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**The Mega-field of Science Fiction Film: Studying Fans' Negotiations of Cultural Value via  
Canonical, Art-house and Blockbuster SF Movies**

Dawid Sosin

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Research**

September 2019

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### **Abstract**

Despite research on fans, relatively little is known about the mechanisms behind the negotiation of cultural value of genre texts by fan consumers. The overall image of fandom that emerges from the literature (for example Fiske, 1992; Jenkins, 2012) is as a fairly uniform social formation of audience members devoted to specific pop-/subcultural goods and therefore displaying quantities of appropriate capital enabling them to engage a given field. I will explore field structures that build on Bourdieusian field theory (Bourdieu, 1979, 1992, 1993; Jenkins, 1992) by showing a lack of specificity in terms of field boundaries, allowing me to theorise fandom in relation to what I term an SF “mega-field”. I focus on relationships between cinematic science fiction and fans who engage with texts displaying a spectrum of ‘quality’ signified by cultural value.

To illustrate the negotiation of cultural value of texts by fans I examine three case studies: *Alien* (1979), *Moon* (2009) and *Avatar* (2009). These represent different qualities (canonical, art-house, blockbuster) and correspond to a palette of Bourdieusian tastes. I conduct empirical research using qualitative interviews with thirty-two science fiction fans who vary in terms of social background, gender, age, and level of engagement with the field.

Drawing from my data, I theorize Bourdieusian-based phenomena such as intra-fandom distinctions whereby fans engage with texts via a “fan gaze” showing paradoxically “detached immersion”. I also show supportive evidence for the downward cultural mobility of the most elite audience, omnivorous fans, which expands on Bourdieu’s theorisation of social action. Furthermore, I explore fandom’s approach to generic SF texts by illustrating the fannish drive to canonise textual novelty in otherwise theoretically repetitive texts. By focusing on readings of texts in relation to personal pragmatics, I discuss SF canonisation via “innovative cliché” – a position-taking which splits and recombines the repetition and difference inherent to genre (Neale, 1980). Ultimately, this enables me to theorize the formation of an SF “mega-field” acting as an industrial tool for audience expansion. To this end, I describe the intermedial nature of cinema which allows me to theorise SF films, as they are valued by fans, as multifunctional generic texts with an appeal directed towards the widest possible audience.

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## I. Introduction

This dissertation examines fan audiences' relationships with the science fiction genre. Relying on audience practices, and distinctions between fans consuming genre texts, I will attempt to provide a way of approaching science fiction cinema as a series of overlapping Bourdieusian fields. To do so, I will seek the ways in which Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of distinction, taste, field, habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979; 1993) inform mechanisms for the appreciation of science fiction films of differing 'quality' (canonical, art-house and blockbuster) by fan audiences in the process of negotiating these films' cultural value. I propose a reconceptualised view of Bourdieusian field theory and introduce a notion of the 'mega-field'. More specifically, I will investigate the position-taking of fans within the fields of film and cultural production which inform textual hierarchies within a particular 'constellated community' (Altman, 1999, p.161).

My approach is innovative in relation to genre; the significance of my research results from relatively under-developed understandings of the formation of genre hierarchies (Altman, 1999; Neale, 1980; 2002; cf. Jancovich 2000) within audiences as well as the underdeveloped analysis of science fiction cinema's distinctions, demonstrating a transformation of Bourdieusian fields into new, more complex structures which need to be addressed academically. The audience negotiation of a hierarchy of genre texts depends on a number of relational (cultural, sub-cultural and fan-cultural) capital-driven factors such as subcultural, and consequently in-fandom, recognition of markers of quality. As I will show, fans demonstrate relational identification with autonomous poles of production within the sub-fields of cultural production undergoing cultural legitimation. Analysing both producer and consumer position-taking will allow me to theorize the negotiation of science fiction films' cultural value.

My literature review consists of three sections which form a theoretical arc for my research. First, I introduce the key concepts theorised by Pierre Bourdieu which I will employ. I focus on field theory and doxa as well as habitus linked with cultural capital (and other forms of capital). I will demonstrate how these concepts work with each other relationally and translate to specific, capital-informed phenomena within audiences' consumption of science fiction films and its direct outcome – namely, negotiations of the cultural value of such texts. Secondly, I focus on the concepts of genre and science fiction, preparing the ground for empirical research, and for my demonstration of a networked field-like structure in relation to SF. This will also help me to identify the negotiations of cultural value of individual SF texts within fan audiences. Thirdly, I focus on fandom because I propose that it is fans who significantly shape the cinematic genre field they appreciate; they are crucial in the processes of defining genre (Hills, 2005; Jenkins; 1992; Lopes, 2009; Williamson; 2005). I will demonstrate that the doxa of a Bourdieusian cultural field, and its shape, depends on agentive practices in regard to the cultural goods produced within it. I will analyse fan audiences' position-taking and relate this to the ways in which they consume SF film texts.

As discussed in my methodology chapter, I utilise thirty-two semi-structured qualitative interviews, with fans from diverse social backgrounds, regarding experiences of the three case study films focused on. These science fiction films are identifiable as canonical [*Alien* (1979)], art-house [*Moon*, (2009)] and blockbuster [*Avatar*, (2009)] versions of SF. This will provide me with insights into

fans' position-taking across a broad spectrum of science fiction. Arguably, these three films display qualities which correspond to Bourdieusian concepts of taste – respectively legitimate, middle-brow and popular taste (Bourdieu, 1979). Qualitative research will allow me to break with academic assumptions surrounding audiences such as, for example, presupposing their cultural tastes or aligning audiences' responses to texts with their age, gender, social background, etc. (Allor, 1993; Jancovich, 2000; Austin 2002; Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015). I will utilize data from respondents' in-depth accounts of their subjective experiences with selected films.

My Findings are then organized into three sections, each related to a different aspect of my research. I discuss science fiction fandom first. I will demonstrate how distinction between fans hierarchizes a seemingly uniform social formation of fandom in relation to the forms of capital accumulated by its members (Austin, 2002, p.12). I argue that this hierarchy is linked to a 'fan gaze', a disposition enabling fans to construct the 'quality' of texts as well as potentially isolating and evaluating markers of 'quality' (King, 2016, p.14). The fan gaze expands on Bourdieusian cultural dispositions by addressing a disposition reliant, paradoxically, on a combination of the codes of conduct from two poles of cultural production – autonomous and heteronomous. Here, I also describe an unexpected paradox of a mode of consumption which I termed 'detached immersion' which, like the fan gaze, combines the characteristics of both Bourdieusian dispositions. Fans are able to immerse themselves in texts to an extent, at the same time as interpreting them as constructed forms of art. Additionally, I will explain the importance of the forms of capital linked to this disposition, using the concept of the cultural omnivore (Gripsrud, 1998; Peterson and Kern 1996; Prior 2005) to show how agents legitimize specific SF texts in relation to their taste for goods from the genre's autonomous pole of cultural production.

The next section of my Findings discusses fans' position-taking in relation to two prominent theories of genre from Rick Altman (1999) and Stephen Neale (1980). I demonstrate how fans negotiate the pragmatics of genre texts (Altman, 1999, p.207-216) by relating SF films to their everyday lives, therefore challenging previous genre theory. I proceed to analyse the hierarchization of texts by fans, based on repetition with difference (Neale, 1980, p.13) which, unexpectedly, fans discursively split into cliché and textual novelty when negotiating the value of science fiction films. I also theorize an unexpected consumption phenomenon which I refer to as the 'innovative cliché paradox' whereby fans canonise textual novelty in otherwise supposedly devalued and clichéd texts.

In the final section of my Findings I set out the concept of the 'mega-field' which updates work on Bourdieusian field theory. I demonstrate that genre meaning-making strongly relies on intertextuality (Jensen, 2016, p.2) as well as on cross-genre influences. Therefore, formerly separable fields are no longer fully autonomous (Hills, 2005, p.168). Instead of being bound by identifiable borders they collapse into each other (Lash, 1990, p.252; Prior, 2005, p.135) and are fused together into new inter-genre and intermedial mega-formations. I argue that this phenomenon is a direct outcome of producers' position-takings, serving as a tool with two specific functions. Mega-fields seek to assure the circulation of cultural, sub-cultural, and fan-cultural capitals, further reinforcing the value of each of these forms of capital. Furthermore, mega-fields serve to attract diverse, expansive audiences operating with different quantities and forms of capital. This challenges Bourdieusian field theory; for Bourdieu, fields were seen

as relating to specific forms of capital granted and exchangeable within that field, whereas a mega-field utilizes the multiplicity of forms of (cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural) capital as a way to bid for the widest possible audience reach.

This is a relatively new research area – perhaps surprisingly, there are few works which apply Bourdieusian field theory directly to science fiction (see, for example, Barker and Brooks, 1998; Bacon-Smith, 2000). Addressing this gap in the literature, I will explore capital-driven fan distinctions within the network of interrelated fields – what I am terming the ‘mega-field’ – that constitutes the social space of media/genre consumption evidenced in my data.

Next, I will show how the main theoretical framework of my research lays the ground for my theorization of mega-fields as well as for an investigation of fans’ position-taking which informs their negotiation of the cultural value of SF film texts.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. Using Key Concepts from Bourdieu

Considering that I will argue that the characteristics of the Bourdieusian field can be applied to the science fiction genre I will introduce this concept first. A field is a social reality – a construct developed on the basis of human agreement making the structures of social spaces ‘exist only because we believe them to exist (...) because they require human institutions for their existence’ [for example money, legal agreements, etc. (Searle, 1995, pp.1-2)]. Consequently, the Bourdieusian field is a construct ruled by distinguishable codes (doxa) considered objective by social agents. Bourdieu described a field as ‘a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants’ (in Wacquant, 1989, p.39).

The positions within any field rely on relations of power and often result from struggles between social agents because of the ‘domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field’ (Jenkins, 1992, p.53); fields are a market for forms of capital. They require forms of capital as their access pass-code, and they produce relevant capital and supply it to those social agents who can move around a given field with ease. It is important to emphasise that ‘to each position there correspond presuppositions, a doxa’ (Bourdieu, 1979, p.240). This is the key characteristic of a Bourdieusian field, itself inseparable from the concept of doxa. Fields are governed by relational sets of rules of engagement, ‘the rules of the game’ (Grenfell, 2008, p.55) defined by dominant social agents within the field. Consequently, doxa is seen as having an ‘extraordinary sense of déjà-vu and a peculiar familiarity’ (Jameson, 2012, p.418) which ‘implies the immediate agreement elicited by that which appears self-evident, transparently normal’ (Terdiman in Bourdieu, 1987, p.812). Field-based doxa can be described as ‘an adherence to relations of order which (...) are accepted as self-evident’ (Ibid. p.471) as they structure this feel for the game ‘complicit in reproducing the doxa, the presuppositions (...) [which allow social agents] to maintain their positioning, the allocation of capital, and the legitimation of the forms of capital to be allocated’ (Hunter, 2010, p.178).

Bourdieu identified cultural capital (Grenfell, 2008) as one such form of capital that is often crucial to one’s position-taking in a field – this can be a level of education, possession of goods seen as ‘cultural’ (art, etc.), or specialist knowledge. Post-Bourdiesian theories consider forms of capital linked to the immersion in fan communities (cf. Jenkins H., 1992; Hills, 2002; Jancovich, 2003; Hills, 2009) or familiarity with a code of conduct considered appropriate in subcultural social spaces (Thornton, 1995, p.85).

To interact in a social space, agents need ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53) which Bourdieu refers to as a habitus. It is a ‘present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities (...) is constantly exerted’ (Bourdieu, 1992,

p.54). This is 'a set of norms and expectations unconsciously acquired by individuals through experience and socialisation as embodied dispositions (...) predisposing us to act improvisationally' (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p.181). As norms and expectations turn into dispositions after a prolonged process of repetition and internalisation, they stand behind the reasoning for actions taken, making habitus a key sociological concept to explore and understand in studies of audiences.

My claim is supported by Randal Johnson's editorial introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu, 1993), which comments:

by isolating texts from the social conditions of their production, circulation and consumption, formalist analysis (...) ignores the objective social relations in which literary practice occurs and avoids the questions of (...) what constitutes a work of art (...) and "value" of the work (p.11).

This influences consumption and audiences' appreciation of goods provided by the field of cultural production. Because of its unconscious, embodied impact on every aspect of the individual's life, habitus is a primary factor of identity. Consequently, habitus informs distinctions between social agents. Participation in practices or belonging to a specific community can mark a social class or other form of rank recognized in social spaces. For the elite class, these position-takings involve consumption of specific types of texts with a 'pure gaze' – approaching them as more artistic, recognizing structure and form instead of being immersed in narrative or spectacle (cf. Bourdieu, 1979; Grenfell, 2004).

Habitus informs and gradually expands agents' accumulated capital as well as potential trajectories of position-taking within fields and

is (...) converted into a disposition that generates (...) meaning-giving perceptions; it is a (...) disposition which carries out a[n] (...) application – beyond (...) what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions (Bourdieu, 1979, p.170)

Habitus is produced by conditions available to an agent and it is adjusted to conditions encountered by the same agent (Jenkins, 1992, p.49). A social agent engaging with a cinematic text will only be able to apprehend what their gathered cultural capital can translate according to this 'dictionary' of references.

The essential quality of any form of capital is that its value changes depending on a field and

produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced (...) In a particular field, the properties, (...) dispositions or (...) cultural goods (...) are not all simultaneously operative [as] the specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market (Bourdieu, 1979, p.113).

The principle behind this is that a specialist specializes in a particular field. Therefore, the artist and his works are produced 'in particular (...) conditions' and because of their expressive, multi-layered and discursive nature they represent 'sets of relations within which struggles (...) occur [so that] the

audience[s], possessing sums of cultural and economic capital (...) activate their attitudes, artistic preferences (...) – habituses' (Prior, 2005, p.125).

Consequently, there can be communities of dominant and subordinate factions which can potentially establish the doxa of a particular field (of cultural production) via their position-taking. There exist sub-communities of audiences that distinguish themselves from each other by the amounts of accumulated cultural capital operating in a given field. The value of capital is not established by its own existence but by its 'exchange rate' on a particular market just like the social construct of a social class is

not defined by a property (...) in a relation to cause and effect (...) but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices (Bourdieu, 1979, p.106).

Bourdieu's field theory has been applied to pop culture, as well as more autonomous arts. Paul Lopes sees the world of graphic novels as a field when he refers to the 1980s as 'the Heroic Age' of the comic-book medium. He borrows this term from Bourdieu commenting that in this period 'writers generated "principles of autonomy" in the French literary field. These principles claimed independence from the "rules of art" governing this field at the time (...) by forming their own "restricted subfield" of production' (2009, p.XIII).

Also, Matt Hills refers to the horror genre as a Bourdieusian field in his *Pleasures of Horror* (2005) drawing from Ken Gelder (1996; 2000). Hills describes horror as 'a cultural space in which texts (...) seek distinction from their rivals (...) [and] recognition within horror's' (2005, p.163) identified field. Additionally, Gelder has theorised pulp fiction as a Bourdieusian field, linking it with the concept of genre (2004). Field theory has been also applied to journalism (Benson, 2005). Bourdieu explains that it could be applied to anything that requires position-taking within a structure of codes of conduct. He says that there are

as many fields of preferences as (...) fields of stylistic possibilities. Each of these worlds - (...) newspapers (...) political programmes, [science fiction cinema] - provides (...) distinctive features which, functioning as a system of differences allow (...) social differences to be expressed (1979, p.226).

Richard Jenkins notices that Bourdieu wasn't able to identify how a field could be identified as bounded (1992, p.56). Multiple fields of cultural production influence each other, transforming their content in the process of creation or consumption of texts. Hills suggests (2003) that it is possible to 'discern different ranges of intertextualities that are drawn on' by films (2005, p.185). Hills argues that fields are currently impure and mediated by each other and highlights Gelder's argument which 'considers interfield transgressions between literary and filmic fields of cultural production' (Ibid., p.168). I will argue for the need for a new model within Bourdieusian theory - an approach to socially constructed realities as a relational network of correlated fields mutually dependent on their cross-influences. Nick Prior observed this phenomenon (2005) and attempted to sensitize his readers to the relational nature of Bourdieusian theories. Prior wrote that a field 'should not be seen as a fixed geometrical space but

more as a process, an accomplishment produced over and over in and through social relations' (ibid., p.135).

My theory regarding fields relies on an observation that doxa dictates a spectrum of position-takings, a field of possibles supplied by the 'more or less (...) probable trajectories leading to more or less equivalent positions' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.110). Any field is ultimately constituted by the position-taking of producers and consumers. Identifying 'fields of possibles' offered to agents within any social space is key to understanding the doxa underpinning a field or subfield. In *Distinction* Bourdieu describes fields as 'capable of imposing (...) their own norms on both the production and the consumption of (...) [their] products' (p.3). If during media consumption it is possible to employ a particular form of capital to decode these products it is because

the work's objective meaning (which may have nothing to do with the author's intention) is completely adequate (...) only in the case where the culture (...) [within] the work is identical with the culture or (...) the artistic competence which the beholder brings to the deciphering of the work (Ibid.).

Art-house cinema is often considered something that would follow the Bourdieusian autonomous principle of legitimacy (Rascaroli, 2013) because social agents provide goods for 'other producers (...) by the autonomous (...) "art for art's sake", meaning art for artists' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.51). The heteronomous principle of legitimacy is described as 'the consecration bestowed by the choice of ordinary consumers, the "mass audience"' (Ibid.). Heteronomous works, e.g. blockbusters, are subjected to laws of the market just like any commodity (King, 2016).

However, Bourdieu has distinguished not two but three kinds of taste which depend on distinction between social agents. He deems taste as 'manifested preferences (...) [or] the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference (...) [appearing] to be natural (...) which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.56). Bourdieu distinguishes between "legitimate", "middlebrow" and "popular" tastes (Bourdieu, 1979, p.16); these correspond to the cinematic case studies in my research – canonical SF; art-house SF; blockbuster SF – which represent texts consumed by audiences diversified through taste distinctions.

Social agents constantly mutate through interaction when they engage with numerous fields and, in some cases, gain cultural capital. Despite being embodied after a process of predisposed conditioning, habitus and taste are 'enduring but not static or eternal (...) [they] can be dismantled by exposure to novel external forces' (Beckert and Zafirovski, 2011, p.319). The field of film mutates to meet the demands of the market. Like every field of cultural production, it cannot 'function if it could not count on already existing tastes (...) [so it] enables taste to be realized by offering (...) the universe of cultural goods' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.230); in this case, very different kinds of genre film, through which legitimate, middlebrow and popular tastes can be performed. In terms of the hierarchization of texts within a field, Bourdieusian theory depicts a complex mechanism. Bourdieu proposed a formula: '[(habitus) (capital)] + field = doxa' (1979, p.101). This identifies the position-taking employed within a field, depending on agents' inter-field dynamics and the relational valuation of goods produced in such

a field. The observation of practices within cultural consumption will thus allow me to identify how the cultural value of these three kinds of SF film is recognised and constituted by knowledgeable (fan) audiences.

In addition, fields of cultural production tie questions of textual structure to social agents' expectations regarding this structure (Altman, 1999). A taxonomic scheme for goods is produced within fields these agents belong to – a codified assembly of features exhibited by individual cultural commodities sharing a homology with other manufactured, field-specific characteristics. To understand mechanisms of textual evaluation it is crucial to analyse and understand the concept of genre and look at it through the prism of field theory. Furthermore, the field of cultural production attempts to generate distinctions; in terms of cinema, this can mean presenting 'each film as different from all its competitors. ... (as) each film is marketed competitively against all others currently in distribution' (Staiger, 1990, p.6). Consequently, as SF films compete for distinction against others in the genre, they can tend to draw on other fields of cultural production by way of individuation and bids for distinction (comics, video-games, literature, etc.). In this way, what I would term a genre-based and cross-media *mega-field* emerges, and I will explore this next.

## **2. From Bourdieusian Field Theory to the Science Fiction 'Mega-field'**

Texts are 'recognized by particular conventions (...) shared by other texts of that type' (Chandler and Munday, 2012, p.173) and can be grouped within a designated family, 'derived from a wide variety of differences among texts' (Altman, 1999, p.11). This is the principal characteristic of genres which potentially, over time and after the formation of relationships between social spaces and agencies, form new fields. Showing the intertextual and intermedial influences shaping the genre of SF film will allow me to argue that currently field theory is unable to adequately capture science fiction cinema. I will focus on the interrelated, mutually dependent fields which constitute a genre 'mega-field', varying from a singular Bourdieusian field due to the permeable boundary and shared influences between them.

Genres are structures 'embod[ying] the crucial ideological concerns of the time in which they are popular' (Fiske, 1987, p.110). They are carriers for 'a myriad of themes and concepts' (Kitses, 1969, p.26) evaluated through the mediation of the relationships of their consumers with texts, social space or field, and themselves. Consequently, genres can be capable of a further structuring of social spaces. Just as social agents follow predisposed trajectories of position-taking, genres predispose the textual content of texts as well as they transpose a defined matrix of practices into processes of cultural production and consumption (Shaheen, 2003, pp.171-193).

Genre texts often exhibit the features of numerous genres and approached individually, do not strictly comply with expected monogeneric features. Individual texts will display idiosyncrasies. Genre is only identified through the examination of texts which share certain homologies and a constituted generic corpus of attributes (Altman, 1999) shared within a social space or field. Genre films rely on the expressive nature of conventions employed as carriers of meaning, so a potential discourse, activated by the relational nature of signs, makes them part of processes of systematisation (Neale, 1995). Genres also provide for distinction between generic texts and, in response to constantly mutating agency of

consumers, 'genres (and the relationships between them) change over time; the conventions (...) shift, new genres (...) emerge and others are "discontinued"' (Chandler, 1997[2000], p.3). Because film genres are commercially produced (Comolli and Narboni, 1970) they are 'practical device[s] for enabling individual media users to plan their [consumption] choices (...) [and ordering] mass communication' (McQuail, 1987, p.200). Consequently, genre becomes a field of preferences performed through a system of differences (Bourdieu, 1979, p.226), in turn dictated by the amount of capitals accumulated by social agents, when 'the space of social positions is retranslated into a space of "positions" by the mediation of the space of dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1991, p.634). Some SF films are knock-offs of previously popular films and their producers bank on audiences' 'confusion, with titles (...) almost the same as the original (...) lur[ing] audiences into watching their "mockbusters"' (Dixon, 2016, p.43), e.g. *Atlantic Rim* (2013) versus *Pacific Rim* (2013). Even these films will still find genre audiences willing to consume them, although I will focus on blockbuster SF and taste as one of my categories in this thesis, rather than analysing the mockbuster.

All of this makes genre a discursive concept which relates 'production to the expectations of (...) customers' (Ibid.). Arguably, an expectation is a result of an embodied disposition originating in social agents' habituses. Theoretically, minor differences between the habituses of social agents can result in fundamentally opposed trajectories of position-taking. Bourdieusian theories of habitus, cultural capital, taste and field are intricately interrelated (Thomson, 2008, p.61), including dialectics between agencies, dispositions, fields and social conditions. As the discursive nature of genres produces a multitude of potential decodings of genre texts, e.g. drawing on intermedial processes of adaptation or resonance, then inter-field relations can deepen (Krajewski, 2003, p.214). Individual social agents will compile their body of SF references applied to science fiction film viewing, for instance, from forms of capital and knowledge accumulated over their entire lives, and through engagement in numerous fields and social spaces.

Rick Altman emphasises that the distinctive nature of a genre is a 'part of the constant category-splitting/category-creating dialectic that constitutes the history of types' (1999, p. 65). He locates genre as dependent on the 'existence of audience activity (knowledge of similar texts, intertextual comparisons (...) and predictable schema-processing practices)' (p.84), resulting in 'competing meanings, engineered misunderstandings and a desire for domination rather than communication' (p.99).

Multiple genres have been recognised as Bourdieusian fields (e.g. Gelder, 2004; Benson, 2005; Hills, 2005; Lopes, 2009) and the same can be said for science fiction films whose cultural value has been established throughout their history. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, certain film narratives within the new medium of film exhibited textual content associated with science fiction, e.g. George Melies produced a number of science fiction shorts. Their content varied from simple tricks like double exposure, through to playing the film backwards. Consequently, Melies' films could be seen as a response of the field of cultural production to the relationships between technological progress and social spaces. The field of film itself is a direct consequence of technological progress, given that 'Cinema is one of the languages through which the world communicates itself to itself' (Comolli and Narboni, 1971, p.30).

Science fiction films can be seen as a tribute to the technological proficiency of humankind (cf. Asimov, 1983) commenting on world affairs or theorizing the consequences of human agency through cautionary tales such as films showing the consequences of war – e.g. *Things to Come* (1936) – or varied kinds of dystopias, e.g. *THX 1138* (1971), *Children of Men* (2006) etc. Often employing vast intertextuality, SF films deal with the speculative visualisation of fantastical imagery while simultaneously having a close relationship with cultural reality which, over time, has associated them with a didactic role through which they have acquired a middlebrow status (cf. Kernan, 2004; King, 2016), e.g. via films such as *They Live* (1988) or *Arrival* (2016).

Film genres become subjects of discourse; they deliver meaning in terms of audiences' expectations of 'the operation of discursively produced generic conventions' (Austin, 2002, p.12). These expectations can concern the form or content of a genre text as well as what a genre potentially stands for. In addition, genre-derived meanings can be constituted by the structures of social spaces in which social agents are operating. Consequently, meaning can be decoded by an audience member as they are engaged with varied fields and social spaces, also varying depending upon the agent's habitus and capital. For instance, the longer an audience member engages with SF as a genre, and the higher their subcultural capital, then new textual meanings can be discovered, e.g. specific intertextual references might be entirely missed by someone lacking in appropriate fan-cultural or subcultural capital. Any social agent is potentially able to decode the connotations provided by texts through 'layers of individual identity and preference' consisting of cultural distinctions (Parks, 2004, p.135). Consequently, the level of accumulated (sub)cultural capital will influence audience tastes, position-taking regarding consumption preferences, and potential readings and their relational complexity.

Early SF films were often politicised, requiring cultural capital on the part of audiences who could recognize and relate to the intertextual references that were intended to confer cultural legitimation on this form of art (Cornea, 2007; Lopes, 2009). SF recognised that the 'future doesn't just arrive (...) but comes from what we're doing now' (Aldiss in Cornea, 2007, p.23), serving as a metaphor for the present as well as a cautionary theorization of potential futures. Reading some science fiction films as allegories, e.g. *Metropolis* (1928), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Godzilla* (1954), *Silent Running* (1972), *The Matrix* (1999), or *District 9* (2009), 'invites us to adopt a reflectionist stance' (Kuhn, 2003, p.54). Reading these films allegorically makes it possible to decode science fiction as a mirror artistically held up to reality. Consequently, viewers of SF cinema might decode a film by 'mixing and correlating textual evidence that allows them to obtain a compass on (...) their lives' (Conley, 2011, p.145).

The 1950s established science fiction cinema in the collective imagination of audiences (Jancovich, 1996, pp.1-35). In this decade, science fiction dominated the field of film as well as box office takings (Cousins, 2011; Novell-Smith, 1997). Approached as a means of expression (Wells, 1984), SF operated with archetypes and innovation so that it could carry the 'internalised', the familiar, on the wings of the 'unknown' by providing textual novelty (Abelman and Atkin, 2011, p.29) whilst predicting the future. Most SF films appropriated their cultural value through relationships to ideological currents present at the time, for example, representing the Cold War in fantastical forms (Chapman and Cull, 2013), coding specific social problems or offering a commentary on dominant ideology (Thompson,

2001). Although not directly encoded in textual content (e.g. denotative imagery), the currently-agreed critical reading sees anti-communist propaganda expressed through 1950s SF films (*Them, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Earth vs Flying Saucers*, etc.) so that audiences of the day 'could work out their obsession with Communist subversion (...) in post-war America' (Avila, 2007, p.89). Depending on audiences' identity, the meaning decoded from the SF invasion films of the 1950s can shift from the battle of capitalist/communist ideologies to one of immigration problems. In the UK, alien invasion became synonymous with 'concerns about immigration (...) [with audiences] projecting the alien Others of the cinema screen onto the immigrant Others (...) settl[ing] in the nation's towns and cities' (Jones, 2017, p.128). Although radically different, these readings available to US/UK audiences appropriated cultural value for SF film through its social significance.

Eventually, driven by the reshaping of the film industry after the dismantled vertical integration of major studios and the popularisation of colour television, science fiction films increased their budgets, offered more spectacular material, and showed an increased drive towards exploitation cinema (see Nowell-Smith, 1997; Cousins, 2015; Benschoff and Griffin, 2011). New auteurs of the 1960s also redefined the ideological principles of SF, with Stanley Kubrick and other directors (e.g. Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Andrzej Wajda, etc.) focusing on a 'bleak view of the essential nature of man' (Katz E., 1996).

Agents of the SF 'mega-field' of cultural production, through the use of textual similarities, kept assuring audiences that genres were 'neat, manageable and stable' (Altman, 1999, p.17) because genre texts must 'leave no doubt as to their generic identity [and] instant recognisability must be assumed' (Altman, 1999, p.18). In the process of determining a genre (seeking patterned position-taking according to the doxa defining the field) it is essential to 'analyse genre's central tenets' (Taves, 1993, p.4). Consequently, SF films presented imaginary worlds utilizing post-apocalyptic/dystopian visions of future society. But in the attempt to provide novelty in the market 'either by adding a new element or by transgressing one of the old ones' (Neale, 1990, p.56), producers started to mix different genre conventions – demonstrating the fluidity of the boundaries of overlapping fields and leading to hybridised genre fields. My case study of canonical SF film, *Alien* (1979), combines SF with horror just as *The Thing* (1982) does, whilst *Barbarella* (1968) combines science fiction with erotic comedy, and *Westworld* (1973) is a surreal blend of SF with the western.

In the 1980s, a new narrative relationship of femininity towards masculinity began to be established. Female heroes were introduced on screen in tandem with an explosion in machismo-oriented films (Tasker, 1993). A new model of femininity nested itself in the collective consciousness of audiences (see Beynon, 2002; Leavy and Trier-Bienek, 2014; Spicer, 2001); this feminism-driven inclusion of a new model of female agency in film is one factor in the legitimation of SF films, I would argue. Through relating filmic content to social realities, SF texts produced commercially can bid for and gain a sense of cultural significance (Lopes, 2009). And as SF films have more explicitly addressed the cultural-political interests of audiences then the cultural value of specific science fiction films has, over time, become more securely recognised – e.g. *Alien* in relation to Ripley's role.

Some genre films are based on 'original' narrative content, whilst others adapt literary works or borrow from other media and translate them into the medium of film. Some films rely on the power of stardom, and/or through the expenditure of economic capital will secure 'blockbuster' production attributes. A narrow selection of genre films tends to be based around the self-consciously 'artistic' status of encoded meanings (Stam, 2000). These diverse conditions of cultural production result in the palette of genre texts that exhibit diverse and distinguishable forms of 'quality'. Geoff King recognizes numerous markers of distinction which in his understanding generate types of quality embodied by films corresponding to Bourdieusian tastes. These films can be classed as blockbuster, middle-brow/art-house, and canonical texts (King, 2016, p.178).

However, it is important to note that generic quality is not 'an evaluative judgement simply of how well something is done' (King, 2016, p.4). Instead, markers of distinction link to value within the cultural arena because of the potential meanings encoded in genre films, which can in turn be transformed by audiences through their (relational) discourses. King explains how the concept of quality 'does not suggest something particularly well made or accomplished (...) but something with a particular location within an established hierarchical system of cultural evaluation and taste patterns' (ibid.). Markers of quality include socially significant elements of narrative or cinematic construction. 'High quality' films often put 'an emphasis on (...) social realism and (...) social problems' (King, 2016, p.14). Often they can appear subversive, heralding novelty, and can be avant-garde. Most importantly for SF, they can attempt to communicate forms of social/allegorical relevance, e.g. as in *1984* (1984), *Children of Men* (2006), and *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017). They can be socially relevant because they tackle matters of ongoing struggle within fields, or they can break with the 'populist' nature of entertainment, calling to supposedly higher emotions and attempting to provide a narrative in the artistic mode of 'art for art's sake'.

Finally, it is important to be aware that there exist types of capital such as subcultural, fan-cultural and pop-cultural capital. These capitals can enable the manipulation of textual codes, extracted from familiarity with media, that are necessary for allegory to be recognised. These forms of capital were not considered by Bourdieu but are used by audiences as markers of distinction. In my research, I will correlate Geoff King's concept of quality with Bourdieusian tastes in an attempt to challenge presupposed prejudice against types of genre cinema, e.g. SF, that are still undergoing processes of legitimation and are still sometimes 'associated with cultural weakness' (Barker, 2009, p.287). I will attempt to provide evidence for the ways in which audiences legitimate science fiction texts through their communal practices, which in turn have the potential to influence what I will identify as SF's 'mega-field' of cultural production. I will also use King's concept of quality to demonstrate a network of relationships between multiple fields and groups of audiences. I will now proceed to describe the dynamics of cinema audiences and fandom which will allow me to introduce post-Bourdieuian forms of capital as well as providing a rationale for their significance in my research.

### 3. Dynamics of the field's Audiences and Fandom

The term 'audience' 'homogenizes what is (...) very diverse, (...) because it assumes an almost reverential concentrated attention to their chosen media' (Barker and Brooks, 1998, p.11). Despite this, given the fluidity of fields' boundaries as well as their internal division into distinctive sub-fields, audiences consume products of the mega-field of SF which often require knowledge of film as well as other media, or a subcultural capital linked to the understanding of SF/fantasy – for instance, although there is no need to be familiar with all the associated graphic novels and comics to interpret it, the Marvel Cinematic Universe is a very different construct when one knows all of them very well. SF genre films might be considered to have an effect 'enabled only by... sub conventions ... which are unassimilable to high culture' (Jameson, 2005, p.316), but I intend to break with this idea and attempt to show how legitimisation of the minor arts works to negotiate SF films' cultural value. In addition, I will show how fandom generates struggles over status within the audiences of a field. Social agents who have accumulated a higher quantity of (sub)cultural capital can be distinguished as an 'elite' audience (Hills, 2003), comparable to elites equipped with higher levels of cultural capital in other fields. Genre audiences eventually form a so-called 'constellated community', a concept proposed by Rick Altman in his 1999 book *Film/Genre*. He recognized that such a group could be identified by their having 'intermittent contact with others fond of the same genre' despite typically 'only imagining their presence and activity', and where 'direct contact' remained exceptional (p.161). Altman explains that the constellated community is a group of individuals isolated from each other but imagining the informal presence of such a coherent group that is united through repeated acts of imagination and genre/media consumption (ibid.) What this means is a group of members distanced from each other in (social) space, yet participating in the same rites of consumption and decoding, and engaging with the same genre-based practices of consumption.

In my research, I will employ three case studies to explore their relations with audiences' 'constellated community' and inter-field processes of evaluating cultural. I will focus on science fiction films which represent three qualities corresponding to Bourdieusian modes of preference. Blockbuster film is represented by *Avatar* (2009), which despite its 'presentation of a wide range of cultural, social, political, and religious themes' (Dunn, Irwin and Wiley, 2014, p.2) constantly operates with a simplistic hyper-masculine narrative (Nesbitt, 2016, p.27). Progressing through the hierarchy of SF film's cultural goods, *Moon* (2009) can be best described as middlebrow spectacle (compare Constable, 2018, pp.417-448). Finally, *Alien* (1979) represents a canonical science fiction film (cf. Neale, 2007, p.346) broadly considered to be one of the key films in the science fiction genre (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015). I consider it to parallel those goods classified in other fields as ones that satisfy legitimate taste (cf. Claessens and Dhoest, 2010). Despite the popularisation of *Alien*, this can therefore be seen as a cultural good exhibiting elite taste.

Various qualities of SF films in general, as well as the case studies employed in my research, underpin and generate the 'field of possibles' present within the 'mega-field' of science fiction cinema. SF films, despite homologies in their textual content, vary from each other in terms of what they represent and how they represent it. Arguably, spectacle itself can be a marker of quality for science

fiction film and this is why I will now further discuss the blockbuster film, which is most often associated with spectacle. The term 'blockbuster' describes the kind of cinema associated with

'the dominant commercial forms of modern, mainstream, "postclassical" or "post-studio" Hollywood (...) typically (extraordinarily) successful in financial terms (...) [and needing] to be this successful in order to have a chance of returning a profit on their equally extraordinary production cost' (Hall, 2002, p.11).

Often assumed to be the binary opposite of art-house cinema, blockbuster films are typically heteronomous products which 'see that the logic of profit, particularly short-term profit, is the very negation of culture' (Bourdieu, 2003, p.70). Widely released and often undemanding (Barker and Brooks, 1998, p.2-7), they are constructed to appeal to the widest possible audience while often relying heavily on technical wizardry and special effects. Notoriously, narrative complexity is reduced by the use of a simplified code, as well as syntax, already internalised by the current audience through repeated exposure to these kinds of films. Hills has argued that the identification of a blockbuster relies on extra-textual factors, e.g. box office figures, as well as on its discursive construction (2003). In his terms

'texts do not represent definitive attributes that can allow them to be classified as blockbusters (...) Instead, the term (...) depends on the mobilization of certain promotional/economic discourses: we are able to identify the blockbuster only through its placement within a set of industry and reception practices' (Hills, 2003, p.179).

The majority of intended blockbusters ensure a financial return from the most profitable audience which is currently considered to vary in age, being between ten and twenty-four years old (Balio in Neale, 2002). Most often, this results in supposedly near-clichéd patterns of storytelling with uncomplicated characters carrying archetypal attributes and participating in highly legible adventures (Kramer, 1998). I mention this for a specific reason. The supposedly simplified, clichéd narratives of spectacular blockbuster films can also gain social significance among some of their audiences, which is a factor in the process of legitimating the minor forms of low art as shown by, for example, Lopes in his works on graphic novels (2009) or jazz (2002). I will also explore the complexity of such a process of legitimation through my empirical research here, challenging the idea that blockbusters are merely devalued, heteronomous versions of SF cinema.

Allegedly near-clichéd patterns of storytelling produce expectations of reduced consumerist agency as they potentially make texts predictable. This remains one reason underpinning assumptions regarding why audiences consume such texts (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015; p.8). Blockbuster consumers are presumed, usually without any empirical evidence, to be a passive audience that doesn't look at texts 'in depth'. In my work I will avoid such assumptions, linked to assumptions regarding the cultural value of genre texts, by focusing on audiences' responses, as well as their active processes of hierarchization of science fiction films. In this way, I will potentially challenge a 'set of abstract totalities' (Allor, 1993, p.102) within existing studies of genres, fields and audiences by detaching my research from fan/audience/producer assumptions of value. By analysing actual audiences' approaches and

responses to genre I will avoid the imaginary estimation of values held and represented by both the audiences in question as well as the cultural goods they consume (Jancovich 2000). Numerous times in the past, details about the audiences for SF films, like their age/taste, have been assumed on the basis of academics' textual readings rather than empirical audience study (for more on this, see Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015; p.14). Instead, I will research the dynamics within social spaces provided by the network of interrelated fields which go to make up science fiction cinema. This is important because although the state of affairs in audience studies has improved, it has been suggested that while analysing film genre, the academic focus on audiences has remained limited (Jancovich, 2000, pp.23-35). For example, in the past it has been assumed that film language appealed to audiences in a universal way when a film was highly popular (Davis-Gemelli, 1986, p.235). This approach produces a distorted image of the phenomenon under study based on an author's private impression which can widely diverge from the actual processes of consumption of the goods provided by the field of cultural production. In addition, Bourdieu's theories have rarely been applied to science fiction film, especially in its canonical, middlebrow and blockbuster forms.

As audiences accumulate cultural capital their position-taking can supposedly become more 'sophisticated', and consequently they are assumed to look for texts worthy of their attention. Depending on taste, audiences are drawn to texts of various qualities 'by a transcendent hope and a desire that something will touch us' (Silverstone, 1999, p.55). According to Bourdieu, gaining forms of capital follows unequal patterns of accumulation (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993). Arguably, the educational system provides considerable quantities of cultural capital, although having more interest in a field outside the educational system might result in the incommensurable gain of information which forms a type of extra-curricular cultural capital (subcultural and fan-cultural capital) instead of following a trajectory proposed by the educational system.

John Fiske has argued that the 'cultural system promotes and privileges certain cultural tastes and competences' (1992, p.31) and social agents can create such a communal sub-system when they share a cultural disposition and focus on seeking cultural goods which they see as legitimate outside a normative understanding of cultural capital. Consequently, patterns of position-taking while accumulating forms of capital outside the educational system have generated new forms such as subcultural and fan cultural capital. Both require an academic focus on understanding the field's interrelations with other fields as well as with audiences. Sarah Thornton has applied Bourdieusian theories to a subculture of clubbers, identifying subcultural ideologies which she describes as a 'means by which youth imagine their own and other social groups, assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass' (1995, p.24). She later conceives of subcultural capital which she uses to describe a capital that 'confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder [and can be] *objectified* or *embodied* (...) in the form of being "in the know"' (1995, p.27). Thornton emphasises that, like cultural capital, its subcultural variation puts a 'premium on the "second nature" of (...) [social agents'] knowledges' (Ibid.) She then explains that subcultural capital varies from cultural capital by the fact that 'the media are a primary factor governing the circulation' of the former. In further studies, subcultural capital has been recognised as tasteful and 'sophisticated'

knowhow within a specific subculture; it allows a social agent who possesses it to be seen as distinguished by relevant subcultural others (Jensen, 2006, p. 263)

As Hills describes in *Fan Cultures* (2002, p.52), Fiske also coined the term 'pop-cultural capital'. The author himself describes it as 'appreciation and knowledge of texts, performers and events (...) excluded from official cultural capital and its convertibility, via education and career opportunity, into economic capital'. He proceeds to narrow it into a 'cultural capital for fans' when he explains that 'in fandom, as in the official culture, the accumulation of knowledge is fundamental to the accumulation of cultural capital' (1992, p.46). Fan cultural capital is a narrowed kind of subcultural capital; this is an argument supported by Mark Jancovich, who considers how fan communities can be based on the subcultural ideologies 'through which fan cultures present themselves as alternative, oppositional and authentic' (in Mathijs and Mendik, 2009 [2002], p.150).

Through years of (official/unofficial) study, social agents gain knowledge which enables them to comprehend and internalize ways of looking at the products of different fields. As time progresses, the density of information provided by the educational system (or by an 'illegitimate' private search for information) increases whilst often it simultaneously narrows the focus of a social agent's own scope of competence, e.g. into genre specialism and/or subcultural expertise. The knowledge obtained through such a process can manifest as the possession of intertextual codes informing the appreciation of cultural goods. Such an aesthetic disposition has then been trained over time and through the position-taking involving a close engagement with particular fields or texts. A good example is the audience who consume genre texts. Realising this, Bourdieu concluded that

'legitimate manners [for the sake of argument, understood as articulated with cultural capital] (...) manifest the rarest conditions of acquisition, that is (...) tacitly recognized as the supreme excellence (...) [They can] only be acquired in the course of time, (...) against time, (...) by inheritance or through dispositions which (...) are likewise only acquired with time (...) by those who can take their time' (1979, pp.71-72).

The accumulation of any form of capital is, therefore, a long-term process, whether it is a familiarity with high art, knowledge of a niche minor art, or financial savings gathered through years of work. Despite large quantities of cultural capital being needed to produce an autonomous cultural good, artists who seek the recognition of other artists usually 'break with commercial interests, elite patronage – their very security – to found an alternative bank of symbolic values' (Fowler, 2016, p.18) in the same manner as do members of a subculture or a fan community.

The above quote about legitimate manners masks another important point regarding the characteristics of forms of capital (e.g. prolonged position-taking leading to gain) and inequality between patterns of their accumulation. In relation to this, Bourdieu discusses inheritance as well as disposition. Social interactions have their origins in the predisposed conditioning of social agents through the privileged accumulation of forms of capital by inheritance, deriving from their primary habitus formed in early childhood – most often via social interaction with members of their closest family. The higher

classes arguably possess 'larger' quantities of various capitals. Consequently, embodied dispositions generate not only higher capital but often familiarity with doxa in numerous fields. The objective structures of social agency 'are somehow given as "cultural arbitraries", which the actions of embodied agents then reproduce' (Jenkins, 1992, p.82). Despite numerous potential trajectories this, in a way, determines the initial capital of social agents, recognised within fields and so it is worthy of attention to analyse audiences in terms of the inherited dispositions in this research. To do so, I added specific questions to my interview schedule.

Having considered the formation of other subfields of cultural production which have gained recognition in terms of their distinctive doxa (graphic novels, jazz, pulp fiction, etc.) I found that legitimisation of the minor forms of art is often the outcome of encodings which enable texts to become the carriers for socially significant meaning, then recognised and decoded as such by audience communities. This relational response establishes a new trajectory of position-taking in terms of consumption of the most 'valued' products of a given field. On a long enough timeline, and because of repetition, this eventually forms new, patterned fields of preference. As successive generations of social agents accumulate enough of the relevant forms of (sub)cultural capital they become responsible for cultural production: 'Far from being writers' they start to 'move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write' (De Certeau, 1984, p.174) According to Henry Jenkins, this poetic metaphor signifies 'the relationship between readers and writers [encoders and decoders, producers and consumers in the field of cultural production – author's note] as an ongoing struggle for possession of the text and for control over its meanings' (1992, p.24).

Understanding of a subfield of cultural production eventually results in a frequent encoding of more socially significant information (cf. Lopes, 2009; Sullivan, 2013). In this way, the patterned position-taking of some agents, and extended exposure to such content, influences the field so that material recently considered barbaric or distasteful begins to gain legitimate status within minor forms of expression. In addition, class struggles within pop-cultural fields – previously denied recognition – have a consequence in 'the stratification of tastes in such a way as to construct and reinforce differentiations of social status which correspond, in historically variable and often highly mediated ways, to achieved or aspired-to class position' (Frow, 1996, p.85). This is because a field is a "contingent ongoing accomplishment" of competent social actors who continually construct their social world via "the organized artful practices of everyday life" (Bourdieu, 1992, p.9).

