Two Chairs In Print

Issue 7
The Clock Has Stopped in the Dark!

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Colophon

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the members of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this publication is produced in Mill Park and Hawthorn, Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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Transcript Episode 7, Season 2

Introduction

David:

Hello, and welcome to episode seven of the second season of our podcast, Two Chairs Talking. My name is David Grigg and I'm joined by my co-conspirator Perry Middlemiss. How are you, Perry?

Perry:

Thank you, David, very well. Weather's starting to improve slightly, I think. Although we're still hammering into winter, it's probably going to be a shocking week just after I've said that. You know what it's like, as soon as you start thinking, the weather's going to pick up, it also starts getting freezing cold again. But no, I'm doing well. Didn't get any colds or flu. I think it's probably partly to do with the fact that we aren't out and about going on public transport all that much.

David:

No, I'm I'm remarkably free of all that so far. Touch wood.

Perry:

However, I do have to say that I traveled on public transport to and from work for over 30 years here in Melbourne and only ever caught the flu once. So I thought I did pretty well with that. I mean, I used to get it You used to get a cold and a sniffle at the change of each season because there's always something new popping up. But then later on. we all got to the point where we remembered that we had to sanitize all the time, and that sort of worked pretty well. If you did that, you yeah, yeah. Yeah, so so we're and masking, that basically helped. Although I've gone away from masking on public transport now, I think that No, as long as you keep the vaccinations up to date and keep on getting those boosters, we should be okay.

David:

Yeah. We should, indeed.

Fiftieth Anniversary of Aussiecon

Perry:

So what else is happening? We're coming up for a major, major anniversary, David.

David:

I was about to say that, indeed, that yes, we're about to come to a major anniversary, the fifty year anniversary of Aussiecon, the first World Science Fiction Convention ever held in Australia in Melbourne in 1975.

Perry:

Oh, yes.

David:

Not only that, but prior to that there was a writer's workshop run by Ursula K. Le Guin, famous writer, wonderful writer. I was very privileged to to be able to attend

that workshop. So yeah, thinking back and realising it's fifty years is quite quite astonishing.

Perry:

Well, that was my first ever SF convention, so I remember it well.

David:

Yeah, you would have been just a young lad.

Perry:

Oh, 20?

David:

Okay.

Perry:

So, yes, just before I turned twenty, so I was at university. And I had to unfortunately go back in the middle of it for an exam back in Adelaide.

David:

Yeah, bum Yeah, about that, yeah.

Perry:

So I was over and back and back anyway. It just shows dedication, David; things you do to to get to see the people that you want to see. But it was a very interesting convention. It was reasonably small in terms of what conventions are like these days. I mean, it was probably what, seven, six, seven hundred people, but it seemed enormous at the time. There were a lot of people who came in from overseas, and that was about the time that air travel started to get almost reasonable and you could actually do it.

David:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, it would have been bigger, way bigger than any of our previous national conventions, I would have thought.

Perry:

I would suspect that there the people that flew in from the US would have had to have stopped at least once on the way over, either Hawaii or in New Zealand. But there was a lot of people that came in from the US for that convention and seemed to have a very, very good time.

David:

Yeah. A few people couldn't afford it. I have a letter from George R. R. Martin, who was nominated for, I think, a short story "A Song for Lya". He was nominated but he couldn't afford to come. That was in his letter. I think he could probably afford to come now.

Perry:

I think he probably can. Yeah. But, you know, we'd rather he stayed at home and wrote his books. But anyway yes, he can do what he wants to do. That's up to him. He's the writer. It's his decision. But yeah, it's odd, isn't it? It's 50 years.

David:

Yeah.

Perry:

It seems to have firstly gone very quickly and also gone very slowly. A lot's happened in that time, of course, to both of us.

David:

Of course.

Perry:

But anyway, it's a very interesting anniversary to remember coming up in the next week or two. Yeah. Well, it's actually it's about this past weekend, isn't it? Well, you would have been smack in the middle of the writers' workshop about now, fifty years ago, weren't you?

David:

Yeah, probably, yeah, yeah. I can't remember the dates exactly, it doesn't matter, it's still fifty years.

Perry:

Doesn't matter. No, 50 years is close enough. Then that'll do. I mean, if you've got to quibble about a couple of days over 50 years, it's too much, just too much.

David:

Yeah, yeah.

Discussion

Perry:

Anyway, well, let's move on, David. We've had a bit of a chat about that. So we get on to what we were here to talk about this episode. And our first thing up is you're going to be talking about the book. Would you like to introduce it and move on?

Shroud by Adrian Tchaikovsky

David:

Yeah, I will. So the book is going to be *Shroud* by Adrian Tchaikovsky. I just thought I'd like to do a little bit of a biography of the author so we know who he was, who he is and what he's been doing.

So Adrian Tchaikovsky was born in the United Kingdom in 1972 and he's of Polish descent. And in fact, the name that you see on his books, Tchaikovsky, isn't spelt that way on his birth certificate. His birth name is actually spelt, or transliterated, I should say, in the Polish manner. It begins with a CZ but I think it's pronounced the same way pretty much the same way as Tchaikovsky. I'm sure that the publishers preferred that they use the transliteration from the Russian, because the name Tchaikovsky, obviously the famous composer, is far more familiar to the average person than than the Polish version. I know that he wanted to get the publishers to use his Polish-spelt name on the Polish editions of his books, but they wouldn't agree, and so they also got to have the Tchaikovsky version, as with the composer.

