

PROCRASTINATIONS EIGHT

SILVER SCREEN

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The more observant of you will have noticed that this is my first entry to the world of fanzines since April, in which I pubbed my seventh ish. Unfortunately, life has somewhat gotten the better of me at this point! This also means I have been paying less attention to my mailing list than I should have been, so if you expected to receive a paper copy of Procrastinations #7 and it never appeared, please get in touch with me and I'll add your name to a list of people who need to be sent a copy. Alternatively, you can always read it on eFanzines (the link is above, and #7 is finally up!).

As is traditional for Procrastinations, the Eastercon issue usually mentions at least one of my panels, and this issue is no exception. I appear on a panel about Sherlock Holmes at Odyssey 2010 and need to do some rereading of the books beforehand, but for now, I've jotted some thoughts down here and hope you enjoy them.

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The Summer Blockbuster.

By John Coxon

Warning: The following article contains spoilers for *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*; *Iron Man* and *Star Trek*.

When I published Procrastinations #3, I lead with an article about the just-released film, *Transformers*. This is what I had to say about that film:

“It is a good film, and it has prompted a revival of the franchise, and for both of these things, it deserves praise and applause. By chance, both my half-brother and I acclaimed it as the best film of the year before we realised the other had done so, which must say something (perhaps that the Coxon family are too easily lead by shiny things blowing up).”

I then promised my readers that I would go and see the second and third films in the planned trilogy and report back on the experience. Unfortunately, the experience of the second film was not something I feel like reporting on in too much depth. However, a promise is a promise, so here goes: The plot was almost non-existent, the twin robots were so racist I found it difficult to believe that the studio hadn't stepped in, the jokes were surreal and random, the dominatrix bot was completely out of the blue and the action scenes, whilst completely mind-blowing, were also far too long and needed editing. It may not surprise the reader to find that I have not purchased the film on DVD.

As such, I thought I'd report on the film by including it as part of a more general article on the summer blockbuster, reminding myself of other awesome films containing explosions, and cheering myself up. Handily, given that I type this in the morning of the day on which I want to publish the issue, I happen to have a review of a film lurking on my hard drive which provides an excellent place to start *[at least, I thought I did, but as it turns out, I made it up. Wahey! – Ed]*.

Given that *Transformers* was released in summer 2007, let's start with summer 2008 and the release of *Iron Man*. It was the first film released by the newly-minted Marvel Studios and also marks the first film in the Avengers franchise. It was released in May, followed by the next film in the franchise, *The Incredible Hulk*, in June. Unfortunately, there has not been another film in the franchise since, but *Iron Man 2* is scheduled for summer 2010 (and looks **amazing!**).



Iron Man was a decent film that combined the same comedy and the same action that I loved from *Transformers* into a story about Tony Stark. He wears an alloy suit with missiles and repulsor technology in it, before using this suit to fly around, effecting damage on the bad guys whilst trying to protect the good guy. He lives on Tracy Island (well, no, not really, but did you see that house?!) and has an awesome sarcastic English computer to run things in conjunction with his assistant, Pepper Potts.

I liked *Iron Man* a lot and the light-hearted, action-packed tone it set for the Avengers series made it feel like a comic book, but there were glimpses of Stark's vulnerabilities underneath that and the beginning sequence is brilliant. I also loved Rhodes, and laughed at the reference to War Machine in the first film. Unfortunately, for reasons I do not quite understand, they are replacing Terrence Howard, the original actor, with Don Cheadle. Although I completely love Cheadle, having seen him in a few really good films, I think that Howard's portrayal of Rhodes was really good and I'll be sad to see someone else take the role.

Another thing I loved about *Iron Man* was the bit at the end of the credits, starring Nick Fury being awesome and being played by Samuel L. Jackson. Given that the Ultimate Nick Fury is fairly clearly modelled upon S.L.J., this came as no great surprise, but it was awesome to see it on the cinema screen, hidden away at the end of the film! The trailer for *Iron Man 2* shows that Nick Fury appears in that film, also, which is one of a plethora of reasons I am excited about the sequel – if you enjoyed the first film, the sequel’s trailers are up on the Apple website.

