

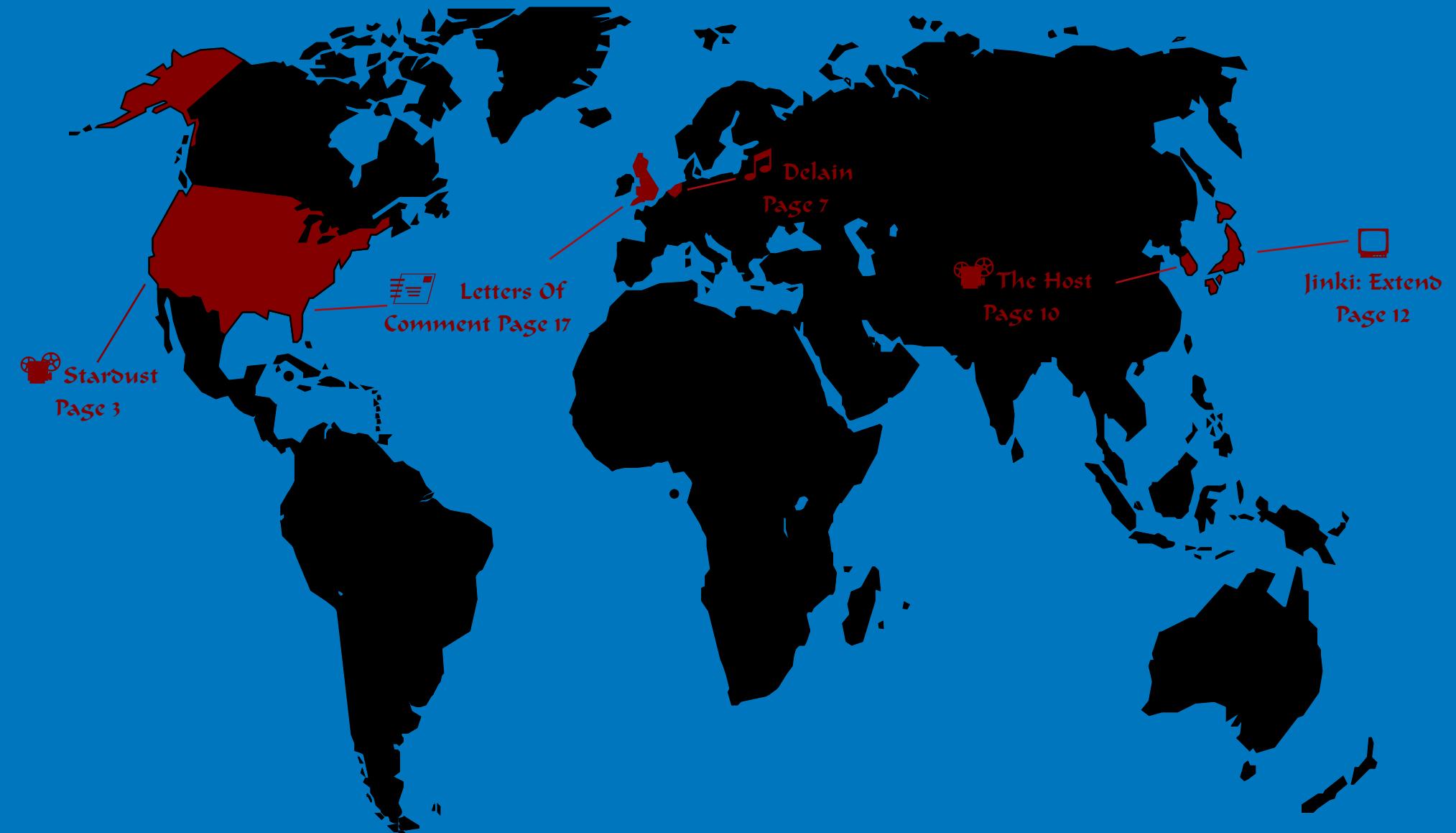
STARDUST

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark, patterned dress, stands in a grand, opulent room. She is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking directly at the viewer and pointing her right index finger towards the center. The background features a large, curved staircase with gold railings, a chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and a large painting on the wall.

FROM
ALIEN
SHORES

IN THIS ISSUE:
DELAIN'S DEBUT ALBUM
THE HOST

JINX: EXTEND
AND... STARDUST



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STARDUST

Stardust, the movie, is a tightly made work that, while taking some liberties with the details of the original, provides an entertaining adaptation of Neil Gaiman's short novel.

There's really nothing to dislike about

proper place.

And I think that's actually a problem. There's no detail for the sake of detail, everything, every word spoken, means something. There are some things that are very subtly done in the novel that

it. It's a well-crafted, well-balanced movie. There's romance, but not too much, action, but not so it overwhelms, fantasy, but nothing that will alienate a mundane audience, a bit of comedy, while not being overly silly, and a dash of chills, but without being too scary. In short, it has a little bit of something for everyone, but nothing to offend anyone. It's just a very likable movie.

It's also very well constructed. Every little part fits neatly into place. Every little detail (well except for the appearance of the unicorn, which appears out of nowhere) eventually dovetails into its

are pointedly announced in the movie. If a line is spoken that doesn't have an immediate purpose of moving the plot forward, it's a foreshadowing hint.

This is a movie constructed to be a great summer movie. This means some changes, quite substantial ones, from the book, but it makes for a movie that will be accessible and entertaining to a wide range of movie goers, not just fans of the book.

While there isn't as much action and swashbuckling as the trailer would suggest, there is quite a bit more than there is in the novel.

The story begins in the village of Wall where a young man crosses the forbidden gap that separates the mundane village from the magical realm on the other side. He has a brief dalliance and then returns, only to get a

surprise nine months later – a son, who grows up to be the hero of the story.

In order to prove his worth to the village beauty, young Tristan Thorn also crosses the gap in order to bring back a fallen star, only to find that fallen stars in the magic realm are young ladies with strong opinions about bumpkins who want to take them home as prizes.

Also seeking the star are a trio of witches who want to cut out her heart to extend their lives and a couple of princes who seek the magic jewel that knocked the star out of the sky.

The acting here is quite good. We

get excellent performances from the lesser known actors and some standout performances from the stars.

