

## *Power Rangers (2017) Notes*

### THE FILM

- We might lose listeners because of this episode. This movie is divisive.
- Opens with a Power Ranger. Can't fault it there. It's eerily similar to the start of *Power Rangers Unauthorized*.
- I wonder how they made the alien language.
- HUGE CHANGE: Zordon was a Red Ranger and Rita was a Green Ranger. I'm not bothered by this. It actually makes some sense. Also, I do like the Green Lantern-style set-up here with the Power Coins as Zordon dies. Although, the Rangers do just find them.
- The transition from the mountain to the cow image is cool.
- Starting with a "masturbating the cow" joke...not good. Thankfully, the dumb jokes end with that.
- Having the camera spin around in the truck creates the illusion of one continuous shot.
- The film quickly establishes that this version of the kids aren't the goody-goodies from the show. Most of the Rangers meet *Breakfast Club*-style in detention.
  - Jason is a delinquent.
  - Billy (who is black) is autistic. He's the "purest" of the group. However, he does help Jason cheat on his parole.
  - Kim is a mean girl who circulates nude pics of other girls around out of revenge.
  - Zack is a reckless daredevil trying to live up to his parents' expectations.
  - Trini is a bi girl in a "very normal" family. He's standoffish because of it.
- I'm surprised the detention bully wasn't Bulk and/or Skull.
- I don't get why Kim cuts her hair.
- This isn't *Chronicle*; it isn't found footage, nor is it nihilistic enough.
- They use Billy's autism for exposition. He keeps talking and explains his backstory. Clever.
- AWARD: "Is that a workout program? Like Tae Bo?" -Jason
- Of course Jason sees Kim in her underwear.
- Was this the first Ranger media to make Jason and Kim a couple?
- Trini is Hispanic like the original actress in the "lost" pilot.
- Car chase with a minivan. The team comes together in it. Funny.
- AWARD: They don't make it across the railroad tracks?! Great subversion.
- What's with the movie and car wrecks?
- These Rangers have civilian powers. This, along with the Zeo Crystal, are elements of lore pulled from other parts of the franchise. I don't mind them.
- AWARD: Bully knocks himself out headbutting Billy.
- AWARD: Boiling the counter and exploding the food. Very *Ghostbusters*.
- Rita is associated with death. Her desiccated body is found in a pile of dead fish.
- The score often reminds me of *Tron: Legacy*.
- The characters have color-coordinated clothes.

- I take a bit of an issue with race-swapping the characters. It goes back to the fear of having a black, well, Black Ranger and an Asian Yellow Ranger. I don't mind making Trini Hispanic (original actress), but I honestly think Zack could've stayed Black. This was a year before Black Panther, which would've made it easier.
- AWARD: "I'm black!" "What?!" "I am!" "No, you're not!" -Zack and Billy (calls it out)
- AWARD: Passing through the water ceiling.
- They get the Coins in about 20 minutes, I think. That's about right.
- It takes 38 minutes to get to the Command Center.
- AWARD: "How long you been waiting?" "Is it Monday?" "Yeah." "Uh...65 million years!" -Rangers and Alpha
- "Alpha" is an acronym in this. The design is quite weird and alien, but he is recognizable as the character.
- The viewing globe is here.
- I like the look of Zordon. His face appears on a metal grid.
- "Primitive dialect." Typical.
- The Zeo Crystal is created by life within planets. It's the opposite of Rita.
- AWARD: Zordon's vision of the future with creepy Rita and dust people.
- Rita is a devil figure: she betrays her team for power.
- This is a hero's journey.
- Marvel heroes are confirmed as fictional characters in this universe. Which is funny because this is very Marvel-esque.
- AWARD: "Me and four kids from Angel Grove found a spaceship buried underground ... Pretty sure I'm superhero." "Pee in that cup!" -Trini and her mom
- Rita in this is savage and creepy.
- Zordon does give the three rules.
- "Have any of you ever morphed before?" "Yes...but only in the shower." -Zord and Zack
- The Putties look even more like golems. They aren't nearly as humanoid.
- I did like seeing the Rangers train. It makes more sense than having their powers "downloaded" magically. It's earned.
- AWARD: Kim and Trini train with food.
- Krispy Kreme gets blatant product placement. It is a bit crass.
- The Zords. Some look better than others. I like the T-Rex (recognizable) and the Pterodactyl (jet). Six-legged mastodon is goofy. They do look like Bayformers.
- AWARD: The singing nuns!?
- 62 minutes in, Billy morphs. He does so by stepping between Zack and Jason. Jack says it's an act of love.
- AWARD: "Your team's dead. And you're just as scared as we are." -Jason to Zordon
- Rita's wand does resemble the original.
- This Rita is more Michelle Pfeifer Catwoman than Wicked Witch of the West.

