gets Trolled* and *Scoob and Shag* "derivative works" in *Database Animals*; essentially fan-art, but his whole thesis is derived from the very regional scene of dōjinshi which is not-quite as 'outsider' as its American counterparts since it has proliferated into conventions, clubs, and full-on storefronts to support the 'derivative' material; it's an industrial pursuit in-of-itself despite being derivative - dōjinshi is explored better than I ever could in *Otaku No Video*, an weird mockumentary-anime about Otakus. Anyhow, in the years since *Database Animals*, Azuma's concerns of commodification and post-modern deconstruction of narrative have bled into canonical works; I'd argue some contemporary official IP entries are so removed from their progenitor that they are just as 'derivative' as a fan-fiction; *Velma* is a derivative work of *Where are You?* to the same degree that *Red vs Blue* is to *Halo*. LazerBot's *Tails Gets Trolled*; which is a fascinating work of long-form outsider storytelling, and too many post-internet purveyors of 'derivative' IP exploitation, a magnum opus. However, *Tail's Gets Trolled* is steeped in bad grammar, so-ugly-its-beautiful MS paint art, ultraviolence, and excessive edgelord comedy that it undermines its status as a 'genuinely, stand-alonely great' comic, as much as good faith readers like myself want to read something like this in earnest. In both cases, the foreknowledge of the source property being derived from is exploited to fast-travel towards viewer understanding of characterization, and increasing the likelihood that

the desired reaction is achieved. I reiterate - character exposition is usurped. In *Scoob and Shag*, the reader's foreknowledge of its characters is weaved into the text and exploited in a manner that interrogates and weaponizes growing parasociality with fiction, and IP exploitation re:nostalgia all the while telling a bang-up Shonen epic that goes toe-to-toe with its Dragon Ballish counterparts.

Scoob and Shag is born out of a simple, now-dated Tumblian sense of humour - what if Scooby told Shaggy "ruck roff" and had a gun. Its a refined, inside-baseball, sleep-derived, split-screen, Bawls energy drink chuckles series of one-shots. But Dingo realized, quickly, that it'd be even funnier if this irreverent little comic slowly devolved into Junji Ito body horror before finally descending into a lore-driven action-oriented manga with a sentimental streak. But even from its wonderfully guileless and crude naissance point, *S&S* exploits our collective affinity for the cartoons of yesteryear by making them much realer than ever before; making them fallible, complex, and capable of change. As I explored in the above essay on *Scooby-Doo*, Dingo uses our understanding - our foreknowledge - of his IP rolodex to find something in meaningful beyond recognition and parody; many of us already have a parasocial relationship with the Mystery Gang; one wherein we can fill in the narrative gaps and understand why they may say or do what they say or do without exposition. Dingo takes the stark characterization of cartoons a step further by introducing the planet of Toone.



The concept of Planet Toone is where Dingo's IP exploitation transcends their 'lolcow' counterparts, and, at times, even the properties that Dingo's borrowed from. All cartoon characters come from the vastly advanced alien planet of Toone which eventually managed to broadcast themselves to Earth via TV. The government does not think mankind is yet ready to face alien life, but allows the toons to continue broadcasting because they were so beloved by humans and because, Popeye suggests, it made em' a ton of cash too. However, the love of the

humans transmitted a power to the toons; a power called “Ballyhoo”, which gives them individual Shonen-esque abilities all generally named after various broadcast terms (Flash Forward, Jumpcut, Dead Air, Frame-by-Frame, to name a few). The extent of each character’s Ballyhoo is dictated by their popularity - as far as I’ve parsed out Mickey, Bugs Bunny, and Scooby are the most powerful, though I failed to ask Dingo what they think.

I was sold on *Scoob and Shag* from here-on-out. Toone is beyond anything on A03 or appreciated with an air of irony. Planet Toone inserts a thesis about nostalgia, and its grip on mankind as this maybe-evil, maybe-good for contemporary society that dictates our ideology. We gave too much power to the fucking mouse, man, and we let the Bugs get too weak! Additionally, there’s some wonderful Judith Butlerian subversion of characterization of Bugs - after a time-skip, Bugs is no longer Male presenting, instead he’s now a woman. It’s not a gag, nor is it explained. Bugs, whose cross-dressing has been the subject of much academic intrigue, is simply genderfluid, or trans (Bugs has yet to return to Male presenting in the series). This is an expansion of Bugs as we, in real life, know *them*; free from didacticism and moralizing; it just is - an expansion and solution to the problematized past.

We already have a relationship with Kermit, with Mickey, with Shaggy and Scooby-Doo, but never have they intersected and transcended an episodic, disposable narrative framework so feverously that it becomes meaningfully parasocial.