However, you spell his name, his first novel, *Empire in Black and Gold*, was published in 2008. But it had taken him 15 years to find a publisher for that, so he'd been trying for a while, 15 years.

Since then, he's been an extremely prolific writer of both fantasy and science fiction. He's published more than 30 novels. Some stand-alone, like the book we're about to discuss, others part of trilogies or long running series. And he's also written and published some fifteen novellas So he's been publishing on average two or three novels or novellas every year, for more than seventeen years. So that's pretty remarkable. He's now in his early fifties, so we can hope for many more still to come.

Anyway, let's get on to the book, *Shroud*. This came out earlier this year. Am I right? I think it was 2025?

Adrian Tchaikovsky at MCM Comic Con London, May 2025

Perry:

Yeah, 2025, yep.

David:

This one doesn't have the feeling of being part of a series, I think it's just going to be a standalone, but who knows.

Anyway, well what it is, is a really original first-contact story.

So, a quick summary, I'll try to make it quick. So, as in many of Tchaikovsky's other SF novels, mankind is spread out among the stars after the earth has become essentially uninhabitable. And there are exploration teams like those aboard the vessel *Garveneer*, which survey star systems to see which resources, if there are any, resources that can be exploited. And then other ships on the Acquisition Teams immediately begin to strip those resources. And they use the resources to build space habitats and things like that.

So as the novel opens, the *Garveneer* has arrived in a new star system. You know, par for the course. But there's an anomaly. One of the large moons of a gas giant is emitting strong radio waves. Not some kind of transmission, but an absolute cacophony of radio noise in all frequencies, just a cacophony. There's no discernible pattern to it. It's just beaming all this radio noise all over the place.

The crew of the *Garveneer* joke that maybe this time it is aliens, but no one takes the suggestion seriously. But this time it *is* aliens.

The anomalous moon, nicknamed Shroud by the crew, has a dense, opaque, and poisonous atmosphere. There's no visible light at the surface, gravity is nearly twice that of the earth, pressure is crushing, and temperatures are far below freezing. There's no way that an unprotected human could survive for more than an instant on the surface. Surely there can't be anything *living* down there?

And yet when the crew send down drones, a few survive briefly and manage to return fragmentary video in which there are strange moving shapes.

The book is largely narrated in the first person by Juna Ceelander, whose job is essentially to be a kind of mediator and coordinator among this particular team. And Mai Ste Etienne, I don't know whether I pronounced that correctly, Mai Ste Etienne, who's a designer and engineer, brilliant engineer.

To cut a long story short, following a catastrophic accident, Juna and Mai end up marooned on the surface of Shroud, far from any chance of contact with their ship, and the novel tells of their seemingly hopeless efforts to survive. They have to travel to get from one point where they've landed to one point where there is actually a place where they can contact the people in orbit. But it's almost the other side of the moon. So in their efforts to survive, the women's initially really quite hostile relationship between them develops and matures and becomes a good deal less hostile.

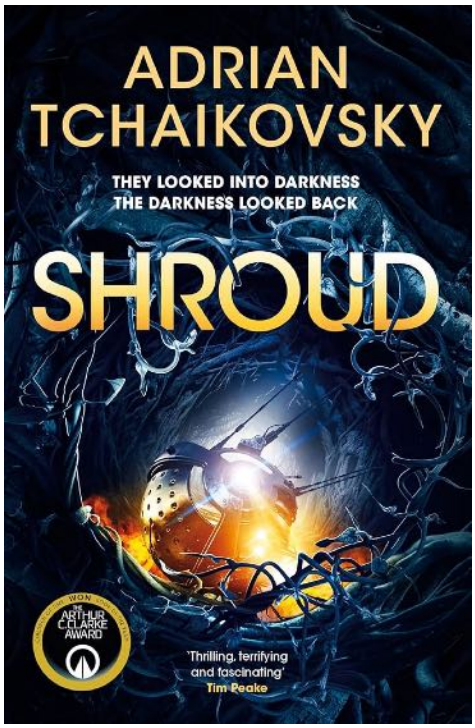
And in their desperate struggles they begin to interact with some of the local life forms---there are indeed life forms down there---which are very, very strange in our human terms. Tschaikovsky has come up with an original idea of how life might evolve in this incredibly hostile environment, and through this a remarkable concept of a very different kind of sentience.

Following the stranding of Juna and May, chapters begin to alternate between Juna's point of view with those of this bizarre entity. The chapters are are labelled Light or Dark, Light being the humans and Dark being that of this entity. And the first few chapters of this Dark viewpoint are very puzzling to read, very alien, you I could say. And it takes quite a while before they begin to make any sense.

Look, I really enjoyed this. I thought it was very clever and very thought-provoking. I thought it was top notch. What did you think of it, Perry?