In terms of film consumption, we can distinguish the agency of audiences engaged in a potentially participatory 'activity or condition of viewing a film' while simultaneously making sense of the 'memory of other films and (...) textual and intertextual comparisons' (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012, p.399). According to Jenkins, participatory culture 'absorbs and responds to (...) new media technologies that make it possible for average consumers to (...) annotate, [and] appropriate (...) media content in (...) new ways' and heavily relies on the 'skills and cultural knowledge necessary to deploy (...) [appropriate] tools' (Ibid. p.8).

In relation to my research there is a clear significance of the pure gaze 'since the levels of 'reading' designate hierarchies of readers [and] it is necessary and sufficient to change the hierarchy of

reading in order to overturn the hierarchy of readers' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.229). As a pure gaze is the effect of high cultural capital possessed by audiences, then it is possible to form a specific hierarchy linked to a space of struggles within the field via the use of accumulated capital (Cf. De Valck, 2014, pp.40-59). In this way, patterns of position-taking help to define the doxa of a field which constantly morphs into new forms interrelated with neighbouring fields of the highest mutual influence. One example concerns science fiction role-playing video games such as *Deus Ex*, the *Mass Effect* series or *Shadowrun*. As these video games have become progressively more cinematic (Jenkins, 2006), engaging with such a game has become related to how audiences engage with SF films, dictating not only a shared trajectory of position-taking but a level of cultural capital necessary for the correct engagement with an SF 'mega-field' cutting across digital media.

The position-taking of social agents interacting within the field and its doxa are mutually constitutive within a dialectic between them which shapes this field. It is through analysis of available trajectories, the field of possibles, that the field can be defined through 'struggles for distinction' (Eldridge II, 2017, pp.17-30). Understanding the idea of a constellated community allows one to utilize the relational nature of Bourdieusian theory, as well as the discursive nature of science fiction (Altman, 1999) to define and analyse the spectrum of inter-field relations (doxa and struggles) through an understanding of distinction in terms of

'how a prominent text could function simultaneously as part of the fannish experience of a number of different interest groups (...) [and] how certain cultural products such as films – and the contexts in which they are viewed – embed in people's long-term memories and are reconstructed and re-experienced in their present lives' (Barker, Egan, Phillips and Ralph, 2016, p.IX).

This will provide a way of analysing how fans negotiate the hierarchy of texts. By establishing what audiences collectively see in films (identifying reading patterns) and what the SF genre means for them, it will be possible to understand the trajectories of position-taking of social agents within the mega-field of science fiction. Consequently, this should enable me to identify the patterned process of hierarchization employed by social agents depending on their dispositions and location in the constellated community. This will allow me to establish the principles of negotiating a genre's cultural value, hence identifying the hierarchization of SF cultural goods.

The constellated community of fandom exhibits a constant drive to glorify the meaning of the object of their affection (Hills, 2005, pp.71-72) as well as actively devaluing cultural goods seen by them as 'bad' or as overly heteronomous. Bourdieu states that the social agents who see themselves as an elite in terms of taste and cultural capital can force 'the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated' (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 57) and consequently this need for status-building legitimation keeps

treating popular texts as if (...) [they] merited the same degree of attention and appreciation as canonical texts (...) Fans speak of "artists" where others can see only commercial hacks, of transcendent meanings where others find only banalities,

of “quality and innovation” where others see only formula and convention (Jenkins, 1992, p.17).

It is also possible to identify class-like movements within fan communities – something that has generally been under-researched in relation to SF fans – as noticed by Milly Williamson. She describes types of fans who will collect anything related to their fan object. They are seen as ‘uninitiated’, wild and unworthy, whereas ‘real’ fans display an elite taste and orient their position-taking towards more autonomous practices. They reject commercialism, ‘demand the possession of appropriate cultural capital and (...) see their fan practices in “pure” terms – fandom-for-fandom’s-sake’ (2005, p.117). Consequently, in my research I need to analyse fan audiences’ attitudes towards the consumption of SF film texts along with their inherited and accumulated levels of (sub)cultural capital. Having said this, I am aware that fandom potentially has the greatest influence on the legitimization of the SF mega-field over time as it provides ‘a semi-structured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated, and negotiated and where readers speculate about the nature of the mass media and their own relationship to it’ (Ibid.). This also helps agents of cultural production to establish their products as socially significant which can prompt their increased consumption and eventually exhibit cultural value for those products.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, my research will show the need for a new approach to field theory. I will highlight the existence of key relationships between the multiple permeable fields which appear to form the ‘mega-field’ of science fiction. To do so, I will utilise empirical research on the tastes of relevant social agents, i.e. SF fans. The description of patterned consumption practices provided by these audiences will allow me to break with assumed positions regarding the minor arts. I will part with a patronising evaluation of SF films on the basis of their devaluation, and instead I will examine what value they actually have for their dedicated audiences. I will challenge Bourdieu’s disregard of popular culture, arguing for its legitimization based on empirical data provided by the analysis of specific position-taking among fan audiences. Consequently, this will enable me to reassess post-Bourdieuian theories of subcultural and fan cultural capital and support my argument that currently field theory, which typically sees fields as singular formations, needs to be re-evaluated and updated via a much broader and more complex notion of ‘mega-fields’ of genre which cut across media. Also, I will argue that inherited capital remains a key element in the dynamics of fields and fan audiences, having been underplayed in previous work on media/SF fans.

Empirical research methods such as interviewing will enable me to meet the aims of my research. A structured and detailed outline of my methodology will now follow, especially highlighting under-researched mechanisms operating in the hierarchization of science fiction films.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the research methodology used in the study will be described. The research design and the sample of respondents researched will be described, as well as arguments made for their suitability for this research. The instrument used to collect the data, including the methods implemented to assure validity and reliability, will also be described. Through my analysis of fans' position-taking within mega-field of SF film, I will explore how a hierarchy of such texts is informed when it is negotiated within a particular genre-based constellated community.

#### **2. Research approach**

Following the notion (Allor, 1993; Jancovich, 2000, Austin 2002) that academic work on film genre is often based on assumptions regarding its audiences (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015), my research will focus on the engagement of science fiction cinema fan audiences with the goods provided by the field of cultural production. In particular, I want to generate data that will allow me to study how fans negotiate the value of SF's cultural goods as well as the field structure itself. By using a semi-structured interview, I will be able to explore the Bourdieusian position-taking of relevant social agents while consuming science fiction films of different qualities (King, 2016). This requires me to employ three case studies which correspond to the theoretical framing, and the different types of SF, highlighted in the previous chapter: canonical, arthouse and blockbuster science fiction films.

While working with audiences, in this research I will employ a qualitative approach which will enable me to form a contextual fan study to address my main aims as described above. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches and methods where

'the information or data collected and analysed is primarily (...) non-quantitative in character, consisting of textual materials such as interview transcripts (...) that document human experiences about (...) social action and reflexive states (...) most often composed of essential representations and presentations of salient findings from the analytic synthesis of data' (Saldana, 2011, p.4)

It focuses mostly on audiences' own phrasing of their lived experience through the collection of descriptive data which then allows the analyst to identify, specifically, the cultural 'power of canons, authenticity, and aesthetic value in film communities and how they contribute to the creation and fragmentation of fan identity and culture' (Geraghty, 2011, p.89). In research such as this – where the formation of an abstract social space or a negotiation of cultural value is being studied – it is important to employ a research method through which an inductive view of the relationships between research and theory is provided, so that potentially the latter is eventually generated by the former. This is important as until the turn to empirical audience studies, audience responses tended to be based on the assumptions and theories provided by academics instead of empirical data gathered from actual audiences as researched social agents. Correlating theorised trajectories of audience position-taking with data gathered from my respondents will 'produce in-depth understanding of the processes of

consumption and their consequences by directly involving and listening to research subjects' (Pickering, 2008, p.7).

Reception studies are a branch of studies concerned with 'the ways in which, and the conditions under which, (...) works are received and understood' (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012, p. 346) by their audiences. In my audience study, I will move past the 'conditions under which' interpretations occur, to focus instead on the actual readings and distinctions of an interpretive community of science fiction fans. An interpretive community can be understood as a form of genre-based constellated community (Altman, 1999) that consists of social agents necessarily sharing those quantities of cultural capital, subcultural capital or fan-cultural capital which enable them to manifest a spectrum of expectations and shared readings of works such as science fiction films (cf. Payne and Barbera, 2010, p.348). I will employ Bourdieusian theories to explore the responses of fans engaged with the science fiction mega-field in different ways. The spectrum of potential readings will be correlated with fans' inferred levels of (sub)cultural capital. This will provide data enabling me to extract the patterns of fans' position-taking, leading to new understandings of fan practices and circumstances which impact on the mega-field of science fiction by legitimating certain kinds of texts at the expense of denying cultural value to others – usually, the more heteronomous products of the field (Hills, 2005), although my data may complicate this. The theoretical framework described in my literature review chapter and the contextual nature of audience study both require me to look at my chosen science fiction films 'relative to the context in which they occurred (...) [as well as] in relation to the sociohistorical circumstances' (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p. 74) of fan audiences.

### **3. Research design and setting**

My research will utilise semi-structured qualitative interviews which are commonly seen as a method allowing the researcher a better 'understanding [of] the deeper self (...) [which] means seeing the world from the respondent's point of view, or gaining an empathic appreciation of his or her world' (Marvasti, 2004, p.21). Although a structured interview provides more precisely comparative data it is the interviewer who leads the topic and matters covered in the research, therefore this runs the risk of generating data based more squarely on pre-existent assumptions regarding audience and genre texts. This is what I want to avoid as a way of challenging and potentially improving on previous research, giving fan audiences a greater chance to voice their experiences and textual discriminations. I will therefore use a qualitative research method such as semi-structured interviewing.

It is important to note that 'reality is always going to be accessed through narratives in the form of research reports that provide representations' (Bryman, 2008, p. 383). What I mean is that in this contextual audience study it will be extremely difficult, if not arguably impossible, to pinpoint the key moments and mechanisms responsible for the formation of the Bourdieusian field concerned. Austin claims that reception studies have often been unable to employ empirical audience research, reconstructing instead 'something of the range of probable meanings a film may have had at a particular location and moment in time' (2002, p.13). He argues that such studies imply that the textual content of a film can guarantee its determinate decoding by audiences seen as 'occupying a single position fixed by a film's formal characteristics', therefore suggesting a 'uniformity of viewer response and meaning

production, regardless of who was watching the film, or the conditions under which it was being viewed' (Austin, 2002, p.12). He also notices that, following the genre theorisations of Rick Altman and Steve Neale, films genres are in fact discursive and relational, something which renders the notion of 'fixed' genre decodings invalid. Instead there is a need to 'understand cultural products (...) as they are understood by audiences' (Lewis, 1991, p.47) and to take into account 'the multiplicity of discourses to which an individual is exposed in everyday life' (Austin, 2002, p.21). These discourses are a 'result of both textual and contextual determinants' (Staiger, 1986, p.21) and furthermore they can come from a system of references provided by the forms of (sub)cultural capital which locate texts and their semiotic signs 'within a negotiated place in (...) [the social agent's] knowledge or memory' (Corner in Curran, 1991, p.272).

Consequently, as a variety of meanings can be decoded from the same texts by numerous social agents it is crucial to conduct qualitative interviews which will allow the participants to express details of their interpretations that do not fit into a numerical or boolean (true/false; yes/no) set of possible answers. A semi-structured interview will provide the clearest data-set relevant to my research aims and topics. Through the use of this method I will be enabled to follow fans' own reasoning and the potential reflections of the respondents while at the same time building up a contextual sense of their experiences of SF genre consumption. Therefore, the secondary task within my interviewing is to 'ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced' (Mason, 2002, p.62). I will aim to achieve this by posing additional follow-up questions in each 'interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008, p.3).

I intend to sample a small group of science fiction fans, as is appropriate for in-depth, qualitative research: 30+ participants is my target figure, unless I first reach the point of data saturation, which is that moment in research when 'new data tend to be redundant of data already collected (...) [because of] the same comments' (Grady, 1998, p.26) and the same observations recurring. My interviews will be designed to focus on three case studies grounded within my Bourdieusian framework regarding taste and the forms of (sub)cultural capital operating within the mega-field of science fiction.

I am employing representative case studies because in terms of their differential "quality" (King, 2016) they correspond to Bourdieusian forms of taste (Bourdieu, 1979, p.16). The films I have chosen can be identified as canonical, middlebrow and heteronomous titles, with the latter focusing on a science fiction blockbuster. The selected SF films are, respectively, *Alien* (1979), *Moon* (2009) and *Avatar* (2009). I am focusing on them for two main reasons: firstly, so that via their use I can aim to illustrate the structured structures of a Bourdieusian field in operation. Secondly, and as noted above, each case represents a specific textual category, meaning that three "qualities" of SF film as well as Bourdieusian taste can be analysed. In this way, focusing on these case studies will provide a suitable context for the analysis of genre-related field theory and the negotiation of texts' cultural value by audiences, as well as providing insights into the hierarchization of such texts within the constellated community of SF fans. My semi-structured interview which refers to the three films will follow the same basic schedule for all participants, covering shared matters of decoding, consumption, appreciation and position-taking as

well as pursuing variable follow-up questions and responses for each case study, as relevant. Consequently, all respondents will talk about all three case studies, generating 30+ views and experiences per case study film.

Together with my semi-structured interview I will utilise a range of academic publications surrounding the case studies as well as the science fiction genre. Potentially, this will help me to investigate the relationships between the 'producer of the text, its intentional recipient, its referent in the world, and the context in which the text is produced, transmitted and received' (Phillips and Brown, 1993, p.1558). In relation to the variety of readings within my participants' responses, this secondary reading or 'desk research' will potentially provide insights into the wider cultural processes of legitimation in the instance of my 'canonical' case study film *Alien*, as well as further insights into the hierarchization of arthouse/blockbuster SF texts delivered within the field of cultural production.

My work will therefore rely on the textual analysis of all three case studies. In cultural studies, this is used 'to make a deduction about specific, local or wider, social conditions in which cultural production takes place' (Davis in Pickering, 2008, p.66). In this way I will, however, part with textual determinism as my research focuses on SF fan audiences and their position-taking during the consumption of film texts which is when they 'may bring to the text codes of their own which may not match those used by the encoder(s)' (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p.431).

#### **4. Sampling criteria**

I will operate with purposive sampling (Grinnell and Unrau, 2008, p.153), meaning that the sample of participants will not be identified on a random basis but in a strategic way. My respondents will be chosen by relevance to the research topic (being science fiction fans) but at the same time they will vary due to certain subcultural distinctions (i.e. different levels of engagement with the mega-field of science fiction, resulting in various amounts of accumulated subcultural and fan-cultural capital). The respondents I am seeking will therefore need to meet specific criteria such as:

- Being over 18 years old (so that a certain level of cultural capital, usually provided by the education system, can be considered);
- Being a fan of science fiction cinema;
- Preferably not being academics within media or humanities schools (but they could be future academics still in training) as this would potentially impact the data sample because of the capital-informed and 'purer' gaze typically required in the scholarly critical approach to texts;
- Being diverse in terms of their social background (class identity to be established through initial demographic questions during the interview);
- Being diverse in terms of their age and gender;
- Being diverse in terms of their level of engagement with the mega-field of science fiction (to be evaluated through questions aimed at identifying their levels of cultural and subcultural/fan-cultural capital).

## 5. Data collection instrument

Interviewing has been chosen as my main data collection instrument. It is a more flexible and in-depth analytical method than a questionnaire (cf. Burns and Grove, 1993, p.368) which is what makes it attractive and valuable for my research, given that I am focusing on social phenomena. A questionnaire requires 'standardized ways of asking questions [which] are thought to lead to answers that can be compared across participants and possibly quantified' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.19) which may not capture nuances of position-taking, as well as the complex emotional responses of audiences during the consumption of science fiction films. These fan responses could directly influence the hierarchization of SF texts within the mega-field, and consequently the negotiation of their cultural value, which is the process under investigation. The social phenomena I am interested in, and those mechanisms behind their occurrence as such, are not wholly quantifiable because they rely on 'meanings and messages in the form of sign-vehicles of a specific kind organized (...) through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse' (Hall, 1973, 128). This is where structured and quantitatively-oriented research methods would fall down if applied to my research as they could 'never (...) provide information beyond what is scripted in the questionnaire' (Conrad and Schober, 2008, p.173). The data about fans' SF film consumption that I am aiming to elicit could be found within 'the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons' (Atkinson, 2001, p. 125) lived by each fan respondent in a different way, and therefore it is virtually impossible to prepare for this by purely pre-structuring all data-gathering in terms of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument (Brinkmann, 2013, p.20). What I mean here is that the lack of unscripted investigation via the use of, for example, probing questions following respondents' replies, would greatly weaken any such questionnaire-based data-gathering.

I will utilise an interview guide (see appendix 1) which consists of a list of initial questions related to my research aims, but the fact that this is a semi-structured interview obviously allows flexibility in terms of the topics that can be covered if I see any further relevance to fulfilling the aims of my research. In the process of designing this guide I attempted to translate research questions into an interview guide that would make sense in ordinary language to my interviewees (Brinkman, 2013, p.52). Here, I will attempt to address the quality markers (King, 2016) of my chosen case study films in the process of seeking patterns of audience position-taking which relate to the negotiation of cultural value, and result in the hierarchization of SF film texts. To extract these markers of quality, as well as the patterns of position-taking, the interview will cover areas such as: the cinematic apparatus (i.e. the environment in which the films have been seen/continue to be seen); personal experience (impressions, social relevance, taste); textual decodings (including readings of a film as a construct or as an immersive narrative); and engagement with the mega-field of science fiction (i.e. investment in the cultural goods produced by the field, reasons for the legitimation or devaluing of texts, quantities of the accumulated field-related form of (sub)cultural capital, etc). These main areas of the interview will be grouped into sets of questions drawing on the existing literature from contextually similar studies (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015; Culloty, 2016, pp.70-89; Austin, 2002; Klinger, 2006) as well as the theoretical framework of this research, already covered in detail in my literature review.

I will also address my 'general aims by [spontaneously] orienting (...) question[s] to the particular positions of (...) [my] participants' (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, Tindall, 1995, p. 54) as what I seek to extract patterns from is the variety of lived experiences of the participating social agents (Ibid.). It is a problematic idea to attempt to completely 'standardise (...) interview schedules [as it] would be inappropriate to the aims of the study' (Gray, 2003, p.71) in this instance, which will instead be met through a 'mixture of participant observation and conversational or life story interviews aimed at the free flow of discussion (...) and the potential for encountering something new and unexpected' (Ibid.). Rubin and Rubin advise (1995, pp.131-171) the utilising of three kinds of questions while exploring relevant areas in a qualitative interview: firstly, main questions will establish the central narrative of a response, and the provided answers can then secondly be further probed to clarify these answers or, if necessary, the interviewer can request additional or more illustrative examples of what is currently being described. Thirdly, with the use of follow-up questions I will further explore the potential implications deriving from a variety of answers to my main questions.

This research method will allow me to develop and probe responses by employing supportive, follow-up questions developed on the go, and depending on the individual respondent as well as the answers provided in response to my main set of questions. This will allow me to explore, as David Morley notes, the 'logical scaffolding' (1992, p.173) to respondents' answers. This is a concept built upon an idea proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Binkley, 1973, p.143) which provides a richer set of data, to which I can apply the concepts of habitus, cultural capital and class theorised by Bourdieu. This will potentially improve the quality of my research through the analysis of those 'linguistic terms and categories (...) through which respondents construct (...) their own understanding of their activities' (Morley, 1992, p.173). This will require an 'elaborate venture in (...) "thick description"' (Geertz, 1973, p.6) while analysing 'background and context (...) to understand the full meaning of a statement' (Buchanan, 2018, p.481) provided by respondents in the interview context.

Bourdieu approaches social agents' position-taking as grounded in a relationship between texts and agents' social location as well involving the sum of experience manifested in conditioned dispositions. In this way, Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production argues against any universality of 'aesthetics and ideologies of artistic and cultural (...) [phenomena]' (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p.2) and provides supportive evidence for the existence of individual, predisposed and relational tastes and position-takings when social agents are engaging with a cultural field (cf. Ibid.). In turn, this defines consumption as 'an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.3). Consequently, thick description and logical scaffolding become crucial to my research given that it is focused around investigating 'the rhetorical dimensions of popular culture (...) [in] need of further inquiry regarding the relations between rhetoric, cinema' (Chisholm, 2003, p.37) and social agents consuming the cultural goods produced by a mega-field of science fiction film. Thus it is necessary to grasp the 'array of codes and rules for making and interpreting meaning in [the sub]culture' (Buchanan, 2018, p.482) of SF film fans.

The semi-structured interviews which I will conduct will, as noted, consist of open-ended questions surrounding specific phenomena to allow a degree of comparability between the sets of

answers provided by respondents. To further ensure the credibility and reliability of my research I will need to distance myself from my own fan/audience opinions. It is thought that qualitative research is often open to a contamination of data (Gray, 2003, p.72) by the 'researcher[']s (...) biases (...) of his or her age, class, (...) [and] pre-existing theoretical orientation' (Plummer, 2001, p.156). Drawing on Plummer's work, Gray comments that 'it is impossible to imagine any research project which could eliminate [all] these biases' (Gray, 2003, p.72) and she proceeds to explain that it is relatively safe to 'acknowledge that the researcher is part of the world which he/she is researching, [and] that different factors will influence the interviewee' (Ibid.). Consequently, I will avoid my personal influence upon the respondents as much as possible by asking neutral, non-leading questions which will allow me to collect a data set generated by respondents' relationships with the mega-field of science fiction. Of course, it is neither desirable nor possible for my theoretical framework to be entirely suspended in relation to my data-gathering since my theory and data are both framed by a post-Bourdieuian approach, as I have acknowledged. At the same time, it remains possible for my data not to be entirely driven by my theoretical debts, as I need to remain open to respondents' variety of empirical responses.

Finally, I will compile a face-sheet of factual information about each interview participant. This face-sheet will provide a clear record of the data collection process as it will address the date and time when the interview was conducted, as well as noting additional information such as its length and place, and if the interview has taken place face to face instead of online. The face-sheet will also enable me to 'describe the sample of participants (...) gathered' (Gaudet and Robert, 2018, p.102). It will include the 'social characteristics and other pertinent information' (Ibid.) of respondents such as their age, sex, education, employment etc (Warren, 2001, p.87). In addition, the face-sheets will ultimately work as one of the contextualising filters allowing me to code and classify respondents through the variable data they provide (Seale, 2001, p.658). The indicators chosen relate to Bourdieusian theorisations of class, taste, habitus and forms of capital, which will potentially help to contextualise my data in relation to the location of interviewed social agents in social space. Further correlation of this data with interviewees' detailed responses will help to analyse their position-taking in relation to the negotiation of SF films' cultural value, as well as phenomena linked to films' hierarchization within the mega-field.

Following Bourdieu's theorisations, I will estimate each respondent's cultural capital by exploration of their upbringing and through establishing their 'educational level (measured by qualification or length of schooling) and (...) social origin' (1984, p.2). In the later stages of the data analysis I will compare these data sets with my qualitative data regarding respondents' quantities of subcultural capital/fan-cultural capital. I will also attempt to estimate the economic situation and consequent social location of interviewees, which will potentially allow me to recognise some of their dispositions by contextualising their responses in terms of 'conditioning by (...) economic necessities (...) [or] an active distance from necessity' (Ibid., p.5). By the observation of respondents' tastes and the consequent struggles and self-differentiations of those agents within the mega-field (cf. Ibid. p.6), I will begin to place them within the context of a corresponding social class (Ibid. p.16). To develop a deeper understanding of this context I will further analyse my interviewees by categorising their inherited cultural capital which I will achieve to a satisfactory degree by asking questions about the backgrounds of respondents' parents. In this way, I will potentially be able to see an image of the 'combined effects of

cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school' which, to some extent, always depends on 'cultural capital directly inherited from the family' (Ibid. p.23). Also here, I will analyse interviewee data in terms of inferred subcultural capital/fan-cultural capital.

All interviews will be recorded and transcribed (see the Appendices supplied for a full record of my interview data) so that in this way, a thorough, and if necessary repeated, examination of data is made possible.

## **6. Data analysis**

For this stage of my research I intend to organise data in terms of the lived experience described by respondents, emotional responses, as well as the hierarchization of my case studies. This data will be coded accordingly to each respondent's engagement with the field based on the estimation of their accumulated subcultural capital/fan-cultural capital. Such a system of cross-referencing data thematically will be combined with the transcripts and additional notes gathered through the observation of the respondents during the interviews which will work as 'the rudiments of a system for preserving some of the 'messiness' of everyday talk' (Devault, 1990, p.109) such as identifying striking behavioural patterns related to any described phenomena (hesitation, reflection, pause, passion, etc.). As a result, 'the dynamic construction of what was said' (Paget, 1983, p. 87) will enable insights into fans' emotion and meaning. As suggested by methods literature, the cumulative effect of such a cross-referencing of the data will allow me to systematise it in terms of shared homologies so that my research topics can be explored (Mason, 2002, p.147).

This is particularly important as I will work with the 'logical scaffolding' of respondents. Consequently, I am interested in the behaviours, 'words and language used, the sequence of interaction, the form and structure of the dialogue, and the literal content' (Ibid.). This is the point of the thick description stage of data analysis in preparation for a reflexive reading of my data, as this kind of material can be crucial in 'opening up new avenues of research, of formulating different, usually suppressed, versions of events' (Gray, 2003, p.148).

Given the fact that qualitative, semi-structured interviews are considered a reflexive form of data gathering there is a potential for themes, problems and additional research questions emerging from the spectrum of answers provided by the respondents during a few initial pilot interviews. These new points of focus can be then included in further research by restructuring the interview by amending or expanding the list of questions utilised. The first stage of the data gathering process will therefore involve piloting of the interviews. In this way, I can estimate the need for adjustments and further adapt the interview guide for practical use by testing 'the appropriateness of the questions and to provide (...) early suggestions on the viability of the research' (Majid, 2017, p.1076). To ensure the credibility of this rehearsal, after completing pilot interviews I intend to ask respondents for feedback (Gillham, 2000, p.55) in regard to the questions posed in my research as well as the whole structure of the interview (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). I will also record the duration of pilot interviews and note any events not going according to the interview schedule. Afterwards I will transcribe all of the pilot interviews, which together with the piloting process itself will allow me to form a tactic for finally collecting my full data set.

I will use a method of comparative analysis which is best described as a 'form of research (...) which aims to draw upon similarities and differences among a set of relatively comparable cases' (Elliot, Fairweather, Olsen and Pampaka, 2016, [www.oxfordreference.com](http://www.oxfordreference.com)). This will allow me to analyse responses with the aim of coding emerging characteristics in terms of shared homologies between social agents which will potentially lead to the emergence of a patterned trajectory of position-taking within the mega-field of science fiction. In addition, homologous means of appreciation of the various films by social agents will allow insights into the hierarchization of these science fiction films in the process of negotiating their cultural value.

## **7. Ethical considerations**

Conducting research requires not only expertise and effort from the researcher, but also honesty and integrity, dictated by a will to protect the rights of human subjects. The respondents will be informed about the aims of this research, the shape of the interview they will participate in and they will be assured that there are no potential risks or costs involved. Their total anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Academically, anonymity is considered a situation where subjects cannot be recognised and identified by their responses recorded during the interview (Burns and Grove, 1993, p.762). In my research, anonymity will be provided by not disclosing the respondent's full name in the research reports and chapters of the dissertation related to the gathered data. Instead, respondents will choose their pseudonyms, unless they prefer to be identified by their formal real-world identities in the final data analysis. In addition, during the process of data analysis I will make sure that respondents do not become identifiable via the precise data they have provided in their interviews, hence maintaining confidentiality throughout this study (Polit and Hungler, 1995, p.139). I could achieve this by changing the details of specific personal experience, geographical space, exact locations etc, into a more general narrative consisting of hypothetical spaces sharing relevant characteristics.

One of the most important ethical responsibilities when conducting any academic study is to social-scientific honesty. What would be considered dishonest conduct can be described as manipulation of the research design and its methods as well as the manipulation of data (Brink, 1996, p.47). I will truthfully transcribe all recorded data provided by respondents during interviews. I will also analyse them in an unbiased and precise way, meaning that I will base my conclusions solely on the data provided and will bracket off my own tastes while theorising the outcomes of interviews. Paul Lopes has suggested that Bourdieusian methodology relies on immersion 'in the discourse and practices surrounding a field (...) therefore, [it] relies on analysing the discourse' (2009, p.XII) which emerges from a collective dialogue among fans, artists, and publishers (p.XIII). In this way, it is the 'participants' own categories and discourses [that] become part of the argument' (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph; 2015, p.10) and this will allow me to bracket off my own relationship with case studies and the mega-field of science fiction by excluding 'any 'naive' reaction – [e.g.] horror at the horrible (...) - in order to concentrate solely upon the (...) representation (...) [as] perceived and appreciated by (...) a total relation to the [respondents'] world' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.54) and his or her position-taking, aesthetic dispositions, tastes, and most importantly, experiences. This will provide the data which will allow me to challenge some of Bourdieu's theorisations. As a consequence, I will relate my data to the three chosen

SF films as case studies, analysing them through 'direct, exclusive reference to the concrete particularity of a situation' (1984, p.461), i.e. the situation of social agents participating in my interviews.

I will now discuss the patterns present in my empirical data in relation to my theoretical framework. I will begin with my findings regarding distinctions amongst SF fans, proceed with the more specifically genre-oriented phenomena I observed, and finally I will theorise what I am terming SF's 'mega-field'.

#### **IV. Findings**

##### **1. Fan Distinctions: Subcultural/Cultural Capital, the Fan Gaze, and Omnivorous Fandom**

In this section I focus on capital-based distinctions between the fans patterned throughout my data. Firstly, I will describe a split within fandom, which doesn't act as a uniform social formation. Secondly, I will theorize the "fan gaze", a blend of Bourdieusian modes of engaging with texts by fans, depending on the forms of capital they have gathered. Finally, I have identified an elite faction amongst fans, namely 'omnifans', and I will theorize this hierarchizing of fandom whereby fans negotiate readings of texts and their cultural value due to accumulated amounts of (sub)cultural capital. I argue this is key to approaching and understanding the constellated community of SF film fans as a hierarchized structure.

##### **Intra-Elite Fan Distinction: Fans Using Subcultural Capital versus Fans Combining Subcultural and Cultural Capital**

Fans have been described as 'often highly articulate' enthusiasts who 'can produce reams of information on their object of fandom' (Hills, 2002, p. IX) and behave in a manner 'inspired by a cultish enthusiasm for' an object of devotion (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012, p.153). This makes fans a supposedly elite audience, as it distinguishes them from the general public in accordance with Bourdieu's theorisation of the uneven acquisition of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1979; Bourdieu and Darbel 1991). These theories emphasize that throughout prolonged interaction with the object of fandom, fans accumulate relevant cultural and subcultural capitals. However, varied amounts of individually accumulated quantities of those capitals can render the social formation of fans internally heterogeneous. The lower rate of an agent's cultural capital doesn't allow the formation of a network of relationships outside their fandom when consumption is informed only by subcultural capital.

The average duration of fandom shown by my respondents is 37.8 years and numerous fans display large amounts of subcultural capital rendering them capable of decoding the meaning structures of texts in relation to frameworks of knowledge related to the production process and technical infrastructures (Hall, 1980, p.130). At the beginning of fan studies (Johnson, 2007) fandoms were seen as coherent, 'monolithic formations' (Larsen and Zubernis, 2012, p.9) hegemonic in terms of 'a tacit agreement (...) [over] what questions are worth asking' of a text (Jenkins, 1992, p.137) as well as demonstrating 'overlapping circles of interests and practices' (Anderson, 2015, p.106). This perspective has been dismantled in favour of recognizing fans as a community 'made up of various thematically organized specialized sections' (The Janissary Collective, 2014, p.80) operating with 'different modes of reception (...) shaped by the different social conditions (...) in (...) everyday lives' (Jenkins, 1992,

p.210). This translates into different trajectories of position-taking during consumption and results in diverse fan readings of texts which I will now illustrate.

Arguably, Duncan Jones' *Moon* requires cultural capital to decode; it has been recognized as an impressionist and anti-capitalist commentary on utilitarianism (Constable, 2018, p.417) and a middlebrow study of human nature and loneliness (Parry, 2017, p.93). All respondents demonstrated high levels of subcultural capital by reading the film in relation to the SF canon. However, a solely subcultural reading of the film resulted in a somewhat simplified meaning being decoded. Here, the reading of *Moon* is modified, resulting in its dismissal by those respondents approaching it only with subcultural capital, as I will go on to show.

The majority of respondents approached *Moon* culturally and related its narrative to philosophical and experiential issues outside their SF fandom. For example, this can be seen when Gustavo (male, 43, Peruvian, graphic designer, educated to MA) admitted that

'It made [me] think a lot about artificial life, basically (...) about ownership and how capitalism really can own people' (Interview 31. 28-11-18, p.272).

Additionally, respondents utilising their cultural capital when reading the film immediately identified a primary textual emphasis, which Craig (male, 59, Scottish, musician, BA) describes as an exploration of

'isolation. (...) Two words to define [it]: Mental breakdown' (Interview 29. 26-11-18, p.258).

Al Sirois (male, 68, American, web content manager, college-educated) notices the use of tropes popularised by canonical literary science fiction writers, which I would argue he recognised because of his previously accumulated cultural capital:

'It reminds me kind of a Philip K. Dick book in that you often don't know what's real (...) The question is 'who are you?'. 'What are you?' (Interview 17. 17-11-18, p.185).

In contrast, the very different meanings decoded from *Moon* only via subcultural capital resulted in a split within the respondents in terms of recognising (or not) the film's cultural value. This intra-elite distinction has its basis in the lower quantity of cultural capital utilised by fans approaching the text only subculturally. Consequently, Shanehar (male, 40, American, senior systems administrator, college-educated) finds the film, at the autonomous pole of SF's cultural production

'Boring. (...) it was really slow. (..) [T]he movie was forgettable to me. (...) I've just seen enough sci fi. It was an interesting concept but (...) [there was not] enough (...) meat behind it' (Interview 18. 19-11-18, p.192).

Max Loosli (male, 63, British, IT sector, secondary school) similarly looks at *Moon* only through the prism of his fandom, and therefore he considers it derivative and unoriginal. He admits that he

'didn't find it a particularly exciting movie. (...) [I]t felt like something I've read before (...) Whether it's (...the) sheer amount of science fiction that I've read or (...) watched... I generally work... out what the plot is' (Interview 13. 16-11-18, p.158).

Unexpectedly, this type of dismissal – based on reading via subcultural capital only – can also happen with texts already canonised by fans, such as *Alien* (Barker, Egan, Phillips, Ralph, 2015, pp.21-40). Alan (male, 61, British, chemist, MA) sees *Alien* as a

‘Space horror [where] the alien is just a ravaging monster. That’s not going to appeal to me tremendously (...) I need aliens to be intelligent’ (Interview 30. 25-11-18, p.264).

Carol (female, 62, American, secondary school science teacher, MA), by contrast, directly employs cultural capital in her reading of *Alien* when she filters the narrative for significance in relation to the time that it was produced in, as well as reading it as having social relevance:

‘A woman as a hero. Well, you always had women like Katharine Hepburn (...) so you had (...) a powerful presence on screen but they were seldom in a true position of authority. Ripley was (...) the actual captain of the ship. (...) fearless, (...) cunning, (...) smart, she was something that was really new’ (Interview 26. 24-11-18, p.241).

Fandom has already been considered as a social hierarchy driven by different types of knowledge (or capital) and distinction (Hills, 2002, p.46).

From my data, though, it appears to be significantly divided by uneven ratios between individuals’ quantities of subcultural and cultural capital, resulting in art-house and even canonical SF films being devalued or dismissed by fans who are primarily responding to them via subcultural capital alone. The nature of intra-elite fan distinction here is partially homologous with the concept of social class as theorised by Bourdieu (1979, p.106). This means that both of them rely on accumulated quantities of cultural capital working as a prism for textual engagement. In contrast to Bourdieusian class distinctions, however, the split of the social formation of fandom into fractions is an even more complex phenomenon; it also involves dispositions derived from forms of fan-cultural capital and subcultural capital as recognized in post-Bourdieuian theories (see Fiske, 1992, p.46; Thornton, 1995, p.85).

Next, I will attempt to show how this hierarchy is secured by examining further clusters of fans, namely fans displaying a “fan gaze” and omnivorous fans, the latter of which act as the most elitist faction of this audience.

### **Beyond ‘Pure’ and ‘Impure’ Bourdieusian Gazes: The Fan Gaze**

Pierre Bourdieu proposed two modes of engaging with art: the ‘pure gaze’, specific to culturally and socially elitist classes and an ‘impure gaze’, specific to agents with so-called barbarous taste (Bourdieu, 1979, p.16, 56, 229; De Valck, 2014, pp.40-59). However, patterns in my data imply the existence of what I refer to as a *fan gaze*, a combination of both Bourdieusian gazes resulting in a ‘detached immersion’ paradox of viewing. It challenges previous theory and builds upon the binary of pure/impure gazes via the inclusion of fan-cultural capital. Before I explain this further, I will set out the key attributes of pure/impure gazes.

Michael Grenfell explains that 'there is no ultimate reality, only ways of seeing it' because social spaces do not rely on the 'absolute expression of things (...) [but they are] sets of relations (...) partly determined by the conditions of their realization' (2008, p.23; see also Monaco, 2009, p.24). This is particularly true within the fan audiences for genre texts. Relatedly, Dan Hassler-Forest comments that 'critics and scholars have pointed out [that] a number of (...) SF and fantasy texts have offered allegorical reflections' (2016, p.110) capable of being mapped across political/social movements. This requires a mode of engagement, a 'space of (...) artistic position-takings (...) [which by its artistic nature] is inseparable from the space of (...) positions defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.30). A 'pure gaze', then, relies on the capability for appreciation of art and is constituted as 'the aesthetic gaze (...) capable of considering the work of art in and for itself, i.e. as a 'finality without an end' (...) as an object of contemplation' (Ibid., p.36). It requires partial detachment from the immersive narrative linked to a cinematic text's sensuousness. Analogically, a 'pure gaze' is formulated as the ability to apprehend art as a 'form and not as function' (Ibid., p.256). An agent's appreciation of art is possible because of repeated exposure to artistic texts over an extended period of time, producing familiarization. A cultivated position-taking is eventually articulated with a disposition (habitus) as well as a system of reference enabling the formalist recognition of cultural value. Additionally, one of the attributes of the Bourdieusian 'pure gaze' is a refusal of the 'barbarous', impure gaze (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p.24) described as involving a sole immersion in narrative, or textual function, and a focus on the 'pleasure of the senses' (Ibid., p.24) during consumption. Referred to as an 'untrained gaze' (Maton, 2008, p.56) it is seen as obscuring the reading by a common sensory experience 'which only recognizes realist representation (...) of objects designated by their beauty or their social [practical] importance' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.44). This can be seen as a signifier of low quantities of agents' cultural capital and a search for "what pleases" and (...) "the interest of the senses" which (...) requires that every image shall fulfil a function' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.222). Therefore, this dichotomy defines a distinction between social agents.

By contrast, the fan gaze apparent in my data displays an approach to texts with elements of both Bourdieusian gazes, indicating a kind of seemingly paradoxical 'detached immersion'. It draws from a base of collective knowledge translated into subcultural capital in the process of immersing one's self in filmic narrative, as well as recognising and employing a structural/formal approach to SF film art. In addition, the fan gaze contributes to the establishment of intra-fandom levels of distinction depending on the quantities of subcultural/fan-cultural and cultural capital accumulated by individual fans and their collective utilisation in fandom. In effect, at least some fans poaching meaning (cf. Jenkins, 1992) from the object of their fandom hybridise Bourdieu's two gazes.

Utilizing both Bourdieusian gazes, detached immersion in the narrative of an artistic form depends, in part, on high levels of cultural capital. Therefore, levels of detached immersion distinguish an audience displaying this fan gaze from other factions or groups of fans as well as from these other fans' more subjectively legitimated and favoured texts. Fans without the ability to perform the fan gaze usually focus on elements of texts which carry the most meaning in terms of a personal emotional response. Fans displaying the fan gaze focus their attention, instead, far more on textual syntax. I will illustrate this with Isabelle's experience as a fan (female, 30, British, BA student). She is capable of a

Bourdiesian pure gaze as she approaches aesthetically appealing SF film sequences as works of art existing in their own right. She detaches her attention from the narrative coherence of film as a mirror of reality (Clarke, 2001, p.1) and sees texts as a structure, a form for meaning and a storytelling device. She explains that

‘*Sunshine* [as a] film is very beautifully shot. (...) Visually it’s [a] very stunning film but in fact as a film it’s terrible. (...) [I]f the script is rubbish you don’t really have a film’ (Interview 8. 14-11-18, p.125).

Additionally, Isabelle deconstructs *Avatar* and dismisses it formalistically as a text of low quality, at the same time as immersing herself in the story which she sees as copy of an animated film, *FernGully*. She is able to recognize textual form but she still reaches beyond this to estimate cultural value based upon the subcultural capital she has gathered in her years of fandom:

‘*Avatar* is a complete copy of *FernGully*. (...). Even certain scenes from *Avatar* rip straight from *FernGully*. There’s a scene in *FernGully* where they’re jumping on the lily pads and the colour of lily pads is changing. (...) No one can deny that *Avatar* is stunning. But (...) it rips [off] the film that was made 15 years before that told the same story’ (Interview 8. 14-11-18, p.129)

Finally, she is immersed in the diegetic worlds of these two films so deeply that she can map both syntactically designed narratives onto each other to the extent of rendering them unrecognisable without knowing the context (see Interview 8. 14-11-18, p.129). In terms of Bourdiesian modes of consumption, detached immersion appears paradoxical because of its hybrid nature given that Bourdieu clearly distinguished pure and barbarous gazes as a binary choice instead of a disposition reliant on their combination.

Continuing to focus on fans’ unexpected blend of the autonomy of art and heteronomy of sensory experience I will now move on to examine another pattern I discovered in my data which can potentially further systematize the intra-elite distinction of fans.

### **‘Omnifans’: The Elite Amongst SF Fans?**

Nick Prior describes a diffusion of taste in modern society into a mixture of subjective preferences for both high culture and the ‘minor arts’ which nonetheless require a high amount of cultural capital (2005, pp.127-128; Gripsrud, 1998, p.540). Peterson and Kern label such taste as belonging to the cultural ‘omnivore’ which they theorise in terms of a focus ‘not on *what* one consumes but on the *way* items of consumption are understood’ (1996, p.904). Relatedly, my research depicts omnivore fans, or ‘omnifans’. I noticed that socialisation into a taste for autonomous cultural goods at an early age seemed to be followed by an apparently downward social trajectory among some of my respondents, as their tastes progressed onto heteronomous goods. This is something left unaddressed in Bourdiesian theorisations of social action which often assume an upward social mobility or, in the case of legitimate taste displayed by social agents, a stasis of taste for the goods from the autonomous pole of cultural production (cf. Bourdieu, 1979, 1992, 1993; Friedman, 2012, p.469). Unexpectedly, agents

developed an omnivorous fan position-taking by hybridising their already 'cultivated' taste with a taste for popular culture.

This trajectory also can be a factor in the development of the fan gaze, itself combining the autonomy of the pure gaze with the heteronomy of a barbarous gaze, as omnivorous taste doesn't mean that 'the omnivore likes everything indiscriminately. Rather, it signifies an openness to appreciate' high and pop culture together (Paterson and Kern, 1996, p.904). A cultural omnivore demonstrates an 'extensive knowledge of (...) [a subject] (...) and of various relevant contextual elements (...) based on specialised training and knowledge' (Gripsrud, 1998, p.540), therefore omnivorousness can be seen 'as an aspect of the aesthetics of elite status' (Warde, Wright, Gayo-Cal, 2007, p.145) although I would argue that this is also a key part of fandom's intra-elite distinctions (see Gripsrud, 1998, p.535).

The non-monolithic social formation of SF film fandom thus can't be seen as displaying a 'singular unity of class habitus' (Bennet, 2007, p.202) or as being governed by a 'generative and unifying principle which retranslates(...) relational characteristics (...) into a unitary' (Bourdieu, 1998, p.8) trajectory of position-taking, precisely because this constellated community of fans is not 'the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditionings' (Bourdieu, 1979, p.101). Cultural omnivores and omnivorous fans further drive intra-elite distinction as some fans have access to 'both high and low culture, but the majority has only access to the low (...) therefore access to the codes and practices of both high and low culture is a class privilege' (Gripsrud, 1998, p.537). Ultimately this creates a disposition which allows 'culturally privileged respondents (to) use their embodied reserves of cultural capital to read and decode (...) [texts] in ways that are knowingly inaccessible to those from less privileged backgrounds' (Friedman, 2012, p.468).

Omnivorous fans whom I interviewed – Aaron (male, 35 yo, American, office manager, BA), Craig, Igor (male, 55 yo, Croatian, teacher, ongoing PhD), Isabelle (female, 30 yo, British, BA student) and John (male, 66 yo, British, business owner, BA) – admitted inheriting cultural and subcultural capital from the previous generation (usually a parent), initially learning to focus on autonomous, canonised SF texts that they consumed the most when younger. Jeff recognized his own disposition 'to separate the scares from the story' as a consequence of being 'fed on a diet of sci fi'. Reflecting upon his relationship with fandom he assessed that 'the majority of people probably will remember more scares than Ripley refusing to let them [members of the Nostromo crew] back in to the ship' (therefore exerting a response for the emotionally charged, sensory experience characteristic of the barbarous gaze). He describes the first appearance of a fully grown xenomorph as his favourite scene in *Alien*:

'Because until that scene you had this tiny thing running around. (...) It's manageable. And suddenly... That's not manageable. (...) The dynamic of the film tips' (Interview 23. 22-11-18, p.224).

In doing so, he is able to 'employ the aesthetic ideals of disinterestedness' (Friedman, 2012, p.468) in 'the spectacular', instead displaying an elitist pure taste which demands 'detachment, distanciation, reflection and tends to focus on form rather than content' (Gripsrud, 1998, p.542). Understanding heteronomous SF texts from the perspective of a pure gaze acquired relatively early in their personal

and fan development allowed omnifans to 'open themselves' to heteronomous blockbuster SF texts (as Isabelle puts it; Interview 8. 14-11-18). Or as Aaron says: 'I think I've relaxed a little bit' (Interview 21. 21-11-18) into a progressive familiarization with fandom-oriented and more popular texts. For example, Igor says:

'In my teenage years (...) I preferred science fiction movies that say something about something so the first Star Wars did not impress me (...) When I accepted it as entertainment, or as my father said, a fairy tale. (...) I could accept a good movie. It's probably how you grow up. You're (...at a) rebellious age and you want (...) rebellious content' (Interview 12. 16-11-18, p.151).

