

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

PUBLISHER
LEE HARRIS

MANAGING EDITOR
ALASDAIR STUART

COMMISSIONING EDITOR
ELLEN J ALLEN

REVIEWS EDITOR
PHIL LUNT

ISSUE 126 · 23RD AUG 2010

CONTENTS:

FICTION: *The Nightmare of You and Death in the Room* by Adam Christopher

REVIEW: *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*
Changes
Starhyke

FEATURE: *On Being Scully and SyFy's New Series, Haven* by Ro Smith



Hub Magazine is Sponsored by Abaddon Books

EDITORIAL:

by **alasdair stuart**

Stage Two Complete

Last year, *Avatar* took more money than could comfortably be carried by *Godzilla* and exploded into popular consciousness whether you liked it or not. Current plans say Cameron is looking at filming two more films in the series back to back, will be publishing a novel of his original screenplay and is seriously looking at opening up the *Avatar* universe to other scriptwriters.

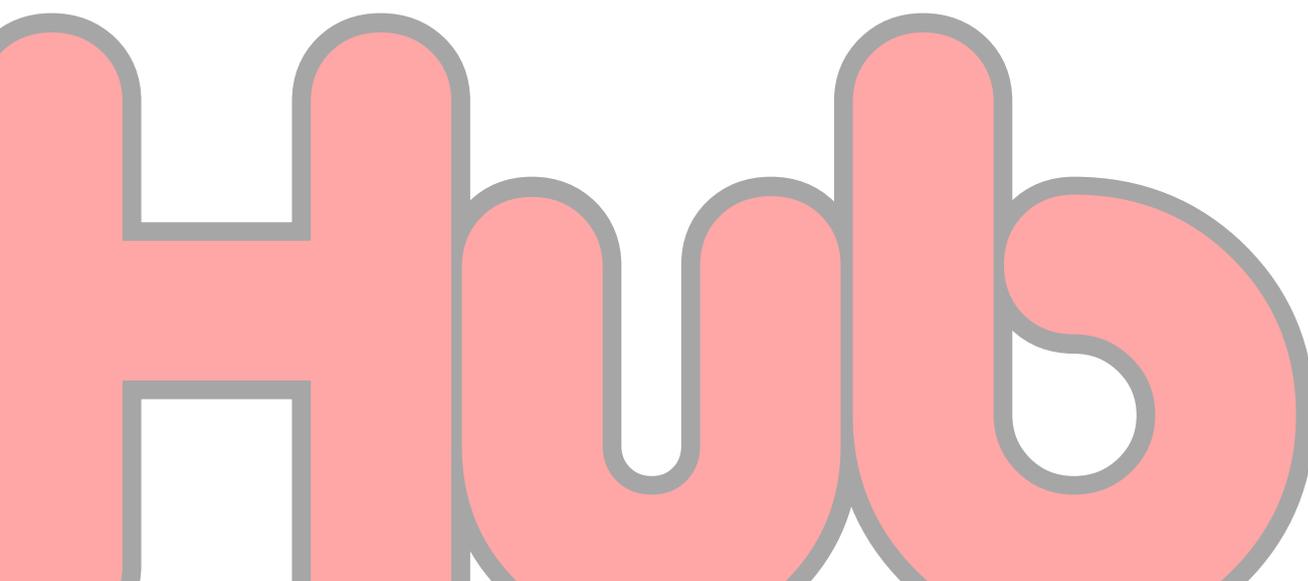
There will now be a moment of silence as those that want to yell 'Good! The script was rubbish!'

Love it or hate, Na'vi or Smurf, the bottom line is *Avatar* was hugely successful and has the most successful opening of any original science fiction movie ever. Which is understandable because, as I say, *Avatar* took more money than *Godzilla*.

So what came second? *Inception*, Christopher Nolan's cerebral heist story has been hugely critically acclaimed and commercially successful. Not on the same level as *Avatar* but certainly enough to be noticed and that, combined with the rise of the Na'vi, suggests something very interesting is quietly happening in modern cinema; original science fiction is becoming commercially viable.