Perry:

I did indeed. I thought it was great. I thought the aliens that they encounter are very definitely alien. I mean, we've had this bit of a chat previously, I think, about how with a lot of first contact novels, the aliens have a tendency to speak and act a bit like mid-twentieth century Americans.



David:

Very much so.

Perry:

And you really think, well no.

But in this case, they certainly don't, there's something very different about their communal structure, something very different about the way they live and the way they communicate and how they're able to communicate and how they're able to get around. And all of that is vitally important to what ends up happening in the rest of the story, which we aren't going to spoil because I think this is one of those books that, if you want to know what's actually going on in "hard" science fiction, this is one of those books that I think you should read. But it doesn't blow you away with too much in the way of science. It's a very interesting setup.

The characters are good. I mean, I do like the structure of the fact that a lot's going on in the early parts of the novel, and then after they've crash-landed and they have to try and work their way across this moon to safety. That this major part of the book is about the interaction between the two human characters in the module. And so it's a good setup and it works very, very well in the context of learning about how this moon and this ecosystem actually works. I thought it was great.

David:

It's interesting, I think, about how long it takes the two humans to realize, to convince themselves that this actually *is* a sentient being that they're dealing with. That's done very well because it's very slow. It takes chapters and chapters and chapters before they start to really think "hang on, maybe this thing is actually intelligent".

Perry:

I did like also the sort of the viewpoint from the alien where you're getting bits from it about how primitive these creatures [the humans] are because because they can't communicate properly. I thought, okay, that's a nice little dig. I think Tchaikovsky has done very, very well with this. I would not be at all surprised if this is going to end up being on just about every one of the awards ballots next year, and frankly, so it should.

I was alerted to this because of a very interesting NovaMob talk given a couple of months ago. And then the book was reviewed in Locus by a couple of people, and it's an excellent book. I think it's one of those ones, as I said, that people really should be reading if you want to know what's going on in the field. I think it's great.

David:

Indeed. Well, we agree on that.

Perry:

Oh, yeah, that's right. I mean, I know people basically…

David:

We should find books we disagree about more.

Perry:

Well, yeah, okay, but I know some people want us to disagree more often. But I think in this instance it's a bit hard to disagree on this one.

David:

It's too hard to disagree, it's too good a book, yeah.

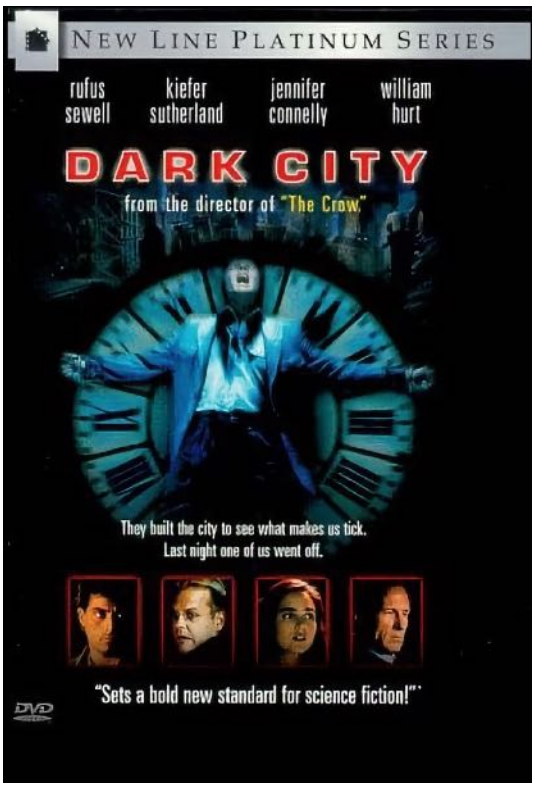
Perry:

It's too good a book.

Dark City, directed by Alex Proyas

Perry:

Anyway, all right, so moving on then, we'll talk about the film that we were going to be discussing today, and that film is *Dark City* from 1998. This isn't available for streaming as far as I'm aware, so that's a bit of a problem. But you can get it out on DVD and you can probably hunt it down somewhere, or you can probably rent it.



David:

Yeah, renting it, I think, is probably the shot. I couldn't find it actually on on a physical DVD. I was actually looking to see if I could get hold of the DVD because it has the commentary stuff on it, but it doesn't seem as though anyone has it available any more.

Perry:

Unfortunately the one that I saw doesn't have the commentary, but anyway, we'll get to that.

Okay, so this is a film that was directed by an Australian director by the name of Alexander Proyas.

Now he was born in 1963 in Alexandria, which was then part of the United Arab Republic and is now part of Egypt. Proyas is probably better known for directing… he directed an Australian film called *Spirits of the Air: Gremlins of the Clouds*. Which I reckon I saw just after it came out. It got very little release, but anyway, it wasn't science fiction as far as I recall. Anyway, we won't talk about that one too much. But people may remember him from films such as *The Crow*, which had Brandon Lee in it. And unfortunately, Brandon Lee died during the making of that film. *I, Robot* with Will Smith, which got very wide release. *Gods of Egypt*, which I believe did not do very well at all, but he's also slated to be working on R.U.R. Which is an adaptation of the Karel Čapek play, a Czech play which introduced the idea of robots, well automated beings that look and act like human beings.

