

## **BATTLESTAR FANTASTICA!**

In the home of the Space Needle, fittingly, lives the Science Fiction Hall of Fame, a wing of the Museum of Pop Culture dedicated to spotlighting the most impactful works in the most magical of genres. From Star Trek to X-Files, Star Wars to The Matrix, the collection reflects the best of the creative imagination in American media to date, and it is simply awesome.

But still, I need a word with the committee. There's been a terrible mistake. They've spent three decades awarding honors, yet there is nary a plaque or poster anywhere on premises bearing the insignia of Battlestar Galactica, one of the most epic sci-fi series ever made.

I suppose it's not difficult to lose sight of BSG in the sea of VFX that is a defining hallmark of the genre. There are no giant sandworms in this story. No fluffy puppets, sorry. There is not a solitary alien beastie to be seen anywhere in this universe, and that is precisely what makes its subject matter so compelling.

The series, which aired for four seasons beginning in 2003, commences with the nearly complete nuclear annihilation of humanity. The perpetrators are not a foreign species, but rather an expansive network of artificially intelligent beings called Cylons who were created long ago to serve human society. After a century long armistice following the first Cylon-Human war (no sci-fi shocker here: the original AI rose up and rebelled), the once metal-made "children of humanity" return to finish the job, but with a twist: now they look just like everyone else.

As it depicts the human survivors hurtling through uncharted space to escape pursuing hordes of Cylons and establish a new civilization on a fabled long-lost planet, the show expertly explores themes of fate, consequence, consciousness, and the nature of the soul.

The philosophical heart of the series, however, does not a thing to soften the edges of the exhilarating entertainment it provides. Every single episode plays like a mini movie; I would pay top dollar to watch its grand battle scenes on the big screen. The production value is that good.

Also, while it might lack the colorful splash of imagined creatures, BSG does provide a deeply immersive worldscape. A layered alternative human history builds throughout each season, complete with customs and idioms, religions, and modes of dress. It is smart and natural; the writers carefully draw distinctions between our world and theirs, with subtle choices that enhance the perceived reality of their vision.

The writers draw too a bevy of deeply intriguing characters, brought vividly to life by powerhouses like Edward James Olmos and Mary McDonnell, each of whom give career pinnacle performances as military Commander Bill Adama and President Laura Roslyn. The entire cast is not only supremely talented but delightfully diverse as well. As in all great science fiction cinema, the show's diversity simply exists and does so organically, instead of making a virtue signalling snorefest of itself.

Honestly, I could go on and on, but my time (and yours) would be much better spent watching this show. Though now twenty years old, its subject matter is crucially relevant to our current digital age replete with everything-bots, AI girlfriends and concepts like NPCs. While Battlestar Galactica may not have the cosmic cotton candy flash of other sci-fi vehicles, it does offer thrilling, edge-of-your-seat excitement alongside intellectually suffusing narrative fare.