Sci-Fi Epic 'Project Hail Mary' Blasts Off:

A SPOILER-FREE REVIEW

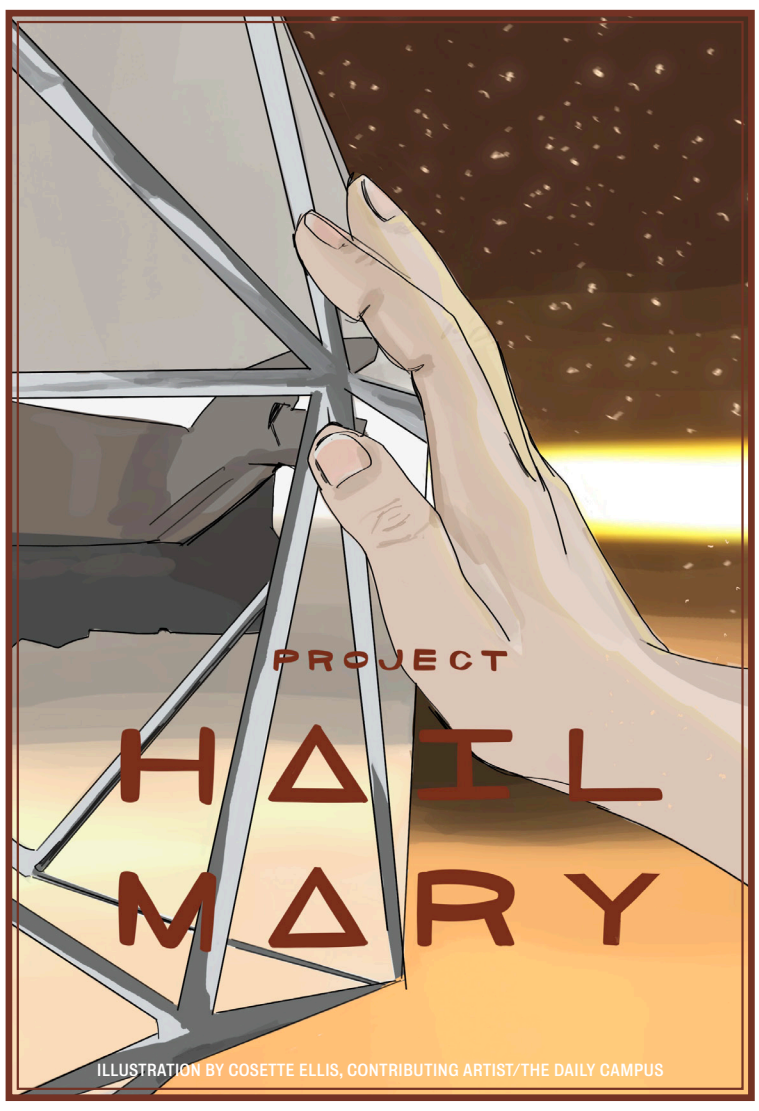


ILLUSTRATION BY COSETTE ELLIS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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An apocalyptic suicide mission set in deep space may seem like the start of an action film. Most movies in this genre feature some oversized military buffs and evil aliens with a macho main character who gets the girl by the end. While these things aren't necessarily bad, it's been done before.

"Project Hail Mary" is not like most movies.

Released on March 20 and based on acclaimed science fiction writer Andy Weir's novel of the same name, "Project Hail Mary" dives into the complexities of survival, friendship and what it means to be human. According to Box Office Mojo, the highly-anticipated film grossed $80 million on opening weekend and has since secured a spot as the third most successful movie of 2026, behind "Avatar: Fire and Ash" and "Hoppers."

Directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller (of "The LEGO Movie" fame) and starring Ryan Gosling as main character Ryland Grace, "Project Hail Mary" had some massive shoes to fill. Weir's original novel is considered by many to be one of the best modern science fiction novels out there, and adapting a book with that much love behind it is no small feat.

This review of "Project Hail Mary" will not contain spoilers for the book or movie. All information discussed is information that has already been disclosed by the movie's trailer. However, I highly recommend reading the book before watching the trailer — the movie is incredible without reading the book, but there's nothing quite like a blind read of "Project Hail Mary."

The movie and book tell the story of Ryland Grace, a man who wakes up on a spaceship with no memory of who he is or where he's found himself. Even worse, he can't remember why he's even in space to begin with, but it doesn't take long for him to realize that humanity is in danger.

To begin, Ryan Gosling is the world's most perfect casting of Grace. Gosling is able to perfectly capture Grace's joking, charismatic and somewhat dorky energy coupled with his scientific genius, and he's a joy to watch on screen.

Gosling also pairs very well with puppeteer James Ortiz, who plays the beloved alien Rocky. In a movie about humanity's desperation and a last-ditch attempt to save everything anyone has ever loved, Rocky and Grace provide plenty of comic relief to keep the movie from becoming too much of a tragedy. Gosling and Ortiz do an excellent job at portraying the pair's iconic bond across space and time, making this duo the best part of the film.