So Proyas has got a bit of a science fiction background, and it's interesting to see this particular film, and this is a very interesting film. It's got a fantastic look and feel to it, but we'll get to that in a minute.

Now, I've seen this film referred to as being part of a sub-genre called *tech noir*. This is not one that I'm overly familiar with, but just came across it after reading about this film and then researching a little bit of the background to see where this fits. And this particular film fits the concept of tech noir quite well. This is a genre so named to cover those films that blend science fiction with the classic sort of *film noir* of the 40s and 50s. Now the film noir label was a term coined by French critics for a certain type of American film of the 40s and 50s, things like *Double Indemnity*, *Maltese Falcon* and all those ones where there was, you know, cynical attitudes and motivations and people desperate to get out of where they were, or find out what was happening to them, or trying to better their life by

committing some crime and then having to try and get away with it. Most of those particular films used a very expressionist black and white visual style. This one's not in black and white, it's very much in colour, but the colour palette is very, very muted. It's down at the fuzzy, grainy, green, brown, black end of the end of the spectrum. Lights are always low. There's very little in the way of lighting. Which you'd pretty much understand given the title of this particular film, *Dark City*, that's a bit of a giveaway. That's fine. The phrase tech noir supposedly first appeared in James Cameron's 1984 film *The Terminator*, and it's the name of the nightclub where Arnie's robot tracks down Sarah Connor, the woman it has been sent back to kill. The term has been co-opted to describe a smaller set of films that had a similar look and feel. Films like *Metropolis*: that was retroactively applied to it, if you can remember what that's like. *Soylent Green*, *Blade Runner*, *Brazil* and the *Matrix* films.

David:

Blade Runner, yeah, definitely.

Perry:

Blade Runner is probably the quintessential one in that. It's mostly all at night. It's raining a lot of the time. The light's dingy. That sort of look and feel that you've got, you know, in some ways, you can also include Christopher Nolan's *Batman* trilogy in this, parts of it. I mean, the very first one in particular. When I was watching *Dark City*, I kept on thinking, God, this reminds me of Nolan's Gotham City, this particular cityscape. And so I was happy to link the two of them together. It sort of basically makes a bit of sense to me that this one looks rather like that. Now, I think that this film was released in 1998 and I think the first of the Nolans probably came out a year or so later, or at least *Matrix* films came out a year or so later. No, the Christopher Nolans probably came out a five or six years [after this]. So there's a possibility that, you know, he got a little bit out of this. Not sure. Hard to know.

Anyway, in this particular film, we've talked a lot about the visual style and how it sort of fits in, but let's get down to the actual film itself.

Here, a man by the name … we learn later on, his name is John Murdoch, who's played by Rufus Sewell. He wakes up in a bath in a hotel and he's got absolutely no memory of who he is. He's just lying there. He doesn't know basically what's going on. While he's in the bath, he gets a phone call telling him to leave the hotel immediately as a group of men are coming for him. So he gets out of the bath, gets dressed. As he's about to leave, he sees that on the floor of the hotel room there's a body of a murdered woman, along with a bloody knife. And the woman looks like she's been cut up in sort of a ritualistic way with circles all over her. So he decides he's not going to hang around. Luckily enough, he decides not to pick up the knife, 'cause most of the time that happens, David, as you know, somebody finds a body, sees a knife, picks up the knife and looks at the knife and goes, "Oh, oh, oh, better drop that". Of course, leaving all their DNA and fingerprints all

over it. But anyway, that's neither here nor there in this instance.

Anyway, so Murdoch flees, just as this group of men who look very strange in long black outfits and hats, and look very pale indeed. turn up at the hotel, obviously looking for him. He is told that there's well, there's a message for him left at the front desk that his wallet has been left at an automat nearby. So he goes there, he gets the wallet, and starts looking through it and realises who he is and where he is supposed to live. And so he wanders off to start following the clues which are going to help him regain his memory throughout the course of this particular film.

Meanwhile the police turn up and Police Inspector Frank Bumstead, who's played by William Hurt, has taken over the case of this murdered woman. We learn that she is one of many that have been killed in the same way. And of course, obviously, he identifies Murdoch as a suspect. He's not there. He was in the room. She's dead. Seems like a logical conclusion to come to.

Murdoch finally gets cornered by the men in the long black cloaks and realizes that he can alter reality and is able to escape from them by creating a door in a wall and he gets out, he gets away from them. And he finds out that this is something that they can do as well, they can alter reality. Now, later that night, he learns at midnight each night that the whole city just basically grinds to a halt and people fall asleep, except for him. He's the only one that seems to be around that's awake. During this time, when everybody's asleep, the buildings, streets, and cityscape begin to change. Some of the buildings are crushed together and others rise up from below. And a few minutes later, the architecture stops rearranging itself, and everybody wakes up and continues on as if nothing had ever happened. This is a little bit strange.

