

EGSM – Sci-Fi Films

Content Warnings

- Spoilers for Timeless, Looper, The World of Tomorrow, Alien: Prometheus
- Brief sexual reference
- Discussions of: death & murder, aliens, fire, police
- Mentions of: bombs, guns, food, blood, quarantine, body horror, alcohol, war

JONNY

...I would say what for me makes a good Sci-Fi movie, is when the technology is wet...

(Laughter)

TOM

Oh yeah.

(Laughter)

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans, and welcome to Enthusigasm. The show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers.

Today we're talking about Sci-Fi films and I am astronomically glad to be joined by Cathy, Jonny and Tom. As always, we shall introduce ourselves alphabetically, so Cathy, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

CATHY

Hello, I'm Cathy Rinella – she/her, and I am an audio master at Rusty Quill.

HELEN

And Jonny, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

JONNY

Hi, I'm Jonny – he/him, you will probably know me most from the Magnus Archives, and I do other things.

HELEN

Mysterious things?

JONNY

Watch, let me watch Sci-Fi movies sometimes.

(Laughter)

HELEN

And Tom, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

TOM

Hello, I'm Tom Crowley. I'm a he/him, and I do writing, acting and comedy in various media. People listening to this will probably know me best from Wooden Overcoats, which I act in and write for. I'm also in Victoriosity, the Beef and Dairy Network podcast, and I do my own solo sketch and character comedy podcast called Crowley Time, which is the one thing that I implore everyone listening to this to go and listen to, because it's the least well listened to of all the things I've mentioned.

HELEN

Aw!

(Laughter)

TOM

And it takes me hours!

(Laughter)

CATHY

Aw.

TOM

But people seem to like it, so I'm happy enough, but anyway, thank you. Yes, that's me.

HELEN

Okay, so, we're talking about Sci-Fi films and I'm interested to know what people think a film should have, or what kind of story it should be telling in order to be considered science fiction?

TOM

There's a bunch of answers to this, aren't there?

HELEN

Oh yeah, that's why I asked it.

TOM

And I think they change, depending on like how pedantic you are.

HELEN

Ooh, whoo whoo whoo.

TOM

Because I think technically science fiction is meant to be a vision of a future, or alternate present, where one particular scientific deviation or development, has pushed society in a certain direction, and if it's just like stuff in space, it's space fantasy and if it's the same as science fiction but there's no scientific element, it's just speculative fiction, I think.

HELEN

Errr....

JONNY

I think for me, like I mean it's genre questions are always like...

TOM

Boring!

JONNY

...complicated and like...

(Group laughter)

JONNY

Well, I'm not – like this is – it's...

HELEN

No, no, no, Tom is happy to call me out, on my own podcast.

TOM

Boring!

HELEN

First time that we've met each other.

TOM

No, it's not.

HELEN

It's fine.

TOM

It's not the question. Asking the questions are very interesting.

(Laughter)

JONNY

I have a very personal sort of way I think about like what is genre and what is setting, which weirdly I think actually comes from thinking about stuff in terms of like tabletop role playing. Where like you will have like the system, which is like how things are resolved, how the actual game works and the setting, and

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often you will have a system that can have lots of different settings; and like to me often genre feels like, what is the fiction, what is the fiction system? Like what is the fiction trying to achieve? So, I quite like speculative fiction as like the genre in terms of like – you're taking like a what if? You're looking at the world if X, which can apply to fantasy, it can apply to like space stuff, it can apply to the modern day.

Whereas I think of science fiction, as these days much more of a setting of much more of a like a set of aesthetics and tropes that tend to be wrapped around genre.

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

But that's like how I tend to think of it, and obviously as with all these – let's draw nice clean lines between different sorts of art and stories – it's all just drawing your own personal little boundaries.

TOM

I mean, you're not going to find a definitive answer, are you?

CATHY

No.

TOM

It's, because I suppose genre – you kind of go – I mean for one thing the word 'genre' now means sort of anything not set in the naturalistic present day world...

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

...or some things that are, but people, wizards or something.

JONNY

Yeah, in publishing, people would be like, "Oh no, that's genre fiction."

TOM

That's genre fiction actually yeah, because that guy's got a magic wand; but yeah, it's technically from what you're saying Jonny, quite an interesting way to think about it is like genre is action or adventure, but science fiction isn't really a genre anymore it's a trapping.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

It's a set of descriptors, or like identifiable characteristics that might contain a story that's a detective or a romance or a whatever.

JONNY

Yeah, absolutely.

HELEN

Mmm.

CATHY

I think science fiction has become such a misnomer to the point where it, to just to branch off that, it gets tacked on a lot to, just as a generic description of – well the story has science in it and it's fiction, so therefore it's science fiction. Which can be a little misleading from that kind of understanding of Sci-Fi being a possible future, and one, especially when you're looking at things that kind of track backwards into past story lines. I do think that line gets blurred a little bit there, but yeah, and I think science fiction also, depending on how you're looking at it, also is defined by showcasing, not just like a possible future based on a change, but also a reflection of the culture at the time that the story's been developed.

HELEN

Yeah.