Now, it’s time to zap forward in time by a year to summer 2009 (the year of the disappointing *Transformers* sequel) to consider another film that came out that year. *Star Trek* (I refuse to number it XI) was an instant box-office success and managed, somehow, to make it acceptable, in the wider world, to go and see a *Star Trek* film and then tell your friends about it afterwards. Hell, even my mother went to see it, and she’s about as far from Trekkie as it’s possible to get!



The premise of the film is very simple – causality is completely and utterly fucked up by a marauding Romulan vessel, and then J.J. Abrams romps in a universe that is dissimilar enough to the original that he can, pretty much, get away with anything. However, the homages to the original series are all present and correct, and the casting is amazing – every member of the Enterprise feels right, from Chekov to Scotty.

Then we have the action sequences. The part where Kirk and Sulu are falling to Earth and

Chekov runs through the Enterprise to get to the transporter bay to save them is epic, and very tense, and then the part where Kirk and Spock land on Nero's ship is brilliant for the interaction between Spock and Kirk on Spock Prime's ship (and also, it must be said, for the brilliant scene that made its way into the gag reel on the DVD!).

I could say a lot of things about *Star Trek*, but in conclusion, let me just say this. The real achievement of *Star Trek* wasn't that it was a brilliant film, or that it made *Star Trek* cool, or that it will almost certainly spawn a series of awesome sequels. The real achievement was that **it made me forget about how terrible the sequel to *Transformers* was.**

Sherlock Holmes.

By John Coxon

Warning: the following article contains spoilers.

Sherlock Holmes was released over what is generally referred to as 'the holiday period', at the end of the 2009 (neatly not qualifying it for the summer blockbuster article, which is handy!), and I've been asked to appear on a panel called 'Sherlock Holmes – Did You Like the Movie?' at Eastercon this year. The blurb for this panel is, at the time of writing, "Does it bear any relationship to the books? Does this matter? Were the writers targeting it at slash fans? Does it have a Steampunk element?", the answers to which are: "yes"; "I would say so"; "probably not"; and "arguably, yes". However, in the interests of having a more interesting debate and a longer article, I will flesh these ideas out, both on the panel and in this piece.

I went into the movie as a fan of the books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but I will confess right now that my knowledge of Holmes' televisual escapades really only extends as far as a sketch by Mitchell and Webb and a clip I saw of one of the episodes, once. Thus, I have no idea of Holmes beyond what I've read in the books,

and I went into the movie with no preconceptions of what a visual Holmes and Watson should be like.

Let me just announce at this point that the film is brilliant. I love the characterisation of Holmes and Watson, I love the interplay between the two, I love the storyline and how the film is structured, I love the intrigue and I love the suspense.

But the thing I really love about this film, and the part of the film which I believe makes it a good representation of Conan Doyle's books, is the way that the plot twists and turns, and you're never quite sure what has just happened until Holmes chooses to reveal it to you. I know that this is inherent in Sherlock Holmes, but the way in which the film is constructed means that you're not sure in which direction Guy Ritchie is going to take the film right up until the very end, which makes it feel very much like the Sherlock Holmes about whom I enjoyed reading.



Just now, I mentioned the interplay between Holmes and Watson was very good, and something the panel asks is whether the movie was aimed at slash fans. I want to talk about how the film relates to the books in this regard.

In the books, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson are two men who share a home together until Dr. Watson is married; and then live together again after the unfortunate death of his wife. For seventeen years they work together on cases, spending almost every day together. In *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, in a story

called *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs*, Watson is shot by the protagonist of the piece. This is how events unfold:

“You’re not hurt, Watson? For God’s sake, say that you are not hurt!”