- The campfire scene is the heart of the film. The Rangers open up to each other, share their struggles and secrets. Trini all but says she's bisexual. It's acknowledged and the story moves on.
- AWARD: "I'll show you mine if you show me yours." -Rita
- AWARD: "Sadly, I believe you." -Rita
- Rita's attack on Trini is borderline rapey. It's in her bedroom and on her bed.
- AWARD: "You did an awful thing; it doesn't make you an awful person." -Jason
- Jason is a quarterback, and he displays more leadership as the film progresses. He even stands up to Zordon. He believes in his team despite all their shortcomings.
- The Rangers decide to kill Rita even without morphing. They do have powers, but this is equivalent to a superhero being heroic without powers.
- This Rita is able to fight and not just use magic.
- AWARD: "Eeny-meeny-miney-blue!" -Rita
- There are some lines in this that sound like they'd be in the show.
- The fact that Zordon is training the Rangers to morph to gather energy to restore his body is a far cry from the original. BUT Zordon sacrifices his chance to have a body to resurrect Billy. It's an act of humility.
- Kim has a shirt that says, "It was all a dream."
- Jason says the thing!
- Trini has a shirt that says, "1973."
- 90 minutes in we get the Avengers-style group shot of morphed Rangers. Then the movie goes NUTS. It becomes the show.
- Let's talk about the costumes. They're recognizable as the MMPR suits, but they definitely look like Iron Man armor. Maybe a bit too much so.
- AWARD: Rangers fight Putties in water.
- I like how the Putties are elementals.
- Rita says the thing!
- Okay...this Goldar is lame. It works for this film, but compared to what came before, he's lame. "Not-Goldar." I do like that he's literally made of hot liquid gold.
- AWARD: "Yippee-ky-yay mother—m-mother's good, mother's good." -Billy
- Rita is unphased by the Rangers surviving. Nice.
- AWARD: "Sorry, Bumblebee!" -Jason (Bay's Transformers confirmed as fictional in this universe)
- "Mariner Bay and Reefsides." Nice easter egg, movie.
- AWARD: Pterodactyl Zord grabs Triceratops Zord and throws it through Not-Goldar at Rita.
- AWARD: "No one dies alone!" -Jason "Thank you for being my friends!" -Billy "Hold onto to each other!" -Kim
- AWARD: The Megazord forms.
- AWARD: Suplexing Not-Goldar.
- AWARD: Rita gets backhanded into space?!

- AWARD: Dancing Megazord?!
- Of course there's a cover of "The Power." And it's a rap. Oi...
- The post-credit hints at Tommy. We see a green jacket.
- I can't hate it.
- AWARD: "This is your time, this is your team." -Zordon
- AWARD: "This Ranger team did what my team could not. You will humbly walk amongst your peers, but heroes you all will be. Each of your names will be etched alongside the great Ranger teams before you. I will always owe a debt of gratitude to you all." -Zordon
- (Appropriately, Rita completes her rebirth at the Fenix jewelry store).
- "Adapting" *The Breakfast Club* is what PR does.
- Zack in this is unique in that he a first-generation poor Asian kid. This goes against the model minority stereotype. It's underused in film. It's increased by 38%, second only to Hispanics. 33% drop out of high school and face lots of cultural pressure.
- The colors are muted until the final battle. It bucks the usual Hollywood trend since darkness hides special effects issues and adds tension.
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#### *Blu-ray special features*