The plot, just like in the book, is also amazing. Weir's original novel is hard science fiction at its finest, and readers are taken through every step of Grace's scientific discoveries, which includes discussion of some intense physics.

It would be easy for Lord and Miller to gloss over the science in the movie in favor of spectacle and storytelling, but the iconic duo doesn't take the easy way out. "Project Hail Mary" still mainly takes place in a laboratory as Grace does his best to navigate humanity out of crisis. Nothing is dumbed down for the viewers, but it isn't difficult to follow Grace's trains of thought either.

Another standout feature of this film was Sandra Hüller as Eva Stratt, the woman tasked with saving humanity. She's the primary decision maker and director of Earth's efforts, and Hüller plays her incredibly well.

One of my few gripes with the movie was Stratt's screentime, or lack thereof — we spend much more time with Stratt in the book than we do in the movie, and I wish Hüller had just a few extra minutes to shine. Stratt is a morally complex character who is constantly forced to make the choice between her own humanity and the survival of Earth, and it would have been nice to see a little bit more of this side.

However, the film makes up for it by adding a specific scene involving a very specific Harry Styles song. It's a tearjerker, ladies and gentlemen.

For those who aren't worried about character work or comedy, rest assured that "Project Hail Mary" succeeds in one of the most important characteristics of all great movies: it looks beautiful.

Miller and Lord famously used no green or blue screens while filming, which sets it apart from every Marvel movie ever made. While the movie relied heavily on VFX, every aspect of the movie was real and tangible — Rocky was a real moving puppet assisted with some post-production animation and the set of the Hail Mary spaceship was a real construction.

All of this extra effort from the "Project Hail Mary" team was entirely worth it. Everything from the sets and lighting to the score and cinematography was masterfully done. You could watch the movie on mute and still have a great time.

Finally, the most important piece of the film: does the emotion hold up? The original "Project Hail Mary" book is a deeply tragic while also incredibly funny space adventure that raises all sorts of questions and answers about what it means to be human and what it means to be loved. After watching, I'm happy to share that the movie smashes all expectations.

"Project Hail Mary" could have been made on a lower budget with worse effects and it still would have been iconic. Miller, Lord, Gosling, Ortiz, Hüller and the rest of the movie's team hit every mark when it comes to capital M Moments in this film and I'm sure it will stand the test of time year after year.

It's not often a movie comes out that makes an attempt to define what it means to be human. It's even rarer for a movie to get it right. "Project Hail Mary" sticks the landing every time.