Craig acknowledges this Bourdieusian irregularity in his own display of omnivorous fandom when he reflects on how

My taste changed in a strange way. I think I moved from conceptual science fiction towards adventure science fiction (Interview 29. 26-11-18, p.259).

Because the properties linked to accumulation of forms of capital are the main stakes in a field (Jenkins, 1992, p.53) agents need to constantly analyse the field and update their system of reference in order to maintain their distinction in a 'struggle for positions (...) at stake in cultural debates' (Gripsrud, 1998, p.541).

Again, intra-elite fan distinction appears to be governed by some of the same basic principles as class distinction, being reliant on cultural dispositions instead of the material manifestations of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1979, p.106). Although a correlation between assumed social class and social location in the constellated community of fandom appears to correspond to fans' levels of cultural capital, the mechanisms of fan hierarchization are more complex as they are negotiated through combinations of subcultural, fan-cultural and cultural capital. However, there appears to be a correlation between this intra-fandom split and the social class of respondents as demonstrated by level of education and occupation. My data shows a pattern behind the development of dispositions enabling social agents to progress upwards in the fan hierarchy: working class respondents read texts more strongly through subcultural capital, with those who could be identified as middle-class occupying higher social positions in fandom as well as drawing more centrally on cultural capital.

I will now discuss how fans negotiate their own system of reference, in fact whole new pragmatics of science fiction as a genre, by relating this to their real-world life experience and grounding their identity as a fan in potentially pivotal moments in the remembered past which would go on to shape their fandom.

## **2. New Pragmatics of Genre Fandom and the Canonisation of SF Difference**

In this section I will describe how fans consuming science fiction films expand on the semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach proposed by Rick Altman in 1999. I will show that fans' relationship with their object of fandom makes them capable of approaching fantastical generic structures, unusually, in relation to their real-world life experiences. Additionally, I will theorize how fans

engage with SF genre texts by drawing upon a discursive split of repetition and difference previously theorised as inherently inseparable (Neale, 1980). In this way, I will innovatively theorize fans' hierarchization of genre texts. I will also describe a further consumption and hierarchization paradox patterned throughout my data which I refer to as the fannish interpretation of 'innovative cliché' in SF films. This term refers to a situation where fans positively evaluate the distinction of a SF text but still dismiss its overall value because of a posited excess of repetition.

### **Science Fiction Meets Remembered Fact: Film Genre Related to Life-experience**

Arguably, a cinema audience assumes a blueprint of a textual structure when labelling a film in terms of genre (Altman, 1999, p.14). In fact, an unexpected pattern was evident in my data. It appears that the semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach proposed by Altman is unable to capture the full range of a genre's functionality when consumed by fans. SF fans approach genre here by shifting their understanding of science fiction from Altman's pragmatics to instead filtering its meanings as a genre in relation to impactful moments from their real-world lives.

Altman centres his theory on genre's pragmatics by explaining that 'audiences (...) use genres and generic terminology in differing and potentially contradictory ways' (Ibid. p.208). He concluded that genres are multi-coded and multi-discursive as they 'simultaneously (...) correspond to multiple groups (...) using the genre (...) facilitating the integration of diverse factions into a single social fabric' (Ibid.). He also explains that genres are mixed together so that they offer 'every possible chance for positive audience response' (Altman, 1999, p.139) and that audiences recognize, acknowledge and understand this process. Despite this, the closer we look 'toward textual uses and generic uses, the more problematic and unstable the system' (Ibid., p.209) becomes, resulting in the development of the lateral codes produced by Altman's reception-driven definition of genres (1999, p.162). In practice, he argues that audiences nominate the lateral, secondary and 'pragmatic' variations of SF, such as alien invasion films or films focused around cybernetic organisms. As a result, genre serves as 'an egalitarian licence to (...) [convey meaning] in ways that meet diverse local needs [or uses]' (Seidlhofer, 2001, p.135). Altman comments that 'It is precisely this use factor that pragmatics addresses (...) [as] the base language(s) [of a genre] surpass their own structure and meaning as they are integrated into textual uses' (1999, p.210).

However, my data shows that Altman's pragmatic approach doesn't cover all the potential uses which SF fans can make of the genre. Altman limits his argument to the assumption that pragmatics work in a way whereby pre-existent genres are repositioned into new generic formations. In contrast, my data shows that fans shift genres in use in other ways beyond merely showing that genres can't be fixed semantically and syntactically in texts. Additionally, fans do not merely nominate lateral understandings of genres, as Altman argues, but instead they relate genres to the impactful events in their own lives which have potentially helped in the formation of their fan identity. Therefore, fandom negotiates a new pragmatics of genre where it is not the case that genre discourses are repositioned at the level of genre's overarching identities but instead genre terms are, surprisingly, reworked in relation to fans' individual memories and identities.

As a result of this dispersal into personalised genre meanings, it becomes difficult for fans to negotiate a clear understanding of SF:

'Science fiction doesn't concentrate on one thing (...) It gets blurry' (Interview 6. 12-11-18, p.114).

[It is] more of a setting than a genre (...) something in a visual convention that exceeds the genre (Interview 14. 16-11-18, p.161).

Indicating fans' lack of genre consensus, 62.6% of my respondents see science fiction as a philosophical-sociological genre, whilst 19% of respondents agree that science fiction 'encourages (...) [the audience] to contemplate... the known world from a distanced perspective' (Cornea, 2007, p.3) 'where (...) man is facing himself' (Interview 12. 16-11-18, p.150). Meanwhile, 28% understand science fiction as a kind of political speculation, and as an exploration of 'a logical progression of the direction we might be heading in' (Interview 23. 22-11-18, p.221). Finally, 9.4% share 'a point of view that it's a form of escapism' and don't read SF socioculturally (interview 3. 06-11-18, p.92).

Such a multiplicity of discourses allows fans to 'fully consume the fiction and make it an active resource' (Jenkins, 1992, p.114) while poaching an SF text's meaning (de Certeau, 1984, p.174; Jenkins, 1992, p.24). The fan readings of SF spawn uncertainty, allowing fans to recognize new genre pragmatics by filtering genre through their own identity and personal experiences of pivotal life events.

Fandom is the 'emotionally involved consumption of a given (...) text' (Sandvoss, 2005, p.8). Whether developed in a 'moment of self-transformation (...) [or] a routinized, habituated way of interacting with pop culture' (Hills, 2014, p.10) active participation in fandom 'as a learned set of protocols and reading conventions' (Ibid., p.11) enables a fan's 'core 'identity to be reconstructed' (Hills, 2002, p.56). In what follows, I will explain how position-taking in fandom differs from Altman's theorization because fan 'audiences (...) [display] an awareness of having had a unique' experience (Barker et al, 2016, p.38) of science fiction consumption which, in turn, has shaped their fandom (Ibid, pp.40-59). Each of these moments generates a *personal pragmatics* of the SF genre through a subjective experience of SF (Barker et al, 2016, p.43). For example, Jeff (Interview 23. 22-11-18, p.222), John (Interview 20. 21-11-18, p.202) and Paul (2. 05-11-18, p.78) have inherited cultural and subcultural capital and describe their fandom as being gifted by their parents (Barker et al, 2016, pp.40-59). And Carol formed her understanding of SF from early life influences:

'I also watched *Lost in Space* and I still watch it on TV (...) I would watch it with my family (...) on my dad's lap (...) every week' (Interview 29. 24-11-18, p.240).

She stresses how this led to her continued fandom and her 'taste in a lot of things', implying her fandom and taste were formed as an outcome of familial influence (Ibid.). Richard explains his relationship with SF as follows:

'I had to live somewhere very poor. (...) *Forbidden Planet* was on TV. (...) [I]t was just an amazing, colourful world. (...) [S]hortly after that I saw *Blade Runner* (...) And

it was like (...) North London, in a rainy winter (...) so close to what I was living (...)  
We look for something we can relate to' (Interview 25. 23-11-18, p.234).

Richard (male, 43, British, sound engineer, MA) related his object of fandom to his life and vice versa which informed his understanding of a corpus of SF films. This relatable textual content of consumed science fiction films shaped Richard's fandom for years to come. In addition, this is how his understanding of genre has been defined. Richard filtered his real life experience through the diegetic reality of SF films which in return has allowed him to skilfully filter the markers of quality within science fiction cinema through his own, subjectively unique relationship with his object of fandom.

Martin's (male, 57, British, manufacturing director, BA) identity as a fan has also been (re)constructed via a specific event. He explains that he was

'interested in [*Alien*] even before [he had] seen it. Because [he] did go to a convention in 1979 and loved the crew from the movie... [This] science-fiction convention (...) made [him] look for things in the film that [he] probably wouldn't have looked for otherwise'. (Interview 16. 16-11-18, p.1 and p.168).

As fandom is 'tied into individual and group identities and social performances, which are rarely set or coherent' (Crawford, 2012, p.102) fans project their own real life experience onto the reading of SF 'which grounds the illusion of reality it produces' (Bourdieu, 1992, p.14; 1979, p.101; 1990, p.53; 1992, p.13).

Although the semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach doesn't fully cover these fans' experiences of genre, fans negotiate the cultural value of texts by evaluating intertextual generic relationships which never offer pure repetition but rather repetition with difference (Neale, 1980, p.13). Fandom negotiates the canon of science fiction cinema or rejects/devalues texts by evaluating their value relationally. *Contra* Neale's essential characterisation of genre, difference is perceived within valued SF by fans, whilst repetition separately leads to genre texts being devalued. Fans also create a consumption paradox unaddressed by genre theory. In the next section, I will describe this unexpected pattern discovered in my data by introducing fans' sense of 'innovative cliché', and how this challenges previous genre theory.

### **Splitting or Recombining Repetition and Difference: Negotiating the Cultural Value of SF Texts**

Genre's 'role allotted (...) by the cinematic institution (...) [is] to provide, simultaneously, both regulation and variety' (Neale, 1980, p.51). Stephen Neale claims that 'genres establish a regulation of variety (...) across a series of individual texts, organising as systematizing the difference that each text represents' (1980, p.49). Nonetheless, fans 'give priority to particular aspects of narratives as potentially interesting and significant while assigning others to the margins' (Jenkins, 1992, p.136). For SF films, this is key to their hierarchization and potential canonization. Neale explains by quoting Lotman that genres rely on 'equivalence (...) as a basis of incomplete sameness (...) [where] the elements (...) cannot be reduced to a dead uniformity' (1973, p.131). However, in contrast to Neale stressing the importance of intersecting repetition and difference, my data shows that science fiction fans split these factors apart and evaluate them independently when negotiating the cultural value of texts via perceived cliché and

displayed textual novelty. Neale stresses how repetition and difference are 'symptomatic of the very nature of... genres themselves as a systematic process' (1980, p.48). Both are inherently combined in his theoretical framework where repetition and difference 'cannot be taken in isolation as if they constituted specific generic instances' (Ibid.). Therefore, it appears safe to assume that fans, through the repeated consumption of genre texts, desire combined repetition/difference in the objects of their fandom. In contrast, though, fans in my data repeatedly and discursively split repetition and difference and evaluated them independently from one another. Fans reject repetition and devalue its worth, instead canonising the novelty displayed or signified by a singular text in the process of its evaluation. In this way, fandom separates repetition and difference by stressing the 'tension that makes the history of cinema: the tension between commodity (...) (context, the narrative-image of a film) and process (...) (movement towards memory and the balance of novelty)' (Ellis, 1978, pp.93-96).

The discursive splitting of repetition and difference when evaluating texts is grounded in fans' constructions of cultural value. According to my data, fans have entered a 'heroic age' in the cultural legitimization of science fiction as art itself (Lopes, 2009, p.XIII). Bourdieu sees a "Heroic Age" as a period where autonomous rules of art are formed among relevant cognoscenti (Lopes, 2015, p.219-220). This is what happened in the 'heroic age' of graphic novels described by Lopes. Analogically, fans focus on negotiating an SF canon of culturally valuable texts in a process of genre legitimization. Often, this results in fans' celebration of novelty, demonstrated within otherwise generic texts.

However, fans subvert Neale's understanding of genre (1980, p.51) by denying the value of repetition which they recognize 'through previous encounters with other texts' (Jenkins, 1992, p.68). For this reason, the quality of *Avatar* is repeatedly devalued in my data because 'the moral of the story was weak and obvious' (Interview 24. 23-11-18, p.169). Also 'it didn't have anything new to say' as the repeated semantics were seen as 'stereotypes (...) [of] aliens and their culture (...) [which] didn't try (...) to differentiate the culture and make it original' (Interview 21. 21-11-18, p.212).

In contrast, fans exhibit a strong drive to subjectively canonize textual novelty, or difference, in the process of hierarchizing SF films within their constellated community. For example, fans point out that SF has (a much valued) 'tradition of pushing social boundaries and exploring ethical ideas which (...) could never [be] explore[d] in a (...) a non-fiction setting' (Interview 10. 15-11-18, p.139). At the same time, my data shows fans collectively canonising what one of my respondents described as a 'time in the cinema (...) [when producers were breaking] boundaries. (...) [and doing] things never done before' (8. 14-11-18, p.130). *Alien* is seen as 'the definitive science fiction (...) classic' (Interview 10. 15-11-18, p.140) masterfully 'updating 50s science fiction movie[s]' (Interview 17. 17-11-18, p.182) because of its unprecedented realist science fiction and horror mash-up (Brittany, 2017, p.7; Cherry, 2008, pp.212-215; Nathan, 2011, p.6):

[It was] a game changer. (...) The dirty ships, the dripping oil (...). It's really a horror film in a science fiction setting' (Interview 15. 16-11-18, p.168).

Fans also recognize that 'another thing that stands out about this film is a strong female character' (Interview 9. 15-11-18, p.71; see also for example 15. 16-11-18; 29. 24-11-18), deemed to be

revolutionary in SF at the time (Gallardo C. and Smith, 2004, p.3). Similarly, a perceived difference from the generic corpus of SF fuels the canonisation of *Moon* within SF fandom. As indicated by fans, one of the most memorable and valued moments of this narrative is a plot twist revealing the nature of the protagonist's existence. Fans appreciated this non-generic, different SF narrative resulting in a

'surprise, you just don't expect (...) It was more of a case of [the] director's got me'.  
(Interview 3. 06-11-18, p.98)

Al Sirois explicitly expresses that *Moon's* difference from 'generic' SF makes it 'absorbing' (Interview 17. 17-11-18, p.185). He describes the unpredictability of *Moon*, which to him feels more like 'a literary kind of experience' (Ibid.):

'Nothing is what it seems. Gradually, as the film progresses, you learn a little bit more  
(...) Until you finally learn what the secret is' (Ibid.)

Interestingly, *Avatar* also illustrates the discursive evaluation of science fiction films by fans, demonstrating what I call an 'innovative cliché' paradox. The same fans, 56.25% of respondents, who dismiss the cultural value of *Avatar* because of what they see as its pure narrative repetition then go on to canonise the technological cinematic progress that they also take this film to signify. Fans acknowledge the production process of genre films and evaluate their cultural value by assessing texts in terms of textual novelty. In some cases, however, that novelty is celebrated alongside a simultaneous recognition of generic repetition and a denial of the film's cultural value based on this. Consequently, the same fan can treat an SF film as clichéd, but they will simultaneously recognize specific elements as indicating a higher cultural value and may therefore subjectively canonise it. The data I gathered on *Avatar* demonstrates this position-taking in fandom. For this film, James Cameron established a unique system of producing 'Real 3D' with the use of motion-capture suits and facial capture setups, as well as using a 3D painting system capable of rendering photorealistic, computer generated imagery (Failes, 2015, p.118-119). My SF fans recall the visuals of *Avatar* as a technological milestone contributing to the future of cinematic production. Its special effects are considered a dazzling novelty, but the same SF fans dismiss the film as a whole because of its 'two dimensional characters and story. Grossly simplified concepts [are linked to ] (...) a beautiful empty shell' (Interview 13. 16-11-18, p.160).

In short, genre provides a conceptual framework of reference 'where its binding mechanisms cohere [and provide the ground for] the deployment and configuration of discourses' (Neale, 1980, p.25) providing the constellated fan community with 'basic forms of combination (...) to produce a new structure' of meaning (Willemsen, 1973, p.122). As per the data gathered from fans here, genre pragmatics are even more multiple than Rick Altman's framework suggested (Altman, 1999, p.136). This unsettles 'historical cultural assumptions' (Barthes, 1976, p.14) about the SF genre by dispersing textual readings into fans' memories and life experiences, as well as fans splitting apart generic repetition and difference, or reading them via the 'innovative cliché' position-taking where difference remains valued and repetition is starkly devalued (rather than these possibilities being viewed as integrated into genre's essential characteristics).

In the next section, I will return more significantly to Bourdieu's theoretical approach, arguing that science fiction films don't belong to a clearly defined field with set boundaries, but can instead be evidenced through my data as the products of what I will term a 'mega-field' of science fiction.

### **3. SF Films Outside Genre and Medium: The 'Mega-field' as an Industry Tool for Audience Expansion**

In this section, I focus on what I call the 'mega-field', expanding on Bourdieusian field theory. I propose the concept of a mega-field which takes into account the new structures formed by different and multiple fields interacting. This means that the texts produced within a given sub-field of cultural production can be strongly characterised by cross-field influences, whether these are inter-generic or intermedial. I also argue that this situation can be marked by position-taking linked to producers' agency, one that aims at a 'multifunctionalism' of texts, i.e. seeking to reach the widest possible audience with textual content that appeals beyond any one 'field', in Bourdieu's terms.

#### **Not Just SF Film (I): Inter-genre Meanings and the Mega-field**

The easiest way to describe a Bourdieusian field is as a 'structured space' understood as a 'network of social relations (...) [with] rules for inclusion and exclusion (...) [and] ...strategies (...) [for] operating within its boundaries' (Buchanan, 2018, p.175). However, field theory is incomplete as it doesn't address fields as 'themselves an object of struggle' (Shammas and Sandberg, 2015, p.8) which in fact renders their boundaries vague and mobile (Ibid.). The fact that 'boundaries between fields are not sharply drawn [even] by Bourdieu' (Swartz, 1997, p.21) requires a reformed concept of the field. I will demonstrate that currently a degree of de-autonomization (Hills, 2005, p.168) causes a diffusion of fields and their collapse into each other (see Lash, 1990, p.252; Prior, 2005, p.135) resulting in mutual influence and therefore forming a mega-field. Additionally, I argue that mega-fields are used in the film industry to seek audience expansion through the multifunctionalism, or inter-genre coding, of supposedly genre-based texts such as those of SF cinema.

There are two main reasons behind the formation of mega-fields. The first is an increased circulation of forms of (sub)cultural capital among fan audiences because of a relative ease of access to fan cultural capital, and the second involves mechanisms of intertextuality and intermediality. Firstly, the current distribution of subcultural and fan-cultural capitals potentially allows a relatively easy mode of accumulation (compare this with Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p.7). Bourdieu explained the 'unequal distribution of a particular kind of capital' (1993, p.97) in society because of 'unequal power relations' (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p.2) which resulted in 'the unequal (...) distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture' (1979, p.29) via cultural capital. However, access to the Internet can serve social agents as a potential 'repository of the (...) current configurations of popular memory' (Pearson, 2016, p.78), making the acquisition of forms of fan cultural capital and their exchange, at least, much easier than in the past.

Producers operating within a given mega-field attempt to attract audiences demonstrating diverse interests as well as varied levels of accumulated cultural, subcultural and/or fan-cultural capital. Consequently, they display a taste for formerly separate and separable Bourdieusian fields which now

come to supply forms of textual content open to (re)combination. Producers can fuse these textual reserves of content, creating multifunctional texts which may attract varied audiences to consume texts belonging to numerous sub-fields of generic cultural production and fan cultural capitals at the same time.

Genres are 'selective articulations of a cultural heritage (...) understood as the most complex instance of (...) intertextuality' (Jensen, 2016, p.2). Hills claims the existence of a 'field of horror' understood as a 'cultural space' where genre texts attempt to 'distinguish themselves relationally from other generic productions' (2005, p.163) and hence reinforce their intertextual links to the 'preceding (...) cultural history of the horror genre' (Ibid.). However, this distinction between individual genres is a self-referential 'stylistic mask' (Jameson, 1985, p.114) understood 'in terms of revolving around (...) [genre's] foundational texts' (Hills, 2005, p.164). Supposedly singular 'genre' texts do not belong to one 'closed system' (Robbins, 2000, p.77) but instead their fluidity allows consideration of a flexible system of wider and more multiple generic conventions.

SF films can be understood as part of a mega-field because of their actual mixing of genres, something which can be recognized by fans as a marker of quality and then, somewhat ironically, canonized as 'quality' science fiction. Take *Alien* as an example. In the Bourdieusian understanding of a field, *Alien* couldn't easily be described only as a product of a posited field of science fiction as it is also clearly indebted to the horror genre. Those sub-fields of cultural production thus interact and form part of an emergent mega-field. All my respondents recognized these 'mega-field' characteristics of *Alien* by unanimously classifying it as a genre hybrid. Martin and Max Loosli described it as 'a horror film in a science fiction setting' (Interview 15. 16-11-18, p.168) that 'just happens to be in space' (Interview 13. 16-11-18, p.155). The film is considered by some of my interviewees to be 'the definitive science fiction' movie (Interview 10. 15-11-18, p.139), demonstrating its genre fluidity, although other fans explicitly refer to its elements of the horror genre: Richard mentions jump scares (Interview 25. 23-11-18, p.135), Mark (male, 60, American, retired after work in technology sector, ME) 'the graphic horror elements' (Interview 9. 15-11-18, p.134) and Benjamin Black (male, 39, British, self-employed, higher school) refers to it as a 'creature feature and science fiction' (Interview 10. 15-11-18, p.139). Igor further elaborates with a reference to a canonical slasher horror film:

There is a monster like in *Halloween* (...) [K]illing members of the group one by one until one member arrives either to kill the monster or more often not to (...) so there could be a sequel (Interview 12. 16-11-18, p.151).

This shows that audiences acknowledge that a media product's 'overall signification' can 'refer to a specific (...) subsystem (such as a certain film genre)' (Rajewsky, 2005, pp.52-53), e.g. a valued SF film can also refer to the horror genre, thereby addressing multiple forms of fan cultural capital and knowledge. Having focused on the issue of inter-genre meaning making, I will now go on to discuss intermediality as one of the additional factors leading to the formation of a science fiction mega-field.

### **Not Just SF Film (II): Intermedial Traits and the Mega-field**

Alongside inter-generic meanings, mechanisms of intertextuality and intermediality also become more important to the formation of SF's mega-field. The structure of a mega-field allows the intersection of textual materials from different media as well as different genres (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p.219). Here, the film industry examines 'new possibilities for presenting (...) different views on medial border-crossings and hybridization' (Rajewsky, 2005, p.44). When film emulates composite elements of the visual arts (e.g. paintings or photography) then the boundaries of different sub-fields again interact. Eventually they can form a structured mega-field based on the 'potential of artworks that articulate their message in the interstices between two or more media forms' (Jensen, 2016, p.1).

Bourdieu argued for an autonomy of fields through 'the affirmations of difference which writers and artists profess ever more insistently as the autonomy of the field of cultural production becomes more pronounced' (1979, p.226). He also stressed field-specific values of capital (Ibid., p.113) because he perceived fields as the spaces where 'struggles over culture are aimed at creating the market (...) [for] the products which are marked, in their manners, by a particular (...) market' (Ibid., p.96). He meant that goods produced by a field belong strictly to this field and represent their associated value within this specific field. However, this neglects how, in any medium, texts can incorporate and resonate with the influence of other media, especially when media convergence is a factor in the distribution of texts (involving cinema theatres, streaming platforms, television and physical media – potentially all at once). Additionally, it is not only the case that content is distributed across media platforms (Jenkins, 2006, p.11; Keane, 2007, pp.153-154) but texts can also display advanced intermediality, distinguishable from '*intramedial* phenomena as well as from *transmedial* phenomena' (Rajewsky, 2005, p.46). This means that 'one medium may reproduce as well as reshape another' (Jensen, 2016, p.4) in the process of encoding texts, a process which may also inform their 'quality' (King, 2016, pp.4, 178). For example, film can remediate and represent painting and photography as 'packages of content (...) accessible to different audiences in different contexts of use' (Jensen, 2016, p.4). Therefore, the integration of traits of different visual arts in a mega-field diffuses the boundaries of supposedly singular or autonomous Bourdieusian fields. When asked to evaluate science fiction film as art or entertainment, for example, a quarter of my sample focused on the emulation of other visual media such as the remediation of paintings or photography that they suggested were utilised by film to mark out an impression of SF film's artistic value. So fans referred to intermedial visuals as a fundamental element of the artistry of SF cinema here. Furthermore, another 9,5% of respondents referred to the artistry of cinema in the same manner (through the prism of the visual, intermedial traits of the medium of film) rather than making any particular evaluation of SF as a genre.

The intermedial characteristic of film provides a solid ground for reconceptualising SF films in terms of a mega-field rather than as a genre-specific, singular field. In terms of 'Intermediality in the (...) sense of media combination' (Rajewsky, 2005, p.51) film is frequently also bound up with literature. The structure of filmic narrative necessarily corresponds to a written screenplay, but also adapting novels into films is one of the most common instances of film's intermediality (Ellestrom, 2017, p.512). In terms of intermediality, my data shows unexpected position-takings among science fiction fans. They utilize accumulated cultural and subcultural capital to approach films as 'the transfer of media characteristics among media products' (Ellestrom, 2017, p.514), identifying 'novelistic (...) equivalences

in the film medium' (McFarlane, 1996, p.13) even though the film texts concerned are not adaptations. For example, Mark and Al Sirois both refer to a canon of science fiction literature when they recognize the narrative of *Moon* as resembling a Philip K. Dick story (Interview 9. 15-11-18, p.135; 17. 17-11-18, p.185). Similarly, Richard reads *Moon* through the prism of stories by Stanislaw Lem, a canonical science fiction writer (Interview 25. 23-11-18, p.150). And Craig comments on the origins of the virtual reality sub-genre of science fiction cinema, saying that 'Philip K. Dick had all those ideas (...) for years' (Interview 29. 26-11-18, p.255).

All these fans recognized how the intermedial permeability of science fiction film relies on 'transmediation (...) [of] elements from a medium and using them in a new way in another' (Ellestrom, 2017, p.511). This renders SF film as part of a mega-field due to its use of other media, or as a result of their influence – the recognition of which requires cultural and subcultural capital. However, this also potentially makes the mega-field a tool for producers' agency. The mega-field's intermediality and inter-generic meanings can enable producers to bid for the widest possible audience by relying on the multifunctionalism of mega-field texts that supposedly belong to one genre such as SF. Next, I will describe how the mega-field operates in this way.

### **Multifunctional Texts as an Aspect of the Mega-field**

The impact of encoding SF films with cross-field (inter-generic and intermedial) content is noticeable through the availability of numerous interpretative configurations (Altman, 1999, p.134) derived from differing forms of (sub)cultural capital. I argue that by encoding genre texts with 'excess' material (Ibid.) from multiple sub-fields of cultural production, the producers of science fiction can target multiple audiences with diversified tastes (and often radically different interpretative dispositions) as well as associating genre texts with cultural value (King, 2016, p.13).

Cross-field textual content combined within a science-fiction narrative activates accumulated cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital and potentially appeals to and attracts the members of diverse or even conflicting fan audiences. This means that a large-scale commercial production such as a genre blockbuster may no longer be positioned simply at the heteronomous pole of a single field. Instead, the mode of cultural production in a mega-field can be insistently hybridized. Films are encoded in a way which targets different audiences operating with quantities of the accumulated cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capitals required to decode 'intertextual [and intermedial] references and the self-referentiality of the works' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p.161) in question, as well as such films being addressed to mass audiences that cannot necessarily be assumed to possess these capitals. Such texts are targeted at the widest possible audience, but some audience members 'do not merely constitute a (...) market, they are also subculturally knowledgeable' agents (Hills, 2005, p.169). A large-scale commercial blockbuster understood in Bourdieusian theory as merely heteronomous can hence be reconceptualised within the mega-field. For some fans it may belong to a genre's 'most literary, autonomous end', and for other audiences it may be read as belonging to the 'popular end' of film production (Bacon-Smith, 2000, p.244), depending on the higher or lower level of their subcultural capital (Hills, 2005, p.170).

Producers' agency within a mega-field does not only presume a determinate quantity of specific audience capital distributed within a sub-field (Bourdieu, 1993, p.30) but instead targets audiences across multiple levels and types of capital. Therefore, structured manifestations of these multiple levels and types of capital can tend to become textual functions, and not purely as a result of audience decoding (see King, 2016, p.10). For example, *Avatar* combines a palette of intertextual references to previous works by the director James Cameron. Army mechs (battle exoskeletons) connote the similarly constructed and visualised Power Loader from *Aliens* as well as a strong female protagonist appearing to be one recurrent motif in Cameron's films sometimes combined with the participation of Sigourney Weaver, originally Ellen Ripley – the protagonist of the *Alien* franchise. This is a producer's position-taking, aiming to appeal to members of diverse audiences and potentially to induce responses derived from the levels of their forms of fan cultural capital, depending on whether they are James Cameron fans or *Alien* fans.

Furthermore, producers will bid for a positive audience response and might attempt to stretch a film's audience reach beyond those favouring a specific genre by reinforcing the circulation of cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital across different media, knowing value exists here 'if known and recognized, that is, socially instituted (...) and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing (...) the production of the value of the work' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.37). For instance, the visual artists employed in the production of *Alien* were accomplished artists with huge fan followings. Their work signifies a marker of quality to those audiences with the appropriate capital so this was consciously 'internalised by the film[s] (...) [producers because it was] likely to resonate with (...) other cultural products considered to have high standing in prevailing hierarchies' (King, 2016, p.15). Indeed, 35% of my respondents recognized specific visual artists such as H. R. Giger, Ron Cobb and Moebius as involved in the production of *Alien*. Those intermedial, cross-field influences have been identified as markers of quality by fans and translated into the canonisation of the final product. The symbiosis of seemingly separate fields therefore further reinforces the existence of a mega-field structure here, despite the fact that *Alien* remains readable as a canonical science fiction movie.

To give one example from my data, Steve C. (male, 50 yo, USA, US Government, MA) recognises the cultural value of *Alien*'s production design by admitting he thinks that what really 'sold *Alien* was the superior work of H. R. Giger' (Interview 14. 16-11-18 p.162. And Grahame (male, 52 yo, British, cabinet maker, O levels) expresses that, like other fans, he 'knew Ron Cobb was involved in most of the art work. Giger was involved with the alien design. They [were] prominent artists that I followed for years' (Interview 6. 12-11-18, p.116). Additionally, Al Sirois stresses the input of Moebius who was 'tremendously well known. [because] he worked on *Heavy Metal* and many other publications' (Interview 17.17-11-18, p.184).

It is important to stress that fans' positive responses were linked to the film's 'implementation' (Interview 23. 22-11-18, p.212). *Alien*'s textual content is encoded in accordance with numerous markers of 'quality' (King, 2016, p.14) such as social relevance, realism, and textual novelty. Consequently, the mega-field can work on two levels: informing textual filmic structures, and as a social structure supporting producers' bids for audience expansion by attempting to secure position-takings from widely

different audiences. The cross-field (inter-generic and intermedial) content within a 'genre' product can potentially appeal to diverse mega-field audiences and 'exploits assumed levels of the forms of capital when it moves from one [audience] universe to (...) [an]other' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.43). Producers combine elements of multiple sub-fields of cultural production in texts because 'efforts to control the reception of their own works are always partially doomed to failure (...) if only because the very effect of their work may transform the conditions of its reception' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.31).

As the trajectories of audience position-taking are unstable, this effectively results in producers' inability to foresee the readings of multiple, diverse audiences. But by seeking to convert the mega-field's social structure into textual structures, producers can shape multifunctional SF movies aimed at predicting differential audience responses. Example of this might be a social realist portrayal of the corporate power relationships depicted in *Alien* which is widely recognized in fandom and seen as a marker of canonised quality SF. Also, the sexualised imagery of Sigourney Weaver at the end of the film, although narratively it might heighten an impression of the protagonist's vulnerability, can also be read as a bid for mass audience response in relation to hegemonic norms of sexuality.

In summary, the mega-field is a regulatory consumption tool allowing SF fans to circulate and reinforce their forms of capital as a shared system of reference, as well as an industrial tool allowing SF producers to mix media and genres from multiple fields. In this way, supposedly singular generic structures may help producers to reach the widest possible audiences for canonical, arthouse and blockbuster SF films, not merely because they are positioned hierarchically within one Bourdieusian 'field' but because they are fluidly and multifunctionally positioned within multiple fields.

## **V. Conclusion**

### **1. Discussion of Findings**

In my research I have sought to understand the appreciation of science fiction texts of various types such as canonical, art-house and blockbuster films by fan audiences in the process of negotiating the cultural value of those films. I explored how Bourdieu's key concepts informed this process. My findings demonstrate that genre texts' cultural value in fandom is grounded in capital-based distinctions between fans – these are characterised by uneven ratios between social agents' accumulated quantities of cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital. Accumulation of those forms of capital translates into a variety of trajectories of position-taking during consumption and, primarily, provides social agents with a number of dispositions informing how they consume SF film texts.

After the initial set of pilot interviews, I received good feedback from the first 10% or so of respondents (3 pilot interviews); the dynamic between myself and respondents with whom I share a passion for science fiction meant that I was able to build rapport effectively. I also began to discover the importance of forms of (sub)cultural capital in my research, enabling me to focus on the relaxed, semi-structured nature of qualitative interviews so that respondents could freely express their science fiction fandom.

Following my interview data, I identified three main clusters of fans displaying cultural dispositions which predispose their perception of the cultural value of SF texts. These are fans relating texts to each other on the basis of subcultural capital only, resulting in arthouse and even canonical SF films being devalued or dismissed by such audiences; fans who possess an ability to approach texts with a mix of Bourdieusian modes of consumption which I refer to as the 'fan gaze'; and thirdly, the most elitist section of fandom, omnivorous fans. The omnivorous fans I identify in my data have been socialised into a taste for goods produced at the autonomous pole of cultural production at an early age. They have internalised the practices and sets of codes enabling both high and low culture to be appreciated through a genre lens. Additionally, and unusually, they demonstrated a downward social trajectory, with their genre tastes progressing towards the heteronomous pole of cultural production – a phenomenon typically unaddressed in studies of genres in relation to Bourdieusian theories. Through a long-term familiarization with the object of their fandom, omnivorous fans and those displaying a fan gaze have developed a disposition resulting in the consumption paradox I termed 'detached immersion'. This utilizes two Bourdieusian modes of consumption, the barbarous and pure gaze, at once.

My research shows the importance of socialisation and the consequent quantities of fans' accumulated cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capitals. These play a role in the process of negotiating SF films' cultural value which is apparent throughout my interview data. I discovered several challenges to previous theorisations of genre. It appears that fan audiences negotiate the pragmatics of genre texts by grounding science fiction in their subjective, real-world life experiences instead of negotiating SF through the pragmatics of distinctive subgenres or new genre classifications, *contra* Altman 1999. Furthermore, fans discursively evaluate genre repetition and difference independently from each other, celebrating textual novelty through a subjective canonisation of content and devaluing clichéd patterns they are overtly familiar with, *contra* Neale 1980. Additionally, fans acknowledge the production processes of texts and are able to evaluate texts through their recognition of 'innovative cliché' – a canonised textual novelty identified in otherwise supposedly clichéd texts.

The modes of distribution and acquisition of forms of cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital enable the formation of mega-fields, themselves highly reliant on intertextuality and intermediality, and audiences' capital-driven responses to them. Initially, I had hoped that my research would provide data allowing me to theorize the impact of audiences' influence on the formation of mega-fields, but a thorough analysis of interview data enabled me to see a different dynamic between the agencies of cultural production and consumption. It appears that texts can be encoded with cross-genre, intermedial content to bid for the widest possible audience reach and expansion. Texts encoded with various forms of capital linked to a number of sub-fields represent a bid for positive responses from (fan) audiences belonging to these various sub-fields and possessing different quantities of accumulated cultural, sub-cultural and/or fan-cultural capital.

## **2. Limitations and Future Directions**

My research is obviously limited by its relatively small number of interview respondents. Additionally, it is somewhat restricted as respondents who identify themselves as fans can't provide the full spectrum of position-takings that would also involve the general public, i.e. more casual SF audiences. My findings are therefore incomplete as further theorisation of the mega-field and negotiations of cultural value require more data from fan and non-fan audiences. As I've already shown, levels of cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital have the potential to significantly alter audience perceptions of markers of 'quality' and can consequently translate into the evaluation of texts, potentially impacting on processes of textual hierarchization.

A greatly uneven ratio of 3 females to 29 males in my respondents also doesn't allow any credible analysis of consumption mechanisms linked to gendered differences. And my small number of respondents unfortunately doesn't provide enough data to adequately theorise relationships between social class and genre valorisation in terms of Bourdieusian theories, something that could significantly impact on genre's constellated communities. Furthermore, my interview data relates to audiences' decoding of texts, whereas comparative data on producers' encodings during the production of SF film texts would allow for a far more developed theorisation of genre-based distinctions.

Following these limitations of my research, I would suggest that further audience studies in relation to mega-field structures of cultural production are called for. Non-fans as well as perhaps anti-fans who engage with mega-fields for radically different reasons (Gray, 2003; Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington, 2007) require more thorough investigation, as do issues of gender and social class. An exploration of relationships between anti-fan communities and mega-fields would potentially allow scholars to explore the distribution and acquisition of other forms of Bourdieusian capital in relation to audiences and mega-fields, such as for example social capital (Bourdieu, 1979) which I have not studied here. Furthermore, given that some of my respondents clearly understood SF films through their own biographical experiences and memories, researching negotiations of cultural value through the prism of nostalgia could also be productive (see for example Casey, 2000; Boym, 2001; Deciu Ritivoi, 2002; Barrett, 2010).

I believe I have identified a solid grounding for further investigations into the negotiation of cultural value of genre texts, as well as providing a degree of supportive empirical evidence for the multiple roles played by cultural, subcultural and fan-cultural capital in relation to an SF mega-field, complicating my focus on film as a specific medium and science fiction as a singular genre. In addition, I hope to have indicated new ways of understanding the impact of individually accumulated quantities of forms of Bourdieusian capital on the relational evaluations of canonised, arthouse and blockbuster science fiction cinema.

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## **VII. Appendix 1 Interview Guide**

### **Interview**

#### **I. Icebreaker.**

1. What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?
2. What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films? Why?
3. Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF? Why would you describe them as such?

#### **II. Core beliefs in relation to science fiction cinema**

1. What makes a film a science fiction film?
2. What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?
3. For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?
4. Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?
5. Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.

#### **III. Emotional response and decoding**

**(Each question applies to every film separately, after each question will follow a space for notes regarding each film)**

1. What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?
2. Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?
3. What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?
4. Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)
5. Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?

**IV. Consumption and the apparatus**

1. How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?
2. What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?
3. Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?

**Face sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent:

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age:

Sex:   X Male           X Female

Nationality:

Education:

Father:

Mother:

Occupation:

Father:

Mother:

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction?

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month:

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes	No
Collecting merch	Yes	No
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	Yes	No
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	Yes	No
Online forums	Yes	No
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	No
Tweeting	Yes	No
Blogging	Yes	No
Cosplay	Yes	No
Fan art	Yes	No
Fanvids	Yes	No
Fanfiction	Yes	No

#### VIII. Appendix 2 The Interviews

##### **Interview 1. 01-11-18 Michal Misztal**

###### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

I think it's post-apo after all. When I look at the list of films which I saw for multiple times then the second Mad Max, The Road Warrior, is such a film that I will watch it dozens of time although I already memorized it.

###### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Now that need good thinking over. If you say a film is bad then it has to be bad in its category. There are better and worse films generally however there are loads of this crap in science fiction. For example there films which fake good films so you have something you know and you know it was good and now someone gives you the same but with a smaller budget. There is a multitude of such zombie films for sure. They were made by a bunch of mates and somehow, miraculously they got distributed. Their cover are purposefully misleading. For example Uwe Boll. In the Name of King – a fake Lord of the Rings. It's just an awful film. It's physically painful to watch it.

###### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

I think *Avatar* would be such a film for me. On one hand it was such a ground-breaker back then but now it lost its impact. A multitude of films were created in this technology. But let's be honest: *Avatar* is a pumped up Pocahontas. It's not... It's not a particularly a visionary film. They thought of a new setting for the same story, added some effects, and added the third dimension. It all had a massive marketing campaign and a mass of people went just to see what it is. Does anyone even go back to it? Does anyone remember it? There was no sequel...

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

This is such a broad category. Actually, post-apo distinguished itself relatively not long ago from all of it. I think it kind of comes from the books. I think that someone once said, some author in the books, that science fiction answers questions you haven't asked yet. This surely needs to be addressed. New world, some introduction. It needs to hold up. Some convention. Everything else is just a speculation. For example terraforming of some planet or something about the people living after the atomic world. It's a speculation but as long it is coherent then I classify it as a science fiction. So, let's say, it's kind of a realistic wondering what if. But how many years we jump into the future, which planet... Those are secondary details.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

What I like in science fiction films is that there is a some kind of a question posed. There is some convention the producer wants to show us. I very much like well thought films so if there are some rules of distinction of this world from ours then the producer, or director, knows how to use them. For example I recently watched *Altered Carbon*. While watching it I had some reflections like what would be a potential of a technology allowing to condense people into a hard drive and switch between the bodies. What was shown in successive episodes shown me, between the others, the things I thought about so I realized the producers also gave a thought to the multiple possibilities. You can "dress up" as someone, impersonate someone. You can survive so many years. All that was there and even more. I like that, it was intelligent.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

It can be everything at once. You always smuggle in something that stays with you after the film. Something that can change your worldview. So entertainment for sure. In the Hollywood films the entertainment prevails for sure but I like very much is there is something smuggled in. Some emphasis. It will stay, like, for later. The film doesn't end with the end credits.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think that this is a matter of an individual approach. It's kind of related to the previous question. It can all resonate for some time. Sometimes, when I watch those old "StarTrekks", one looks at their

technology. Those huge phones... Currently I have a phone, a camera, weather forecast. All in my pocket and it's twice smaller than in *Star Trek*... I think it's difficult to say if maybe when something like this appears in a science fiction film from 1970s then it turns into a kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy. People began to aspire to it. Except for that... Digressing a little from science fiction... Every film is a story. Science fiction can be a setting for a universal story. It doesn't always mean that if there are space ships so then we have some science fiction silliness. It's like a stage in theatre, a convention. I think about *Alien* in such a way.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

For sure, I think. Taste always changes. The fundamental two things are that a man always grows up. Begins to seek new things. When I was younger... I focused on those Hollywood characteristics of it all. Some explosions, chases. We don't really pay attention if it all makes any sense. Another thing is the exhaustion with repetition. You watch those films and they're all the same. And then it kind of... I'd like something different. I'd like them to surprise me. Some plot twist, a reference. Those are the films where the director misleads you from the very beginning but he does it so skilfully that when the plot twists at the end and you play the film again you realize it all was in front of your eyes from the start. But you followed a suggestion of something else.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

This is a film that seriously scared me when I was younger. It was terrifying as heck. I saw a lot of films with various monsters but this one was so suspenseful that it still is in the TOP OF the science fiction horror. It was a ground-breaking film. Maybe less than fascinating. It's the form of an epic, that's what I had in mind. How it all was coherent, how many cool things there were and just a mastery of the craft. Solid cinema. Now there is a whole series of those films. The first and second parts are my favourite. Still in the VHS era I paid a small fortune for the complete saga. Now the tapes have been exploited to the limit so I replaced them with DVDs. I return to those films. Also I think that you spot more things the older you get but this is solid cinema, even if speaking in terms of creature motif in such films. It's always done much better than some "StarTreds" or "StarWars". It's more realistic. This otherness [alien-ness] of the alien is THE otherness [alien-ness] and not just an actor with some rubber on his face. Because *Star Wars* is more of a fantasy film. There is this magical element but it's called the Force. I *Star Trek* I was very much irritated but the sterility of it all. That's what *Star Wars* did better. Those ships there are dirty, used. In *Alien* all this tractor for all that [Nostromo towed a cargo through space] it was something different. A brick that travels through space. Neither beautiful nor... Just a tractor. There is a job to do and we tow this cargo. It doesn't have to be pretty. This makes me think of a cosmic HGV. Such a bunch of the HGV drivers.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Well, the alien itself for sure. How it looks, how it moves. It's kind a humanoid but on the other hand it has six fingers, his blood is acid. You can't see its eyes so it's such an alien alien. There's no contact with it. It doesn't speak, doesn't shoot lasers. But even before this, there is such a suspenseful waiting period when they bring this guy with a facehugger on his face and you immediately know that something is wrong, that it's only yet going to kick off. And then the cantina scene.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

The spectator realizes that there are worse things than death. You can die while being a host for a space alien which later runs away, grows up and starts killing others. Makes me think of vampirism or zombies. Death is not everything, you can also be recruited as a vampire or a zombie. In case of an alien you're an incubator. This alien jumps out of you and kills you, it is explicitly shown it's not very nice. Agony, the terror of his friends... And the third thing I recalled... For example in *Halloween* or some other film where there is some a killer with a knife walking around you can always say: 'man, woman, get out of the house and run somewhere to the Police station'. But here they're cut off. It's a space ship and there is nowhere to run. They're not soldiers, they don't have weapons and they have something like this to deal with. It's a primal fear of the unknown. Everything is terrifying in this film but it's not a typical jump scare but a pragmatic, logic and terrifying. A trap without exit, no help.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It was a time when the film trailers haven't been so easily accessible like today. If there was a snippet of a trailer shown then it wasn't even called a trailer. So... Some brick as a space ship, some dressed up people... I think that when I was younger I could have easily confused it with Cameron's *Dark Star*. I didn't have any specific expectations but I think that the people expected a film similar to *E.T.* or *Close Encounters*.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Surely there was some element of a surprise with an android when it was disassembled. Those are not typical robots like Terminator. There are not metal parts but just pipes and kind of a milk leaks from them. It is something organic but there's also a motif of the people hunting that alien and one of them turns around and that alien is there doing like 'aaarrgggghh' and then you can see it properly. Then the spectator realises that, well, now the guy is completely bugged. Point blank, head first crash with a tough guy from space. And that final plot twist... Ripley got the cat, she's going to hibernate herself and suddenly it turns out that she's not alone. And surely... You hear about those artificials [androids]... That it wasn't a typical one but an artificial human. And that scene with a torch. It might have been the first time the whole adult alien was shown... Because sometimes it happens that when the film doesn't show you this main monster and then it finally does... They better haven't shown it. A car tire, a string. But this one was cool.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Surely the scenes when they bring the infected one. You already know it's bad because it's a typical introduction to horror. It's dark, this thing stuck and they take the guy to the ship. You already know nothing good will come out of this but the question is what is going to happen.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I actually saw *Moon* only once. I actually have two thoughts. Firstly that is a surprising film, in its own way. Secondly, it was obscure, not well known. Very underrated. I'd say niche. It's not like a super hit of mine. There are those films with the twist which you rewatch and look for the points where it was indicated. Out of all of them *Moon* wasn't one of my first so I think it would make a better impression if I saw it earlier. What was unique about it is that it is thought provoking, that final twist. In terms of thinking about it all after the film, never mind the narrative. One day it might be possible that they will simply clone someone forever and this person will live convinced he's original, that he needs to do his part and he's going home. Such a film with a twist... kind of science fiction but later I thought that it wouldn't be very good to find out that you sit in such a Matrix actually. That you're not original and when you will deplete then the version 07 will come. And you're the sixth. That was very depressing. A coincidence makes him crash and that we even find out about it all.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

The only one - first one. It's one of those films where I think it didn't have a high budget, is very minimalistic but I think that in this case it turned out very good that they didn't play with CGI. They didn't even have to. There was some model which he was building and I remember a robot which made me think of HAL from *Odyssey*. Kevin Spacey, right. He was very relaxed. Calm, without emotions. Those emoticons... And actually his only companion. Kind of Mr Wilson for this protagonist.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I didn't have any expectations, it was recommended to me and I got it in a store. I purposefully haven't watched any trailers so I wouldn't get influenced. A recommendation from a friend is a much better advert to me than a billboard, trailer, etc. I know that I won't waste my time and I know that someone knows me well enough to it will suit my preferences to a degree. Recommendations are tricky though. There is kind of a subjective threshold of recommendations you can let slide. You like a director so you forgive him a bad film. You like an actor so you forgive him a failure. You become very subjective. I had an expectation that it will be at least ok. I don't think it impacted my reception of this film. I expected an ok film and I got a much better one. That's a win for me.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

It could be difficult because I saw it very long time ago. I surely remember a scene when he managed to call home. There was something wrong with the connection and he found out he was there, at home. So that main plot twist. It surely gets remembered because he wanted to get out and realized he is there, he doesn't mean anything. It was a mix of a surprise and such a feeling... When you watch a speculative science fiction which assume there can be a version of future that is quite probable. You hear a lot that there's a lot of exploitation on the job market that the people are materialists and then there are the corporations. That would be a step towards even a worse direction. This would mean that the company has something to do so it simply clones a guy over and over again and bullshits him, lies to him all the time and he's there alone with that robot. It is then when you can feel rally lonely. Actually, his whole life, whole existence is fake. That is sad, that is more probable than the teleports from *Star Trek*. That's that darker side of the technological progress. We don't achieve anything good, we don't cure cancer. We fix a clone, he doesn't know anything and when he runs out we fix another. Terrifying. I didn't expect such a depressing plot twist from this film.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I have this problem that I don't remember it well but I remember that sub-plot with a model he built was meant... I saw something there that suggested that I thought I might know what was going on. And I think I was right. Foreshadowing. I thought that this is something more than just his hobby, that there is something more going on. I left a mental note to myself that I need to see how this will unravel. I like that in films. There is an intelligent trope and you either catch it or you catch it next time.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

The FX, loads of CGI, a killer dose of CGI in everything. I think it was typically a trip to the cinema for sole entertainment. To see what the people are excited about. I put it on hold for some time anyway. I saw it once, even the second time on DVD... But surely, in comparison with the films we already discussed... [shrugs].