Both *Avatar* (Yes I know, *Dances with Wolves*, *Smurfs* etc) and *Inception* are original ideas and both of them have been embraced and both of them have made money. Both have been commercial successes and as a result the door has opened wide for original SF to take it's place in modern western cinema. Don't get me wrong, I liked the first *Transformers* a lot, giggled all the way through *The A Team* and am really

looking forward to the fourth *Resident Evil* movie. I like commercial, I embrace the trashy. But now, we've got a real shot at something new and original that didn't come from a toy line first being a real success and changing the pop culture landscape forever as a result. So it turns out? Those Pandoran smurfs may end up being everyone's heroes...





Hub Magazine is Sponsored by Abaddon Books

FICTION

The Nightmare of You and Death in the Room

by adam christopher

It is dark, and cold, but I must listen again.

"Mandy? Mandy, it's me. We're... I don't know what."

Your voice, cracked and far away, echoing in that stone room.

"I love you Mandy. They're... they're... my God, they're all around us. What? Oh shit, Mandy, I love you. No, vicar, don't...!"

A shout, then several more; a scream, then many. Then something else, loud, enough to pop the mic in your phone. Sitting at the kitchen table, lit only by my phone's display, I hold my breath and wait for the next, crushing words.

"To replay the message," she says, "press one. To save, press two." How can she sound so damn calm? I snap the phone off, dropping into a darkness near absolute. After a minute the night glow registers through the window. In the silence I sit and cry.

Terrorists. At least three groups claimed responsibility. Al-Qaeda, of course. Some splinter from the Real IRA. One or two that nobody had heard of. The news had a field day, not quite able to believe their luck. Every village was suddenly on high alert, suddenly a prime target. Experts wheeled out to talk geopolitics and shifting paradigms. All terrible, terrible bullshit.

They killed you.

They killed many. They came after dark, running through the village, rounding people up, driving them to the centre, to the church. You were working late, dammit. Of course I didn't know. I had no fucking clue that the world had just ended ten miles away in the quiet green hills.

They'd rigged the church. They must have. Half the village inside, surrounded, escape-proof. Then, fire. Death. Half the village plus you, my husband.

You called from the church to say goodbye. A lot of people did. This was our 9/11. Your call, just one of many.

I can't resist and play it again, listening to you die as the church burns.

"Mandy?"

I open my eyes. The message has ended, but the phone says I'm still connected. The voicemail instructions haven't played.

"Don't cry, Mandy."

I hold the phone. It's you. You're speaking to me. You survived, somehow, magically.

"I'm all right. Everything is all right."

My heart thuds. You're alive and I tell you you're alive, and you laugh.

"I'm nearly here."

Movement now, outside. Shapes through the back door glass. I don't notice the patio lights fail to come on.

"Mandy?"

"Yes?" Wide-eyed I hardly breathe.

"Can I come in?"

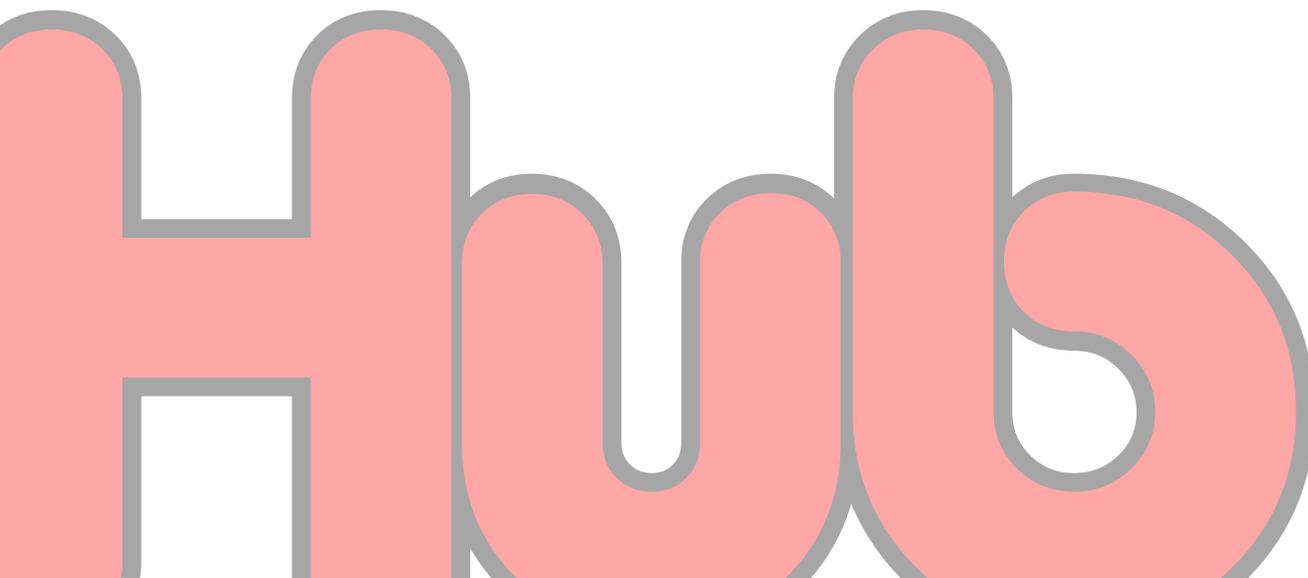
"Danny, of course."

