

Amazon's 'Fallout' a scathing critique of military industrial complex

The series reveals where the toxic relationship between commerce, politics and the military will ultimately lead: Death and destruction.

By Lyla Miklos

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Ella Purnell in a scene from "Fallout."

(Photo Credit: Prime Video via The Associated Press)

Once again, the source material for a prestige television series is a post-apocalyptic themed video game.

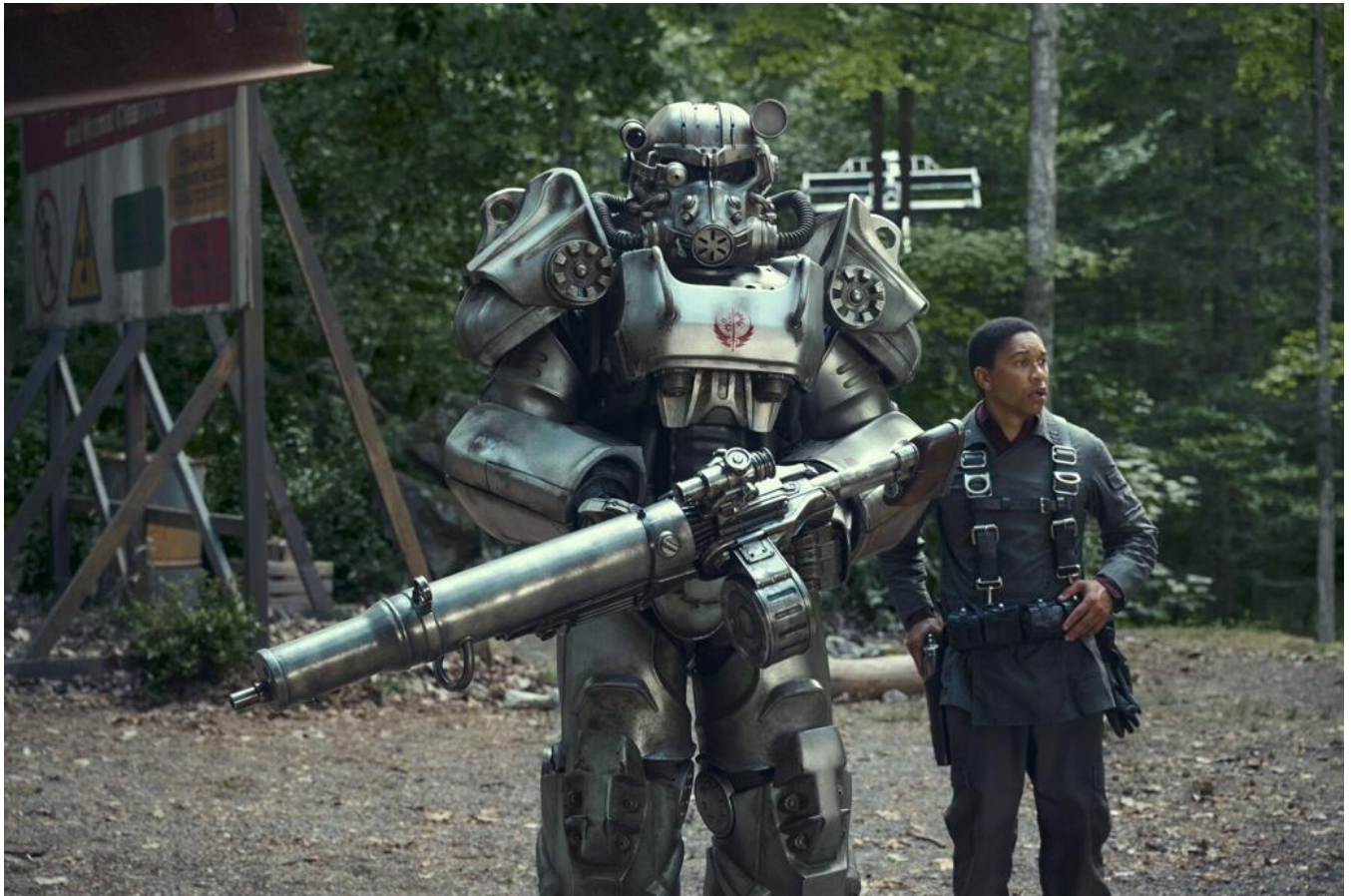
Last year it was HBO's "The Last of Us". This year it's Amazon Prime's ["Fallout"](#).

The original 1997 video game "Fallout" takes place after a nuclear war between the [United States and China](#).

In the 2024 television adaptation of "Fallout", we follow three protagonists whose journeys interconnect more than 200 years after the Great War of 2077: Vault dweller Lucy Maclean (Ella Purnell), Brotherhood of Steel squire Maximus (Aaron Moten) and ghoulish bounty hunter Cooper Howard (Walton Goggins).

The series has a colourful kitschy 1950's aesthetic in an alternative future where the creation of the first nuclear bomb goes in a decidedly different direction. "Fallout" is what I would imagine would happen if Marvel's animated series "What If...?" hooked up with Christopher Nolan's Academy Award winning film "Oppenheimer" and had a baby.

What I wasn't expecting was "Fallout's" final thesis statement to be a scathing critique of the military industrial complex. I'm still processing the gut punch of its season finale. I won't spoil, but will provide some context.



Aaron Moten in a scene from “Fallout.” The three lead characters navigate the aftermath of a nuclear apocalypse.

(Photo Credit: Prime Video via The Associated Press)

The 34th President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, is credited with coining the term “the military industrial complex”. Warning against it in his 1961 televised [farewell address to the nation](#). Sixty-three years later and the U.S. has the highest military spending worldwide. In 2023, it was over \$900 billion (U.S.). Canada ranked 16th, spending over [\\$27 billion \(U.S.\)](#).

Ike's original term later evolved into the Military Industrial Congressional Complex as the relationship between capitalism, government and war have now become an “iron triangle”.

I was grimly reminded of this while listening to a commentator discuss on CBC Radio why Republican politicians are fighting U.S. President Biden's attempts to provide more military aid to Ukraine. He argued their actions were blocking their citizens from working in arms manufacturing and giving their state economies a boost.

I had a flashback to when I was a guest on a political talk show on Cable 14 many years ago where one of my fellow panelists glibly said we just needed another war to get us out of our then economic recession.

Many believe that the Second World War is what ended the Great Depression. That claim has led to what is known as the wartime prosperity myth. Military spending does

inflate a nation's gross domestic product and military enlistment reduces unemployment, but America also lived through a shortage of basic goods from sugar, metal, meat, gasoline and housing [during the Second World War](#).

“Fallout” reveals where the toxic relationship between commerce, politics and the military will ultimately lead: Death and destruction. The three leads navigate through the aftermath of a nuclear apocalypse. As of January 2023, there were over 12,500 nuclear warheads worldwide. 90% of them belong to the [U.S. and Russia](#).

When “Fallout” Series Co-Creator Graham Wagner appeared on TheGamer's YouTube Channel he assured viewers that the video game's “Peak 90s Adbusters anti-corporate energy” would stay intact. He went on to say that “part of the appeal was the absurdity” of them getting to “tell a story about a world that bet big on mega-corporations and it collapsed.” Putting it on Amazon [“is too delicious for words.”](#)

“Fallout's” ultimate message echoes climate activist Greta Thunberg's words at the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit: “You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words . . . all you can talk about is money and fairytales of [eternal economic growth](#).”

“Fallout” lays bare the horror of humanity's willingness to sell its soul in the name of profit by turning war into a commodity. Much like any great work of science fiction this isn't a story about us in the future; this is a story about us now.

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