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It surely was one of first two films in full 3D. It was visible it was shot in 3D. Some pollen, ashes... You took it in very visually. Frankly speaking we might began with a migraine before we finished watching it. It was so lengthy... And I think the eyes had enough of this 3D, of this attack of... They just have been used to. And I watched long films. Like *The Godfather* or something.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

There was quite a big... Kind of a hype that Cameron made a film and given that Cameron makes good films this one will be such a great audio-visual experience. I generally try to wait in these cases and to

see it for myself because the people usually go and say it's a nice film. So no expectations but for different reasons. I don't think that a film is great because a mass of people said so. I wanted to see it for myself. I could still go with my wife and not be bothered that it's longer than two hours. I expected that it will be kind of a relaxed sci fi and that's what I got. I don't think I didn't have any impressions. So far as *Alien* and *Moon* I had some deeper thoughts that things are not good... With *Avatar*... Some simple ecological message but presented so... Obviously and forcefully that it made me think: "what is this? So now we can't cut trees down?". I don't know if there was meant to be depth there and if there was but it's quite a simple story, kind of such a *Pocahontas*. I don't know if when people watched it they felt ecologically motivated after this... Maybe I haven't been sensitive enough to pick it. We walked out of the cinema with my wife and nothing. There wasn't anything... Sometimes when we go and it's even like *Deadpool* or something... Sometimes you chat about cool lines or something. And after *Avatar* it was like we're going home, show's over, done and dusted.

I think it's not always about how something looks but how it was thought up. Bullet time. That's a concept and using it within a convention is one of the key scenes in films. And it will stay this way.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I liked the jungle motif for sure. It was such a... mass of colours. Some strange animals, it looked cool. I actually liked this motif. They used those mechs towards the end. That also was a cool motif when you realized there are mechs in this film. And when I saw this military guy... I think it is like a cultural coding. I looked at him and I thought he would be fit for Cable. I'd like to see all those things used in a better film. Maybe an adaptation of Mech Warrior or something like this.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I don't know it's about feeling or an impression or maybe because it's a cliché narrative but there are films where the protagonist is not exactly good then they send such a not exactly good himself somewhere and he makes friends with those people. The he betrays them and later it all good anyway. Predictability.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I think *Alien*, *Moon* and *Avatar*. From the best to the worst. *Avatar*, obviously, was very mediocre so it's the last. I would maybe have a dilemma with *Alien* and *Moon* but *Alien* was more ground-breaking and visionary. And it set some standard as well. Marginally maybe but... Let's put *Moon* in the middle.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

There are films that have some elements poorly executed but they have cool characters and if I like them then it wasn't that bad. It's hard to say which element is more important, there needs to be

chemistry between all of those elements. I have an impression that maybe it's the production, creation process. Someone makes a story about something pulled out of our world and also there are actors who can act it out, e.g. they have dialogs like people, they fit their characters. They don't stink of a pathos but they speak like people. Kind of a realism. So it all works.

#### **D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Not every film needs some great message because theories and ideas are not made just out of thin air so I have an impression that I don't even feel ashamed that sometimes I watch films purely for the entertainment purposes. You come back from work, you know your brain is mush and you want to see a simple science fiction film which won't be like... depressing. My wife doesn't like that.

#### **Face Sheet**

##### **III. Participant**

Respondent: Michał Misztal

Chosen pseudonym?: -

Age: 35

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Polish

Education: HNC

Father: Primary school Mother: Vocational school

Occupation: Logistic manager (supply chain) Father: Warehouse operative Mother: Cleaner

##### **IV. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 30

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £50

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting		No
Blogging	Yes	
Cosplay		Yes
Fan art	Yes	
Fanvids		No
Fanfiction	Yes	

## **Interview 2. 05-11-18 Paul Ka-Pow Shop**

### **What is your favourite all time science fiction film and why do you love it?**

R: Blade Runner.

I: Blade Runner?!

R: Yeah, the original. Although I have the remake, the sequel recently...

I: Yeah, I actually find it amazing.

R: Yes. I spent ages waiting to watch it until I was in the right mood. And I'm happy I waited. I just sat there like... Nobody else in the house, just screen, tv and... But the original Blade Runner, it does everything I like about movies in general. Which is: it doesn't rush anything, it really let's the tension built without like seeming that it's slow. They take ages on establishing shots, to set up what the city looks like. You can't rush it. Like they did... They did a remake of Total Recall and that really rushed over the city and kind of...

I: Oh you mean the remake...

R: Yeah, yeah, you got a sense that it was a massive sproug [inaudible actually]. You didn't get any sense of detail like in Blade Runner... Even when he was eating food and the vehicles, and weapons and every single bit of it... I love that attention to detail. It also is a great story, some brilliant lines from...  
Aaa...

R, I: Rutger Hauer.

R: Yeah, ending bit is fantastic, aa, but, it does all what I think sci fi should do, all genre fiction. Which isn't just telling the story but also giving you insight to something else what is actually happening... Like identities... And who we think we are compared to who the world sees we are, stuff like that. So it does a lot of things. And it's also just a great film. Like in terms of: you want to sit and enjoy a movie. There isn't much I'd rather watch than that and then it does all this other stuff as well, so yeah.

I: Fantastic. That's a true passion.

R: Oh, I love it. It's really good.

I: I got exactly the same about The Matrix.

R: Yeah, I really like The Matrix, I just wasn't really much into the second. The third one kind of brought it back for me... A little bit...

I: Yeah... The third one I find the weakest.

R: A lot of people would agree with you on that one. But I just think when it gets to the end and there's the... aaa... the fight with the... aaa... the robots, and the giant mech warrior things. [They're sentinels which are sentient and mech warrior things are APUs.]

I: Yeah, maybe the real world... But whole, you know, binary opposition of Neo and Smith was just trivialised...

R: I think the moment they brought Smith back. That kind of, I don't know, I got the impression that it wouldn't live up..

I: I kind of expected...

R: If they're having to bring back something from another movie that means they haven't got enough of ideas for the actual movie [what about the story released before (and now included in 0 comic books? Goliath? I've heard once a rumour regarding unused script for the sequels and it sounded very much like Goliath...].

I: This may be, but you know, that's what partly created. That was the meta narrative in a way, because you know, we see Smith fighting resistance from very beginning, with Trinity [although it wasn't agent Smith who did the chasing]. But you know, that's, that... Different... Anyway... So what in your opinion is the worst science fiction film? Or what are some bad science fiction films and why are they bad?

R: I'm going to be quite obvious here, I'm afraid. (13 minutes 38 seconds). Star Wars Episode I The Phantom Menace.

I: All right, hahahaha!

R: Hahahaha, I know it comes down a lot but when I was a kid I watched the original Star Wars and I really enjoyed them but I've gone back and rewatched The Phantom Menace recently, just to kind of see if, you know, if my opinion of it was just because I disliked the idea that they were remaking, or reimagining, much older movies. And it just doesn't work for me just as a movie: it's really slow, aaa, there is much attention paid to stuff which shouldn't matter, aaa, the way they give the accents? Like specific regional dialect-accent which smacks the racism just a little too much to be comfortable with it...

I: Well, I didn't notice that.

R: Well, it's the fact that like aaa the Jar Jar Binks race... I've got like a very

I: Oh yeah

R:...Caribbean accent whereas...

I: Oh really

R:...the overpowered Trading Federation... It just kind of plays to the existing stereotypes. Somebody recut the entire movie and they took out the whole bunch of stuff about the Midichlorians and about the training thing. They took out every bit of dialog from an alien and instead they just had like garbled words and the subtitles. So you didn't have an accent in mind, you wouldn't think 'oh that sounds like Chinese or Japanese' and it works way better because you don't have preconception which you will do with the accent...

I: Which is how it was in the original films...

R: Yeah, you didn't have this, not an accent like a thing... Oh, what is it? 'It's a trap!'... That just sounds like any accent, it sounds like an animal noise.

I: Exactly that

R: And it works better like that and yeah, they did this recut and it was half an hour shorter. Way better.

I: Yeah, I'll look for that.

R: I think it's still on YouTube, I don't think they took it down yet but it may go down anytime.

I: I'll take a look.

R: Yeah, it just makes... It just cuts away all the things I didn't like about it. And actually it made it more of a science fiction story because it was dealing with aliens and space opera stuff rather than just anything else.

I: The same kind of a thing was done with The Matrix Reloaded where they the Zion out. The city. And a propos, the languages, yeah? I think the essence, to me personally... My favourite scene which shows the beauty and the strangeness of, like, all the species or, like, the entities, yeah, is when R2D2 and C-3PO are basically in trouble, yeah? And, you know, there's a scene. There is this droid. I think they're captured by Javabots or something like that and you know, R2D2 is tititutu and that droid is like: 'You're a feisty little one!' hahaha.

R: Yes, hahaha, it works better when you don't necessarily know what they're saying. Chewbacca never gets subtitled so it's all how the world responds to it.

I: Exactly

R: It's never somebody saying: 'Yes, Chewie, I agree with what you're saying' but it works. The remakes... The prequels again, that for me....

I: When you started to talk about it I was actually thinking that it was overexplained. That, ok, it was like a prequel but they decided to, like, just put everything out plain and that was a disaster.

R: That's how they took it on the fanmade cut. They took loads of it out and it just... It doesn't add anything to the story. It just throws it down and... Meh...

I: But then, I think there is a hope in the most recent episode. Which, I mean, that may be just my subjective thing, but by the end there is a moment when one of, you know, the slaves of New Order basically a little boy is like in the stables and he pulls the broom with the Force. Which, maybe, gives a little bit of hope that, maybe, it's not necessarily the Mldichlorians but just, you know, the chosen of the Force.

R: Could be, yeah, yeah.

I: But, you know, have you seen some science fiction films that you would describe as very generic or ordinary? And why would you describe them as such? Just like, you know, neither warm, neither cold...

R: Aaam, ekhm... Oh, Interstellar. Now that one could have been great. It could have been almost like a new 2001. I think that's most probably what they were going for but there was just too many bits where it kind of got bogged down in the science rather than the fiction and then that ending... It felt like they forced the happy ending rather than just let the story...

I: Yeah, like last 20 minutes...

R: Yeah. That story could have ended effectively with... with...

I: With him floating into...

R: Yeah! It's like 'that's terrible' but that's what sometimes happens. But to make a happy ending with everything that went on they really had to dig deep and by the end of it I was like 'naah, I'm done here'...

I: And they overdid it. Suddenly it just didn't fit. Like these other dimensions and him moving those strings... It was just, like to me personally, you know, but I'm just...

R: It just, yeah. It could have been great. It started out really strong and I say it could have gone having how overblown it was. It could have gone really well, new generation's 2001 Space Odyssey but it just didn't do it. Didn't do it.. It didn't stick the landing. Like really good in the air... Oh my God, this is amazing and then pryyk. [horseshit splash sound]

I: And notes go down, yeah, exactly that. Well, not the best Nolan's film but, you know, happens...

R: I'm trying to think of other like... There's one you put on the list that I've seen, I think... Avatar... Because that one. Could have been great. Like a sci fi epic of the year it came out. So much hype over it but then it just... It really hammered home. Instead of just being like 'oh yeah sci fi story can be a great story and then tell you something about our real world' it was just hammering it home so much. It was like the episode of The Smurfs, it was... I think it was just a little bit unnecessary to... It just could have been a great science fiction movie.

I: I can tell you a little secret, after the interview, but you're into something here.

R: Other than that, the stuff like... Usually when it comes to a sequel... It's unusual for a movie after the original : Predator is an amazing movie, Predator II not so good. Alien vs Predator I just really didn't give a crap about. Then they did not the latest one but Predators? Where they transport guys...

I: Oh, yeah, third one...

R: Yeah, that all of the sudden. I was like 'that got my attention again now'

I: It's better than second one but still nowhere near the first one. That's my opinion.

R: I think that's the problem sometimes. When you put an amazing, great movie that totally captures like the imagination of people it's really hard to do that twice.

I: Exactly

R: And that's why usually what I call to be mediocre are when they try that. Sometimes it can work. Sometimes you can do a sequel that's better or at least exiting as original. Like, I love Alien. It's not just a great sci fi movie. It's a great horror movie. When they did the sequel it was just sci fi action and it was brilliant for what it was. The same with Terminator. Terminator 2. First terminator is really dark you got a lot of unpleasant stuff happen. It's very much of the time it was made, like that gritty feel. But few years later when Arnie was a much bigger star they made it into an action movie. And it was a great action movie. They do work as that, but it's very rare for that to happen. And then you got the terminator movie after the second one and I'm like neeh.

I: Do you think that could be because of, you know, during the production process they have been approached as a new idea...

R: Yeah, instead of just trying to do the last movie again. And that's why Alien and Aliens are the best thing like: yes they work brilliantly as independent movies (from each other). It doesn't always feel like it's a sequel. It does feel like it's just another movie set in this world. Yes, you got the same characters, the same stuff but they're so totally different that it could have just been two separate people working on different movies.

I: I see where you're coming from but this happened with Resurrection. Like, with all that space pirates thing. I don't know if you noticed that but I remember when I was revisiting it few years ago I had an impression that they just replaced the horror with crappy action. Because there was this moment... There was some like... dynamic action moment with some like grenade or some piece of weaponry like flying directly towards the camera and cut and end of the scene, yeah? I just had this impression: this doesn't exactly feel like Alien film.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: And a similar thing... Regarding, like, the sequels and trying to catch up with previous film. Because I'm also a big fan of James Bond.

R: Ok?!

I: Casino Royale. And first time in the series: direct sequel. Quantum of solace. Everybody bashed it. Everybody. But it's not actually that bad. It's just virtually impossible... Anyway, let's...

R: Hahahah

I: I know I'm not very professional, you can, like, complain to my supervisor that you know, that I'm an awful interviewer

R: Hahahaha

I: Anyway, so what makes a film a science fiction film?

R: Usually the easy answer would be using like advanced technology. That becomes harder and harder to establish because I recently rewatched Split Second which when it came out was a brilliant cyberpunk noir movie. But it's set I think in 2008. And that was in the future when that movie was made. Nowadays the technology is different, it has surpassed that but it still fits science fiction., I suppose it's how you approach the technology. Even if by our standards it's not advanced anymore... If it's advanced at the time... Because you'd think, like Star Wars. They're not futuristic. It's always a long time ago. It's not humanity expanding into the stars, it's already happened before. 2001 Space Odyssey, years ago. And all stuff with the terminator. It should have happened already. But because at the time when it was made it was dealing with an advanced idea of technology that probably is what does it for me.

I: So, following this question: what makes a good science fiction film? And what do you personally... I mean, you kind of covered it a bit already. What you like about science fiction films the most.

R: I'm trying to think of a way just to put it into the words... Well for start I think it's possible to make a movie which is... Which has a really cutting edge technology and is dealing with really big ideas but it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be a good movie. Avatar being a good example of that one because it was... For everything it was trying to do, it was trying to do everything well but it's not one that I would really go back and rewatch. The... For me it's that kind of a dual narrative where you got like the story that's happening and the story they're trying to tell you. And I think how we interact with the technology because that's becoming more and more a part of our lives. Everyone is carrying some in their pocket, the kind of technology that 10-15 years ago would be deemed impossible. In my lifetime. Like the idea of a computer... How we interact with the science is I think what I look forward to... Like Blade Runner with all of the references how it was a modern day slavery issue, and we're approaching the idea of ai as something what wouldn't have rights and yeah... It tells you something about the way we're living our lives and technology, that makes it even better for me.

I: Nice, very nice. Yes, so for you personally. Is science fiction art, entertainment or both? Or maybe none of those...

R: I think it can be both but it doesn't need to be. Let's go to Terminator 2. That is entertainment. I don't think of it as a high art. Yes, it's got a really good soundtrack and yes, the action sequences are fantastic but for me that is just the popcorn movie. And it's a great one.

I: Could you chase that a little? Like why, for example?

R: I just think that it's appealing to less of a cerebral experience. It's not trying to make you think much more than about what's on the screen. Whereas I think art should be something that challenges. And you go to the original and you have...

I: Is original art?

R: I think so because it's... The horror of it is much more obvious but also really, really well done. It's a creeping sense of dread of technology taking over. Whereas in the second one it's so over the top that it just becomes an effect. I mean, a great one. It looks fantastic but it stops being... It stops that creeping sense of 'oh my God, how do we cope with that' and becomes more of a... aa...

I: Arnie will deal with it...

R: Yeah, whereas the first one it gives you that sense that technology could go wrong but we might do something about it. I don't get that from the first one. Because the first one does challenge you. You think: 'is it good? Is it bad? Are we doing... Are we encouraging it or are we fighting it?' I think that puts it more in kind of frame. 2001 Space Odyssey I think does both. Because I think it's gorgeous to watch. Like the soundtrack, the score, the effects. The fact the guy who directed... Whose name I now forgot...

I: Stanley Kubrick.

R: Yeah, Stanley Kubrick has said the reason he got the Oscar for special effects is that everyone thought they were real apes at the beginning. Because it was so convincing. But we realised they were using guys in costumes. But that was arts but it was also so entertaining. I genuinely would look... It's a kind of a movie where I can kind of turn my brain off and still enjoy it because it's so glorious to behold...

I: Do you think it's seen like that by everyone?

R: I'm not sure. A lot of my friends will tell you that that is actually the best sci fi movie of all time rather than Blade Runner, and I disagree with them, but aaa, I don't know. The thing about art is subjective. So... What I might like is not for everyone to like. I know this because I spent my weekend, well, Saturday, at a very heavy metal festival in Leeds. I had a great time but a bunch of my friends is like: 'really?' hahaha.

I: You, sir, know what you're talking about in this interview.

R: Yes.

I: You definitely do. So, yeah, that's not exactly related to the interview but to A Space Odyssey. You mentioned the soundtrack. I even made a joke that maybe in space no one can hear you scream but you surely can hear classical music.

R: Oh, yes, marvellous, marvellous. Yeah, it's really hard to outdo these scenes in terms of visuals... How old it is as well and that's just what Interstellar tried to do. Because they had the money to do it rather than figure it out how to do it. Takes the edge a little bit, loses a little bit. There's quite a lot of movies I watch when I can't help to think if the director just called it 10 minutes earlier it would be just great.

I: That's... Arguably, the most of the mainstream films or like, middle brow films, you 'should' stop actively watching about 5 minutes before ending. Because they...

R: To lose, like...

I: Yeah, adding to gather wider audiences...

R: Yeah...

I: Anyway, so do science fiction films matter in society and in our culture?

R: Yes, I think so. I think, unfortunately, genre fiction of all facets, it can look down on us. That's why when going to a bookstore they get own section rather than just being fiction. Except for a few considered higher literary ones. Like a... Um.. Susana Clarke. You'll find that in the fiction section even though it's about wizards. Eee because it's considered to be dealing with high things. I think that science fiction fan seen as not belonging to this section is a bit snobbish of that people. I think there's a lot you can get from them. Just look at stuff like William Gibson and aaaa.....

I: William Gibson is...

R: Yeah, he's one of my favourite sci fi authours...

I: ...the king.

R: Yeah, I think you should be seeing more of that. We do see it sometimes but it's usually kind of stuff that has been out long enough and it was made into a GCSE syllabus. Mainstream stuff... Yeah, I think it should have wider cultural acceptance.

I: Definitely. So... You now, following this kind of reasoning. DO you think that maybe some science fiction films are more important than others?

R: Just give me one second (customer walks in).

I: No problem. (after a cut) So as I asked, do you think that some science fiction films are more important than others?

R: Subjective thing again. Do I... Hmm...

I: Yes, it's about your personal experience.

R: Yeah, I do. Because as mentioned earlier. You are looking at different films as arts and entertainment and not taken as a very important. Which I think art is. Some films seem to have a bigger cultural impact, they deal more with real world problems. In the compelling way. They are more important.

I: Do you think that everybody thinks that art is more important than the entertainment?

R: No, I don't think so. Oh nooo, I'm a fan of rugby league but I know that more people are fans of football. Subjectively speaking, when I watch football I find it quite dull because it's just... ..

I: Yeah, I'm generally not into sports...

R: Most people who are geeks aren't but...

R, I: Hahahaha

R: ... I just happened to discover rugby league.

I: It's all right, it's all like... You know, it's all subjective...

R: Yeah... But, yeah, I think... And this subjective again. In my mind rugby league is more exciting sport than watching football. But there's way more people into football. Like on a magnitude you couldn't even measure this properly.

I: Maybe it's more legitimised? Like over time?

R: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, sooo... That idea that... There are people who... Well, they probably not think of it as entertainment. I know a lot of people who... Like I'm using football example: are very, very passionate about it but because of subjective nature of it, yes, I would say they would think it's more important. To my mind it's entertainment so yeah... So... Blood and circus, hahahaha

I: Some really complex matters.

R: Yeah, but that's why we're doing this (interview)

I: That's right. That's exactly why, yeah. But... So how about your personal taste in science fiction films? How has it changed over time? Like, you're a fan of science fiction for over 30 years...

R: I think when I was younger I probably preferred stuff which had more of a horror bent to it because I always liked horror. I got into horror movies when I was very young, my dad was a big, big, fan of horror... So... I was watching like the original *It*

I: A long one hahaha

R: The original *Evil Dead*

I: Oh yeah...

R: I mean, I was a kid. I was like 6-7 years old when it was out. But because my dad was into them... Years ago we would have one tv set per house...

I: Oh yeah, I know. I know, sir, exactly how it is.

R: So yeah, that's what I was into. And I was watching stuff like *Alien* and *Predator* and *Terminator* and it was a mixture of like... The monster movie effectively... It was... And then from there decided... My dad was really into emmm like science fiction comedy. I think it was... Me getting into science fiction was separate from my dad. He would watch the horror ones with me then I would carry on. I love *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. And he never cared about those. I mean even superhero ones, which is kind of like sci fi... He doesn't get around that. He likes science fiction and horror. We did diverge when I was a young man but yeah, I went from the more visceral side of it into the more cerebral and more artistic side. But I still have all the time in the world for just sticking to fun.

I: Obviously, obviously. That's very interesting. That's aaaa.... There could be some really amazing dynamic there... How do you think, how... Why did it happen that, you know, given that your fandom origin lies in horror science fiction and comedy science fiction but then you, as you put it, diverged into more cerebral...

R: I think it was just growing up. Possibly also not wanting in the same stuff my dad was. So I grew up into a house where my dad was into modern music and my mother wasn't and my sister was something else. Me going into heavy metal was one of the things where I just diverged. I was reading comic books etc. It was also kind of the teenage rebellion thing. Which is where my geekhood would start. Like 14 to 18, that's when I really established what I was into. So yeah, it would have been a little bit of rebellion against what I was brought up on but, yeah... I don't know how to answer that. I wasn't thinking about that when it was happening. There's no conscious decision made.

I: Do you think it might have been something like shaping a residual ideology?

R: Potentially... I grew up to be a sceptical rationalist aaaa antitheist, very much all about the logical world...

I: But that's your ideology...

R: Yeah, yeah, but I'm not entirely sure I could say that was shaped because of science fiction I watched. It just happened at the same time. Only while looking back you could kind of see there would be a correlation but I don't think enough of to say: causelation.

I: Yes.

R: Oh, sorry, could you pause for a second.

I: Yes, yes. No problem. (after a cut) So let's move to the specific films now. (38:12) How this section works is that, you maybe can see, I have five questions here and they will be repeated for each film.

R: All right, ok. Yep.

I: Yeah, so you know, I'm going to go chronologically. So I'll start with Alien. What is your automatic thought when you hear the title Alien.

R: With regards to the title of a movie it's just one of the best horror, science fiction movies ever. With The Thing which is another great horror science fiction movie. I have to be in a mood to watch it though.

I: Which one?

R: Alien.

I: Oh really?

R: Because it is a really slow burning stuff. Really takes the time. It's like an hour before anything happens. But I love it.

I: It's 40 minutes in The Matrix...

R: It's a brilliant horror.

I: Actually, that slow burn thing. I think it's got like a subconscious effect. Because the moment when they see that abandoned ship, yeah? It's like interchanged. It's like image from their cameras, and you can hear their voices, like 'maybe we should go away'. It's so real...

R: They spent so much time dealing with the real life of these people that you are more compelled to be sympathetic and want them survive rather than just being a bunch of Marines and an action movie.

I: Yeah, we already also established that what you think of this film and what it means to you. But maybe some more of what it means to you? Except for 'it's a great horror film'. Maybe it's got some more transcendent value?

R: It is the one that got me into science fiction. I will always have a fond nostalgia for it. But I'm afraid I don't have... There is no other emotional connection. I don't connect to the characters in that kind of way. It's just I always liked that style of a movie.

I: I've got similar thing with Jurassic Park. That was my first cinematic science fiction obsession and I used to watch it over and over again as a kid. And now... I obviously got like blu rays and everything but I rarely watch it. But when I do watch it I still remember everything. And now it's like... You know, I'm addicted to The Matrix like... It's just... So, we're talking about Alien now. Tell me what do you remember about watching it for the first time?

R: Predominant memory of the first time that I watched it was the... Because I watched it unaware, there were hardly any trailers. No adverts on TV, my friends wouldn't watch it. Because they were too young. I watched it because my dad watched it, so I went in completely cold. I had no idea what to expect other than it involved aliens. That's all I knew about it. So when you have the chestburster scene. That. It really stuck with me.

I: Yeah, hahaha, they also didn't know... Hahahaha

R: Yeah, you see it happen. Now you can go back and see that it's clearly not John Hurt lying underneath...

I: Yeah, it is a bit dated. Young people laugh at it now... [BASTARDS]

R: But first time you saw that it looked like it was John Hurt's chest that exploded and a creature came out. Not just... Not just like an explosion but something that was living and moving and run. And that...

I: I know... I've been traumatised by this film for many years...

R: That will stick with you...

I: Yeah, hahaha

R: That is the one that got me and I look forward to it now. Because you know that this scene is coming. When they are all sitting down to eat and everyone is just having a laugh and it's so easy going and there's that (imitates cough)...

I: And one of them comments on it: 'come on, it's not that bad'

R: Yeah, and they're still trying to make a joke of it even though you know what's coming... That scene... And for what it was trying to do it did it.

I: And also, you obviously know that. But they didn't know. Except for Hurt. They just didn't what's going to happen. Yeah, I've been traumatized. I accidentally saw the moment with... I think it was some making of. You know, Alien, on some, like, Polish TV. Which is weird, because it was the communism when it happened, so how it... You know, Alien, on TV. But I saw the moment with making of the chestburster thing and I was convinced that they took someone's heart out and it stayed with me for years. I was traumatised. I saw this film when I was fifteen and then I realised 'Oh shit, that's IT'...

R: You recognised this film

I: Yes, that's what happened. Also an interesting thing. Because you kind of inherited a bit of, you know, legacy. Because your father also was... Which is also a part of research... But maybe we can talk about this later. Anyway. So, what do you.. Hmm, we covered that... Another question was what do you remember about how the film made you feel, what did you expect before seeing it and...

R: Yeah, I didn't have any expectations other than it being movie involving an alien. I had no expectations which I'd like to have again. **I miss those days**... I don't watch trailers these days.

I: Yeah, exactly. Only the ones that seemingly would be just 'simple' films.

R: I watched that trailer... And I was like: I'd like to watch that. And then next 18 trailers.. Knowing if I'm going to watch it or not – it doesn't make any difference.

I: Exactly that. So, do you have favourite scenes in Alien and why?

R: It's got to be chestburster scene. Everything I said about it... I jumped ahead without knowing what the question was...

I: Naah, that's all right. It flows naturally, it's all covered. It's great data and I'm really enjoying this interview. It's proper geeky good stuff. Like to me, it's awesome. So, anyway, oh yeah. Are there any moments in Alien that you noticed were designed to make you think or feel something particular?

R: Other than a horror movie? A lot of it was just done for that kind of...

I: Yeah, for example? What exactly was done to make it?

R: When they went to investigate room with eggs. Lighting and smoke effects in that. There was hardly any light that wasn't personal stuff they carried. It didn't feel like a film set where they had light from few angles. Because if you'd ever go back and watch original series Star Trek. It's a terrible example of lighting. It looked like every single planet they landed on had five suns. Because they had full lighting rigs around and everything cast five shadows. And it takes you out straight away. I never really watched the original series, I was too young. But you go back and watch it and it's so obvious that it was done on a sound stage. Whereas this, which is again very old movie.

I: Well, I don't think everything was done on sound stage...

R: Yeah, yeah, but they committed to show it like it was. They lit it from the point of view of people and that was the only light that they had. And just cutting through smoke. You couldn't see everything that was going on.

I: Maybe that's why he looked into an egg, hahahaha

R: Yeah, he had to get right up because there's no other light other than what you've got. And yeah, that scene. To build up the tension was done really well.

I: Tension wise, oh my God, this is like.... THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENS IN SPACE hahaha

R: Yeah, and they didn't rush anything. Camera was going in the same speed. Able to walk.. They had to walk for quite a bit before they got to it.

I: In my opinion it doesn't work in Covenant. Because they also find another wreck and it's just like an establishing shot and 'oh yeah, we found it' and everybody is like 'aaand so what?'.

R: Yeah, as I said before about Blade Runner: I love director who's got confidence to take time. One of my favourite openings to the movie is Once Upon a Time in the West. Which is just a guy stood on a platform. Rain, with water dripping down. And just not even in focus. You can see a horse and a rider coming towards you. And it takes like five minutes, it's great.

I: I think I thought about Man with Harmonica when you mentioned it. It's also on a platform and there are three guys and he shoots them all. But there's no rain in it. I confused those films.

R: It's done so you can see his hat. With water running down and dripping off the top of his hat. And it just takes so long for this guy to come in, in the rain. They don't rush it. And if you'll go and watch Hateful Eight, the Tarantino one, similar thing. With that really Ennio Morricone track as he comes in and is just pulling out of a statue of Jesus to a revealing shot. And it also takes like two or three minutes. But it's beautiful to watch it.

I: Heavily inspired.

R: Yeah, I love that kind of... Needs confidence. People would be just: watch what I'm doing. People knew it was going to be worth it and that's what they did in Alien. Everything on their way there was like: 'I want to show you everything, to know exactly what's going on'. Then when something happens it has more effect.

I: Why do you think it was? Because would it be just boring?

R: It's something about the way it's done. I know I'm not in the majority with this. I tried watching movies like this with people and they just wouldn't like it. I don't think it does work for everyone. It works for me. I love it. Like me and my friends, we were talking at length how this kind of establishing shot works. How beautiful it is when you get camera coming over to see it in Blade Runner. And just all that slow attention

to detail. They loved that but I also had chat with people who were like 'ooo, tried watching it but it took a half an hour for anything to happen'. I was like 'what?'.

I: It's true, but also depends on a cut for me. Because the one... Now there are so many... Either it's the most recent one or penultimate cut. I find the most suitable for me.

R: I've only ever got the one copy of Blade Runner. It's one of the first DVDs they put out. I had a vhs and then only one copy, one edition of Blade Runner later.

I: Yeah, I understand that. I'm also quite conservative about The Matrix. Like, yep, awesome, but sequels... Yeah, Animatrix is more Matrix than the sequels. I was going to say something and it even might have been remotely relevant... But I forgot. Anyway. Yes, so we basically got those five questions covered for Alien now. So maybe let's try with Moon.

R: Yeah.

**I: So what is your automatic thought when you hear the title Moon?**

R: There is a wonderful performance from one very good actor.

I: Yes that's true. So... Aaah....

R: Without me knowing what's going on I went to watch it. I was like: 'how is like one character driving this movie?' and then I was like 'oh, that's how'. Because I didn't really rate that guy as an actor at first but I thought I may give it a shot and yeah... I didn't see it in the cinema. That is one thing I do kind of regret.

I: No, I didn't.

B: Because I think the first time I got it was HMV had like a 'three movies for a tenner' thing. And there were two others that I liked so I thought: 'I remember that being at the cinemas and I haven't seen that. I'll grab that'.

I: Yeah, my neighbour was like... In a community of pirates.... I visited him like every week and what I didn't download I had from him.

R: Very good, I did that plenty of times myself.

I: Yeah, that's how it happened. But, yeah... That was interesting. So, you knew it's going to be a monodrama.

R: Yeah, I heard it's just like one actor. I didn't know anything other than just one guy in a movie.

I: Interesting response. So, what do you think does this film mean to you?

R: No, I think out of the three I think that's the one that means the least. I bought it as a part of a multiple offer. I wasn't very excited to see it. I loved the concept of it but I only have gone and watched it one more time. I've only seen this movie twice. Because as interesting as the idea was it didn't hit me enough to make me want to go back to it. I watched Avatar more because it at least... It's a great popcorn movie.

I think Moon... You need to be more engaged in it but it never grabbed me enough to make want to go back so I can re-evaluate and see what was going on. I almost watched it before you coming here but I said 'no, I will say what I remember from last time I saw it. I want to keep it just that'. Otherwise I would be tainting it. I didn't watch any of these recently.

I: It's ok, it doesn't matter. That's your personal experience. So, again, tell me if you could, please, **what do you remember about watching this film for the first time?**

R: The bit that I do remember would be the dialog. Just when it finally happens and you have him talking to himself I suppose that's the way to put it... You realise how good he is. There's a few people out there that are able to pull off that kind of performance I never would have rated him.

I: It's like two different people.

R: Yeah, yeah. I think that what I remember more is that surprise how good he actually was. Like that sequence...

I: I was generally surprised with this film because I didn't even know that there's going to be such a film. And my neighbour thought I will like it, 'space stuff', and like, fucking right, I liked it. Anyway, so any favourite scenes?

R: Now, this is the problem with not having seen it in so many years. I don't remember any one particular thing.

I: That also says something.

R: Overall I remember thinking that this is a good film. But I guess it never grabbed me there's not that one scene. Say, I would have to recommend it to somebody based on one scene. I would struggle. It is just good. But why? It just is. There is no like one defining moment. Which I definitely have for Alien. There's more than one defining scene for Alien but this is just... I don't know.

I: Alien is one of those films that makes you wonder: how is it possible to make something this impactful? Like... Hmm... There is something off about it ;)

R: Moon had moments of impact in there but... Yeah... Trying to picture one in my head... I remember things happening in the movie, I do. But trying to remember which one was that one...

I: That's a very good answer. Just believe me, it is. So, maybe, because if you don't remember scenes you won't... Or I don't know, maybe you will. Any moments in it that were constructed to make you think or feel something?

R: Bits that happened before you've got like a reveal. It's just him and...

I: But after that?

R: Yeah, I just like the sense of isolation. It's really quite nice. They do something similar, not quite as effective. Surprisingly. In Martian? All by himself, all he can do is kind of record himself and talk to

himself... Though that sense of isolation built was really, really well done in Moon. I don't remember specific bits but it is...

I: It is, it is.

R: I was really enjoying that. Slowly building, really nice easy going bit.

I: All right, that's Moon covered. I think it's taking longer than I promised.

R: It's all right, it's not like I'm going anywhere.

I: That's good. As I said before it's the second interview and I only estimated how long it could take.

R: That's ok.

I: So what, Avatar?

R: Avatar!

**I: So what is your automatic thought when you hear the title Avatar?**

R: Popcorn movie. That's the first thing. When I first saw it, I haven't seen it in the cinema...

I: You haven't...

R: No, no, when it came out I just never came round to it. It's not like I was... I didn't make a conscious choice: 'oh screw that'. I just never got round to it. When it finished its run I thought 'I'll just get it when it comes out' on home release. I did. I bought it like week from the release. Because I wanted to see it. But yeah, after watching it a couple of times... I have watched it few times now. It is a popcorn movie. It's not a bad thing that it is a popcorn movie but that's what it is. It's... It lacks the depth like a need to really engage but I did enjoy it. Can't say I didn't enjoy it. That would be a lie.

I: In terms of what it personally means to you... Is it like... Could I suggest that it's like entertainment?

R: Yeah, it is really good. For what it does it's great.

I: So is it a feel good film?

R: Yes. When I do watch it I not only I enjoy what's going on in the movie but it reminds me watching it for the first few times. Because an exgirlfriend of mine, she was a massive fan of it. We started seeing each other after the cinema release but before the dvd so when it came out she was like 'you got to watch it, you're going to love it'. I said 'yeah, it's good fun'. But her enthusiasm for it was great. Whenever I think of Avatar there's this bit when I think of this girl again.

I: Yeah, exgirlfriend is why I read Daniel Craig's Bond films so dearly... Because we share the rage of a heartbroken man. Yeahh... So tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time.

R: I remember being genuinely blown away by the effects. Even now. If you'd go and rewatch it it still looks great. It hasn't dated. When it first came out there was literally nothing like it. Motion capture was

beyond phenomenal. And it led to being able to make other great movies in that technology. So yeah, it was a spectacle. It was awe inspiring. And I do remember thinking 'I should have seen it on a big screen'.

I: I have but I don't mean it nasty. So ok, that's partly covered: how do you remember what the film made you feel? Awe inspiring.

R: Yes, there was this kind of a moment that cemented me in thinking you were not meant to take this film seriously. And that's the moment when Giovanni Ribisi, corporate guy, is explaining why they're on Pandora and the name for mineral is Unobtainium. Oh my God, that's such a terrible, made up name [it isn't made up, only has a different spelling]. But the moment it comes up I was like: 'I know what level of seriousness you need for this film and it's not that serious'. They're making such an obvious joke so early on so I'm like 'yeah, all right, I can sit back and enjoy this movie'. I'm fine with it. And then that's what happened. They don't really raise above that.

I: That also cover the final question about the film. That that was designed...

R: I think it's hard to imagine that people would take this movie seriously after the thing that they're literally are willing to wipe out a civilisation for is called Unobtainium.

I: Do you think that this shares a homology with John Wick?

R: A little bit, yeah...

I: Do you know what I mean?

R: Yes, because it's just all about a dog.

I: Yeah and like shooting 80 guys for it. You exactly know what I mean.

R: It's a McGoofin, that's what it is.

I: Oh, that's interesting...

R: Yeah, it's a reason for the plot, not necessarily the plot. I don't mind them but the moment you see it... It's like 'right, I know how seriously...' and John Wick is an amazing action film. But it's really hard to actually care about something...

I: It actually redefined a whole genre...

R: Absolutely, in a way, yeah

I: It maybe a 'simple' film but the meaning behind it, at the same moment... I'm very happy that they already are SHOOTING the third one...

R: It's going to be amazing.

I: ... and I recently posted a photo on Children of the Matrix of Keanu standing like in The Matrix, front towards the camera and doing, you know... I put a description 'someone continues to believe' because in The Matrix when he does that, you know 'what is he doing? He's beginning to believe'. And then he

fights Smith. **Anyway, so, what did you expect before watching Avatar? Because you clearly knew something about it.**

R: Yeah, I got some reviews from my friends who went to see it and most of them were quite disparaging but these are the same people who would spend half an hour with me talking about a particular scene in Blade Runner. Or how.. What the monolith means in 2001... Guys who are very intellectual and into sci fi really hated Avatar. [paused and after a cut] But my then girlfriend, she really did like it so I was like 'give it a go properly'. My expectation was actually kind of low. I was expecting a really over the top sci fi action movie. It's a sci fi that is good at that. What it's set out to do it did well.

I: It did provide a good entertainment.

R: Oh yeah, I'm not saying it's in my top 5 sci fi movies but what it's set out to do it absolutely accomplished so my expectations were absolutely exceeded when I finally watched it.

I: There is also a chapter in a book about science fiction which deals with science fiction in a way which gives you like one film per decade and talks about it regarding a cultural value of a film and the last chapter is Avatar. And it claims to be really deep and meaningful film but in the American way ;)

R: I thought it had the opportunity to do it but it handled it... Too heavy handed. It lost all subtlety really quickly.

I: It's in the eye of the beholder... In terms of the cognitive media theory if the spectator sees it then it's there. Basically, yep. **So any favourite scenes from Avatar?**

R: The training montage. Very, very entertaining. The bit where he's been allowed to be a part of Navvy tribe and... I forgot her name but she's Zoe Saldana. She's a great actress in a bunch of films that I really, really like so watching her with this guy...

I: She's almost as beautiful as Rosario Dawson.

R: Oh... Yes, that scene was... I'm going to go back and rewatch it that will be the scene that I look forward to. It shows the world really effectively and the effects and Zoe Saldana... The guys who played the main guy... He comes across as a bit two dimensional...

I: He also was in that Unabomber series, recently

R: What series?

I: Unabomber series.

R: Oh, I didn't watch that.

I: As you said, he's just not the best actor out there.

R: Yeah, just a bit flat for me. I suppose if you got him and then you see Zoe Saldana... Oh my God... So yeah, that scene is one of my favourite scenes.

I: Yeah, so, that kind of would also be concluded because you already said there was something definitely designed to make you think and perceive something in a particular way.

R: In my opinion, yes.

I: It totally is that. I mean, in my opinion. Maybe someone genuinely thought that would be a great... [it kind of is but also isn't]

R: It's too much.

I: All righty, so we got case studies covered. So now we have just four last questions which I'm going to ask only once meaning they won't be repeated like those before. They won't regard each film individually. **How would you personally rank those three films?** Like which one is the best...

R: Now, Alien, definitely the best one. It's up there with my all-time favourite movies anyway so you could put that in a list of most films and it still would go high. But the other two it's kind of hard to judge because I definitely seen Avatar more even though I would say it doesn't do as many things for me. Whereas Moon, it did all these things, but it wasn't exciting enough to really compel me to go back and rewatch it. Some movies do that, some don't. There's movies that I actually adored but I actually watched two or three times. Because... They are not easy to rewatch. Because they will be made too uncomfortable and stuff like that. Moon isn't that bad but it's got that kind of a thing to it which is not what I would go about 'uuu, I'm in a right mood to watch that'. Yeah, I think I would have to put it the third on a list but it's a very close run. In term of what get from them I get more from Avatar. Because it's easy to watch.

I: So how are those films different from each other? For you.

R: One. You work out which one I mean. One is a horror movie. One is an action movie and one of them is actually a sci fi movie.

I: Yeah, Alien, Avatar and Moon.

R: They all fall into an umbrella of science fiction but in terms what is their defining thing you've got: Alien is a horror movie, Avatar is an action movie and Moon is actually science fiction. Pure and simple.