Charlie Cox, seen in last year's BBC remake of the lost classic *A For Andromeda*, is a winning and likable Tristan Thorn. He does a good job both as a befuddled shop boy and as a swashbuckling hero. He actually makes it work that the transformation between the two takes only a week.

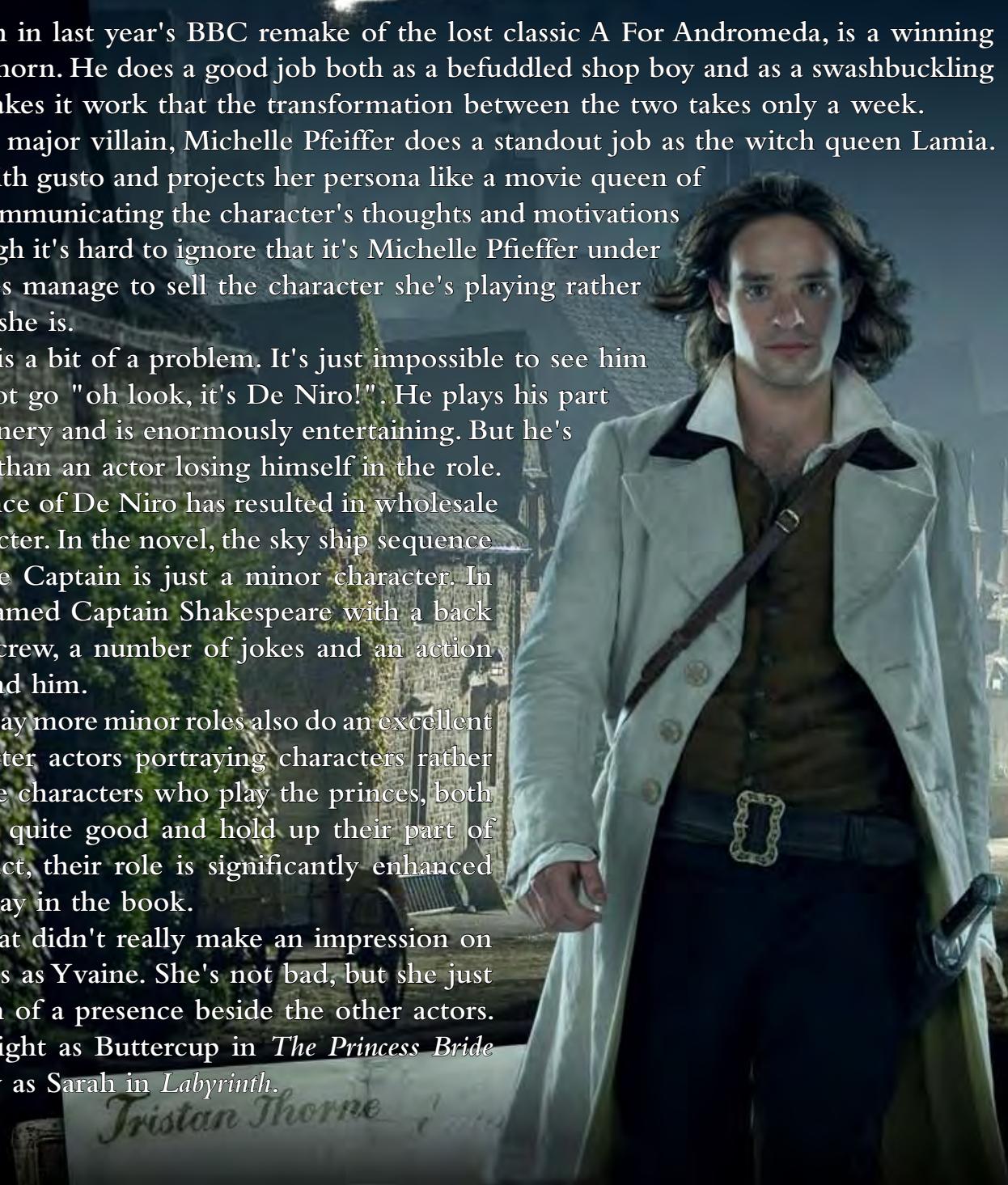
In the role of the major villain, Michelle Pfeiffer does a standout job as the witch queen Lamia. She plays the part with gusto and projects her persona like a movie queen of old. She's great at communicating the character's thoughts and motivations non verbally. Although it's hard to ignore that it's Michelle Pfeiffer under the makeup, she does manage to sell the character she's playing rather than the movie star she is.

Robert De Niro is a bit of a problem. It's just impossible to see him on the screen and not go "oh look, it's De Niro!". He plays his part big, chewing the scenery and is enormously entertaining. But he's still De Niro rather than an actor losing himself in the role.

In fact, the presence of De Niro has resulted in wholesale changes to the character. In the novel, the sky ship sequence is very short and the Captain is just a minor character. In the movie, he is renamed Captain Shakespeare with a back story, a fleshed out crew, a number of jokes and an action sequence built around him.

The actors who play more minor roles also do an excellent job. They are character actors portraying characters rather than movie stars. The characters who play the princes, both dead and living, are quite good and hold up their part of the story well. In fact, their role is significantly enhanced over the one they play in the book.

The one actor that didn't really make an impression on me was Claire Danes as Yvaine. She's not bad, but she just doesn't have enough of a presence beside the other actors. She's no Robin Wright as Buttercup in *The Princess Bride* or Jennifer Connelly as Sarah in *Labyrinth*.



U.S.A.