I have a deadline, and not much left to say about *Scoob and Shag*, so that’s it. Give it a read. It’ll take about 3.5 hours to catch-up. Unfortunately, Dingo’s had a rough go as of late, and the comic has slowed down significantly; frankly, from what I’ve garnered, it’s a radical act of effort justification, and not the passion project it once was though that hasn’t spoiled the quality of the comics that do come out. But, if I know anything as a pretty prolific dude myself, you need a little exterior push sometimes to cycle back over to passion during the dark-days. I can not believe they’ve kept it up for this long, and I really hope they do see it through; this story sure as hell ain’t over. So, give the comic a read, and throw some cash at the Patreon. It’s worth it; this kind of IP exploitation is punk as fuck, and the art’s gotten so god-damn good that it’s worth shelling over something for it. Plus, I SWEAR, it’s a better, less-bloated and more emotionally thoughtful narrative than *Naruto*. For me, it’s the Shonen I’ve been looking for...

So, here are some emails I exchanged with Dingo.

An Interview with Diego Casasola, aka Dingo, creator of *Scoob and Shag* by JP Meldrum

How do you think this sort-of mega-crossover differs from an ‘original’ story (and that’s not to say Scoob and Shag isn’t original)? What liberties and limitations does it breed?

There's definitely some benefits to parodying pre-existing characters, in that there is an expectation of how that character acts or even sounds. It's fun to play around with that, because I can also subvert expectations by making them act completely different from what you'd expect. Either way, there's already a history there that you associate with the character. There is a challenge there sometimes in drawing them, just because there's so many different art-styles to reference and I feel bad sometimes breaking the "rules" of a character's design to fit my art style.

Do you feel as though Scoob and Shag is a part of a ‘scene’? If so, what scene and why?

I guess I've never really thought about it? Although I'm nowhere near the first, I'd like to think I had some influence in the idea of comics that start off simple and evolve into something more complex. And I guess the idea of using free-use/parody and how that ties into death of the author and all that.

Scoob and Shag has such a distinct genre-shift; what motivates them, and what genre(s) might you be interested in exploring down the road?

My biggest influences have come from shonen and horror, and while I'm not against exploring other genres, I think, at its heart, Scoob and Shag is a horror/comedy. I'd like to keep getting deeper into that, especially the horror aspect and how horror and comedy are two sides of the same coin.

I’ve always been very attracted to long-form storytelling, especially those that pivot and twist like S&S does; however, it seems like a very stressful type of project to commit to; how do you keep track of lore, plot-threads, and characterization?

If I'm being honest, while I do keep notes and have a plot written out, my writing process is very loose. I don't like having everything set in stone and like the ability to improvise on the fly. One of the biggest benefits of publishing online is that feedback is almost instant. This lets me gauge where the audience's interests are and see what works and what doesn't. I won't lie though, it is A LOT to keep track of, but part of the fun is writing myself out of holes.

The series slowly shifts from misanthropic to sentimental over the years. How have you changed in the years since starting the project, and how do you feel that is reflected in the series?

Scoob and Shag is really just a joke that's gone too far. It's been a good 11 years since I started it and I'm definitely not the same person I was in my early twenties, so I guess I've just become a sentimental person as I've aged. I think art should be vulnerable and an extension of yourself, so with the audience I have, I think I feel some sort of responsibility to make something meaningful if it's going to be the mark I leave on this world.

Which characters do you feel are most distinct from their source material?

I had to think about it for a second, but I think it's Scoob and Shag themselves. I think Shag especially, since a lot of his story is about having to live up to a version of himself that he has no memories of. He was essentially "born" witnessing a traumatic experience that changed the trajectory of his life, and then had his memory wiped on top of that. As for Scoob, he's obviously very different, but we haven't gotten into why just yet.

It's clear that you've had fascinations with Shonen, Horror, and NewGrounds-ian surrealism; What manga/comics/series/films are exciting you these days?

That's a huge question because I feel like I'm constantly trying to consume media for inspiration. I think it's the best way to learn. The only manga I have been keeping up with is One Piece, and it's a constant source of inspiration. I even GM a DnD campaign that takes place in the One Piece world. But I've been meaning to catch up on Chainsawman, Dandadan, and Part 9 of Jojo. I've also really been into Deltarune lately, I find myself always listening to the music. For horror, I tend to read a lot of it. I just finished The Troop by Nick Cutter.

Since the issue is about Scooby-Doo (sort of), what Scooby media do you recommend?

So something people assume about me a lot is that I'm a huge Scooby-Doo fan. And the truth is... I'm not really, haha. Don't get me wrong, I love Scooby-Doo, I grew up with the cartoons and movies, but for some reason people assume that I'm some sort of super fan. That said, my favorite is probably Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island.

How can we, as fans, help you do your art?

The biggest way people can support the comic is by joining my Patreon. However, at the moment, updates aren't going to be very frequent, mostly due to financial stress and having to hold a job to stay afloat, so I don't want people to feel pressured to join it. Other than that, sharing the comic with people is always a great way to show support. But hopefully sometime soon I'll be able to work on it full-time again.