I open the door, never thinking that the question need never be asked, that my husband would need permission to enter his own home, that your voicemail had spoken. That you'd been dead for days, that they weren't terrorists.

White face, red eyes, your breath the stink of tombs. But I don't care. Holding me, lowering your cold mouth to my neck. I don't ask how you survived, I don't stop to remember the morning light I will never see again.

You are home, and I am yours.

fin



Scott Pilgrim Vs The World

reviewed by richard whittaker



Starring: Michael Cera, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Jason Schwartzman, Ellen Wong, Brie Larson, Kieran Culkin, Anna Kendrick, Alison Pill

Directed by Edgar Wright.

Written by Edgar Wright and Mike Bacall.

Cert. 12A, 112 mins.

Dear film historians, it's time to confine *Annie Hall* to the archives. *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World* may be the definitive contemporary statement on modern love.

When Woody Allen created his 1977 breakthrough art-house romcom, it was a success because it hit the cultural touchstones that its target neo-bohemian audience understood. It was a movie for the twenty-something intellectuals that the world wrote off, as Allen's character summed it up, as "left-wing, communist, Jewish, homosexual pornographers." *Scott Pilgrim* is the movie for modern twenty-somethings that grew up on noisy pop, lowered expectations, and *The Legend of Zelda*.

Scott Pilgrim (Cera) is generously describable as a loser. The 22-year-old, no-visible-means-of-support bassist with going-nowhere Toronto noiseniks Sex Bob-Omb is sort-of-dating high school girl Knives Chau (Wong) while still nursing a grudge against his ex-turned-rock-star Envy Adams (Larson). That's when the impossibly gorgeous indie chick Ramona Flowers (Winstead) drops into his life. When he starts sort-of dating her, he discovers that she has some baggage of her own: The League of Evil Exes, the seven people she dated prior to meeting Scott, who have joined together to stop her dating ever again.

Their plan? Challenge Scott to fight each of them in turn. And did anyone mention that the loser explodes into gold coins?

Yes, this is the film where George-Michael Bluth from *Arrested Development* and Max Fischer from *Rushmore* (Schwartzman) have one of the most intense sword fights of the decade and the easiest way to see if you need to go to the bathroom is to check your pee bar. Call it video game logic. Does anyone ever question why a plumber is battling killer plants for the hand of princess? Or who decided that blue hedgehogs can run fast? Or whatever the hell it is that Ms. Pac Man is doing? Of course not. From the story to the editing to the effects, the common language of hand-me-down consoles permeates every frame of this film, just like it did the comic from which it is adapted. *Scott Pilgrim* works on its own 8-Bit 4-colour continuity, where life is a series of boss battles and side quests. For example, it's not just a metaphor that Ramona has a way to get into Scott's head - there's a sub-space path that runs through there that she uses as a short cut in her job as a rollerblading delivery girl for Amazon. That's the world of *Scott Pilgrim*, where no-one (except for Oscar-nominee Kendrick as his hyper-critical sister Stacey) bats an eyelid at real-life power-ups or skateboarders breaking the speed of sound or black clouds that suddenly become ninjas. They're as real as competing in a battle of the band for a recording contract, and less troubling than a post-gig party where everyone dated everyone else.

