

***Drum roll, please...***

***Are you drum rolling?...***

*Okay, I trust you.*

A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES



# STRANGER THINGS

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Season 2. Yes.

There's something to be said about the cinematography and how the components of the mise-en-scene work in tandem to achieve the most incredible on-screen effect. It holds a special place in my heart— with inspirations from Spielberg, Stephen King, and notable film/series/novel references such as:

- The Goonies
- Gremlins
- Ghostbusters
- Aliens
- The Exorcist
- The Terminator
- Risky Business
- Close Encounters of the Third Kind
- E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial
- The Shining
- IT, s.k.
- Jurassic Park
- Karate Kid
- Mad Max
- Mr. Mom
- Poltergeist
- Red Dawn
- Dragon's Lair

I am blown away. Of course, every season of Stranger Things has the writers carefully weaving crazy references into the plot so only the nerdiest of the bunch can spot from a mile away, but season two? Well, it has the greatest ratio of originality and references in my opinion thus far.

*It truly boils down to:*

1. Easter Eggs
2. Cinematography and Editing
3. Mise-En-Scene + Directing
4. Nostalgia and Heart of Family
5. Story\* + allegorical significances

## **Basic Overview**

### **Easter Eggs**

While rewatching this season, one Easter egg I absolutely love is the mention that Bob Newby grew up in Maine and was visited nightly by a clown in his dreams, whom he called Mr. Baldo. This is the first obvious hit, but what truly seals the deal is what he recounts next: after a long time and tired of the abuse, Bob finally confronted the figure, yelling at Mr. Baldo to go away—a moment of courage that caused the fear to fade. Who else do we know that hates the absence of fear, actively feeds off of it, originates in Maine, is a terrifying clown, and is described as being (almost bald)? Why, none other than Pennywise the Dancing Clown from Stephen King's *IT*! It's a beautifully subtle, yet completely undeniable, nod to the horror master's work.

### **Cinematography/Music**

The cinematography by Shawn Levy and his crew is incredibly seamless, showcasing a purity in the shots that is particularly noteworthy given the season's lower budget. This season, much like the first, feels like a collaboration of some of the greatest filmmaking minds, working closely to craft a truly masterful and emotional core for the series with a low but sufficient budget and the biggest heart. What sets this particular season apart is its meticulous attention to detail, immersive world-building, plot complexity, and incredibly *stunning* visuals and colour palette. The team has perfectly captured the essence of the '80s era of movies, making the final product feel like a preserved and cherished art form. I will never get over it. Watching this season evokes a powerful sense of nostalgia, transporting the viewer to a time and place both unfamiliar and deeply personal, and for me, mirroring the feeling of watching the show for the very first time as a kid. This season phenomenally captures the formation of life-long friendships and relationships, while simultaneously re-centering *love beats fear* as the core emotional theme.

### **Mise-en-Scène**

More accurately described as a masterful mise-en-scène, the creators have successfully melted together the trickiest components of filmmaking. The Costumes & Makeup perfectly capture the time period and seamlessly blend in with the surroundings, creating a wholly immersive world. The performances are by far unmatched (though I know season five will be crazy!), perfectly complementing the fantastic music by Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein, and the incredibly well-structured story itself. The set design, the low intensity lighting, deepening the field of focus, costumes, hair,

performance, everything, and what ultimately makes all of these components in Season Two so strong is the sense that the final drafted concept was fully realized by this point, allowing the creators to deliberately throw in as many clues, references, and layered details as necessary to tell their little-big story. There is a clear reason why the Duffer Brothers themselves said to re-watch *Stranger Things* Season Two—it speaks in whispers if we dare listen.

### **Nostalgia and Heart of Family**

This season is marinated in heart, loss, and love, evoking a most profound emotional experience that overwhelms me every time I watch it. With dynamics like Mike and Will, Joyce and Will, Joyce and Bob, Nancy and Jonathan, Bob and Will (and I could go on), there is such life in these characters that hasn't felt replicated on-screen before, stemming from their individuality to their dynamics. The appeal goes beyond the primary nostalgia for those who grew up in the '80s; it generates a potent second-hand nostalgia; a kind of yearning for the innocence and distinct culture of a different time that is beyond us. This show expertly captures the formation of life-long friendships and relationships, while simultaneously re-centering family as the core emotional theme. The introduction of so many diverse and essential new dynamics happens here, making it equally as important as the establishing of Season One. It is the moment the creators were truly aware they'd be getting more seasons, and they used that knowledge to lay the essential, complex foundation for the entire mythology and the emotional arcs that follow. Now is just a matter of watching how they'll end based on how they've been set up.

### **Conclusion:**

Many iconic plotlines, jokes, scenes, friendships, relationships take sail this season, The beauty, good and the bad, The allegorical significance within the story is incredibly written that you can't help but feel exactly how they intended you to feel about the characters. The main takeaway has always been that people are not so easily defined, and it truly stands out, amplified, in this beautiful network of families that come together to fight evil creatures, a necromancer, and a shadow from a darker, parallel universe all while trying to save their youth in this second season.