- Becky G: "There's a lot of new things and a lot of true things."
- Dean Israelite watched Power Rangers as a kid in South Africa.
- Unless they're all faking it, everyone in these behind-the-scenes interviews loves Power Rangers and wanted to do right by the fans.
- Israelite says watching the show made people want to be strong in those suits.
- Saban said this is an origin because it was intended to be a multi-film franchise.
- Israelite wanted to recapture the spirit of the original. Saban said kids' expectations for films and TV are different.
- Israelite wanted to make this like an '80s film (I assume Hughes). He said modern films box themselves in tonally and such. More nuance.
- Bill Hader (Alpha 5) said political statements in stories work better when they're not didactic. (Thank you!)
- Cyler says this is *The Breakfast Club* meets *Guardians of the Galaxy*.
- Hader: the kids act as though they're in a drama and not a superhero film.
- *The Breakfast Club* was used as reference. They wanted these kids to have the same chemistry. They cast them as an ensemble. They mixed and matched the actors together to build the chemistry.
- Banks: The theme is being young and discerning your own power.
- Brian Cranston wanted to be in the film after seeing footage of the younger actors. He never worked on set with them.
- Casting Rita, they wanted someone who was scary, funny, and sexy.
- Playing Rita, Banks said Rita's complete disregard for people was freeing as a performer.

- The young actors said they felt they had to up their game around Banks.
- Cranston performed in makeup in front of a greenscreen for screen capture for most of his scenes. He did wear a body suit for the beginning. That took four hours.
- Cranston did voice some monsters in MMPR.
- Bill Hader did mocap for Alpha.
- Hader did compare it to a sports movie.
- Cranston said that grounding the story and getting people invested in characters allows the story to leap into fantasy.
- The suits were designed by Legacy and built by Weta.
- Weta started with functionality.
- New techniques and materials were invented to realize these suits. Their goal was to make it look like they belonged to the franchise while making it look contemporary.
- They wanted the “morph” to look like energy repurposing the molecules around the kids’ bodies. It starts from the chest/diamond.
- Israelite wanted individual styles for each Ranger.
  - Yellow: straightforward.
  - Pink: fluid, athletic.
  - Black: wild, masculine.
- The Rangers did most of their own stunts to keep it grounded. They trained in martial arts and worked out.
- Ludi Lin is a martial artist.
- Naomi joked that she was at “ninja school.”
- It was filmed in Vancouver.
- The set for the Command Center was the size of 8 city blocks.
- They avoided CGI camera moves as possible to keep the camera angles and moves natural and grounded. (Del Toro did that).
- The Zords break apart to form the Megazord instead of them becoming specific parts. They thought it was “childish” otherwise.
- The T-Rex Zord was the hardest one to design because they were trying to avoid looking like Grimlock.
- The Zords are warships, but they have to be fun because they’re piloted by teens.
- It was Israelite’s idea to have the connector cable in the Zord.
- They made flight manuals for each Zord.
- The cockpits were built and then shot on gimbles.
- They spent a year refining the pin wall for Zordon. They originally considered something more like liquid.
- Israelite directed Cranston’s mocap session like it was live action.
- Cranston had to learn how to emote without moving his head.
- They had Alpha making fun of the Rangers, but it didn’t test well.
- Bill Hader did all his scenes in one long day.

- Hader credits the whole special effects team with bringing Alpha to life. He supplied the voice and attitude.
- Israelite said he watched the show as a kid and had just made a film about teens, so he felt prepared to make this.
- Cranston would say which of his ADR takes he liked best.
- The made-up language was developed by a linguist. It has Arabic, pig Latin, and other languages. Banks took it the most seriously.
- Brian Tyler says the intuitive thing was to score it like a drama and an action film. He didn't do that. He centered the score on the drama. He scored themes for the Rangers as a team and not as individuals.
- Tyler says Israelite knew that the music could be reduced to one of many sound effects in Pro Tools, so he composed in a way that kept it from getting lost. Also, a few scenes—like the Rangers walking out—are music only.
- Israelite says 50% of the storytelling is in the sound, to the sound mixing is important.
- Israelite wasn't nervous about replicating the spirit of the show.
- The Rangers actors had an impromptu table read at Cyler's house on day 1.
- Gatis says they wanted to honor the lore of the show and only rewrote some with Saban's permission.

