

Fans Clash Over the 'Bill & Frank' Episode of 'The Last of Us,' The Showrunner Reacts



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Feb 06, 2023 5:49 PM

5,864 views



In the past ten years alone, HBO has produced critically-acclaimed hit shows such as *Euphoria*, *House of the Dragon*, *Succession* and *The White Lotus*. But the network's latest sensation is breaking viewership records that may soon rule them all. *The Last of Us* debuted in mid-January with the second-most-watched pilot episode on HBO in nearly a decade. The post-apocalyptic drama is a live-action adaptation of a video game that was officially released in 2013. The premise details the horrific evolution of a mutated fungus as it ignites a devastating global pandemic that sends civilization spiraling into a barbaric version of the dark ages and nearly wipes out mankind. The main cast features former *Game of Thrones* co-stars Pedro Pascal (47) and Bella Ramsey (19). The duo has been excellent in their roles as Joel and Ellie throughout the course of the show's first four episodes. However, the standout installment of the season thus far was the third episode. A story that fans of the show are now calling the "Bill and Frank" episode.

In the video game, a bearded weapons-hoarding dooms-dayer named Bill briefly encounters the corpse of his dead lover, Frank, before acknowledging the tragic suicide and moving along. Frank and Bill share very little time together in the actual video game. Nevertheless, the co-writers of *The Last of Us* (Craig Mazin and Neil Druckmann) built an entire episode of their heralded TV show around the couple's unlikely love story in a fictional world defined by anarchy, rowdy gangs, militias with self-serving agendas, murder, hopelessness and more importantly... aggressive humanoid creatures made of fungus. The characters of Bill and Frank were portrayed by actors Nick Offerman and Murray Bartlett. The episode was properly named "Long, Long Time" because it follows the pair from the moment they met until the bittersweet end of their time together decades later. "Long, Long Time" scored the highest rating numbers of the young season, and it has since been showered with praise for its cinematography, brilliant character development, and heartwrenching storyline. Aside from a brief appearance from the lead characters, Joel and Ellie, "Long, Long Time" plays out like a stand-alone episode (with a duration of one hour and fifteen minutes) that's insightful, tear-jerking, scary, and thrilling. Nonetheless, not everyone was happy with the episode. Some fans of the video game have criticized the show's production team for deviating from the storyline and blowing the relationship between Bill and Frank out of proportion while also taking liberties to create a social narrative.

In a recent interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, Neil Druckmann, who currently serves as the co-showrunner for *The Last of Us*, explained the decision to create a story arc about a couple with so little screen time in the original video game. He also shared why he and his co-showrunner, Craig Mazin, didn't always see eye-to-eye about the direction of this particular storyline.

"How much we deviate [from the game] has to be proportional to how good it is," Druckmann Explained. "Frank was mentioned [in the game] but offhandedly. Here we get to kind of explore this relationship and obviously make some changes. And [the idea] was so good, I didn't mind that it was different...In the game, the way you build the relationship with Bill is fighting alongside him. There's a set piece where Joel is hoisted up in this snare trap, and Ellie has to cut him down. It's exciting and one of the most memorable parts from the game. I think a lesser adaptation would be like, 'This action sequence has to go in the show. Whereas [Craig Mazin] was like, 'No, don't focus on that, there's this interesting thing happening over with this survivor and this partner that he had. What's that story? Let's explore that. Let's flesh that out.' So it was easy not to be precious about that when you got these really wonderful ideas that I felt broadened the world and broadened these characters."

Although Frank's fate in the live-action adaptation turned out vastly different from the narrative in the video game, there is no denying allure of HBO's captivating take on his involvement with Bill. Shortly after the 'Bill and Frank' episode aired, HBO announced that they had already renewed *The Last of Us* for a second season.

Source: [Yahoo!](#)