As the story progresses, we learn that the pale men in black are creatures belonging to a race of beings who live in the lower reaches of the city, manipulating the streets and the city's inhabitants by injecting them with fluid that changes their memories and personalities. They are aided in this endeavour by a person by the name of Dr. Daniel Schreber, who's played by Kiefer Sutherland, who has taken on this role in the hope that he can change the outcomes, or at least that's what he's basically telling himself. He was the one who rang Murdoch at the start of the film, for example. You also learn a fair bit about this if you get the ordinary cinematic release, because there's a bit of a voiceover at the beginning that introduces all this, but I'm trying to basically bring it in as if that doesn't happen. Because I believe, as you said, David, that the director's cut gets rid of that voiceover. And I think that's probably it would have been a very good idea. But I think the director's cut also adds in a lot more, a lot of deleted scenes.

David:

About eight minutes, I think.

Perry:

Yeah, that would basically fill out the whole of the background of this. But anyway Shreber refers to these pale men as "the Strangers", identifying them as aliens who've come to Earth to learn what it is to be human because their race is dying and they want to find out whether they can actually survive or not. And what they're doing is they're attempting to learn what it is to be human by manipulating the human memories and environments as a major part of their experiments. Now we have no idea how long this has been going on, though that really doesn't matter.

What we've got is a situation where we have one of the humans, Murdoch, who has suddenly, somehow or other, learnt how to manipulate reality the same way that the aliens do, which they refer to as "tuning". And is also able to stay awake when everybody when these aliens want everybody else to be asleep. So we slowly learn, along with Murdoch as this film goes along, that the city is in perpetual night and that no one has any memories of any daytime activities at all.

When Bumstead finally catches up with Murdoch, he comes to realise that Murdoch is not responsible for the murders he's investigating. And so the two join forces to try to figure out what is going on, investigating the city, but also investigating what's happening around the city and how it's doing what it is and how Murdoch is able to manipulate reality, which doesn't make a lot of sense to anybody at this time.

This film's really all about style. It's all about the visual style of it. That's the major thing that's going on. It has got a noirish feel in a science fictional setting, so it fits that tech noir description that I mentioned at the beginning. The lighting here is really murky, dark. The city streets are grim and unwelcoming, and the sky is perpetually black. The plotline focuses as much on Murdoch's search for his own identity as it does on what the strangers are up to. And he's bounced around from one crisis to another. Does his wife Emma, who's played by Jennifer Connolly, know who he is? Are these memories he has of being a child during sunny days at a place called Shell Beach real or an implant? And where is Shell Beach anyway? He asks a few people how to get there and they go, "Oh, yeah, I've been there". "Well, how [do you] get there?" None of them can remember. They know it's there, they just can't remember how to get there.

You could be forgiven when you're watching this particular film, that you're going to be fixated on the visual style, and that's very interesting indeed. But then you'd be missing a lot of the other parts about this film that set it apart. I think it's an excellent piece of work. Very stylistic. Interesting to note that it was filmed mostly in Sydney. So if you keep an eye out, you can see quite a number of Australian actors in bit parts here. There's Colin Friels plays one particular character. He's an ex detective who was working on the murders before Bumstead takes over. David Wenham's got a tiny little part for about 30 seconds, and that's about it. But there are others in there as well. That you'll see and that you'll recognise. It's good. It's a good film. Worth seeing.

David:

Absolutely, yeah. This is one of my most favorite SF movies of all time, really. I just love that dark noir feel and look to the movie. And I like the way that---I've just re-watched the director's cut. I originally saw it in the cinema, but I've managed to get a hold of a DVD of the director's cut, and that's what I've just re-watched. And as Perry says, it doesn't have that giveaway narration at the beginning. I love the way it starts with a mystery. In the director's cut version, it

starts with Dr. Shreber, Kiefer Sutherland. He's kind of shuffling along. He's been obviously badly injured at some stage of his life. One of his eyes doesn't work properly But he shuffles along and he takes out his watch, he looks at the watch and the second hand comes round to midnight and then stops. And that's just the beginning of the movie. Why has his watch stopped? And then you go to the scene with Rufus Sewell in the hotel and you know, he wakes up without knowing who the hell he is, or where the hell he is, why he's where he is. So, like, it's crazy. So it's just that slow working out of the mystery, the audience slowly comes to understand that there's something really odd going on here. It takes a while to get there, but it's great. I just love it.

And as you say, the acting [is great]. It has got a terrific cast. I mean, Kiefer Sutherland as Dr. Shreber, I think, is very good. William Hurt as the inspector is very good. Rufus Sewell is great. Jennifer Connolly is fabulous, I thought. I actually fell in love with Jennifer Connolly at the start of this movie where she sings "Sway with Me" in a nightclub. She's employed as a singer in a nightclub.

And what else? Who else have we got? We've got some terrific main characters. And as you say, so many Australian actors are in it because it's made in Australia. So we've got Bruce Spence, Colin Friels, who I think is terrific. There's that wonderful scene with Colin Friels where he's going out of his mind, but he understands that there's something going absolutely nuts, and he's trying to convince Bumstead of what's going on. It's a really good scene. Oh, Frank Frank Gallacher is in there. A whole bunch of Australian actors and there's lots of bit parts I'm sure that were played by. Australian actors. All made in Australia. So I mean, there may have been some production done overseas, but I think most of it was done in Australia. So yeah, I think in terms of a great Australian SF film, this is this is the tops.