This has been a dream project for Wright for five years. He and Bacall (best known as PF Zimmerman in *Inglourious Basterds*- reviewed in *Hub* iss.99) have boiled down Brian Lee O'Malley's riproaring 1,200 page, graphic novel sextology into a breathless two hours. If it doesn't redefine how films can be constructed, it at bare minimum proves that this school of hyper-kinetic cinema is really possible for a mainstream movie. For decades, this kind of fast-cut approach was the sole purview of music videos, experimentalism, and

low-budget Japanese popgasms that wanna be *Tokyo Gore Police* but instead use the dash-dash-dash approach in part to cover up the seams on their rubber monster suits. Wright experimented with it on *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*, but was clearly limited by budgetary constraints. This time around, it feels like every frame is drenched in nuance and buried cultural references that would be tiresome if it wasn't for the fact that there is a real story here.

There are three main reasons to watch this film multiple times. First, that it's such a boss-level extravaganza that you'll want to head back for another joy-blast. Second, that there's pretty much no way to pick up every manga, sci-fi and video game reference on the first run-through (think of it as like finishing a game level, then going back for the power-ups you missed.) Thirdly, there's a beating heart here. The battles with the evil exes are a metaphor for Scott developing the emotional tools to finally discard his extended adolescence – and if he needs to use a bonus life to complete the final boss battle, well, that's what extra lives are for.

Wright may be the best director around when it comes to chronicling the romantic endeavors of the video game generation. If Shaun of *Shaun of the Dead* was a bit of a knob-head, Scott Pilgrim is a dick, and Cera never flinches from the fact that Wright and Bacall left every second of his dickishness intact. Instead, he moves slightly beyond the nebbish discomfort of his earlier roles, much as Allen did when he stopped producing slightly intellectualized slapstick like *Bananas* or *Sleeper*. No sign that audiences need to worry about Cera heading into late-era Allen self-indulgence: Scott, as mentioned previously, is a dick. This is a grown man dating a high schooler, a no-hoper that shares a bed with his gay room-mate Wallace (the super-dry Culkin) not for any sexual reasons, but because he has the only mattress in their apartment. As Sex Bob-Omb drummer Kim Pine (Pill) drolly observes, "Scott, if your life had a face, I would punch it."

For all that dickosity, Wright and Bacall's script and Cera's goofy, oblivious man-child take on Scott mean that Scott is a dick you can't help liking, and his moments of dickishness make sense. It helps that the audience can buy into the fact that he'd be this much of a dick over Ramona Flowers. Between this, *Sky High*, *Grindhouse*, *Black Christmas* and *Final Destination 3*, Winstead is picking up quite the rep as a genre-friendly actress, but Ramona Flowers may be her defining role. Her ability to stare out of the screen, unflinching under her multi-colored bang-bob haircut, makes her a Marlene Dietrich for the post-SNES generation. When it comes to actors locking eyes with the audience, Wright has described himself as a "blink Nazi" and it absolutely pays dividends here. If the audience falls in love with Ramona instantly, they'll get why Scott is prepared to endanger himself for her so suddenly and recklessly. Does he seem too nerdish to get anyone that cool? Eh, who complained when Mickey Rooney got Judy Garland, or Jack Lemmon got Shirley McLaine? And have you ever seen Jimmy Cagney?

In simple terms, this is a beautiful, eclectic, energetic nerdgasm of a movie with more heart and soul than a cut scene from *Shadow of the Colossus*. And if you get that reference, you need a ticket for this movie more than Mario needed a hammer on the kill screen.

Changes

reviewed by martin willoughby

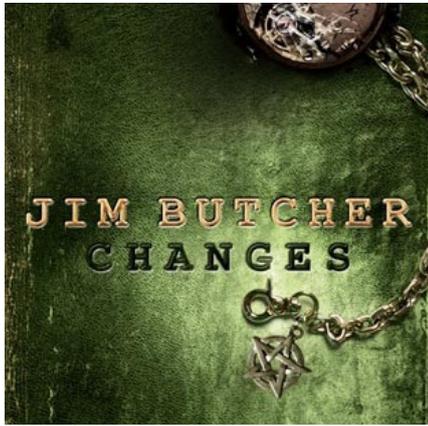
by **Jim Butcher**

Orbit

rrp **£12.99**

'I answered the phone, and Susan Rodriguez said, "They've taken our daughter."' So begins the latest novel in the Harry Dresden series, and a thumping good read it is too.

