

# Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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## CONTENTS:

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**FICTION:** *All your needs and wishes* by Steven Ellis

**REVIEW:** *Rivers of London*  
*Sucker Punch*  
*Doctor Who: The Day of the Moon*

**FEATURE:** *Interview: Matt Frank* with Richard Whittaker



## EDITORIAL:

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**by alasdair stuart**

### Dresden's Friends

I've met Harry Dresden, after all, a surprising amount of people have. *The Dresden Files* books by Jim Butcher are a genuine phenomenon, following the adventures of Harry Dresden, consulting magician for hire. They're fun too, Butcher neatly balancing a complex supernatural underworld with a gleeful pulp sensibility. Or, to put it another way, there's an undead T-Rex as a vital part of one book's climax. If that makes you grin? You need these books.

The thing is though that Harry's clearly starting to permeate into popular culture. The idea of real world, with occasional monster has been at the heart of supernatural fiction for a while, but there've been some recent developments on TV that seem to suggest it's time has come for that particular medium. Pilot season this year is rife with this sort of thing with *Once Upon A Time* following a young woman who is drawn to a town that connects our world with the world of fairytale archetypes. Jennifer Morrison stars and Robert Carlyle is apparently playing Rumpelstiltskin.

Poe, meanwhile, sees a young Edgar Allen Poe recast as the world's first CSI, investigating dark crimes using odd methods and, let's hope, a Raven. I'm actually really up for this, especially if it becomes a little Holmesian along the way.

Then of course there's *17<sup>th</sup> Precinct*, which has the distinct air of a *Battlestar Galactica* reunion. Produced by Ron Moore and set in a world where magical rules govern the universe rather than scientific ones, it follows a group of detectives and forensics specialists as they investigate magical crime. James Callis and Jamie Bamber are front and centre, along with Patricia Helfer as the precinct pathologist who is, of course,

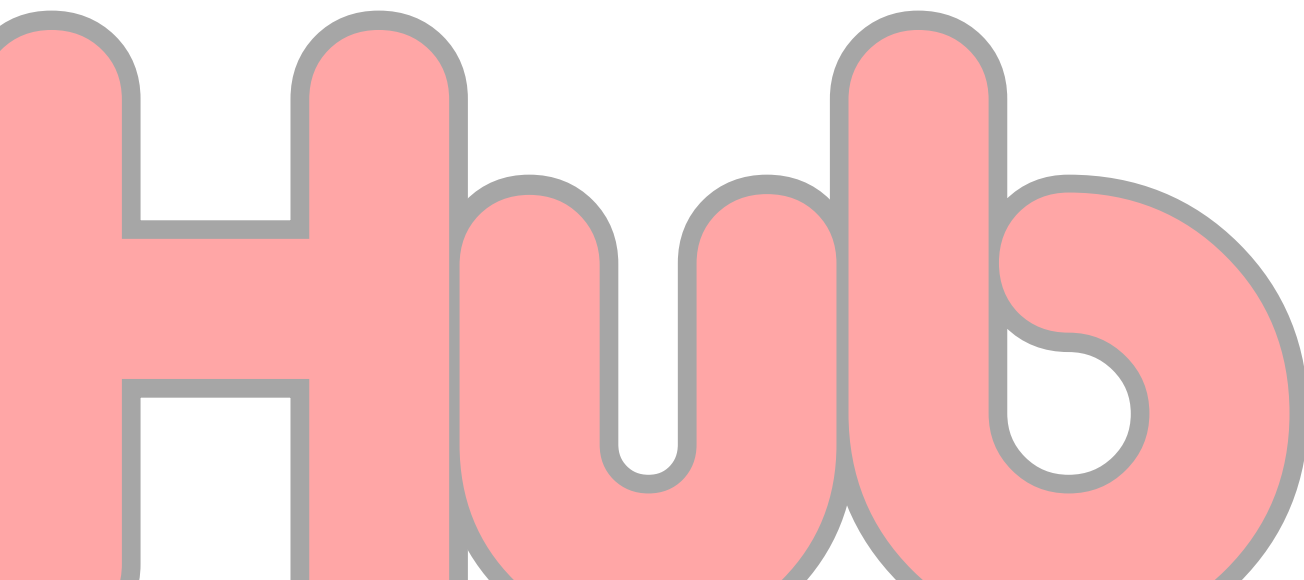
also a necromancer. Again this looks huge fun and hope it comes to fruition. *Grimm*, meanwhile, has literally the premise next door to *17<sup>th</sup> Precinct*, with a detective realising he's destined to protect humans from these very real, very hungry fairy tale creatures.