Perry:

Yeah, pretty close, I would reckon. I won't talk about the ending because I think… I would think that this is probably a film that a lot of people haven't seen, but I think that it is a film that they should go and see. It's now twenty-six years old, so you know, I feel like we could almost give spoilers away on this one, but I don't really want to because I think it's probably better if people try and figure this out for themselves and get to the end. It's one of those lost and forgotten ones that I knew about and had seen a long time ago. But I'm glad that you suggested that we re-watch this again because I was quite taken with it. And I think, as you say, it is one of the better Australian SF films ever made. So I think it worked out fine.

David:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Perry:

Good choice. Okay, well, that's the book and the film that we're going to talk about today. We seem to be getting through things rather quickly on this. But what else have you been doing, reading?

What Else We've Been Watching/Reading

Station Eleven (Mini-Series)

David:

Well, the highlight of of what I've been watching recently, I think, is... I managed to pick up a DVD at the library of *Station Eleven*. Remember Emily St John Mandel's book?

Perry:

Oh, yep.

David:

Have you seen the TV series?

Perry:

No, not the series.

David:

It's not a series, it's what they call a mini-series. So it's just it's self-contained. There won't be any further seasons of it.

But I thought that was excellent. And it made me realize that I'd forgotten most of what goes on in the book. I've got to go back and reread the book now, I think. But it's a basically it's a post... the book was written before and the film this series was made before the Covid pandemic hit, so you know it foreshadows the real thing. But there's this really devastating flu that hits and it's literally ninety nine percent fatal essentially. So humans are dying off in droves. But then the TV series goes back and forth in time quite a bit, right back to the when the pandemic originally hits. And we follow this young child who's an actress, she's a child actress in a Shakespeare play. And she was saved by someone. And then it goes forward to twenty or so years later, when the few survivors that are around,

some of them have gathered to make this travelling theatre group that wanders around all the few settlements that are still in existence and they put on plays, including lots of Shakespeare. I thought it was really, really well done. Mackenzie Davis, I think, is the lead actress. She was in *Hold and Catch Fire*, if you remember. Have you seen that?

Perry:

No, I haven't seen that one either.

David:

There was like three or four seasons of that, I think, at least three anyway.

Perry:

Yeah, yep.

David:

And that's about the early days of the computer industry. And she's excellent in that too. She's a Canadian actress. In fact, really Emily St. John Mandel is Canadian too, so there's a lot of Canadian people in this and it was made in Canada, I think, with bits in America. So that was excellent.

F1 directed by Joseph Kosinski (film)

David:

And then I went to the cinema and I saw *F1*.

Perry:

Okay, yep, I've seen that too.

David:

Not a sport I'm very interested in myself, but I thought the movie was okay, a bit predictable, but some good action scenes.

Perry:

Yep. Yes, well I thought the in-car filming was fantastic. I mean I know they did a heck of a lot of work on the cameras for that. And Formula One's not a great sport that I follow, although I'm keeping a bit more of an eye out now, seeing as our Melbourne homeboy Oscar Piastri --- well, he won the Belgian Grand Prix overnigh, and he's leading the Drivers' Championship for this year, so that's causing a bit of interest in my part.

David:

Yeah, I guess all that, yeah.

Perry:

So keeping an eye on what he's up to and what's happening with F1. But look, I thought it was a very interesting film. Oddly enough, I'd mentioned it to my wife and said---this is not odd because I mentioned it to my wife---but I mentioned it to my wife and I said I was going to see it. And she said, well, maybe *I* want to see it. And I thought, "you don't like sport movies". "Yeah, but I've heard it's all right". So we went along and we were both reasonably impressed with it. It doesn't fall into the mawkish sentimentality that it might have done. I mean, there was a big plot point there where they could have just dived straight into it and just gone completely sentimental, and they just turned to one side and moved away from that, which I thought was well, they sort of nodded to it and then moved away, and so that didn't stick with the standard formula for this type of thing. And so I was happy that they had done that. That made a lot more sense to me.

But as you said, the action sequences are good. The acting's good. Yep. If you get a chance to see it, see it on a big screen. Because you do need to have it as big and loud as you can possibly take it. Because it has to be that way because you're dealing with some fairly sophisticated and very, very loud engines that are going to make a heck of a lot of noise, and that's part of the whole deal. But it's interesting that they were able to plan and film this over a couple of years so that they were able to fit the actors, who are driving for a fictional team, but on occasions they've actually put the actors themselves into real life shots. So that at the start of every Formula One race, what they do is they all basically form around, all the drivers stand up and they [play] the national anthem for the country that is hosting the Formula One. And there they are, stuck on the end. Being there. And so they obviously allowed them to go ahead and do that. And so they must have had a lot of help and cooperation from the Formula One authorities, which is the only...

David:

I guess it's a big promotion for the sport, really, isn't it?