CATHY

Because it's always about like, what's going to happen in the future due to these problematic events now? Or due to an issue that has popped up and how that reflects later on.

TOM

Yeah, well if instead of communists it was monsters, or similar?

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

Or in the 80s it's like, what will we do when fax machines get too powerful?

(Laughter)

TOM

And then explode a bomb.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Also, like as with all these question like, I think that these kind of labels are often useful as descriptive shorthand, so like...

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

...when you say, “Oh this is Sci-Fi” there’s a bunch of stuff that I’m like, okay I know I am therefore expecting X, Y and Z. As opposed to, I find that they are often counterproductive when they are used in the sort of a prescriptive way. As if to say, when you say, “Well, no, this label means it has to be X or Y” rather than...

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

...well, you know, I’ve heard that this label is applied to it so, I’ve got these expectations.

HELEN

Mmm.

TOM

Do you think that’s maybe a demographics thing as well? Like, a Hollywood producer has heard the commission bot 9000 has heard that Sci-Fi plays well now. So, they look for the word ‘Sci-Fi’ on the document, then it’s like, “Is it

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really science fiction?" Yeah, there's like a telepathic kid in it, so sure and there's like...

(Laughter)

..."oh, tick, Sci-Fi" like, maybe that's what these things are all in the service of?

HELEN

Mmm. So, relatedly, my next question was okay so, we'll discuss how science fiction heh! Can be what you like really.

JONNY

With films it's even more confusing, it's even more complicated in a lot of ways.

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

Because I think a lot of what I would consider the traditional, speculative fiction in terms of like exploring an idea within like an alternate world or like a futuristic context or this sort of thing. There's not actually a lot of that in the mainstream Sci-Fi movies. Like generally you'll get it more in like the indie space with something like Primer. Which is weird, because Primer is one of the most like purely sort of Sci-Fi speculative fiction in terms of what it is trying to

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do, which is like, “Hey, let’s properly try and explore the idea of time travel.”

Turns out it’s really, massively confusing and weird.

(Laughter)

But the trappings are not at all what one would consider normal Sci-Fi. It’s because it’s a pair of modern day inventors out of their garage and creating these devices that look very normal. So, it’s an interesting one that like to my eyes, genre-wise that is one of the most like science fiction movies out there, but you would not know it to look at it.

HELEN

Yeah.

TOM

Well, similarly I was looking into kind of what... how you would define this sort of thing and what films I count among favourites for me personally, and one of the few kind of really properly textbook definition science fiction movies is Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.

CATHY

Yeah.

HELEN

Oooo.

TOM

Which is a mumble core like indie rom-com with a sort of tragic bent to it, and it's like you wouldn't at all go Sci-Fi films of the last 20 years, *Eternal Sunshine*. It doesn't necessarily, but it is and if it were a novel you wouldn't question it once, you'd go, "Yeah, that's a science fiction novel."

JONNY

Yeah, because there isn't... there's quite the tradition of exploring ideas I think, in the Sci-Fi movie compared to like the Sci-Fi short story, novella novel, that sort of tradition, certainly not in the last like 30/40 years I'd say.

CATHY

Mmm.

JONNY

If you go back to the 70s and you get some really weird experimental stuff, where you know, like *Zardoz*, answering the question of "What if a giant floating head gave Sean Connery a gun while he was in a jockstrap?"

TOM

Vomited guns onto some guys.

(Laughter)

JONNY

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Yeah.

HELEN

What are your thoughts, Cathy?

CATHY

You took ‘em all.

(Laughter)

TOM

Thoughts on Zardoz? Pro/con.

CATHY

I find it interesting as a kind of a side step. I find it interesting how the idea of Sci-Fi as a quintessential genre has changed over the years.

HELEN

Mmm.

CATHY

When we’re talking about like a classic Sci-Fi film, my brain goes back to Forbidden Planet, 1950’s. One of the very first good, what I mean by good is non-B movie Sci-Fi films, because there were many B movie Sci-Fi films back in those days.

HELEN

Yeah, I don't actually know much about Forbidden Planet. What's actually...

CATHY

I would definitely go watch it. It's maybe about an hour and a half long, hour and 45 minutes. It is one of the grandfathers of a lot of what we consider classic popular Sci-Fi films today.

HELEN

Mmm.

CATHY

It's about a spaceship crew that comes down to a planet to retrieve a researcher and the rest of a colony that was left there, I don't know, like maybe 20 years prior, and they find there's only one survivor left...

HELEN

Oh.

CATHY

...and his daughter, and the whole story goes forth in like figuring out why they're there by themselves, and why suddenly the crew has a problem leaving.

HELEN

Oooooooooohhhhhhhh?

CATHY

Yes.

TOM

It's based on The Tempest, I believe.

HELEN

Oh.

JONNY

Yeah, Forbidden Planet is inspired by The Tempest, and like the Caliban figure is this really cool invisible monster.

CATHY

Yes.

JONNY

And you just sort of see the footprints going around, and at one point there's some special effect that like shows it in energy detail and it's a foot...

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

...it's a really cool 60s Sci-Fi effect actually, I really, I really rate it.