I: So is this opinion based on what you see in the film or the film is reviewed or how it applies to the world?

R: I think it's what you get out of them. If I'm sitting down to watch a movie usually I know what to expect. And those kind of prove it to me. They use sci fi or science in different ways but Alien works in terms of isolationist monster horror, the other is an backdrop for the technology so they can go off and do those crazy things in this cool world. The other one is basically just the idea that science has gone too far and what can happen.

I: So that's textually. Based on the content of those films.

R: Yes.

I: Yeah, ok. So what do you focus on while watching a science fiction film. Is it for example cinematography, script, acting, something else maybe?

R: I think the first one for me is always cinematography. Like even movies like Harry Potter ones. There will be a great photography and I will be like 'oh this is a gorgeous shot'. That kind of stuff grabs me sometimes. I watched the one, really terrible. They got a new director of photography on for that Harry Potter and there are some great moments like the camera going down and then turns upside down before stopping and points down. And it's just glorious to look at. It's not just practical effect as well. It's stuff like that. Talking about the intro to Once Upon the Time in the West. That is beautiful cinematography, genius and I love it. With Alien. Like the long set up shots, when you first time see the alien crash landed ship. Stuff like that. That's what I will gravitate towards in terms what makes it good. **If it doesn't have stuff like that I wouldn't necessarily judge a film badly. But I would remember that it didn't do it.**

I: So for example... Have you seen film called Ex Machina?

R: Yes.

I: What then?

R: To be honest I didn't particularly enjoy it.

I: Oh really.

R: No. My girlfriend came, she really wanted to watch it so she bought it on her amazon account. And then it took us about six times to watch it. Because neither of us were really in a mood. It was predictable. Like the way they set it up, like, who the robot female was. You should not have been surprised how it ended because you have been pretty much told that's what could happen. That it was superintelligent and it could do all this stuff.

I: Yeah, my experience with relationships would tell me exactly that.

R: There were some great looking bits but overall I wasn't really into that movie.

I: Interesting. Anyway, why is is cinematography?

R: Cinema is more a visual medium than anything else. Add a lot of stuff to it like great performance, like score... They all come secondary to the first... Usually the first thing you get, you sit down and you see everything that's coming, that's happening. It's not that I'm taking away from a great performance or a great bit of writing. But for my mind: because of the nature of this medium: if you can't make it look good, whatever you think is good. It's a very subjective thing but if it doesn't grab you visually then everything else is like you should are trying to make up for it being not a great looking movie. Subjective, so. I fully believe that people will disagree with me...

I: [and you're right] No, it's a great answer for me personally as a film geek and a film student [because I can debate the living daylight out of it]. Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?

I: Yes, because if you're not going to give any meaning to it you're going to get any film [lolz, he from da space or what]. Science fiction, genre fiction they can do more than just what you're seeing on screen. If they don't it takes away from it a little bit. Hence my thing with Avatar. Why I don't think of it as a science fiction movie first is because it tried to do a thing but it's so over the top that.. The actual plot is about what it's trying to do. I think science fiction should have a sci fi plot and a sub plot that's actually like a root of a problem, of what you should be thinking about. I think Avatar just overshoots that for me. Science fiction should have a message. It should matter.

I: Oh, yeah. And how into science fiction would you say you are? Like a little maybe?

R: Hahaha, a little maybe. I don't rank it any higher than I would rank a horror. I spent a lot of time reading fantasy. Watching horror and also science fiction. I am definitely a big fan, I run a comic book store.

I: I mean, yeah, it's one of the questions ;)

R: Put me in the high enthusiasm about science fiction.

I: Yeah, well, that basically covers all questions.

R: Pleasure dealing with you.

I: Awesomeness, thank you very much for that. I will turn that off now.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Paul Ka-Pow Shop Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 40

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: BA Father: High school Mother: High School

Occupation: Managing Director Father: Instructor Mother: Retail

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 30

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £50

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited edition/rarer items	No
Collecting props/costumes/memorabilia	Yes
Online forums	No
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### Interview 3. 06-11-18 Gareth

#### I: So what is your all time favourite science fiction film and why do you love it?

R: Wow, all time favourite science fiction film. I would probably say... I'm gonna be curved ball slightly, instead of saying The Empire... I'm going to say Return of the Jedi.

I: All right, yeah, that is different. A bit against the wind.

R: I think it's for previous generation... A new generations of people like Empire. Empire is seen as the Holy Bible of Star Wars films for fans. But I think, Return of the Jedi was for me like the culmination of Luke Skywalker fully developing into the Jedi knight. And to be honest Luke become a bad ass. As a kid in '77? To see this Jedi now fully formed. Yeah. Right. That's probably my favourite. Too many possibilities of favourites there... I mean Blade Runner would get a part in there as well but you know, it's sort of... Hahaha, but yeah, Return of the Jedi.

I: Could you say that you related to character or...

R: As a kid growing up in '77 you wanted to be Luke Skywalker and obviously the cool kids wanted to be Han Solo. For me... I suppose I grew up in generation where we supported the heroes, I think, compared to know when you want to the ones.. The villains

I: Antiheroes

R: Yeah, the cool characters in '77 and onward... The kid's weren't thinking cool characters or cult characters... They wanted them to be the heroes.

I: Yeah, that has changed.

R: Yeah.

I: Interesting, very interesting. So what is like the worst science fiction film? In your personal opinion.

**And what are for example other bad science fiction films?**

R: Uuuhhh... The worst science fiction film... From recent.. I think Looper was pretty bad.

I: Oh really, you didn't like it?

R: Yeah, Looper, a very bad film. Well I always think of it as a bad sci fi film.

I: And why for example is Looper bad?

R: I mean, It's just a bit of a nonsense... For me story wise it didn't do much. The cast got in there should be a lot better. I don't particularly rate Rian Johnson as a director. I try to think of bad sci fi films... After Earth I don't think I ever finished. There's been a lot of bad sci fi, I would say, in the last 10-15 years. There've been films that were promising but they've not been great. But I suppose for every After Earth you get District 9.

I: I GUESS, yes, I wrote...

R: Fantastic Four, and exactly... Is probably the worst Marvel, if you class that as sci fi I suppose...

I: I think there is a split there, yes

R: Yes, hard to say it's sci fi. But yeah, that's a stinker.

I: All of them, Fantastic Four films, they...

R: You kind of wish days just went by... Even the trailer was bad. IF the trailer is bad it's usually what says you shouldn't go and watch that. If you can't make a decent trailer from it. But yeah. I would say Looper.

**I: And mediocre. Just like a moderaty quality. You just watched and been like 'ok'. Are there science fiction films like that?**

R: I can't think of anything from top of my head which is like that. There's a lot of films that could be better.

I: yes, I totally understand. It rather goes in the extremes: either good or bad. It's hard to pin point the one in the middle, even outside the research. So how do you think what makes a film a science fiction film?

R: I think a basis in real science needs to be in there somewhere. I think it needs to be believable. It needs also to have things that are out of this world, that you haven't seen before. That's what makes a science fiction film.

I: Yes, before you said that for example superheroes are something else so...

R: Yes, I think it needs to be an adventure. Also I think some of the best sci fi are rooted in reality as well. Like it's possible. I mean you get some films that are just so far-fetched that it becomes a parody almost. If you think something like Valerian or something like that. It's just a pantomime.

I: Yeah, I didn't enjoy this one. So what makes a good science fiction film? You maybe partly covered that but...

R: Yeah, I think it's escapism, definitely, I think you need to get sucked into the world. It need to be believable. To a certain extent. You need to believe it could happen, like when you watch Blade Runner. And you're seeing the vision of future and you're looking at it and it's dirty... It's, it's... You can imagine it being like that.

I: A dose of realism.

R: Yeah, I think that's makes a good sci fi. It's gonna be obviously exciting as well. Intelligent, I mean if you look at Ex Machina which was a real curveball. We went to see that.

I: Fantastic film...

R: Actually saw that on a mystery movie so we didn't actually intent to see that. We went for a mystery movie. And that movie was there. I was pleased what I was seeing. You've got a half of Star Wars cast in there. You've got Domhnall Gleeson, you've got Oscar Isaac.

I: Yeah, from new ones.

R: So I obviously was like 'uu, that's got some good cast in it'. Watching this film, I watched it three or four times since. I think it's one of the best sci fi films in last 15 years.

I: I agree with that.

R: I tried to encourage customers, to be honest, to see it.

I: yes, and when during the Oscars... I don't remember to which film but it lost twice...

R: But aslo for a sci fi films, what is unusual, one that is based in reality. Based in achievable technology.

I: And a lot of great dialog there...

R: But it also is small scale film. You know, because it's based in pretty much one base, one room.

I: And the dialog... I loved the dialog there...

R: Dialog heavy but not Tarantinoesque

I: No, no, completely different kind.

R: It is, it is. No really interesting piece of sci fi.

I: Yes, I even got a blu ray of it and I'm very happy about it. So we kind of covered that. Because you already explained what you like about science fiction films the most. Which was in the same question. But for you, personally, is science fiction film art or entertainment or both?

R: I think it needs to be a mixture of both. I think if you've got a sci fi film and it's just purely aesthetics, just art for art's sake [talking Bourdieu now, hah] I don't think I would particularly enjoy it. There needs to be a bit of story. A bit of entertainment in there.

I: So you said it should be. This implies it would make you to appreciate. But generally, how do you see science fiction generally in the world. Is it art or is it entertainment?

R: I think a balance of two. I think if you go for pure art it would be something like 2001. Which was stunning. Massively ahead of its time. As a film overall it's not a very exciting film. I think it's getting that balance. I think there should be balance between the art and entertainment in sci fi.

I: So following this question. Do you think that science fiction films matter? In society and culture.

R: I think they matter from a point of view that it's a form of escapism. So people that've got mundane lives, or they've got the job they hate or whatever, they can go to the cinema or you know sit at home and put a blu ray on or whatever. And sort of forget a crappy day they had. Just sit there and escape to a different world for a couple of hours.

I: And culturally. Do you think they can carry something more?

R: Culturally? I don't know. I suppose they do reflect on the society and obviously things like inclusiveness in sci fi. In Star Trek it was the first interracial kiss, things like that. There are some important things in there.

I: Like for example, Children of Men. It's quite a bleak, in my opinion, vision of quite possible, potential, political situation.

R: Yeah, it's a bit like The Road.

I: Oh, I haven't seen this one.

R: You get a lot of this in post apocalyptic kind of films. I suppose you class them as being sci fi, don't you?

I: It's like a sub genre

R: It is, it is. They can be thought provoking, they don't have to be just entertainment.

I: So are then more science fiction films more important then the others? Or... Or... Or... Or how is it?

R: Yeah, I don't know. These things. I don't know. Why to judge one as being more important than the others? Because, I mean...

I: Like personally.

R: Oh yeah, what's being entertained by a film or being provoked by a film...

I: But can provoking be entertaining?

R: I suppose it can.

I: And entertainment it can also be...

R: Yeah, yeah... They are important. I think it's important in an entertaining way.

I: I mean, that's the thing...

R: If you would take sci fi away. If there was no a sci fi film ever made... I don't... The world would be a lesser place in terms of entertainment and escapism and etc. But overall I don't think it would be the end of the world.

I: Uuummmm, for some it would...

R: Don't get me wrong, I would miss the genre but you know. I think if you'd took it to another genre like with musicals. I don't think too many are being made now.

I: No, no.

R: I think we had a period of time when there wasn't this kind of a genre.

I: And then there is also period, not in our memory, when there were mostly musicals.

R: It's like westerns. To be honest sci fi has replaced westerns.

I: In a way, yes.

R: Because a lot of those sci fi films if you look at some like Serenity or even Star Trek films or even Star Wars films. They're basically space westerns.

I: Well, Serenity and some of Star Trek could be, yes. Star Wars is more of... I mean, I know where you're coming from and I actually am more sympathetic towards Star Wars as a space western than Star Wars as space opera. Because another vision of Star Wars is like space fantasy. Darthe Vader is basically like an evil sorcerer. Yeah... A propos westerns... Westerns actually, historically, have been replaced by gangster films.

R: True. True, true. I think genres have periods of films, historically. That type of films that come out. I mean last ten years there were a lot of bad sci fi films. But there's been some good ones as well.

I: Anyway, so you have been a fan of science fiction for over 40 years so I imagine your taste must have changed in those decades. How would you describe this change?

R: I suppose as a kid, growing up obviously more on TV sci fi, I liked stuff from comic books, from 2000 A.D. Novels, Stainless Steel Rat by

I, R: Harry Harrison

R: Obviously all the art works in the books came out in this period. All of sudden all this futuristic planets like a cover of music albums. My sci fi taste... Then you obviously had stuff coming like Alien, Blade

Runner... I was lucky to be growing up in this generation when all these classics were coming out. I suppose I've been spoiled. I suppose that's when you're getting... Now in a modern day, there's not much sci fi stuff getting out that would blow me away like those things did. We've seen so much. There's a lot of sci fi that tries to be innovative and it just like... But the problem is... Just like listening to new albums. You compare them to new albums and you see where their roots are coming from.

I: Yes, and you sir are into something because this stuff is a part of theoretical background for this research.

R: I mean yeah, every film about the time travel. You instantly compare it to Doctor Who.

I: It's a phenomenon, yes. I just never had an occasion to start watching it. Now I have five questions which will apply to those three films and basically we need to go through those questions applying them to each film.

R: Yeah, five questions for each film.

I: We'll start with Alien. So what is your automatic thought when you hear the title Alien?

R: No one in space can hear you scream, hahahaha

I: That's right! So yeah, a classic. So you already explicitly, at least I understood it like that, you see it as a canon, as a classic. You hear Alien and you immediately know the tag line. So what do you think this film means personally to you?

R: Personally to me, I think it was probably the first space horror film that I saw as a kid. When you get a generation of kids where they try to watch films for older people I suppose you get a generation of kids who have been watching Chucky or Freddie when they shouldn't be watching them. And I think Alien was one of those films because I think it came out at '79?

I: Yes.

R: I was 10, I shouldn't have been watching it. Hahaha. I wanted to watch it, hahahaha.

I: I had that with Carrie...

R: Hahaha, so it was Alien. It was almost like a forbidden fruit but from my point of view it was a film that I wanted to watch. One of those films I hold in a great esteem but also there are some legendary scenes in it as well. It's definitely classic in my eyes.

I: What do you remember about watching Alien for the first time?

R: I can't remember when I watched it for first time. It would have been on video. [paused and after a cut] I think from memory, knowing me, I would have watched it on a vhs video copier, had it from a video store. I can't remember much about first time with Alien. I can remember apprehension about a certain scene, about chestburster scene.

I: Yes, so you do remember.

R: I remember knowing that was going to happen but not having seen it happen first time.

I: So what do you remember about how the film made you feel?

R: On edge. It's one of the films which you watch at this sort of age and you... I suppose it's one of those films where you're kind of on a side of a villain. Because xenomorph is cool...

I: I had nightmares about it...

R: At the age 10 it was a scary film. I think it's one of those great unknown films as well. When you watch it for the first time. Because you've not seen a film like that. There's no other film like Alien in that period to be honest with you. I think it's an original from the point of view... Obviously they marketed it as a horror film but it's a sci fi film and a horror film, by the tagline... But yeah. It's also a pure sci fi film I would say, from the point of view, you got the crew. No glossy sort of 2001 sort of space station. You've got a grubby space ship with most of people doing it for money... But you've got that sort of grittiness about it and you've got feeling of a real crew there, and you've got a feeling of... It's a very realistic sort of feel...

I: Yes, yes, the talk... They just basically behave like the crew

R: It's like anywhere you worked.. You worked in an office or you worked in a construction or a...

I: I worked all sorts of places...

R: You've got that feel of people thrown together, kind have to get on. Certain people who get on well, certain people who don't get on well and it's very realistic to life. Yeah.

I: Even in that scene, in the cantina, he starts.. Alien starts to come out and... [yeah, I love how it's kept like an industrial crew] [pause and after a cut] I think that's covered now. So did you have any expectations before watching Alien?

R: I think because of age when I was watching it my expectation was how scary it's going to be hahahaha. That apprehension when you watch something for the first time and it's scary so you don't know if you're going to enjoy it or not.

I: Do you think that this expectation somehow impacted your view of this film?

R: I think it definitely built my anticipation for watching it. Definitely.

I: So now the geekiest stuff: favourite scenes!

R: Favourite scenes! Obviously the chestburster scene. Just because a sheer reaction from the cast. They had great actors in there. It's just, the first time you see it bursting out of the chest of character... I think the other favourite scene would have to be Ripley on her own against xenomorph at the end. Obviously.

I: In the pod already.

R: Yeah. You want to the cat to survive as well hahahaha Jonesy... You've got some of connection [pause and after a cut]

I: So we talked about Jonesey surviving.

R: Yeah, I think those are some of key scenes. It's one of those films that you don't remember specific scenes apart from the face of... Sorry, the chestbursting scene and her on her own against xenomorph.. When you watched the film for the first time you didn't know it's going to be predominantly Ripley ve xenomorph the way it is at the end... I think most films in 70s that were coming out had male heroes. I think really, it was.. I mean most of the part I think it was Tom Skerritt's character

I: Yeah, the captain.

R: We kind of... Watching it for the first time, we kind of expected it will be Ripley but not Ripley on her own. I think that what makes it unusual from this period. The fact that it's a female hero versus the alien.

I: Yes, that's the general argument about it. Are there any moment in Alien that you noticed that were specifically designed to make you feel or think something particular?

R: I think going back to what we just said. The last scene with Ripley. That sort of.. That was definitely designed to sort of show her survivor spirit. She's got like that determination. She's kind of a victim but she wants to survive.

I: Yes, to me it's very visible when she tries to diffuse the bomb. And it's too late and she shouts to the computer.

R: Yeah, I think that's it. I think it's really... I don't think otherwise it's nothing other fear side.

I: So that's basically those five questions. It seems like more because some of them are like probing questions and that. They cover basically a particular idea. So from the beginning: your automatic thought when you hear the title Moon.

R: Yeah, I don't think it's necessarily the best title for the film. I think it could have a better title, don't ask me to think of one, but I think the title shouldn't give away. The interesting thing... My relationship with Moon is the funny one because my brother in law rent me a copy on dvd. And my brother in law is typical male. Beer drinking, rugby playing type and he rent me this and I'm thinking... I thought it was kind of weird he rent it to me. I was quite surprised he got it in the first place because I wouldn't have thought it was his normal cup of tea. And I remember we had it in the house for a while and we haven't watched it... It was kind of unusual that I didn't watch it...

I: So you could say that you had some expectations...

R: Well, I looked at it from the point of view of it being a very cult film. Left to centre film from what I knew of it...

I: Left-centre you said?

R: Yeah, very alternative. Almost an independent film. I'm not against that type of film. I would normally watch cult films. It didn't appeal to me to be honest and it sat in our house for quite a while on dvd. And the odd thing is we only watched it for the first time maybe about a year ago, on Netflix. And then I wondered why I didn't watch this before because it's a really good film. [paused and after a cut] It's a lot better film than it looked. It's not as alternative as I thought it would be. DVD cover is not very inspiring. The whole packaging and marketing to me felt as if they tried to make something like, I suppose, 2001 A Space Odyssey. Or sort of Silent Running kind of stuff...

I: Yeah, Silent Running is one of his inspirations

R: It was sort of an indie film. It wasn't for everybody, it wasn't inclusive kind of film in terms of audience. You didn't know if it's going to be conspiracy kind of film or sci fi kind of film.. I didn't give away much from packaging or marketing what it would be.

I: Yeah, I missed the marketing, I didn't even know that there was going to be such a film.

R: Even just basics like a dvd packaging. It's very basic...

I: Yes, just like black, the circle and him standing there.

R: I can't imagine a lot of people walking through HMV and finding it interesting. You've got to know about a film to actually watch it.

I: So what do you remember.. I mean, you kind of already said... About watching the film for first time.

R: By the stage when I actually watched it I learned the brilliance of Sam Rockwell. It's a Sam Rockwell movie, we have spoilers coming haha...

I: I mean, it's film studies, it's not spoilers.

R: Hahahaha, I mean, it's an amazing performance from him. A lot more happens in the film then you would expect to happen. It's like Ex Machina. Again, another one that's set in pretty much one location. I think I was blown away by how good Sam Rockwell was in it. He's performances when it turns out...

I: It's like two people. James Franco does it now [I meant The Deuce]

R: It's a bit like... When you got all those different personalities...

I: Hahaha [Tyler smirked] Yeah, I also make jokes about that...

R: If you compare it to something like... Split. You basically got almost a paranoid schizophrenic. You got this different sides of his personality coming, different versions of Sam Rockwell's character. But it's a much more entertaining film than it's put across as. People think of it as being a cult film and they think they won't enjoy that. But at my house, we watched it and thought that this is a brilliant film and I wondered why we put it off for so long. But I think it was the marketing. It was put across that this is... It is a worthy film. There are some films that I class as a worthy film. There are some films that are made with one nod to the academy. They're being made because they think they will get Oscars, they will be acclaimed. They're not necessarily very entertaining films. I think Moon to certain extent looked to me

like a cult, indie movie that was possibly going to win some awards. But then when you actually watch it it's a lot more entertaining. And you don't have to be Sheldon Copper, a scientist to understand a film.

I: It's like middle brow.

R: Definitely. I think it's a bit like Ex Machina from that point of view. It's a lot more enjoyable film than it seems. I wish it had more mainstream audience than it actually had. I think it's one of those films that if you hadn't had Sam Rockwell in it I'm not sure how good this film would have been.

I: It would have to be someone who can do THAT.

R: Yeah. [pause and after a cut] I think we just about covered that question I think.

I: So do you remember how the film made you feel? It was partly covered already.

R: It was a pleasant surprise. It was one of those films I wasn't necessarily expecting much from. Like when you put it on when you have nothing in particular to watch.

I: You weren't expecting much so that was actually an expectation, in a way.

R: One of the reasons I watched it was the Billboards film, you know the Oscar winning film which Sam Rockwell was in. I watched that one just before I watched Moon. That sort of convinced me that Sam Rockwell is a genius.

I: Mmm-m-m-ma mama...

R: Hahaha, that's what made me to watch Moon, pretty sure it was. It was probably made what, 10 years before Billboards?

I: 2009, 8 years.

R: I think it shows it's a quality of Sam Rockwell, I think. Obviously, previous film by director, the title escaped me... The one on a train..

I: Source Code

R: Yeah, Source Code.

I: That was after Moon.

R: Oh was it? Unfortunately I didn't watch Warcraft, I tried.

I: Yeah.. Game fans say it was great but to me it wasn't anything particularly good.

R: Yeah, tried three times to watch Warcraft and gave up three times. I think I watched Source Code before I watched Moon. I knew Duncan Jones from that but Moon is a better film.

I: Fantastic, so any favourite scenes? And why those?

R: oh... I can't think about a specific scene in Moon because I only watched it once. I suppose it's the reveal when he finds out that he's got clones of himself. The twist that he's not the original person. I think that's the thing, not necessarily specific scene but the reveal.

I: Bit like Truman Show. Everybody knows except for him.

R: It is, it is. I suppose. I think you carry through and you feel for the character. You may not like the character when film starts but half way through you feel for him. And then when you find out that he's not even who he think he is, he's a replicant of the original, it's...

I: So, did you notice anything that was specifically designed to make you feel or think something?

R: I think it's going back to the reveal. It sort of plays with your head. You don't expect it. I think if you'd watch it back again you'd pick up on bits more...

I: One of those films, like Fight Club, for example, or Sixth Sense.

R: Once you know the reveal I suppose... It is that surprise, you just don't expect he's been cloned and cloned and cloned.

I: So do you think there was some tension, or was it like...

R: It was more of a case 'director's got me'. With something that maybe you didn't see coming. Element of surprise.

I: Those are basically those five questions for Moon, and now Avatar. So what is your automatic thought when you hear the title Avatar?

R: The film that made a sale of blu ray, hahaha

I: That's a very good point.

R: I don't know, when I think of Avatar... In my family we got mixed reactions. Me and my son really liked Avatar. The females in our house don't like avatar. Which is kind of a weird thing because obviously there are some strong female characters. Avatar for me, I don't think it's... It was mind blowing when it came out and I think it was designed as one of those films to actually blow your mind: graphically. CGI, technology, etc. I think my sort of a take on it when I look at it now is that it was showing off. The technology, that's my take on Avatar now. I remember it coming out on blu ray and stuff and it was pretty much a give away title for blu ray. I don't think it's got really much of heart and soul. As a film.

I: Yes, it just looks. Maybe, in a detail, from a perspective of crafting it, work needed to make it...

R: I don't think you really have a connection with it. If you compare it to Moon, if you compare it to Alien. There's a connection.

I: You are very much into something here. And a propos, so you don't think I don't understand what I mean. I once said that I believe that films are made of heart not money.

R: Yes, yes. I think Avatar is totally made of money.

I: That's very true [although Cameron making it possible to film in such a technology surely put all of his heart into the project] So, what do you remember about watching the film for first time?

R: It's one of those films when it first came out I was fighting against going to see it because everybody else was saying how brilliant it was. Hype was immense for it. Hype machine was in full effect. Going to see it I was stunned by it, maybe not as stunned as some people who maybe haven't seen a lot of films. My impression is that there are some equally stunning films out there as Avatar even in the time period. I think it's because it was sold to an extent when you have analogy with Adele album. Every house in UK probably has an Adele album. I think Avatar was a commercial film that was designed for everybody to see. Got that appeal to people who maybe saw like two films a year?

I: Oh.. I can't imagine seeing only two films a year...

R: I think it was one of those films that if you had like Sainsbury and if they only 10 films on a rack then Avatar would be one of those films. Because it's a massive blockbuster film, everybody had to see it, either they wanted to see it or not. A bit like Jurassic Park back in its day.

I: Yes, but I was just at primary school and it was awesome!

R: In your defence, hahaha, I think the bit that stuck with me about Avatar is stunning visuals, etc. Also one of those films where director seems to have an agenda in terms of pushing social conscience, environmental issues into a story that was a sci fi film... You know, it's got sort of green policies in there... Good guys are the people who try to save the planet. Looking at it now I see it as Aborigines vs Australians.

I: Yeah, I like this idea more.

R: Almost like Greenpeace film. People are colonising and they're the bad guys... And that.

I: I always find it amusing, finding a deeper meaning in Avatar...

R: Hahahaha One of those films, sometimes it feels a bit forced and in Avatar it feels a bit forced. How much of that are director's personal beliefs? Can be compared to something like... I forgot director's name... Emerald Forest which is about the devastation and destruction of the rain forest but then again it's basically set as an action film. But it's like... It's a very good film.

I: I imagine how film made you feel and expectations are covered.

R: I enjoyed it more than I thought I will.

I: Any favourite scenes?

R: There are a lot of scenes that reference other films. There is a scene where main military bad guy.. Whose name I forgot, the guy who's been wanted to play Cable... Hahahaha

I: Yeah, that's how he's described today, hahaha

R: Hahaha, there's scene, I'm thinking of Aliens when I watch it because you almost have a powerloader...

I: yes, very similar.

R: Cameron kind of does rip off some of his earlier films in Avatar.

I: Some would find this to be intertextuality and a postmodern self-tribute hahaha

R: The flying scene is one of the scenes people talk about. When he flies on that dragon which name I have forgotten. I don't think it's one specific scene that jumps out. I suppose it was meant to be one visual show off. It's very much designed to show off HD and 3D hahaha

I: Definitely that. So, that's also kind of covered. But, any particular moments in that film that you noticed that were specifically designed to make you think or feel something?

R: Yeah, I think it goes back to that environmental thing, when you see the destruction of the planet. Also the first time when you see the Navyy. You've got that meeting, and you see the families and where they live, etc. I think that is definitely designed to pull heart strings.

I: Like to build and emotional response.

R: yeah, definitely. I think the film overall is trying to reflect on racial issues as well.

I: Yeah, that's easiest to find.

R: Like man is very easy to destroy the things he doesn't understand. Or that sort of a message.

I: So it's done in a simple way..

R: Yeah, it makes you wonder if science fiction is a place to do that sort of a thing. Or maybe not a blockbuster sci fi movie.

I: So that concludes those questions about particular films. How would you personally rank those films?

R: Which is the best? Hmm... Alien would come first for me just because it's a classic. Because I've seen it more times. I always think that it's unfair to compare films when you haven't seen them equal amount of times. Because you, with most films, you discover more the more times you see them. You got that connection when you watch them more times. Some films deteriorate more times you see them. The recent example I watched Deadpool. If you watch the first Deadpool film couple of times it's not that funny. You know all the jokes and then it becomes lesser a film for me. Because you know all the surprising bits. Alien for me comes first. I think I probably like Moon better than Avatar. Although I think that maybe if I would watch Moon more time it could rank up to the first place. Because Alien is a different type of film. It's comparing an indie film with blockbuster and to rank them...

I: You sir, are very much into something there, hahaha, you know what this research is about..

R: Hahahaha, I like mainstream films but I also like independent, smaller movies. I don't think you should really rank it against the blockbusters because, obviously, the budget is different but also different

emotions as well. I think there is a certain coolness about liking a cult movie. It's almost like a secret club.

I: Yes, but then to me watching something just to belong, for the sake of belonging to a club, it's like questioning something for the sake of questioning. It's not why you question things.

R: I suppose watching a cult movie, or an alternative movie, I think you sort of... It's the same personality that goes to different types of music. That's not mainstream. You're on adventure, you want to discover something. Whereas, if you go to the cinema twice a year and you go to see Bohemian Rhapsody or Mamma Mia 2...

I: I would like to see Bohemian Rhapsody but I wouldn't like to see Mama Mia 2...

R: Yes, if you would I would class you as a supermarket shopper. It's good when a blockbuster has a bit of an indie background, a bit of an edge to it.

I: So yeah, we basically covered how those films are different from each other. So what do you focus on while watching a science fiction film and why? Would it be cinematography, script, acting..

R: Visuals are the first thing you see when you watch a sci fi. You are introduced to a new world or the things you haven't seen before. But I think the story is really important to me. If a story has nothing of interest then your attention degrades. It's good to watch a film even if it doesn't say much, even it's sort of a diary film... Sort of Rules of Attraction... Those are the films set in American colleges but they're sort of grown up films. Drug taking, etc, etc. Violence, etc. Not much happens in those films but because of the dialog and characters are interesting. I mean Ex Machina, back to it, a great film. Not a lot physically happens in the film in terms of the world domination, the planets... [marked for taste because he says GROWN UP films]

I: I mean there kind of is that

R: Hahaha, I think that one, that's where the acting performance carries it. But I think the story is the main thing in sci fi. You can have a film that is visually stunning like After Earth but then the acting and story are just very basic. You switch it off half way through. Unless the story is right, the story is very important.

I: So does it matter if science fiction has meaning?

R: Hmm, you know, it's an interesting question. I mean, no. It can be fluff if it wants to be. It can be meaningless, it can be entertainment. I don't think sci fi.. I mean, there are whole religions based around Jedi. But for me, I just watch it as a sci fi morning movie, what George Lucas has originally intended. [megafield because of religion mentioned]

I: Religion, I approach it more of an ideology.

R: I think I have never really treated these film as anything other than just blockbusters. Sci fi can be just a fun blockbuster. It doesn't have to have a meaning. That's my take on it. There's room for both but I don't think a sci fi film doesn't necessarily have to have a great meaning.

I: So, something I would never guess after this interview, but how into science fiction would you say you are?

R: It's a genre I always liked, I'm into it.

I: So quite.

R: Quite, I would say hahahaha

I: Nice, well that was the last question.

R: Thank you.

I: Thank YOU very much!

### **Face sheet**

#### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Gareth Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 48

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: High School Father: Teacher Mother: High School

Occupation: Managing director Father: Head teacher Mother: Martron

#### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? >40

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £90

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging Yes

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

#### **Interview 4. 10-11-18 Pawel**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Star Wars series. I think it was the first one I watched as a kid and it stuck with me. I liked the crossover of the science fiction and fantasy elements with a bit of philosophy and so on.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Star Wars Episode I Phantom Menace. Well mostly because of Jar Jar Binks. I think he has really broken the film and I think he didn't fit in the movie. It trivialises it.

##### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

I think out of the recent ones Blade Runner 2049, the new Blade Runner. I really liked the classic one but new one hasn't stuck with me. It's not bad but neither good nor bad. I think Harrison Ford is better than the main character of new one. Mostly the question [matter] of the main character. In some way Harrison Ford as Deckard was more believable to me. It differs on movie to movie. Some of them it's a matter of casting. Some of them it's a matter of story. Some of them are a matter of the world building and how the world is presented to the viewer.

##### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Generally an element of something futuristic. Something not yet integrated in our world. Something looking at the things which are already in our world but from different perspective. I really liked Mad Max movies. They basically used the elements that are in our world already but pushed it a bit further. And pushed it beyond the border of the apocalypse into a post-apocalyptic area. So basically what we see there isn't new. It's just bigger and more destroyed. Mad Max and generally the post-apocalyptic genre is a warning for society. It's socially relevant.

##### **D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Good acting, good world building and most of all good main story with... I like when there's something bigger in the movie. Something that gives me something to think about, something to ponder on and

wonder about. Not many of other genre films take their time to build the atmosphere but just use basic tricks to invoke the emotion or response.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I would say both. It's also a matter of a particular movie but I think the most of them are entertaining. But some of them rise higher. The Matrix for example tried to go higher, make it more interesting and to give me something to think about. Some movies are entertainment. I go to the cinema to watch them and it's ok. I have fun and I'm happy. And some give me to think about and the way they present the story they're more of the art than entertainment.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Of course. I think every kind of media even video games matter and have an impact. Have influence if they bring something with them to think about. General answer is yes.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

Yes. Those which present more value. The Matrix, or what comes to my mind – Interstellar. Or even the post-apocalyptic movies such as Road for example. They give more to think about and they give a certain atmosphere. Which is all very important and distinctive I would say.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

Hmm. I think the evolution is similar for all people in such respect that as a kid, as a teenager I preferred the simpler ones with more action and more visual effects let's say. Later I became more and more interested in those which try to convey some meaning, some values. Special effects aren't as important as they were earlier.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Xenomorph. It's the most iconic part of the whole series. When you hear 'Alien' you basically see that face and think about xenomorph. In general, personally, when I watched the whole trilogy for the first time I was quite young so basically I liked Aliens more. Now I'm more towards the first one because it builds the atmosphere much better and the general story is better. It's not just shoot'em up with many aliens. Actually Alien is one of the not many horror movies which was scary and was not simply using jump scares and simple scaring techniques. I think building the story around one 'monster' let's call it. It's much better because it therefore cannot be a need to just be shot, destroyed and moved on to another. It improves the story because everything revolves around this one particular creature. You are afraid of him because it's the main predator attacking everyone. Basically it's the axis of the whole movie.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember I was scared and I remember the final fight the alien when only Ellen Ripley and her cat were alive. I remember the plot twist when it became apparent that the guy is an android and he's working for the corporation. I don't remember his name. Also the moment when the chestburster pops out of the chest.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Covered.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

Nothing. I was in my early teens then and basically I heard that it's a good movie. A scary movie and it's worth to see it.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I think it's scary nevertheless. Even though it was recommended to me I think I would find as classic anyway.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The ones I already mentioned. The fight because it's the closing of the movie and Ripley has her final say, let's say. The chestburster is a surprising moment and I think the android lie is the biggest plot twist in the movie because it became apparent that it's Weyland-Yutani plot to send them there.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think in general using H. R. Giger's work. It was very alien the way he drew these pictures. The main signal here was: 'it's something totally different, totally alien' and I think the main idea was to make the viewer feel it's completely different from them. They don't know what it is, they don't understand it, they are in completely new place in completely new surroundings. So I think using the visual arts of H. R. Giger sends the message: this is really alien.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Clones. Plot twist, reveal. I think because it was the main point of the movie, the main plot twist. The main element of the story. The moment when we understand what is happening and why it has been happening. So I think that's why. There were many stories about people in space, people on different planets and mostly many of them are about different kinds of obstacles and problems those people need to face. But here, you have a situation where turns out the guy has been used the whole time. He's basically one of the many factory workers who have been doing the same job.

I think the main message here is that often the different kinds of corporations and other powerful organisations use people, overuse people. They treat us as pawns. They don't think about the **consequences**.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Well, naturally I remembered the plot twist but also the robot Gerty and basically... And also the humanity of the both clones because once they discovered they're just clones they could have just give up and just forget about everything but basically they tried to uncover the story. They tried to help each other even though they didn't have to. So in many ways the clones in this movie were more humane than the company who uses them.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it?**

I haven't even heard about the movie earlier. Basically Michael, our mutual friend, he lent it to me just saying it's worth watching. So I didn't even know what this movie is about. Only thing I had was the recommendation. And it's definitely worth watching. This movie didn't get the recognition it deserves. I think it's a good movie and it went by too quietly. People didn't talk enough about this movie. It should be recognised, it should be louder about it and more talk about it.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Maybe in a minimal way. I think the story is good enough to defend the movie on its own.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Well, I think many scenes with Gerty are nice and fun to watch. Basically even the robot is more humane than the people which represent the corporation. It's quite nice actually. And also I liked the part when he was talking to his family even though he didn't know that they were just the pre-recorded messages. He was just realistic in it.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

As I said earlier. The way the clones behaved. Their humanity. They were obviously shown in such a way to show the contrast between corporation and the clones which really shouldn't be like humans or normal humans but they're basically being shown even more human than corporation. For example there was a moment... There was a discussion, if I remember correctly, between the younger and the older clone. And initially the younger one wanted to save the older one but the older clone forced him to save himself because he was dying anyway. It shown they're capable of, let's say, sacrifice.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Navyy. I think it's the most visual movie of those three and it was designed that way to impress people with visuals. I think it's the least important of these three because generally speaking the story is quite simple. Maybe there could be something in that but in general the story is quite simple. I think that's the best definition of the entertainment. Basically it's mostly just an entertaining science fiction movie.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Special effects. 3D effects, richness of colours. Visuals and different kinds of creatures on the planet.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it?**

It was very advertised. Widely advertised as a great visual show so I expected to be overwhelmed with different kind of visuals and effects. I think I mostly just had fun.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Definitely but I think it met these expectations. I basically went to the cinema to just see an effect-full movie and that's it. I got what I wanted.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think the final battle. When they were fighting around the tree. It's the most spectacular. But also the romantic scenes between Neytiri and Jake. The combination of visuals and particular kind of music. And also the kind of chemistry between those two characters.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think those romantic scenes were constructed to get a particular response from the viewer as described. I think the whole movie was constructed to make people think about ecology and the nature and respond to the environmental issues. I think it was done by showing the Navyy and all the other creatures living there as the victims of diverse way of extraction by the humans [exploitation]. Basically they were shown as the good guys and the excavation company were the bad guys who tried to push them out of their environment.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I think in the order we were discussing them. Alien as the first, Moon as the second one and Avatar as the worst. In case of Alien the combination of what is shown and how the scary atmosphere is built along with H. R. Giger's works. It's a classic.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Well, the story mostly. Visuals, music and world building are nice and cool but the most important thing for me is the story. When you get down to it, science fiction or any other genre is just a matter of costumes and generally scenography, let's say. You can sell a horror story, or a romance story or an adventure in basically any genre. So for me it's the story that is the most important. Of course there are specific elements. Specific types of atmosphere for each type of the movie but the basic story can be told in any general genre.

#### **D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yes, for me it does. As I said earlier. It's important for me if the movie gives me something to think about. Sends a message, sends something to ponder which stays with me for longer. Let's go back to The Matrix for a moment. If you cut out all the philosophy parts you basically have a very nice science fiction movie with action and effects. And basically it could be sold as a good science fiction movie without all the philosophy elements. The philosophy adds very much to this movie. It's so much better with the philosophy than it would be without it.

#### **Face sheet**

##### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Paweł

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 35

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Polak

Education: MA Degree

Father: Ingeneer

Mother: Ingeneer

Occupation: Interpreter

Father: Passed (engeneer)

Mother: Clerical

##### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 20-25 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £40

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums	Yes	
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	
Tweeting		No
Blogging	No	
Cosplay	Yes	
Fan art		No
Fanvids		No
Fanfiction	No	

#### **Interview 5. 12-11-18 Ben**

**D: What is your all time favourite science fiction film and why do you love it?**

B: That would have to be Star Wars... Uuummm, I don't really know. I've always been a fan of Eastern, eemm, European martial and all sword fighting thing just sort of really appeals to me.

**D: So that's why Star Wars? Because of lightsabers?**

B: It's all really fantastic combination of good vs evil so well personified inside of it.

**D: That's very true, that's a huge part of it. Dark and Light side. So what in your opinion is the worst science fiction film?**

B: Ughhh. That's horrible. Em. Hard to think of bad one that I would call really bad.

**D: Maybe just not really bad but in your opinion like the worst. Science fiction film you don't like.**

B: I'd have to say something like eeerrrrmmm aghhhh, in terms of like production and things like that I would have to say something like original Flash Gordon. It's a cult classic and I really enjoyed watching it but in terms of production and some acting in it... It is pretty bad.

**D: That's why it's a cult classic I guess. It's so bad that it's good.**

B: Exactly

**D: So... It's like a cheap campiness why you don't like it?**

B: Yes.

**D: So have you seen sf films that you would describe as very generic?**

B: Yeah, I've seen a few. Like Arrival. I watched it quite recently.

**D: OH REALLY? You didn't like it?**

B: Thought that was a very generic type, sort of E.T.

**D: Well, I think it's a masterpiece but that's just my opinion.**

B: To be honest I'm finding it really hard because I'm a complete sci fi nut and I will fight the case of any film that you will call a sci fi.

**D: Yeah, Arrival is a very different film. I totally understand your point of view although my is different but your personal experience is the most important here as it's the point of this research. So, in your opinion, what makes a film a science fiction film?**

B: For me it's futuristic technology, aliens, AI. Things that suggest scientific and futuristic plot points.

**D: That's a lot of sci fi. So what makes a good sf film?**

B: For me every time it needs to be a good plot. It's key for me, I'm not there for all the special effects thing. Interesting, twisting plot.

**D: I understand that. So for you personally. Do you think that sf films are art or entertainment or maybe both?**

B: I think they can be both to be honest. It's hard. If you go to sort of the semantics of popculture it's obviously... Pop culture is produced for the masses whereas the art is produced for the sake of art.

**D: That's part of my theoretical frame.**

B: I'd have to say that maybe like some things cross both boundaries but majority probably are the entertainment and popculture.

**D: But in general. Science fiction can be art?**

B: Yeah.

**D: Do you think that sf films matter in our society and culture?**

B: I think now more than ever because now they started dealing with more current themes like emm, especially towards more environmental issues, privacy issues. Issues involving artificial intelligence. I think in 21<sup>st</sup> century it's more relevant than ever.

**D: Do you think that maybe sf films always dealt with social issues but appropriate for the time those films were made in?**

B: Yeah, I'd say so. Yeah. Some of the early sort of SF film dealt with insecurity that humans had... Sort of... Ummm...

**D: Yeah, there was a different cultural background, yes. I was just wondering what you think about whole of sf. Because you mentioned our problems. So I wondered was it the same in past or did it just change?**

B: I'd say it's changed more now to more relevant issues. I'd say it's more now.

**D: I understand. So would it mean that some sf films are more important than others? In your opinion of course.**

B: I'd say yes.

**D: Could you tell me how your sf tastes have changed in your 15 years of being a fan or did they change at all?**

B: Throughout the 15 years I was mainly solidly a Star Wars fan.

**D: All right.**

B: In between that I found my way in and out of different fandoms.

**D: Such as?**

B: For long time I was into Doctor Who.

**D: All right. My supervisor is a big fan.**

B: A lot of fandoms, when they started to change I lost touch with them.

**D: What changed in those fandoms that made you to drop out?**

B: It was usually changing cast or something like that.

**D: So the subject of the fandom changed and not the fandom itself?**

B: Umh.

**D: Yeah, ok. I understand. Now we'll talk about Alien. What is your automatic thought when you hear this title?**

B: Horror sci fi.

**D: That's a well established.. That's what it is. And what do you think of this film? What does it mean to you personally?**

B: To me? I watched it when I was really, really young. It was my first horror film. I was terrified of that for years.

**D: Could you tell me a bit about watching Alien for the first time?**

B: For the first time? I'd have to say the most iconic scenes for me were when they emerge from the criosleep on... I can't remember the name of the ship. The part when they find the ship and the room with the eggs. And obviously the chestburster scene.

**D: their ship is called Nostromo. Why those scenes? Why waking up?**

B: It's so...The room is really, really white. Clinical white and just silence. Complete silence until the pods start opening. I don't know why it's always working with my subconscious.

**D: Very interesting. You actually covered different questions as well by telling me about your favourite scenes. So why other scenes?**

B: So I think the part when they go the crashed ship. For what I remember it just feels cold. Dark, wet and you can feel the atmosphere of this scene. It's really, really immersive. Alien-esque statues. It's so alien, you can't relate it to anything you've seen before. The epiphany of alien. And chestburster scene is just iconic because there's nothing like this has been seen before but the biological elements are familiar to us. In the real world. Which makes it more scary. The Hitchcock thing of the uncanny. Slightly different than what we know and that's what makes it such an iconic scene. It's relatable to real animal world.

**D: Any more things throughout the film are relatable as well. Because the crew itself. It's like an industrial crew from anywhere. Guys working together. Banter, arguments and everything. They're on a spaceship but they're the workman.**

B: And also you get to see the ship. Although the first few scenes are quite clean you suddenly realise that the rest of the ship is almost dystopian. Wet, gritty. And obviously there's this wonderful contrast when they open the pods and wake to a nice surrounding and then they go the alien ship. Alien architecture is so different. And it makes it scary to us as a part of human nature. And the chestburster scene and the concept of uncanny and everything like that. That's what I really picked up first time.

**D: Did you have any expectations before you watched Alien? Did you know anything about it?**

B: No, I didn't really know much about it. I realised it was sci fi and a horror film. Obviously there wasn't anything like Alien before really. The closest thing to it that I've seen would be the original The Thing. The original.

**D: The Think from Another World.**

B: Yeah. That's the only thing I saw close to that. I didn't have any massive expectations. I was just watching a sci fi film.

**D: So are there any moments in Alien that you would think were specifically designed to make you think or feel something?**

B: It's been a while since I've seen Alien so...