Four shows, all set in the 'Magic is real, just next door and hungry' type of world that Butcher excels at. It's interesting to see Hollywood come round to this idea, especially given that a *Dresden Files* TV show lasted exactly one season a couple of years ago. At least part of the reasoning for it I suspect is that it's the logical place to go after the 'Science crime!' shows of the last couple of years like *Fringe* and *Flashforward*. Mainly though, I suspect it comes down to the fact that these concepts are timeless, almost primal in their appeal. We want, on some level, we need to believe there's more than we see to the world and stories like this are the perfect chance to explore that. Plus, undead T-Rexes are cool. Just ask Harry.

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This week has seen the launch of "*Voices from the Past*", an ebook anthology of 28 short stories from some exciting authors all in aid of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. It can be picked up for as little as 99p with 100% of the proceeds going to the hospital. Authors include Alastair Reynolds, Bill Willingham, Jason Arnopp, Juliet E. McKenna, Kaaron Warren, Mur Lafferty, Paul Magrs and Paul Cornell plus many more including our very own Lee Harris (who has also co-edited the book with Scott Harrison) and Alasdair Stuart.

It's a brilliant read! For more info, and to nab yourself a copy, check out [www.HHbooks.org](http://www.HHbooks.org)



# FICTION

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## *All your needs and wishes*

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**by steven ellis**

The Universal Provider floats silently near the ceiling in the corner of the room. If its programming had contained anything similar to curiosity it might have wondered about the scene unfolding in the room below it. It might have wondered about the woman and the child and what was happening to them. The woman lies sprawled on the floor, her back against the edge of the bed. A half empty bottle sits near her side, pills scattered across the carpet and an empty glass rests against her thigh; she's been crying, half lidded eyes still glistening in the pale light. The woman holds the small, unmoving hand of the child tightly in her own. I'll never let go again, she thinks. She struggles to keep her eyes open, it's a difficult battle to stay awake and soon she will lose her fight.

The child lies flat and still on the bed. The Provider, had it been asked, would be able to provide a much more detailed account of the young body lying there, it could even tell you the age of the body down to the microsecond. The body was, after all, less than an hour old.

The woman's eyes flicker and then finally close. She drifts into a deep sleep and even as her heart slows and finally gives up, she keeps her last promise: she doesn't let go of the little girl's hand. The Provider floats quietly by the ceiling, oblivious to the part it just played in the death of its owner. The Provider had done exactly what was required of it. It had provided.

Its task completed, patiently, it awaits the next.

Mark is running late, the last batch of the day had glitched and he'd had to wait while the foreman reformatted the code. He's in a foul mood and as he walks in the door he doesn't notice just how quiet the house is.

He thinks a strong drink might help his mood.

"Skippy?? Whisky with Coke. Half and half. With ice please."

Mark hears the soft hum of the Provider as it comes down the stairs and across the hall, he's about to tell the wallscreen to tune into the evening news channel, when he notices how quiet it is. A deep, cold silence. Something's wrong. Mark feels a sudden sense of dread.

Skippy makes and gently places the requested drink on the lounge table, but Mark has already forgotten it. Mark is shouting for his wife, running up the stairs, starting to panic, knowing something is wrong. He stops at the open door of the bedroom. Cathy is on the floor. Mark takes a hesitant step towards her then he kneels and touches her arm. Her skin is cold and lifeless. Seeing the body on the bed stops him dead. Sally?? No, he thinks. No, it can't be. Mark sinks to floor, he will have no idea just how long he sat there staring at his wife and what appears to be his daughter before his brain kicks in and he calls for help.

Downstairs, Skippy the Provider waits. On the table the ice in Mark's drink begins to melt.

Mark looks out across the bay; the view is quite stunning, he knows it's the reason Sam bought the place. The sound of humming draws him back into the room and he turns to see the round shape of Sam's Provider rising from the table, leaving behind two steaming cups of coffee. Sunlight catches the metal casing of the Provider as it resumes its place near the wall.

"Thank you Manny" Sam says as he takes one of the cups.

"You are most welcome Sam." Replies the Provider.

