

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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ISSUE 120 · 4TH MAY 2010

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by alasdair stuart

Entartete Kunst

Derek Stenning likes working with dead futures. Stenning's art work is filled with massive helmeted astronauts, floating globes, solar panels and wasted industrial landscapes, all of which combine to form a vision of the future that's equal parts utopian and slightly broken. He releases the work under the name Entartete Kunst, a german phrase meaning degenerate art that was coined by Nazi theorists to describe, and decry most modern art that didn't fit the Nazi message. It's a pathetic, blighted concept isn't it? This idea that art can be degenerate and wrong because it doesn't send the political message you want it to, doesn't fit the box you want it to fit.

Because all art, when it comes to it, is Entartete Kunst. All art challenges someone, irritates someone else, grabs someone else by the lapels. All art offends, all art challenges and all art, without exceptional is both universal and completely, totally, desperately personal. For some people, Derek's work, which cleverly mixes Jewish symbolism with European industrialisation may seem hackneyed. To me, it's great, a slightly dizzying look at an almost future that's equal parts Moebius, Dan Dare and Apollo Program.

Entartete Kunst. The Nazis meant it as a criticism, an attack. To me, it looks more like a badge of honour.

You can find more about Derek's work at

<http://borninconcrete.blogspot.com/search/label/entartete%20kunst>



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FICTION

Imperforate

by trudi topham

Mary swallowed. It didn't stop her throat from tightening, and her tongue was so dry now that it was hard to pull away from the roof of her mouth. She could hear her own heart, her pulse pounding in her ears. More than anything she wanted to punch the consultant who was standing there with a patient look on his face. Fuck him. Fuck him and his medical words and his stupid bedside manner. Fuck him, because he was telling her something was wrong with her baby, and it was his fucking fault.

"Honestly, Miss Cooper, James will be fine." There was that stupid smile again. He probably thought he sounded reassuring. "He'll need a colostomy, but in three to four months we can bring him back in, and he'll be strong enough for the PSARP, and a couple more months after that we can close the colostomy. He'll breeze through it, trust me."

Mary hated the words. And she was coming to hate Mr. Turner, too. "My baby... was born without a bumhole," was all she could think of to say. Then she hated herself, too, for sounding so thick.

Turner nodded, just the once. "But it's not as uncommon as you'd think. And it's easily corrected."

Maybe it wasn't Turner's fault. Maybe it was her own.

"Oi, beautiful."

Mary had tried to ignore the drunkard on her left. In between belching out what smelled like rotten eggs or partially digested curry and his repeated attempts to touch her thigh he'd not endeared himself to her, and if the pub weren't so heaving she'd have found somewhere else to sit already.

"What's your name?" He fumbled for his glass in a way which she assumed was intended to look sophisticated. Either that or he was just at the leaning stage and had ten minutes to go before he fell off his stool and faceplanted in the mucky carpet below.

She took a breath, then looked at him. Really looked at him. He'd be all right if his eyes weren't wet and reddened. Some TLC to his hair could help, too, and his stubble was too out of control to be sexy. Really, though it was the odour of piss and rotting food that put her off.

He smiled, revealing shiny white teeth, all neat and tidy. "You're gorrrrrjuss," he slurred, leaning toward her and trying for the umpteenth time to get a hand on her thigh. He got closer this time, managing to slap her barstool.

"And you're not," she snapped. Oh yes. Witty. She straightened in her seat, pushing her own glass away.

"Wanna have muh baybeh?" His fingers groped at the edge of the bar, and he flashed a wide, unfocussed grin.

Mary rolled her eyes and slid from her stool, checking her watch. She knew the time already – she'd been watching the clock behind the bar for an hour, waiting for Sophie to arrive – but it signalled that the conversation was over.

"I'll giv'yoooo a millyun paaaaahnds..."

She snorted at that. "I very much doubt it."

The next thing she knew, he was thrusting a handful of fifty pound notes her way, slapping them haphazardly at her breasts. "I got thirtysomething million offa the lottree," he grinned. "Go on. I'll give you a million. I'll even—" he broke for another belter of a belch, and Mary grimaced at the fresh injection of odour "—give yuz the cash up front... Ow'sat?"

Mary picked up some of the notes. Held one up to the light overhead. Then she licked her thumb and rubbed it over the orangey-salmon ink.

Finally she looked at the drunken sot. "What's your name?"

"Glennnnnnn."

She thought about it. And even while she thought about it, she was repulsed by how eagerly her imagination was running away with the concept of a million pounds at her disposal. Heck, she had to have at least a thousand in her hands right now.

She looked down at the crisp, large notes. The Queen didn't seem to have anything to say that might help.

I'd be a whore, she thought. Nothing more than a dirty whore.

With a million pounds.

A dirty whore with a million pounds and a drunk who might be persuaded to part with more.

"Okay," she found herself saying. "Get your coat."

Definitely her fault.

James was so light in her arms, so fragile, and she'd had to learn how to change his bag and dispose of the waste. But he didn't seem to be in pain.

Of course she'd looked. She still had to put nappies on him – all the front bits still worked, after all. She had to bathe him and clean him and dress him and change him.

There was just nothing there. Or rather, there was something there. It just shouldn't be.

She was used to thinking of a hole as something absent, something missing. Now she was wrapping her head around the notion of a missing hole, and it wasn't doing her much good. Three million pounds, one million of it already gone on a house far too big for her and a car she didn't really want. Deep down she couldn't quite get rid of the loathing she felt, but she could bribe it to stay away for a while.