**D: That's ok. Now we would have to repeat these questions for Moon.**

B: I've actually never seen Moon?

**D: That's not very good. I'll ask my supervisor about that. But you saw Avatar? Let's do Avatar.**

B: Yeah.

**D: So what is your automatic thought when you hear the title Avatar?**

B: I'm thinking a representation of something. Non-real world controller.

**D: Yeah. Which would come either from older science fiction literature or like an online communities. Which also applies to the narrative and rhetoric of the film. That's very true. Does this film mean anything to you personally?**

B: I'd have to say that was the film pushing me towards taking notice of environmental issues and starting to really listening to the problems of the world.

**D: Could you tell me a bit about watching the film for the first time?**

B: I remember really being quite enthralled in visuals first time. Really getting lost in this fantastically well created immersive world. And just being in complete awe at level of depth.

**D: Level of depth?**

B: I just remember being surrounded... It being a fantastic experience.

**D: What kind of depth. Could you elaborate on this?**

B: Yeah, sure. So the depth I refer to is within the world you have a standard narrative linear plot. But beneath this you have...

**D: Do you mean the cultural value of the film or do you mean the world building within the narrative? Or that cultural value? Something that is socially relevant or...? Do you think that Avatar is a deep film, like an art film?**

B: Yeah. I would agree with that term. It's just got really strong, ludic narrative depth. And just creates a fantastic world but it does have real world implication and does comment on social political-economic state of the world currently.

**D: Do you think it does it in a clever complex way?**

B: Yeah, I'd say so.

**D: OK, so it's not like a simple special effects kind of event for you? That's ok. Very interesting. Did you have any expectations behind watching Avatar?**

B: Having seen the trailer I knew it was going to be quite cinematic. I've read some reviews on it that said this was going to be like the movie of the century and things like that. So I went in with quite high expectations, yes.

**D: Do you think that these expectations could have somehow impacted your view of the film?**

B: Yes, certainly. Going in, I suppose, you're expecting more from the film than you would if you had the reviews that weren't so good.

**D: Yes, I agree with that. Anyway, any favourite scenes in Avatar?**

B: Favourite scenes in entire film. I'd say one of my favourite ones is when they are riding the... Oh, what's the name of bird creatures?

**D: I don't remember their names as well. But I know which ones. Do you mean the legendary big one or the smaller ones from the initiation?**

B: I mean the one which Jake finally found a beast that's trying to kill him as an initiation into his manhood. And bond with because I think it's a phenomenal juxtaposition – finding balance in a chaotic relationship. It's brilliant. Certainly that one and I would say the sort of when the mother tree is destroyed in the hellfire of rockets and the indigenous people are removed from their home. The final most iconic scene for me is the final fight between Jake and the villain. It's satisfying in a moral way.

**D: So once again: are there any moments in Avatar that you noticed they have been specifically designed to make you think or feel something?**

B: Yeah, definitely. I'm sure there is a lot more than I can remember but especially the scene when the tree is destroyed. The sound suddenly becomes filtered. It's almost distant. Like a tribalesque soundtrack and the world moves in partial slow-motion. Jake's still strapped to the giant whatever the thing is. And he's just helpless to watch and it's quite emotional motive in its own way.

**D: How would you personally rank those films? And why?**

B: Personally, I would say I would rank Avatar first just because it contains a lot of sort of hidden subtexts that relate directly to issues in the world and things like that and... It's accessible for all people. You can be 8 and you can still understand all the topics in the film. Maybe not to the full extent but you can certainly understand them whereas I think Alien... It's without a doubt iconic but it does contain subtexts that are a little more subtle. It has a savvy adult set as an audience and is less accessible for all people.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? In terms of the craft.**

B: There are three main things that will always help my immersion in a science fiction film. Without them or at least one of them being very strong I will struggle to immerse myself in the film. So the first and foremost is always going to be the plot. It's gonna be solid for me. It needs to have depth as well as breadth. I'd rather watch an hour and half film with a lot of content than two and half hour action thriller where the whole plot is just to kill the bad guy.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

B: As in a ludic narrative meaning or real world meaning?

**D: Do you meaning ludic as luddites or as ludology? Science about games? Logic and stuff?**

B: I'd refer to is that, yeah. As in world in the film canon universe or real world related?

**D: Generally, does it mean if science fiction means something more than you see on the screen.**

B: I think it's a big part of science fiction heritage to convey meaning beyond what is seen on screen and what is an immediate plot value. There's no real reason why sci fi film does need to have meaning. It could be in its own way an expression of the creator's own mental landscape. It doesn't have to hammer the wider meaning.

**D: That's very true. How much into science fictions would you say you are?**

B: I'm a geek.

### **Face Sheet**

#### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Ben Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 21

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: MA Student Father: College Mother: College

Occupation: Student Father: House parents Mother:

#### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 15 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £30-12

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay Yes

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

## 6. 12-11-18 Grahame

### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

It's Star Wars: New Hope. It only came out in 1977, I was 12 years old. And I queued all day and I managed to get in for the third showing. Changed the face of science fiction forever. And the way people make films. Absolutely... It was a gob smacker. I stayed in the cinema and I watched it another 3 times. It was in the theatre in Manchester, it's not there anymore. It's been knocked down. It was a big screen, like a Panavision screen. When I got in the first time I sat on the steps. That's how many people were there. I watched all three [episodes of Star Wars]. I kept watching them and kept watching them. I remember growing up. There was nothing close to Star Wars. There was 2001. Visuals and special effects were mindblowing. And there was TV series Moon 01. It was a Jerry Anderson based series about Moon base. Really well made. And after Star Wars came out, Alien came out. That again just changed the way... Darker side of science fiction films. And Star Wars changed my perception of science fiction overnight. It was like gob smacking.

### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I just watched Stargate Origins. It was fandom based series. It was an online thing but they compressed it to one film and put it online to buy. And I thought it's a good idea and I watched it and I cried. It was terrible. Oh it was awful, oh God. It just... Ok the acting's ok, the actual making of the thing is ok but the story content was pointless. They had their memories wiped anyway so it was just pointless in the Stargate universe it just made it ridiculous.

### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

In my opinion a science fiction film questions our own reality. It doesn't have to be in space, it doesn't have to be futuristic. It can be anything what questions our reality or our perception of our own life. Like in your mind you can live an entire lifetime in a split second. That sort of science fiction. And then when you wake up it's been only five minutes. It's like Star Trek, they did that story. It was called The Inner

Light when Pickard did a lifetime in a blink of an eye. It was like probe that put it in his head. He lived his life with that race of people who died out, it was like a message in a bottle. It travelled through space to find someone and it found him and told him about these people who lived and died. Science fiction doesn't have to be in space. It can be anything science based or it can be our reality but not, if you know what I mean.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Good science fiction film covers all the basis. Science fiction doesn't concentrate on one thing. It tends to blur. It gets blurry and people get fed up and attention span disappears. Like with Star Wars. When it came out it was an old story – good vs evil – but it was done in such a new, refreshing way... Especially with the visual effects as well.. It was amazing. The way it was done... The attention to detail. The good sci fi film is attention to detail. The little things.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. It can be entertaining to someone who's not into science fiction and who doesn't understand science fiction and also it can be art because the work gone into to bringing it to the masses. The artwork, setting it up.. People drawing them. That can be artwork. It is both in my opinion science fiction is an art and entertainment. Person who is not into science fiction would still enjoy it because of its action and explosive content... Like what makes science fiction, it's that attention to detail and that visual beauty of it. Fifth Element. When she looks down before she needs to jump. It's just... We see how busy it was. That was visually spectacular. Mind-blowing and the detail. There was a lot of detail, you have to pause it to look at everything.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

It provides us with absence from our own reality. When you have a non-exciting job, you do your 9-5 and come home. You put a science fiction series like Stargate or some other science fiction series and it helps you escape from your own reality and it helps you feel free or feel better. Then yeah, I think it is important. It helps you escape from that, helps you envision the other aspects of... Than just 9-5...

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I still watch science fiction the way I've always watched it. I look at everything, I don't just watch the film. At the corner of the screen, left hand side of the screen, down the bottom of the screen... Even when dialog is going on. I look underneath or behind, what's going on in the background. That fascinates me across science fiction film. Attention to detail. Small things you hardly see. Need couple of times to see them. If you quick.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

When it was first promoted it was the egg. It was always the egg. When you say 'Alien' that what comes. It was always the egg. Iconic. That's how it all started. I built a model and refinery to go with it. I had some slides from back in the day, it was in the 80s. There used to be exhibition in Oldham called Northern Militaire. We used to display all our models there. From Alien, from Tyrell corporation. We used to build space ships, big freighters. That's from Blade Runner, Tyrell. Making better world. Same thing as Wayland Industries. With Wayland Industries, they weren't really phenomenon in Alien until later on. It was mentioned in the first one but it wasn't predominant. Because it was set up before the others...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was 14 years old and it was 18 certificate and I sneaked into the cinema, with my friend. It was called an X film. When I was a kid you wouldn't be allowed to see it. Today's perception of things is completely different from when I was a kid. I think it was only X rated because of gore and bloody violence. It wasn't until later on when they discovered that some of the themes were sexual in nature. Like the pornographic magazine rolled up and put in Ripley's mouth. When he went loopy... Bald head, he was one of the engineers. He hit Ash over the head while he was attacking Ripley. Ripley's gone to Mother and discovered that Ash is programmed this way and he came in behind her and his face is behind her, so now you know the truth, and he threw her around... He picked up a pornographic magazine and shoved it in her mouth. And the other sexual... I know this from people talking about it... Was when the alien killed Lambert... The other woman. Tail went up between her legs and then went up inside her and killed her. You couldn't see that because they couldn't do that... It was widely talked about it. Ridley Scott talked about it. There is an interview and they discuss it. It doesn't mean it was about sex, it was sexually oriented.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Scared the big shit out of me. You only had whispers from people who went to see it and told their friends it scared the shit out of them. And then you go "I'll go and watch it". It did scare the shit out of me. I went again and watched it again and again.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

There wasn't internet then. There was no spoilers. "Spoilers" wasn't a word you heard of. I knew it was space... In space no one can hear you scream, that was the promo line. And I like space and it was first time... Well they've done few 70s movies but, oh, they were dire. But this was done right because of the detail, like I like it. And I knew Ron Cobb was involved in it, most of the art work. Giger was involved with the alien design.. They are prominent artists that I followed for years. So it was going to be good. And Ridley Scott. So I was going to go and watch it even though I was worried it might scare me. I was only young, I was 14 years old. After watching it first time I went watched it again and again. And I don't like horror because to me horror is a joke. It makes me laugh. You get group of teenagers and someone

gets killed and they all go where this person got killed. Or there's a noise and they go to the noise... You'd get the fuck out of there.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Space jockey. The opening scene. When they're in hibernation, lights came on and things started operating. That opening scene was fantastic. When they show you the cockpit and the computer came on... And it went through the living quarters and where the crew was... And it all opened and they came out. There was no sound, just the music.. .And then it started with the scene with them all sat on the table. And to me it looked so natural... I didn't look like it was being filmed, it looked like... When they were all sat eating breakfast... You were just like an observer.. Not like watching a film, you were watching an actual breakfast. It just felt real.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

No... I think Ridley Scott's perception of the audience was... He wanted them to be there with the crew. He wanted them to be with them on that ship so the only thing I thought was the chestburster thing and when the alien came out of the pod. When it jumped... Came out screaming, landed on his helmet. And chestburster scene was a shocker. It was like 'waaah'... And I think he wanted to make you part of the crew on that ship, as terrified as they were.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I thought... When first saw it... I thought 'hmmm'. I only watched it once, I saw the actor and I thought that he's been in few things and he's pretty good so I'll watch it. And at first it didn't really grab me so Moon to me... I like anything about the Moon because I grew up with Space 1999, Moon 01, Moon 02... Anything to do with the Moon, like First Man on the Moon... Because it's the closest celestial body and because it is a part of our planet. It was a left over from when a planet collided with Earth so I've always been interested with Moon and I would always watch it. SO I thought this is going to be good, I want to see how they do it. I want to see the imagination of the person making the film. And I thought this is really good. Left me hanged to this fucking day. You realise that space travel is too fucking expensive. You can't keep sending people to Moon every so often. And those clones. It's an overall story that was done before but it's done well. In retrospect it took a bit to get going but I enjoyed it. To me when you say "Moon" I would go to previous things about the Moon, like to do with the Moon.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Covered

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I didn't have any expectations because I didn't hear about it. Moon thing drew me to it and the actor. I'm going to watch it again now.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

When he discovers where all the clones come from. He knew then what was happening. That was penny dropping for him and for me watching it, as a spectator. And we put it together. And another scene is in the buggy, when he crashed. I liked that, it was done very well. There was some shading and stuff but actual physics were done very well. And they managed to get the Moon dust the right scale. Because you can't miniaturise dust... It's like water.. You can't scale water down.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Those scenes when he discovered clones underneath the thing. That was made for the realisation for the character and the audience participating. To me that was like.. It answered all of his questions and all of your questions. Now, what were you thinking after that: what's he going to do about it. Now he's got a computer against him... It gave empathy for the character to think what his next movie is. It kept you in, made you more feeling for him. Tat you wanted him to succeed.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It's not a deep film... It's a story done to death by the Americans... Native Americans straight away. Even the names were too close...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Visually Avatar is wow. Cinematically it was fantastic. That's what made the film so popular in my opinion. The backstory itself was weak... To be honest.. Why did Cameron get involved in it? I don't know. It was his baby, it was his dream. He's got another 4 planned... You start relying on your visual artistry and nothing to do with a story. You're going to kill it for people who are into science fiction and just ponder it to the masses and think of your back pocket. This is what I think is happening now to a lot of science fiction. It's being destroyed by greedy people. They see a quick buck, they're going to make a film which is going to be wow and it's just going to kill the story. It's just wrong. They should never have made... Oh what was that called...

Oh.. But, lower budget films focus more on acting and the actual trying to engage audience whereas the big budget films try to visually capture you. That to me... Visual captures, big visual captures are for run of the mill person, not a person into detail who has a vivid imagination... What the directors are trying to do is to get people in and watch the film who haven't got an imagination.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Disappointed. Because it could have been more. Come on.. Unobtanium? They used it in Core. The Core. Where they developed this weapon that uses seismic waves. If you use it in science fiction it's a joke because it's been used so many times and as a science fiction connoisseur you hear this and you remember it. It doesn't make it feel real. Just because it says it's fiction... All science fiction is based in science fact. So you have to make it believable. I still enjoyed the film, I liked the characters. Sigourney Weaver was immaculate as always. And... what's his name... Also the detail in him being paraplegic was amazing.. You would think that the actor was paraplegic... They way he acted with the CGI. It was really good, he's done his homework.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The home tree getting destroyed. Made you feel bad to be human. Made me feel awful inside. To destroy somebody's home like that. That's been there for thousands of years... That was one of the pinnacle moments in the film. I felt disgusted watching it. I felt inside... We actually crossed the line. To me it was just unbelievable. And the visual effect was amazing, the way it was shot. Especially when it hit the ground. It made me feel sick in my stomach. I think James Cameron wanted you to think this way.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Covered in previous question.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

In the order you presented them. Alien, Moon and Avatar. Alien for me, even though it's a science fiction horror... It was portrayed as a science fiction horror but to me it was crew of a spaceship in the wrong place in the wrong time and they were used as scapegoats as a way of company trying to discover if it [the alien] can be used as a weapon. But it was well made, detailed. Everything was superb. Moon to me was a far better story... And Avatar, even though it was visually spectacular, to me there were too many negatives in that film. Moon was more real, more believable, felt real. Avatar was a fantasy, not a science fiction really.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I like to focus on the content of the film, not just the visuals.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

No, it doesn't need to have meaning. It need to be believable but it doesn't need to send a poignant message. You can watch science fiction for entertainment value.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Grahame Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 52

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: O levels Tradesman certificates Father: Don't know

Mother:

Occupation: Cabinet maker Father: Salesmen Mother: Archivist

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 50 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £20

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums No

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes No

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay Yes

Fan art Yes No

Fanvids	Yes	No
Fanfiction	Yes	No

### **Interview 7. 13-11-18**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Of course it's The Matrix. First time I saw The Matrix it was the pirated copy. It was in Iraq, I was a young guy. 17 years old. My English was not so good. Copy wasn't translated at the time, it wasn't subtitled. Needless to say I did not understand about a half of the movie and I still walked out of it thinking it's the best movie I ever saw. I knew there was much to it so I kept rewatching. I think I fell in love with movies at that day in general. I like action and I like basically kung fu and martial arts and science fiction. It just provided a blend that was unprecedented. And also as a film in general, the basis of The Matrix is hard to achieve. Every act of the movie, like you see at the beginning. Something intriguing that is unbelievable and you want to know more. You're lost in it. You're really excited to know what's happening. Then there's this big, slow act where it's all explained to you. Every shot is done with the maximum 'awesome level' I would say. And then it delivers the third act. I think it begins with Morpheus being kidnapped. And the third act is unparalleled. I can't find any other movie that can provide such a quick paced, edge of the sit third act.

**D: Maybe rather when Neo reveals to Trinity that he's not the One. He makes the decision, the connection that that's what the Oracle talked about and then he makes the decision which kick-starts the third act. Basically. At least that's my opinion.**

Yeah, yeah. It's true, it kick-starts the third act, saving the Morpheus. Just one shot after the other it's mind-blowing.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

That's kind of hard. They don't linger usually. They need to be really bad. There are some... I don't mind that movie as movies that don't rise to their potential. They promise a lot but they don't rise to it. I think... It's not really bad per se but just from the top of my head... I remember when I saw Equilibrium. I just really disliked it. I thought it had potential but then... That's the kind of a movie I would remember because it sat something promising and then made me sit through it and then I regretted it. I think if I would see it now I wouldn't mind it that much because I would have a perception if it that it's a bad film that I can enjoy it.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

It's the same as with Equilibrium

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

It has to have a fictional presumption based on a scientific presumption. Like you can assume we could travel into space and then you have an adventure in space. Or you can assume we have reached Mars and then you have an adventure on Mars. So you need a scientific assumption that we not achieved yet to provide groundwork for your story and then make it a science fiction.

**D: Does this scientific assumption need to be explained in detail? Does it need a focus in narrative or does it need to be just hinted?**

Yeah, it needs focus to a certain extent. It should be explained to a certain limits but not a waste to a film story to try to prove its reality. Viewers already agreed to watch it. Give me something convincing and you move on from there. I think the popular example would be Midichlorians. I don't hate it. I like Star Wars but I'm not a fan boy. And SW fans really hated the midichlorians. We know there is the Force, we didn't need to know exactly what it is.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

I think the punch line makes it whether worthy or not. The example would be Keanu Reeves in the remake of The Day the Earth Stood Still. First part of the movie is very interesting. This is 10/10 movie for me. But then it just fails and doesn't meet the expectations. I think so there are two things initially: you need to set up an intrigue at the beginning. And you need to deliver by the end. So it's like a joke: without a punch line it doesn't work. No matter how the film was you gonna leave thinking about the ending. If the ending is not that good I won't be satisfied.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. Again the case with The Matrix. It has full artistic integrity. It has a philosophical value. But also it's asking. I wish someday I would sit with the Wachowskis and ask 'How do you start? Do you start with the idea?'. Is that you want to make a kung fu movie and spire down to this deep thing?

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think it heavily depends on the cultural success of the movie. What becomes of it, in the people's minds.

**D: So the commercial hit?**

Yes. Just take the Avatar for example. One of our topics. Avatar was very clear this wasn't a subliminal film. It was about the environment. I think it got people talking at the time. This is our nature and we were forest destroyers. We needed to take measures towards that. Maybe you could walk out of the theatre and plant a tree. Does it have an impact on geeks? On science fiction lovers? I think it does but I'm not sure beyond that.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

More effective I would say. Some movies have more effect than others. The more people see it the more effect it has. But they're not more important. A science fiction movie often has its effect on the course of the cinema. Again... Ok, let's not say The Matrix this time. Let's say 2001 A Space Odyssey which also altered the course of the Cinema. Filmmakers are still intimidated by this movie today, like Interstellar. They want to make something that will surpass it and they can't.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Horror masterpiece. I saw it when I was young, very young. Made me crap my pants and I saw it as an adult. Much later in time. It wasn't the second time, I saw it again through the years. But I've seen it in the recent years once more. When I had a much bigger appreciation of films in general. And I saw it like a complete work of art. It's magnificent. I saw it again when Prometheus was out. And I got to compare Prometheus and that one. And Prometheus is not on the same level. But Alien is sci fi mostly and also horror comes to that. It's really scary. The tagline can even be sold today. I think Gravity had something similar. Movie opens with a similar statement.

It's definitely one of my favourite movies in both genres. Sci fi and horror. Now that we talk about it... I'm not a fan of horror. Horror movies are usually crap. Maybe Alien is the best horror movie I have ever seen.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

The chestbuster. Because my older brothers and the elders of my family they were telling me to watch out for this. And it came and it scared me.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

My expectation was definitely met. I was promised something good and it delivered. I remember being scared. Because I was so young. And for many years I haven't seen it as a complete thing. I saw parts of it on TV. And so... I did not have a full, complete memory of the film until I have seen it recently.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I remember the scary parts of it. I remember the dinner table. I remember the cat, when it sees the alien. I remember Sigourney Weaver in her outfit in the pants. I definitely remember that. It was my favourite part. Her in the pants. As a kid I saw part two, Aliens, more because it's an action movie. James Cameron one. It's not as scary. Equally good but not as scary. It's a very good movie. It's just not scary, it's a blockbuster.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Symbolic material you mean?

D: Or anything.

I remember the robots being filled with white goo. Something disgusting. It seems to be the aim of the early Alien movies. To disgust you maybe? I don't know what it means but I think that. They were very successful in getting the emotional response. It's very gooey. Or in Aliens, they walk into the Queen's lair and it's all covered in that stuff. And oh! Of course. Giger's art! That's fucking impactful. I can talk about the directors but Giger is the only concept artist I know. His work is unbelievable. It's nightmare stuff. Pure nightmare stuff. Xenomorph himself... Yeah, definitely. The xenomorph is what hits you the most. I was talking about other things but the xenomorph is the king of monsters maybe.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Overrated. I don't know why. I've heard some good stuff about it and the first time I saw it I really loved it. Few years later I felt it's not as good as everybody else thinks it is. It is good but not great.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I liked it the first time better than the second time. I've only seen Moon twice. It was... Pacing was unusual for a moment. It's an indie movie so it wasn't full of explosions but the character acting. And I really, really liked Kevin Spacey as robot. I also like Sam Rockwell. He always shines in a movie. He's always... I like seeing him shine and the acting is terrific in this movie. But there is that general perception that Moon is great but I think it's only good.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**D: So could we say that this is how the film made you feel? That it's not as good as everybody says?**

Not on the first watch.

**D: So how did it make you feel?**

I was really interesting in the craft. In the filmmaking process. It's about isolation and it's a very interesting subject because humans are very social creatures. They can't thrive on their own. Maybe there are few cases of the actual people living in such isolation and maybe studied... It's very interesting. Also there's sci fi element to it. I think... The premise is they were mining something there and that was the reason to clone somebody and control his life. It's weird to me at this point. That a company like this can't afford human resources.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I remember there is one scene when there is an interaction between two Sam Rockwell's when one of them is really sick. It shows some really delightful performance by Rockwell. I like watching him perform. He's a great actor.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There was moment when the robot decided to take his side and it's like it's unknown for the robot why it's helping him. It feels sorry for the guy. It's not doing its job. It was really satisfying. It's not easy to achieve a satisfying moment in the movie, you know. Yeah, I think all of the movie is about the isolation effect.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Money. Oh my God. The guy, Cameron, knows what to do. I don't know what it is. For me personally... Most women that I know are not personally interested in sci fi but almost all women I know have seen it. I went to see it and then I got back and took my wife to it. Because he knows it. He knows how to make sci fi film not only for sci fi audience that makes a lot of money.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Technology wise when you're first watching the movie and you see the Navyy in motion capture... I was just amazed by that. When I walked out of the cinema I thought that because it was about Navyy it was more of the tool to tell the story than the tool itself. That's what I liked a lot about it. But I had an impression of a very convenient and a generic movie. It's a movie not challenging. It's not challenging intellectually but it's really good. Whenever it's on TV and I'm switching channels I'll watch it again. My youngest one wants to be a film director. When she sees something she asks what it is and I have to explain it to her. Most of the movie is just training and exploring but it's so good.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I remember when I walked out of the theatre there was that scene when he captures that flying creature. The small one, the initiation process. I thought it was the best thing in the movie.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Yes. All that destroying the big tree. It's all very simple, it's not that you walk out and discover that it's about something. It's set up throughout the film very simply.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Matrix, Avatar, Moon.

D: Hahaha, but from those three films.

Yeah, hahaha, sorry. Between Alien and Avatar it's hard to choose. If one of those three was on TV then which one would be most likely for me to finish? Probably Avatar, Alien and Moon. In terms of cultural importance and specifically impact on the film industry I would say Alien comes first. I think Alien has more of cultural importance than Avatar. People still talk about Alien but Avatar it could be forgotten. It's one of those movies you walked out of the theatre, you enjoyed it. Maybe you'll talk about it over the dinner immediately after the movie and the second day you'll be like 'Yeah, I've seen Avatar'. Before we'll move I'd like to change it. Alien, Avatar, Moon.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Usually when I watch a film, not just sci fi, I pay attention to the craft. Most movies I can tell from first couple of scenes whether it's a well made movie or not. Is it just a commercial movie or not. Costume, cinematography, dialog, set up. All of these... The director's work I would say.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Of course it does. More than any other genre. I think sci fi is mostly about our future than presence or past. So when you watch a period piece it's full of motifs and characters that make sense and how they interact. But sci fi is about the social... where are we going to be if we're like that right now. It's not about the capacity of design or make up but where the community is driving at. We have a potential to use things and sci fi is looking at it.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Majd Chosen pseudonym?: Selbi

Age: 36

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Iraki

Education: MA in Telecommunications Father: Bs degree Ingeneer Mother: Ba social sciences

Occupation: Ingeneer

Father: Managing director

Mother:

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 30

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £15

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting Yes

Blogging Yes

Cosplay Yes

Fan art No

Fanvids Yes

Fanfiction No

### Interview 8. 14-11-18 Isabelle

#### D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?

I watch a lot of science fiction films, it's my favourite genre. I actually think it is Alien. I'm just a huge classic film fan and nothing comes close... Sometimes does... But not in science fiction genre. It's flawless, it's really good. Ridley Scott had some very good films back in the day. I'm very big fan of Ridley Scott. I'm a massive film geek. I really like the fact that when alien first burst out of John Hurt nobody knew that was going to happen. Shock on everybody's faces is just real. If I had to write down my top 50 films probably Alien would be on top.

#### D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?

I feel very strongly about this. It immediately comes to mind. It's Sunshine by Danny Boyle. I hate it that much... To the point it offends me. It's so poorly, poorly set up... The mission is called Icarus. Why would you name a spaceship after something that burns when it gets too close to the sun? Just stupid. Like it's trying to be clever but I don't what the target audience is because the only ones impressed by that would be 12 year olds. I feel very strongly about that.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Quite a few that I would consider meh. That's even harder because those are the ones that don't automatically come to mind. I got one. Interstellar. I liked it. Can't remember that much about it. Can't remember what happened. I remember being entertained at the time but now I can't tell you what that's about. I think that's a good example of meh. I just got another one. AI: Artificial Intelligence. With that little Joel Haley Osment being that little robot. That film was like 3 hours long. It was 2 hours too long. It seemed to have finished and it started again. Finished and it started again. Finished and started again. And I was like: Why am I still watching this? Like... It was good. Obviously, it's Spielberg but it just annoyed me because it carried on and carried on and carried on. They needed to edit it. Maybe it would work better as a series but at the time big budget series didn't really exist.

**D: Yes, it was still before that boom, like.**

Yeah, before the Netflix.

D: HBO actually. The pioneer in really solid series was HBO. They started with Rome, and later Sopranos..

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

I would say anything that has some sort of theme or technology in it that doesn't exist currently. So I started to watch this series called The First. Sean Peann on Mars. And that's in maybe 2023 and technology is quite like ours but not exactly. Or things like Buffy or True Blood. I guess they are kind of science fiction but going more into fantasy. I'm not sure I would consider Game of Thrones science fiction. It's fantasy like. I don't like fantasy. I like Buffy and True Blood. I like things about the vampires.

**D: I think Buffy was meant to be a horror for youth.**

It's not pure fantasy. It's an ordinary girl. With an extraordinary powers. Living in a slightly different world. That's on a borderline to me of science fiction. Anything where technology exists that doesn't currently exists I would say that is science fiction.

**D: But then you also open it up a little further for the whole palette of speculative fiction.**

Yes, and aliens and stuff.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

I think a good science fiction is believable. When you can see it happening or you can really put yourself... I put myself in a position when I'm watching. It needs to be immersive. Going back to Sunshine. My issue with Sunshine is that there's a point in it when everyone who works on that ship is beautiful which annoys me anyway. There's one point where two of the scientists are having a fistfight over one of the girls and it just doesn't make sense. You're on the mission to reignite the Sun with like an atomic bomb and you wouldn't be having a fistfight over a girls. For me attention to detail makes a film really, really good. I feel like that was just quite sloppy. Everything can be fiction, everything can be made up but it still needs to be believable.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

When it's done right – both. 2001 A Space Odyssey. That is definitely art. That is beautiful. Even Gravity, which I wasn't massively mad on, but I saw it in 3D and when you see it in 3D and everything is flying pass you, like debris is flying right pass you. That was definitely cool. Quite artistic to me. And I think it can be artistic because you're doing art. You're drawing new planets and stuff.

**D: So in terms of aesthetics?**

Yeah, yeah.

**D: Do you think that Gravity had some residual symbolism in it?**

Eeeehhh. It was a long time ago and I don't want to see that again because I saw it in 3D. I also have seen the new Tron in 3D. There was no plot in it, it was in 3D so it becomes more of experience.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Yeah, they definitely do. I think they give a good idea where we can be in the future. Like robots taking over and we still continue to do it. I think it is important to have these people looking at the bigger picture.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

They're more important than like rom-coms. I think they show more intelligence and the show more in terms of looking forward.

**D: Do you think it could be saying something about contemporary times?**

Yeah, even a really good example of this is Wall-E, the Pixar animation. They show like the evolution of people and how they are getting fatter because life is more convenient. I think that's really important social commentary on what's happening. It's being taught to kids and I think it's good.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I don't know. I think I've always gone to art house films. More arty ones. I've only seen 2001 A Space Odyssey once when I was 12 years old so I didn't really get it. I'd quite like to watch it probably again. I think now that I kind of realised that I'm a science fiction fan I'm opened to different films that I would go for before. Some that aren't critics' favourite doesn't mean they are bad.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I love it. I really, really love Alien. Just a cult classic to sum it up in just two words. If it's on TV and I'm flipping through the channels then I have to watch it. I can't turn it off.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I can't remember exactly first time that I watched it but I remember not finding it scary. I was about 13-14 and I was in sort of 'nothing would scare me' and I tried to scare myself. My dad told me how scary it was and I was like: 'I'm not going to find it scary' and I just remember being a bit disappointed. There's only one alien hence it's called Alien and I remember watching the second one and thinking that the second one is much, much better. Because there were more than one alien, there was more action, you didn't know where they were coming from. I think the first one is quite slow paced. It's just very, very tense. I'm not sure there is any music in it. I think there's not much.

It was probably a little while until I watched them again because I made my mind and then I decided to watch it not as this film that has been recommended to me. Like without a preconception. That's when I was really wowed. I remember walking away and thinking that this is how it should feel the first time. I wanted something shocking. Blood, guts and gore. But it's not about the gore. It's about the chase and intensity, all that. It was the second time that got me more than the first one.

What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?

**D: You covered that already. So...**

Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)

I do like the beginning when it bursts out of his chest. Because it was so shocking and no one knew that it's going to happen.

**D: Yeah, that was actually cheeky in terms of directing the film.**

Yeah, very cheeky. Actor's faces – they don't know what's going on.

Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?

I think I briefly mentioned it before. When the blips are happening and they're tracking the alien. I think it seems to be like when it's far away the blip is lower and when it's closer the blip gets faster. And I know that The Jaws tune does that the same thing. It basically mimics... When your heart listens to the blip it matched it. When it quickens up your heart quickens up so there is like the actual physical response. That's what your heart does. So I know they used those blips to make your heart go faster.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

There was a poster in black and white. Sam Rockwell. I kind of remember that. I think I picked the poster when I first think of Moon. And I remember quite a lot about the film. It's in my not too good category. I not seen it more than once so I couldn't have loved it but I was enjoying it.

It was probably more a film about loneliness and isolation than it is about a man harvesting Moon for energy. I remember it being quite sad. It's quite a bleak film. That's what I remember about it. Depressing. If you compare to Martian... It's kind of like.. Not empowering but he's very motivated. Moon was very much: he's on his own, he's doing his job, it's very depressing. You know when, like, there's a film about a guy who works in America and there's one of those office... Like the office.. Compartment. Just kind of feels like he was doing a dead end job, is all alone and it's basically that. I actually can't remember... I remember the end. I remember sort of the twist. I remember what happened but I don't really remember the middle.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I only watched it once, it was in the cinema. I remember thinking it was very well shot. Very arty. I remember going with some friends and a friend's girlfriend is a scientist so she was getting very annoyed about the realism of the science behind it. I like seeing films like that on a big screen. With all surrounding sound and things like that. It's quite important. It was good and it was quite sort of sad. You didn't know whether he was going crazy of loneliness or wasn't he.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

We covered that.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

No, to be honest I don't really remember any favourite scenes.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

It was really long ago. When it came out was when I saw it.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Ok so I have quite a strong feeling the other way with Avatar. My instant thought of Avatar is 'rip off of FernGully. It's an Australian animation from like 1993, 1994. It's only an hour and 15 minutes long. It's about these fairies living in the forest and the forest is in danger of being chopped down by deforestation company. One of the guys who works for the deforestation company gets shrunk down to live with the fairies in the fairy world by mistake. He falls in love with like the chief fairy, their world is beautiful and magical. She gets to show him the beauty of the fairyland and why deforestation is bad. Avatar is a complete copy of FernGully. And I know people say that it's a rip of Dances with Wolves but it's not. Even certain scenes from Avatar rip straight from FernGully. There's a scene in FernGully where they're jumping on the lily pads and the colour of lily pads is changing. There's a very, very similar scene in Avatar where she's holding hands and the poodles or whatever change colour and it really annoys me because it's like three hours long which is too long. It's a beautiful, beautiful film. No one can deny that, Avatar is stunning. But it's too bloody long and it rips the film that was made 15 years before that told the same story in an hour and fifteen minutes. And did it better. Honestly, FernGully is just incredible. It's lovely. It's really, really lovely film. And also, you know, in Avatar there's a tree. Like a good tree. In FernGully it's an evil tree. And they cut down this evil tree and it releases this evil spirit. And I think it's voiced by Tim Curry. And that evil tree threatens the existence of this fairy land. It's just basically a big cautionary tale how we should respect our environment.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I watched it later than everyone else. I think I didn't watch it for a little while. I really wanted to, just haven't got round to it. And no one said to me that Avatar has a link with FernGully. It's not like I run to watch Avatar knowing it's going to be like FernGully. I was watching it and I was like: this is the same, this is FernGully. Some arguments against me were that he has this theory, this concept for years and he was trying to think of the way to fund it because of the CGI which was never done before. The FernGully is so much older. It's not just a few years older. He thought he can make it better and he didn't.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

None, because I was just so enthralled how much it is like FernGully. Like it's very, very pretty. All scenes are beautiful. You can't not say that. It's a very pretty film. So I guess that scene with a forest that all sort of lit up. That sort of stands out.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I just felt angry whole way through. When you'll watch... It's the same thing. It's a cautionary tale. It's designed to make you feel like we should be doing something to make things better. I was just like 'agrrr, I've already seen this film'.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I would say Alien, Moon and Avatar. Alien is a classic. You can't get better than that. It's sort of my favourite film. It's just really an example of such a piece of cinema. Because there's nothing like it. It was on its own. At its time... I think 1970 cinema was the best time in the cinema because they were breaking boundaries. They were taking things to extreme like in Exorcist and Texas Chainsaw Massacre. And Godfather. They did things never done before. Godfather was like THE best gangster film. Then you have The Exorcist which is consider THE best horror and I just think like Alien is just THE best sci fi. There's many sort of things that 70s set that it's hard to beat even now. Everything is quite eerie. It's still not as graphic as for example American Horror Story. Exorcist is creepy as hell, it's just horrendous. I went to a catholic church and I watched it with friends and they were drawing crosses on their hands and praying. We all had to go to the bathroom and they all just started praying because they were concerned that something bad is going to happen to them because of watching this film. That's what it does to you and you don't get that anymore. I don't think it's because we became numb to it. I think it's too easy to instantly go for the gore now. And you kind of miss that eeriness. You got that torture porn. It's like in how many ways you can torture that poor girls. You watch on or two and you get bored. It's like 'give me something really creepy'. And recently more and more films are getting creepy. Babadook? It really scared me. That was really, really, really good one. It similar to Don't Look Now in a way. I've not seen it yet though. It' their grief. Is there a ghost there or are they overcoming their grief.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I would like to say cinematography but my counter argument would be that this Sunshine film is very beautifully shot. It's Danny Boyle, that's what he does. Visually it's very stunning film but in fact as a film it's terrible. I think for me it is the script. It is the story, it's the basis of it. You know, you can have a beautiful film but if the script is rubbish you don't really have a film.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think it's better if it does have meaning. If something doesn't have meaning then you come away of it a bit empty. When it has meaning it kind of sticks with you more. It makes it more memorable. Makes you sort of linger on it more. Question things rather than just 'oh, that was a nice hour and a half away from life'.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Isabelle

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 30

Sex: X Female

Nationality: British

Education: Studying BA Father: Architect post graduate Mother: Senior school

Occupation: Student/ part time work Father: Architect Mother: Teacher

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Always

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £8

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes (facebook social media)

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No (used to).

### Interview 9. 15-11-18 Mark

#### D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?

Oh wow. I like a lot of science fiction films. I'd say one of my favourite is The Fifth Element. For multiple reasons. It's got adventure and excitement and some amazing production design. I like the director, he

pulled in Jean Paul Gattie and he pulled in Mobius to do some production design. So he basically brought Heavy Metal production design. It's a bit... When you watch it now, over the years, it seems a bit frothy, too colourful. Like it's really light. So it may not stack up against some darker science fiction. That's one of the reasons it's one of my favourite science fiction films of all times. It has a lot of very humours moments. Kind of a bit more emphatic, sad moments. I like movies that have a bit of spectrum. I'm very encouraged by two shows that are actually series. The Expanse. They took good books and made them into the series. And another book adaption is Altered Carbon. Altered Carbon is a good example of good production values. Excitement, good story. Great science fiction story as opposed to space opera. Difference between the science fiction and space opera. There's a quote by Philip K. Dick. 'The difference with science fiction is that we take a story and at some point it makes a right turn'. Like it takes a turn you didn't expect. An unfamiliar territory. As oppose to the space opera, like Star Wars. It's a classic tale. There's nothing very mind challenging about it. So going back to Altered Carbon: the whole idea of chip at the back of the head and the guy being reborn in the future... You don't know much about him but also he doesn't know much about the current situation. You're in a non-familiar territory. You don't know what's going to happen. You kind of... You know it's going to be in the parameters of physics but that's that. Another good science fiction movie was Cloud Atlas. That movie also, would head down the path and then take a turn. You wouldn't know where the story would go, or what era you're in. So you're scratching your head. I like that, that balance of the movie so that you go back to watch it again and figure it out.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Probably... One of those added prequels to Star Wars. First one and the second one. Episode I and Episode II, especially the one with Jar Jar Binks. That was really a terrible film. Shouldn't be made. I'd probably add some of the Transformers films. And there was that popular series about the giant fighting robots. Pacific Rim. Everyone was really excited about it and it turned out something to be totally targeted for the Asian market. I think it was probably widely popular in Japan. I didn't think it was all that special. It's another example of a technology driven filmmaking instead of science-fiction. So it's not space opera but it's kind of a monster film with science fiction elements. Oh, here's another example of a great science fiction film. Arrival. You had down the road and then you start to realise what's going on. You realise the language she's learning is shifting her back and forth in time. It's a challenging film. I saw it recently. It's really not a big budget film. You can do a lot with not much. When we'll get to Moon we'll probably talk more about it.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Well, I guess there are some science fiction films you could ask is it science fiction, is it not science fiction. The one that come to mind is Truman Show. It is kind of science fiction. You know and honestly, a lot of superhero films are a bit science fiction. It beg a question what is science fiction.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Science fiction film has to have an extrapolation of today into some future situation. I would distinguish between alternate time stories. Science fiction typically is set at some time in future, they are

believable... You have to have a credibility about what could be in the future. You got to have weapons that are futuristic. You will have cars that are futuristic. Take The Fifth Element for instance. You could believe this guy is a taxi driver.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

So that's easier for me. It challenges.. It takes you maybe in a conventional story line and part of the problem with science fiction movies is that you have to in some way identify with characters. It can't all be Jedi knights. Somebody has to be Luke Skywalker. You go down the story and you're challenged. Maybe emotionally, mentally with some event. Something happens, also within the rules but all of sudden you're like 'what's going on, what is happening?'. I think the best science fiction... And take Philip K. Dick. He would write a story about something and then you would totally try to figure out what reality is. It would be science fiction but you're trying to figure out if he's dreaming this or aliens probing his mind... That's what I think when it comes to science fiction movies if they can capture that. This sense of disorientation.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it's both. So if they don't make it entertaining it fails as a movie in general. For me movie has to be at least some degree of... Am I overstating it? Now I'm thinking about movies which aren't entertaining per se. I think the opportunity is there. Within science fiction to do almost anything. So the question is; 'what do you want to do?'. If you can... You can take huge leaps in a production design, in costuming, in special effects... You know, make it very entertaining to watch. And very artistic to see. Blade Runner 2049. There is great scene when he's approaching where Deckard lives. It's got these huge statues. And so that scene is amazing build-up of suspense. So he's using film techniques but in a futuristic setting. Or take the original Blade Runner, when he shows up in the hotel. So he's in the old hotel looking for Rutger Hauer character and it's very dramatic. It's abandoned and futuristic at the same time. You get that disjointed feeling when it could just a cop hunting down a felon but it's in a completely different context. Everything from his gun down to the advertising outside is different... Anyway, back to the art. Each of these scenes has its artistic design, cinematography, music and I think that's where it all comes together... It's an artistic product.

**D: So do you mean this in terms of the aesthetic or the response of the audience that all of this induces?**

Both. Depends what an art is. Art is something that, in my opinion, moves you in some way. Invokes a response. So that response could be 'wow, how beautiful' or it could be 'I feel disturbed by this but I don't know why'. Art changes the person who looks, who beholds it. When feel all out of sudden really sad then you may wonder what makes me sad about this music. So that's the beauty of it. The art that doesn't move me when I look at it... It's like... I just go on to the next piece.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I definitely have seen the arc of science fiction during the course of my life time. So when I was growing up it was dominated by what I call the golden age science fiction authors like Asimov and Heinlein... They were writing very episodically... None of it was very... None came up with some divisions in science fiction that exists today. So in 70 and 80 it became blended with fantasy. Then you had more of a split. When you look at the science fiction shelf you see science fiction fantasy, hardcore science fiction and then you have these emerging genres like military science fiction. Starship Troopers is an example... He might have almost started it... But a funny thing about Starship Troopers was essentially a WWII book. There were many books about WWII at the time. And then he took it and put it out there. So a good space opera example. There was nothing about that to take a little turn and challenge you. It's just some good shoot'em up fun. Which Verhoeven made a movie of. So he acted with over the top gore and militaristic jingo. It's actually quite good.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (the title)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I think about ... It probably goes back to some of the graphic horror elements... The thing that comes out of John Hurt's stomach... It's shock in space... I think it became iconic because nobody... Even though people made films about scary aliens... Aliens show up... You know The Day the Earth Stood Still. Robot and everything. No one has done like a very graphic, stomach turning scene like that so made it an impact.