CATHY

Mm hmm. That one moment it's a very fluid animation that is, I don't know it gives off a lot of like animation vibes from like in the 80s when you had that combination of animation and live action, kind of meshed together for a time; but there's so many tropes and ideas that are established in Forbidden Planet that go on to show up in Star Trek, Star Wars, Dr Who, you name it. Transporters, certain borrowed props, special effects.

JONNY

It really sets the look...

CATHY

Yes, yeah.

JONNY

...of like Sci-Fi for the rest of the century.

CATHY

Yeah, it really does.

HELEN

Mmm.

TOM

I know they've re-used a load of props from Forbidden Planet for various episodes of the Twilight Zone, which being like a ginormously popular show at its time, I imagine that also bled through and created this incredible influential aesthetic just by accident, because they went, "Oh I needed a spaceship", there's one in back lot, we'll use that. What was this in? That Forbidden Planet or something, I don't know, can't remember.

(Laughter)

Ah that robot suit's cool, let's use that and it's just because they haven't got any money, because it's television in the 1960s.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Ah, I love recycled props, like periodically. Weirdly, like the soldier armour from Starship Troopers...

CATHY

Oh yeah.

JONNY

...keeps cropping up in low budget Sci-Fi shows.

TOM

Ah nice.

JONNY

Because they've clearly just got it, got a whole bunch of them still in a prop warehouse somewhere, and so whenever they're like, "Oh yeah, we need some like military looking dudes in space" it's like, here have the old Starship Troopers' armour.

(Laughter)

TOM

Beautiful, they must have made so many of them because there's a lot of shot, they don't all look like digital compositions either. Like they must have made dozens of those things.

HELEN

Mm hmm.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

And they're quite generic...

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

...that's mmmm (chef's kisses) – free cycle.

JONNY

Yeah, no, exactly and obviously this is back in the day where like, if you had a lot of extras dressed a certain way, what that meant is, you had a lot of costumes left over.

HELEN

Mmm.

TOM

Now they just film one guy and then duplicate him...

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

...digitally 4000 times.

JONNY

Also, from what I've heard a lot of the stuff that they make props out of these days, degrades a lot faster than the stuff...

TOM

Oh really?

JONNY

I could be talking completely out of my ass for this but yeah. I think modern props degrade faster than old ones, but I could be. You know what, I don't even remember where I heard that, so...

TOM

Did you dream this, Jonny?

(Laughter)

JONNY

I might have, who knows? Who knows?

HELEN

Is our thesis then that one of the things that makes a good Sci-Fi film is how many props from it get re-used in the future?

TOM

Yeah, in low budget television programs.

JONNY

To well, to be fair, if that's the case then almost all period dramas are also amazing Sci-Fi films.

CATHY

Yes.

TOM

Yeah, true.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Because the number of like Elizabethan dresses in Hollywood is like three.

CATHY

Yeah.

HELEN

It's because they take so long to make. It's very, very complex and very expensive.

TOM

Space soldier future guy - easy.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

Elizabethan, lady of the manor - incredibly difficult.

CATHY

Mmm.

(Laughter)

HELEN

I mean, what else in a more serious bent makes a good Sci-Fi film?

TOM

My answer is sort of dull, but this is what I would say about any film, which is like the human element of it.

HELEN

Mmm.

TOM

And by human, I mean any humanoid thinking creature.

HELEN

The person element.

TOM

You know, especially with Sci-Fi it could be an alien, yeah it could be a robot, it could be anything.

HELEN & CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

But it's you know, characters with interesting personalities that interact in interesting ways with other characters. Stories that come from character in jokes that ideally also come from character. Some degree of sort of humour of some kind, nothing too po-faced, in my opinion, that's more subjective I suppose; but also like, what I realised was also I think a key thing is taking the core idea, even if you're not going down the conventional one key scientific idea route, whatever your sort of central plot idea is or interesting reality of

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time bending idea, whatever it might be, and like really live it with some kind of commitment...

HELEN

Mmm.

TOM

...and invest some screen time and script time into how will people react to this, and I've got one specific example, which is only because I've watched it recently, but has anyone seen Timeless?

CATHY

No.

TOM

Which I believe is on UK Netflix? It's a kind of a sort of trans-continental Dr Who kind of thing, where like they wanted to a time travel type story but in time and specifically it's historical events, but I think the first episode suffers really badly from like being edited down from maybe a feature length pilot, to a 45 minute episode.

HELEN/CATHY

Mmm mmm.

TOM

Because your central team is you know, it's science, it's straight out of central casting like Sci-Fi movie main characters. You've got the female lead who's like a historian; you've got a military guy who's there to be the muscle; and you've got a nerd guy who's there to keep track of the like machines, basically. So, the female historian lead, I think because of some harsh edits, essentially, her introduction to like we've got time travel is like, "Cool, and?"

(Group laughter)

And you get, sort of ruins the entire first episode, because you go "Hang on, this is your entire life's work understanding history, you can go there now, yeah, cool, what?! Wow, that's crazy, anyway let's go..."

(Laughter)

That's ridiculous.

HELEN

I kind of respect that as a reaction.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah. Well...

HELEN

I like that, imagine being that unphased.

