

Westworld

Navigation:

- Overview
 - *Westworld* is an American science fiction thriller television series created by Jonathan Nolan and [Lisa Joy](#) for HBO. It is based on the 1973 film of the same name, which was written and directed by American novelist Michael Crichton, and to a lesser extent on the 1976 sequel *Futureworld*. It is the second TV series based on the two films, the first being the short-lived 1980 series *Beyond Westworld*. Nolan and Joy serve as executive producers along with J. J. Abrams, Jerry Weintraub and Bryan Burk, with Nolan directing the pilot. The first episode premiered on October 2, 2016. The first season consists of ten episodes.
 - The program takes place in fictional Westworld, a technologically advanced, Western-themed amusement park populated completely by synthetic androids dubbed "hosts". Westworld caters to high-paying visitors dubbed "newcomers" (or just "guests"), who can do whatever they wish within the park, without fear of retaliation from the hosts.
 - The series' debut on HBO garnered the network's highest viewership ratings for a premiere since the first episode of *True Detective* in 2014. *Westworld* has received positive reviews by critics, with particular praise for the visuals, story, and acting.
- Cast (w/ photos)
 - Evan Rachel Wood as Dolores Abernathy, as the oldest host; she is a Western girl who discovers her entire life is an elaborately constructed lie. Her aesthetic drew influences from Andrew Wyeth's painting *Christina's World* as well as Lewis Carroll's Alice.
 - Thandie Newton as Maeve Millay, a host; she is the madam of Westworld.
 - Jeffrey Wright as Bernard Lowe, head of the Westworld Programming Division and creator of artificial people.
 - James Marsden as Teddy Flood, a host; he is a newly arrived gunslinger in pursuit of a local beauty.
 - Ben Barnes as Logan, a veteran guest; he is a louche bachelor. His hedonistic romp through Westworld is equally motivated by self-indulgence and a desire to help his friend and brother-in-law, William.
 - Ingrid Bolsø Berdal as Armistice, a host; she is a brutal and ruthless bandit.
 - Clifton Collins Jr. as Lawrence, a host; he is a charming but lethal outlaw, with a knack for maneuvering and negotiating the various criminal elements of Westworld.
 - Luke Hemsworth as Ashley Stubbs, the head of Westworld security, charged with monitoring host and human interactions and ensuring the safety of the guests.
 - Sidse Babbett Knudsen as Theresa Cullen, Westworld's terse operations leader, responsible for keeping the park from sliding into unscripted disarray.
 - Simon Quarterman as Lee Sizemore, Westworld's narrative director, whose artistic temperament aggravates his co-workers.
 - Rodrigo Santoro as Hector Escaton, a host; he is a wanted man bent on survival.
 - Angela Sarafyan as Clementine Pennyfeather, a host; she works for Maeve and is one of Westworld's most popular attractions.
 - Jimmi Simpson as William, a reluctant first-time newcomer to Westworld, joining his friend, Logan. Initially dismissive of the park's more lascivious attractions, he slowly uncovers a deeper meaning to the park's narrative.
 - Tessa Thompson as Charlotte Hale, executive director of the board overseeing Westworld.
 - Shannon Woodward as Elsie Hughes, a rising star in the Programming Division tasked with remedying odd behavior in the park's artificial beings.