Eight Scooby-Doo Movies Minus the Meddling Kids

By Travell Bask

Scooby-Doo has often been a cultural introduction to mysteries, the macabre, and a way to dismantle the scary situations in life. The following recommendations are films featuring familiar sensibilities: creepy castles, ferocious and often fictitious monsters, a lively ensemble of characters, and many hijinks. Additionally included are my thoughts on which members of the mystery gang would be best suited for the caper. Now to tiptoe through the dark to the TV to watch these films while asking yourself: Scooby-Doo, where are you?

The Old Dark House (1932) - Directed by James Whale

Beware the night!

This genre defining picture begins as multiple groups seek refuge from a terrible storm within the titular setting. There, while hosted by the unusual and sporadically violent Femm family, the youthful travellers try to make it through the night. Everyone present is quick witted, making playful remarks about the locale and the locals, they certainly are meddling kids who even pair off at points. The only thing missing is that blasted dog Scooby-Doo. It's easy to picture Scooby getting one look at Boris Karloff's Morgan and skedaddling out of there only to come back once he hears the call for supper.

The Raven (1963) - Directed by Roger Corman

Wits and wizardry run a-fowl!

Roger Corman's adaptation of Poe's classic poem twists the story into a gothic gag-filled comedy. Vincent Price plays Dr. Erasmus Craven, a sorcerer whose household quickly becomes caught feuding with other wizards, played by familiar horror figures Peter Lorre and Boris Karloff. Many shenanigans follow as the mystery of what happened to Craven's wife Lenore is revealed. Matching Price and Lorre's back-and-forth perfectly, Shaggy and Scooby's goofball antics will be right at home. The whole movie also has the energy of the 80s TV movies featuring the duo teaching gym class to the next generation of monsters or competing in a racing rally amidst a run in with lycanthropy. In these environments, magic and sorcery are as real as the cobwebbed manors and slapstick routines.

The Whip and the Body (1963) - Directed by Mario Bava

Evil horror!!!

Mario Bava's technicolour castle films perfectly capture Scooby-Doo's essence and visuals. The vibrant greens and blues of this picture in particular translate directly into the colour palette of the cartoon's background art. *The Whip and the Body* stars Christopher Lee as a sadistic nobleman in 1800s Europe returning to his ancestral seaside castle after years of exile. There he torments everyone in the dwelling till his death at the hands of an unknown figure. However, rather than the terror ending, the torture had really only just begun. Having the trio of Daphne, Fred, and Velma would be key to unraveling these ghostly murders. Between the three of them, the hidden relationships of the manor's inhabitants, all passageways to the family crypt, and the murder's true identity would soon be unmasked.

The Vampire Happening (1971) - Directed by Freddie Francis

A satirical horror comedy of a beautiful woman with exotic "tastes"!

A stylish American actress inherits a Transylvanian castle in this very 70s German sex comedy of mistaken identities. You see, our lead bears a perfect resemblance to her ancestor, the Baroness Catali, a rumored vampire. Next door to the ancient estate is a Catholic seminary full of men struggling to remain faithful to God, with a free spirited devil or two across the yard (Pia Degermark in dual roles and wigs). Culminating in a grand vampire bash, *The Vampire Happening*, true to its title, is a campy romp all the way through. Now if only Daphne and Velma were invited to the party along with their own set of vampiric doubles. The increased identity mishaps alone, not to mention the amount of chic outfits.

The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave (1971) - Directed by Emilio P. Miraglia

The worms are waiting!

This fashionable giallo features a vile man with a huge Italian manor complete with an S&M dungeon. There he brings various women to torture, until the ghostly image of his dead wife begins to taunt him and his new wife. Or has this unstable man gone completely over the edge? Now this ghost has a standout look, a white flowy robe with skeletal hands and face, finished off with a voluminous red wig. It'd fit right in amongst the likes of the Ghost of Captain Cutler and the Space Kook in a lineup. At this point I would bring in Fred Jones. As a true skeptic and mechanical trap expert, I believe he'd be perfect to dismantle the various games afoot.

Arnold (1973) - Directed by Georg Fenady

Arnold is dead. And a newlywed. Don't miss his honeymoon!

Fog covered cemeteries, paintings with eyes that follow you, and a swinging theme song; the film plays within a very similar tone to the Hanna-Barbera cartoon. Stella Stevens stars as Karen, a young woman who is getting married to the wealthy Arnold, but the only odd thing is at the altar he's in a coffin. Now his riches are to be hers as long as she stays faithfully with him forever, and as his endless series of voice recordings relay to Karen and the rest of his vulture-like relatives, he will know otherwise. Let the inheritance scheming begin. As Norville "Shaggy" Rogers has often ended up in the will of some distant well-off relative, his easy-going and unmotivated demeanour will favour him well as he makes his way through Arnold's twisted predictive games. He won't be scheming for anything out of Arthur... except maybe the key to the pantry.