TOM

But would you do that?

(Laughter)

If you had your own time machine?

HELEN

No! But the fact that someone could is so wild, that I'm like yeah, I want to see what kind of person that is.

TOM

I find it hard to relate to that person.

(Laughter)

It's just like wow, really, anyway where are we going?

HELEN

That's why they're interesting.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah, well, maybe I mean but to my mind I think that would fall under like... I really feel like when you watch it. Firstly, the edits are incredibly quick, it's like expositional line, expositional line establishing genre in we go.

(Laughter)

So, you can really feel like they were up against it with cutting it down.

HELEN

I see.

TOM

And I feel like maybe her, well and the other main characters sort of arcs of going "a real time machine?!" of like, are just gone.

(Laughter)

And you're like, am I meant to be impressed by this or not in this world, it's kind of hard to tell, anyway...

JONNY

I have, obviously like Tom's answer, about like; good writing is the real answer.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Yes.

TOM

Good writing is the answer...

JONNY

But I would say what for me makes a good Sci-Fi movie, is when the technology is wet, or when it goes shh shhhhhs and releases a bunch of steam, you know?

(Laughter)

TOM

Oh yeah, we'll get back to that when we discuss my favourite Sci-Fi.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Oh.

JONNY

I like it when the technology feels very physical.

HELEN AND CATHY

Mm.

JONNY

And often, that means that like it will be rained on or like I don't know you think about those corridors in Alien where like you're on a spaceship why is everything dripping?

HELEN

Yeah.

CATHY

Yeah, yeah.

JONNY

But it is and that makes it feel very real and very like kind of industrial and lived in and...

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

Yeah, I like it when the technology is wet or when there's steam on it. I like that, that's cool to me.

TOM

Yeah.

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I can't remember who said this, it was either some great Sci-Fi theorist or it was just a friend of mine when I was young, I can't remember.

JONNY

I mean when you are young, all your friends are great Sci-Fi theorists.

(Laughter)

TOM

"Oh my god so deep man, thank you so much for saying that really insightful thing" that yeah, that kind of that's your outlook like basically at that age.

Yeah, but someone defined it as you know the empty box of Chinese takeaway on the spinner dashboard in Bladerunner basically, is like...

JONNY AND HELEN

Mmm.

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

You know the lived in Sci-Fi.

HELEN

Thoughts on the texture of machinery, Cathy?

CATHY

Oh.

(Laughter)

Oh, on machinery well, everything I have is a tangent, I love a bit of technobabble.

HELEN

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CATHY

I know that's debateable, but you know you can present me all the technology down the corridor, but if you can give me some wild explanation for why it's there or what it does with just a little bit of science truth in it - I'm sold.

(Laughter)

There's something about having that full explanation just delivered at length for me, that's like a partial immersion into the, oh yeah, I see, I appreciate.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

I will now buy into your narrative because you've at least tried to add some logic to this science fiction layout that you've given. Never mind the fact that we can tell from your prop that you've used three different electrical plugs and maybe two slider bars from an audio desk...

(Laughter)

...no, no that's alright, I will suspend my disbelief – we're good.

HELEN

Just look at things like, that is a toaster!

(Laughter)

TOM

And a Lego Millennium Falcon, on the side.

CATHY

Yes.

(Laughter)

JONNY

As opposed to something like Looper, which is explicitly is like “Hey, don’t think too hard about the time travel”.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

There’s literally a guy in Looper who’s like Joseph Gordon-Levitt’s boss who’s like “Uh, don’t think so much about the time travel, I can’t even keep it straight.”

CATHY

Oh.

(Laughter)

TOM

I think, yeah. I think it is Bruce Willis as well says this, and it’s about, he’s talking about the memories thing, which I think... that I forgive because it’s like yeah, what is the effective of mechanical time travel on a wet human brain like...

(Laughter)

...who knows?! Like, what would it be?

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

Yeah, but also what I liked about Looper was this idea that they've got time travel but it's awful!

(Laughter)

Like it's just like a washing machine that you shove an assassin in and then he turns up exactly, is it 30 years earlier, and they can't control it?

JONNY

Oh no, no the victims they loop the victims, they send the victims back.

CATHY

Oh, right.

TOM

Oh no, yeah that's right, not an assassin they send the...that's it and that's why Bruce... of course it is because that's why Bruce Willis turns up – spoiler alert for Looper.

(Laughter)

For anyone who doesn't know the premise of Looper.

JONNY

Oh, there's one other thing, there's one other thing that makes a Sci-Fi film really good and that's greebling, do you know greebling?

TOM

No.

HELEN

What's greebling?

CATHY

No.

TOM

The guy that Han Solo shot in the New Hope?

(Laughter)

JONNY

Well, no I mean to be fair, both the Millennium Falcon and the Death Star have loads of greebling on them.

TOM

Mm hmm.

JONNY

Greebling is that thing where on a flat Sci-Fi surface like on the outside of like on a big building or a spaceship, they put lots of like uneven little bits and bobs...

(Laughter)

CATHY

Oh.

JONNY

...and like little just details that like aren't really anything, they're just there to give the surface texture, and that's called Greebling.