Jim Butcher writes novels that have more pace than a space shuttle on take-off, so it's probably just as well that he writes shortish chapters to give you some time to get your breath back. This time, he not only has the pace, but also a far darker story.



Many moons ago, the Red Court of vampires lost a war against the White Council of Wizards, but they're seeking revenge. The trouble is, the Red Court is fractious and Arianna, the kidnapper of Harry's daughter, wants to displace the Red King and rule the Court. Harry and his daughter are merely pawns in that desire. The fact that through Maggie, she can also take revenge for Harry killing her husband is a pleasant side dish as far as she is concerned.

It won't spoil anything to say that Harry wins and gets his daughter back alive. But some of the deals he makes along the way are haunting... and believable to any parent. His final act to save his daughter and beat the Court... well, if it doesn't disturb you then you

aren't human.

Through it all, Harry wisecracks his way past pain, obstacles and fury but loses everything he owns. His home is destroyed by fire along with most of his magical possessions. His car, a Volkswagen Beetle is crushed like a... beetle. The only things he has left are his wits, his sense of humour, his friends and his trainee. Harry's in trouble and he knows it.

The usual suspects are here as well: Molly, his *Padawan*, Mouse, his foo-dog, Karrin Murphy the cop and Bob the skull. Mouse gets a much bigger part in this tale of woe and makes me want him as my own dog even more. As he is a figment of another man's imagination I'll have to make do with a couple of guinea pigs.

Mouse continues to stop people killing each other, but this time takes on an enormous creature and defeats it. Molly faces up to her fear and nearly dies in the process, whilst Murph shows a skill with a sword that was hitherto unknown... not that she recalls much of it later. Bob the skull... continues being Bob the skull.

Two new characters are Susan and Martin, each of them half-vampires fighting a terrorist style campaign against the Red Court. Susan used to be Harry's girlfriend/lover/fiancé and is the mother of Maggie. Martin is too cool for his own good and isn't trusted, or liked, by Harry, something highlighted near the start of the novel.

'Martin plummeted from the ceiling and landed on a threadbare thrown rug covering the concrete floor. Nobody was there to catch him, which was awful. Just awful. I examined Susan quickly. She had no obvious wounds. She was breathing. She had a pulse. And that was pretty much the length and breadth of my medical knowledge. I checked Martin, too, but was disappointed. He was in the same condition as Susan.'

Martin proves to be both trustworthy and untrustworthy at the end, sacrificing anything and anyone to achieve his goal, and the twists and turns of his character are a sight to behold. Susan, too, makes sacrifices for her daughter's sake.

The final chapters involve all of them and a lot of blood. It reminds me of the scene near the end of Star Wars II, when the remaining Jedi are in an arena, surrounded by robots and about to die. Given the Star Wars references throughout the novel, this doesn't surprise me. At one point Harry says, *'I asked myself: What would Yoda do?'*

The heroes survive to fight another day, another set of bad guys and gals are dispatched to whatever lies beyond death and another novel ends. The tone of the book suggests that this may be the final Harry Dresden novel for a while, but I wouldn't bet against Harry making a return at some time in the future.

One final point of spookiness. I've mentioned Harry, Molly, Susan and Martin. What I haven't mentioned are Harry's elderly neighbours, the Willoughbys. My name is Martin Willoughby and my father was called Harry. My best friend is called Susan and her eldest daughter is called Molly. Has Jim Butcher been watching me?



starring Claudia Christian and Jeremy Bulloch

This has never been broadcast on TV in the UK, or anywhere else in the world as far as I can see and having watched four episodes I can see why: it's awful.

The show starts in the year 3034. The human race has managed to get rid of its emotions and has gone on the rampage throughout the galaxy, destroying anything and anyone who isn't human. One of the few remaining species are the Reptids and they have come up with a wheeze of a plan: go back in time to the 21st century and ramp up the human emotions to a level so high that they can never be a force in the galaxy.

It's not a bad premise for a comedy, but the only emotion on view in the show is lust.

Here's a selection of character names: Blowhard, Popyatopof, Yul Stryker. One of the opening scenes involves a man fondling a woman's breasts and it goes downhill from there. Add to this the fact that most of the female leads wear short skirts with huge slits up the sides and you get a picture of the show more clearly than sitting through it.

