

THE PULL LIST:

‘CLAYFACE’ LOOKS TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE SUPERHERO MOVIE

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Just before summer arrives, DC and Warner Bros. Pictures have finally released their first teaser trailer for the upcoming “Clayface” movie, to be released on Oct. 23 later this year. The film will be an unprecedented genre leap as the comic juggernaut jumps into a horror thriller for the very first time, but based on the teaser alone, it looks to be a strong effort.

Hello and welcome back to The Pull List, a weekly column detailing the news and new releases in the world of DC Comics. In the final edition of this academic year, we’ll be diving into my thoughts on “Clayface,” along with some summer releases to keep an eye out on.

To get things started, my personal pull for this week includes “Zatanna #1” by Jamal Campbell. Campbell was given a chance to bring the mistress of magic into the limelight last year during a limited six-issue run. Now, almost a year after its conclusion, Campbell is back in the ring.

Zatanna Zatara, in my opinion, has the chance to become a DC powerhouse if given the right moment to shine. As DC’s resident magic expert and an occasional Justice League member, she’s a well-established part of the universe and yet somehow hasn’t made it too far into the public consciousness.

Zatanna’s stories typically involve a lot of magic, and she’s often associated with New Orleans or Las Vegas, either literally or just in aesthetic, such as in “Zatanna: Bring Down the House.” If you’re interested in her character, I’d check out that series and Campbell’s earlier Zatanna run. Just be prepared to read some backwards text, as that’s how she prefers to cast her spells. It sounds annoying, but I got used to it.

As for other things I can get used to, “Clayface” is the exact direction I’ve been hoping DC takes in the new DC Universe. After years of Marvel projects being on top of the world, I think it’s a safe bet to make that people are tired of the classic superhero movie. And while I loved last year’s “Superman,” at the end of the day, it’s not too outside the norm of what to expect in these kinds of movies.

“Clayface” breaks the mold, pun fully intended.

For those unfamiliar with the story of Clayface, self-obsessed actor Basil Karlo one day goes insane and later develops the ability to shapeshift, much like he’s made of clay.

Like many other DC characters, “Clayface” is a title, not a name, and it’s been held by many throughout the years. The character of Matt Hagen has also become an incredibly popular version of Clayface, and he’s essentially absorbed Basil’s backstory as an obsessive actor gone wrong.

Just like fellow villains Harley Quinn and Mr. Freeze, we mainly owe this interpretation of Clayface to “Batman: The Animated Series,” which ran from 1992 to 1995. The two-part special “Feat of Clay” gives Matt his obsessive actor persona and emphasizes the idea that his clay body is a curse, not a boon, and is the driving force of his villainy. This complicates Matt’s character and helps the audience build sympathy, but his erratic nature ensures he’s still a Batman villain at his core.

The original script of the upcoming “Clayface” movie was written by Mike Flanagan, who confirmed in an interview that his script was inspired by “Feat of Clay,” and DC’s teaser further proves this.

In the movie, Matt Hagen will be played by Tom Rhys Harries and his love interest, Dr. Caitlin Bates, will be played by Naomi Ackie.

“Clayface” is exactly the kind of film the world needs to combat superhero fatigue. The success of the 2019 “Joker” movie proved that there’s a market for supervillain-focused films, and “Clayface” looks to be the next step.

On top of that, much of Hagen’s appeal in “Feat of Clay” comes from his frustration at having been turned into a monster. By leaning into body horror, DC seems to be making a movie that stays true to Matt’s characterization and appeal beyond being just another face for Batman to punch.

I predict “Clayface” to be a major success, and if this holds true, I hope DC takes the hint on what kind of content they should make going forward. Cookie-cutter movies like “Superman” still have their place, but a little bit of genre fluidity might help bring some lesser-known or newer characters to light.

Speaking of what’s new, DC has already announced some of their upcoming titles to be released early this summer, so let’s run down a quick list of the new series to look out for.

First up is “Barbara Gordon: Breakout,” which releases its first issue on May 13. Honestly, I’m not too excited about this one. I love Babs as a character, but it’s tough for me to enjoy how she’s written — I think the DC writers wouldn’t agree with my takes on her. I could see this going either way.

One week later, you’ll want to get to the comic store fast because issue one of “Absolute Green Arrow” finally drops May 20. If the genre-bending of “Clayface” sounded interesting, this is the book for you, as the new Green Arrow looks to be a serial killer targeting billionaires in this slasher-inspired line. We don’t know who this Green Arrow is quite yet, but it definitely isn’t Oliver Queen, who met his fate at the wrong end of Absolute Green Arrow’s fury.

“Superman: Father of Tomorrow” drops May 27 and tells an Elseworlds story about Jor-El assuming the role of Superman, not his son Kal-El (also known as Clark Kent). This is sort of a nothing comic to me. Part of Superman’s appeal is that he learned about humanity and kindness by growing up with an elderly couple in Kansas — what is Jor-El supposed to bring to the table?

On June 3 we’ll get a visit from “The Deadman,” a little-known superhero with the real name Boston Brand. Boston is an aerialist who was murdered and now haunts our world, using his ghostly powers and acrobatic abilities to fight crime. I don’t know much about Deadman, but this series looks weird enough to be fun.

And finally, “Absolute Catwoman” arrives on June 10. I love the way Selina Kyle has been portrayed in “Absolute Batman” so far, so many only hope is they continue that characterization. It’s an even-more-badass Selina, what’s not to like?



Cover design for “Zatanna #1” by Jamal Campbell. The issue was first published Feb. 19, 2025.

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Clayface, a notorious Batman villain is receiving his own movie under the same name, set to release Oct. 23, 2026. The movie marks the first time DC Studios has strayed into the body horror genre.

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