Only by spending the money, she reasoned, could she make it worthwhile. It was the difference between a whore and a slut.

Three times she'd done it with Glenn. He'd been increasingly sober each time. She'd been increasingly drunk. But after the third he'd stopped calling. Mary figured he'd got bored of wasting his money.

Then a couple of months later she figured it was because he'd succeeded.

She didn't care to put too much thought into that one.

James was at the stage where nothing was more interesting than waving his feet in the air and grabbing at his toes. Mary was at the stage where she was wondering how to circumvent eBay's rules on selling living creatures.

He had Glenn's eyes. Oh, not rheumy and drunken, no. Vibrant and blue and persistent.

Mr. Turner had lovingly hand-crafted a new anus for James. There was some complicated gubbins about tubes and rectal muscles, but basically her little boy could now shit for England. Which he did. He could also fart, which he also did with a frequency utterly alien after four months of botty-related silence. He seemed to enjoy farting the most while gripping his toes, and it always stank of rotten eggs.

If she fought with herself long enough to set the loathing aside, Mary could sometimes feel attached to the boy. It took a lot of vodka, but she could do it. She just didn't see why she should.

"He's such a gorgeous little boy. You're so lucky!"

Mary took one look at the woman on her right and felt the yawning emptiness in her stomach grow. But she made her lips smile, and forced words out past them: "I am. Which one's yours?"

The other mother pointed to a delicate little girl tottering around with a pink, horse-shaped baby-walker. The toddler's wispy blonde curls and wide brown eyes turned Mary's smile genuine for a moment. "Julia, over there," she said. "It was my mother's name."

Mary nodded, but couldn't find anything to say. A nurse had said her little bastard looked like a James, so she'd picked that. Why the hell she hadn't gone ahead with the abortion... She looked back over to the children.

"I'm Petra," the woman said, sticking her hand out toward Mary. "You're new to this playgroup aren't you? We've only been here a month ourselves."

Mary glanced to the hand, then took it. "Mary," she said, her voice flat. She lifted her gaze to investigate Petra more fully, but found nothing there of real interest. Mousey hair, mousey face. Julia was probably doomed to turn average once she was in double figures if this was anything to go by.

"Nice to meet you, Mary. I really hope you like it here. Julia's made so many new friends since we came."

Mary watched Julia, and for a moment she entertained the absurd idea of asking Petra to swap children with her. She could have a normal – if average-looking – little girl, and Petra could have the filthy son of a whore and a drunk. But only if Mary still got to keep the money.

Petra laughed a little, and Mary looked to her. "What?"

"I see that look a lot," Petra murmured. "It's so nice to see them playing together, isn't it?"

Yeah. She probably wouldn't swap.

She'd considered contacting Glenn once or twice, just to tell him that he had a son. Perhaps that could lead to a paternity test, and in lieu of her bleeding him dry for maintenance she could just ask him to do his duty, you know. Take care of the child for some of the time. Maybe forget to give him back once in a while. Or she could jet out of the country while he had the boy, and be deemed negligent by the courts. They could force Glenn to take him full-time.

They might take her money.

She didn't know what could or couldn't happen. She wasn't sure if he even knew she got pregnant back then. How could any man know a woman was pregnant the moment conception took place? Hell, even she couldn't be sure precisely which of the three whorings had gotten her knocked up. She was positive they'd used condoms each time.

In the end she didn't bother. Although she wouldn't admit it to anyone, the thought of seeing that man again filled her with dread.

What if he wanted another child?

James' latest game was tearing his nappy off the moment he arrived at playgroup. Mary made several attempts to put the damn thing back on him, but he wasn't having any of it, and the other parents laughed and said how cute it was, so she gave in.

She sat and watched as he ran, pantless, through the mass of considerably more well-dressed babies. He seemed to be taking great pride in his carefree bottom, and would squat by other children, miming pooping for them with great gusto. And they squealed and laughed and Petra would repeat how lucky Mary was to have such a wonderful little boy.

"If he's still doing that when he's eighteen he'll be getting kicked out," Mary said.

Petra laughed. "It's just a phase. It'll pass. My friend Diane said her little boy, Bryan, wouldn't leave his winkle alone for two years. Kept on grabbing it and running around holding it."

Mary glanced across at the mouse. "He'll still be doing *that* when he's eighteen," she countered.

"Noooo... You think?"

"He's a boy." Mary smirked. "Sooner or later, they all get obsessed with their dicks."

Petra looked across to James, then back to Mary. "You really don't like him, do you?"

And there it was: that great, gaping chasm inside her again, the guilty feeling of getting caught with a hand in the biscuit jar. "I..."

Petra nodded, putting a hand on Mary's. "He's a bastard," she said quietly. "But you still have James." Mary wasn't sure whether to feel dismayed or relieved.

Three months in to playgroup, and Mary was starting to relax. Nobody really questioned that she turned up in a DB9 with the world's cheapest baby seat fitted. Nobody seemed to care that she wasn't the talkative, sharing type. She had a baby, and that baby was cute, adorable, and occasionally humorous.

A baby, she was finding, was a ticket to a whole new way of life. People got out of her way on the pavement. They put out their cigarettes when she was near. They let her jump queues. They treated her like some kind of minor celebrity just because she'd managed to breed. And she was starting to like it.