Does it have any redeeming features? Three.

Firstly, the visual effects are superb and some of the sight gags in those effects are quite funny. When the Nemesis first appears in orbit of 21st century Earth it runs into Hubble and knocks it out of orbit. There is also an alien invasion fleet of several hundred ships that approach Earth, but due to a miscalculation of size end up running into a communications satellite and being destroyed.

Secondly, there is the occasional surreal moment where you can see elements of humour, such as when the maintenance crew have their hands stuck in an electrical socket and the captain pulls a cord to switch the socket off. For the most part, though, what humour exists is based around sex, the female crew's desperate attempts to get laid by the first officer and the absent minded doctor's continual bedding of his nurse and his sexual overtures to the captain.

Thirdly, disc three didn't work so I was unable to watch the last two episodes and it means that I can get a refund from Amazon. I was therefore spared the episode set in a strip club. Disc four, which also didn't work, had a blooper reel which could easily be a rerun of all six episodes.

Jeremy Bulloch aside, the rest of the cast haven't broken much ground in acting and judging by this won't. Having said that, the man playing 'Bull Ox' (say it carefully and you may get the joke) may do well in the future but he had few lines and wasn't given any sexy scenes.

One final question: why did Claudia Christian agree to star in this? It can't be money, so I can only assume that she saw the idea and the first script and thought that it had potential, and it did. But it was screwed up by the writers and the director. The actors and the visual effects people deserved better than this.

If you want to know more about the show you can visit www.starhyke.com and even join in the 'fun' on the forums: **but don't buy it.**

I could wish for those two hours of my life back, but I consider it a worthwhile sacrifice so that readers of Hub don't have to suffer watching dross like this.

FEATURES

On Being Scully and SyFy's New Series, Haven

by ro smith

I often think about what *The X Files* did for us. Many factors undoubtedly contributed to the rapid resurgence of sci-fi and fantasy onto our screens, which started in the mid-90s and hasn't really gone away – not least the rapid improvements in special effects. However, I still believe the unique and compelling phenomenon that was *The X Files* had a lot to do with it. One thing I tend to forget about these days, though, is Scully, and what a revolution *she* was. SyFy's *Haven* reminded of me of this.

Here's the thing about Scully: as a female lover of science fiction, science, and logic, I didn't realise how good I had it with Scully, and we've rarely seen the like of her since. There are a lot of things *The X Files* did for us, but it's easy to forget what it did for women in science fiction, nor less, women in scientific careers. Not only was Scully a strong woman in a man's world; not only was she the voice of logic and reason over her impulsive and intuitive male companion; not only was she able to bring down bad guys single-handed, and do the FBI roll; not only was she undeniably sexy without having to wear impractical clothes; she was an equal to her male counter-part, not only within the FBI, but in having a lead role.

OK, no question, it was Mulder and Scully, rather than Scully and Mulder, but they were a team. Well do I remember how my school girl crush on David Duchovny was frustrated by having to cut Gillian Anderson out of all the photos I clipped from the Radio Times. They were everywhere, and they were together, whilst keeping their sexual tension unresolved. I hated it at the time, but I now recognise that it not only kept the show going, it maintained Scully's independence.

To maintain dynamism once a relationship is established on TV, it is often necessary to make the relationship unequal in some manner. All too often this is cashed out through gender stereotypes. The woman will be too needy, the man will be poor at expressing his feelings, the woman will want children whilst the man does not etc. etc. One thing the latest series of *Doctor Who* should be credited for is the far more interesting dynamic between Amy and Rory. Although Amy does fall into the frustratingly familiar tendency for female companions to lust after the Doctor, who remains aloof, this is balanced by Rory's position as the romantic, more emotionally needy and domestically inclined partner. But such examples are few and far between, and still concern only supporting characters.

Here's the thing: there are virtually no female leads in modern television. This is not to say there are no female role models, and ensemble casts have given us the odd excellent example. One of the many, many things that are to *Battlestar Galactica's* credit are its plentiful and varied strong female characters. President Roslin's inauguration still gives me a shiver to watch. That moment felt epoch defining, and Roslin is a character who remained interesting and strong throughout, even through her illness and relationship with Bill Adama. And yet... not that much has actually changed.