It was worth a wound – it was worth many wounds – to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

“It’s nothing, Holmes. It’s a mere scratch.” He had ripped up my trousers with a pocket knife.

“You are right,” he cried with an immense sigh of relief. “It is quite superficial.” His face set like flint as he glared at our prisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. “By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive.”

So was the film written with slash fans in mind? Almost certainly not, I would say. It recreates the relationship between Holmes and Watson well, certainly – but they are extremely close in the books, too. Having said that, I’ve heard rumours from friends that Jude Law and Robert Downey Jr. were deliberately inserting some sexual tension into the relationship between the two (although I can find no source online to back this up) and I’m sure that slash fans will have a whale of a time anyway!

The last question in the blurb for the film asks whether the film is steampunk? Well, as someone who is not really a steampunk aficionado, I confess that I am unsure I can really fully answer this question, and so I turned to a dictionary. The dictionary I turned to didn’t have ‘steampunk’ in it, and so I turned to the Oxford English

Dictionary instead (bless the University of Leicester for giving me access!).

steampunk (n): science fiction which has a historical setting (esp. based on industrialized, nineteenth-century society) and characteristically features steam-powered, mechanized machinery rather than electronic technology.



Based on that definition, I think this film is plausibly steampunk. For a start, the adventures of Sherlock Holmes penned by Conan Doyle are set in the late nineteenth century, and the film contains several devices and gadgets which could be argued to be the mechanized machinery the OED mentions.

However, is it science fiction? This is the one last part of the definition of which I am unsure. I think you could probably argue it either way. Personally, I don't see

the film as being science fiction, but then again, I suspect that the other panellists will disagree. At least, I hope they will!

Oh, and forgive me for the unrelated photograph of a steampunk Dalek, but I just couldn't help but include it. I hope you can all find it in your hearts to forgive me! It was entered in the Great Crystal Cyberdrome Exhibition at Orbital 2008 by Alex Holden.

Letter of Comment.

Those of you who got to read Procrastinations #7 will doubtless remember that it contained a reworded version of an article I'd written on *And Another Thing* for a certain society's magazine, along with a couple of plugs for the society in question. As it turns out, that society didn't like being plugged, and the editor of that society's magazine decided to request I remove Procrastinations #7 from eFanzines.com for a month. Being my usual forgetful self, I totally forgot to ask Bill to put it back up once the month had elapsed. Add that to the fact that I also never got around to posting out copies of the fanzine to my fans abroad, and you have a whole bag of fail just waiting to happen.

Therefore, the reason the loc column looks pretty empty this time around is because I'm fairly sure almost nobody got to download and read it. It is, at the time of writing, still unavailable on eFanzines, but as soon as I send a copy of this issue to Bill, that will be rectified and people should be able to read it again. I will also aim to include Procrastinations #7 with the copies of Procrastinations #8 I send to my correspondents abroad (if you're a British member of my mailing list you almost certainly received a copy at Eastercon LX last year!).

Lloyd Penney writes:

I have Procrastinations 7 with me... that whooshing sound is usually a deadline going past at warp speed, but I don't think there's a deadline here? Maybe it's the sound of a deadline not being there. Similar deep comments follow.

Read and enjoyed the issues of The Voice...not to worry about using your own articles as reprints. Old article, but new audience.

Comments on a new Hitchhikers novel not written by Douglas Adams? Looks like you like it, hope it sells.

I have been in Penguin's Canadian offices in Toronto. Years ago, I was there for a job interview. Looked big and roomy, and I remember some nervousness, because you never knew who you'd meet in a publisher's office. Never got the job, and Penguin Canada has since moved, no doubt to even more luxurious facilities. Or possibly not – the economy, when it tanks like it's tanking now, hits the arts first and hits it the heaviest.

Eric Mayer reminds me that Toronto's zombie walk organizer recently joined the local SF con committee. Ad Astra now has a serious zombie factor (not the stink), and may be a little more steampunkish in the future. So that's what the FAAn Awards from Corflu Silver looked like. They handed them out, but I never got to see what they looked like.

