Once Upon A Time in Arconia: OMG OMITB is back!

Only Murders in the Building effectively challenges contemporary TV comedy's typical reliance on high-concept plotting and star power over genuine humour. At first glance, the show—featuring Steve Martin, Martin Short, and Selena Gomez as a trio of true-crime podcasters—might seem like a formulaic exercise in blending media satire with intricate mysteries and emotional themes. The presence of high-profile guest stars like Meryl Streep and Tina Fey could further suggest that the show's success is due to prioritizing star appeal over substantive comedic content. It could, but doesn't. I laughed out loud several times, although I will admit that I did binge the last few episodes from season three right before the premiere.

The fourth season of *Only Murders in the Building* exemplifies this success by shifting its focus to Hollywood. This new setting could have risked repeating the pitfalls of the previous Broadway-themed season, which was criticized for its insular focus and excessive reliance on theatrical references. However, the show reinvents itself by integrating Hollywood elements into the familiar environment of the Arconia apartment complex. This approach maintains the show's core appeal while exploring new narrative territories.



The transition to Hollywood is not just a change of scenery but a clever thematic evolution. In the first episode of the fourth season, the show incorporates visual references to Sergio Leone's 1968 Western, *Once Upon a Time in the West*. This homage is particularly notable in how it reflects the plot's exploration of Hollywood's allure and its impact on the characters. The episode mirrors Leone's use of widescreen cinematography and meticulous framing to enhance dramatic tension, effectively translating Leone's epic Western scale into the urban landscape of the Arconia.



This visual reference is more than an aesthetic choice; it serves a thematic purpose. The directorial choice to include sweeping, cinematic shots aligns with Leone's style, emphasizing the grandeur of the landscape to evoke a sense of mythic scale. In *Only Murders*, this technique underscores the characters' journey into Hollywood, providing a stark contrast to their usual cozy New York setting. This cinematic approach highlights the clash between the old-world charm of the Arconia and the glitzy, exploitative nature of Hollywood, deepening the narrative's engagement with themes of authenticity versus spectacle.



However, to fully appreciate the show’s evolution, it’s crucial to understand its roots. Three seasons in, the *Only Murders* universe is so populated and its plot so labyrinthine that providing a brief précis is nearly impossible. In season one, three neighbors and true-crime enthusiasts—washed-up TV actor Charles (an uptight and egotistically frustrated Martin), washed-up theater director Oliver (Short, delivering a flamboyantly sweaty performance), and millennial Mabel (an utterly deadpan Gomez, in one of TV’s most compellingly strange performances)—started a podcast about a suspicious death in their fancy apartment complex. Subsequent seasons have expanded this universe, with season two focusing on the murder of the building’s board president Bunny, and season three centering on Ben Glenroy (Paul Rudd), the obnoxious star of Oliver’s Broadway flop *Death Rattle*. I got it wrong each season.

Which brings us to season four. At the end of season three, Sazz Pataki (Jane Lynch), the phlegmatic stunt double of TV detective Charles, was shot through an apartment window. Before the trio can start their investigation, Hollywood beckons.



The trip is a comic feast, particularly during the meeting with unhinged producer Bev Melon (Molly Shannon), who describes her desperate quest for the trio's life rights with a memorable line: *When I see a hot piece of adaptable IP getting circled by a bunch of horny rival studios, I go in hard and I always finish first*. This dialogue, both contemporary and comedic, is complemented by vintage slapstick from Martin, as Charles attempts to negotiate a fee while struggling with a piece of paper across a supersized conference table. Martin Short holding his legs? Hilarious.



The season also introduces new characters, including Zach Galifianakis as Oliver, Eugene Levy as Charles, and Eva Longoria (a comic revelation) as very straight-faced Mabel. The plot's unfolding involves a lot—most of

which would spoil if you haven’t seen it—but it quickly becomes apparent that solving Sazz’s murder requires sifting through the myriad loose ends left by the podcast and the TV show itself. All those notes on the table at Sazz’s apartment, yes, the one from Mulholland Drive must mean something? Right? or more red herrings? Something about twins? And then the new Hollywood directors are twins.

This clever, long-game plotting makes *Only Murders* genuinely gripping as a murder mystery and will drive me crazy with conspiracy theories for the next while. It’s a testament to how well-crafted storytelling and character development can elevate a show beyond its genre constraints.

Source: https://www.idonthaveacoolname.com/once-upon-a-time-in-arconia-omg-omitb-is-back/