TOM

Why are these ridges here? Oh, they're here to make the Death Star less aerodynamic.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah, and I love it, I love greebling. Everything looks better if it like... listener...

(Laughter)

...just Google greebling - G-R-E-E-B-L-I-N-G? - just Google it and it's great, I love it.

HELEN

And while audience you are Googling Greebling, we're going to take a break and we'll back in a second.

BREAK

HELEN

And welcome back.

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Okay, so we've discussed what Sci-Fi is and what is cool about it, and so now we're going to get into the meat of the question, not the meat of the episode. What are your favourite Sci-Fi films? Tell me about um' tell me why you like them.

TOM

Maybe the meat of the episode could be Soylent Green.

(Gasps!)

CATHY

Ooooh, yes!

TOM

That's not my answer, it's good but that's not what I was going to say.

JONNY

I saw it, yeah, it's alright.

(Laughter)

TOM

You just kept saying meat, sorry... that's what came to mind.

(Laughter)

HELEN

It's because Jonny's here.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Wow!

TOM

Mr. Meat himself, yeah.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Yeah.

(Laughter)

TOM

Mr Soylent, 1997.

(Laughter)

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HELEN

They call him Jonny Meaty Sims.

(Laughter)

TOM

Ah, Soylent Sims they call him.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah, it's really nice to have a professional on here.

HELEN

Cathy, let's move away from these terrible boys! Cathy, you and me, tell me your favourite Sci-Fi films?

(Laughter)

CATHY

Oh, let's see, I've got a soft spot for Sci-Fi comedies when they pop up, I love them.

HELEN

Ooooh.

CATHY

I love them to bits. I love Galaxy Quest.

HELEN

(Gasps)

That's so good.

CATHY

I think Paul's really nice. I love Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy.

HELEN

Oh well naturally.

CATHY

Well naturally, but also the TV series that preceded the movie as well, was brilliant and wonky.

So many 80s movies that went down that trajectory of weird science.

HELEN

Mmmm.

CATHY

You know from Back to the Future, Ghostbusters, Bill and Ted's – all those just wonderful.

(Laughter)

If I was to look at something non-comedy, I did recently watch a series of shorts called The World of Tomorrow, by Don Hertzfeldt (I think I'm saying that correctly).

TOM

Oh right, yeah.

JONNY

I don't know it.

HELEN

Ooh.

CATHY

Yes, it's an... there's a series of animated shorts made over the course of probably three years total I think, they get dark but...

(Laughter)

HELEN

That's never happened in Sci-Fi before!

TOM

What you mean dark from Don "My Anus is Bleeding" Hertzfeldt.

(Laughter)

HELEN

What?!

(Laughter)

TOM

That's a different movie, it's a...

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

...the more famous one, I think.

HELEN

Is the movie called "My Anu- what is this?!"

CATHY

No.

TOM

It's the rejected ads I think it's called.

CATHY

Yes.

TOM

Rejected Adverts which was...

HELEN

Oh, okay.

TOM

That was the one that I guess went viral but kind of before that was a thing, I suppose, it's very popular.

CATHY

Yeah, yeah back in the early 2000s, yeah.

TOM

Yeah, yeah.

CATHY

Bunch of rejected animated shorts for hypothetical big companies that then the animation kind of took over itself.

HELEN

I see.

CATHY

What I love about this series of shorts a) that they are shorts, which after Lord of the Rings kind of made the presence of... made it known to Hollywood that hey, people will sit for like a three hour long movie, that I think a lot of Sci-Fi movies have kind of like get into a bit long drama that you've got to sit two and a half hours for, and there's so much that you can tell with Sci-Fi elements and in just a short time period, and I think that it gets kind of lost, so it's kind of refreshing to watch a short that goes into his whole universe.

But more fascinating is that what the creator did is, it's a series of three and the first one he took a recording of his niece's ramblings, who was like four years old at the time, and made a story out of the babblings that his four year old niece was making.

HELEN

Oh, that's great.

CATHY

And it's wonderful; and then the second episode is the continuation of that first episode, and it's the ramblings of his niece when she was five.

TOM

Oh nice.

HELEN

Oh.

CATHY

Except it got so much more complicated within that one year...

(Laughter)

...between aged four and five, that it took him three times as long to get the second episode done. I think it took like a year and a half to kind of piece together, produce, write, animate etc; and then the third one is trying to tie the universe that basically his niece made at this young age...

(Laughter)

...piece it together and kind of jump into the fallout of what happened with all the elements that happened in episodes one and two.

TOM

Oh.

CATHY

It is very nice. I say it's dark because there's a lot of time travel, and there's a lot of themes of mortality and immortality and if you can live forever, how cheap life suddenly becomes.

TOM

Mmm.

HELEN

Tom, what's your favourite Sci-Fi film?

(Laughter)

TOM

Now I thought about this long and hard it's...

(Laughter)

...it's hard to say, I think probably the best Sci-Fi film ever made is Alien, because it is the best film ever made that is a science fiction film.

(Laughter)

If that definition makes sense.

HELEN

Oh.