Lazlar Lyricon II sounds like it was the ultimate in fannish piss-ups. "You mean there was a convention downstairs? Didn't know." Maybe it was a cross-dressers' convention? Or Tobes and Squaddie both like ventilated clothes. That segues right into Eroticon VI, and the clothes-optional convention. Did anyone at that convention take the sub-title seriously to any extent? Ah, yes, some people were literal, weren't they? Wearing inflatable animals or stuff long things down your pants explains a lot of James Bacon's behaviour at LAcon IV.

Good luck with Lazlar Lyricon III, make sure all the attendees keep their clothes on or don't do anything questionable with inflatables, and see you next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Thanks, Lloyd, for writing me this time around – it means that this part of the issue isn't completely devoid of content!

Unfortunately, Lazlar Lyricon III still has no hotel (despite 'being close' at the last Eastercon, the hotel liaison hasn't yet found us anywhere suitable). I am hoping this will eventually be rectified, but at the moment I'm hesitant to say anything on the matter. We shall hopefully have details at some point. I really wish I had attended (or been old enough to attend) Lazlar Lyricon II, as you're right, it does sound like an extremely good party, but that's life, isn't it? I have had the good fortune to go to several very awesome events, so I'm not feeling too hard-done-by.

My FAAn award is very shiny and is still waiting for me to get around to putting a nail in the wall for it, but is currently residing on top of my chest of drawers. Makes it a pain when I want something that's behind it, but it's worth it to be able to display it prominently!

At the time of writing Procrastinations #7, I had not read And Another Thing by Eoin Colfer. I now have, and it's not a terrible book. Although, as a Hitchhiker purist, I confess that I don't think I'll reread it. I'd encourage people to make their own mind up about that sort of thing though, and maybe I'll expand on that viewpoint in some future fanzine that I pen. I may, at some point, do a concept zine that talks exclusively about the Guide and my love for it, since it's such a rich source of fandom.

Thank you for your comments about The Voice, I had such a blast editing that at LX and it was so much fun to work on that with everybody and have people think it was awesome. It's definitely something I might be interested in working on again in the future, but I'm going to be laying low at Odyssey and just doing my panels and hanging out in the bar!

I think the deadline that Procrastinations #7 missed may have been distribution rather than writing or publishing... Letting people see the finished product a year after it was ready for people to read it may seem a little late to some people!

John.

Closing Remarks.

Last issue, in the closing passage, I told readers that I would have written Procrastinations #8 by Constitution, which was held in Cambridge in August last year. I lied, massively! Unfortunately, having had a job over summer and a lot of uni work to do, my fannish activities have been put on the backburner a little more than I would like. Unfortunately, though, that's all part of life, so there's not much I can really do. However, it is still a bit wrong that I haven't released an issue of Procrastinations since last Easter – I usually aim for a semiannual publication!

I should apologise now that this issue is the shortest fanzine I've done since Procrastinations #1, four years ago! I'm writing it for Corflu, since I feel that I should have something to give to people who are at a fanzine convention. However, I only realised that Corflu was actually before the end of the Lent term a couple of days ago and so I'm having to get things into gear earlier than I had anticipated, hence the short-but-sweet issue in your hands.

Hopefully this issue will find an audience at Corflu, and it will be distributed again over Easter at Odyssey 2010. I'm also going to a convention called Continuum in Leicester over the summer – however, that's a gaming convention, so I am unsure whether I am going to write a fanzine or not. Opinions on a postcard, please!

I already have a theme and a few article ideas for my next issue of Procrastinations, though, so hopefully the next one shouldn't take too long to come out (where 'not too long' is roughly equal to 'less than a year'). Until next time, folks!

This fanzine is unstapled due to the demands of the third year of a master's degree in Physics with Astrophysics!

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