Mark always used to wonder at the oddity of calling a Provider Manny and then giving it a sexy sounding, husky female voice but Sam would just laugh and say he was being too logical about the whole thing.

Sam looks up at Mark; his friend looks tired, drawn. Sam thinks he probably hasn't been eating. He wonders how he would cope in this situation. Badly probably, just like anyone else.

"Mark, I'm so, so sorry."

"It's not your fault, Sam, it's not anyone's fault. If I didn't see it, how the hell can I expect anyone else to notice what's wrong. Sometimes we just don't see, sometimes there just aren't any signs."

Mark stares down at the table, watching steam rise from the coffee cup; he doesn't think he can look Sam in the eye.

"We were OK. I thought Cathy was OK, I thought she was coming to terms. I mean I know you don't just forget, but it's been nearly two years, you learn to live. Don't you? I just never thought Cathy could do something like this."

Sam waits. Letting Mark speak, or not, in his own time.

"It was the other body that got me. Shit Sam. My wife's lying dead on the floor and all I can think, all I want to know, is how the hell did she get her hands on Sally's body."

"The Provider?" Asks Sam, looking at his own Provider hovering above them. "It built her?"

"Yeah," says Mark.

"They can do that?"

Mark nods. "They can do that." A thought suddenly hits him.

"Oh, hell. I remember we.... There was a science show on the wallscreen, about how they're being used to build replacement organs in hospitals, grow limbs back. It was a couple of weeks ago... Cathy was watching it. I remember this look in her eye. Damn. She'd been a little quiet since then. She must have got the idea from that."

"Jesus!" Says Sam, staring at his friend, he gestures at the coffee cups on the table "Making dinner and drinks, building furniture. Steak and chips or a new table, sure. Even building new housing and skyscrapers if you get enough of them together, and you give them enough time, but now people have them building spare parts?"

Bitterness creeps into Mark's voice "Yeah, Modern technology. Amazing isn't it? Like the damn, bloody ad says 'Universal Provider: For all your needs and wishes.' But they can't bring back the dead."

Tears well in Mark's eyes and begin to roll down his cheek, but he ignores them.

"They can build the parts, but the soul, that spark, what ever the bit that life is, that's beyond them."

"And Cathy just wanted your daughter back?"

Mark nods. "But all she got was a life size model. And when she realised, when it sank in, well... I guess that's what made her snap. Take the pills. End it."

Sam looked across the table at his friend, knowing nothing he says can help.

"Jesus," he says quietly.

"Yeah." Says Mark, finally meeting Sam's eye. "I thought we were over it. I thought Cathy was finally getting over it, but this. This is like Sally dying all over again. And this time she's taken Cathy with her."

Both men look up to where Manny the Provider quietly hovers in the corner. "All your needs and wishes." Mark whispers as his hand moves to wipe the tears from his cheek.

The house is quiet. Mark sits, alone finally, all the faces gone. All the support, all the hand shakes and kisses and hugs. He knows that tomorrow he won't remember a thing, the numbness taking it all away. He'd buried his wife, and the new daughter she'd tried to build, next to his real daughter and that was the only point, the only thing to remember, none of the platitudes or sympathy. Just the cold hard facts.

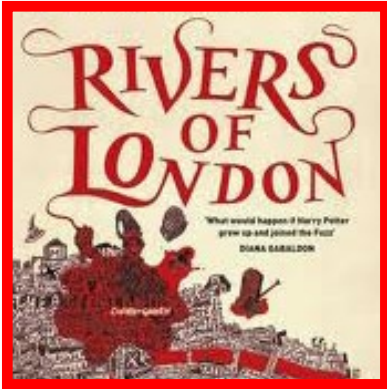
"Skippy?" He calls.

Skippy the Universal Provider glides down the hall towards him, ready for a new task.

# REVIEWS

## Rivers of London

reviewed by martin willoughby



by Ben Aaronovitch  
Gollancz  
rrp £7.99

'What would happen if Harry Potter grew up and joined the police force', states one reviewer. Well, not this. Harry already knew how to perform magic, instead of finding out via a VSP (very strange policeman) and a chance meeting with a ghost.

Peter Grant is not a normal copper. For one thing he's easily distracted which puts him in prime position to do 'valuable work' for the Met: filling in forms. His friend Lesley, on the other hand, is a good police officer and looks set for the fast track to inspector.