- Ed Harris as the Man in Black; a rich, sadistic Westworld guest searching for a "deeper level" in the park. Outside of the park, he has achieved prominence as the owner of a medical foundation.
 - Anthony Hopkins as Robert Ford, the creative director of Westworld.
- Episodes
 - Season 1 (with plots)
 - 1: The Original
 - 2: Chestnut
 - 3: The Stray
 - 4: Dissonance Theory
 - 5: Contrapasso
 - 6: The Adversary
 - 7: Trompe L'Oeil
 - 8: Trace Decay
 - 9: The Well-Tempered Clavier
 - 10: The Bicameral Mind
- Production
 - **Conception and development**
 - Michael Crichton, the writer of the 1973 film that the series is based on
 - Warner Bros. had been considering a remake of *Westworld* since the early 1990s and after the departure of studio executive Jessica Goodman in 2011, the project was again under consideration.^[28] On August 31, 2013, it was announced that premium cable channel HBO had ordered a pilot for a potential television series version of the story, with Jonathan Nolan directing and co-writing with Lisa Joy. Nolan, Joy, J. J. Abrams and Bryan Burk are executive producers.^[29] HBO later announced that *Westworld* had been taken to series and that it would premiere in 2015.^[30] In August 2015, HBO released the first teaser which revealed it would premiere in 2016.^[31] It is the second series based on Crichton's original story after the 1980s *Beyond Westworld*, which aired only three episodes on CBS before being cancelled.^[32]
 - Abrams suggested that the show be told with the perspective of the "hosts" in mind.^[33] Nolan took inspiration from video games like *BioShock Infinite*, *Red Dead Redemption* and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* to deal with the narrative's moral component on a spectrum.^[34] He explained the show would explore why "violence is in most of the stories we like to watch, but it isn't part of what we like to do" through the characters known as guests, who give payment to satisfy those urges.^[35] The autonomous existence of non-player characters in video games influenced the approach to the individual storylines in *Westworld* that are reset in a continuous loop.^[36] "These violent delights have violent ends" –^[37] a recitation from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – is made part of the show as a virus trigger within the hosts, which alters how they perceive their existence.^[38] Asked whether the Roman Empire or Middle Ages-themed worlds from the original film would appear in the show, Nolan counted them out as possible new settings.^[39] George R. R. Martin met with Nolan and Joy to pitch them the idea of a Westeros-themed setting featuring androids based on *Game of Thrones* characters.^[40] Ed Brubaker served on the writing staff as supervising producer,^[41] co-writing the fourth episode with Nolan.^[42]
 - **Financing**
 - The ten episodes of the first season were reportedly produced on a budget of approximately \$100 million, with per-episode budgets somewhere in the neighborhood of \$8 million to \$10 million. HBO and Warner Bros. Television shared the cost of producing the series; HBO reportedly also paid an undisclosed licensing fee to Warner Bros. Television for broadcast rights.^[43]
 - **Casting**

- Anthony Hopkins and Evan Rachel Wood were the first cast members to be formally announced, taking on the roles of Dr. Robert Ford and Dolores Abernathy, respectively.^[4] Jeffrey Wright, Rodrigo Santoro, Shannon Woodward, Ingrid Bolsø Berdal, Angela Sarafyan, and Simon Quarterman were all announced as cast members in August 2014.^[7] James Marsden and Eddie Rousewere also added to the cast.^[8] Ed Harris was cast in a key villain role, known only as the Man in Black.^[14] Other roles were filled by Demetrius Grosse, Kyle Bornheimer, Currie Graham, Lena Georgas, Steven Ogg, Timothy Lee DePriest, Ptolemy Slocum, Thandie Newton, and Miranda Otto.^{[6][17][9][44]} In July 2015, it was announced that Otto had departed the show due to her commitments to the fifth season of *Homeland* and she was replaced by Sidse Babett Knudsen. Additionally, three others were cast; Eion Bailey, Jimmi Simpson and Clifton Collins Jr.^[11] Bailey was later replaced by Ben Barnes.^[10] Talulah Riley was revealed to have a role as one of the hosts after her ex-husband Elon Musk had stated so on Twitter.^[45]
- **Filming**
- Castle Valley in Utah is one of the filming locations.
- Filming for the show's pilot episode took place during a 22-day period^[46] in August 2014 in and around Los Angeles^[47] as well as Moab, Utah.^[48]
- Filming locations in California included various soundstages, backlots at both Universal Studios and Warner Bros., the Paramount Ranch in Agoura,^[49] the Melody Ranch in Santa Clarita,^{[46][50]} and the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood.^[51] The Melody Ranch set used for the town of Sweetwater had been used previously for many western films, such as *Django Unchained* and *The Magnificent Seven*, but was significantly upgraded for *Westworld* by production designer Zack Grobler to portray an idealized version of the American frontier.^[50] Green screens were placed around the California sets to block modern objects like parking lots, so that the California shots could be later merged digitally with exterior shots from Utah.^[50]
- For the show's large-scale exterior look, the producers drew inspiration from the work of John Ford, who shot his last four films in Castle Valley, east of Moab.^[49] In the spring of 2014, Nolan visited southern Utah with key crew members and a location scout to explore the possibility of filming there, and promptly fell in love with the place.^[48] Location shooting for the pilot episode later occurred over five days in southern Utah,^[48] including Castle Valley.^[49] Most Utah locations, like Dead Horse Point State Park, were "walk-in" areas where both cast and crew were required to hike in and out with all their gear.^[48] Horseback riding scenes were filmed at a private ranch, where the filmmakers were not subject to as many restrictions as when working on public land.^[51] To seamlessly blend California sets with Utah scenery, set walls were shipped to Utah so that they could be used to film reverse angles of scenes originally filmed in California.^[51] For example, conversations on the exterior balcony of Westworld's operations center were shot on a balcony at the Pacific Design Center facing towards the center, then reverse angles over the shoulders of the cast members were shot at Dead Horse Point, to make it seem as if the operations center was located on top of the state park's steep cliffs.^{[48][51]} The train interior scenes were created by mounting the entire train car set on the back of a flatbed truck and driving the truck back and forth along Utah State Route 128.^[48]
- The 3D printing of hosts was shot utilizing almost entirely practical effects, with some of it polished by the visual effects team.^[5] Out of respect for the actors and extras involved, filming of nudity is done on a closed set; in terms of sex scenes, a sex consultant is used.^[52]
- **Title sequence**
- The series' title sequence was created by production studio Elastic, which had previously created the title sequences for *Rome*, *Carnivàle* and *Game of Thrones* for HBO. Patrick Clair acted as creative director for the title sequence,^{[53][54]} which took about five weeks to conceptualize.^[55] Clair met with Nolan and Joy in February 2016 to

