



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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**The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy
"מדע בדיוני והעולם האמיתי" – הרצאת גפן בחודש יוני.**

במסגרת ההרצאה יערך גיא וינר דיון פתוח בהשתתפות הקהל, שיידון במקרים בהם המדע הבדיוני והפנטסיה פרצו את גבולות הקהילה הסגורה והשפיעו על העולם כולו, תוך דגש על יצירותיהם של טולקין ושל רוברט היינליין. מדוע *שר הטבעות* *גר בארץ נוכריה* הם ספרים כה משפיעים, בניגוד ליצירות דומות בתחום?

ההרצאה תתקיים ביום ד' 29.6.05 בשעה 20:00 בבית אריאלה (שד' שאול המלך 25, ת"א). הכניסה חופשית.

חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

פעילויות התא מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2, בבניין ליד הבריכה. הפעילויות ללא תשלום.

26.6 – מ.ק. 22

מידע נוסף ניתן לקבל באתר התא (<http://sfir.tk/>) או בדוא"ל sfir42@yahoo.com

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Many Film Reviews:

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (2005)

Directed by Garth Jennings, the original book by Douglas Adams, screenplay by

Douglas Adams and Karey Kirkpatrick, 109 minutes

Rated PG for thematic elements, action and mild language.

Reviewed by **Aharon Sheer**:

I had the pleasure of seeing this movie with my wife and our old friend Bess Speizer. Now my wife and Bess had never read Douglas Adams' books *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, had never heard the radio play or seen the TV mini-series. For them all of the humorous ideas were completely new, and they enjoyed it thoroughly. It's a fun satire of bureaucracy, and humanity. And of course it's all satire on science fiction! There are surprises all the way through (it's the mice that are the most intelligent beings on earth). It's good-humored and enjoyable. Seen with fresh eyes it is delightful. And in truth, I enjoyed it too, even though I've read the books and seen the TV mini-series. (It's also true I could never get into the original radio series – I just could not understand the upper-class English accents.) The only minor thing in the movie that bothered me was the Vogon bureaucracy, which was supposed to be the height of bureaucratic impenetrability. It's true that the Vogons make you fill out various forms, and finding out which forms are needed can be a bit of a problem. But

once you've filled out the right forms, the Vogon bureaucrats on the spot stamp the form "APPROVED" and you're on your way. That's not how it happens in Israeli bureaucracy! In Israel you never get the forms approved on the spot. Just think of the last time you took a driving test in Israel. They cannot possibly give you the answer on the spot, for fear that if they turn you down you will pull out a knife and kill the examiner. Nope. "You will get an answer in the mail." How many times I've heard that refrain! Clearly the people who made this movie have no idea of what bureaucracy is about. They are Americans! In any case, I enjoyed the movie, recommend it to others, and would be happy to see it again.

Reviewed by Mordechai Housman

The HHGG Review or How Many Paths Must a Writer Walk Down?

When James Thurber left the theater after watching the preview of the movie made of his masterpiece, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," he remarked sarcastically, "Did anyone catch the name of that movie?"

Douglas Adams would have been more likely to say, "That was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike the book," except for the fact that he wrote for the first few drafts of the movie himself. He undoubtedly knew what twists and turns the plot would take, and probably wrote most those twists and turns himself.

It was a good movie. I liked it, once I stopped expecting it to turn into a moving version of the book. Even while watching it, I felt that this movie is a *very* nice tribute to Douglas Adams. The nature scenes, and particularly the references to Madagascar, were a moving testimonial and honorable tribute to the memory of Douglas Adams and his life and work.

And die-hard fans like myself notwithstanding, the plot of the first book would probably *not* have worked very well as a movie. Admittedly, the plot of the movie was not a very complex one, which was shameful, considering Adams' amazing propensity for complexity and tying together very diverse elements. The plot of the movie seemed to serve no better purpose than as a vehicle to hold

together the basic concepts that Douglas Adams had created, relegating the plot to a barely necessary evil. But after all, it was not, when you think about it, the *story* in the *HHGG* that made it so great, but Adams' brilliant concepts and how he interwove them.

The sort of plot elements that Adams created so brilliantly would in any case be impossible for such a movie. Any one of them, for example the artificial universe that Zarniwoop creates for Zaphod, which allows him to escape the horrible effects of the Total Perspective Vortex, could float almost an entire movie by itself, if it could somehow be at all explained via that medium. There is simply no way any one of these concepts could be treated in a movie to any satisfying degree.

But as a result, they went only half-way with some of Adams' ideas. For example, why the doors sighed must have been incomprehensible to anyone who has not read the book. Thus, it is not likely to ever be a widely popular film, because so much of it is incomprehensible, except to already committed *HHGG* fans.

But despite the flaws, I liked the picture, and I think Adams would have as well. It was rather loosely based on the first book in his series, but it took it in a rather different direction, with new plot devices. Unfortunately, they were easily

recognizable as mere plot devices, and it was hard to figure out why they belonged there. At least two of those scenes seemed rather stupid and pointless. Nevertheless, it was a funny movie, and it was mostly good.