Perry:

Absolutely oh, absolutely. And why not? And I mean, I know a lot of people say that it's a waste of time, but it's a bit like... unfortunately a bit like warfare. There's so many innovations that come out of that because everybody's trying to be better than everybody else, that then ripples down into the space age equipment and then that ripples down into something else into communications and satellites and weather forecasting. Similarly with Formula One cars, although it's probably near the end of its time now that we're moving towards electric vehicles. But you get a lot of innovation that happens at the top end that slowly ripples down into the general cars that we drive. Well, at least that's the theory. As to whether it works or not. People can basically scream and yell all they want about,

you know, that's just a waste of time. But look, it's a good movie and it's a spectacularly good sports movie, I think. Worth seeing on a big screen.

David:

Yeah, well it's interesting, I said that one of the reasons I wanted to see it was I knew it was an Apple production because they've been putting money into making their own media for their Apple TV+ service. And I listened to a podcast the other day which told me that Apple is actually bidding for the F1 streaming rights in the US. So that's interesting.

Perry:

Okay, so this is a long term long-term plan, do you think?

David:

Maybe.

Perry:

Maybe, maybe. Apple have not really done terribly well with a lot of their movies that they've made. They don't seem to have done terribly well, but I think this one's probably going to do very, very well. It'll probably pick up Academy Awards for sound effects and editing, that sort of stuff. As to whether it gets anything else, it's not going to be the greatest film of the year. Okay, but it's spectacular to look at, and it's sort of the Formula One racing equivalent of the *Top Gun* Movies from a couple of years ago.

David:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Perry:

So, yeah, that's interesting. Anything else?

The Amateur directed by James Hawes

David:

Yeah. Um, oh nothing, that's worth talking about really. I saw *The Amateur*, which I think you talked about briefly, last episode, which was all right.

Perry:

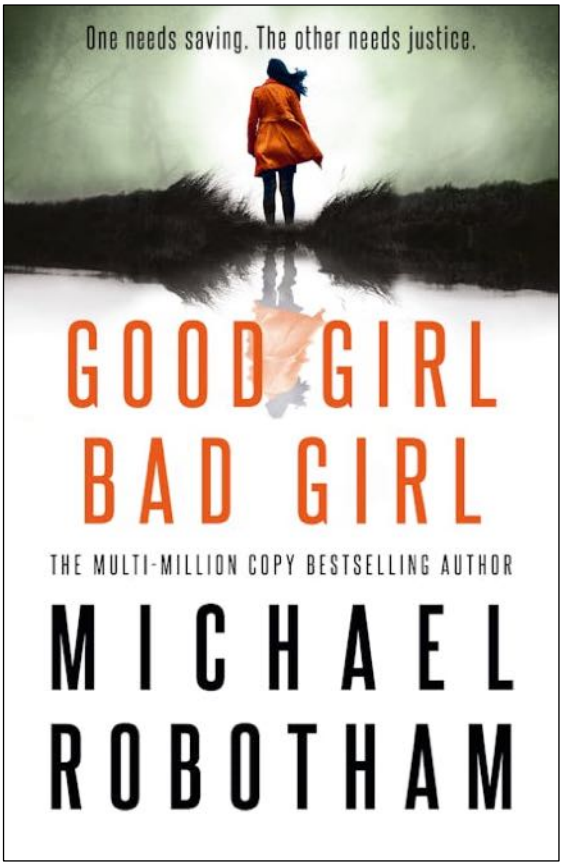
Yeah. Yeah, it's just all right.

I mean, it tries very hard to get there, but it's just got no, I don't know, it's just got no *feel* to it, I think. Something's wrong, something's off. It's not all that engaging. It just tries to do all the formula stuff of pan-European espionage. It doesn't quite make it. Anyway, there we go.

Good Girl, Bad Girl by Michael Robotham

Perry:

I've got the book here in front of me that the reader can't see, but you may be able to. So I read just recently Michael Robotham's novel *Good Girl, Bad Girl*. Now this is the start of a new series by Michael Robotham featuring forensic psychologist Cyrus Haven. He is investigating the death of a champion figure skater, Jodie Sheehan. But he also is introduced to a woman by the name of Evie



Cormack who six years prior to the start of this particular book was found filthy, half-starved and hiding in a secret room in a house. The interesting thing about this particular house is that elsewhere in this house, was the body of a man who had been tied to a chair and obviously tortured very, very badly with… it's a nasty piece of torture, anyway. I won't go into the details, but think of the worst things you can think of, and that's probably what was done to him. And we gradually learn a bit more about Evie because she wouldn't give anybody her name or where she was from or her age. Went into care and was introduced to Cyrus Haven by an ex-classmate of Haven's.

And it's just a very interesting book. He really writes well. I mean, I sat down through this and I sat down, started reading. I'll read for a little while. Next thing I know, I'm about 150, 200 pages in. I'd just read half the book in one go. I read it in two sittings, and so, 200 pages at a pop, and it just flew. It just absolutely skated along. And you look at it and you think, oh, you know, it can't be all that impressive and you sit back and think about it and you think, "Well, he really plotted this very, very well". He ekes out those little bit of the clues every now and again. And, you know, there's that mystery all the time that he's trying to help solve with the death of this young figure skater. But he's also got the point that he's got this other, he's got this young woman that he's trying to help as well, and he gets her out and she goes to live with him. You know, where he's acting as her foster parent, if you like, in this instance. She seems to be about 17 or 18, but he's not terribly sure. She's still in an institution and has to go back to that at the end of the book for various reasons. But there's three or four more books in this particular series, I think. And look, if there are anything if this is anything to go on, the rest of them are certainly going to be worth seeing.