Our screens are full of a certain sort of drama of which I am particularly fond. It can possibly be traced back to shows like The Sci-Fi Channel's (SyFy's previous incarnation) short lived *John Doe*, in 2002, but rose to prominence in shows like *House, MD, The Mentalist, Lie to Me*, Life*, and even, I would say, *Dexter*. Police/medical/forensic procedurals or mysteries that distinguish themselves from the CSIs and NCISs of this world by focusing on a lead with almost inhuman powers of deduction and/or intuition (usually both). The lead is an odd-ball who keeps his loved ones distant and is frequently socially dysfunctional beyond the norm. It's all very Freudian. You might think *Dexter* is the extreme example of this, but I would actually argue that one of the more interesting things about *Dexter* is that he knows he is dysfunctional, and makes steps to remedy or at least hide this most of the time.

I love these shows, but as they've come to take up more and more of my viewing hours I've noticed something: these wise, quirky, charismatic leads are all men. 'So what?' you might think, 'These shows are also full of strong women, even women in positions of authority over these men.' Yes, they are; in fact, I quickly realised that this is another trope of the genre. Dr Lisa Cuddy, Special Agent Teresa Lisbon, Dr Gillian Foster, Lt Karen Davis, Lt Maria LaGuerta, Lt Jamie Avery – that's a lot of titles, education, and seniority going on. These are women in nominal authority, but usually with demonstrably little control over the men who fill the lead role. In some ways it's worse to see the nod to political correctness, because it is then so thoroughly undermined and used to bolster the power of the male lead.

Some are better than others; Cuddy is undoubtedly the worst. Before I pick her apart, let me stress that I love *House*; I think Lisa Edelstein is a terrific actor, and having a female hospital director is new and innovative. However, although it was borderline plausible in the first season, there is no longer any doubt that Cuddy's character and position are anything other than a fantasy. I'm not talking about the short skirts and low-cut tops; I'm talking about her complete lack of control over her staff and her own emotions. I'm not talking about the fact that she wears a thong; I'm talking about the fact that her staff know about this, and she permits House to undermine her authority making it the butt of elaborate pranks without disciplinary action. I'm not talking about the fact that she struggles to balance her career with having a family; I'm talking about the fact that she throws away her hard-won family life because she really, deep down, wants to submit to House. Women can and do run hospitals. This woman would not be one of them.

At the other end of the scale Davis and Avery are rounded characters in good standing in their professions who know where to tow the line on their respective male leads. They play second fiddle, rather than Scully, but they do it with dignity. Sadly, Karen Davis is replaced in the second season of *Life* with a male counter-part, and Jamie Avery went the way of the rest of *John Doe*: into the land of cancelled shows.

I would love to see a female equivalent in a show like this – an odd-ball, strong, quirky woman with almost super-human powers of deduction – but I fear we are reaching a glut for this genre. It's depressing to never see yourself reflected as a lead in anything but a romantic comedy 95% of the time. Scully was a powerful feminist icon of the 90s, and Roslin and Starbuck may have been our icons for the naughties, but going into the next decade, I want something more. I want a strong woman who isn't merely equal to the strong men around her; I want her to take the lead. This isn't because I want to dominate men, or think that women should dominate men; it's because 95% of the television I watch is full of men who take centre stage in a cast largely full of other men, and in which the token females have at best a sort of notional authority, from which the lead actor gains strength by undercutting. And it's just depressing, as a woman, to watch programs you love, and never see people of your own gender playing the role you most want to identify with.

I understand why it happens. It's endemic, and self-perpetuating. As a writer myself I often reflect with frustration on the fact that my stories tend to have many more men than women, and the men are almost universally in more prominent roles. I try to pull the story out of its gender rut, but by the time I realise it's there the damage is done, and although I *could* rewrite the characters to be exactly the same, but of different gender, I've developed an image of the character in my head, and it won't shift. The effect of all that male dominated TV is pervasive and subconscious.

And it's for this reason that I was filled with such relief when I saw the pilot to SyFy's new show, *Haven*. Other writers will talk about its basis on the Stephen King story, *The Colorado Kid*, and on its derivativeness from half a dozen other things that immediately spring to mind, *The X Files* being just the most obvious. I'll leave that to them. I want to talk about what it felt to finally see something that took what *The X Files* did for women as a foundation, and moved it to the next stage.