This comedy book begins with a murder. Someone has had his head knocked clean off in Covent Garden for no apparent reason. After the usual suspects, Forensics etc, have been over the place, Peter and Lesley are left to guard the crime scene overnight to prevent undesirable people, aka members of the public, from disturbing it.

Whilst Lesley goes to get some coffee, Peter meets a ghost who tells him what had happened. It turns out that the murderer changed his appearance just before committing the crime by hitting the victim with a large stick. The ghost, one Nicholas Wallpenny, promptly disappears when a man with a silver topped cane walks over to Peter.

Not long after, Lesley and Peter are given their assignments. Lesley gets a plum job in the Murder Investigation Team whilst Peter is assigned to Inspector Nightingale. Nightingale is the man with the cane who happens to run the Supernatural Section of the Met. In fact he IS the supernatural section of the Met. Think Mulder, think X-Files...and then throw those thoughts away. This is Britain, not America.

Peter has just become his apprentice. Whilst he is learning to make magic, Lesley, the incredibly perky object of his lust, is filling in forms for the murder team and Peter is trying not to gloat.

The story that follows is gruesome, horrific, funny and sometimes dwells a little too much on police procedure, albeit to make fun of it. More people are killed, always horrifically, and it turns out that too much magic destroys the brain and causes it to explode. Magic also turns silicon chips to dust if they are connected to electricity which is why you have to remove the battery from your phone before performing it.

Working alongside Peter and his VOB (very odd boss) is a Doctor at UCH who, although he denies it to everyone else, knows a fair about what magic does to people.

Molly is Nightingale's maid at his home come office, the Folly. She cooks, cleans, eats raw meat and what she gets up to at night...no one wants to know. She is also capable of performing magic that usually involves bearing her large, sharp teeth and biting people.

Toby is a small yappy dog that Peter inherits from one of the first murder victims and, it turns out, is where the whole sorry tale begins. He'd bitten somebody on the nose, they'd got angry and resentful and naturally took it out on a complete stranger by killing him. Though it wasn't his fault as he was under the influence of a malign spirit.

Nightingale is an old man who is currently the only member of the Supernatural Section of the Met. In fact he is the only person allowed to be a member due to several arrangements with the magical powers that inhabit London. His home is the Folly, which also serves at the Operations Centre for his section and Peter moves in so he can learn magic. Naturally Toby moves in with him and gets quite fat with all the food

that Molly feeds him, including the raw meat that they share.

We also get to meet Old Father Thames, who is a Gypsy, and Mother Thames, who controls the tidal part of the river. They have an ongoing battle for control of the river that Peter gets involved in and has to resolve, without eating any custard creams.

The story weaves its grisly, humorous path through a few months of Peter's life as he learns some basic magic. He learns how to levitate apples, though makes many of them explode in the process, make a werelight and send a ball of flame across a room. People get killed, heads explode and Peter gets no nearer having sex with Lesley, though he is sorely tempted by Beverley Brook, one of Mother Thames' daughters.

It ends up with a riot started by the middle class people at an opera who, dressed in their gowns and dress suits, start burning, pillaging and killing, a bit of time travel and the death of a ghost. By the end of the book we find out who is behind the whole grisly sequence and why they started. As much as you'd like me to, I'm not going to tell you as it would spoil everything.

It's a well told tale with plenty of red herrings, twists and turns. It's also a very funny book with occasional laugh-out-loud moments and is the first in what I hope will be a long series. The next book, *Moon Over Soho*, will be out in the spring and, if this one is anything to go by, should be worth a long, quiet evening in an armchair with tea, biscuits and raw meat.

## Sucker Punch

*reviewed by richard whittaker*



**Starring: Emily Browning, Abbie Cornish, Jena Malone, Vanessa Hudgens, Jamie Chung, Carla Gugino, Oscar Isaac, Scott Glenn**  
**Directed by Zack Snyder, written by Zack Snyder and Steve Shibuya**

Ever read *Axe Cop*?

It's this comic by the Nicolle brothers about a cop with a fire axe who fights crime with his friend Uni-Avocado Soldier and his pet T-Rex Wexter. It is drawn by Malachai Nicolle, but written by his seven-year-old brother Ethan.

So you have this great schizophrenia of adult-quality artistry combined with the untrammelled, hop-scotch imagination of a child. *Sucker Punch* is kind of like that. Only the adult is *Watchmen* director Zack Snyder, and the seven-year-old child is, well, Zack Snyder.