I am sure some disliked the movie because it deviated too widely from the books, from Douglas Adams' "vision," but the fact is that Douglas Adams himself was not true to the "vision." The book series was very different than the radio series, and the TV series walked a path somewhere in-between. Nothing that Adams did was the same twice.

Furthermore, why would I want a moving clone of the book? I already know all the jokes in the book. In fact, I know them better than I know some of the members of my family. Why would I want to hear them all over again, straight out of one or all of the other media versions of the series? It would be pointless.

Instead, this was a refreshing approach, with *new* jokes, and a *new* plot, yet using all the same basic concepts and the same old characters.

Okay, well, that's perhaps where some of the more irritating differences were to be found: in the characters. Some of the characters were done simply wrong.

Ford Prefect was a completely different character. Gone was the sarcasm, the cruel humor, the lackadaisical callousness, the complete and total irresponsibility. This Ford Prefect was more reminiscent of *Red Dwarf's* Cat, with touches of *Star Trek's* Data. He was an entertaining character, even though those comparisons are not favorable. This put a damper in his immortal line, "No, I was just fooling. We're going to die after all." Instead of it being one of his ghastly jokes, the line was done seriously, as if the screenwriter

had no idea what the original line meant. In general, the final writer seemed to have no idea what some of the lines meant, and which lines *HHGG* fandom considers immortal and important. (See Slartibartfast, below.) On numerous occasions they applied quotes to the wrong character, and sometimes the effect was lost. This sort of thing was also done in the *Harry Potter* movies, but not to such detrimental effect.

Zaphod Beeblebrox was almost the same as in the book, though somewhat more intense than the TV series and radio versions. But in any of the other series he never cared about anything strongly enough to make threats about it. Zaphod of any other version couldn't have cared less if Trillion knew that Earth had been demolished, and all other versions (except the radio version) might have cared only a little if Trillion had known that he had signed the order.

Arthur Dent was not quite the same old layabout he was in all the other versions, but the difference was not all that great. However, here we see some growth of the character, and at the end of the movie he is not the same as he was at the beginning. This is necessary for a movie, and so I think it was acceptable, particularly because he got the girl in the end. I was also happy that he wasn't the butt of everyone's jokes as he was in the books and TV series.

Trillion was someone else entirely, somewhat less personality and a little harder to like than the radio series version. However, she was by far a great improvement over the vapid TV series Trillion. And this version was a better match with Arthur anyway. (The book Trillion was almost inconsequential, and seemed mostly like background.)

Slartibartfast was very different, and actually rather delightful in this

incarnation. I loved the nervous, slightly bumbling air about him, which made his famous line "I told you my name wasn't important," work better for him. Unfortunately, most of his other lines didn't work at all in the context of this movie. In particular, not knowing what sixties sitcoms are is a better line than not knowing what cheese is.

I thought the religion created out of the Great Arkelseizure concept was hilarious. The sneeze that replaced the "amen" had me giggling. That was a nice touch.

The temporary changes the characters went through every time they used the Infinite Improbability Drive were hilarious.

It is noteworthy that the nature scenes were stunningly beautiful. The special effects were incredibly good, and the music was outstanding at some points.

The familiar theme music came in rather late, but I was delighted when it showed up. There were two *Guide* entries that were not in the book, and those were nice. The graphics for the book were not spectacular, but they were good, though animated for some reason. (By the way, stay until the end of the closing credits; it's worth it.)

I especially liked the ending, where Slartibartfast says "Everyone hold tight," and Trillion hugs Arthur. I *hate* stories that end unhappily, and this put things right. It's how Adams *should* have written the ending, for *this* Trillion. It wouldn't have worked for the book Trillion.

So I guess what I'm saying is: I had fun. Who cares about integrity? After all, I'd far rather be happy than right any day.

Reviewed by Devra Kunin aka J. F. Rivkin/Ellen Foxxe

Finally made it to the movie, along with a couple of other science-fiction writers. None of us liked this version. I was put off from the start by the fact that my favorite lines were missing from the dialogue, namely (I quote very approximately, from memory): "I see. This is apparently some new definition of 'safe', with which I am not familiar!" and "Ford, you're turning into a penguin -- stop that!" Perhaps I've been spoiled by listening to the original (and still the best) version -- the radio play -- more than once, but, on the other hand, I suspect that someone who wasn't familiar with it would have trouble following this version. It was nice to hear some of the original voices from the radio play, but how could anyone cast Marvin as a featureless ping-pong ball, when it's perfectly obvious that he looks like a cross between a shopworn Chevy and a vintage upright vacuum cleaner?? And Zaphod -- of course he was shallow and egotistical in the extreme, but in an original and amusing way, not in a sophomoric and tedious way! What makes people think they can improve on Douglas Adams's writing? If they could, they'd be Douglas Adams, not Disney hacks. The best I can say for the movie is that the special effects were well done, and the casting -- except for Marvin -- was OK, especially Slartibartfast, who looked exactly right. One final warning for anyone who hasn't already wasted money on this poor excuse for *Hitchhiker*, and is determined to do so: Don't leave as soon as the credits start to roll.