Well, we're talking about something that is almost 39 years old. It was the first science fiction film.. It really collided with the movies where you're in the dark house and something jumps out... So no one really treated science fiction like that before Ridley Scott did it. He came out practically out of nowhere. He did one movie before. Was sort of like a period drama. The Duellists. It's a minor film with Harvey Keitel. So kind of looking back... Actually my feelings about Alien are augmented by its sequels. It became a franchise of course. I thought Aliens was even better and I also liked the fourth one, by French director. It all did more than just come out with one of horror like Carpenter. He made more but not many science fiction... And Alien became a franchise.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I think I was just at the end of college so I didn't see it in theatre, there was no movie theatre near us because it was deep in the country. So I must have seen it on tape like a year or two later. But what I do remember is that I was... Like a next day I was taking a shower and I went back in to wash my hair and I saw in the corner of my eye my own hand and I went 'aaahhhh'. Because of that element of something there... You know, I don't really like horror as a genre film... I don't like to be scared but that was one of the films that had this visceral reaction. Another thing that stands out about this film is a strong female character. Even today there aren't that many films... I think it catapulted Sigourney Weaver into this role of the strong female. And she had strong... Not in terms of physical strength, endurance... But awareness. She was smarter than people around her. And she grows... So her character changes in a big arch of the four movies.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Covered

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

There's the one at the end when you think that she's safe. Everybody has been killed, it's all quite... It borrows that code from horrors, like it's not really dead but it's coming back... So I like the whole scene because it builds up the tension, it's really masterfully done.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Like Giger... Like the production design. ... So clearly the Alien's production... Like the alien's design was taken from Giger's work who really came out in Heavy Metal. He made Heavy Metal before Alien for the French magazine. The animated film came out years later after the magazine. So Heavy Metal magazine had all these stories and images that were a part of later films and one of them was Alien. I mean... That's a good crossover between... Yeah.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (the title)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Moon sort of pushed envelope a bit around science fiction. I found it a bit slow movie. It's a bit claustrophobic in a way. It's a... There's nothing more... Nothing particularly futuristic about it except for that he's on the Moon. And at one point I thought to myself that maybe he's not on the Moon. I've tried to figure out what's going on. Tried to fit... So it is a good example of a science fiction that I was talking about. A bit like Philip K. Dick story. We're waiting for event. He's waiting for this event. And all this shit starts going on as I recall. It all starts to happen. You are wondering if he's actually sane... It's really kind of more an internal piece that has a futuristic setting, like for a science fiction setting. Which is perfect. That's great. As even... We are going back to Philip K. Dick but he was almost 'ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances', typically in the future... Something is going... weird... One of my favourite books is Eye in the Sky by Philip K. Dick. They all sort of mash together a little bit. But there are few books that I think are really good. I think it's clear that... They can take the elements of the short stories and take them to the logical conclusion just like Blade Runner did. Just like Paycheck... Total Recall... Imposter... It's a classic one, I was thinking about that recently.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember thinking.. Because it's slow paced there are some scenes of him moving around in his interior habitat and it's almost no tension building, it's almost like 'what is going on?'. Trying to figure it out. So I do remember feeling that... What's going to happen, what's the real situation here. It dawns on you that it's not straight forward. You know they won't replace him, it's not actually going to happen... The thing that just jumped to my mind... Gravity. I think it was an underrated film. It has a scene when she's half way... She somehow made it to the pod, George Clooney shows up and then you learn after that it was all in her head. So it's like the opposite. It's like you have a scene that didn't happen and at first... I was like 'wow, this is great'. It's like the opposite. It was only after it happened I was like: 'ok she's going insane'. So Moon... It's a one person's journey. So not all science fiction needs to be a cast of thousands... Loads of characters.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**I had none. Somebody told me it was a good film and I haven't read anything about it...**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I only saw it one time, some time ago... I seem to remember... Him driving out... It was interesting to think about it... I think at one point he goes out and he finds a body. I remember this scene in particular because I was thinking how does he get out, how does he get in. What if he will run out of gas, of air.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think the station. The habitat that he was in seem to me it was deliberately claustrophobic. It wasn't like.. There are other movies, particularly on big ships, where they kind of make it more open. But here it's just tiny, very small space.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (the title)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I have to admit... I think of it as being a bit of a high budget, glossy film. I found it pretty shallow. It was... So Cameron made it after Titanic, yeah? He had loads of money so he could... The time came when he could actually.. He'd been working on it for years...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

So I remember going to see it in the theatre in 3D, it was an early 3D. It seemed to me.. The first scenes, the first section was really... It gets set up, the hero gets an opportunity... In the middle section when it launches to the actual planet side of the adventure it seemed almost animated. It was like an animated feature so my memory of it was of the animation and honestly the whole story is another good science

fiction example. Whole story is just lifted from the new world... Basically Indians, the americans... In their natural habitat... And everything gets stolen by the big corporation.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It was heavily built up. I expected it was going to be... Will blow your mind, futuristic 3D... Space extravaganza, whatever... I think probably it didn't impact me because it didn't challenged me the way I would like... You know in contrast I would have to mention The Abyss which is another film by Cameron. So that film was much more... I think it was a much better film. A lot of people don't like it. Part of the reason people don't like it is that it has few very gripping scenes. So you have this tension provoking scenes and there is an alien presence and you don't know if it's dangerous or not. So Avatar didn't have much build up.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Yeah, actually there is a lot of in the middle, swooping like. But I kind of like the very beginning when he comes in and I think he's in training or something. They're trying to teach him what's going on... I think that actually 3D was handled much better in that first section. I think that's part of the reason why it didn't succeeded as well as if... You didn't really empathised with alien characters and yet you have human becoming an alien character so kind of your empathy is ripped away a little bit. I felt like that. Once he became sort of a creature I kind of lost the link that I had... Just jumping around...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Well, I think the section that I mentioned. At the beginning you meet Sigourney Weaver in her character and he is a wounded service man so it's deliberately set up to sympathize with his character He's brother was gone, he doesn't want to that... So you are being manipulated a little bit to like that character but as I said that was lost later.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

That's difficult. I think I wouldn't give any of those films four stars. They're all like three star films to me, in a way. I guess the best one would be Alien. The worst of those three... It's a tough call... I mean... Probably Moon... Because even though I enjoyed it and everything I can't see myself watching it again. There's no.. Since there's a twist to the plot and everything is non-exciting, so to speak... I would only be watching to experience it... The details.. Maybe to look into when the things were hinted.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I'm usually looking at the production design. What choices have they made to make the whole environment realistic... Captivating visually and non-distractive... They usually... My favourite films have just interesting background so I can just pause and even just look around... The cabin or the little landscape to see what's happening. It's very difficult... You can't pick something deliberately anachronistic... Although sometimes we do for purpose... Like Blade Runner 2049. Once he finally finds Deckard, that home that Deckard has is a fascinating place. It has lots of fascinating artefacts that he collected and some of it is old, some of it is new... That's the kind of thing I really kind of like... That depth of it. If you haven't spent much time or effort on a production design it kind of shows. Often.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yeah, it has to have something that makes you think. It goes with that right turn business. Otherwise it's just blooming and zooming. Big, big splashy events. Pacific Rim, Transformers. I feel like Transformers is an example when they want you to feel these are cute characters, or something like that, and it's like 'oh my God...' [non flattering]. It's kind of overtaking a lot of superhero films. Which are right at the end of their time. You have to have something different. Like a more successful superhero film like Deadpool. You have like a sarcastic, brake the fourth wall, goofy. Aquaman and Captain Marvel are gonna bomb because no one wants big, shallow films. So it has to have some sort of meaning.

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Mark Chosen pseudonym?:  
Age: 60  
Sex: X Male  
Nationality: USA American  
Education: ME Father: An Anglican priest Mother: MA  
Occupation: Retired (worked in technology) Father: Priest Mother: A housewife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 50 years  
Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month:  
Sponsors a sci fi author, generally about £30  
Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:  
Conventions No (a couple in past)

Collecting merch	Yes
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	Yes
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	Yes (few times but mostly blogging about traveling)
Cosplay	No
Fan art	Yes
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	Yes

#### **Interview 10. 15-11-18**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Oooh. That's hard. Probably Alien. I think because it made quite a big impact on me when I was a child. It was one of those films that actually managed to get into my head and scare me. Really, like... I've never found ghost films and supernatural horror really scary because I don't really believe in supernatural because I've got quite logical, analytical mind. The eerie horror doesn't really scare me. I suppose it's a natural horror so... You know like creature feature and science fiction. Stuff that could actually be plausible and you could, you know, you could imagine somewhere in the universe there being a supreme predator. Like the alien. Also the fact that it was so well executed that even now, 40 years later, it hasn't aged badly. There are some films probably 10 years old that dated badly and look horrible but Alien is so well done... Also I 'm quite a fan of H. R. Giger who did the art work. I've got a book of his artwork somewhere. He's done some really weird stuff. Some of the imagery he has created is really bizarre.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Oh God... Hmmm... I've watched some really bad... There was some actual trash made so I tend to forget really bad ones... I was very disappointed with that Luc Besson film...

##### **D: Valerian and the City of 1000 planets.**

Yeah, because I'm huge fan of The Fifth Element so I was expecting big things. And it never really... Just for whatever reason, had an impact. It was a forgettable film. There were times in it when it was quite rambling, the plot wasn't going anywhere. So yeah, I'm just quite disappointed with this film.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

I suppose Jurassic World... What was the sequel to Jurassic World?

**D: Jurassic World Fallen Kingdom.**

Yeah, very bland, very mediocre. I really didn't... that kind of verges on being bad but it was kind of watchable I suppose. It's interesting because a lot of people slate, are generally hated, that I really like. You know The Island of Doctor Moreau with Val Kilmer and it was a very last film of Marlon Brando. Or one of the last films he ever did.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Oh that's a good question. I think a science fiction is any film which gives a kind of a vision of what might be. That could be in a technological sense or... I suppose you got two different types. You've got glimpses of what might be in a technological sense which can be considered as science fiction so you've got space travel, time travel, advancements in robotics. But then you've got what could be in the sense of 'what could be out there'. Which is also science fiction, so alien life, etc.

**D: Do you think science fiction somehow could be about present time? The world we live in now?**

Well no because then it would be science fact I suppose. I think it has to be predictive, its nature.

[he doesn't seem to be getting what I meant] It has to be speculative or predictive.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

What I said is what I like about it the most.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think science fiction is made purely for entertainment. But then it can be an art form. I think it moves to being an art form when it has a degree of originality and creativity. And you know, a skill that goes to it. If it's just a mass produced, trashy... It's just entertainment.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think science fiction is quite important. I remember watching Star Trek New Generation when I was growing up. Which was a hugely successful series, very long running. It was very much in a tradition, a Star Trek tradition of pushing social boundaries and exploring ethical ideas which you could never explore in a kind of a non-fiction setting, or I suppose in normal fiction. As oppose to science fiction. So there is that aspect. But also I think maybe... It will sound a bit crazy and tinfoil hat... Maybe science fiction is preparing us for the future? Because I remember when I was growing up... When I was first in

school there was no internet. Computers were very basic, like a grid type screens. I remember when smartphones first came up, mine was like a brick. And now... You know. Like voice recognition technology? That was science fiction. When I was a child that was science fiction. Now it's everyday life. Now you ring a company and you speak with a computer that recognizes the words that you say. So... I think science fiction prepares us for the future and gets us thinking about what's next. And maybe even inspires innovation. Sometimes science fiction can act as a warning. Like Children of Men or The Day After Tomorrow... Or what day we may contact an alien life. How will we react to that? Will we see them automatically as an enemy?.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I think it perhaps broadened. I think in the beginning actually it was more of the dinosaurs films, like the really old dinosaur films. Stop motion animation. Well, I kind of went back to dinosaurs. My early interest was like One Million Years B.C. Plastic T-Rex. And I liked the original King Kong, I watched it every time it was on. So from that I went to aliens, I started reading more science fiction.

**ALIEN**

What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?

The definitive science fiction. It's just a classic. Something that I can enjoy and return to multiple times. There aren't many films that I can do that with. Come back to it and to see more details and appreciate them. I think it's a good example of a film as a craft, as oppose of just producing something just for money.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I think I just remember being quite overwhelmed by how realistic it was.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

it quite scared me as a child... It was quite realistic and quite believable. And also Aliens was very much like that. That really scared me as a child because it was like a personification of a bogeyman with the story of Newt. Aliens was more horrific because a lot of it was what you didn't see than what you saw. And also you have an implied whole backstory of the company people being there as a colony and trying to make a new life for themselves. And they're all wiped out by this monster, the real monster. So that implied backstory makes it more horrifying.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I liked scenes with the android very much. It's a bit gruesome. The scene when Ripley reactivates him when he was ripped to pieces. It's quite gruesome and then she like deactivates him at the end. It's kind of recreated in Alien3. She retrieves what's left from Bishop and reactivates him to get the information.

It was different because she kind of had a mutual respect with the android in Alien3 whereas the android in Alien was pretty much the malevolence. She didn't really have any respect for alien. It was just a villain. And of course the scene when Ripley is alone with the alien, in the pod. The tension is palpable. You can imagine yourself being in this situation.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I'd have to go back to that scene when Ripley is alone with the alien. It's designed to tap into our most basic, primal, animal nature. The fear of being pursued by the predator. The alien is camouflaged. It's a dark environment. The actress is wearing very little so she's very exposed and very vulnerable. She looks vulnerable. That makes you empathic. We tap into... We emphasize with the character, the protagonist.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

What is that film? Is that the one that he's the only person on the planet and then there is a twist ending... He's a clone. I have seen it but it has been a while. It's not very fresh in my mind.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Main thing I remember the twist, when it turns out that he's just a cog in a machine really.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It's a clever film, it's a thinking film, I suppose, as oppose to a film which is just all about special effects. The explosions and a gore... It's a thinking film but I think there were a lot of science fiction films that were on similar themes. I watch a lot of shorts. Up and coming film makers. And the this theme of somebody alone on the outpost. And there's something not quite right is repeated quite a lot.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I remember very little of it other than the twist at the end.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think the dreadfulness of his existence. The fact that it's such a bleak place. You can empathise with him.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I think visual spectacular. Immersive experience, I think it was designed to have that wow factor and to look amazing and I think it achieved that.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember going to see that in the cinema because there was a buzz around the film, everyone wanted to see it and yet it delivered what it promised. All the luminescent life and all that.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Underneath of the special effects there's a very basic storyline. And, you know, the good and bad, the underdog and the man's greed make you feel angry seeing something beautiful being destroyed to exploit it. There's this element of it. It left me angry that something wonderful is being destroyed again. That's a repeated theme.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Probably when he's exploring the planet. When we first get the scene when it's get dark and it all lights up. And the scene when you have a view of Pandora, floating mountains. I think that's a signification of when science fiction becomes art. Because of the craftsmanship that goes into creating that other world. And then bringing it all to life.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The whole thing is just made to inspire awe.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Alien, Avatar, Moon. I think Alien has it all. It's got the visuals that maybe have dated a bit but then it's like comparing apples and pears. Alien is nearly 40 years old now whereas Avatar is relatively recent. So, will Avatar stand the test of time in the same way Alien has? You know, in 30 years' time. Will people still get that wow factor from Avatar? Already graphic have got... Better. CGI has improved. Alien has got it all. The attention to detail, the visual realism, storyline. Unique and original at the time.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I think it has to be believable.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think it can just be entertainment. I think it certainly helps to engage the audience if it has meaning. It gets the audience drawn in if it has meaning.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Ben

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 39

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: Higher

Father and mother: Basic school

Occupation: Selfemployed, horticulturalist; Online retailer

Father: Engineer

Mother: Housewife/nursing part time

Both retired

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 35

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £0

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### **Interview 11. 15-11-18 Jeffer**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

I don't know if I can pick one but Terminator 2 would be very close to the top. It is action from beginning to the end. The CGI was ground breaking for the time. It was a good story. The stunt work was unbelievable. The old time stunt... The physical stunt work really impressed me. I also like a lot Fifth Element. One of my favourite films. Those two may be close for the top spot. But I also really like Aliens. Robocop, I love. And Total Recall. They're films I like to watch over and over again. They're smart. They're smart films, not just action. You can tell the directors and the actors cared for making a good movie. Yeah, I'd have to pick Terminator 2 if I'd had to pick one film.

The plots are smart. The characters are smart. So much drama depends on stupid people. I like my heroes to be smart. I like my villains to be smart. You probably saw some films where characters are stupid. That's my problem with horror films. Most characters in horror films are stupid.

Good dialog, some good lines. Those movies I give, people quote from them. They have such a smart dialog that people want to use that dialog in the real life. Sometimes as a joke. Usually as a joke.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Apollo 18. Oh m God that was awful. I went to the theatre with my Nephew. I don't remember what we were gonna watch but it was gonna to be a good movie. But they changed the times. They were different on the internet. So we either had to wait an hour and a half to watch the movie we wanted to see or we could watch Apollo 18. We should have waited, Apollo 18 was awful. Aliens that look like rocks. So when they bring the rocks into the spacecraft the alien rocks attack. It was awful.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Well, everything else. I think most science fiction films are probably mediocre. There aren't really that many that are awful. You may have 10% awful and 10% really great and the other 80% are mediocre. If you'd shown me a list I might change my mind but just based on my feeling right now that's what I think.

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Science has to be prominent. Not necessarily space but space happens a lot. It has to be speculative. One step beyond what we know is true. It happens to be maybe. Like this might be true but we don't know it. Or we know it can't be true but it's gonna be a good story anyway.

#### **D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

The same thing that makes a good science fiction makes any film good. It's a plot that makes sense, which is logical. That doesn't leave any questions unless it's supposed to leave some questions. You have characters who act logically. Which means that if they're scientists they're smart and not stupid. For me personally, I can't say... Generally I prefer action films but I do like dramas. Like Dangerous Liaisons. No action, very little action. It was a very good drama because the characters were smart. They were believable even if there was some action. That kind of to me is what makes a good film. And in science fiction you throw in some science that may or may not be true.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think anything that a person does that's creative is art with a small 'a'.

**D: When is it the one with a capital 'A'?**

I don't think it exists. Art was created by critics. Art is your soul expressing itself in a creative way. So anything a person does that tries to express themselves is art. Now people who do that only for money are not making art. I think the entertainment has to be films and books and music. Or plays. I don't think photographs count as entertainment. Or I don't think paintings count as entertainment. They are purely art. Films can be art but they are always entertainment even if the art is entertaining. That's how I define it.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Yes but only because they want to. For a long time, possibly for over century or longer, science fiction has been used as a mirror to society's problems or future problems. And they matter in that way because they try to matter in that way. I don't think that's a natural element of science fiction. That is the choice of the authors.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I don't know that it has changed very much. I'm less tolerant of stupid characters now. And I probably am a little more willing to try things I might think I won't like. I tried to watch Life. I stopped watching it when they broke the protocol to save the guy trapped in there. That's why the protocol is there. As trained scientist they should know why the protocol is there and therefore they should follow the protocol. When they acted stupidly I stopped watching. The problem is compounded in that movie because we've seen it so many times in movies in books. If that was the first time anybody had even thought about that I could forgive that mistake. Because you can probably name ten movies easily where someone broke the rule and bad thing started happening.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Excellent film series. Just the first film... A science fiction horror movie that was well done. That was a good taste... An example of characters acting believably. You had people who were confused, people

who wanted to get paid, people who were scared, people who panicked and didn't do anything. And a working group dynamic.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

No, I don't have any idea... I've seen it probably a dozen times... I couldn't tell you the first time. I could tell you when I first saw it. Probably a couple years after it came out, maybe the same year. I'm sure I remember the chestbursting. Even now I get anxious when the monster is hunting them and they're hunting the monster. The tension was really well done. The thing that was well done is that the film answered questions it needed to answer and it didn't tell you more than you needed to know. We don't know where the aliens came from exactly. What the astronomer was? [he means a space jockey but he's right, we don't know]. There were a lot of unanswered questions but that was ok because it was supposed to be that way.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it?**

I don't remember. It's been a long time. It's been 35 years probably. I don't remember. I had heard good things about it. I probably have read some articles about it that didn't give away any secrets. And whatever I read or heard about it from friends I don't recall anything specific about any of those but I remember I was reading science fiction magazines at the time. Magazines about science fiction. Not stories but articles. So I went in expecting a good thing because I've read good things about it. From the films that I saw... The uniforms looked like something that people wear in the space ship. The technology was used like really it would be. And I probably saw a picture of the alien and I thought it was just fabulous.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I don't think I learned enough about it to influence me before I went. I think I learnt enough to interest me. And I thought the film was better than I expected it to be.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think my favourite scenes are the ones when it's a surprise. They come out of nowhere. You know at some point it's going to be a big alien running around but you're completely surprised with chestburster. And you're totally surprised that Bishop is an android. But this is my favourite: when Ripley reads on the screen that crew is expendable.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Of course. All horror movies are designed to make you tense or anxious or scared. Like a lot of horror movies: when people are walking around, whether they're looking for a monster or not, you know there is a monster and they don't know where that monster is. It's always a tense moment. You don't know when or if the person you are watching is going to meet the monster. It adds the tension to the scene. I

don't think that Alien had a philosophical message. I think it was pure entertainment of the horror variety of science fiction. But if you consider it with the later films, not the prequels, just the original four films, the message could be that the corporations only care about the money, they don't care about the workers. But I don't think that it's necessarily present in just the first film. I mean, it's there but I don't know if that's the message.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Very inventive idea. That was totally original to me. No other films like that or stories like that. I've never seen them or read them. And it was as close as I see it to the original idea of the story.

**D: Why exactly was it a novelty to you?**

Because of the premise. You have a human who is working not knowing that he's just one of who knows how many clones. And then he has to... Yeah that part is a little Blade Runnerish but it's a similarity. It's not derivative. The story is: how do you deal with yourself and the fact that you are not unique? That to me is the message of the film. How does the human being face the fact that they are just a thing, not unique? My inclination is that the author meant that we are special when we find a way to make ourselves special.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I saw it more recently, maybe five or six years ago. It is what we call in America a 'potboiler'. Which means that everything seems to be nice and quiet and a little thing seems to happen. And it becomes more interesting. And then more and more things happens and the pot boils.

[Google says something completely different].

And it's a different thing that's happening and you had no idea at the beginning of the film. I was surprised. In fact I thought I may stop watching it because it was boring. I don't remember that. I wouldn't say that it is exactly true but it could be true. But I just don't remember how quickly things develop. You kind of wonder at the very beginning if you pay attention and if you are a film person who thinks about what they are seeing as opposed to just sitting there and just enjoying what they're telling you. You think: what is he doing there all by himself. Why is there one man in this entire giant Moon operation.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

No, I don't have any. I haven't seen it in at least two years. I recall some scenes but I can't say that any of them really are my favourites. There are the ones I remember because they were shocking. Like him seeing the face of the wounded guy for the first time. But I wouldn't necessarily call it a favourite scene.

It's just a shock the way it's done. It's not a bad thing because it moves the story forward. It's not done just for shock value. But it's a shocking scene. That's the best type of surprise that moves the story forwards. That you never saw it coming.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Don't remember

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Amazing CGI is the first thing I think of. It doesn't mean very much to me and here's why:

I thought it was a gorgeous film but the first time I saw it I came out feeling overwhelmed by my senses. By my sight and my hearing because it was just so much. Especially when it was bright. When I was watching I didn't feel it was too bright. But it was just bright everywhere. Like going to the alien world. I thought it was a good aspect of the world building. But I think that it detracted in my experience from absorbing the story. A little bit. I didn't think the story was complicated. I've seen that story many times. You have the civilised men interacting with the "savages". There's more to them than the civilised men think. He takes a new cause, betrays his people and there is a war. And the "savages" just win the war against the technological society. It's a fairly routine story. It's well done here with the technology that Cameron used. I only prefer to see the more original story. With the same setting, you could use the same characters. I just thought it was a... I would give it probably a B+, not an A. Because I saw this story before.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Covered

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Covered

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The fight at the end between the sergeant and what's his name. Jake. What I liked about that scene was the inventiveness of it. The sergeant did not give up. When something went wrong he moved to the plan B. When that didn't work he moved to the plan C.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Oh sure. It was manipulative in several ways. I feel like sergeant in the mech suit killing the panther thing was manipulative. He need to die because he hurt the animal. Which is not to say that's a bad thing because that was logical take on the story. But just pulled out of nowhere to make hate one character or to make you love another character. That was in the character of everybody involved in this fight. I thought it was a little manipulative.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I would say the order that you have given them: Alien, Moon and Avatar. But they're all pretty close. They would all probably be in my TOP25 of science fiction films that I've ever seen. They try to accomplish different things. Alien is a horror movie, Moon is a drama and Avatar is an action film with moral. When we talk about Moon, it has a moral. Alien, I don't think it has any moral whatsoever. There's no moral to the story. It's a 100% entertainment. I don't think there is any social relevance in it. Moon I think has a message that could be culturally significant but I don't think that many people have seen it. I have never heard of it. I found it on cable and I don't know why I watched it. I might have just finished watching Sam Rockwell in another film and I decided to see Moon. I shown it to my nephew and he said he never heard of it.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I probably focus on story the most since I'm a writer. Stories which have plot holes just annoy me. After that it probably varies on the film. There are different things about different films that will get your attention. A lot of people focus on cinematography and 2001. To me the story is more intriguing about what's happening to HAL. What is happening to him throughout the film. He's a perfect computer that's wrong. And how the humans have to respond to that. I liked how the humans don't say 'Oh HAL you have a problem'. They're smart about it. They don't warn him what they're doing. They go to action knowing it's a serious problem.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Well, it does to some people. I think science fiction is a form of fiction asking questions people should be asking because people are stupid and they don't think about these questions about someone tells them to. Most people. So I think that's why it's a good thing. It doesn't really matter to me personally. I'm a very introspective person and lots of people told me I think too much. So for me films can just be entertaining without moral message.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Jeff

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 57

Sex: X Male

Nationality: American

Education: 3 years of college

Father: 1 year of college

Mother: High School

Occupation: Author (adventure fiction)

Father: Oil company executives

Mother: Housewife

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 45 years (started reading sf in high school)

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: Not currently due to economic reasons

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch Yes (as a teenager. Then the most recent is a year ago. Christmams James T. Kirk T-shirt

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes (4 or 5 groups on facebook)

Seeking info

about new SF projects No

Tweeting No

Blogging No (but does about own writing)

Cosplay No

Fan art Yes (for private purposes)

Fanvids No

Fanfiction Yes (wrote a Star Trek)

### Interview 12. 16-11-18 Igor

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Not much surprise there because it's more than one movie. It's 2001 of course and on the other hand there are those two movies by Tarkovsky: Stalker and Solaris. I've seen Stalker recently because it did play in our cinemas I didn't want to watch it on TV because I know you have to watch Tarkovsky in the cinema. People say that if there's no monster or alien in the movie then it's not a science fiction movie. I say on the contrary. If there is just monster or alien it's not really a science fiction movie. In science fiction movies man is not facing alien but he's facing himself. Not necessarily himself like in Moon but like in The Day the Earth Stood Still, I mean the original one. Mankind faces itself. Or you have Forbidden Planet. You also have facing himself subconsciously. You have here now these movies don't present aliens. You cannot see aliens because every alien that you see is just a mask to what you see.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Hard to say. Because I usually don't tend to watch the worst ones. No, I forgot if there even was one. Of course nobody like Episode I of Star Wars. I cannot say that I remember any worse film. It took itself too serious. It had to tell a tragic story of a young boy gone wrong, going to the dark side and it didn't had it... It wasn't as lively as the original trilogy. Han Solo with his one liners, C-3PO and R2D2 as a comedic duo... You have a little bit of it... And here everything was very serious. Like Peter Jackson's Hobbit. It's a children's book and it was made like a very... Something like Homer's Odyssey. No place for humanity in it. It goes deeper than Jar Jar Binks. Or Valerian and City of 1000 Planets. I've read the comic books before and it's nothing like the comic books... Many movies are based on special effects so you don't have a story, you don't have characters, you don't have anything but special effects.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

There are lots of those. I remember the ones that stayed with because they impressed me... And I try to forget some that didn't. I just happened to open my diary from year or two ago and I saw I watched a movie I remember absolutely nothing about. TV show. Space 1999 was average. As a child I adored Lost in Space, you know. But I didn't see it as an adult so I can't say what it's really like. Probably just some cliché story first. Then probably a hollywoodisation of movies. You have to have some romantic relationship, etc.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

It's a movie where primarily man is facing himself. Even if.. Enemy Mine. One is human and another is not. In the end this human character has to change to bring the story to the end. So this is the first thing. The second thing is that it is not mash-up. It is not another genre put in space. I would say that Starship Troopers is a war movie in space. Ok if it's comedy, parody. I like Red Dwarf. Because they make parody and when you saw some vintage Doctor Who, fourth Doctor series with Tom Baker, then you saw they made a parody of some ideas from Doctor Who. And the idea of series is not aliens. Whatever they encounter in space is from Earth. Important thing is not to 'transport something else to space'. I mean the original Star Wars was a fantasy put into space. You have a simple boy, "a Frodo", who saves the galaxy and all.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Man facing himself. Ok. Not against aliens. Just aliens need to be very rarely shown. Because Stanislaw Lem, who wrote Solaris, his idea is that if we meet an alien intelligent form the first problem will be do we recognize it as such and then how do we communicate with it. That's what Solaris is about. There's a problem: if you present an alien life form very human like.. It's ok in Red Dwarf and some older movies from 50s and 60s but today not really.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. If you take science fiction to a broader sense you can find art in there and entertainment. Stalker is art and Star Wars is entertainment. Even Alien is entertainment although it has some political moment put in. Stalker... It speaks about problems more in general than those entertainment films. In Stalker there was a professor and writer. One was a scientist and another was a creative one. They spoke all the time about their goals and their worldviews. Plus the stalker himself who speaks for Tarkovsky I believe. They are not concerned about how to survive the attack of a monster in space. They speak about broader things. And in 2001 almost nobody speak anything, it speaks a lot about humans and humanity and specific singular problems.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think they do. They were taken as entertainment in the 50s and 60s and they were mostly double features. Usually not very expensive, black and white productions long after colour movie was a standard. Then in these B movies you have Shrinking Man. The Incredible Shrinking Man, the classic. On the other hand Harold made some monster movies. He made Tarantula, The Creature from the Black Lagoon so it was entertainment but here and there something greater slipped in. After the 50s I think really good science fiction movies really matter. It's the same with literature. It began as pulp fiction and then some authors made it high literature. It depends who makes it and for what reasons.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

In my teenage years and sometime later I preferred science fiction movies that say something about something so the first Star Wars did not impress me so much then. But then later, when I accepted it as entertainment, or as my father said, a fairy tale. Then I changed in that direction that I could accept a good movie. It's probably how you grow up. You're in rebellious age and you want a rebellious content.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Horror. What it means... As I said, for me it's a horror movie that's set in space because there is a monster like in Halloween who is killing members of the group one by one until one member arrives either to kill the monster or to more often not to kill the monster so there could be sequel. That's what it means to me.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It came as a very famous movie so of course everybody had to see it and it was satisfying in the way what you expected from the movie, what I've heard in advance about the movie.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Of course as a horror film, it was a horror. Not a horror as a movie [he says it wasn't a bad film] but a horror as a genre. There were no problems with it. I was aware I saw a movie which... I was aware of its scary elements with science fiction elements. I can't say I had some special emotions like when you go out of the cinema and you still need some time to put things in place.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

More or less everybody knew what it was about. I wasn't disappointed in that way, what they promised they delivered. Well the main point is you want to say it's the best thing in the world, otherwise you won't sell.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

One of the scenes the things I liked was that they never show the alien too much. Because the less you show it the more real it is. I think it was thing attributed to Hitchcock... That the best monster is the one that you never see. So that was the best part. Whenever you try to show the monster it's game over. I don't know if you have seen for instance, The Tenant. It's a horror movie when you think about it but there is no monster.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The moment of the disclosure when the crew member who is the android robot or something, must tell the others that the government wants the alien for military reasons. There's a difference that this is not a horror exactly. There is something political exactly.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It's the last real science fiction movie that I've seen, so to say. Under my definition. It deals with literally men facing himself. Maybe there were films like this later but I haven't seen them. It's a very interesting idea which at the same time has its psychological and political aspects. Psychological bit is that he's facing himself. First because he's alone and then because he's with himself literally. And there is this political part of the story. You have the employer who finds it cheaper to clone the employee than to employ more people.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was watching it at home, it was on video so I didn't see it in the cinema which was a great disadvantage for me. I like seeing films in the cinema. The fact that just one actor and the computer can carry the whole story through without being boring, repetitive or so, and the fact that it's a story calmly told. Nobody is running, nobody is rushing. Everything was calm, and the storytelling was very even and well paced.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It made me think of what I'm just seeing and ask myself what would be my reaction to such situation. First to finding myself and then to the reveal of the truth and seeing that the truth was not the truth known to you but something completely different.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

Not really, because I didn't hear about it except what everybody and every critic said and I knew it before that the director was David Bowie's son. And it was 'woooow, great thing! Who cares about the movie, who cares about the story?' [is being sarcastic].

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Not really, because I've never seen any of his films. I didn't know what he was doing so it could not affect me because I knew nothing about him as a movie director. I'm not interested in this or how much it earned. I'm interested in the movie.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The key scenes are well made. One when he becomes aware of whole conspiracy and the other when he is with himself... When he finds himself.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There were in the retrospect. When you know what's going on all those conversations he had with Earth... Everything was what it wasn't. It inserted something... They were key scenes because at the end they shown what it was about really. Misleading without misleading. Just told the story without conscious attempt to push it in.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Ecology. The term avatar... The first suggestion is, which is not in the film, that the avatar is like Indian in Hindu religion. But as for the movie it's ecology. I like the movie, it's also a political drama put in space. On one hand you have corporation and capitalism and on the other hand you have the nature. They're in conflict. We have more or less traditional story where the main character is on one side and then he realised he's on the wrong side and then he goes to the right side.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was very, very impressive how it was made. A lot of special effects and things like that. I liked the aliens looked like cats. I like cats. Also I try to go hiking every weekend, I learn about the nature, I know some plants and I go for mushroom picking with my father so it was very a tragedy to me when they tornd out the tree.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

The fact is we're all endangered by the constant fight between the business and nature and the nature is losing at the moment which is not a good thing. We are part of nature and if nature is gone we go with the nature. There was already very good sf Silent Running, it's a similar thing. I don't remember having heard a lot about the movie before watching it in terms that could affect my perception of the movie. I just knew who the director was and his previous movies.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The tree falling down. I can't say it's my favourite but it's probably the most impressive scene. And the scenes with the aliens I like them too. I found it very attractive in a way. There was one more thing about the movie that bothered me. All the animals had six limbs. Six legs. Only those humanoids had four. I was wondering what happened with the evolution there. That was intriguing.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

First encounter between the main character in his new form and the aliens. It did have a little bit of cliché. He's someone new coming to society and they don't believe him so he must prove himself. Like the stories of the people who were accepted into some primitive tribes. They must pass the tests of courage, being adult or something. He had to do the same thing there. He was going to try stop destruction but at the end he didn't succeed but there was a happy ending.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Moon at the top, Alien at the bottom and Avatar in-between but Avatar would be closer to Moon than to Alien, so... Alien would actually be fourth, haha. Because Alien is the most obvious crossover genre. Horror in space. It has characteristics that are not necessarily science fiction ones. Other two movies are more science fiction although I think the story of Avatar has political and ecological connotations. It's more of a concern of the humanity what it does to itself. And Moon as a genre is the cleanest of all of them makes it the top of those three.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I mean to make a good movie all the elements have to be good. But the story. You can have stereotypical story that doesn't need the science fiction environment but on the other hand you have how to tell the story. You have directors who are perfect story tellers. Steven Spielberg is a great story teller. That's his art. He can tell the story and it always makes sense. Some directors have a problem with that. And there is also the thing about the special effects. Are the special effects what the movie is about or are they just a way to tell the story in the movie.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

It matters in all art forms. The meaning makes it art. Even some abstract art has some meaning underneath so yes it has to have some meaning.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Igor

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 55

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Chorwatia

Education: ongoing PhD  
/College

Father: Facult of economy (later in life) Mother: Gymnasium

Occupation: Teacher / Academic

Father: Advertising

Mother: Clerk

### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Parents were fans of comic books  
50 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £0

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes (as a teenager but not anymore)
Collecting merch	No
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	No
Collecting props/costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	Yes
Blogging	Yes (but on a non strictly sf blog)
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No (but some private drawings from time to time)
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### **Interview 13. 16-11-18 Max Loosli**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Depends on time of year. It's either 2001 or Alien. 2001 was... I saw it as it came out, it's my era. It was a brilliant visualisation of space, there was lots of realistic technology. Great music and visuals. Great story. It helped that I've read the book before I saw the film so I wasn't as confused by the end. There was some story based on Sentinel, beforehand. Arthur C. Clarke had a short story called The Sentinel which was then developed to 2001... So I did some reading and had an insight before I went to see the film. 2001 is very much a hard science fiction. Alien... I tend to think about it as horror. Just happens to be in space. It was loads of hard technology but it was grim and realistic. It made space ordinary whereas 2001 made space special, if it makes sense. 2001 I would say is artistic. It was a big vision and a big picture. Whereas some of the other films less so.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Oh good God... Probably Battlefield Earth... Either that or some of very, very old B movies. If you remember some of the American B movies that came out in the 50s and 60s.. Black and white Revenge of the Saucer People... That type of thing...

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Well there's an awful lot... Is the Osiris Child? Em... That's possibly not its proper name, it's a fairly recent one... Yeah 2016 science fiction film... And there was a Matt Damon film... Not The Martian, I liked this one but Elysium... That was very average to me. There's a lot of films... And I have to say some of the recent Star Wars films and all of the recent Star Trek films are very generic to me. They don't seem to try... There's no thought...

I quite enjoyed Rogue One.. I thought it was... As long as I didn't think too much about the logic behind doing what they did. I thought it was a really tightly done film. The Last Jedi – bleeh – average. I didn't think much of Force Awakens either.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Good question. It's something different technology, different social structures. It's thinking about what could be. So it could be science fiction not having new technologies in it but it's thinking about social structures, political structures in a different world. Or it could be existing social structures but new technologies, or it could be existing social structures and technologies somewhere else. It always has been a hard thing to focus on. Because a space opera... We had a big discussion in the facebook group what makes a space opera. We had all of these discussions about really something that differentiates a soap opera story from science fiction. It's the scale of the concept.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Probably thought through, logically consistent universe. So everything makes sense, even if it's not that impactful now. Characters who act appropriately to that environment. Who act consistently. So they're not constantly going from being a baddy to being good...

D: Like having some integrity...

That's a very good word for a whole thing. If the whole thing needs integrity. If the concepts is well thought through, if the characters are interesting and act within that context appropriately... If it's got some cool technology, that's always a good one for me. Great visuals, great setting. Brilliant dialog. It needs to be a complete package that I can go: 'Yes, I believe in this'. If it makes sense. That's what makes a good film for me. Something that I'm not always thinking: 'they wouldn't have done that'. This logical flow of action and dialog and suddenly someone has done something that's completely out of [inaudible]. So I think your word of integrity across whole piece is what makes a good film for me.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

It's both. It's entertainment, because films are basically done for entertainment. It becomes art when the integrity of what's being presented is so high... The photography, the imaging, sound, the script work together. And I think when you have high integrity along with pieces you start to move towards the art. 2001 is an example. Could have been viewed... A lot of people viewed it as art because of stunning

visuals.. But if the story wouldn't come together, if the characters wouldn't come together... I don't think it would have been art. It would have been a beautiful looking.

D: It would be form over substance then.

Yeah.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I don't know about society as a whole but in certain parts of society... They matter as expression of group identities. The Star Wars junkies, the Star Trek junkies... People who get really, really upset about recent Star Wars films. They matter to them. So I think they matter to certain elements of society. Culture... Yes. I think science films particularly influence... Impact on culture. So if you're in virtually any business setting and you make comment in the Yoda like voice... Most people will get it. If you'll do a lightsaber act with the noise.. Most people will get it. Even people who are not science fiction fans. So I think culturally, and also last census... Censuses that happened in the UK... Number of people put Jedi as their religion. So I think it forms or impacts culture. Because if you listen to people talking in social setting there's always a little phrasing and the throw aways where they use 'beam me up', they use 'Spock'.. They use references. I watched the original series as a kid. I've never watched The Next Generation... I watched couple of films but that's it. There's awful lot. If you want to have full grounding across the whole you have a lot of watching to do.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I think when I was younger it was very much action. Space ships and what have you. As I got older... I still like action and etc. but it's like my reading. My reading was everything but predominantly hard science fiction. Whereas over the years I became a broader range reader. Some of the softer stuff. I think some of the films I watch I wouldn't have watched 20 years ago. I wouldn't have thought that would be interesting. I've always been a very, very prolific reader. So I used to read everything in whatever subgenre within science fiction. And pretty much I still do. I tend not to now read some of the classic authors that I used to read because it always crashes with what I'm now used to if that makes sense. And I think that would happen with the films as well. I watched some of the older black and white films and some of them hold up. The original Thing. That still works. It's still a sharp, very tightly scripted, very tightly filmed interested movie that still works. But only some of my books are still that good. Some of the things... You watch them and you think 'neeeh'. It's no longer in the group you're with.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

In my mind I see the Nostromo. With the cooling towers and that. The images that come to me when you say 'Alien' it is that image, I forgot the character's name, but when he's in the loading bay and there are chains hanging down... And liquid dripping. When he's looking for the cat and he gets into one of the bays.. Those are the images which I get when you say 'Alien'. I see those images and I think about

the film. The shock that it gave. It doesn't mean... What does it mean to me? It was one of the first films to handle aliens in the believable way rather than... It didn't... Because right until then the films that had aliens... It was effectively a man in rubber suit suit. And this got a bit of a man in a suit but not for the majority of it. So... I don't know, it worked. Alien and Aliens happen to be one of my favourite combination of movies.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Basically, going to the cinema. Being quite tense as I received all that. Really having a jolt when John Hurt had the thing in his stomach. I think it traumatised a lot of people. I was a little bit irritated in places. You know, in horror movies when people are exploring a haunted house they always split up. And you know when they split up they're going to be dead. So when they split up looking for a cat, wandering around in dark places without huge torches... Which is what I would have had. And something in my hand, you know... If you're looking for a very small cat in a hangar... There were things like that that irritated me but overall it was a feeling of tenseness.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

D: Would like to add something to that tension?

Tension, a little bit of a terror at couple of points... I left movie feeling quite satisfied. I remember thinking ... Let's come back to that word 'integrity'. The whole thing held together. That's good filmmaking. Because they got inside our heads.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I've heard some stuff about it but not in any sort of detail. Stuff I heard about didn't stop me to feel any of those things I felt or to enjoy it. And it wouldn't make me feel those things.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I didn't think the shot of Nostromo is what I'd see when you mention 'alien' because it's not a great shot because it's blurred and fuzzy... The scene we were talking about, with Harry Dean Stanton. That struck me as very film noir. The chains and that... It made a very significant image. Visually it struck me. It's something I could see on the art card. And the couple of the scenes with Sigourney Weaver where she's trying to find the cat. And she's with her back to the walls and then round the corner there's one of the aliens... Scenes like that I really remember.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The chestbuster was definitely designed to make you go 'aaaaaeeee'. Which has definitely worked out. Some of the scenes we talked about, like the Harry Dean Stanton. I think it was designed to play on what we all know happens in horror movies. You know, the lone person going into... somewhere where

we know something bad is hiding. And because you knew it would be a surprise if nothing would have happened. What happened to him wasn't really a surprise.

D: It would subvert the cliché.

Yeah.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It's the... I see a picture. Two pictures. Roving... There's a vehicle.. There's the truck and then sort of him in the building. In the control room. In his habitat. When you say Moon, the film. The other thing I have is a feeling like 'yes, that was a nice movie, a nice little film'.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I didn't find it a particularly exciting movie. So for me, as the film developed, it felt like something I've read before. I don't know what. But it definitely felt like a story that I have read before so I wasn't surprised about the cloning. I don't know whether it's a factor of a sheer amount of science fiction that I've read or other science fiction films that I've watched... I generally worked out what the plot is at the third of way in. I watch a lot of other films, not just science fiction. What's the things they say? There's only 7 plots? The films and books. I definitely felt while watching Moon, but the third part I was definitely thinking there was something else than mental illness going on. And before we got to the whole deal about cloning I was already thinking about replication of some sort. Maybe it's the way I read. Some of the authors I read don't write sequentially. They chop and change and you get some views and you get retrospective views but they don't always tell you what it is until later on when it all comes together. So just the fact that he was freaking out and he was all messy... I didn't come to any conclusion about that. To me it was just what he was doing.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It would... It's not my favourite film. It was a good film. Yeah, I came away from watching it thinking it was ok. It's just another film that was actually quite good but it doesn't have any impact on the way I think on day to day basis. I haven't heard anything about it when I found it. I found it online when I was looking for science fiction films to watch. I had a quick glance at imdb to see what it scored.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Not really.. Like I said it was such... Just another film.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think the scenes when he was all beat and rumbling... Were designed to make you think that he was losing it. But in some respects they maybe overdid it a little bit.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Irritation. Because it wasn't a subtle film. It was very clearly anti-corporate, anti-government, pro the environment but in a twisted way... It was a... At times I thought it was a very beautiful propaganda film. There was no subtlety or graduation of the actual opinion. It was either you were either corporate, greedy, military evil, destroy everything and completely nature is wonderful, nothing can be damaged, all in this beautiful world is connected, blah, blah, blah...

D: So the ultimate binary opposition.

Yeah, rather than graduation in-between... It felt very much like these anti-corporate, anti-government pieces... I grew up in the military camp. My father was in army, my two brothers in law are ex-military, friends are military... You know, I've been around. There are as many views and opinions... Across that spectrum, in the military as there are in society. So the fact that corporate-government-military people were all skewed this way and all the scientists, etc. were skewed this way was just ridiculous. Just a token. Two or three guys... Younger, who saw the light and came over to the good side. It just struck me as too simplistic. It lacked the integrity of vision. It was a beautiful film, visually, and lots of interesting technology. The way it flow together... Very nice but... Overly simplistic in terms of its premise.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I thought it looked beautiful. Liked CGI technology, all flying aaround... I found some of the characters just two dimensional.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I heard a little bit about it but I didn't have any expectations.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Not really... I mean some of the scenes when the attack fleet in going on the natives and is intercepted. Some aspects of that. There's a battle, they're jumping from one thing to another and destroying those things. That was quite an interesting scene but overall... Avatar... It's just a form and that's my problem.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There were a few instances with the military commander where he was ordering people around, he was saying what's going to happen and... But they were so crudely articulated, so crudely thought through so it felt to me that that's where they were tried to pull out this filling 'oh, look at that bad military corporate guy'. Cliché, two dimensional characters. It felt to me they were trying too hard to 'ooh, look at the baddie'.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

That order. Alien, Moon and Avatar. Alien best. Moon second, Avatar the worst. Alien had high integrity, realism. Real people as the characters. Moon... Reasonable integrity, interesting character. Just for me a little bit derivative. Avatar.. Beautiful to look at, low integrity. Two dimensional characters and story. Grossly simplified concepts. Avatar is a beautiful empty shell.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

For me it's a combination of... Is the acting consistent with the background.. Background of the music, pictures, graphics, etc. Does the acting fit with all that, does it make a believable character? If the character fits the story and if it makes sense. So it's again coming back to that word of integrity. Without having seen the whole film yet you might feel that there's... Is it developing as a whole or rather disjointed pieces that pop out every now and again. And it's not a problem if they are as long as by the end those disjointed pieces have been shaped to be appropriate. But if you get to the end and all those disjointed pieces are just disjointed pieces then it's just lazy filmmaking.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

If it has no problem. If it hasn't and still have a good story... If it works as both – great. If it works as just one of them, as long as it's entertainment that's great. If it doesn't work as an entertainment but it works great as an allegory then I'm not sure it's worthwhile as a film because it's not entertaining. If that makes sense.