Clue (1985) - Directed by Jonathan Lynn

It's not just a game anymore.

The adaption of the classic board game brings our six colourful characters the manor of Mr. Boddy. Before long, our character's true identities are hinted at before the party's host is murdered. But by who, with what, and as things develop, where? Our all-star comedic cast, featuring Tim Curry and Madeline Kahn, find out the truth traversing through secret passages while making suggestions and clever asides. The film features multiple endings emulating the gameplay and creating something cinematically unique. Here Daphne Blake, totally comfortable at high society soirées, would be an expert in navigating the subtleties in the conversations at this cryptic gathering. She'd cross out the double-negatives to find the truth behind every entendre until she's ready to make a winning accusation.

Howling V: The Rebirth (1989) - Directed by Neal Sundstrom

The beast returns!

Invited by a count, various people including a movie star and an academic professor, arrive at a Hungarian castle for its reopening after being sealed off for the last 500 years. The mysteries of the castle deepen as more and more people vanish after an encounter with a furred beast, each time punctuated by a fantastic choral soundtrack sting. Could the person behind the disappearances be a werewolf and could they be amongst our very group? The fifth Howling film twists away from the gritty-become-silly canine cults of previous entries and instead fulfils its wolf-based obsession as a gothic whodunit. Velma Dinkley would thrive in these cryptic halls and through researching the castle's origins, she would reveal the secrets hidden within its lycanthropic lineage. I bet you she'd even hear the soundtrack stings, although it might startle her enough to lose her glasses. That is until a hairy paw hands them back to her.

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The Old Dark House, The Raven, The Whip and the Body, The Vampire Happening, and Howling V: The Rebirth are currently available to stream on Tubi or Plex for free. *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave, Arnold*, and *Clue* are available online via other services.

Exploring the Creative Directions of the Scooby-Doo Franchise

by WildwindVampire

The Scooby-Doo franchise has been taken in so many different creative directions over the years. There are dozens of articles talking about the plot directions of each series. However, there are very few (if any) that go series-by-series to analyze all of the different creative elements that the writers have emphasized in each show. Some series are heavier on comedy or have darker tones. Others are more character-driven, or focused more on the aspect of the gang having an adventure together than developing the mystery in great depth. There are so many different creative mindsets that have gone into each of the series. Since the franchise usually sticks so closely to its core formula, it can be difficult to notice the subtle creative differences in each series's approach. I like to think of each creative difference between the series as an "ingredient" for the show. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the creative elements emphasized in each *Scooby-Doo* series (in airing order), followed by an "ingredient" list of what I feel to be the most prominent aspects of each series.

The first *Scooby-Doo* series, *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* is a series that heavily focuses around creating strong, immersive atmospheres. There are literally entire articles and webpages dedicated to spotlighting the background paintings of this series. The dark aesthetics of each of the settings are arguably a huge part of why this show feels the way it does. The series also focuses on creating compelling mysteries. The clues usually present a decent challenge to figure out, even for adult audiences.

Despite how iconic *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* is, it arguably isn't a character-driven series. Each of the gang's character development is pretty limited in this series, especially when you compare them to some of the later series. I would instead argue that it is a *characters*-driven series. That is to say, one of the main appeals of this show is the gang's dynamic. The show presents us with a group of curious kids who love solving mysteries, and our investment in them as characters is centered around our engagement in the group as a whole, rather than any compelling character traits or arcs.

The Ingredients: Attention to tone, developing engaging mysteries, and whole gang dynamic

The New Scooby-Doo Movies presents a bit of a different vibe. The atmospheres don't have the same level of depth to them as the original series does. There seems to be a heavier focus on the adventure aspect, as well as comedy. The "comedy" isn't necessarily laugh out loud funny, but the extended plots allow for heavier emphasis on the characters getting into misadventures or goofy antics. The earlier episodes (notably the first four, "A Good Medium Is Rare," "Sandy Duncan's Jekyll and Hydes," "The Phantom of the Country Music Hall," and "The Caped Crusader Caper") seem to harken towards the tone of some of the other Hanna-Barbera Scooby clones. The episodes in parentheses seem to focus on shady plots with less monster-y villains. Some of the episodes like "Ghastly Ghost Town" and "A Good Medium Is Rare" have less of a clear structure to the mystery, and are more of a mix of antics and the gang casually investigating wrongdoing. In the later episodes, the series seems to find more of a rhythm, and re-establishes the more traditional monsters and mystery structure. However, some of the episodes still feature the gang having one-time encounters with multiple villains, and tie it to a central mystery.