*Commentary by Dean Israelite and John Gatins*

- The prologue was storyboarded before it was written, and Israelite and Gatins debated if they needed it. It was meant to be more subjective and subversive than most superhero movies.
- Fans saw the green Power Coin in Rita's staff in promo images.
- The opening chase is a combination of practical and CGI. The transitions are seamless.
- *The Breakfast Club* was a huge influence.
- They see teens as good people who do dumb things.
- Israelite says a theme is unmasking, which is narrative and visual.
- It sounds like Israelite is fond of one-shot scenes. Some he didn't keep (like the bathroom scene).
- Israelite's first movie was *Project Almanac*.
- Once Israelite got 30 pages into the script, he felt like the movie they were trying to make was coming together.
- This was shot over 65 days, which was "aggressive."
- Cyler got the part by sending in a self-tape while working on another movie.
- The suits took 18 weeks to construct.
- Dacre was cast in one of Israelite's student films 12 years before.
- That's a real minivan being hit by a semitruck that was digitally replaced with a train.
- Israelite did much of the storyboarding.
- The actor playing the bully is a singer.
- More color comes into the film as the kids discover their powers.

- The boiling lunchroom scene took 45 minutes to set up, and they did it in one take.
- The chasm jump was contentious because they were worried the effects wouldn't look good or that it seemed too small for a superhero movie.
- "No, you're not!" was improvised.
- Bill Hader improvised a lot.
- It was hard to show the film to test audiences was hard because the effects were unfinished.
- This was pitched as a Power Rangers movie where the Rangers can't morph. The scene where they try and fail was meant to be subversive. Getting the armor was meant to be a metaphor.
- "Strong-\$\$\$ hologram" was an adlib and a hashtag used in e-mails by the crew.
- They went with a more organic language in their designs, such as for the Zords, Alpha, and the ship. They wanted to avoid the angular looks of Transformers, Star Trek, and Star Wars.
- Israelite and Gatins say they made this film with the fans in mind.
- Israelite's favorite shot is Jason walking into Zordon's room. He likes the integration of the effects.
- Banks putting the necklace in her mouth was improvised.
- Banks grew up on Tim Burton villains. That was the tone she was going for.
- The campfire scene had six hours of raw footage. It was filmed in week 2 on location.
- Israelite and Gatins were aware of the potential consequences of Trini's monologue. It could divide the audience as a controversial issue. They met in the editing room with people from Saban and Lionsgate, and when they said they'd keep it, one of the producers cried. Israelite did say he thinks there will eventually be an LGBT+ Ranger team eventually.
- While the script has a scene where Kim and Jason kiss, which is in the trailer, it was cut because test audiences said it robbed Kim of her moment.
- Originally, Kim was a straight-up cyberbully, but Saban thought that was too hardcore and made her difficult to like. Having her not take the photo but distribute it speaks better to the character.
- Billy doesn't drown; he's affected by Rita's sorcery.
- Saban was opposed to Billy dying at first, but they convinced him to do it. He gave them permission to be bold because it was "Haim's baby."
- Israelite says Jason speaking about the pressure he was under is the scene that resonates with him most.
- Israelite rewatched MMPR and TMNT when he got the job and wanted to be uncynical.
- They said the audience score on RT was in the 80s. Um...
- The kids are "reborn" through the water portal. Hence the fight.
- The reason Goldar was reimagined was because Israelite felt there had been many monsters like the original Goldar since the show. They wanted something different; he's soulless, but Rita loves him.
- They go from the tribute with the original (movie) theme to a contemporary music.

- Israelite broke the dailies footage record three times.
- They incorrectly say Mariner Bay is a street in the show.
- The idea of the Zeo Crystal being buried under Krispy Kreme wasn't a money grab. It was to have it be under something contemporary.
- They actually thought they be criticized for taking too long to have the Rangers morph. They said they didn't get that. This is a character journey. They didn't just want to make another superhero movie.
- The original version of the post-credit scene would've been in the cafeteria after a fight.

#### *Other Blu-ray features*

- Most of the bloopers involve Bill Hader.