TOM

In that it's just an incredible film, like it's so tight and taught and the characterisation is beautiful, and it's just fantastic. It stands up so incredibly well in terms of its design, music, acting everything.

HELEN

I found that Alien often comes up.

TOM

Yeah.

HELEN

Do you not think it's more of a horror film?

TOM

Now this is an interesting question, because again I was thinking about this when I was looking up you know oh, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, is an absolute copper bottomed classic Sci-Fi plot.

HELEN

Yeah.

CATHY

Mm.

TOM

And Alien is a haunted house film in space, but like yes, I would say yes it is a science fiction film or a Sci-Fi horror if you want to go into subgenres, because if you take the textbook definition you're saying this is a future where humanity is exploring new uncharted plains.

HELEN

Yeah.

TOM

So, whereas like you might have met a tiger as a sort of trader or trucker on a clipper ship in the fifteenth century and gone "What's that?!" like now you're seeing the Xenomorph and going "Woooah, what's that?" in space, you know space clipper ship; so I think yes it does count, because it's taking a sort of scientific advancement or a point in humanity's future that follows a specific thing, and also, crucially, it has that kind of classic science fiction corporate dystopian element to it.

HELEN AND CATHY

Mmmm.

TOM

In terms of like where human sight is going, it's because of Weyland-Yutani that they can't obey the quarantine rules and they can't behave responsibly.

HELEN

Yeah.

TOM

It's all Weyland-Yutani trying to acquire the Xenomorph.
So, I would say yes it does count, even if yes, the way in which it's a great film is the way in which it's horror I suppose primarily.

HELEN AND CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

You know this is where the patented Jonny Sims classification method really comes into its own.

TOM

Here we go. Here we go.

JONNY

Because I can very easily say well as a genre, it's a horror movie.

(Laughter)

But the setting is science fiction.

TOM

It's science fiction, actually.

Yeah, the more you think it doesn't make sense does it because there's not one Sci-Fi aesthetic or plot or tone is there.

So, Spaceballs and Alien technically are in the same, and have John Hurt playing the same character in them both, so that's actually too close an example if anything.

CATHY

Yeah.

(Laughter)

JONNY

No, Alien's fantastic.

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

Like, again, strong example of my wet technology thesis.

TOM

Very much, yeah.

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

Because everything's very physical, everything's dripping – why is it dripping?

(Laughter)

I don't know! Surely the water is important to not be dripping in a closed...

(Laughter)

The closed environment of a spaceship.

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

But no, no, it's just leaking down everywhere. It's all over the shop.

TOM

Why it's the future, and we've mastered you know lightspeed interstellar travel, but we haven't mastered like a boiler!

(Laughter)

Like you still might need a bath in the morning, and so you have to have a boiler and sometimes those pipes leak, hence steam and condensation develops so...

HELEN

Mm hmm.

JONNY

I love Alien as well because it is something you don't actually see super often, which is a working class Sci-Fi.

TOM

Yeah completely.

CATHY AND HELEN

Mmmmm.

JONNY

Does that make sense?

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

Like every, all the characters are like blue collar, they are truckers like they are...

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

They are there to maintain and look after this big mining ship, and like there's like I think Ash the android is like the closest thing to like a scientific professional.

TOM AND HELEN

Mmmm.

JONNY

It's interesting if you chart the sort of the progression of like the Alien stuff to Prometheus, which is much more of a... I was about to say a much more of a middle class crew, which I felt very silly for saying, but actually it's true.

TOM

Yeah, it is.

JONNY

The Prometheus crew is... it's like the Alien crew, but everyone's middle class professionals who want to do some science.

TOM

Mmm, there's a geologist, he likes rocks, there's that guy, classic character.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

A biologist probably I don't remember. There's a couple I think they have sex in the shower at the end in a real like eleventh hour Hail Mary nudity.

JONNY

Probably, it's been a long time...

I'll be honest, Prometheus did not stick with me.

TOM

No. It's not great.

(Laughter)

I mean like, yeah. But I think that is one reason. I think what you're describing there as well, I think you can make a really interesting comparison with another contender for favourite Sci-Fi, which is another film that also could be called a horror instead which is The Thing.

JONNY

The Thing!

HELEN

Oooh, The Thing.

CATHY

Mmmm, yeah.

TOM

Which is one of my maybe top fives of all time, top ten definitely.

JONNY

Well, yeah. Absolutely, and like the thing is, I was trying to decide whether to say The Thing as my favourite Sci-Fi movie...

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

...because it is straight up, just like my favourite movie. Or like right up there.

TOM

Oh man yeah, absolutely, it's astonishing, but also I think maybe that you can say it's Sci-Fi I think because of course there's the mistrust and the shapeshifting element, which is science fiction. No one's that good with the makeup kit.

JONNY

Also, it's a alieamum

TOM

Yeah, it's an alieamum, but if you want to take the sort of does the Sci-Fi thing, is it only setting or does it affect the story, it does, partly again because it's kind of virus like mass reproduction is the reason they can't let it get away from the base, which also sort of drives the plot. So, I think yes, it is Sci-Fi true blue.

JONNY

It asks the question, what would the world be like if there was an 'orrible shapeshifting monster which could look like you.