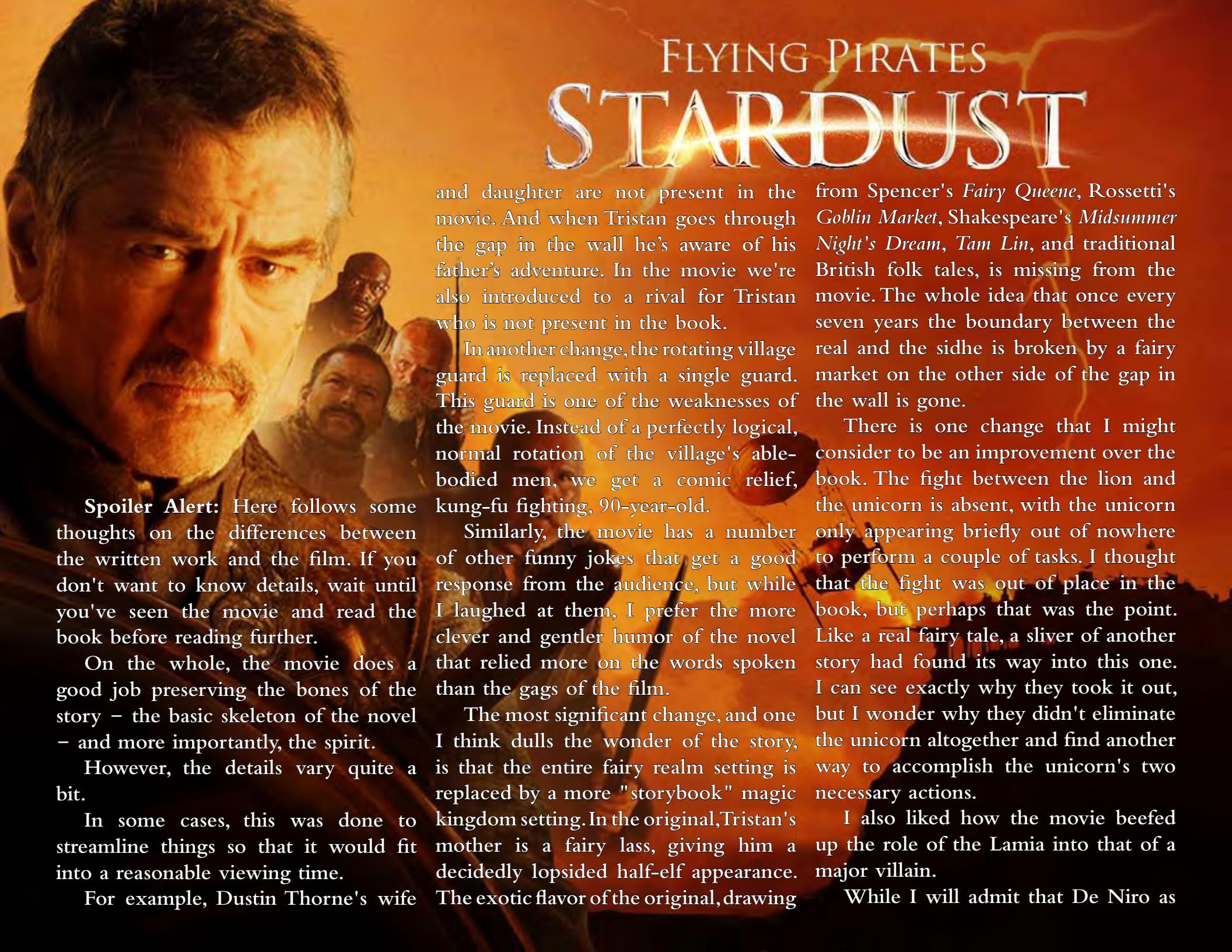
Original
Language:
English

Format:
Movie

Year
2007

Genre:
Fantasy/
Romance/
Comedy/
Action

Adapted from
the novel by
Neil Gaiman



FLYING PIRATES STARDUST

and daughter are not present in the movie. And when Tristan goes through the gap in the wall he's aware of his father's adventure. In the movie we're also introduced to a rival for Tristan who is not present in the book.

In another change, the rotating village guard is replaced with a single guard. This guard is one of the weaknesses of the movie. Instead of a perfectly logical, normal rotation of the village's able-bodied men, we get a comic relief, kung-fu fighting, 90-year-old.

Similarly, the movie has a number of other funny jokes that get a good response from the audience, but while I laughed at them, I prefer the more clever and gentler humor of the novel that relied more on the words spoken than the gags of the film.

The most significant change, and one I think dulls the wonder of the story, is that the entire fairy realm setting is replaced by a more "storybook" magic kingdom setting. In the original, Tristan's mother is a fairy lass, giving him a decidedly lopsided half-elf appearance. The exotic flavor of the original, drawing

from Spencer's *Fairy Queene*, Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Tam Lin*, and traditional British folk tales, is missing from the movie. The whole idea that once every seven years the boundary between the real and the sidhe is broken by a fairy market on the other side of the gap in the wall is gone.

There is one change that I might consider to be an improvement over the book. The fight between the lion and the unicorn is absent, with the unicorn only appearing briefly out of nowhere to perform a couple of tasks. I thought that the fight was out of place in the book, but perhaps that was the point. Like a real fairy tale, a sliver of another story had found its way into this one. I can see exactly why they took it out, but I wonder why they didn't eliminate the unicorn altogether and find another way to accomplish the unicorn's two necessary actions.

I also liked how the movie beefed up the role of the Lamia into that of a major villain.

While I will admit that De Niro as

Spoiler Alert: Here follows some thoughts on the differences between the written work and the film. If you don't want to know details, wait until you've seen the movie and read the book before reading further.

On the whole, the movie does a good job preserving the bones of the story – the basic skeleton of the novel – and more importantly, the spirit.

However, the details vary quite a bit.

In some cases, this was done to streamline things so that it would fit into a reasonable viewing time.

For example, Dustin Thorne's wife



SHINING STARS STARDUST

Captain Shakespeare is entertaining, and will certainly appeal to movie-goers, I really dislike the changes they made there. First of all, it's a case of shamelessly pandering to both the ego of the star and to the recent popularity of pirates. In fact, in the book, they aren't pirates. And neither are they in the movie, although they are quite a bit more fearsome than the sailors in the text.

I also think that it's completely ridiculous to expect that Tristan will, in the space of a week, transform from a meek village boy to a master sword fighter and swashbuckling hero. He spends about three days aboard the sky ship in the movie and somehow manages to cram a couple of years worth of training and personal growth into it. Time may pass strangely in the faery realms, but not this strangely.

I do agree with the significant changes to the end of the story. The rather anti-climatic, although storybook-like, ending of the book is replaced with a thrilling action sequence.

Essentially, they took a very good book and transformed it into a satisfying summer movie that I'm sure will be regarded as a classic.



"A tear is only water, a sigh is only air"

As I've grown older, the way I listen to music has changed. When I was a teenager, I'd buy a new cassette and spend weeks listening to it, playing it over and over, leaving it in my car stereo so that I'd listen to it every time I drove. I'd memorize every track and figure out the lyrics. I'd really play a tape to death before I tired of it.