Rating: 5/5

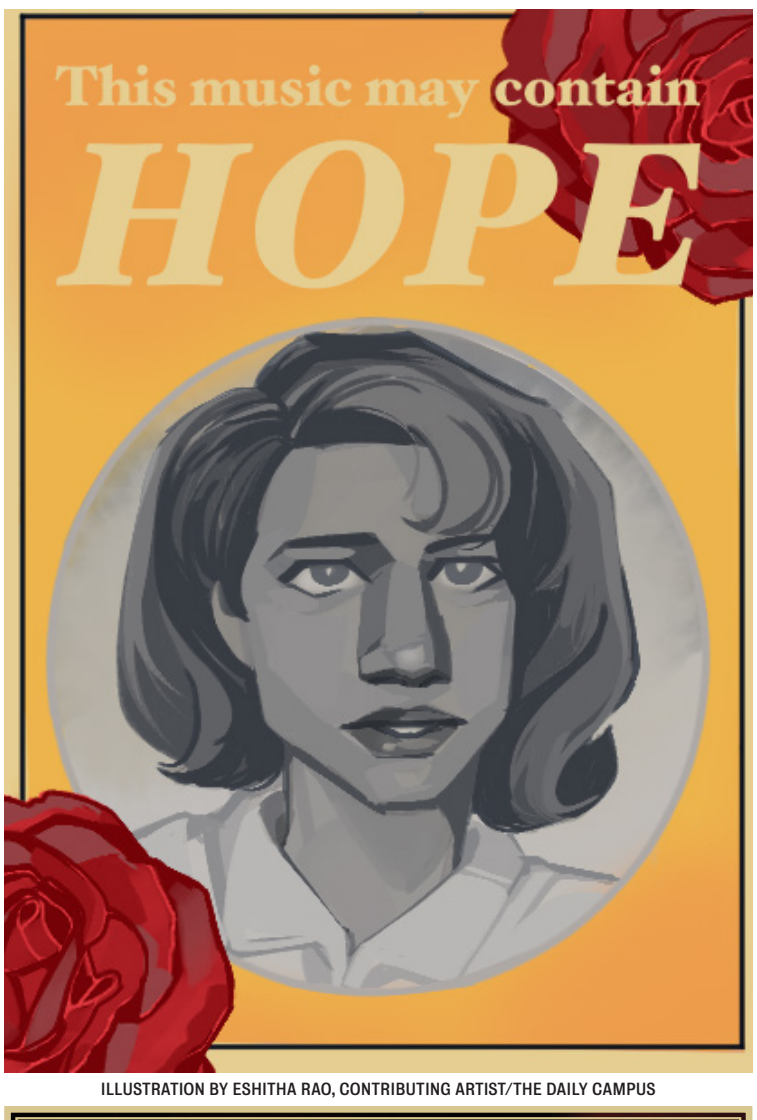


ILLUSTRATION BY ESHITHA RAO, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Does RAYE'S 'This Music May Contain Hope' hold true?

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British singer and songwriter RAYE released her new album titled "This Music May Contain Hope" on Friday, March 27. Before listening to the album, I wondered whether it would be truly cheerful or not. After listening, I determined that it's indeed optimistic — but not always in obvious ways.

The album begins with "Intro: Girl Under the Grey Cloud," a monologue with violin music. In the monologue, RAYE describes the story of a woman running to a hotel during a rainstorm, who feels a gaping hole. While listening to the monologue, I began to suspect the album wouldn't be as upbeat as the title suggested.

The second song, "I Will Overcome," changed my assumption. The song shifts the mood from desperation to elation. It begins with classical music and distant background voices. The music later changes to pop with heavenly vocals that are full of determination. Throughout the song, RAYE declares that she'll never give up, presenting a feeling of bravery and perseverance within her listeners.

"Beware... The South London Lover Boy." is an interesting tune that has a swift tempo and bold vocals. The tune is about being cautious of the South London lover boy, a guy who consistently seduces women. RAYE tells listeners to stay safe and remain prepared, which I interpreted as an advocation of sexual assault awareness and the ability of women to defend themselves.

"The WhatsApp Shakespeare" doesn't contribute to joy. However, it's a compelling allusion to "Romeo and Juliet," which is constantly referenced throughout the song.

"Winter Woman," however, has some uplifting elements. Containing a mixture of pop and rap, the tune is mostly about crying in private. However, at one point it discusses praying for better days and not giving up even when you're feeling down.

"Click Clack Symphony" is one of my favorite songs on the album. It features Hans Zimmer, a film score artist, and it's full of swift tempos and energetic orchestral music that make the song motivating. The song has its own music video, where in the beginning, RAYE is alone in her house, feeling isolated from everyone. Eventually, her friends free her from that isolation, and they dance together in the street. Towards the end of the video, RAYE grabs a music note and flies around England. I interpreted that as happiness since RAYE is now able to go wherever she wants.

The next two songs continue the motivation provided by "Click Clack Symphony." Containing powerful vocals and uplifting piano music, "I Know You're Hurting" portrays RAYE recognizing someone's pain and supporting them by telling them that everything's going to be okay. "Life Boat" contains a similar message. Featuring spirited electronic music and distinct voices, the song tells listeners not to give up.

"I Hate the Way I Look Today," "Goodbye Henry." (feat. Al Green) and "Nightingale Lane" change the mood from motivation to anguish. They talk about breakups and loneliness.

"Skin & Bones" shifts the tone from feelings of heartbreak to groovy ones. The song's a little too swift to determine its main message. However, its mixture of rap and pop music makes it catchy.

"Where is My Husband!" is another one of my favorite tunes from the album. Even though she receives no luck searching for her ideal man, she continues to look for him, symbolizing grit and perseverance.

"Fields (feat. Grandad Michael)," "Joy (feat. Amma and Absolutely)" and "Happier Times Ahead" all portray a combination of bliss and misery.

Full of beautiful guitar music and elegant backup singers, "Fields" depicts RAYE writing a letter to her grandfather about how she feels lonely. "Joy" features swift tempos and enthusiastic melodies that last throughout the song. In the song, RAYE discusses that while she cries at night, she knows joy will come in the morning. And "Happier Times Ahead" portrays the story of a girl who is learning to overcome her pain and recognize that better times will come.

The final song, "Fin" adds nothing to hope. However, in it, RAYE acknowledges the people who contributed to her album's production, which I find unique since it symbolizes RAYE's passion for her album and the support she had for those who helped her compose it.

"This Music May Contain Hope" is an interesting masterpiece. While some of the songs contain sad themes like breakups, they also let listeners know that they're not alone in this world. Regardless, all the songs' messages were powerful, so powerful that they'll serve as an influence for my college journey.

Rating: 4.5/5


British singer and songwriter RAYE, wearing sunglasses and dressed all in black, poses against a red backdrop. Raye recently released a new album, titled "This Music May Contain Hope." Photo courtesy of @raye on Instagram.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @RAYE ON INSTAGRAM