TOM

That's right.

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

And then didn't look like you and looked like you but with a big mouth where your head was...

(Laughter)

...and you were chomping on a guy and he was like [screaming]

(Laughter)

And Kurt Russell was trying to get the flame thrower going, but it wasn't going...

TOM

Yeah, and reviled in the paramedic community that film.

(Laughter)

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

As what if's go, rapid response healthcare professionals just hate it.

JONNY

Aw, I need to re-watch The Thing.

TOM

But no... so I think you can make an interesting study of The Thing and I think it's 2011 remake/prequal to The Thing.

JONNY AND HELEN

Mmmmm.

TOM

Because The Thing is a film about men, guys being dudes – as they say.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Just guys being dudes with a couple of dogs.

JONNY

Yeah, it's about dudes rocking, in the snow.

TOM

Again, kind of working class Sci-Fi movie, I suppose there's a lot of doctors professionals you know like soldiers, pilots, people who might be in kind of slightly more middle class or possibly professional...

JONNY

But it is all pitched as like yeah like, it's got a very blue collar vibe.

TOM

Yeah, yeah very much so.

They're just working their nickel, you know they're working their shift and it sucks, it's awful and they hate it and it's really lonely and boring, and they're a bunch of sweaty frustrated men...

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

Like who just desperately want to have a break and go home. It seems to be at when they're at their least patient that this awful thing strikes, and so it's just a bunch of guys making really bad decisions because they're tired and lonely and angry and they're running out of whiskey.

JONNY

Yeah.

HELEN

So, Jonny is it fair to say The Thing is your favourite Sci-Fi film?

JONNY

It's my favourite film. I would say that my favourite Sci-Fi film, I mean it's probably Robocop.

TOM

I had Robocop on my list too. Robocop's stunning.

CATHY

Ah, yeah, that's nice.

HELEN

Ooooh.

JONNY

Because Robocop really, in terms of speculative fiction, it asks the question of; what if a policeman was a robot?

(Laughter)

But also, a man, you know?

TOM

If you're not familiar with the premise, he's part man/part machine, but simultaneously...

JONNY

All cop.

TOM

He is all cop, yeah.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah, all cop entirely.

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

(Laughter)

It's just a perfect movie.

TOM

It's brilliant.

JONNY

In the sense to me a perfect movie is a movie that cannot achieve what it is going for better than it does.

TOM, HELEN AND CATHY

Mmm.

JONNY

And like Robocop is going for some stuff.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

Like, Paul Verhoeven is not a subtle director.

TOM

What do you mean?

(Laughter)

A board game played by children called Nuke 'Um where you practice global thermal nuclear war of all your family.

(Laughter)

Advertised on telly with cheering Americans – ah, I don't know what you mean.

JONNY

I'd buy that for a dollar.

(Laughter)

But it's ah, it's just really good also it has... it's one of those movies where like I realised gradually how much of a favourite it was of mine, because like back in the days when you know people watched TV with like loads of channels, periodically late at night flicking through any time I flicked onto something and Robocop was there, it didn't matter at what point it was I was like, oh I guess I'm watching Robocop until the end of Robocop...

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah, Predator is sort of similar, actually, I think it's hard to not to be in the mood.

CATHY

Can I just say thank you very much for this play by play reminder of Robocop because I have a bad habit of...

(Laughter)

...no, no, no honestly, genuinely, I have this bad habit of super imposing similar things on top of each other so, somewhere in my past I have gotten Robocop and the Terminator kind of fused together into one movie.

JONNY

No that makes sense.

TOM

Yeah, yeah.

CATHY

Yeah, and now I've got to back and watch it again.

JONNY

I'm pretty confident, I'm pretty confident that I could broadly shot for shot just tell Robocop as a story.

(Laughter)

Like when that guy dips his fingers in... when Clarence sticks his fingers in that guy's wine and puts it up his nose for some reason.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

And he's like "AHHHH".

TOM

Miguel Ferrer's reaching for the grenade, he's reaching for the grenade!

(Laughter)

HELEN

I've never seen Robocop, so all of this is just the wildest thing I've heard.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Yeah, it's... why does he do it? Nobody knows.

(Laughter)

CATHY

Oh gosh.

HELEN

Right, well I was going to round us off on a final question, but we're really running over, tell you what I will do... we will do the last...

JONNY

Also, I love Dark City, if you haven't seen Dark City, watch Dark City.

TOM

Oh, I haven't seen Dark City, thank you, yes.

JONNY

Watch Dark City.

HELEN

Okay.

CATHY

Nice!

HELEN

I'm going to ask, what I hope will be a fairly quick question...

TOM

Hah!

HELEN

Which is, is there an upcoming Sci-Fi film that anyone is excited about?

TOM

No! There we go, that was quick.

(Laughter)

HELEN

That's like – perfect!

JONNY

I mean actually also no, because I'm really bad at keeping up with upcoming films.

(Laughter)

I'm always getting surprised.

TOM

I'm sure there's a bunch to be fair. I think I saw an interesting one called Chariot.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

I'll give you a quick run down of some research I did earlier, very quickly.

HELEN

Okay.