Now that I'm older, I find that I maybe throw a new album on my mp3 player and listen to it in rotation with a couple dozen other albums for a week or two, perhaps listen to it on my computer at work once or twice and then I'm on to some other album. Sure I'll play it again in a month or two when I'm scrolling through my playlist looking for something I haven't heard in a while. Even if I'm planning on doing

a review of an album, it's not the only thing I listen to.

Somehow, new music just doesn't inspire me to the point of obsession anymore. I suppose that it's a natural change as I've gotten older as far as how important music is to me.

But *Lucidity*, the debut album from Delain, has returned me to my teenage years.

My God, is this a good album. I've been listening to this non-stop for eight hours a day at work for several days now. I resent it when another album is playing on my mp3 player.

The only downside is that I really, really want to hear another album from this group. Unfortunately, I've got a wait. *Lucidity* just came out last fall and it took the group three years in the studio to produce it.

While *Lucidity* is Delain's debut album, the musicians involved are a gathering of some of the most talented musicians from the European symphonic metal scene.

The core of the band consists of composer and keyboardist Martijn Westeholt and singer Charlotte Wessels.

Westerholt previously was the keyboardist for major Dutch band Within Temptation. Just as the group started on the road to international success, he fell ill and had to drop out of the band. While convalescing, he began work on *Lucidity*, contacting musicians he wanted to work with and convincing them to join the project.

Wessels, only 18-years-old at the time the album was made, is a relative unknown when compared with her project-mates, but her amazingly rich vocals and musical presence more than make up for her youth. What's most impressive is that on an album with guest vocals from two of the most prominent female vocalists in the genre, Leaves's Eyes's Liv Kristine and Within Temptation's Sharon den Adel, she competes on an even footing with those better

—DELAIN—
LUCIDITY



known symphonic metal divas. Her voice is clear and accessible, with a rich pop sound instead of the more common opera style often used in symphonic metal.

Westerholt's fine keyboards, which provide the symphonic elements, are rich and varied. His compositions seamlessly blend piano, strings and the sounds of other traditional instruments with the metal guitars. This is definitely Westerholt's band, the keyboards are a stronger presence than in some other symphonic metal bands. In Delain, it's the guitars that compliment the keyboards and not the other way around.

One of the things I particularly like about the choices Westerholt makes is how well he balanced all of the diverse elements. Delain's sound is almost a prototype of the symphonic metal sound. The sound is strong, yet accessible. The male vocals are harsher than power metal, but softer than death metal; the female vocals are intense and powerful without verging into high opera screaming; the metal elements are perfectly in tune with the orchestral. The album has a wide variety of styles while still presenting a unified sound.

I think if you don't like Delain, you probably don't like the symphonic metal genre. They sit squarely in the center, more rocking than Nightwish, not as harsh as Therion, more serious than the fantasy metal bands, yet remaining accessible.

While the important role a drummer plays in a band is often overlooked, particularly

in symphonic metal where the vocals and keyboards are such a strong component, it's impossible to overlook the contribution of the band's regular drummer Sander Zoer and guest drummer Ariën van Weezenbeek (God Dethroned). The drumming on *Lucidity* is superb. With the vocals and keyboards ranging all over the map, the intense metal drums keep the whole project firmly grounded in the rock genre. The percussion is never intrusive, but provides a solid framework for the vocals and the other instruments.

The album's guest list is a who's who of symphonic metal, it's particularly strong with Dutch musicians. The various bassists, guest vocalists and guitarists are all very talented and contribute to the overall high musicianship of the album.

The album opens with the orchestral metal of "Sever" which opens with a bombastic symphonic strings arrangement underlain with solid rock drumming which segues into the strong vocals of Wessels. This song really showcases the variety of sounds Delain weaves into their work. There is a strong string element, powerful lead guitars, bombastic choral elements, a little piano, striking sweet female lead vocals that occasionally blend with harsher power-metal-style male vocals and solid drumming to hold it all together. It's particularly nice how well the lead guitar plays off of the keyboards that are emulating a string section.

"Frozen", the first single to be released off of

The
Netherlands



Original
Language:
English

Format:
Album

Genre:
Symphonic
Metal



Lucidity, starts off with a tinkly music box melody, that explodes into symphonic power metal. The album also contains a bonus track that is a variation of this song with male vocals joining those of Wessels. I prefer the later version, although the heavy death grunts by, I think, George Oosthoek may be a bit intense for some.

“Day for Ghosts” starts with a Theme-from-Halloween-esque melody. This song features guest vocalists Liv Kristine and Marko Hielata. I admit I’m a sucker for these sort of arrangements that pair sweet female lead vocals with harsher male metal vocals.

“Silhouette of a Dancer” has a similar pairing of contrasting vocals, here the male vocals serve as an additional instrument more than as a duet.

I have to admit that Delain’s lyrics often leave me confused. I’m not sure if this is because the group is deliberately creating songs that can be interpreted in several ways, or if the translation from Dutch into English is just unclear. For example, the song “The Gathering” could be inspired by the movie “Highlander”. Or maybe not.

Whether it’s “Day For Ghosts”, “Shattered”, “Sleepwalker’s Day Dream” or “See Me In Shadow”, there



isn’t a weak song on the album. As could be expected for a project album worked on for three years by top musicians, the quality of the music is very consistent and very good.

The band’s music is not explicitly science fictional, although some lyrics could be construed as either literal fantasy or metaphorical, but the band does draw from gothic metal roots to inspire a mood of the fantastic. The lyrics are dark and foreboding, yet combine with the music to become euphoric.

And the band’s name is supposedly a tribute to the work of Stephen King.



The Host

Review By Liz Berrios

The Host is a story based on the Park family and a giant river monster. Before you think that you can already predict the ending and what the characters will be like, rent the film. You will find yourself completely hanging on their words and hoping that things turn out for the best in the end.

I don't know about you but I wasn't rooting for Richard Dryfus when he hunted that shark in *Jaws*. In this film, I can't help but root for the Park family while they hunt the beast in the dark sewers of Korea.

The son and grandfather run a small snack stand on the edge of Seoul's Han River. They have a simple life. The center of the family dynamic is granddaughter Hyun-seo. A school girl of 13, she is the daughter of Gang-gu, the son who works at the family food stand.