It's a little bit grimmer than *Axe Cop*. In what seems to be a suburb of Sin City, Baby Doll (Browning) accidentally shoots her sister, after which her evil stepfather pays an orderly (Isaac) to have her committed to an asylum and then lobotomize her. Which he does. Which is a bit of an odd end to a film, particularly considering this all happens in the first ten minutes in a near-wordless opening sequence. Fortunately, Baby Doll has already slipped into a world of her own making where she dreams she is a virgin whore in a bordello where ... wait, that can't be right. Let me check my notes ... nope, that's right. OK, so then she dreams that whenever she dances, she becomes a warrior woman, receiving mystical advice from a strange guru (Glenn, channeling his finest David Carradine) and surrounded by her fellow prostitutes Rocket (Malone), Sweet Pea (Cornish), Blondie (Hudgens), and Amber (Chung). Only they're not really prostitutes, but figments of her imagination based on women from the asylum, except in the fantasy warrior world they are also gun-and-sword-toting ninjas. And Carla Gugino is a psychologist. Or a dance instructor. Or a madame.

Wait. Let me get a drink and try this again.

It is sort of a brilliant idea, and it definitely shows that Snyder is thinking far beyond the normal confines of big budget summer fare. He is also bright enough to understand that combining starlets clad in army surplus stripper chic with a bunch of big action sequences is going to sell tickets. After all, who wouldn't want to see Victoria's Secret models dungeon bashing? Unfortunately, he never moved beyond the half-formed thoughts, instead running off to polish the sumptuous visuals. Think of it as a fetish *Inception*, in which layers of reality are peeled back to reveal a great and deep truth. Actually, don't think of it like that. *Sucker Punch* is more like a roll of bubble wrap. It briefly looks complicated, and it's fun to play with, but start to straighten it out and you can see right through it.

The end result could have been the lovechild of *Kill Bill* and *Moulin Rouge*. Instead, it's more like their joint walk of shame. Something just feels off about the whole madcap affair. It doesn't make any sense that a 20 year old girl in the 1940's would dream about steam-powered Nazis or clockwork shoguns. However, Snyder would. Frankly, it just looks like he went through his own movie collection, slammed together *Lord of the Rings*, *Samurai Jack*, *Hellboy*, *Sailor Moon* and some of the tamer Japanese *pinku* movies, then turned that hodge-podge of images into storyboards. It's an amazing piece of fan service, but that's exactly what it is, and nothing more.

Is it pretty? Undeniably. The last time anyone threw this much raw image on the screen was probably *Transformers 2* (reviewed in *Hub #97*). However Snyder replaces Michael Bay's incoherent visual babble with a true sense of art direction. As Baby Doll wanders through a series of high fantasy and science fantasy set pieces (robot samurai, trench warfare zombies, dragons, and finally a jet-propelled train full of mirror-faced robot killers), the entire FX crew brings their A-game. But plotwise, it's hard to see where Snyder was going. Any viewer paying even a modicum of attention will know that this is just dream sequences within a dream sequence, so there is no reason to become emotionally invested. At that point, who care how pretty it is?

It is a weird moment in cinema. Snyder and Bay were actually classmates at Pasadena Art Center College of Design, along with *The Cell*'s Tarsem Singh, and all three have been accused (rightly or wrongly) of reducing movies to gorgeous junk. Or inflating them to gorgeous junk. It's really hard to tell whether this is a blow to spectacle on the big screen or its perfect moment. This is not dumb film making: The script deals, if obliquely, with the fact that society has often dealt with 'troublesome' females by sticking them in mental homes. Yet it has no intellectual or narrative heft, so if Snyder was trying to make even a quasi-serious statement then it's a disaster with a baffling coda. If he just wanted an excuse to film hot chicks in fishnets with machine guns fighting trolls, then it was a success. But that's the difference between a failed attempt at a post-modern third wave feminist psycho-drama and a *Gor* novel (although, frankly, it is no more exploitative than *Girl, Interrupted*, which was just mental illness porn.)

From an acting point of view the only high point is Jena Malone, who has been waiting for a role as good as Rocket since *Donnie Darko*. Browning, who balanced maturity and childhood so wonderfully in the tragically underrated *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, is reduced to a doe-eyed kewpie doll. Abbie Cornish has nothing to do but pout, while Jamie Chung and Disney alumna Vanessa Hudgens are little more than set dressing. Malone is the only member of the cast who seems to know what to do with Snyder's deranged vision, and that's to have fun with it.

