

'Stranger Things' trailer a real 'Thriller'



Nostalgic horror sensation "Stranger Things" unveiled a new trailer set to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" on Saturday as it built buzz for season two at the San Diego Comic-Con fan convention. The Netflix series—about a gang of 1980s children looking for their missing friend—became a break-out hit last year, winning critical acclaim and fame for its cast of young stars, led by Millie Bobby Brown. The trailer starts with the boys—played by Gaten Matarazzo, Finn Wolfhard, Caleb McLaughlin and Noah Schnapp—crowded around 1980s video game "Dragon's Lair."

Suddenly Will experiences a vision of the arcade they are in as part of the show's dark alternative world, the "Upside Down." "I saw something... I felt it everywhere," a crying Will later reveals to his worried mother Joyce, played by Winona Ryder. Next the four friends are seen creeping about in "Ghostbusters" costumes, apparently looking for evil spirits, as Vincent Price's ghoulish voiceover for "Thriller" plays in the background. The three-minute trailer ends with Brown's character, the telekinetic Eleven, trying to find her way out of the Upside Down.

The footage was shown as part of a Q&A moderated by Patton Oswalt with executive producers Shawn Levy, and Matt and Ross Duffer, as well as much of the cast. The Duffers said they had always intended the show to be similar to "Spielberg directing a big, fat Stephen King book."

Brown told the 6,000 fans filling San Diego Convention Center's Hall H that playing the enigmatic Eleven was tough because she had so few lines to work with. "I had to express everything with my face which is very hard. But it gets easier when you feel more comfortable with your character," the Emmy nominee said. "The first two episodes—I immediately fell in love with Eleven and Eleven was me. The only thing that was hard was crying. I feel like I'm a happy person in real life so that when I'm crying I would need five minutes to get in the zone." "Stranger Things," which premiered in July last year, has picked up 18 nominations ahead of September's ceremony in recognition of its eight-episode first season. Season two, comprised of nine episodes, drops on October 27. — AFP



Ryan Gosling, from left, Harrison Ford, and Ana de Armas attend the Warner Bros. "Blade Runner" panel on day three of Comic-Con International. — AP

Ford delights Comic-Con with gruff charm

Harrison Ford is still Harrison Ford, gruff charm and all. The actor delighted and toyed with excited audiences at Comic-Con on Saturday in promotion of "Blade Runner 2049." Ford reprises his role as Rick Deckard in the film, which hits theaters in October.

Ford said he gained a greater understanding of his character in the sequel. But when asked whether or not the film

answers questions about the original, Ford just paused and said that it doesn't matter what he thinks. He closed out the panel with a laugh and a cheer. When an audience member asked if it was Ford's life goal to reboot all of his iconic roles, Ford said, "You bet your (expletive) it is!" — AP

Amazon meal kits offer easy dinners for a price

Amazon's new ready-to-eat meal package is the perfect recipe for someone who doesn't have enough time to shop and cook, yet has a healthy appetite and a need for balanced meals. These meal kits come with just about everything you need to prepare dinner for two. You can choose from a variety of vegetarian and meat options. For now, Amazon's meal kits are available only in limited markets, including Seattle. There's no major commitment, the way rivals require you to order an entire week of meals at a time. But you pay dearly for the convenience and flexibility, and you must plan ahead, at least for now.

Ordering the meal

As a competitive athlete who trains a lot, I find generous portions are almost as important as lots of protein. I usually don't eat red meat, and the chicken dish got a few bad reviews, so I went for Togarashi-spiced salmon with soba noodles. It was \$20 for two servings, plus \$10 for delivery. When I tried to place my order Tuesday, Amazon said the only delivery times left that day were for 6 pm to 8 pm. Before confirming the order, though, those slots were gone.

It was only 11 am

I could have gone to Amazon's pickup location in another part of town, but who has time for that, especially in Seattle traffic? Instead, I chose delivery before 7 am on Wednesday. It arrived before 5:30 a.m., as I headed out for a long morning run.