She wasn't sure how long this would last. Were babies only a permit to better parking spaces under the age of two? Or was anything up to six acceptable? How mobile did your child have to be before he was no longer a free pass, and instead became a hindrance?

She was also starting to appreciate just how lucky she was with James. Other children would scream and wail at the drop of a hat. Not James. Apart from his tendencies to find farting hilarious and expose himself to other toddlers he wouldn't yell, wouldn't punch, and wouldn't vomit unexpectedly across other mothers while they held him.

As usual, while she was sitting and Petra was talking her ear off, some other child was screaming. A proper belter it was, too, not a pitiful wail or a mithering squall. Mary even flinched at it. It was hurting her ears.

Then it wasn't just a baby screaming. It was two or three. And adult voices soon piled in. The cacophony was unbearable.

But not inexplicable. Because when she lifted her head to see what all the fuss was about, there was James, and there was Julia. Both covered in blood. Julia screeching like a dying cat, and James smiling as he dug pudgy little fingers into her face to pull out her *other* eyeball.

His left hand was already cramming Julia's first eye up his backside.

Apparently they weren't welcome at playgroup after that.

They'd had the police round. They'd had the CPS. They'd had counsellors. And Mary kept praying that they'd take James away from her. But they didn't. They couldn't find anything wrong with her parenting, with James, with his environment, with his upbringing. There was no evidence that he'd been collecting eyeballs from anywhere else or, indeed, that he'd been shoving anything else up his arse.

"You have to help me," she'd begged each and every one of them. "He's evil. I can't take it any more. Please!" And she felt so certain that stating that outright should just *make them* see. Why couldn't they see?

James would cling to her while all the strangers were poking and prodding and questioning. She tried so hard to push him away, but the little shit's grip was tight.

In the end everyone whose job it was to help her didn't.

"Mummy," he said. And he gazed adoringly at her with those wide blue eyes.

"I'm not your mummy," she said.

But, of course, he was only twenty months old, and didn't understand. "Mummy," he repeated, smiling, pleased it seemed to have emulated a noise.

She sighed and sat on the sofa, looking at her hands. They were dry and lined, she noticed. She was twenty five, and her hands looked like they belonged to a forty year old.

She wondered how Sophie and the girls were doing. They'd kind of drifted apart once Mary had started spending the money. Back then Mary had assumed they were jealous, but now she was starting to realise that they just had nothing in common any more. The girls didn't really have room in their lives for a single mum who had a nice big house in the suburbs and could afford to settle all their debts but wasn't going to. Mary didn't have a place in her life for women who didn't understand that she wasn't happy with the money, and that her baby boy was not a gift from Heaven.

And here she was now. Lonely. Rich and lonely.

It wasn't her fault, she decided. It was Sophie's. Sophie who didn't turn up on time. Sophie who bored her so much she accepted a grotesque offer from a grotesque man rather than wait around any longer for

the flakey bitch. Sophie who got her landed with the demon child and the loveless life.

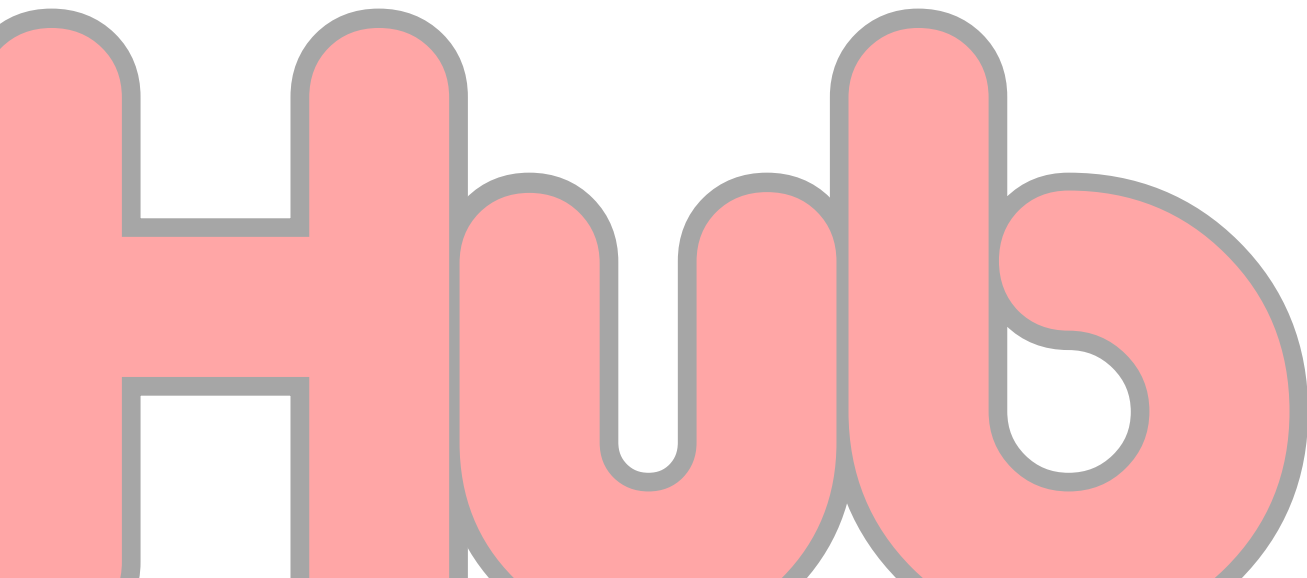
Sophie.