discuss its development. He was interested in their decision to approach the show's point of view from that of the hosts, deeming the result an inherent psychological study. Upon its inception, the sequence would translate elements present in the series via computer-aided design. For example, once Clair was sent footage by composer Ramin Djawadi of a player piano in motion, its actual counterpart, situated in the *Westworld* production office, was photographed and then reconstructed in computer-generated imagery.^{[55][37]} Nolan also applied it in reference to Kurt Vonnegut's first novel *Player Piano*, meant to represent the first Rube Goldberg machine to invoke an emotional response.^[38] Clair saw the metaphor behind the player piano – "a primitive form of robot" – as an exploration into the disparity between man and machine, "being created to be made redundant". Hosts that were bathed in white liquid struck him as a juxtaposition between the grit and grain of the Western genre and its basis in science fiction. Motifs of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man came about from Clair's wish to convey *Westworld*'s depiction of the naked human body.^[37] It commences with the ribcage of a horse, and then a set of hosts manufactured by industrial robots. The skeletal horse is shown in gallop to subvert the iconography of such a depiction.^[55] As for his efforts in exposing the Western landscapes in connection with a world of robotics, he thought it sensible that it be done inside a single eye; craters and valleys are formed as the simulacrum of an iris.^[37]

- **Music**

- Ramin Djawadi is the composer of *Westworld*
- The music is composed by Ramin Djawadi, who also worked with showrunner Nolan on the TV series *Person of Interest*.^[56] The main theme blends the use of bass notes, light arpeggios and melody, all of which complement the "theme park aspect", says Djawadi.^[57]
- In an interview, Djawadi spoke about the modern songs used in the show. He stated, "The show has an anachronistic feel to it, It's a Western theme park, and yet it has robots in it, so why not have modern songs? And that's a metaphor in itself, wrapped up in the overall theme of the show."^[58] The feature was invented by Nolan.^[59] Player piano renditions featured in *Westworld* include Radiohead's "No Surprises"^[60] and "Paranoid Android", Soundgarden's "Black Hole Sun", The Rolling Stones' "Paint It Black",^[38] Scott Joplin's "Pine Apple Rag"^[61] and "Peacherine Rag", Claude Debussy's "Reverie L.68"^[62] and The Cure's "A Forest".^[63] Licensing costs ranged from \$15,000 to \$55,000.^[64]

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