TOM

Chariot is a film that's coming up which is starring John Malkovich with interesting premise. It looks like it might get you wrapped up in its own nonsense, but the trailer was very interesting until a woman turned up doing the worst English accent I've ever heard.

HELEN

Oh no.

TOM

Spider-Verse 2 (Part One) is a Sci-Fi film I guess is all about multiverses, Spider-Verse is maybe the third or fourth best superhero film ever made!

JONNY

Oh, it's great.

CATHY

Mm hmm, yes.

TOM

After the Incredibles, Rocketeer and Mask of the Phantasm.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Strong...okay.

TOM

Yes, well listen, I'll stand by that I'll stand by that.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Rusty Quill - Enthusiasm – Sci-Fi Films

If you want to do another Enthusiasm on Batman, the animated series
Helen...

CATHY

Oh, yeah.

TOM

Oh god yeah, absolutely.
Yeah, anytime, anywhere!

(Laughter)

CATHY

Yes please.

TOM

But I loved Spideverse so much, I worry about it being stretched out beyond
its welcome and getting franchised to death like everything else.

HELEN

Yeah.

JONNY

We'll wait and see.

TOM

And I think Lightyear will be loads of fun.

CATHY

Yes.

TOM

Even though it's not the most exciting prospect ever, I'm still like... Pixar are some of the best people in the world at making films and if they're going to make a fun Sci-Fi romp I will be there to watch it.

HELEN

Yeah, what about you Cathy?

CATHY

I would say of the line-up that's coming down the pipeline, I would also say Lightyear, I don't know what to expect from it, but the more I see the trailers the more I'm catching onto somebody, or maybe the entire department is in animation or in story boarding, definitely has a Sci-Fi background and they definitely went into do their research both in fiction and fact because you've got certain shots that they're throwing out there in the trailer of like the launches and the mechanics that very much, it gives off some NASA vibes from some of their recent launches.

HELEN

I see.

CATHY

And a lot of the shots that they're previewing, there's one that kind of reminds you a little bit of Dagobah from Star Wars.

(Laughter)

There's another shot that looks eerily like something out of Space: Above and Beyond, which is a 90s Sci-Fi TV series. Still more that kind of looks like it could be related to Halo shots a little bit.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

So, it's like it's all over it's like you know what, this looks like it could be a fun easter egg basket of like little Sci-Fi goodies for the nerds out there.

HELEN

Yeah.

CATHY

So, for that alone, I'm looking forward to seeing that one.

JONNY

I like the idea... I quite like that it's a, like a PG13.

CATHY

Yeah.

JONNY

I really, actually want them to go a little bit further and make it a hard R...

(Laughter)

To reference the fact that, certainly in my youth a lot of the coveted children's toys were for movies that were thoroughly inappropriate.

(Laughter)

TOM

Yeah, Aliens, there were Aliens action figures, and of course they were!

JONNY

Aliens action figures... Robocop!

CATHY AND TOM

Yeah.

JONNY

Like you got loads of Robocop merchandise and I'm like...

TOM

Remember when Buzz Lightyear shot that guy's dick off in Lightyear...

(Laughter)

JONNY

And so, there's a part of me that like I really love the idea that in Toy Story, Buzz Lightyear is an action figure for like a really dark gritty Sci-Fi movie.

(Laughter)

That has been inexplicitly marketed to children.

TOM

What if like, we've got kind of like references to maybe Dagoba, you know I imagine there maybe a sort of a, Hoff analogue maybe even some sort Halo-esque looking stuff.

CATHY

Yeah.

TOM

What if you go through all that stuff and you think oh, what's going on here, and at the very end of the film a guy comes out, you know from the shadows, and it's Bruce Willis and this film is also in the Unbreakable universe.

(Laughter)

JONNY

Or the Fifth Element universe.

TOM

Oh, now well, now that's a different story.

JONNY

Yeah.

TOM

I mean...

(Laughter)

HELEN

It is a story that we cannot go into now.

TOM

Oh. Shame.

HELEN

But I am interested in it, and listener you can ponder it and write your own version of what might happen in that film.

Thank you for listening to us talk about so many things.

(Laughter)

TOM

Sci-Fi movies, right? Just all the way through...

JONNY

As much as 20% of it probably useable.

HELEN

Yeah!

TOM

Yeah! This podcast is 12 minutes long.

(Laughter)

HELEN

Rusty Quill - Enthusigasm – Sci-Fi Films

And thank you very, very much to you my lovely guests for coming on the show. This has actually been a lot of fun. I have laughed a lot!

So, I will see you in the next episode, but for now, it's goodbye from me, goodbye, and it is goodbye from them, do you all want to say goodbye...

EVERYONE

Bye.

TOM

Goodbye, I love you.

[Show Theme - Outro]

HELEN

Enthusigasm is a podcast distributed by Rusty Quill and licensed under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial share alike 4.0 international license. It is directed by Helen Gould, produced by Lowri Ann Davies with executive producers Alexander J Newall and April Sumner, and edited by Marisa Ewing, Tessa Vroom and Catherine Rinella. Thanks for listening.

[Show Theme – Outro Ends]

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