Mary watched James as he hared around, then reached out toward him. "James, baby. Come to mummy."

He came teetering over, arms outstretched. "Mummy!" he declared.

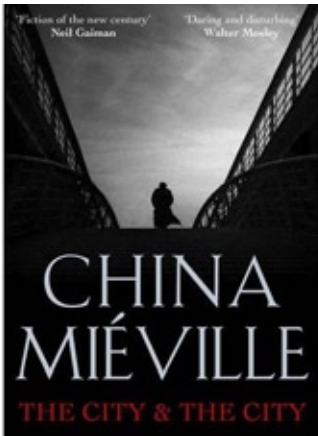
"That's right." She stood, lifting him and holding him to her chest. "Let's go see one of mummy's old friends."

And James squealed with delight.



The City and The City

reviewed by amanda rutter



by China Miéville

Pan

rrp £7.99

The City And The City is a hard-boiled detective novel with a difference. Set in a location that feels very Eastern European in tone, and not far removed from a real place, we follow Inspector Tyador Borlu of the Extreme Crime Squad as he begins investigations into the body of a murdered woman. The very effective spin that **China Miéville** uses, which moves this novel from the crime shelves in the bookstores to the SFF shelves, is that the setting is actually two cities existing in the same location, governed in a sinister fashion by Breach. Borlu lives in Beszel, a grim city with featureless concrete and rattling trams, where the citizens wear few colours. The other city is Ul Qoma, and both cities exist in the same time and space. The citizens of each have learned from a young age to unsee and unsense the people and buildings of the other city. In the event that, say, a citizen of Ul Qoma acknowledges a citizen of Beszel, they are then subject to the jurisdiction of Breach.

"But pass through Copula Hall and she or he might leave Beszel, and at the end of the hall come back to exactly (corporeally) where they had just been, but in another country, a tourist, a marvelling visitor, to a street that shared the latitude-longitude of their own address, a street they had never visited before, whose architecture they had always unseen, to the Ul Qoman house sitting next to and a whole city away from their own building, invisible there now they had come through, all the way across the Breach, back home."

I have a couple of China Miéville books on my shelf already, and confess to never having picked them up so far. Somehow I thought they would be pretentious and wordy, and I could never quite tell which genre something like 'Perdido Street Station' fell under. When I decided to pick this book up, I was both interested in reading my first Miéville book, but also feeling a little dread at the idea of picking up something that seemed so meta and impossibly clever.

Having set the scene, I can now state categorically that this is one of the most powerful SFF books I have ever read, and is without doubt my top read of 2010 so far. I found it unbelievably accessible (especially considering my unfounded view of Miéville's work); stunningly imaginative and constantly entertaining. I am willing to abuse adjectives at length to convey my extremely high opinion of this book.

So why did I enjoy it so much? This is where the review becomes harder to write. Sometimes you just 'click' with a book and enjoy it thoroughly. This definitely happened. But it was more than that. While I read each page, I felt as though I was reading something important, clever and classic. In fact, I imagine the way I felt reading *The City And The City* would be the way the first person felt when picking up *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*: enjoying the book for what it is (a darn good story) but also conscious that this novel is something special and has the potential to resonate through generations of readers.

The story was tight, well-written, with excellent pacing. Thanks to the rather slight nature of the novel (a mere 312 pages, in my hardback edition), I found that there were no erroneous scenes or indulgently bloated descriptions - everything felt very lean, and helped lend the plot a driving urgency.

I enjoyed the characters. In particular, the first person perspective of Borlu enables us to experience

the frustration, the fear and the eventual fall-out of the investigation. His familiarity with the city of Beszel immediately gives *Ul Qoma* an exotic flavour, giving strength to the concept that these are two very separate places co-existing in the same location. He is ably assisted by a short cast of secondary characters, with their own motivations and foibles. None of these characters felt at all as though they were purely there to drive the story along - all of them felt fully-realised.

The way that Mieville declines to really delve into the back story of his main character is also well-done. It is not necessary for the plot, and therefore we catch only a glimpse, a mere snapshot, into the life of Borlu. This for me was far more effective writing and had more of an impact than if Mieville had lovingly dwelt on events that were in the past and had no relevance at all to the present time.

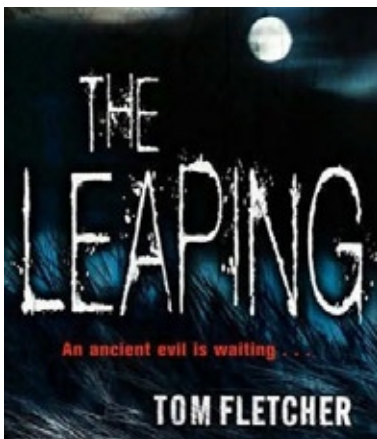
Beyond all of that, and the exceptionally clear descriptions of the two cities, concept is everything. If this had been a straight-up detective novel, I would have enjoyed it thoroughly, what with the twists and red herrings thrown into the mix as well. Add into that the notion of these two cities co-existing - allowing Mieville to explore issues such as nationalism, patriotism and a 'big brother' entity - and you have a killer novel that delivers on every level.

This will be one of the very rare reviews when I do not strive to find something that I disliked to balance the review. It would be nitpicking for the sake of it, and I'm not sure I could honestly find something that I didn't like enough to discuss it impartially.