From door to kitchen

The meal kit was the size of a loaf of bread, but it came in a heavy bag that resembled a large paper grocery bag. Inside was a silver insulated bag, nestled inside a cardboard frame, and six ice packs. That's a lot of packaging. I chose the delivery option that allowed the driver to leave it at my door, which may explain the extra layers. Each item was individually wrapped and marked. All I needed were a few pots and pans, a knife and some vegetable oil. The recipe also called for a pinch of salt from my kitchen, but I didn't feel the need. The ingredients you had to supply on your own were reasonable, given that most kitchens would have these. Everything else was provided, including some sesame oil in a tiny container to sauté my veggies.

A meal in a half-hour

I sautéed the asparagus and oyster mushrooms and cooked the salmon. I cooked the soba noodles and edamame together in boiling water, while I warmed the soup base in a separate pot. Once done, I arranged the noodles, edamame and salmon on plates and sprinkled each with asparagus, mushrooms, scallions and sesame seeds. The meal includes a side of pickled ginger.

The recipe was easy to follow. I am an OK cook and have a few special dishes, but I find recipes often take a convoluted path from stove to table. This one had seven easy steps, such as boil the water.



All this took less than 30 minutes, as promised. After about 10 minutes of washing veggies, chopping and opening packets, the cook time was minimal, just 13 minutes. Setting the table and opening the wine were the only other tasks. The servings were surprisingly large and visually appealing. Add a few glasses of white wine, and the meal was the perfect end to a very full day.

The value

I've been curious about meal kits for some time, but rivals such as Blue Apron and HelloFresh require you to subscribe to ongoing deliveries and pick your meals a week in advance. I wasn't willing to commit to \$60-plus per week for a multi-meal plan without first trying out the concept. Amazon lets you buy as you go, even spontaneously, notwithstanding the limited delivery windows. And the per-serving price is comparable with rivals — with a catch.

Meal kits require membership in both Amazon Prime (\$99 per year) and AmazonFresh (\$15 per month). Those fees along with the \$10 delivery fee should be factored into the overall price of each meal, which range from \$16 to \$20 for two servings. Amazon offers free delivery for orders over \$40, but you lose freshness if you buy multiple meals at once. Instead, you could buy other groceries to qualify. AmazonFresh also has light bulbs and laundry soap. Of course, it's ultimately cheaper just to buy these ingredients separately and assemble the meal yourself. But if you buy a whole tray of mushrooms and throw away all but the two you eat, then it's no longer cheaper. Nor is ordering takeout all the time, not to mention also being less healthy. As someone who's often too busy to cook elaborate meals, I'm hooked.

In fact, knowing I needed a few groceries and dinner, I went on AmazonFresh early Friday and was able to secure an evening delivery. I added milk, juice and bananas to get free delivery. I'm looking forward to roasted cod with cannellini bean ragout and pesto. — AP

Photo shows togarashi-spiced salmon, prepared from one of Amazon's new ready-to-cook meal packages.



In this file photo, actor John Heard, who stars as Alex, rehearses for Steppenwolf Theatre's production of Don DeLillo's play, "Love-Lies-Bleeding," in Chicago. — AP

John Heard, of 'Home Alone', dies

Actor John Heard, whose many roles included the father in the "Home Alone" series and a corrupt detective in "The Sopranos," has died. He was 71. Heard was found dead Friday in a hotel in Palo Alto, California, the Santa Clara County Medical Examiner's office said Saturday. An investigation which includes a toxicology test is underway to determine the cause of death, but so far there is no evidence of foul play, the office said.

TMZ reported that a representative for Heard said he was staying in the hotel while he recovered from back surgery at Stanford University Medical Center. Heard played Peter McCallister, the father of Kevin, played by Macaulay Culkin, in "Home Alone" and "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York." He said in later interviews that he sought a movie with kids in it so his son, age 5 at the time, could come to the set and have someone to play with.