The two share a love-hate relationship. Gang-du is not sure how to be a father and seems to have relied on his father Hee-Bong to raise her. Hyun-seo wants a few finer things and is frustrated her father can't provide them. Gang-du tries to please his daughter, for instance he steals extra change from the register to help buy



his daughter a new cell phone.

They all share a simple existence near the river side when quite suddenly things change. A creation, a mutant if you will, rises from the water on a warm day to wreak havoc among the people and steals away young Hyun-seo. The family is devastated believing that she is dead until

later that night they receive a call from her cell phone. Is she alive? Is it a ghost? The family bands together to search the sewers to discover the truth. And to kill the beast that may have killed Hyun-seo.

The movie is made stronger by the soundtrack. I expected a rock or alternative soundtrack to accompany the searches

South Korea



**Original
Language:**
Korean

**Subtitled in
English by**

**Format:
Movie**

Year
2006

Genre:
Action/
Horror/
Giant Monster

for the creature and battles instead I was pleased to hear a classical melody with a spooky twist to guide the family on their adventures. It's refreshing to hear music that doesn't overshadow the action in a monster movie. The music was composed by Byoung-woo Lee.

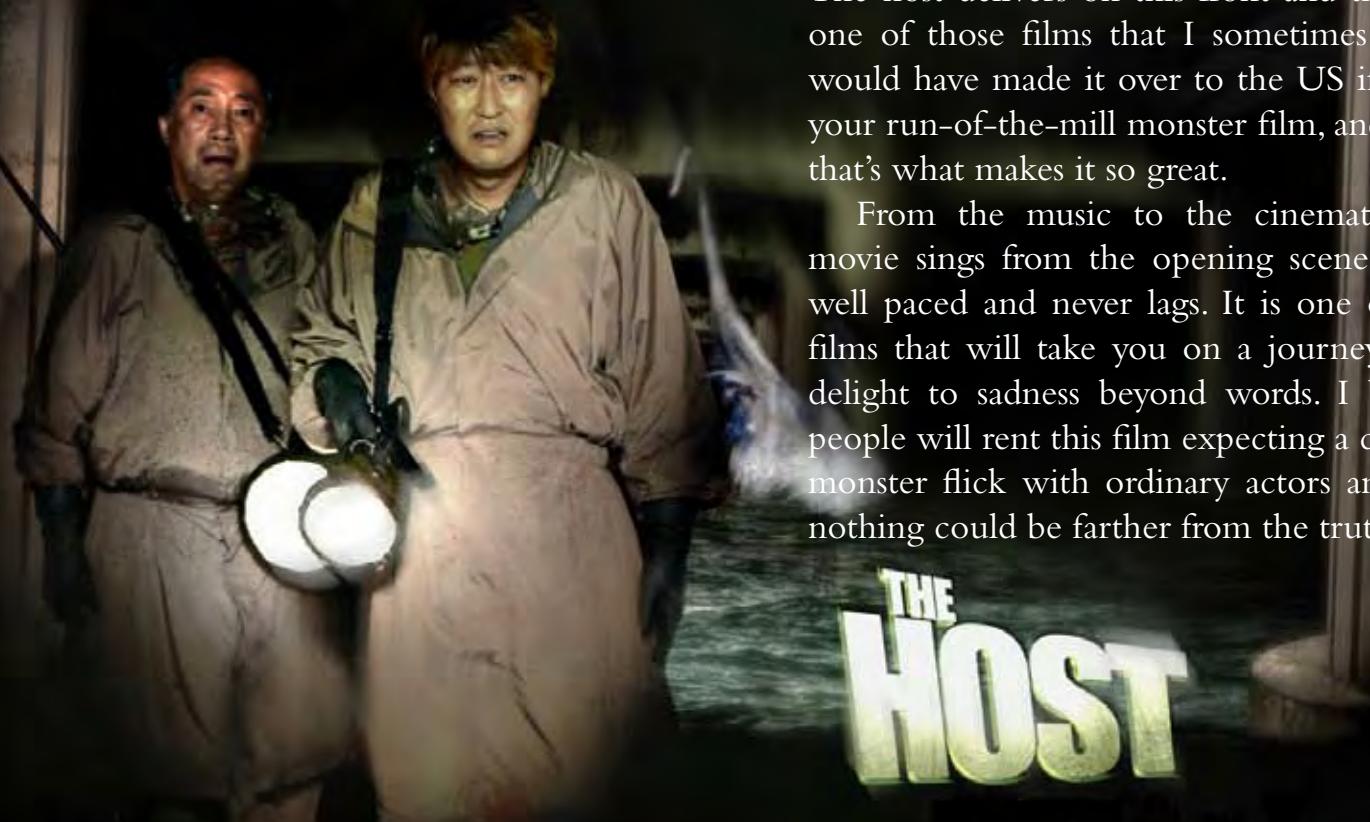
I was excited to see this film because of the reviews calling it "on par with *Jaws*". I expected to see little to no shots of the mysterious creature because of this. I was wrong. The creature itself shows up quite a bit and when it does it really causes a stir. The animation done on the creature is very well done. I never knew so much detail could be done on an imaginary mutant. The mutant is made to move like a big cat but look like a salamander

mated with a tyrannosaurus rex. Instead of being scared of the beast I found myself amazed at the quality of computer animation and the time that must have gone into creating it.

America also has a voice in the film. The creature itself was born when expired formaldehyde was dumped down the drain at a local scientific facility. The order was given by an American doctor while the Korean doctor protested to the orders. An American solider makes an appearance to help fend off the creature during the initial attack, he is blond haired and muscular and played as a hero when he is killed by the beast.

There is nothing I like more than a good foreign film that makes me realize how silly Americans are. The host delivers on this front and then some. Its one of those films that I sometimes think never would have made it over to the US if it had been your run-of-the-mill monster film, and it's not and that's what makes it so great.

From the music to the cinematography, the movie sings from the opening scene. The film is well paced and never lags. It is one of those rare films that will take you on a journey from sheer delight to sadness beyond words. I believe most people will rent this film expecting a cookie-cutter monster flick with ordinary actors and plot lines; nothing could be farther from the truth.



Jinki:Extend

Review based on 12 (of 12) TV episodes and the 13th episode OAV fansubbed by ANBU.

“Let’s go Akao. An atrocious dark future stained in blood is waiting for you.”