This series features Scooby teaming up with a different guest star each episode. Usually, this series puts the guest star in a wacky situation outside of their wheelhouse. Some episodes intentionally develop a strong dynamic between the guest, Shaggy and Scooby when splitting up. I'd also argue that generally speaking, there's more warmth and playfulness in the character interactions than in *Where Are You* (likely to enhance the comedic tone).

It may be worth noting that another one of Hanna-Barbera's most successful series, *The Flintstones*, also branched off in a comedy-focused direction around this time. 1972 marked the debut of *The Flintstone Comedy Hour*, which featured comedy-focused shorts of the characters getting in misadventures. These plots typically had little substance, and were written with the intention of putting the characters in odd or silly situations.

The Ingredients: Comedy, guest stars, warmth in character interactions, and adventure-based plots

Some fans might not find that much of a difference between *Where Are You* and *The Scooby-Doo Show*, but I'd argue they have subtle differences in tone and focus. *The Scooby-Doo Show* goes back to the more traditional-feeling format of the gang solving mysteries. However, this show seems to explore different types of tones more than the two previous series did. That exploration of tone is executed more through focusing on the villain's presence in the episode, and the situation that the gang finds themselves in. Take "Watt a Shocking Ghost" as an example. The gang being chased around a power company's building isn't objectively any scarier than your traditional *Scooby-Doo* mystery. However, when the gang is stranded there in subzero temperatures with no power, these plot elements make the setting significantly more frightening. "The No-Faced Zombie Chase Case" presents a similarly illustrative example. The gang being chased around a toy factory isn't objectively scarier than other episodes. However, the toy factory is completely abandoned, and some of the toys are presented in a creepy way (such as the haunting-looking dolls that speak when the gang is trying to hide from the zombie).

Season 2 particularly explores this tone, putting the gang in extremely serious and dark situations. In this season, we get plots such as the gang staying the night in a hotel haunted by a vampire on an isolated island, being stuck in a cliffside house with a soul-stealing monster, and a Phantom Racer who is first introduced through one of his victims returning from his clutches with a haunted look on his face.

Arguably, this series also focuses heavily on compelling mysteries. The mysteries in this show are, in my opinion, some of the most intricate and detailed of the entire franchise. There seems to have been a concerted effort on the writers' part to create very strong, tightly-written mysteries in this show.

The Ingredients (season 1 + 2): Attention to tone and developing compelling mysteries

In *Scooby-Doo*, there aren't a lot of major changes in the middle of series, but *The Scooby-Doo Show* season 3 is a rare example of this. With the exception of a few episodes like "To Switch a Witch" and "A Menace in Venice," there's a noticeably heavier focus on Shaggy and Scooby getting into antics and misadventures. Fred, Daphne and Velma typically split off from the group early, and receive significantly less focus. The only focus they usually receive is brief scenes of finding clues.

This shift seemed to be part of a larger creative direction of Hanna-Barbera. The shows that followed this increasingly focused on comedy-leaning plots, and also seem to give Shaggy and Scooby significantly more focus than the rest of the gang.

The Ingredients (season 3): Attention to tone (although arguably lesser than the other two seasons at times), antics, and adventure-driven plots with Shaggy and Scooby

Before we move into the Scrappy years, we're going to take a brief detour and talk about *Scooby's All-Star Laff-a-Lympics*. As a "Battle of the Network Stars" type show designed for Hanna-Barbera characters, this series focuses heavily on comedy. The episodes are all centered around the characters competing in sporting events, and typically involves some sort of antics or goof-ups mid-way through the competitions. This is a heavily character-interaction based show, often focusing on how different characters work together, compete with each other, and how they deal with sabotage from the Rottens. Perhaps this marks the beginning of Scooby's temporary shift in creative direction to be a comedy-focused show.

Ingredients: Comedy, and character interactions

The Scooby-Doo and Scrappy-Doo Show introduces Scooby-Doo's nephew Scrappy. Scrappy is a very feisty pup, who unlike his uncle, isn't afraid to run straight into danger. Scrappy-Doo presents sort of a comedic foil to Scooby and Shaggy's tendency to run from monsters. Typically, he tries to bring them back into whatever situation they are frightened of. Like the final season of *The Scooby-Doo Show*, this show focuses most heavily on Shaggy, Scooby and Scrappy's antics and misadventures. Fred, Daphne and Velma receive much less focus compared to Shaggy and

the dogs. Despite this, this series still presents a balance between the comedic antics and presenting well-written mysteries.

The Ingredients: Antics, adventure, and developing well-written mysteries

While the previous series is quite sensible and balanced in introducing a new character, *The Richie Rich / Scooby-Doo Hour* is a hard pivot towards the comedy side. The traditional mystery format is completely removed. Fred, Daphne and Velma are written out of the series entirely. The series mostly doesn't even feature monsters, instead choosing to focus on plots of the guys' getting in non-spooky misadventures. The episode runtime is reduced to seven minutes, and the tone shifts completely to focus on antics. This series aired along *Richie Rich*, presumably to boost ratings by pairing an unknown series with an established franchise.