After it became a big hit, he was reluctant to revisit the role. But his agent convinced him the money was too good to pass up. "I didn't want to be the 'Home Alone' dad for the rest of my life," he told Yahoo News in 2013. He was born March 7, 1946, in Washington, D.C., and grew up performing in local theater. One of his memorable early roles was as a disabled Vietnam War veteran in the 1981 film "Cutter's Way."

He was active in film for the next decade, playing Tom Hanks' rival in "Big," actress Geraldine Page's son in "The Trip to Bountiful" and in the movies "The Pelican Brief," "Beaches," "Gladiator," "Rambling Rose" and "After Hours." He earned an Emmy nomination for playing Vin Makazian in "The Sopranos." Heard said in a 2015 interview with The A.V. Club that he got the part after running into series star James Gandolfini in a gym. His time on "The Sopranos" ended like it did for many other actors there — with his character's death. Heard said he approached series creator David Chase and said "Why me? I'm a detective! You can use me forever!" And he told me, "John, there's a rule in television. Somebody has to die that the audience likes." I said, "They like me? How do you know they like me?" He said, "Well, they like you. So we're gonna kill you." "My mother said, 'Why do you have to die in everything?' I said, "You're telling me? I could've made a fortune!"

Other television roles kept Heard busy. He acted in "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "Elementary," "Prison Break," "Modern Family" and "Entourage." One of his favorite jobs came in the original "Sharknado" television movie in 2013. "I knew it was going to be a cult classic," he told the Baltimore Media Blog last year. "It's just ridiculous. I thought it would replace people calling me the 'Home Alone' dad." — AP



Photos show the ingredients in a togarashi-spiced salmon dish that is one of the choices available as part of Amazon's new ready-to-cook meal packages. — AP photos



Photo shows the packaging of ingredients in a togarashi-spiced salmon dish that is one of the choices available as part of Amazon's new ready-to-cook meal packages.

Lexus Short Film 'Game' wins the Bronze Lion at Cannes

Lexus and The Weinstein Company have announced that Jeannie Donohoe's film "Game" has won a Bronze Entertainment Lion for Cinema and Theatrical Fiction Film at Cannes Lions. Game, about a young athlete who defies the odds to pursue a sports passion, was one of four films released this year as part of Season 3 of the Lexus Short Films series.

Lexus Short Films aims to engage with film enthusiasts and audiences to develop and nurture a new generation of emerging filmmakers. Now in its fourth season, the series continues to exemplify Lexus and The Weinstein Company's shared commitment to arts and innovation by recognizing and supporting up-and-coming talent. Submissions are now open for Season 4 until August 24th, 2017 at www.withoutabox.com/LSF.

"Being recognized with a Cannes Lion in addition to the other film festival awards is an amazing achievement," said Spiros Fotinos, Global Head of Brand Management and Marketing, Lexus. "It reflects the spirit of our Lexus Short Films program, which is to support emerging filmmakers by giving them opportunities to make their career



leap forward. We are thrilled to see such fantastic results."

According to Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, "We would like to congratulate Jeannie Donohoe



and her team on this fantastic achievement and commend their efforts in creating the beautiful and inspiring piece of cinema that is Game. The Lexus Short Films series is all about providing emerging and talented filmmakers with a platform to bring their creative vision to life and

reach out to the world with their stories. We are thrilled to see that the films emerging from this unique program continue to garner awards and accolades at some of the world's biggest and most prestigious movie festivals. As we celebrate this moment, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our customers for wholeheartedly backing Lexus' ongoing efforts to nurture creativity and innovation."

Game has already won several prestigious film festival awards, such as the Best Short Film at the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, the Audience Choice Award at the Los Angeles Indie Film Festival, the Best Short Live Action Narrative at the Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival, the Special Jury Prize: Narrative Short at the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival.

All the films from the Lexus Short Films series are available at www.LexusShortFilms.com and on Amazon Prime Video.