As if we needed yet another “angst-ridden-high-school-students-are-the-only-ones-who-can-pilot-the-giant-mecha-but-will-they-want-to?” show, *Jinki: Extend* is here to try to solve the inherent troubles of this genre.

These shows have built-in logical problems with them, such as: why would a military contractor design and build very expensive weapons systems that can only be effectively piloted by emotionally unstable 14-year-olds, and: isn’t it child abuse to force little boys and girls to fight and kill?

Even *Jinki:Extend* can’t answer the first question, other than with a variation on the old “New Type” business, but the answer to the second question is: yes, it is child abuse. *Jinki: Extend* actually has the guts to make valid points about the cruelty of child soldiers and does comment on the exploitation and abuse of children used in warfare. Although the creators get distracted by the conventional mecha-show plot, and don’t explore this idea sufficiently, this still gives the series a depth beyond most shows of its genre.

Unfortunately, this slight depth is not enough to save it from the convoluted history of the series and some bad production and direction choices. *Jinki: Extend* is based on two



JINKI:EXTEND

related manga series: *Jinki* and a sequel *Jinki:Extend* that takes place several years later. The anime blends both together by having the story jump back and forth between the two time periods, but the direction does not make this clear when this happens. Viewers have to be alert to which scene dissolves are cues to the fact that the storyline is about to jump to a different time period.

The first episode starts out in the “present” and then jumps without warning or notice to the “past”. The plot of the past is dependent on things that happened even earlier in the storyline, necessitating still further flashbacks. Bits of storyline from the “present” intrude into this mess almost without warning, showing characters that have not been introduced referring to circumstances that have not been shown. This makes following the plot difficult.

Clones of characters from earlier parts of the story show up without introduction, causing confusion as to whether characters who in the past were heroes have in the present become villains or whether dead characters have come back to life. This is compounded by the fact that there are characters who do switch sides, or at least reveal themselves to be aligned with the villains.

A major problem is that the series assumes that viewers have read both manga series. However, only the sequel is licensed and available in the U.S., making it difficult for American fans to follow the storyline. It's unfair to expect viewers to do homework before they can figure out the plot of a TV show. There is never any point where the villains are introduced or explained. The active villains are apparently being supported by a



shadowy cabal, but we don't know who they are or what they want. The members of the cabal wear animal head masks when conducting their secret take-over-the-world meetings. But these backers disappear from the storyline after only a few cryptic appearances without any explanation for their presence.

Once the series starts and we flash back to the past, the story is fairly interesting, with Aoba Tsuzuki learning to pilot a mecha, called a Jinki, in the jungles of South America. This storyline is reasonably understandable, although there's never any explanation as to who is directing the Ancient Jinki that the team is there to fight.

Aoba is a Kindred, one who has some sort of inherent psychic ability to pilot a Jinki, which is what battle mechs are called in this show. Unbeknownst to her or her new allies, she has been brought into the Angel team as part of some plan by her evil mother, who is demented after being raped by the bad guy. This rape doesn't stop her from doing the villain's bidding however.

Aoba is an interesting character, and this storyline is reasonably straight forward as we follow her development from novice to somewhat experienced combat pilot. She is a character that could carry a

series like this: slightly flawed, manipulated by both her mother and her inborn talent, yet strong enough to do the right thing when the hard choices have to be made.

For the majority of the first six episodes, we follow Aoba and the Angel team as they fight the creatures/mecha called Ancient Jinki. Just what these Ancient Jinki are, and why they might be causing trouble is never



JINKI:EXTEND

adequately explained.

However, once the story jumps to modern day Tokyo for the majority of the last six episodes, we are treated to the unfortunate angst-fest that is the story of Akao Hiragi who doesn't want to pilot a Jinki, and who is destined to destroy the world if she does. Shiba, a clone of Aoba, appears, working for the bad guys. Hiragi is also a clone, created for the express purpose of learning to pilot a Jinki and thus activate her psychic world-destroying power. Shiba's evil plot is apparently to commit suicide by forcing Hiragi to kill her, thus causing Hiragi to go berserk and destroy the world. A major trait of the villains here is that they want to be killed by the heroes. Somehow this counts as a win for them.

I'm not even going to try to sort out the plot here. It makes no sense.

Overall, there was too little logic to the plot and too much existentialistic bullshit. This series makes Evangelion look straightforward and coherent. Okay, nothing could make the ending of Evangelion look straightforward and coherent. Still, characters are not introduced properly, the aims of the

villains and even the heroes are not elucidated and the puzzles are never adequately solved. In fact, the viewers are never told who the villains are. And when a new character shows up, the other characters don't bother to tell them important information or even basic background information about what's going on. There's some nonsense



about some sort of “Lost Life Phenomenon” that is causing huge explosions around the world, but what this is and why it’s important remain a mystery

This series needed at least a full season of 24 episodes to reveal the story it had to tell. By cramming the plot into only 12 episodes, the producers end up with a Cliff’s notes version of the manga.

A 13th episode, released on DVD, caps the series, but doesn’t resolve any of the plot. Instead it tries to pander to the audience by showing rather pedestrian scenes of the lives of the main characters in the aftermath of the final battle in episode 12. It fails to either advance the plot or to deal with the loose ends. In short, it’s a wasted episode made merely to extract some more money from the show’s fans.

That’s not to say this series isn’t worth checking out, the episodes that cover the Jinki storyline are fairly good, and it is a disappointment when the action shifts to the Jinki: Extend story.

There is a lot of interesting food for thought here, and it’s unfortunate that a lot of the ethical and moral questions raised are not given the time needed to explore them.

It was also nice to see that one had to have some training in order to be able to use a fantastically complicated battle mech, although in the second half of the show it seemed that some characters were able to instinctively pilot them.

There are some good mecha battle scenes, although some of these are shortchanged, with only the start of the fights shown and then the next

episode shifting to the aftermath of the combat. This is an unforgivable sin in a mecha show.

Speculative fiction content: This is one of those shows that pretends to be science fiction, but is really fantasy with hardware. The plot that drives the Tokyo/Jinki:Extend storyline is completely dependent on psudo-mystical claptrap.

Aside from that we have some clones, but the clones all seem to inherit mystical legacies from their originals. Apparently clones not only inherit Kindred abilities from their originals, but also the spirit of the deceased original also resides inside the clone.