Here is what is most disappointing. Snyder has made intelligent movies that are also entertaining. His *Dawn of the Dead* remake is one of the better modernizations of a horror classic, while *300* had undeniable style and a real sense of dramatic urgency. Yet *Sucker Punch* confirms the worst fears people had about *Watchmen*: That, for all Snyder had the skills to bring the graphic novel to the screen, he somehow still did not quite get it. And that's the contradiction: *Sucker Punch* is great film making, but lousy movie making. For all of Snyder's obvious intentions to make something meaningful, this is shiny and hollow as a disco ball.

# Doctor Who: The Day of the Moon

reviewed by guy adams



**Written by Steven Moffat**

**Directed by Toby Haynes**

"Apparently it's even more complicated than last week's episode," I tell my partner, Debra before it starts. "Oh," she replies, "good."

But is it good? Are kids following the action or just cooing at the monsters? We've had visitors this week including Rhiannon, or Nons as she prefers to be called, my twelve-year old niece who is a huge fan of Doctor Who and Torchwood (I once made her the central character in a Torchwood story for the Titan magazine so she'd think I was the coolest uncle in the world, we get insecure we uncles). She's following the plots just fine, but then she's twelve and cleverer than me so she's not the best example. "It is complicated," she says "but I still love it. I think Matt Smith is probably the best doctor ever, though Jon Pertwee was brilliant..."

I know. A Nu-Who fan extolling the virtues of the Be-frilled One, quite takes the breath away doesn't it? I assumed it would be impossible for someone of her cultural age, steeped in CGI effects and story pacing that makes moths hyperventilate, to watch any Classic Who without slipping into a coma.

But we love to patronise kids don't we? "Oh this is far too complex for children to follow..." Really? Kids are wonderfully creative, with hard core imaginations that the next few years at school will do their best to fragment. When presented with stuff like Doctor Who they just let off the mental handbrake and cruise, going along with time paradoxes and stories told from multiple perspectives. It's how their minds work anyway and isn't even remotely confusing to them.

Ask a kid to come up with a story and I guarantee that they'll have your brain spasming in your brain pan before they hit the third sentence. "The Doctor meets these brilliant orange aliens except their not aliens they're space fruit and they can make your legs fall off just by shooting you with their magic space juice which comes from their eyes and smells of dolphins that are angry because dolphins are aliens too and came here through a hole in time that they caused using their magic space flippers. The dolphins want to take over the earth and they're using the space fruit to do it because grown ups like fruit because they're stupid so the fruit will shoot off the grownup's legs and the dolphins will send them back in time where they'll live on the planet Leggos until the Doctor turns up and realises what's going on and saves the day with a magic pair of shorts and some sherbert. Then the Daleks arrive."

Kids? Confused? Get off, They could run rings around most of us. And even if they don't get all the details, the David Frost references, the crushing weight of what it must be like to be Rory, the fact that River Song has just had her last ever kiss with the man she loves... Well, they get most of it and the DVDs are there for them to rediscover the rest in the fullness of time.

But do the adults get it? I think so, though of course we still have just as many questions left unanswered as answered. But that's OK as long as the answers come in the end and I have no doubt they will.

The episode was certainly exciting in and of itself. I used my Universal Drama Barometer to test as much. I used Antonio, my mother's Spanish partner. Antonio exists in two states: agitated or asleep. When awake he flits around the house at high speed, quietly buzzing like a fly, he sits down to watch the telly and is immediately knocked unconscious as if their cheap flatscreen came preloaded with knock-out darts. He stayed awake throughout The Day of the Moon. Not only that but he kept making noises. Antonio is a man who cannot allow things to pass him by un-noted. He keeps a tally of characters ("That's the boyfriend, no?") where the actors that have played the characters have been previously seen ("That's that man from Waking the Dead, anyway, the one who ate babies.") He also likes to keep abreast of what they're about to do ("She's going to shoot her, no?") and what they should be doing ("Why they not just run?"). Outside