This review was originally published at www.FloorToCeilingBooks.com and www.FantasyLiterature.com

The Leaping

reviewed by scott harrison



by Tom Fletcher
Quercus Books
rrp £7.99

Can you remember the last time a book scared you? If not 'scared' then how about unnerved, or even just plain weirded you out? No? Then you're probably like me, someone who can watch or read horror without being troubled by the merest hint of creeping gooseflesh, to say nothing of the lack of movement from the hairs at the nape of my neck.

It's sad really but the only two books that have scared me in any way were Stephen King's *'Salem's Lot*, which I first read when I was twelve, and Whitley Strieber's *Communion*, which I read at one o'clock in the morning, alone in a tiny attic flat at the top of a very, very old building. Apart from that, nothing.

Until now.

There's something deliciously creepy and wonderfully disturbing woven into every page of *The Leaping*, the debut novel from horror author Tom Fletcher. It's so rare nowadays, in this modern climate of awful teen vampire angst-fests and endless zombie splatter books, to find a horror novel so refreshingly simple yet cunningly inventive. If you will excuse the pun, it's a book with teeth in more ways than one.

Reading like some deranged offspring of Irvine Welsh, Fletcher's prose is so delightfully urbane and simple that sometimes you'd be excused for thinking that you were reading a wittily incisive indictment on post-economic crisis Britain rather than a horror novel. It is a book that concerns itself just as much with the

'horrors' of bleak suburban existence than it does with some hulking, shadowy beast roaming the open moorland. Although, rest assured, there is certainly plenty of the latter, by the spade-full. And therein lies the books brilliant ingenuity.

Working at a call centre in Manchester, Jack and his friends feel that they are stuck in a rut. Enduring an endless bombardment of customer abuse and moral-crushing job dissatisfaction, Jack suddenly and unexpectedly finds himself in a blissful romance with co-worker Jennifer. After recently coming into a considerable inheritance Jennifer soon falls for the eerie charms of Fell House, a somewhat large and crumbling building out on the edge of the fells in the Lake District. Thinking that all their troubles are over both Jack and Jennifer quit their jobs and move in just as its original owner is about to return for its property – and it's brought some friends along for a party.

It's true that it takes a while for the actual werewolf plotline proper to kick in – some 262 pages to be exact – but such is the build-up of suspense and tension within the first half of the book that when it does come it's like the first welcome clap of thunder at the end of an oppressively muggy spring day. The second half rattles along at a furious pace, plunging the reader into a fevered miasma of twisted images and half-glimpsed nightmares, blurring the boundaries between dream and reality until the reader is no longer able to discern one from the other.

The Leaping is a novel that just begs to be read in one single, breathless sitting. A truly stunning book that will leave you, in the end, scratching your head in wonder as to why there isn't more horror novels on the market like this one; bold, original, visceral and downright bloody wonderful!

If only there were a few more authors like Tom Fletcher in the world and far fewer Stephanie Meyer wannabies then the Horror genre would be in a much healthier state than it is right now. Or should that be 'unhealthier'?

Highly recommended.

Doctor Who: “Flesh & Stone”

reviewed by scott harrison



Written by Steven Moffat

Starring Matt Smith, Karen Gillan, Alex Kingston

Directed by Adam Smith

Saturday 1st May, BBC1

I have a confession to make. I've been rather worried about these two episodes of *Doctor Who*. Ever since I read in *Doctor Who Magazine* a few months back that this Moffat penned two-parter was the first story to go before the cameras back in July of last year, it's been playing on my mind.

You see, the character of the Doctor is such an unusual part for an actor to play it often takes them an episode or two to really get a handle on it and settle in. As Peter Davison explains in the documentary *Being Doctor Who*, when approaching other 'normal' roles the character at least has a back story – childhood, education, environment, etc – with the Doctor, however, very little is known or even hinted at.

Davison himself didn't completely nail the character of the Fifth Doctor until the third episode of his first recorded story, *Four To Doomsday*, where as Sylvester McCoy took almost the entirety of his first season before the real Seventh Doctor began to shine through.

So, for many a sleepless night I lay awake, staring at the ceiling, trying desperately not to notice the strangely crooked mouth-shaped crack that was forming overhead, and pondering over the quality of Matt Smith's performance I'd soon be witnessing in the approaching two-parter.

I needn't have worried.

Ironically these are by far Matt Smith's best episodes as the Doctor, proving once more what a magnificent choice he was as David Tennant's replacement. The story picks up immediately where last week's episode left off, with the Doctor and Co. escaping from the army of Weeping Angels and into the wreck of the *Byzantium* above. Retreating from the relentless onslaught of the deadly stone creatures, the group soon find themselves inside the starship's 'oxygen factory', an oddly fairytale-esque forest of treeborgs – half trees, half artificial technology. With Amy blind and the soldiers being erased from existence one by one, the Doctor must make a terrible choice, should he sacrifice himself to save the lives of his friends?

There's nothing more difficult than trying to review the second half of a two-part story as an episode on its own. It really can't be done. The purpose of this episode is to tie up and conclude all the plot strands begun in the previous weeks show, and on its own it makes little sense. Having said that, although a little less frenetic than last week's episode, *Flesh and Stone* still packs a lot of wallop, matching its partner in both quality and excitement and when watched together in a single sitting it's easily the strongest opening two-part story since the programme returned to our screens in 2005.