When a clone is killed, their “dark genes flow” into their killer, (whatever that means) provided the killer has some sort of psychic connection to them. The hard science fiction implications of the Jinki technology are never addressed and the world does not seem to be materially effected by the presence of the Jinki technology.

Cosplay opportunities: The flight suits the girls wear could be cosplayed, but I didn’t think any of the heroic characters really stood out enough to be interesting enough to cosplay, with the possible exception of Aoba. Main villain Kokushou would be a good choice as he has a very recognizable full facemask. The best female character is villainess Shiba, who sports an attractive caped outfit. Unfortunately she spends the majority of the time skulking in the shadows so it’s hard to get a good look at exactly how her costume should be constructed.

Japan



Original
Language:
Japanese

Licensed in the U.S.
by ADV Films

Format:
12 Episode
TV Series
Plus 1 DVD-only
Episode

Genre:
Science Fiction/
Mecha

Letters Of Comment



Great Britain



U.S.A.

Original
Language:
English

John Coxton, editor of Procrastinations, writes:

Dear Jack,

Your fanzine is, without a doubt, the best layout for a 'zine that I've seen yet. Admittedly, I've only been reading and publishing for around a year (give or take), but the graphics you use as the backgrounds to your articles are well-selected without detracting from the readability of the text, which is clearly a job well done. I have a feeling that if I ever do an electronic-only fanzine, your 'zine's look is what I'd be aiming for. I'm curious to know whether there is a print run for FAS or whether it's being published exclusively through the internet. I also thought that the use of the world map at the beginning was a good idea.

I read the articles with great interest - I've never been a huge fan of Godzilla (having never seen any of the films and having no concept of the story outside of the average British take on things, which is, I suspect, heavily influenced by the US movie you show disdain for), but the first review was still interesting, managing to provide enough background information for even those who hadn't the faintest idea about Godzilla before reading the 'zine.

The review of the Korean movie was also fantastic. I like the way you've written a detailed analysis on the influences from their neighbours, such as Hong Kong and Japan, and how this affects the film, thus meaning that anybody who's seen any Japanese or Chinese cinema instantly has some sort of frame of reference for the film and a context in which to place it. I freely admit that the sum total

of my knowledge of these two cultures' cinema and film essentially boils down to the first eight episodes of 'Neon Genesis: Evangelion' and 'Kung Fu Hustle' (although the latter film is absolutely brilliant!), but I personally found this to be useful. The review has really made me want to see the film, and also films that might be similar to it.

I must admit that I've never been a huge fan of anime or manga. I've dabbled, occasionally, in both, but I've never actually felt a compulsion to follow it in any great detail. 'Neon Genesis' is good, but I never got around to buying the next DVD (it's very expensive, especially for a student) and so I never got hooked. However, the 'Basilisk' review made me reconsider whether I want to be watching more anime, and I think that if I do try to broaden my tastes, I will be using this 'zine as one of my starting points.

Going from that review to the review of Fairyland (and that of Warp 11), I like the way you've described what you like about each track rather than just saying "oh, this album is really good". It makes it much easier to decide on whether the album is worth a purchase or a listen when the reviewer goes into more detail.

I must confess that the horror genre, also, is one that is not the peak of my viewing interests. As such, the final two film/TV reviews are not really talking about something I have a great deal of experience in, but the review of 'Vampire Gigolo' was good. It had tight dresses in it.

Yours in anticipation of FAS#2,
John Coxon.

John:

Thanks for writing, I've enjoyed reading your zine as well.

To answer your question, I don't print any paper copies of From Alien Shores. The zine is designed to be an electronic only publication. While there are some obvious disadvantages to this, such as that I can't send off copies to other zine editors for trade, a print zine would not be able to take advantage of many of the features that pdf publishing allows.

For example, I wouldn't be able to print full bleed backgrounds, printing in color would be cost prohibitive and printing in black and white would lose too much of the impact of the images. I'm also playing around with being able to easily change page orientation. In future issues, I hope to experiment with different page sizes and other innovative designs.

The world map was actually a late addition, within the last couple of months of preparation. I'm pleased with how it turned out, but making it work was more challenging than I thought it would be. I need to sit down and do some in-depth design work on it to improve it.

I am obviously a big fan of Asian fantasy and martial arts films and I can trace my enthusiasm for them to seeing a number of Hong Kong films at the London Film Festival way back in 1990. They had a fantastic program that year of HK films, including A Chinese Ghost Story Part II and A Terra-Cotta Warrior. Sadly I

couldn't get tickets to the showing of The East Is Red, but I made a point of seeing it when it showed in Berkeley a year or two later.

I'm not a big fan of Neon Genesis Evangelion, people either love that show or hate it. Like with all else, Sturgeon's Law applies to anime. There are some series with excellent science fictional or fantasy content, such as Planete, Haibane-Renmei, Ghost In The Shell and Princess Mononoke, some that are entertaining if you are in the mood for mindless entertainment, and a lot that is really awful.

I find it quite difficult to review music. I know what I enjoy, but I find it hard to describe in words what the music sounds like, so I'm pleased that you found the reviews useful.

I'm glad you found something to like in the Vampire Gigolo article.

John Purcell writes:

Jack, this is a wonderful debut issue! So visually beautiful with fun contents; I freely admit that I'm a sucker for Godzilla movies, even the American version (Godzilla 2000). But the cheesy Toho Studios ones are my favorites mainly because they make me laugh so much.

And I really must thank you for mentioning Jet Jaguar and MechaGodzilla in the same sentence. To this day, I can still hear the voices of the two miniature

Japanese girls singing out, "We love you, Jet Jaguar!" In our house, sometimes we say that line for no reason, probably only because it's funny. But overall, I have a soft spot in my heart for cheesy Japanese monster movies. Remind me never to move to Tokyo; their idea of urban development (based on these movies) seems a bit harsh and indiscriminatory.

It was also interesting to read how the Japanese film-makers didn't like the American version of Godzilla, which is too bad. I liked that one since it's another fine addition to the canon as a mindless bit of fluff. Sounds to me that Kitamura takes jabs at the American film mainly because we "stole" the character - a Japanese national hero and cultural icon - and Americanized it for a new audience. Ah, me. To each his own. The way I look at it, fun is fun, and there's no need to get political over a silly piece of cinematic fluff.