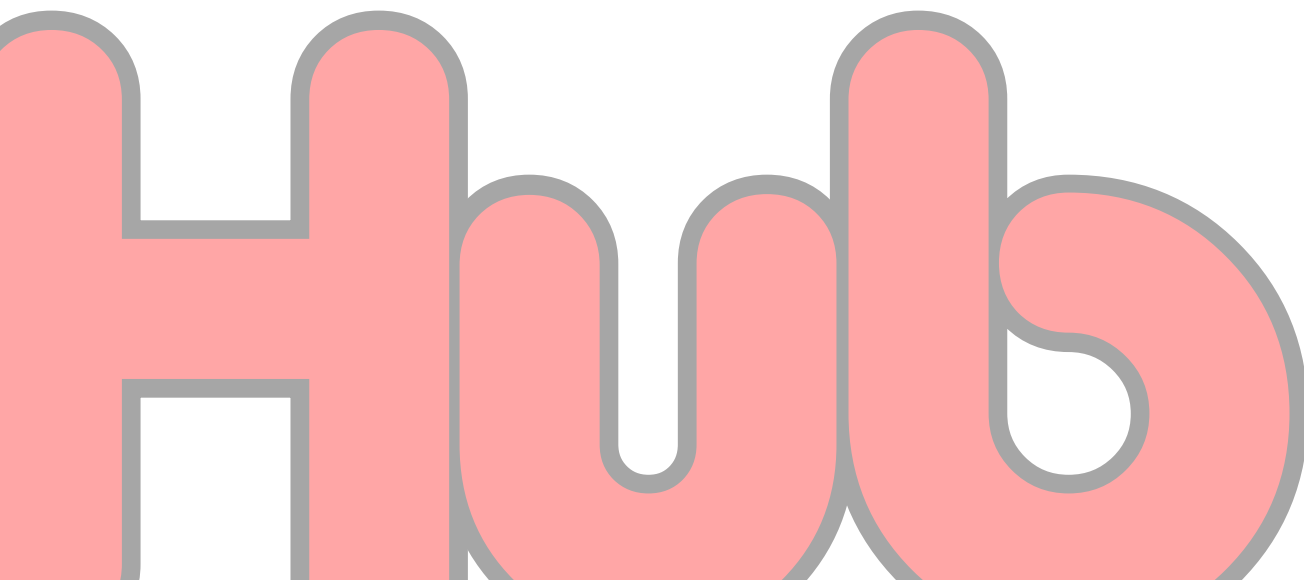


of these comments he likes to hit the rest of the plot beats with a percussive “Oh” or “Ah” just so you know they're all going in. He barely shut up last night. He was like a man being thrashed with a talky stick. (“What’s happening? Why’s he shot her? He’s got a beard! She’s jumped off that... That’s the boyfriend, no?”) As far as event barometers go it’s extremely reliable. If hard on the knuckles to switch off.

What of the rest of my non-fan audience? Did they enjoy it as much as this soft touch, easy convert did? I think so. Whereas last week’s shock death was met with a small amount of apathy (“Doesn’t matter, we know he’ll get out of it.”) This week’s big reveal at the end of the episode actually engaged its viewers (“Ooh... who is she? Amy’s daughter? Is Amy’s daughter River Song?” “That’s the little girl, no?”).

Some portions of online fandom are bemoaning what they see as a descent into an American-style reliance on long-term story arcs. But, as Steven Moffat commented recently, it’s time to stop pretending people aren’t watching. Millions tune in every week (yes, despite what the Daily Mail says it’s still massively popular) and they’re not silly, they can follow a few plot threads over the run. It’s not as if we’re not being offered enough, easily digested romps on the way, I mean, come on, look at next week “Dr. Who in an Exciting Adventure with Pirates!”

That’s the one from Downton Abbey, no? Fighting a mermaid, yes?



# FEATURES

## Interview: Matt Frank

with richard whittaker



Where do giant monsters come from? They start off tiny. Take Godzilla: He's one burst of radiation away from sunning himself on a rock with all the other iguanas. Same thing is happening with Matt Frank. A rising star of the *kaiju* Japanese giant monster scene in the US, Frank had already built up his resume with artwork for Blue Water Comics *Ray Harryhausen Presents* series, as well as character art for IDW's *Transformers: Beast Wars* sourcebook. Then IDW Publishing announced they were launching *Godzilla: Kingdom of Monsters*, a new comic about the iconic city-wrecker. There was a twist: Any comic store that ordered 500 copies would get a special variant cover printed for them, showing their shop being crushed by Godzilla, *Bambi*-style. The publisher hired Frank to provide the covers, thinking

it would be a minor oddity picked up by a couple of big stores. Instead, nearly 100 companies signed up to be pulverized by ol' Gojira, making *Godzilla: Kingdom of Monsters* one of the year's biggest selling titles and elevating Frank to buzz status. With the comic going into a second printing before it even hit the shelves, and Frank signed up to provide more variant covers for the rest of the run, he talked to Hub about becoming the most destructive artist in comics.