It is clearly entirely intentional. FBI agent investigates weird happenings in small town USA. If they weren't thinking X Files, they would have to have been mind-bogglingly blind. But here's the thing: it's not *The X Files* just done from Scully's point of view. For one thing, this is much more supernatural-police-procedural than an SF/horror. For another, the female FBI agent is the one who wants to believe, whilst her local, male, police counter-part is the sceptic.

Isn't that a step back towards the trope of women being more intuitive and less logical? Well, yes and no. First off, the specter of Scully looms so prominent in the X-Files-like premise that one could not easily forget her impact as a plausible, logical woman of science. Secondly, it isn't presented so much that Agent Parker is more intuitive as that she has been directly presented with highly convincing evidence that the supernatural is going on. This fact is not divorced from her skills as a detective, it is combined with them.

Moreover, the writers walk a clear, careful line with gender tropes from point dot. In the opening scene we have the male superior FBI agent drop in on Parker in the 'trying to keep the maverick in line' role. He finds what appears to be a paranormal romance on the coffee table. He notes it derisively, and she responds to the effect of 'Yeah, well, you should see what I read on planes'. The implication is that this is not all she reads, and that a little pap every now and then really isn't of any great significance. More importantly, she invites him to read the novel, and as he leaves *he takes it with him*. He has teased her, but it's a guilty pleasure he's not above sharing.

We also see a woman with the power to control the weather linked to her emotions. 'Oh how unoriginal and belittling' would be an easy thought. Not so, I say. Again, it's carefully balanced. We are initially presented with what seems to be a very plausible case of a man who cannot control his emotions, and to which the weather is linked. The resolution doesn't suggest that women are more emotional and less in control than men; it shrugs and says: 'Well, it could have gone either way.'

Haven is just starting out. It may well be another SyFy flash in the pan. Agent Parker isn't bad, but she's neither as charismatic, nor as spookily clever as House or Patrick Jane or Cal Lightman. It's a shame. I'd like to blame it on the writing, but she does get some good lines, especially in her first encounter with her future partner, where she comes out on top both in terms of professionalism and wit. But it's inconsistent. It would be easy to see this as a sign that young women just can't pull off the same kind of charisma and easy confidence as middle-aged men. I'll certainly grant that society often doesn't grant them the same kind of tolerance for such behavior. But Joss Whedon taught us a lot of things in the 90s too, and one of them should be that a young woman can absolutely carry a fast-paced, popular show with confidence and wit.

Of course, Joss is infamous for his penchant for super-powered adolescent girls. It used to annoy me that Buffy was held up as a feminist icon when all her physical strength lay in a supernatural power not available to real girls and women. However, I now realise that I, and many others, were entirely missing the point. Buffy's true symbolic power is as a charismatic, long-lasting, epoch-defining female lead – like Scully in a different context. Not quite the same – Buffy has an exemplary supporting cast that nears ensemble status. This is why seeing *Supernatural* as a response to Buffy is entirely misconceived. I love that show, but men and boys didn't need a supernatural horror show about smart-mouthed young men in the same way women needed Buffy. Such roles have always existed for men.

Joss wears his feminist agenda on his sleeve, in a way that might be regarded as tiresome. He brings it out in all his projects – Buffy, River, Echo; and to a lesser extent, Cordelia and Fred in *Angel* – strong, but super-powered young women in plot-central roles. So what? It's not always successful – Fred's status degenerates to a pedestalled idol in Season 5, and Cordelia's power is never really divorced from her sexuality – but he is at least trying. Such characters are few and far between, and I'm thankful to a man with the sensitivity, skill, and power to turn his efforts towards doing something about it. His single-mindedness has given more to women in science fiction in the naughties than virtually anybody else. He

didn't just give us River; he launched Summer Glau, and her utterly un-super-powered ability to perform the sort of stunts that took *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* to another level.

The writers of *Haven* are not Joss Whedon, and Agent Parker is no Buffy. But I say, give her time. I hope she gets time. I hope, at the least, she's the start of a change in the wind in the way that *John Doe* presaged a new genre, before it faded into obscurity. She's no Scully, either, but she's walking in her shoes. Let's see where she goes.



Hub Magazine is Sponsored by Abaddon Books