The Scooby & Scrappy-Doo Puppy Hour is mostly the same format. There seems to be more of an effort to present the guys as "teens" in this show. There's also the introduction of Uncle Fearless, who hires the guys to be a part of his detective agency and assigns them to go out on cases. The cases usually involve the guys trying to stop sleazy crooks, but there are a few that feature monsters. There are three seven-minute shorts grouped together to make one episode. Unlike *The Richie Rich / Scooby-Doo Hour*, the first short is generally focused around an Uncle Fearless case, the second short is the guys getting into misadventures around town, and the third short is a spin-off with Scooby's relative, Yabba-Doo. These shorts don't feature Scooby or Shaggy, but instead involve Scrappy stopping crooks with his Uncle Yabba and Deputy Dusty in the western town of Tumbleweed. There was also a fourth segment featuring *The Puppy's New Adventures*, but these were completely non-Scooby related and thus won't be focused on here.

I did consider including "adventure" as one of the ingredients, but upon further consideration, I don't think that ingredient is utilized in any significant way here. The plots often feel disorganized and catered to focus on comedy. Developing detailed adventures doesn't really seem to be the main focus of this series.

Interestingly, the franchise's direction once again parallels *The Flintstones*. In 1980, a series of shorts called *The Flintstones Comedy Hour* was created. This series featured six shorts combined into an hour-long episode, all based around a different theme like *The Scooby & Scrappy-Doo Puppy Hour*. These shorts were also comedy-focused, and involved plots written around the characters getting into silly antics. Based on this, it seems Hanna-Barbera's creative mindset at the time is that kids mainly wanted to see comedy in their cartoons. As a result, other elements that were formerly part of the franchise were minimized or written out entirely.

The Ingredients: Comedy and antics

The New Scooby and Scrappy-Doo Show featured a quasi-return to form for the franchise. Daphne returned to the show, and the mystery format returned. While this series had mysteries, many of them were written to be much simpler than the first three shows. Shaggy and Scooby getting into antics is still a focus, but it feels much more sensibly balanced with the mystery-solving than the 1978 and 1979 series did. Scrappy's personality is noticeably toned-down and is commonly grouped with Daphne. Together, the two of them seem to absorb Fred and Velma's roles, since they are absent from the show.

Ingredients: Simplistic mysteries, balancing comedy with mystery, and lightheartedly spooky tone

The New Scooby-Doo Mysteries featured a very similar format. The show had quirkier writing, and was more lighthearted (although there were slight undertones of this in the previous series as well). In addition, this series features five two-part episodes that include Fred and/or Velma. These two series focus mainly on mystery-solving, adventure, and to an extent, friendship. There seems to be a more unified focus on showing the gang bonding and being playful with each other, which wasn't shown as much in previous series.

Ingredients: Same as *The New Scooby-Doo and Scrappy-Doo Show*, but with a pinch of warmth

The 13 Ghosts of Scooby-Doo featured another major overhaul. Fred and Velma are once again completely absent, but the more notable change here is that this series is the first to feature entirely real monsters. The plot revolves around Scooby and Shaggy unwittingly opening the fabled Chest of Demons, which unleashes, in Vincent's words, "13 of the most terrifying ghosts on the face of the Earth!" The tone of this series is genuinely very interesting. This series features darker plots than *Scooby-Doo* ever has, but balances it out by providing the stark contrast of extremely cheesy and schmaltzy comedy. Presumably, this was to dilute the extremely dark overarching plot of Scooby releasing 13 sinister spirits. A con-artist kid named Flim-Flam is added to the series, both to appeal to the younger generation and to play into the cheesy side of the tone with his goofy character. This series also is stylistically similar to the Disney's "Dark Ages" era, featuring broodingly dark aesthetics and creepier plots. A notable entry in the Scooby franchise for sure, particularly for the unique contrasting tone!

Ingredients: Overarching plot, adventure, and balancing dark tone with campiness

Hanna-Barbera released three *Scooby-Doo* Superstars 10 movies in 1987 and 1988. These movies are interesting in how they each explore their own unique tones. Boo Brothers explores a more classic mystery presentation with a very dark setting and tone. It manages to mix in the element of humor thanks to the Three Stooges-like characterizations of the Boo Brothers, who provide some comedy relief from the otherwise dark atmosphere. Ghoul School is more of a slow burn, which provides a warm and feel-good first half complemented by a broodingly dark second half. Reluctant Werewolf features a mostly comedic and antics-based tone, mixed in with the lightheartedly spooky aesthetic of Dracula's Monster Realm and castle.