### **Hub Magazine: So how did you get a high-profile gig like this as your first major cover project?**

**Matt Frank:** As my mom always says, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Really, I had a pre-established relationship with IDW. I had worked on their *Transformers*' character books, just light things like little character illustrations or some stand-in pages, things like that. I had always stayed in touch with them, I sort of badgered them for work, and eventually I started saying, 'You guys should really get the *Godzilla* license.' Chris Ryall, the editor-in-chief, had always alluded to it, but it wasn't until last October when they said, 'We're doing *Godzilla*' and everyone was like, 'Yay!' But I thought, 'wait a minute, why am I not involved?' So I started badgering them again, then he emailed me and said, 'Hey, I have this really cool idea for this cover project, and I know you're a big fan and the fandom knows who you are, so we'd love to have you help with this.'

### **HM: Where did the idea come from to have Godzilla's foot crushing a store front, and were you surprised that so many stores wanted to be demolished by the king of Monster Island?**

**MF:** Near as I can figure, it was an idea by either Chris Ryall or [*Transformers* writer] Chris Mowry. I think Ryall himself gives the credit to Mowry, because he's the big *Godzilla* fan at the offices. They kind of wanted to do something like *Bambi Meets Godzilla*, because *Godzilla's* foot crushing something is so iconic. They just said, 'If a store order 500 copies of the book, we'll do this special order copy for them.' We only thought there were only going to be like 10, 20 stores, but then it just exploded. Everybody wants a piece of it.

### **HM: How did you contend with such a massive increase in projects – other than just buying more pens?**

**MF:** To be fair, I didn't do all of them. I couldn't do all of them. We got to 75 stores, and then later we got another 20 with the second printing, but on the first printing we all started talking, and we were like, 'We have two weeks to get 75 covers done. There's no way.' So I started reaching out to other artists that I had worked with in the past: Other line artists, other colorists, people who hadn't even worked professionally in comics but who I knew could draw, and they brought other people in. At the end of the day, we had 12 people, four to five teams of artists, all working around the clock, and I was having to shuffle between them. All in all, I drew 50 to 60, 65 of the covers myself, or did edits, and everybody else did at least a handful a

person. Ultimately I had to go through and do edits on just about every one of them, so my hand is in each one of them somewhere. But that is the only way I could do it, that I had to have a team.

**HM: Obviously you couldn't visit every store to sketch them: How did you do about dealing with what were effectively 100 commissioning bosses?**

**MF:** Most of the stores were very good to work with, and everybody was really appreciative and communicative of what they wanted. Just about everyone sent photos, even online stores without a physical location sent their logos for me to crush. Although I do remember one store, they just decided, 'We don't want the store, we just want a blank space and our logo in the bottom corner.' We just let that one slide. It was like, 'OK, whatever, your comic.' But there were other people who sent photos of themselves or their kids. A couple of people got a little picky. They were like, 'This really doesn't look like my face,' or 'That doesn't look like my son's head,' or 'My oldest son isn't that much shorter than my youngest son,' so things could get a little confusing. But ultimately everybody was easy to work with, and everybody was as specific as they could be.

**HM: IDW is becoming the go-to firm for hot comic licenses, like Transformers, True Blood and Dr. Who, so this is a major boost for Godzilla in the US. Why do you think the time is right to bring him back?**

**MF:** It's an underground resurgence of the art form in America. I almost want to call it the art house resurgence, because I think it started when the original *Gojira* was doing the rounds at the art house theaters, and reminding everyone, 'Hey, these aren't just cheap jack movies. These were honest attempts at art back in the 1950s and '60s.' I think August Ragone's book about [*Ultraman* creator] Eiji Tsuburaya, *Master of Monsters*, really helped, as did movies like *Cloverfield* and *Big Man Japan*, and this comic is definitely a big step forward. In Japan, they're kind of sick of it because they've been hammered with it for the last 50 years, but over here it's becoming cool again.