What's more, this was undoubtedly Amy's best episode so far, too. Finally coming across as a fully rounded character for once, rather than just an attitude in a short skirt that Steven Moffat continually insists on writing her as. Sadly there seems to be very little depth to the character of Amy Pond and, as the episodes go on, it would appear that this will not be rectified any time soon.

And now we have the added ingredient of Amy being sexually attracted to the Doctor, which is something that alarms me greatly. The relationship of the Doctor and companion works so much better when they are just friends. Great mates travelling through all of space and time having a bloody good time, no strings. OK, the Rose/Doctor relationship worked well because it was rather sweet and sensitively handled, but the whole 'Martha's unrequited love' subplot seriously threatened to drag series three down with it by the end, and suck out all the fun as it went. Needless to say I shall be keeping a close eye on how this new plot strain develops.

But for now I shall hold my tongue. The sun's going down and there are vampires beneath the city of Venice. You're on your own from here, I'm afraid. I'll see you at day-break. Don't forget your garlic.

Pulse

reviewed by lee harris



Starring: Claire Foy, Stephen Campbell Moore, Gregg Chillin

Written by: Paul Cornell

Directed by: James Hawes

First broadcast: June 2010 (UK)

Coming through the same back door as the pilot for *Being Human*, and featuring scenes to equal it in terms of gore and suspense, it's tempting to write off *Pulse* as just another wannabe. However, the temptation disappears as soon as you start watching.

Right from the opening minutes *Pulse* sets out its stall as a medical drama with a difference. Unlike the positivity continually onscreen in other med-dramas such as *ER*, *Holby City* or *St Elsewhere*, we know instinctively that there's something not quite right happening at St Timothy's.

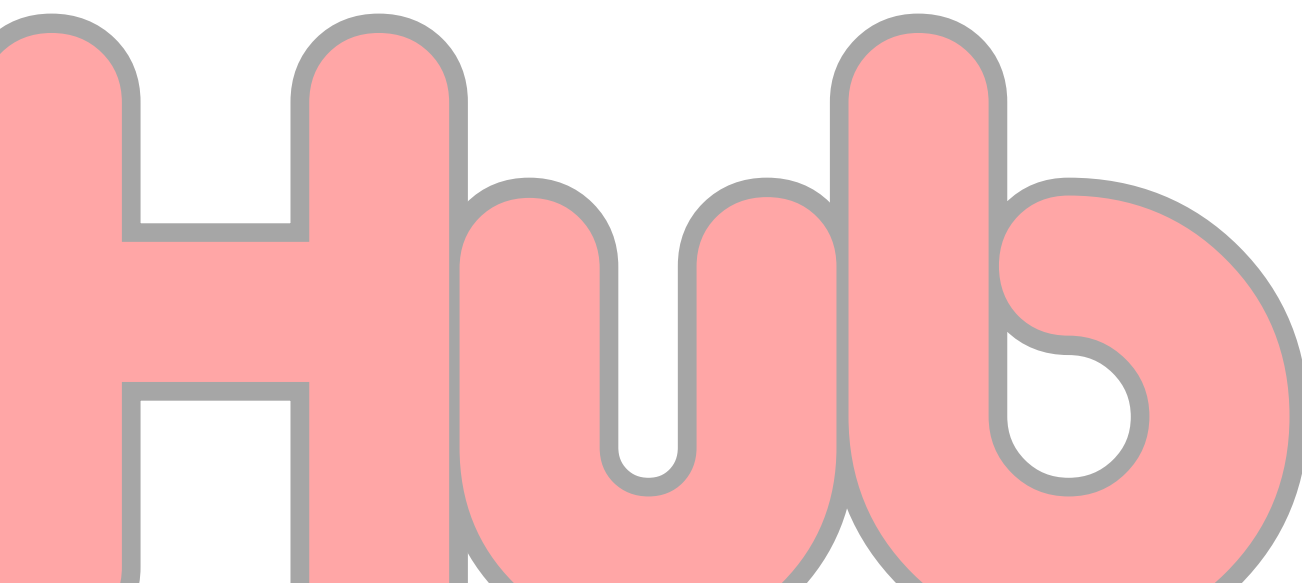
Well, of course, it's not instinct that's telling us to be concerned – it's good writing, performing and direction.

The always-delightful Claire Foy stars as Hannah – a trainee doctor returning to the teaching hospital after a year off, following the death of her mother, a consultant at the hospital. Hannah's grief was overwhelming and not everyone is convinced she is ready to be back at work.

She soon starts to see things that shouldn't be there, things that *can't* be there. Her colleagues dismiss her concerns, believing she is still under too much pressure to function adequately on the ward.

As events progress, Hannah puts her job – and her sanity – on the line in order to uncover the truth about what is really going on at the hospital. A particularly disturbing scene in an operating theatre, and another in the mortuary, provides clues to St Timothy's secrets, and the pilot leaves us – of course – on a cliffhanger.

The pilot is easily strong enough to warrant a full series, with a superb cast (Claire Foy shines, as does the always-excellent Stephen Campbell Moore), a great script, and flawless direction.



FEATURES

Interview: Christopher Mintz-Plasse and Aaron Johnson

with richard whittaker

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Aaron Johnson, surrounded by high critical acclaim for his remarkable turn as the young John Lennon in *Nowhere Boy*. Christopher Mintz-Plasse may be fresh off a US box office smash with Dreamworks' *How To Train Your Dragon*, but for a generation of moviegoers he's McLovin, the break-out star of *Superbad*. Together they are Kick-Ass and Red Mist, the far-from-dynamic duo from the recently released unsuperhero movie *Kick-Ass*.

