



By Emma Puglia
WEB EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sequels rarely live up to the original, and *Maze Runner: Scorch Trials* is no exception. Although the addition of some talented actors boosted the quality of the movie, the plot, chocked full of explosions and zombie-like creatures, was just one long chase scene.

A group of teenage boys (plus one fierce girl to add diversity) are scarred from their experience of being trapped in a giant maze, escaping death by robot spiders and murderous cellmates. Beyond the countless hedge walls, the gang discovers a company named WICKED has been testing their skills.

The inhumane company is searching for a cure to a flesh-eating disease that leaves its victims savage, undead monsters. To find a cure, they must harvest enzymes from immune youths, sacrificing one generation to save another. Thomas, the unspoken leader, and his friends from the maze run away from the company's advances in search of a rebel army.

All action and no character development makes for a slightly dull movie. My quickly beating heart was hardly given a break with so many near-death moments, from being struck by lightning to almost being eaten alive by zombies. Although these almost laughable creatures (known as Cranks)

had an impressively disturbing makeup job, their continuous "gotcha" moments lost their effect quickly.

What revives the reduced version of the plot is the actors. The emotion that celebrities such as Dylan O'Brien and Thomas Brodie-Sangster poured into betrayal and death scenes was remarkable, considering these actors are known for their more sarcastic, witty performances. One of the new characters, Aris (Jacob Lofland), a sweet boy from a separate all-girl maze, added intelligence and security to the rebellious group. Lofland's perceived innocent demeanor and intense loyalty was refreshing throughout the serious danger.

There's one common aspect of all dystopian sci-fi/fantasy movies that never loses its zest: the set. An abandoned city, with crumbling buildings, bullet-ridden cars and sandy streets always proves to be a terrifying glimpse of what the future could hold. The amount of detail that goes into the physical (and the editing of) the set is admirable.

However repetitive the plot seemed to be, with the amount of cliff-hangers, unanswered questions and lingering feelings of attachment to the characters, there's no doubt that fans of the series will remain hooked.

Maze Runner: Scorch Trials (2015)

Directed by Wes Ball
132 Mins
PG-13

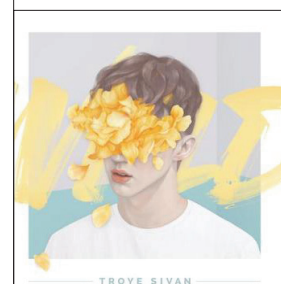


THE MAZE WAS JUST THE BEGINNING

SEPTEMBER 18

ALBUM

WILD



WWW.TWITTER.COM

Among a sea of new artists striving to make it as the next Lorde or Ed Sheeran, Troye Sivan emerges victorious. Prior to his music career, Sivan starred in the South African movie franchise *Spud* and gained international fame through YouTube.

Sivan's dive into the music industry began with a few singles and an EP, *TRXYE*, last August. His most recent musical endeavor, *WILD*, dropped Sept. 4.

This new EP has gained a much-deserved celebrity following since its debut, including social media shout-outs from pop giants Taylor Swift and Sam Smith.

However, *WILD* isn't Sivan's first EP to score media buzz. Both of his EPs sold well, earning spots in the top 10 albums on iTunes after their release and staying on the charts multiple weeks. *WILD* was promoted through teasers on Sivan's YouTube channel, which helped him advertise to his over 3.5 million subscribers.

Songs featured on *WILD* have the same feel and style as *TRXYE* but with brand new lyrics and a more alternative sound. The Aussie's silky, airy voice meshes with funky beats similar to those in Swift's *1989* to form six ear-pleasing pop anthems.

Unlike on Sivan's first EP, these songs feature other underground foreign artists. "EASE," which features brother-sister indie pop act Broods from New Zealand, showcases a gorgeous harmony throughout the entire track. Australian hip-hop artist Tkay Maidza's rap in "DKLA" (which means don't keep love around) takes Sivan's tranquil song and adds some edge to it. This creates a perfect blend of silky smooth pop and a more piercing rap sound.

Breakout hits from *WILD* are "FOOLS" and "BITE." These songs emulate the best song off of *TRXYE*, "Touch." "BITE" places more emphasis on Sivan's voice rather than the synthetic beats in the background. Its minimal sound gives the track a slightly haunting vibe. In "Fools," which feels the most personal of all the songs, Sivan expresses his regret of falling in love with someone who could not love him back. The title track "WILD" is by far the most upbeat. Think Lorde's lyrics in "Tennis Court" to the beat of Swift's "Bad Blood."

WILD is chock full of unique songs. Sivan's gorgeous lyrics and soft voice work with each song's exclusive sound to make the EP worth every penny.

Troye Sivan; *WILD*; Universal Music Australia; 2015
Available on iTunes for \$4.74

By Mora Downs

TECHNOLOGY

VOCALOIDS



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People, holograms, software, singers. Vocaloids are all of these things. Except they aren't exactly people.

Vocaloids is a type of software that emulates the human voice. Each character is represented by a different voice with a unique range. Songs aren't written by any one company or recording studio. Rather, they are user-generated. Participants have created thousands of songs in varying genres and by different Vocaloids, such as Kagamine Len, MEIKO and Megurine Luka.

A few songs in particular stand out. "The World is Mine" a pretty energetic pop song, is one of the most recognizable songs from Hatsune Miku. "Unhappy Refrain" resembles the sort of grunge/heavy metal style of music with a strong emphasis on the drum set and bass guitar. "Paired Wintry Winds" uses traditional Japanese instruments, such as the Koto and Taiko, to great effect. "Rolling Girl" is a piano-based song that's a sharp contrast to most other Vocaloid songs because of the choice of instruments.