David:

Yeah, yeah, it's good. Yeah, I I read it some some years ago, but yeah, it's excellent. Yeah, I haven't read the latest one, I don't think, in that series.

Perry:

[Should] have a look.

David:

But I do think starting a new series with yet another forensic psychologist might be a bit overdone.

Perry:

As I said I've got the book here. I've got to check out when it was 2019, so it's five years old. So he seems to put out a book a year, so he's obviously moved on to this particular character and he's gone on now. Interesting to note that he

connects it back to one of your favorite characters , Joe O'Loughlin, when you find out that O'Loughlin was Cyrus Haven's university lecturer. But it's only mentioned right at the very second last paragraph.

David:

But the trouble is that the Joe O'Loughlin character is supposed to have Parkinson's, and he's had Parkinson's for about 20 years by the time you get to the end of the Joe O'Loughlin series.

Shrinking (Apple TV+)

Perry:

Well Parkinson's seems to be in the news right now. One of the other things that I wanted to talk about is the TV series that is on Apple called *Shrinking* also has a character with Parkinson's disease and this character is played by Harrison Ford.

David:

Okay.

Perry:

Now, *Shrinking* is set in a small therapy practice. Where there's three people employed. Harrison Ford is the one who's the head of it all, and he runs it, and there are two others. And the male character---I always forget the male characters' names when I'm looking at these things. I'll have to go basically look it up. So I've forgotten his name, so forgive me for that. His wife has died in an accident. probably six months before the start of the particular series, and he's slowly trying to come to terms with that, not doing very well at the start. But he is trying to come to terms with it. But he's also got a 16, 17 year old daughter. And she's trying to come to terms with that and also deal with her teenage years.

It's good, I thought. Ten thirty, thirty five minute episodes, which seems to suit the nature of this particular series. Worth seeing, worth watching. I've only finished watching it last night, or Friday, whenever it was I've finished it, I've got to start thinking about what I really do think of it. But I do think it's worth watching. It's worth having a look at. And it's good to have something that isn't too heavy. So, this is a comedy drama. There's a lot of comedy in this and some funny situations. And you can actually see that Harrison Ford's having a great time. He's really enjoying himself here, being able to say things that he hasn't been able to say before. There's a lot of swearing in it, but that's okay. That's what people do. That's what real life's like. I gather it's been nominated for a few Emmy

Awards. So certainly worth checking out if you haven't seen it already.

What's [with] most of these things? People say, "Oh, I'm not really interested in it." Well, what's the first episode? It's 30 minutes. Watch that, see how it goes. If you like it, great. If you don't, move on. That's really the best thing. Sometimes things take a little while to get started, but if it's got a little bit of interest in it, have a bit of a look and see what it's like. It's the only way you're ever going to find anything.

David:

True. Yeah.

Perry:

That was what happened to me a long time ago when *Breaking Bad* first came out. I heard about it, knew nothing about it at all. Absolutely nothing. But I had a hunch and thought, oh, well, I'll watch the first episode and see what it was like. And the very first scene where you've got the main character standing in the middle of a road in the middle of a desert in his underwear with a gun pointing down the road. And I thought, well, this is intriguing. How the hell did he get here doing this?

David:

Yeah, yeah, that's good.

Perry:

And so, and it just, you never know. Sometimes things just, and nobody was talking about *Breaking Bad* at all at that stage, and it had only just started. And I was watching this thinking, oh, this is great. This is really, really good. And that worked out pretty well. So that worked out fine. Just give things a shot and see what happens. You never know. It might catch your interest, it might not. You never know.

All right, I think we're about done. I don't think I've got anything else that I want to talk about. David, you got anything?

David:

No, I could talk about the few books I've read, but no, there's no there's nothing nothing of any great value in that.

Perry:

Ah, do that next time. All right, okay. So, next issue. Next issue. Ha, next episode. What do I talk about? Issues. I've been thinking about other things. So, next episode.

We're going to be talking about *Asteroid City* directed by Wes Anderson. Very much up and down director. This is not a film that I have seen, but I'm intrigued by Anderson, he's an Intriguing director, so I'm interested having a look at this and seeing what's there. And the book we're going to be looking at is *The Saint of Bright Doors*, which won the Nebula Award last year and was also nominated for a Hugo Award. So that should be interesting. I think it also won a Locus Award for Best First Novel. So I've had it recommended to me, and we've decided we're going to have a look at it. So we'll see what happens with that.

David:

Sounds good.

Perry:

Okay. All right. Until then.

David:

Until then, we'll see you next time. Oh, well listen. You'll *listen* to us next time.

Perry:

Yeah, something like that.

David:

Yeah, you know how it works.

Perry:

Anyway, all right. Bye, David.