Just after our interview with *Kick-Ass* creators Mark Millar and John Romita Jr (see Hub #118) *Hub Magazine* got the chance to sit down with the pair on the day of the film's world premiere at the SXSW 2010 Film Festival in Austin, Texas. They talked about ill-fitting costumes, learning to drive a manual gear box, unmade superhero adaptations, and how their 11-year-old co-star got to out-fight and out-swear them both.

(Portions of this interview have previously appeared in the *Austin Chronicle*.)

Hub Magazine: Unlike a lot of superhero adaptations, *Kick-Ass* the comic and *Kick-Ass* the film are nearly identical: Mark Millar called it the best adaptation he could have hoped for.

Christopher Mintz-Plasse: It's good to know that a comic book fan likes the movie. You never know, like with the whole *Watchmen* thing, they love the comic but hate the movie.

HM: Mark went through that when *Wanted* was adapted, and they changed everything.

Aaron Johnson: I loved the comic book.

CM: I saw the movie before I read the comic. The movie was fun, but then I read the comic and I completely understand why comic book fans were angry. It was nothing like the same.

AJ: What about *Shit Head* and *Johnny Two-Dicks*?

CM: yeah, all that exciting stuff, you want to see that in the movie. Just change the name and make it something different.

HM: It's got to help that, in Matthew Vaughn, you had a director that's got his own style and found material he wanted to work with.

AJ: Matthew got asked in Hollywood to do all the comic books, from *X-Men* to *Iron Man* to *Thor*, and he said, 'Great, I'll do it like this,' and they told him it's too risky and dangerous. So he said, 'Fuck you, I'm going to make the best comic's movie I can.' So he got *Kick-Ass*, made it, and then distributors wouldn't touch it. He independently funded it.

HM: I guess his versions of those stories will go down as great unmade projects.

AJ: I remember him telling me about what they were going to do with *Thor*, and I didn't think he sounded too enthusiastic, but then he started telling me the concept of what his was going to be, and I said that was brilliant.

CM: The way he described it was like the movie *Gladiator*, but with gods.

HM: Compared to those big-budget studio projects, *Kick-Ass* is the ultimate indie flick.

CM: No-one was behind Matthew or looking over his shoulder. It was Matthew, Brad Pitt, and a couple of Matthew's friends and they produced the whole thing. They had 100% freedom on making it, and then they went after distributors. That's how you have to make a movie if you want to make it out.

AJ: And now distributors are going crazy.

HM: It also helped that there was so much collaboration between Matthew, Mark and artist John Romita.

CM: With *Kick-Ass*, they made the comic and the movie at the same time, which has never happened before.

AJ: I remember when we were shooting the movie, only issue three was out, and we'd finished filming when issue five was out.

CM: Yeah, Mark was emailing us the comics in black and white. They weren't out yet, but I was reading them.

AJ: What's great is the comic book sequence, with [Chloe Moretz's character] Mindy [aka Hit-Girl]. John Romita was sketching it out and that's great to have that collaboration.

HM: So are you big comics fans?

AJ: I probably haven't followed through as much as a wish I could.

CM: My dad is a massive comic book fan. He's got comics from the 70s and 80s stacked up in our garage, he's got a massive pile next to his chair, he reads comics while watching TV, and he reads comics while he's in the toilet. So I picked that up from him, although I don't read them every day.

HM: Every actor dreams of playing a superhero, but you guys get to play the nerdiest costumed characters ever.

AJ: That's what's so brilliant. For me, I was just at that time where I said, 'It would be great to do a movie where you're not playing the heart throb or a leading good-looking role.'

CM: Yeah, you get so sick of being the heart throb.

AJ: So it was great to dive and experiment with being the nobody kid who dresses up as a superhero and gets the shit beaten out of him.

HM: Part of being a superhero is getting to wear the uniform. The *Red Mist* costume ends up being a lot more elaborate than in the comic, but the *Kick-Ass* outfit is almost exactly the same.

AJ: I remember when we were going in to get our costumes designed and the skinnier we looked, the better. We had these really baggy costumes on. Mine was a real wet suit.

CM: I remember the first time we were supposed to try on my costume, it had fake padded muscles.

AJ: You looked like the Michelin Man.

CM: yeah, I had shoulders up to here and my arms are out there, and the collar was tight so I had neck fat coming out. So we just said, 'This is just not happening.' The original design was reversed, with the red and black reversed. Matthew walked in and said, 'It looks like shit. You look like you've thrown up Michael Jackson' and walks out.' Sammy the wardrobe lady just said, 'God, I have to think of something new.'

AJ: She's great though. She worked on *Stardust* and *Hellboy*.

HM: Any chance of an action figure?

AJ: I saw photos ages ago of Hit Girl and Kick-Ass, and they look pretty cool. I think these were just prototypes.

CM: There'll probably be a Red Mist figure for the sequel. Would you like to see a sequel? Fuck yeah, that's what I like to hear.

HM: Neck fat aside, were there any other problems?

CM: People complained about his costume having a mouth hole.

AJ: We did this so much and it was [covers mouth] mmmmmmmmmmm. Matthew said, 'Fuck it, I don't want to fucking deal it. Cut him a fucking mouth hole.'

CM: People don't understand that, if you have the mouth covered, you have to do the whole thing in [post-production automated dialogue replacement] and it makes it almost pointless acting the entire movie

HM: There's still a real feeling of authenticity, especially with Kick-Ass' DIY look.