Reviewed by Ben Svetitsky

"Brain the size of a planet ..." Yes, if you know the books as all true sf fans should, then you, too, can recite much of the dialogue together with the actors. But not all. After the radio show, the book, and the TV show, the movie is (1) lavish, (2) self-contained, (3) somewhat expanded, and (4) short (who would have thunk it).

Lavish: This time around, Marvin cost more than \$.39 at Woolworth's. Special effects abound (though it's not **Star Wars**). The "factory floor" of Magrathea is unforgettable!

Self-contained: The plot actually wraps up! Damn mice...

Expanded: Arthur is humanized (though not well acted) and given a voice, particularly opposite Trillian; the Vogons are marvellous and they're given a more central role (but what can be more central than the Destructor Fleet?); and a number of little things....

Short: Well, the 10:30 showing will have you home by 1 AM, which I guess is a plus. And of course the time is constrained in any movie. But this means the movie can't dwell on anything. The wild ideas go by quickly, maybe too quickly. Marvin's interjections are brief (but he's great! and his body language is SO expressive). There are a few readings from the **Guide**, but much fewer than in the previous versions. The Heart of Gold is never really explained. I missed Trillian's countdown of the improbability factor. The list could become endless, of course. I admit it's hard for me to get a perspective on this, since over the years **Hitchhiker** has expanded to fill the brain cells available.

On the other hand, if you can SEE the effects of a Pan-Galactic Gargleblaster, you don't need to have it explained to you. Likewise The Thumb.

Pluses: Slartibartfast is quite good, and quite different from the TV show. THE BIG PLUS is Mos Def as Ford Prefect. (Or is it Ford Prefect as Mos Def? Which sounds more alien?)

Minus: John Malkovitch. And his whole plot segment.

I can't imagine how this movie plays for people who don't already know **Hitchhiker**. Such people are to me more alien than Zaphod Beeblebrox.

Reviewed by Ted Henderson

As the film opens, we find the dolphins fleeing the earth; as the second most intelligent creatures on Earth, they sense an impending disaster. We next find Arthur Dent (Martin Freeman) at home in England. He is joined by his friend, Ford Prefect, (Mos Def) who has come to tell him that the earth is to be destroyed by the Vogons, a large, ugly, and bureaucratic group of aliens who are planning on building an intergalactic bypass through Earth. It turns out that Ford Prefect is also an alien who is on

Earth while he is writing a chapter in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He summons a large spacecraft to which they are both transported. There they find Arthur's girlfriend, Trillian (Zooey Deschanel) and a robot named Marvin who is morose and depressed. From there, they witness Earth being blown up. The four of them are transported to another spaceship where they meet the galaxy president, Zaphrod Beetlebrox, a rather laid back, nonpresidential individual. He is

possessed of three arms and two heads which have different personalities. They are put in contact with the Galactic Questular who informs them that the destruction of Earth was a bureaucratic error. They are sent to the Planet Factory on the planet Megrathea where the supervisor tells them that there is a backup copy of Earth, so that it can be restored just as it was, and everything ends happily. Along the way, we find that humans are the third most intelligent beings, and that mice are the most intelligent beings and are in charge of the galaxy. They have been performing experiments on humans, instead of the other way around.

I found the movie to be most enjoyable and worth the admission price of \$8.00 which is currently being charged in Los Angeles. If I had not gone to an afternoon matinee showing, the price would have been \$10.00. The film was made in England, and used many English

actors with whom I was not familiar. Some reviewers have likened the endeavor to *Monty Python*, with which I agree. There are a number of references to English culture which are probably lost on American viewers. The bureaucratic Vogons are probably a reflection on English civil servants. The character, Ford Prefect, is named after car manufactured by Ford in England, but which is not available in the United States. Arthur Dent unsuccessfully searches the galaxy for a proper cup of tea.

This film represents the latest incarnation of *The Hitchhiker's Guide* by Douglas Adams. It has been a radio series, a TV series, and a series of novels. I have not heard, seen, nor read any of these, so I can not make any comparisons. A friend who has read the books tells me that the movie is akin to, but quite different from those.

Reviewed by Amnon Stupp

I saw *Hitchhiker* two days ago. I never liked the book, couldn't get past the first 20 pages. I thought maybe the Hebrew translation wasn't good so I bought the book in English. Couldn't get past the first 5 pages. This humour just doesn't speak to me. Probably it is too nonsensical / impossible. However, my father, who has never read the book, liked the movie and laughed in several places. He said the movie reminded him of some Woody Allen films where the humour was also "shtutnik".

Visually and "movie-wise" the film is very well made. The satirical nature is of course evident from the first scene when the analogy between Dent's house and the Earth is made. From there we understand that everything is allegorical.

I would recommend it not as an sf movie, because it isn't, but as a comedy / satire.

For Comments: 13 Pinsker St., Rehovot 76308. Email: asheer@netvision.net.il. Tel: Aharon Sheer 08-947-1225
 Editor: Aharon Sheer. Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulou
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