The other thing that's notable about Vocaloid music is that the lyrics, despite being dark, are a sort of social commentary. "Online Game Addicts" despite the extremely energetic instrumentation, is about losing sight of society and getting caught up in a world that doesn't exist. "Depression of Cybernetics" explains the endless cycle of the creation of weapons and fighting wars, and the things that were lost in the fighting. The difference between instrumentation and lyrics cuts both ways. Some may think that the contrast is appealing, others think that the difference impairs their enjoyment of the songs.

Also, language barrier is a problem. Most, if not all, of the songs are in Japanese, and the translations aren't always exact. Two different websites with the same song's translated lyrics may not match each other. And the large difference between the Japanese and English languages can leave listeners lost on what the singer is trying to say. Listening to the songs as a whole, not just the lyrics, is a more fulfilling experience.

There's also the fact that the singers aren't actual people, despite their appearances. They're holograms. It's rough to try and connect to these people and follow them, because there isn't anyone to actually follow.

Vocaloids aren't exactly an easy thing to get into, especially because of the language barrier, but the listener will be rewarded after getting past the initial difficulties.

Vocaloids; 2015; Yamaha Corporations.

By Addison Toutant

ALBUM

BADLANDS



WWW.TRENDIO.US.COM

Breakout star Ashley Frangipane, known by her stage name Halsey, just released her first album, *BADLANDS*. Famous for her covers and original songs on YouTube, Halsey's newest album is already a hit. With subtle electronic undertones, Taylor Swift-esque harmonies, brooding and mysterious sound and deep bass

tones, *BADLANDS* has something for everyone.

By using new recording tactics, such as 3D sound and catchy lyrics, Halsey keeps listeners coming back for more. Each song has its own unique feel to it and is as enjoyable as the next.

The album strays from Halsey's first EP, *Room 93*. While *Room 93* has a more rocky edge to it, this album has a more acoustic vibe. However, the two are connected through hits "Hurricane" and "Ghost," which make a second appearances on the album.

Another major difference between the EP and album is that *Room 93* has 3 extra editions of the tracks, including a commentary album, a set of remix tracks, and a set of live copies of each song called "One Mic, One Take". This different twist Halsey took is an original move and separates her from the competition.

A few of the most popular songs on *BADLANDS* are reminiscent of Halsey's individualistic sound. "Colors" brings to mind Taylor Swift's single "Wildest Dreams" with similar harmonies and tones. Another lovable single, "Drive," is one of the most alluring to listen to. Throughout the song and especially in the last 30 seconds of the piece, the revving of a car motor draws the listener back into the title of the anthem. Another wildly popular single, "Hurricane" describes a wanderer who can't find her way as a teen, which resonates with many of Halsey's listeners.

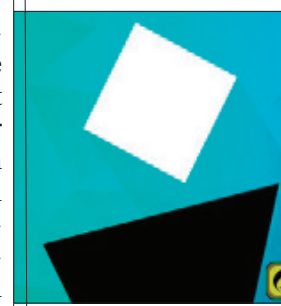
Halsey is one of the newest artists to join the ranks of the alternative genre, and she does not disappoint. With captivating lyrics and beautiful melodies, *BADLANDS* brings something to the table for everyone and is sure to have lasting relevance.

Halsey; *BADLANDS*; Astralwerks; 2015.

By Sarah Wietcheta

APP

IMPOSSIBLE CAVES



WWW.NEOSEEKER.COM

Easy to learn, hard to master. This phrase is common throughout the game industry, and it certainly applies to *Impossible Caves*.

In *Impossible Caves*, the players are white squares descending deeper into the cave. As they fall, they have to avoid spikes that are both on the ground and the ceiling. The goal is to fall as far as possible, which requires both quick thinking and good judgment.

The game is extremely easy to learn. To avoid the spikes, the player simply taps the screen to jump. Quick decision-making is imperative when jumping, as the player has to time jumps to not only miss the floor spikes, but the ceiling spikes as well. But be wary, oftentimes taps won't register, leaving the player helpless to do anything but be killed.

There is no limit on the number of jumps the player can do at one time, which is a double-edged sword. The nice aspect of it is that if one jumps too early before a spike, there's still have a chance to make it over. However, if the player jumps too many times, when the cube lands, it sometimes stops (not because of a glitch, but because of how it lands). Despite the seemingly easy task and controls, it's called *Impossible Caves* for a reason. It's far harder than it looks, as it's difficult to advance without memorizing parts of the map. This constant need to remember causes the player to die frequently.

Impossible Caves is set in specific levels. The paths never change, which, when coupled with the fact that it's so easy to die, can lead to the game becoming boring. However, if the player gets stuck and can't get past an area, there is the option of skipping it. To do so requires watching a video ad, but afterwards, it's on to the next stage. While this feature seems like a good idea, it only cheats the player out of the experience of actually achieving something in the game.

One big knock on the game is the ads. Free games like *Impossible Caves* usually have ads, but they're especially annoying in this one. Ads pop up constantly, one after every few deaths, sometimes even in the middle of a run.

Overall, *Impossible Caves* is a fun game at first. But as time goes on, the repetitiveness of the levels and the maddening ads slowly ruin it.

Impossible Caves; Appsolute Games LLC; 2015; Apple & Android; Free.

By Billy Moin