Some interesting reading about the Korean film industry. You made Shadowless Sword sound like a step in the right direction in terms of cinematography and other visual/technical areas. The rest will come along as their industry grows and writers will start producing good, solid stories and scripts. Since movies are geared more for visual stimulation than cerebral, it's best to start with the former and build.

If they display a worthy product, that should - in theory - attract better writers. I have to admit, the artwork/stills you've included here make Shadowless Sword look quite attractive, so I'll have to keep my eyes open for the film.

Also, the band and anime reviews provide another cultural link to Western Science Fiction and Fantasy. More and more conventions over here - at least in Texas, I have noticed - focus on anime and Japanese culture, which is an intriguing development. My son (age 11) has enjoyed anime cartoon shows for quite a few years now, and I've watched them with him. Some of these shows require a lot of concentration to follow their story-lines; Pokemon, Yu-gi-Oh! and Dragonball Z, for example, have a lot of characters and complicated story structure. Naturally, it doesn't hurt to have marketing tie-ins with the playing cards and games, and cons with a lot of gaming going on have advertised tournaments as attendance draws. Like I said, this is a growing con-genre here in Texas, and I see in zines like Science Fiction in San Francisco, it's big out in the Bay Area as well.

Warp 11 sounds like a fun band to see and hear. If they are as musically fun as their song titles and lyrics are, then these folks have a peculiar niche all of their own.

I would like to see them. Again, thank you for writing about them. Fun, fun stuff.

The only real quibble I have with your zine, Jack, is that you failed to provide contact information in here: no mailing address, e-mail address, etc. I asked and got your e-mail address from Chris Garcia so I could send this to you. In the future, take a half page - or part of your contents page - to include contact information. It will help to get feedback from readers if they know where to send locs and contributions.

Other than that, I really enjoyed this zine. With the WorldCon in Yokohama this year, this was a nice idea and well-presented. I look forward to future issues as you plumb the sf & f field produced around the world.

All the best,
John Purcell

John:

I first encountered Godzilla, and other Toho studios, movies as a kid watching the Saturday Monster Matinee on Channel 12 out of Portland, Oregon. I have many fond memories of watching Godzilla, Gamera, Mothra and Rodan as a child. With one of the most interesting of the current crop of Japanese directors getting a chance to do a fresh

interpretation of the Godzilla mythos, I was inclined to like Final Wars.

Korean fantasy films are definitely coming of age, films such as R-Point, Arahan and Natural City are all steps in the right direction. There have been some not so good films out of South Korea, but even movies that I thought were failures, such as Duelist, were at least interesting failures.

I'm happy to see that science fiction from outside the English-speaking world is finally starting to become noticed and available. Anime and manga have obviously led the way, but we're seeing good stuff in novel, movie, music and TV form coming from Russia (Nightwatch and sequels) Japan (The Guin Saga) and elsewhere. That's why I'm particularly happy to see the Worldcon this year is in Japan. I hope that the convention will raise the profile of quality international science fiction.

As to the lack of contact information, well, quite frankly, I'm surprised that anybody is even reading it, let alone responding. Previously, I've been greeted with a resounding silence from my zines that fall outside the boundaries of traditional sf zinedom. Folks in the anime and cosplay community have said they didn't like my work because it has, you know, words and stuff. That's if I could even get anybody to download an issue. Traditional pulp and sf fandom people seem to be disinterested in the subjects I write about, aside from enjoying

pictures of attractive young women in cosplay outfits. My five issues of Cosplay magazine didn't garner even a single letter of comment.

When I put the first issue together it was not with any hope that it would be read, but because I wanted to experiment with some ideas on layout and design and because I was enjoying thinking and writing about some of the movies, TV shows and music I watch.

I'm quite frankly astounded that I've received more response to this issue than any other issue of any zine I've ever produced.

But I've taken your advice and added an email address to the contents page. Anyone wishing to write a letter of comment may send it to backnumbers@gmail.com.

Chris Garcia writes:

I knew you couldn't stay away. I knew you'd come back and give us another fantastic zine with design out of the palm of Heaven itself. It's a gorgeous piece of work. The images and the text mingle in a way that we don't see much in fanzines... or prozines for that matter. There are a couple of points where white text ends up on white and it's difficult to read, but overall, it's a masterpiece!

I have to find Warp 11. They sound exactly like the kind of band I should have on my Real Jukebox. The chick's quite a looker to if the pictures are to be believed.

She's hot!

I saw the Godzilla film when a buddy of mine got it on DVD a month or so ago. We had a viewing and other than Don Frye, it was only OK. I did like 'Zilla showing up though. I hated the Godzilla movie, but I did like the fact that Hank Azaria got a chance to star in a movie. Frye was great, but everyone expected him to be. He's a big star in Japan (mostly from his days as a Mixed Martial Arts fighter who crossed over to the mainstream with commercials and stuff) and he was pretty good. Goldberg starred with Frye in a direct-to-video release a couple of years ago that I enjoyed enough to bring up at a BASFA meeting.

Can't speak to much of the rest of it. Mostly, the reviews made me want to seek them out which is quite something since these aren't exactly in the wheelhouse of my viewing interests. I do have to say that there was one image during the review of Vampire Host that reminded me so much of the Swiss entry into Eurovision, Vampires are Alive. It was frighteningly close.

Chris:

I always intended to return to pubing by ish, but life and work and such have gotten in the way lately. I cannot commit to doing an issue

on a regular basis, but if I can noodle around with writing and layout in the odd free moment, eventually I get enough done to be able to publish. The next issue could be in a week, or a year, it depends on how things go.

Yes, it's difficult to deal with text over backgrounds that vary in color. I try to keep an eye on it, and I'm working on ways to maximize readability. This issue, design has had to be lower priority as I'm rushing to get it out before Stardust opens.

I'd love to see Warp 11 in concert. I need to pick up their new album too. Perhaps I'll see if I can make it down to San Francisco for their upcoming show.

I didn't see that Swiss entry. The second of three DVDs of Vampire Host, called Bloodhound here in the U.S. is out. I can't really recommend it, it's more of a placeholder before we get into the concluding storyline in the final volume that should be out later this month.

I'm glad that I'm inspiring folks to seek out some of the things I cover. That's one of the reasons I do this, to share the things that I think are fun but that may not be well known.

Thanks for the letter, I know I owe you about a hundred letters of comment, but some of us find it hard to do that and get our own issues out as well.

We also heard from: John Thiel