A Pup Named Scooby-Doo pivoted once again towards a much sillier direction. The series is grounded in a whimsical tone, which fits perfectly with the gang being kids in this series. The show is extremely goofy and playful, and also features sillier, more lighthearted mysteries to match the aesthetic. While the focus is on comedy, this series also marks the start of much stronger characterizations for each of the gang members. As mentioned in the *Where Are You* section, the previous shows seemed to focus on the gang's dynamic as a whole. This series is the first to develop the gang's personalities as strong individual characters. This is technically up to

debate, since Daphne is fashioned into a leader in the 1983-1985 series instead of being klutzy like she was in the first few series, but I'd argue that the bolder, zanier characterizations establish the gang members' individual personalities in much more depth than previous series did.

The Ingredients: Comedy, lightheartedness, and character-driven plots

The Mook films characterize the gang as significantly more mature than we've ever seen before. This era is the best of every world imo. It features strong characterizations, impeccable attention to tone, in-depth mysteries appropriate that appeal to both young and older audiences. The movies also arguably feature the most vivid world-building in any *Scooby-Doo* media to date. The settings all feel extremely expansive and cozy in a way that garners a sense of warmth and nostalgia. Since it's in all of them, I would also argue that surprising twists are an ingredient in this era. All four movies include unexpected twists, if you include the gang meeting their past selves in the tenth level of the game in *Scooby-Doo and the Cyber Chase*. With such high-quality ingredients, it's no wonder these films are generally the most acclaimed pieces of media in the entire franchise.

The Ingredients: Compelling tone, in-depth mysteries, world-building, and strong character development

What's New Scooby-Doo? modernizes the classic era in a way that's such a wonderful product of its time. The show feels quintessentially 2000s for its overall vibe, use of pop-punk chase songs, and excellent encapsulation of that early 2000s period of early technology. The series feels very character-driven, with each of the gang having very distinct personalities. There are minor changes made from the original show, like Daphne being a fashionista rather than self-conscious, and Fred being a goofy but well-intentioned leader, but all of them feel like natural extensions of the classic characters that had been developed over the past 35 years. The series focuses most heavily on writing compelling mysteries, but the show arguably pays sharp attention to creating a tone that feels representative of its time.

Similarly, the 2003-2009 direct-to-video films are also in this similar style. The 2003 films try to specifically match the tone of the classic *Where Are You* series, but the 2004-2009 films feel basically like *What's New Scooby-Doo?* style films due to the animation and tone. Notably, the films all have a cinematic feel to them, which arguably hasn't quite been achieved by the more recent films.

The Ingredients: Compelling mysteries, character-driven, and creating a modern aesthetic

It's also worth noting that the 2007-2009 films seem to mark a creative direction of specifically focusing on Shaggy and Scooby's adventures again. Fred, Velma and Daphne are mainly pushed to brief background scenes. It is a very similar vibe to season 3 of *The Scooby-Doo Show*, although perhaps with slightly less antics. The ingredients of these films specifically seem to be adventure, since there is much less focus on the mystery during the extended scenes involving Shaggy and Scooby. This seems to be a return to the writers' mindset that Shaggy and Scooby are the characters that audiences most want to be focused on.

The Ingredients: Character-driven adventures for Shaggy and Scooby

Shaggy & Scooby-Doo Get a Clue! is, at its core, an adventure series. The mystery-solving aspect is completely removed from the formula. Instead, we get a spy plot involving Shaggy and Scooby trying to stop a criminal mastermind, after he kidnaps Shaggy's uncle. The show heavily focuses on the shenanigans that Shaggy and Scooby get into while trying to stop Dr. Phibes. Comedy is very clearly a focus for this series, and it's executed in a zanier, mess-around type way. Even the villains, Dr. Phibes and his henchmen, are often presented to us in a comedic light.

The Ingredients: Adventure and comedy

Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated gives us another stark change in tone. This series has a significant darker tone that comes packaged within an overarching plot. Over the course of the show, season 1 focuses on a huge mystery involving the original Mystery Incorporated, whereas season 2 focuses on an apocalyptic plot with an ancient evil. In general, the series seems to be

targeted at slightly older audiences, as it features a much heavier emphasis on drama, both in terms of the mystery and the gang's relationships. Romantic subplots are introduced in season 1, although they are mostly avoided in season 2 due to fan reception. There is also some humor included in the show, which is delivered through witty lines and amusing character moments. However, the focus is mostly on sculpting dark mysteries and creating a more dramatic, slightly older leaning version of *Scooby-Doo*. There also seems to be some focus on nostalgia, as the series is noted for its use of clever Easter Eggs to past *Scooby-Doo* content. This series would go on to start a trend of incorporating these types of Easter Eggs in the majority of *Scooby-Doo* media.

