

Love, Death + Lazy Writing:

The newest season of Netflix's LOVE DEATH + ROBOTS

Reviewed **by Róisín O'Shea**: short, badly written, badly animated with undeveloped characters – except for one episode, a mysterious exception



LOVE DEATH + ROBOTS is an animated series of short pieces from five to twenty minutes in length, each fashioned by a different artist.

This all sounds like a great way to circumvent the Netflix insistence on eight hour-long episodes per season, whether the story fits it or not.

It also seems like a chance to dip into animation, to get an across-the-board sampling of the exciting things happening in the field.

It's not.

The writers seem to think the shortness of a piece justifies shortcuts.

Two-dimensional clichés stand in for considered writing: shorthand gestures intended to fast-track emotion without the need to actually be expressive.

A sarcastic comment tells us “this is the funny guy, root for him”, without having built the character in question.

A chattering noise means “there's a monster, be afraid!”— though nobody has bothered to work on creating the tension of horror.

This is a problem across the series. And while it has learned some lessons since Volume 1 (newer episodes are not quite so saturated with boobs), it still falls at the same hurdles.

Some of the stories are driven by interesting ideas: a speaking planet; an alien hive-mind; a civilisation's views of humanity centuries after our apocalypse. But a good idea quickly becomes a gimmick if not well executed.

Take ‘Night of the Mini Dead’: a quirky zombie tale told in miniature, complete with high-pitched voices.

The first three minutes are genuinely amusing (I'm particularly partial to the mini-pope opening semiautomatic fire on the horde from his tiny popemobile) – but the joke quickly gets old.

The episode is only seven minutes long, but boy does it drag once the initial laughs wear off. Most episodes follow this pattern – starting strong and lagging fast, unable to keep up momentum.

Often episodes don't even have real endings – they just sort of finish,



leaving viewers bewildered and disappointed.

And the writing isn't the only disappointment. Most of the animation styles are uninspiring, tending towards either the video game CGI we've seen a thousand times before, or a Pixar knock-off that doesn't even feature the redemption of being unbearably cute.

Animation is a very exciting field right now, and this series lets it down.

There is one exception: ‘Jibaro’. What a piece! Finally, here someone is taking full advantage of the creative opportunity afforded, and stretching it to its limits.

The animation is compelling – at first so realistic it almost looks like a film from life, it moves and plays with sumptuous light and texture.

Paired with the ultra-real visuals, the abstract narrative sings. The piece is devoid of dialogue and bulging with mystery and chaos. It's mysterious because it feels that way, not because some panpipe music playing over a landscape told us it was.

The plot embraces intense drama, violence, and tragedy. It is inventive, atmospheric, and powerful.

But I had to sit through two hours of nonsense to get to it.

Looking for something better in this genre? Try ‘The House’, an animated film made up of several eerie short pieces, or ‘Ruben Brandt, Collector’, a thrilling and playful feature-length animation. **L**