AJ: We really made it the way these kids would have done.

CM: Whereas my dad's so rich that I can get a Mustang with a GPS navigation system. I drove it. I'd never driven a stick shift in my life, so I had to learn on a two hundred grand car that Matthew Vaughn was going to keep after the movie.

AJ: I was going, 'Put me in the car.' It was funny when Chloe had to drive it, because they pulled back the seat so a stunt guy could actually drive. She was sat on the stunt guy, he was accelerating, she was doing the gears and she had to say 'Stop!' and he would brake. She's such a professional and such a great actress.

HM: Hit Girl gets to win all her big fight scenes, but you two still take your fair share of punches. Was it hard work training for the stunt work?

AJ: It wasn't physical for us. I remember Matthew going, 'whatever you're doing, yoga or going to the gym, you have to stop.' Not that I was going a lot beforehand, but he just wanted us to be useless and pathetic. Chloe trained for three months with the guy that trained the guys that did 300. She had Jackie Chan's stunt crew and Jet Li's stunt double, and a whole national gymnastics and parkour team, just for her.

CM: And we just had one fight scene, right at the end. We had two weeks of training and that's all we did for the entire film. And I'm sweating my balls off, thinking, 'Don't complain, don't complain. Chloe's in the next room doing these crazy stunts.'

HM: She also gets the best line in the movie, when she gets to deliver the immortal 'OK you cunts ... Let's see what you can do now.'

AJ: That's one take. Her mum said, 'She can't say cunt. I'm sorry, Matthew, she just can't say cunt. So Matthew says, 'That's fine. Chloe, just say, "Which one of you guys is next?" and that will be fine.' She did about six or seven takes, just bang bang bang, until he thought that was perfect. Then he said, 'now can you do one where you say cunt? Just the one.' Her mum says, 'no, no,' and Matthew said, 'just the one.' So Chloe says, 'OK, you cunts, which one of you's next?' He says, 'Cut!' walks off, and uses it.

AJ: That's gonna become a cult line. She'll be thirty and people will say, 'Oh, Chloe Moretz, she had the best line ever.'

CM: It's because she's 11. If I said or Aaron said it, people would say, 'oh, that's funny,' but it's because she's 11, that's what's really amazing.

AJ: And then she massacres everyone.

Interview: Paul Cornell

with lee harris

Just over two years ago, BBC3 ran a short "pilot season" – four new shows hoping to be commissioned for a full season. Following a successful fan campaign, *Being Human* by Toby Whithouse was born, and it has so far enjoyed two highly successful seasons, with a short series of spin-off novels.

This summer, the BBC are hoping to duplicate the success of *Being Human* with another series of pilot shows. One of these – *Pulse* – has been written by Paul Cornell. Cornell is a successful television screenwriter (with some of his *Doctor Who* episodes in the Hugo shortlists) as well as a popular comics writer (he recently completed a critically-acclaimed run on *Captain Britain* and is about to commence a highly-anticipated run on *Action Comics*) and novelist.

We caught up with him for a brief chat about *Pulse*.

Hub Magazine: *Pulse* is a blend of medical drama and thriller, with a good measure of horror. Horror hasn't been a staple of British TV since the late 80s. What made you decide that the time was right for *Pulse*?

Paul Cornell: I think it's a show that's quite obvious in a way: being in hospital, what's the worst that could happen? It's kind of the stuff you often talk about when you're working on a medical series like *Casualty*, but are never able to actually show. Horror is a big movie genre now, so it only makes sense that a very understandable sort of horror, that deals with what people actually fear in the here and now, could come to British TV. It's a character piece too. You care about these people, so you really don't want anything hideous and messy to happen to them.

HM: If *Pulse* is commissioned after the pilot season, what format will it take?

Paul Cornell: It would be on BBC3, and the plan at the moment is for it to be a six part series of hour long episodes.

HM: How will the BBC decide which of the pilots to take forward into full production?

Paul Cornell: It'll be down to online reaction. That's how *Being Human* went from pilot to series, with very

little help from the mainstream press. That's why it's really important to get people interested in the show before we go out, to get a buzz going.

HM: After submitting the script, what involvement did you have in the show?

Paul Cornell: I came onboard after two other writers had had a crack at the show, and saw it through a long development period. I've now finished working on the script for the second episode, and if we go to series I'll be plotting out the details of the arc, work with other writers who are brought on, and will write the last episode. I'm all over this, because I'm really excited about it.

HM: What attracted you to this particular project?

Paul Cornell: I like how much it's Hannah's story, how she has to decide who she can trust. I also like how it's something we haven't seen for ages, a young doctors show. The hope of these new guys set against something terrible they can only glimpse. I liked how it's not supernatural, either, how our horrors all grow out of medical science. We had many conversations about how medicine takes leaps forward in horrifying situations where ethics gets set aside. Pulse asks what would happen if a group of people did that deliberately, and started acting for the greater rather than the individual good. So we've got loads of delicious grey area ahead of us. And I love the quality of the people we've got working on this. The cast is excellent: I love what Claire Foy; Gregg Kinnear (the landlord in Being Human) and Ben Miles (from Coupling) are doing, to name but three. And James Hawes, the director, just brings this deep chill to it all, sets it in these huge dark NHS spaces. I hope people like it enough to get us the online reaction we need, so we can keep that story going.



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