The Ingredients: Dark tone, overarching mystery, character dynamics and specifically exploring relationships, drama, and slightly comedic tone

Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! presented us with exactly the opposite. After a dark, gritty Scooby-Doo series, WB wanted to bring fans a fresh comedic take on Scooby. In a conversation I had with *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* writer Jon Colton Barry back in the day, he shared that WB executives told him they wanted *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* to be “75% funny, 25% scary” (which they considered the reverse of the previous series, *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*). The series presents us with the classic *Scooby-Doo* formula, but with a comedic and zany twist. *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* is mostly noted for its random and zany humor, but it is also arguably a character-driven series. Each member of the gang has a strongly defined personality and role in this series.

The Ingredients: Humor, character-driven series, and focus on delivering classic mysteries

While *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo!* adhered closely to the *Scooby-Doo* formula, *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* takes a back-to-basics approach. The gang is given limited characterizations, and there is a strong focus on cultivating a “classic,” simplistic feel within the mysteries. It's really interesting to look at *Guess Who* from this lens. Despite how classic *Guess Who* tried to be, it arguably doesn't pay any attention to the creation of aesthetics or developing a strong tone. Perhaps the lack of these elements explains why some fans find the show to be a bit blander, but that of course is up to interpretation. More so than *The New Scooby-Doo Movies*, the episodes

are built around what the guest star brings to the table. Many of the plots feature the gang meeting guest stars being in their normal environments, rather than putting them in odd situations like in its counterpart series. At its core, the show's main goal seems to be creating a classic-feeling version of *Scooby-Doo* for a new generation of fans.

Similarly, the recent direct-to-video films have also featured relatively limited characterizations. However, those films focus on the gang dynamic a bit more than *Scooby-Doo and Guess Who?* does, while also approaching the franchise with a classic feel.

The Ingredients: Cultivating a classic-feeling tone, the gang's dynamic as a whole, gang meeting guest stars in their typical environment, and creating a modern reboot of classic *Scooby-Doo* for the new generation

As an adult Scooby series, *Velma* deviates harshly from any other Scooby media. There really isn't anything to ground this show. The show operates on trollish logic of surprising viewers, by doing the opposite of what they might expect. The show heavily focuses on being raunchy and irreverent, oftentimes sacrificing a logical plot structure to do so. While this may sound negative, I just want to emphasize that I mean all of this in an objective way and don't intend any of it to aggressively assert my dislike of the show. In an objective sense, I feel the show directly attempts to be trollish and unpredictable as a form of irreverence. At its core, the show's main direction seems to be creating an edgy, shocking *Scooby-Doo* series. The show also features race-swapped versions of the characters, and focuses on making social commentaries in a sarcastic way.

The Ingredients: Social commentary, irreverent comedy and troll humor

Having gone through all of the different "ingredients" the franchise has explored, I wanted to explore what I feel the "perfect ingredients" are for a *Scooby-Doo* series. In my opinion, the Mook era presents us with what I feel are the ideal ingredients for *Scooby-Doo*. The tone is extremely dark and well-crafted. The mysteries are intricate. The mature characterizations give us the most well-developed versions of the gang in franchise history. The world-building of the

settings is absolutely incredible! Moonscar Island and Oakhaven are two of the strongest *Scooby-Doo* settings of all time, without question. That said, I think this is an extremely lofty expectation to project onto the rest of the franchise. These movies were very much their own thing, and there is so much other amazing Scooby content out there. Playing into the “ingredient” metaphor, I don’t want to be a snob for only the highest-quality ingredients.

One of my favorite ingredients is strong attention to tone, particularly in *Where Are You, The Scooby-Doo Show*, and the Mook era. I also really enjoy when writers pay close attention to crafting complex and interesting mysteries. The mysteries in *The Scooby-Doo Show*, *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated*, and the Mook era films are some of my favorites.

One of the reasons I love the franchise so much is that it makes me, and a lot of other fans, feel good! Even when the gang are in high-stakes situations, the monsters are always unmasked in the end, or the situation is otherwise resolved. I’ve never cared too much about antics-based comedy, but most episodes have a warm, lighthearted vibe to them. *Be Cool Scooby-Doo* and *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* specifically encapsulate this, in my opinion. *Be Cool, Scooby-Doo*’s zany, lighthearted comedy was right up my alley, and always makes for a fun watch that cheers me regardless of how I’m feeling. Although *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* wasn’t zany or random in its comedy, the series feels very lighthearted in another way. The series gives good vibes all around, and there is a lot of warmth present in the atmospheres.

I feel that some of the strongest series are the ones that are character-driven. While the classic series are near and dear to my heart, watching the characters develop in the later series adds so much to the formula in my opinion. *Scooby-Doo* is such a unique series in how it has basically stuck to the exact same formula for 55 years. One of the main reasons it has not gotten stale is that the characters continue to evolve. Different series have explored characterizing the gang in different ways. This exploration of the characters has allowed us to get to know them in greater depth over the years. Exploring each of the gang’s characterizations has kept the franchise interesting, and is arguably one of the largest reasons that *Scooby-Doo* has remained such a versatile franchise to this day.