#### TOKU TOPIC: REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

- My thesis: Representation in media is overvalued. It can't be the highest priority without compromising the story.
- Writers:
  - Casira Copes, *Medium* and *BLK INK*
  - Catherine Du, *Big Straw Magazine*
  - Nicole Huang, *The McGill Daily*
  - Chris Gore, *Film Threat*
- “Unproblematic content” with “good representation on all counts doesn't exist.”
  - Copes: “Yet every new thing that comes out with even a modicum of fanfare is either glorified for being a beacon of diverse representation, or vilified for failing to achieve the aforementioned diversity quota. And that's a problem because we're setting things up to fail our expectations.”
- Copes, a bisexual black feminist, about how there were moments in the lesbian rom-com *Happiest Season* despite it being about affluent white lesbians. However, the film got backlash for not being “groundbreaking” and not “get[ting] it right.” She asks, “...what narrative is there that suits everyone?”
- Copes: “As cultural landscapes shift, so too do our perceptions of how ‘good’ something is at representing the ideals and values of our society. Our barometer for progressive and ‘revolutionary’ content is in direct correlation to the social mores of the times. We continue to grow into a media world that receives more scrutiny from a wider variety of people than it has in years past, and that means that the bar is constantly shifting.”
- Copes: “As a result, we are constantly ping-ponging back and forth between ‘This is great!’ and ‘This is terrible!’ without leaving much room for ‘This is complex.’”
- Copes: “No single thing can represent an entire demographic.”
- Copes: “As critically engaged consumers of media, we need to learn how to say[,] ‘Give me another one[,]’ without feeling like we have to say[,] ‘The current one is no good.’”
- Copes: “We don't get the representation we need by demanding every individual piece of content check every conceivable box. We get it by demanding more and more content until, eventually, everyone has something they can see themselves in.”



- Du (Asian-American woman): "...I see the movement for representation for what it ultimately is—a distraction."
- Du: "People focus so much time on advocating for diversity in Hollywood that they overlook more pressing issues that exist in the world."
- Du: "Additionally, praising Hollywood for 'getting diversity right' provides the already privileged and wealthy a shield from criticism, one that they don't even have to raise a finger to build themselves. We think, how can something be bad if it features marginalized voices? ... As a result, leftists cannot point out poorly written storylines...without being accused of being racist, or homophobic, or some other form of bigotry by rabid fans, who ignore the fact that these critics are often marginalized people themselves."
- Du: "If a movie's only saving grace is its diversity, then we should be demanding higher quality stories, not accepting the breadcrumbs we get."
- Du: "It shows us that letting a conglomerate as big as Disney set the standards for diversity and receive praise for making the bare minimum effort is dangerous—we willingly give up our power as individuals, and as a result, become vulnerable to manipulation, to control, to propaganda."
- Huang (Asian-American): "...no single group of people exists as a monolith, so no single portrayal is complex enough to tackle the breadth of their reality. ... But how can one depiction actually help normalize the diversity of experience within an entire population? Representation cannot be deemed 'good' or 'bad' purely through the criterion of accuracy, since what is 'accurate' varies from one individual to the next."
- Huang: "We must engage critically with everything that we choose to consume."
- Huang: "While inclusive art is necessary for both consumers and artists, representation is not the end-all, be-all solution to social inequality. There is no such thing as perfect representation. And as bleak as this outlook may be, I believe that accepting that all representation is, to some extent, 'bad,' or at the very least, not good enough, will allow for more productive attempts to mobilize toward an artistic future that is truly inclusive."
- These authors also take issue with what appears to be representation that ignores real-life plights. (Virtue signaling, anyone?)
- Chris Gore: "I spend all day with myself. I don't want a story about me." That way you can safely experience something you wouldn't normally experience.
- Gore: "I think they should see themselves in the protagonist." But, he adds, people confuse that that person should look like you.
- Gore: "People are so narcissistic [these days] that they see films as video games." They can design a character that look almost exactly like you.
- Gore: He says representation is good where possible. "But if you are only capable of identifying with a character that looks mostly like you, I would say you're a narcissist. And you would benefit from identifying with characters who don't look like you."
- Gore: He uses "Godzilla's Revenge" as an example. As a kid, he connected with Ichiro as a fellow kid despite him being Japanese. He also experienced a bit of Japanese culture. He says fiction gives the audience a chance to see the world through someone else's eyes.

- Gore: It's good to have diversity, but storytellers need to get the audience to identify with the characters even if they don't look like them. He cites Ripley as an example, who wasn't his age or gender when he saw those films. He connected in one way because she had a cat and he did, too.
- Gore: (Healthy) Narcissism must be balanced with self-awareness and humility. That requires relating to people *in person*.
- Second Chance: Power Rangers has always been diverse, but never in a "tokenism" way. Tommy is canonically Native American, which arguably makes him the most prominent such superhero.
- Second Chance: This film highlights teamwork and diversity better than the show (he argues). They learn to trust each other and see how their problems overlap.
- Second Chance: It's only when the Rangers voice their love for each other that these robots that aren't all dinosaurs, that are from different periods, and are piloted by vastly different people combine into the most powerful being on the planet: a human. "And they save the day...together."

Sources:

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