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Max Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 63

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: Secondary Father: Secondary Mother: Secondary

Occupation: IT Father: Military Mother: Housewife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 50 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £75

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes (once, in 80s)

Collecting merch Yes (used to have more but sold some)

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes (used to)

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes (facebook groups)

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

#### **Interview 14. 16-11-18 Steve C**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

It's Aliens. Because of two things. Number one is because of Sigourney Weaver's portrayal of a very strong female hero. There's a very unusual and rarely done in the cinema in the 80s. Number two the military aspect. That military thing appealed to me because it was very much keeping with zeitgeist of the 80s around here. Very pro military. In the same time it shown very prominently that it's not going to be a solution to every problem.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

The later Alien sequels I didn't like at all. I think they just pretty much tried to ride the cash cow. I've not seen prequels yet. Alien 3... Weird story choices they made. Honestly I think William Gibson's script should gotten a fair hearing.

##### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

There would be a few. Twelve Monkeys didn't grab me the way it grabbed a lot of people. I just think the whole time travel thing was overdone.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

The speculative elements I think. They distinguish it from other plot lines. The premise is frequently that science fictions tends to be more of a setting than a genre. When you have something in this setting and misses the point to inform the plot. You can have something in a visual convention that exceeds the genre. You can have a science fiction romance. Like for example Fifth Element which does that very well in a science fiction background.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

The same thing that makes any other film good. Writing, performance. You don't necessarily need to have a very high budget. There were very good science fiction films done without a high budget. The truly good science fiction film has the ability to transport viewer into the universe that is created. That's something that the Star Wars movies made effectively for decades to the point that people have actually decided they wanted to form their own religion. They found it so compelling. Dune franchise didn't manage to do that because of the complexity of the source material. David Lynch tried to make his version and it just didn't resonate well with a lot of people. Jodorowsky should be given a chance to show his vision.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. Because you can have art that entertains. Going back to Shakespeare, he's considered the high art now. But in his day he was just a popular entertainer. It's the history that makes something art.

D: So it's a matter of legitimisation over time.

S: Right. 2001 A Space Odyssey was made as an art film that entertained some people and didn't entertain a lot of others. Its reputation persisted over time that it is regarded as an art film. The original Star Wars movie, Episode IV. It became elevated to art. It's going that direction.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Certainly it has proven to be a driving engine for our society and our culture. Star Trek is very good example. The way the vision has been established which by the way was just a way to make a fast dollar. And then it was elevated into utopian ideal for society that has manifested itself in a way that space program has progressed. A lot of people who work for NASA saw Star Trek as inspiration. The mobile technology. We have handheld electronics all which has been inspired by technology we've seen in the original series. It was amazing from a sociological perspective. It prepared a vision that made people want to execute it. The depiction of women in particular. It's a portrayal of women in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I think I'm these days opened for more philosophical approaches. Action and adventure needs to be there but on its own it hasn't any gravity to it. If you have the excitement and the philosophical questions it drives the attention.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Cosmic horror in both literal and figurative sense. Humanity's best efforts are always going to boom in the universe at large. All the best efforts of the crew of Nostromo are going to fail. The android has betrayed them, the company has betrayed them. It's one alien creature and it wiped them all and one sole survivor has barely survived. When she is revived she finds out her entire family is gone, and the company is still trying to betray her.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was 10 years old, I was watching it on the cable television. The chestburster scene freaked me out. There was never anything like that in the mainstream movie before. Certainly in the underground production but not the mainstream production. There was something Lynch had done, like Eraser Head. I think what really sold Alien was the superior work of H. R. Giger.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It made me wonder just what it would be like if we would get so far in space and encountered something we couldn't handle. And you need to remember the time when space programs were very popular. The Moon landing was pretty much wrapped up. Human missions was very much in general consciousness in the end of 1970s. So, for me, it was a matter of particular interest because that's why my big dream at this point was to be the first man on Mars. So it was like 'What if we do run into something there that we can't handle'. We couldn't rule out this possibility. And there very well still may be the case. There may be the micro life on Mars that we won't be able to handle with our medicine. And now we know that there are numerous bodies in our solar system and outside it that have water, that have means of sustain life and it still might pose a threat.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

I was only 10 years old and I was looking for a really cool science fiction movie and it was recommended to me. By my peers, by the adults as well. There was a lot of excitement built up around it. It did not disappoint.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I think it did. I think a very impressible kid was a built up on a lot of hype and hype delivered. And there were some instances with big hype built around stuff that didn't deliver. I remember when the Black Hole came out. A lot of hype was built around that. I look back at it now and it was a decent movie. But it was a movie made for a 10 year old. Disney marketing. R rated film they ever made. It's definitely worth

seeing. It has some very deep metaphysical themes, much deeper than Disney films are usually noted for.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Chestburster scene is the classic. The scene where Ash is revealed as an android. It's a huge surprise when it really ought not to be, that's the thing. I think that crew should know that he's an android all along. The whole idea that he was an android itself. I don't think it should have surprised the crew. I think this is universe where androids are a common place. People know about them. For that reason I don't think that it would be as shocking as a human operating under the instructions from the company. Like we saw with Burke in Aliens.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Certainly all the scenes aboard the Nostromo outside the living quarter. Living quarters are sort of run down. Like something you would expect them to be living in. But it's still very human. Outside the living quarters, engineering and the cargo... Very dark, very dismal. It's designed to invoke a feeling of 'this place is not safe' and in that they had an alien monster running around.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I think it was a very well done film on a small budget. I thought Sam Rockwell and Kevin Spacey, especially, did great jobs. I did have some concerns with a few plot holes I noticed but overall I thought it did a very good job exploring the theme of consciousness. What it means to be human, what it means to have identity. And also, especially important for today, it explored corporate ethics. How much are we willing to do to ensure a shareholders profit.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I saw some goofballs in the story-writing. First of all the whole operation of lunar operations seems very prone to industrial espionage. All it would take one employee or executive to spill the beans on the whole thing. They had one satellite to monitor whole operation. It's not said that nobody else can send a satellite and see what's going on. Especially at that time frame. AI is a head of security and they can't build an android for the same job that the worker is doing? For a lot cheaper? The human character almost seems superfluous to the whole operation given technology that they have. I'm going to let it slide. Some plot holes are there for the purpose of the story and sending a message. It wasn't that glaring to me because it got the overall message across that there are corporate interests out there that consider human lives disposable. And the original Sam Bell gave an authorisation for his memories and his genetic material cloned. How far did that go? These clones are developing feeling and they're developing a free will on their own. That's something they never addressed in their planning

D: Yes, in their planning. Because that's exactly what the film addresses.

Right. And I enjoyed it quite a bit. It didn't take me long to get wrapped in the universe of the movie. They did a very good job with their world building and their storytelling. In many ways it felt reminiscent of 2001. Just the depiction of the near future where the man is able to exploit the Moon and is resolving many existential questions we know today like energy crisis. It seems like a logical projection into a future which many of us will still be alive to see. Just like 2001 was back in 1968. Along with other technology, video calls, access to space travel. It's becoming real now. And Moon... Fusion was always 20 years away since 40 years ago. But assuming that we do implement the nuclear fusion... The future that Moon posits is very possible. It could come within our lifetimes.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Once we learned that the astronaut was a clone you start wondering just how long this was going on for. It makes me wonder about the regard for human life and universe in general. Is the picture as rosy as Lunar Industries presents at the beginning of the film or are they just sweeping them under the rug? Some people matter more than others. And it really... That film predicted the future in near term. 10 years later we see the same arguments and the guy at the end who questions it could be some corporate or a random idiot on the internet. But the fact is that there is a person on this Earth that is confronted with someone who is 10-15 years younger and genetically identical. That can't be just weaved away. I wonder what the company's contingency was in case the clone makes it back to Earth.

D: They didn't foresee that.

They didn't foresee it at all.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

I heard it was a very good movie and I was not disappointed. It did a very job portraying the future that seems plausible. And the acting was outstanding. Kevin Spacey as GERTY did a very good job as an anti-HAL9000. He was a tool but you can see conscience appearing. He was making sure that Sam survives. Even to the point of breaking company's protocol to ensure Sam's survival So we have an AI that's becoming self-aware. Which brings another ethical issue: how do we treat this AI that is now conscious?

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Yes and no. I was trying to watch a good a film. I had people tell about a good film and it didn't quite hold up for me as much as I expected, Avatar being an example. And I had films I was told are horrible and I enjoyed them. So I take a trusted opinion, I won't make it my sole arbiter whether I will enjoy a film. But having heard numerous opinions about this film made me to seek out this film more. But it didn't necessarily inform my opinion.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The interchanges that Sam had with his wife.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The interchanges that Sam had with his wife. It was definitely designed to elicit the emotion from the audience. It was trying to empathize with this guy removed from his family who was on a back side of the Moon for three years. And it turns out it was a scam, the woman was dead for years... His life was a complete lie.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I think it was a good movie but perhaps it was oversold. Marketing machine of hype and if you watch the movie carefully you'll see that James Cameron has used a lot of elements from his other films. Power loader from Aliens. I've seen certain aspects of Titanic in there. Very much it's a story about class struggle. You have the mineral exploitation company and Navy but also there is a larger story of exploitation of Earth in general. Like in Aliens. That feeds into another 80's zeitgeist of the corporate greed.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Visuals I thought were fantastic. I thought it was interesting how the Navy interacted with the environment. It tried to evoke images of the completely interconnected world and the world is heading towards that with the Internet and the global technology. But in the greater sense, because it's all biological it also had some sexual undertones. It was all connected. But the idea that you are able to subdue a creature by basically raping it.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It made me feel entertained but at the same time it didn't really leave a lasting philosophical impression of anything world hasn't seen before. There was nothing new that hadn't already been explored in other films. We've done the corporate thing at that point, we've done the military sci fi at that point. Exploited the native people throughout other genres.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I had a couple of people I had known hyped up in a way of it being the greatest thing they've seen ever. And at superficial level, yes. The visuals were fantastic, gorgeous. But you ditch the visuals and get down to the storyline and you don't find anything really compelling that wasn't done in Lawrence of Arabia 100 years ago. We saw Heart of Darkness adapted into The Apocalypse Now which Avatar borrowed a lot from. I'm thinking really exploitation of the natives. Like when Belgians exploited Kongo

and it was unparalleled by other European powers. You look at the import export numbers of things going in and out of Kongo. You see a lot of things going into Kongo. Rifles, mosquito nets, everything you need to support the mercenary army for a long time. You don't see a lot of coming out. So they were fighting insurgency and they were trying to keep it quiet for a long time. I see the same thing happening with Navyy in Avatar. The company is fighting insurgency but because Earth is four light years away by the time the Earth finds out what's happened what are they going to do about it.

D: Yes, there is a very good running joke that Avatar is Pocahontas in space.

S: yeah, that's a very good comparison especially that both Avatar and Pocahontas glossed over real stories.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The last scene at the end. Fight with the villain in power armour. That's a very visually exciting sequence. Especially when she comes to saves his butt at the end. I think it keeps again with James Cameron's notion of having strong women carrying his films. We saw it with of course Sigourney Weaver in Aliens films. With Zoe Saldana in Avatar. Titanic. It always the woman who carries the film in the end.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Yes, when they look at the hologram of the sacred tree of the Navyy. That was intended to evoke a lot of imagery, I think. Across multiple religions. We had the obvious native American analogies but also a Christian portrayal of Tree of Life.

D: Well, that's more like Norse than Christian. European.

S: It borrow a lot from multiple ethnographies. So I think that was very deliberate to be able to connect with the culture of the Navyy being very similar to human beings, what we went through throughout the history.

D: So what would it signify that all those resources were right underneath that tree?

S: I think it was signify that they would destroy someone else's home to avoid destroying their own. And that humanity sees their progress as a good thing but ultimately that progress comes at the expense of something else. We kill and is it worth it? The philosophy of the company in Avatar was: yes, it's worth it. Also think of the story of the garden of Eden. Cast out of the garden of Eden for eating from the tree of life.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Alien first. It still holds up, 40 years later as a somewhat realistic vision of the future. And the psychological suspense holds up even after repeated viewings. You know what's going to happen with this whole crew and how it's going to end and still it manages to hold its suspense. Female protagonist

is a big move for 40 years ago. Plus acting. It all holds up. Moon would be a number two. It did a lot with a small budget and really fulfilled the mission of science fiction which is to ask small questions. And I think over time it's going to be recognized as a classic it is. Not a lot of people picked up on it but I think as the word of mouth will work and if we look in retrospective at Sam Rockwell's career and Kevin Spacey.. It will be regarded as one of their best performances, it will boost the attention it gets. It's one of the art house films. It didn't get much attention in box office. Avatar I would put in 3<sup>rd</sup> position because how Shakespeare said: 'sound and fury, signifying nothing' (**Macbeth** Quote Act V, Scene V). It took bits and pieces of James Cameron's earlier career. He had this big ambition for a long time but it didn't hold up because it wasn't anything we haven't seen before. The special effects were gorgeous and that was the end of it. And even now they're dated. He rests the movie on its effects alone.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I focus on the storyline and then I focus on the acting. And then cinematography and special effects. There have been some great movies that have horrible special effects and there have been some horrible movies done with multimillion dollar budgets.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think it does, very much so. Every human endeavour has meaning. It has to be done for a reason, otherwise we wouldn't have done it. So I think that when you write a science fiction story or participate in a science fiction production there's gonna be meaning behind it. There's gonna be meaning you intend, there's gonna be meaning that any person will ascribe to it. Like with any form of literature or art.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Steve Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 50

Sex: X Male

Nationality: USA

Education: MA Father: Community college Mother: Nursing school

Occupation: US Government Father: Marine Corp /Private security/Sheriff departments

Mother: A nurse

### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 40 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: <50 dollars

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes	(used to do 1-3 conventions a year before moving to area with less of them)
Collecting merch	Yes	
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	Yes	
Collecting props/costumes/memorabilia	Yes	
Online forums	Yes	
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	
Tweeting	No	
Blogging	Yes	(sometimes, not in some time)
Cosplay	Yes	
Fan art	No	
Fanvids	No	
Fanfiction	Yes	(but not in a while)

**Interview 15. 16-11-18 Martin**

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

A bit tricky for me to think about that. So for books and for films it's the ones that I repeat watch. I think it would be Alien. I think I watched Alien more than any other film. 20 times, more maybe. I was interested in it even before I have seen it. Because I did go to a convention in 1979 and I loved the crew from the movie... They were there. And they had a lot of models of the sets. And they gave a lot of presentations and discussion on the concept behind the film, the design of Nostromo... Then when it came out it was like a game changer. It was a couple of years after Star Wars. Alien.. The dirty ships, the dripping oil, the mechanics and things... The whole Giger design... And I thought it was just an excellent story. Really you could debate. It's really a horror film in a science fiction setting.

There's one fairly recent one that I enjoyed very much. It's called Monsters. In South America, in Mexico. Real low budget and he's gone to do an expensive Hollywood things. I think it was less than 100 thousand dollars... I really enjoyed that. I didn't like Annihilation which it's similar to. I think it's a much better version of Annihilation.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

You got me there. Probably some of the recent worst I didn't like. Interstellar I didn't enjoy at all. I didn't like the science in it. They go the time dilation near the black hole so that was fine but then this guy is desperately trying to get back to his daughter who is his only reason for living and he is her only reason for living. And she spends her whole life trying to contact him and he meets her in the hospital bed, spends 10 minutes with her and he's like 'ok, I got to go now, bye'. I can't think of any other recent ones. Avatar I didn't like either.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

It's a bit tricky to think of... I watched it last week. War of the World, the recent remake with Tom Cruise. And the same with the other remake. The remake of This Island Earth. Maybe 8 years ago... With Keanu Reeves...

D: That was The Day the Earth Stood Still.

Oh yeah, sorry.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

That's a very good question. What makes a book a science fiction book, we have that every week on this forum... It's really hard to say... You know when you see it but it's really hard to define it to the exclusion of something else, you know. A lot of people would say that it extrapolates current science into other possibilities... But it doesn't for me. Like... A lot of science in science fiction is really gobbledygook, there's no real science behind it. I would say... It's fantasy without magic. Has anyone defined what a fantasy film is? I don't know. It's when things happen that do not happen in real life, so far, but are not based on spells or magic. Or that sort of thing. There's usually some attempt at grounding it in real laws of physics or something like that instead of just simply saying 'he weaved his hands and the monster appeared in the room'. You would dressed it the other way. With no more logic you would say the monster was an alien or it came from another dimension. You attempt to eliminate the magic side of something that doesn't happen in the real life.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

The script all above all. What elements you need to have in it are sort of less important than having a good writing.. You can get a good TV series where some episodes stand out because they're written by someone else with exactly the same characters, the same setting and everything else. And yet one writer steps in, does one episode and it's great. It stands out differently. I don't think there are any specific plot elements or physical characteristics... I would maybe say good characters and a good plot make a good science fiction film.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Entertainment. I just want to be entertained. I certainly don't want to be... Have a certain concept pushed onto me very self-consciously. A lot of recent tv series and films... They try to get a message across to you.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Hmm... It depends on what level... I think they create a lot of happiness. I think they can get a lot of people interested in things.. It's hard for me to say. Probably when I was young a lot of the things that I watched at the cinema and read about in science fiction probably influenced me to go towards science later in my life. Maybe that is happening now with 10, 12, 15 years old kids. Maybe it's influencing them and their life choices. So yeah, I would say all media probably matter in the way they present things to the audience. Makes them think about things and therefore... Does it change political direction in the country? Does it stop hunger in Africa? It does not, it's just entertainment. But it must influence people even on the small level. So I would say it probably matters.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

Not sure it has really. I think films have changed for me, not sure my taste changed really. I still like a lot of films from when I was a boy, and in my 20s and 30s. I still like... The films... The style of films seems to have changed. One with Tom Cruise recently, it had two names. Live.Die.Repeat or Edge of Tomorrow. Well, I thought that was a great film. Great action adventure film, great war film, whatever you want to call it. With science fiction elements. So I think my tastes have changed... I still like some modern films and some old films don't work for me anymore. They're very fixed in their time.. Cold War and that... If a film is made to my taste these days I still like it. My taste is quite rare.. Because I wrote a quick list of the films that I liked. So, like Primer. Did you watch it?

D: Yes, but I didn't understand it.

Yeah, but I liked it. And District 9.

D: Oh I love this film.

The Thing, all three versions of The Thing. Blade Runner, Close Encounters, Fifth Element, Dune. Love it, hate it. I hated it in the cinemas, I still hate it but I have four versions of it and I keep watching it. It annoys me but it sort of hypnotises me. Ghost in the Shell, Akira, The Matrix. Twelve Monkeys. Even though you know twist at the end you still watch it. It's still a good film even if it's all about the twist at the end.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

The derelict ship. The first shot of the derelict ship. I just think it's a game changer. The visuals and the design of the film. And the set design... Were great. The tension, all characters... It's 40 years old now, it hasn't aged to me yet. There are few computer displays but they're cool to me. I just think you can watch it over and over again, the story hooks you. And you see more everytime you watch it.

D: You mention the design of the film. Did you mean the narrative syntax or something else.

I meant the set design really but yes, the narrative as well. Because if it was just a pretty series of shots it wouldn't be as interesting as it is.. Without the storyline as it is... And questions it raises. Which I think have been destroyed by the sequels. What were the eggs doing there, what were the eggs, what was the alien? All those questions that originally existed they've just been done to death. There's no originality in sequels and prequels. It's just rehashing some specific point from the original film over and over again. Someone goes to a quarantine, they have a shaky descend to a planet... There's got to be a ship... Sequels were a completely different thing. It was a completely different thing to show in the same setting. Space military operation thing. A completely different take on it but a good film in its own right.

D: And also third one was very different than two previous ones.

It was interesting. I remember a lot about Dan O'Bannon, one of the key guys in the film. And personally I think he had more to do with the film, how it turned out then Ridley Scott did. Because he gave a lot of presentations during this convention that I went to. It was him talking about the design of Nostromo, the different levels of the ship. The dirty engineering level, clean sleep room, medium crew quarter, thinking about the design of the ship. And Giger obviously.. Who brought his own production design on the derelict and the alien itself. So I keep wondering maybe that's why Ridley Scott's prequels aren't that good. Because Alien itself wasn't really Ridley Scott's baby although he was a director. I think it was the whole team that made Alien what it was.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I think the mystery and the questions. I don't scream at the horror film in the cinema but it made you jump, it made you shocked. I remember thinking this is nothing I have ever seen before. Dirty oil, dripping water. The creature uncurling out of the pipe working in the escape pod thing. And all the questions.. What was alien? What was that space jockey thing? It looks really cool. There's a whole story behind that and never explained it. Which I think was something new. And I always remember the end of the first viewing I had. I always remember the cat. What was it all about? So I think it was visuals, story and the questions it raised. And the way it made you think. But it didn't spoon feed you answers to those questions.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Well, I didn't know the crew was at that convention, it was a science-fiction convention. It made me very interested in the film before I saw it. It probably made me look for things in the film that I probably wouldn't have look for otherwise. Like some of the set design and... I keep going back to the design of Nostromo. You know, they talked a lot about the care they took in showing the dirt in engineering level and working areas.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Space jockey. The first walk to the alien derelict ship... The thing when.. I forgot who gets killed... When the alien comes down the chains and snatches him. And then finally the one where the strobes are flickering in the emergency escape shuttle. You don't see the alien and it starts to move. And you think it's just one of the pipes. But gradually uncurls.

I think I love Giger's set design in the storm with all the clouds in the distance... You know, that's not a space ship... Especially in the 70s because before that space ships were always hard, boxy. Usually white or silver, clean.

And then the space jockey because you think 'what was that?'. Is it some sort of telescope? Radio transmitter? It didn't even look metal, it was just more organic. Like a fossil.

And then the scene with the chains because that's just a good horror scene. The chains are dripping oil, water. And there's the snatch. That's just a shock scene.

And then the scene with the strobes and the monster uncurling. Because you don't see the monster and then you think there's something moving there... And then you think: 'did I just see it?'. And then you saw it and comes the only thing 'o shit'. It's there.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think there's that one... To feel something it would be the one we just talked about, on the escape pod. You feel suddenly worried, scared. But also a bit pleased with yourself for having spotted it. And think something? I'm sure... I've never read... But I'm pretty sure they tried to make you think something about the cat. The cat appears too often. The cat is left alone with the monster. It's looking down the cat and then it cuts the scene. I'm sure they were trying to make people think something about the cat. And again, never explained, never resolved. I'm sure there's a scene in the corridor where cat is hissing at the monster. And then just cut. And in the next scene Ripley just finds the cat. Well I thought: has it been infected? There's all that rationale now. With whatever sequels and prequels there's logic of the life cycle. But at that time you didn't know what was happening.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Hmm. The sort of desaturated... I can't remember is it actually black and white or is it just desaturated?

D: It's such a spectrum. Very little colour in it.

Yeah, just grey with the diggers on the surface. That's the first scene that comes to my mind.

I think it was a bit of a twist film. I like a bit of a twist when he gradually discovers the truth about himself. I always liked films with a twist, if you don't guess them before. And I didn't guess it before. I didn't see it in the cinema, I saw on TV, DVD or something. Luckily I didn't know the story. Clones, or whatever. That was the thing I liked the most about it. And then also at the end when it went a bit like the real life but nothing can shock the world anymore. Nothing can change the world anymore. Even showing something as terrible is like: 'ok, it will be in the news for three days and then so what?'. Those news announcements at the end, after he got through all that to get home it was like 'yeah, ok. It's yesterday news'.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Like I said, I thought the story was good. The single cast... There was a lot on him. The story developed and didn't really give anything away... The first time he finds his body and the ambivalent nature of the sort of command computer... That relationship... It wasn't truly a company and it wasn't truly an evil computer... It sort of did what's best for his and at the same time followed... So I just liked the way how the story progressed. It could even be made almost like play. It didn't really need to be on the surface of the Moon. Except for the crashed... But it was like a one man show and I liked how he deteriorated and started falling apart physically and mentally. And you felt a lot of empathy for that guy. If I would be misled and confused...

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think when he finds all the dozens of replacement clones... I don't remember, I only watched it twice. Because it's a shock. By then you knew what it was going to be. But still, all these racks of them waiting to be activated... You think for how long was this going on? Was it going on for a hundred years? Ten years?

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I don't remember it as much as Alien. I mean... I just got this vision in my mind, I don't remember, maybe he was looking in a mirror. The usual sort of bathroom scene where he's bleeding out of his eyes. Deterioration sticks in my mind.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Big blue aliens, lots of CGI, terrible story. I just think it's Hollywood, hype, just a typical Hollywood blockbuster, very American.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Intense disappointment and frustration. How flimsy and childish the whole plot was. There's just so many tropes, overworked scenes in it... It rehashes from everything else... It's essentially an American high school jock as they call it. Who falls, picks himself up and recovers as a better man later. Like Rocky... And then just stupid things like Unobtainium. What a fucking name... And then the whole... I'm not politically correct at all but that film really stuck as that. All these peace loving primitive people, at one with their planet, at one with their nature.. And then these evil capitalists coming to destroy the planet, destroy them. But they can't fix themselves. They need an American guy to come in and fight and win it. It's just terrible. It was just so badly put together. The Abyss... I really love this film... Aliens was a great film...

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Some of the visuals were good in it, floating mountains. Some of this dog-fighting was good. I did like the scene when all the natives gathered together at night and all those fairy lights came up. That was nicely filmed. He sort of finds their temple, like a tree... When they resurrect him or something...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think a lot of them! Almost every scene with the people from the company or whatever it is... The corporation... It was very sort of black and white, very stereotyped. Every scene with them was designed to make you hate them and think they're just greedy destroyers. Every scene with the aliens was designed to make you empathise with them and think how wonderful they are and how useless they actually are.

And in every Hollywood film the hero is a rebel. Always. We never have a hero who follows orders. Disobeys the orders because of his feelings. I'm not going to leave that guy behind, I'm not going to let that guy escape. I'm going to help these people although the army says otherwise. So every Hollywood film hero who is in the army should be court-martialled for disobeying the orders. It's such a common theme in Hollywood. Where ever there is some organisation: Police, military, space force. Whatever that is, it's always the rebels, people who don't follow the rules who are heroes. That's very strange to me.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Alien, Moon, Avatar. We talked a lot about Alien so I think you understand my position. It was completely new in many, many, many respects. It was like nothing else before and still not been beaten in many respects. Moon I thought it was a good story, well filmed, claustrophobic intensity... With twist... So there was a story there. Avatar... It was just every cliché piled together with CGI that you could never forget it's CGI. I don't think there was one second in that film when I was watching it and I thought: 'this is real, this is not CGI'.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Plot and aesthetics, production design are the main thing. Good story with a good plot. And it looks pretty good. Good production design and good effects that are not too heavy can help a weak story. But it can't be too weak story.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I don't think it matters, it's just a genre. There are people who never watched any of these films and never will and the world just continues the same. It can influence people's thoughts like any film. Science fiction has ability to make you think more about whether something is possible that Lawrence of Arabia which makes you think what happened. It's teaching you about history and everything whereas something in the science fiction film might trigger someone to think 'I wonder if that's possible? Could that happen?'. And it may change what they choose to do with their life in future. Does it change a day to day seven billion people in the world lives? Hmm.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Martin Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 57

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: Ba Material's science      Father: High School      Mother: High School

Occupation: Manufacturing director      Father: Accountant      Mother: Housewife

### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? >45

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £50

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes	(many years ago, over 20 years ago)
Collecting merch	No	
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	No	
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	No	
Online forums	Yes	
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	
Tweeting	No	
Blogging	No	
Cosplay	No	
Fan art	Yes	(privately)
Fanvids	No	
Fanfiction	No	

#### **Interview 16. 17-11-18 Richard Schenkman**

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

R: Pick one, Jesus.

D: Or one from a spectrum of films maybe.

R: I'm trying to think of one movie that I would willingly watch over and over again. I guess it would be Blade Runner or 2001.

D: Why one of those?

R: Firstly because they stand up to repeated viewing.

D: In what way?

R: They're layered enough and high quality enough.

D: What do you mean by saying quality?

R: What I'm saying is that every time you watch them there's still something new to see. The pleasures of it are so great that you derive pleasure from it even though you know how the story's gonna end. I don't necessarily enjoy the movie because of what it has to say about the society. I'm much more

interested in what movie has to say about humanity. About individual people. Characters. And also in science fiction you have added one world being created that is alternative to our own. You can view our world through this fictional world.

D: Definitely

R: That doesn't actually exist. That's why I love about science fiction.

**D: I understand that. What would you consider the worst science fiction film?**

R: That doesn't make any sense. There is thousands and thousands of bad science fiction movies. There is... I can tell you what the most disappointing science fiction was. It's not necessarily because they were the worst movies ever made but because they should have been so much better. The Matrix sequels.

D: I totally agree. I say that The Animatrix is more Matrix than the sequels.

R: Yeah. So that would be an example of people just really going out of rails. I think they genuinely thought they had story to tell. As great as The Matrix is as terrible the sequels are.

D: Yes, but adding humorous elements in form of one-liners or awkward situations like 'Where am I? In the mountains. Oh really?' is just not The Matrix. Although there were some very good ideas. Like third fraction – software. How would you describe a very generic science fiction?

R: Logan's Run for example. It's a movie with a great idea. Great idea that made it into a mediocre movie.

D: Why is that? Is that because of seemingly tacky design of the robot at the end or is it something else?

R: Yeah. I think the production values aren't very good, some cast aren't very good. I think that once you have a set up that is so good I think the execution was kind of simplistic.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film in your opinion?**

R: It presents the alternative reality. A reality driven by technology or time displacement that has a basis in science.

**D: So then what makes a good sf film in your opinion.**

R: It's what makes any film a good films. Strong characters that you believe in, emotional atch that takes you on a real journey. It's got story that's involving and compelling. That's what it shares with any movie. And then what makes a good sf film is that it effectively establishes the universe in which it takes place and then it plays by its rules from the beginning to the end. And it's plausible.

D: So realism and a diegetic integrity. Could it be said so?

R: Yes.

**D: Is science fiction cinema art or entertainment or both?**

R: Maybe both.

D: Why is that? Could you elaborate a little bit?

R: Again there is a lot you could say about sf that you could or should say about any film. Movies are by nature entertainment. Yes, people do visual art. They do art installations in museums that involve film elements. But a “movie”, motion picture a 130 minutes film story is by definition entertainment. Really good one raises to the art.

D: I'd say that this would be a description of a movie. But a film. Could film be like a temporal carrier for meaning within an expressive medium that is a sign of times it was made in? Could it be?

R: Sure.

**D: Do you think that science films matter in our society and in our culture?**

R: Oh yes, definitely. Most of the best science fiction films are a big metaphor. Like in Star Trek. Or like when some characters battle each other because of the colour. That's metaphor you can extend to Sunni and Shia. So sf uses metaphor to comment on our society. That's one of the great elements of it.

**D: Yes. Could you tell me how your taste in sf changed over time?**

R: I don't think it has changed much over time but if it has changed at all it probably would... I never used to like horror. When I was young I never liked horror and now I can appreciate horror. For movie that is a science fiction horror movie I will probably more likely enjoy it more now when I was much younger. Also, when I was younger I would probably be satisfied with just cool special effects, explosions, etc. Now I care more about character and story.

**D: What about the meaning? Is it important for science fiction films to have meaning?**

R: Yes.

**D: What is your automatic thought when you hear the title Alien?**

R: I remember the movie and the sequel. I probably focus on Ripley or a baby alien bursting out of John Hurt's chest.

**D: What this film means personally to you?**

R: I love it. I've seen it many times. It's a great movie. It's terrifying, it's exciting, it's inspiring. Mainly because of Ripley character. It's got a great story. I love that ultimately it's about a corporate corruption. And it's beautifully made. It's got iconic imagery so it really stays with you. It's a great classic science fiction movie.

**D: Could you tell me what you remember about watching it for the first time?**

R: Scared the shit out of me. I thought Sigourney Weaver was at least a super cool, badass heroine.

**D: It's partly covered already but maybe you'd like to add something. What do you remember how the film made you feel?**

R: Just what I said. Terrifying.

**D: Yeah. Did you have any expectations before watching it?**

R: I thought it would probably be scary. I remember the poster: In space no one can hear you scream. And I thought it was going to be scary and it was.

**D: Do you think that this could have somehow impacted your view of the film?**

R: I heard it was good. I saw it when it first came out. In theatre. I heard it was good and it was.

**D: Have you got favourite scenes?**

R: I haven't watched it in a while. Certainly, obviously the scene when the alien bursts out. The whole climax with her running away when she's basically the last one. The way she evades alien. I also loved the reveal of the truth. That the corporation always knew. That's what they were after.

**D: Why do you think it's those scenes?**

R: It's always craft. If a movie is badly made then it's very hard to get passed that. So that's kind of assumed. Just that it's a really, really engaging movie so the most important and dramatic moments are going to really land because you're already invested in the characters and you are invested in the scenario. Guy suddenly turns out to have a baby alien embedded in his chest. It's really, really shocking. The alien is so terrifying that when you... Eh.

**D: Do you remember any moments you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

R: Again, sure. There were scenes designed to make you terrified and there are scenes like when she finds out the truth about the corporation. You simply don't expect it. Terror and shock. And I'm not really sure what you're supposed to feel.

**D: Yeah, those are those questions covered for Alien. Let's focus on Moon now. What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)?**

R: I love this film. I just shown it to my daughter recently. I love Moon. As a filmmaker I'm always intrigued by how do you make a compelling movie with just one or two characters. And one or two locations. How do you do that. Because I faced this challenge myself as a filmmaker a couple of times. And so I really, really admire someone who can pull that off and they pulled that off in this movie.

**D: What this film means to you?**

R: What does it mean to me? Um... I love the humanity in that movie. I love the heart breaking humanity. Um. I love how even the computer is so sympathetic to the plight of a human under his care. When you

would think it would more like a computer in Alien. I just love what it says about humanity's capacity for compassion.

**D: So could you tell me what you remember about watching it for the first time?**

R: I was just really thrilled about how smart it was and how engaging and surprising.

**D: In what way was it smart? Was it what you mentioned about two characters and one location or was it something else?**

R: No, I mean that. And it just never run out of ideas. It just kept going. Never became predictable except when it wanted you to be ahead of it.

**D: What would be the moment, in your opinion, when Duncan Jones wanted audiences to be ahead of the protagonist?**

R: Hmm... (doesn't know)

D: That's OK. I understand what you mean.

R: I mean, we've been through the clone situation before the protagonist does. We understand it before he does. That's the example. But intentionally ahead.

**D: So except being impressed like that, what do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

R: Gitty. I just enjoyed it so much. Often the movie starts off so well and then it kind of gets boring or something but I love that Moon is just fascinating. Enthralling from the beginning to the end. How satisfying and also emotional the ending was.

**D: Did you have any expectations?**

**R: No. That's why it was so good.**

**D: Do you have any favourite scenes in Moon?**

R: I love when the new guy tries to make the first guy to understand the reality. When he asks how long has he been working on the miniature town. How he tries to make the first guy understand. And then my other favourite scene is when he starts to feel the real compassion for him. Guys is sort of falling apart. It turns from seeing him as kind of an enemy to having real compassion for him.

**D: Very much. Quite impactful indeed. So did you notice any moments where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

R: Sure, millions of them. When he's first watching the videos from his wife and you understand just how lonely he is. Like I said, when he starts falling apart when the second guy... Like I said, tries to make him understand the reality. And then I love it when he starts to figure out how he can defeat the system. When he turns around and he starts to figure out how he can win.

**D: So that's this section done for Moon. We have Avatar left and then three more questions. What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)?**

R: Avatar is interesting because when I was sitting there I really liked it and the minute it was over I started liking it less and less and less. To the point that it's amazing that it's still one of the top grossing movies of all time. And all the talk about making the sequels... Because I don't think anybody gives a shit.

**D: I'm personally ambivalent because Cameron said he developed technology to show 3D without the glasses. With use of a rig of RGB lasers. So this interests me.**

R: Sure. But I don't want to see anymore of Avatar movies. I guess the more I thought about it what bothered me the most about Avatar was that it was basically Dancing with Wolves on an alien planet. It bothered me a lot and it bothered me how derogative the story was. Obviously the effects were spectacular, the action was amazing but I thought the concepts were simplistic.

**D: So this covers three questions actually except for one thing: did you have any expectations before watching Avatar?**

R: Since it was coming from James Cameron I expected it was going to be really good. And I expected that it will be visually stunning and indeed it was.

**D: Was it only on the basis of the knowledge that it's a film by James Cameron or also something else?**

R: Yes.

**D: Ok. So you don't think that this expectation could in any way influence your view of the film?**

R: I was probably predisposed to like it because I liked all of his other movies. I did like it while I was watching. It was a very weird effect. I liked it while it was on and the moment it was over I thought: 'Wait a moment. What about this, what about that?'.  
D: In what was is it very good to you?

**D: Have you got any favourite scenes in Avatar?**

R: The big flying chase towards the end is really good... I... Eh... Uuumm...

D: In what was is it very good to you?

R: Visually it is stunning. And it's thrilling the design of it. The design of it.

D: The design of it. I'd like to find out more about the thrilling bit. IS it visually or is there something more?

R: Visually. It's just very exciting. It's almost like you're in the first person video game. The perspective... You feel it very much from the perspective of the protagonist. You really feel like you're going on this dragon. It's a beautifully designed sequence. So even though it's basically all animated it feel very real.

You're flying around this alien world on the back of this dragon, or whatever, it's just... It's very exciting in the same way How to Train Your Dragon is exciting.

**D: In a way, I would imagine.**

R: There more scenes I like. I like some earlier scenes, before it gets all animated. When there's more reality in it. I enjoyed the world building quite a bit.

**D: What do you enjoy about world building the most?**

R: Very similar. The fact it can be made feel so real. The alternative future/alien planet ends up just feeling really real so you believe it.

**D: Yes. Are there any moments in Avatar you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something?**

R: That's one of the things about whole movie. It's very emotionally manipulative. A lot of it is designed to make me feel something. Every time plants are destroyed, or when the tree is under attacks.

**D: Could you describe from your perspective how it was done? How this response was achieved.**

R: It's all a visual trick. First you spend time getting invested, involved with the character, or a planet as a living entity. Or a tree. You love the Sigourney Weaver character so when she's dying it's hard to take. Music. Music is very powerful, invoking emotion. As human beings we put greater effort. We don't want to see those beautiful animals or sentient plants die. We're great in investing inanimate objects with life and personality.

**D: So basically this section done. How would you personally rank those films. In your opinion, from the best to the worst.**

R: For me it would go Moon, Alien, Avatar.

**D: How are those films different?**

R: Moon is an intimate, high concept feature. Alien is basically a horror movie within a sci fi genre and Avatar is an epic action movie. With ecological slash social overtones within a sci fi genre.

**D: So why is Alien better than Avatar? In more detail.**

R: Eh?

**D: From what you described it seems that Alien and Avatar similar but Alien seems to be better. So how are they different?**

R: I just think that even though stories are completely fantastical but... Well, I was going to say that Alien is more original but Alien is obviously based on It! Terror from Beyond Space. And Avatar is like Dances with Wolves. From moment to moment Alien is more surprising and original feeling than Avatar from moment to moment.

**D: So in terms of the narrative and suspense, yeah?**

R: Sure. And obviously Avatar is visually more inventive but it's not necessarily a way to judge. Valerian is incredibly a terrible movie.

**D: So what do you focus on while watching a sci fi film?**

R: Character and story unless some other element is distractive. Like in Blade Runner. Sometimes the art direction is so spectacular that sometimes you pay attention to that for a minute rather than the actual story. The art direction is so brilliant that it actually is distracting.

**D: And you mean the original Blade Runner?**

R: Yeah, both actually but yeah. In Avatar it doesn't happen because he know that production is spectacular and he basically makes it a part of the story. He takes the time. He makes certain scenes about showing you the design. Let's look at this tree for a while. Let's look at this creature for a while. So you don't have to take your attention away from the story because the story itself is paused for a bit. Blade Runner never makes a point. It's just an amazing background.

D: Does it matter that sf has meaning in your opinion?

R: Yeah. Otherwise there's no point. Otherwise it's just an action movie or whatever. It's got to be about something. That's why Children of Men is such a great movie. It's got spectacular action but it's got really something to say about the humanity.

D: Ok, thank you very much.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Richard Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 60

Sex: X Male

Nationality: American

Education: Ba

Father: College

Mother: College

Occupation: Film Maker

Father: Small business owner

Mother:

Housewife

### **II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Whole life

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 10

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes	
Collecting merch	Yes	
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	Yes	
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	Yes	(in past)
Online forums	Yes	
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	
Tweeting		No
Blogging	No	
Cosplay		No
Fan art	No	
Fanvids	No	
Fanfiction	No	

#### **Interview 17. 17-11-18 AI Sirosis**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

It's hard because I like a lot of films for different reasons. The first film that springs to mind is Forbidden Planet. And also The Thing From Another World. But I like the remake too. The John Carpenter's remake, it's closer to the original story. Why those films? In the case of Forbidden Planet: it's a beautifully made movie. Music is captivating. The electronic score is captivating. The spaceship and the Thing were... The first time I saw them I was 8 or 9 years old only. It just captivated me. And The Thing was sort of a flipside of that. Forbidden Planet was in colour and it was very splashy. It had excellent performances. And The Thing was black and white, was very constrained in a very limited environment whereas in Forbidden Planet the Krel's machine was huge, 20 miles. But The Thing took place in a very small arctic base and you had this feeling of the paranoia and threat. It scared the hell out of me. By the time I saw the remake I wasn't really scared of it. I was much more appreciative of the imagination that went into all the effects and I could enjoy more of the performances. I got caught up in the gruesome story. Although there was a gruesome story in the first one too. So those are two favourites.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

There are so many. I think they're bad for several reasons. First of all the story, the script. If the script is bad you're screwed. Some cheesy special effects I can forgive. Some less than perfect performances. But if a story is imaginative or cliché you're gonna lose me. I just don't have any patience for it. Like one of the stories that you're interested in, Alien, I'm sure you know is kind of a remake of the old, 50s science fiction movie. It The Terror From Beyond. It's not very good. Alien is much better. Far, far better. That's when I was a kid. Those films from the 50s helped... Through those films I acquired something of a vocabulary of visual science fiction in terms of movies and TV. Invaders from mars, Them! About the giant ants. Also the Walt Disney TV series. There were two episodes in the 1950s. Those shows which are now available on DVD. I first saw them when I was very young. 6, 7, 8. That imagery... Everybody was talking about space and space travel and what the communists were going to do and blah, blah, blah... So there were a lot of films and tv shows in space. There was also less competing for your attention. We didn't have computers. Books, magazines, newspapers and television. So consequently it was easier to keep track of it. Today it's too much of it. I can't keep up.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

I've seen films that to me suffered from the lack of imagination. A lot of them work on a sort of the lowest common denominator. Like space ships and monsters and pretty girls. And those are tropes that kind of belong to 1930s. It took the movies a long time to catch up and it's maybe because they didn't have a sufficient budget. Like MGM with Forbidden Planet. Lots and lots of money.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Well, I suppose you'd have to say that if you took the scientific underlining out of it you wouldn't have a science fiction movie. You got to have some technology. It doesn't have to be the present day. It could be in the past, there are many good stories set in the past. It could be an encounter with some new way of seeing ways. Like... What was that film with hectapods communicating with circles?

D: That's Arrival.

That's a movie that makes you think. Face to face with the unknown. There's always been the fantastic motif that I think is required. Some sort of the unknown. Maybe some sort of a monster, or space flight, or time travel. But you're dealing with the unknown there.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

As I said: conflict. Characters you can relate to. They don't necessarily need to be sympathetic but you need to root strongly for them or against them. Like in Aliens. You got that you know, character who works for the corporation. And you just hate the guy because he's so slimy. It's great. You have these characters you can relate to. As I said positively or negatively. But you also have a good story. A good story will have you asking: what happens next, what happens next? What are they going to do. That's a good script as much as I am concerned. [goes for novum because he puts an emphasis on the unknown potentially implying the unpredictable]

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it's both. I think the science fiction works in the field that I think primarily it's a field of entertainment. It more or less started in the 20's in the magazines. Wells published in the late 1800 even though there were no magazines specifically devoted to science fiction.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think they do. I think you can present moral and ethical questions and dramatize them through film and of course books but I think film is more immediate than books. Films put everything in front of you and when you're reading a book you need to use your head a little more to construct the world. Nevertheless a good film like let's say To Kill a Mockingbird or Rashomon... You've got to confront what's going on in them. In Rashomon you've got few different viewpoints. Viewer must make the decision.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

I'm sure. Yeah, Absolutely. Like Arrival – that's the more important film then... Say... Them! With the giants ants even though Them! is a very entertaining movie. Arrival poses questions that Them! just doesn't pose. Forbidden Planet is more important film because it raises questions of the basic psychology of men and what its impact could have on another culture. And it's a fascinating movie. The construction enables dr Mobius to actually visualize and materialize his own internal conflicts. That's a fascinating question... It's based on The Tempest. I feel that's the more important movie than many others.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

When I was a kid I was just interested mostly imaginative aspects like monsters etc. Like any kid, right. These days I want to have more of a story. I still like monsters but I want to have more of a story, something with more depth. I got more sophisticated in both: my reading tastes and my film tastes. Kids just don't understand the adult world and they have a fairly limited experiential framework. As you grow that framework improves and there's more there for the movie to pluck.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Oh boy, I don't know. Creepy and disturbing. I admire the film for its... Again, it takes place in a closed environment and it was a brilliant idea. I liked the characters. Also it was fun to observe them to be picked up in all sorts of gruesome ways. Especially with the chestburster. That was nuts. It's a hell of a scene. It's gruesome, it's unexpected, it's brilliantly staged. So many times the monster appears in dimly lit circumstances and this one is right in the middle of the dining table. It's nuts. I love the design of the space ship.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was nerve wrecking. And I thought the script was very well done. It would go to a peak and then it would relax. I thought it was a brilliant story. I forgot I was watching a movie and I just got completely caught up in it. So at the end of it I just felt I was just run out, it was exhausting.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

We covered that.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

I tried not to have expectations. I knew the names of the artists who designed the visuals and that was that. I'm in, I got to see it.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Maybe in a way that I expected a certain level of quality. But I wasn't disappointed. In fact it surpassed my expectations. I saw cartoons and drawing before and I knew they were accomplished artists. Funny, had kind of an acid wit. Penetrating sort of an intelligence. All those characteristics put together put this work in a different category [than majority]. The same Giger's work. Tremendously imaginative and again disturbing. The earliest things I saw by him was a cover of 1979 music album. I had actually seen some of his work before that in a science fiction magazine or art magazine. I don't remember where but he was still doing his bio-mechanic thing. Blending organic forms with machine. I was familiar with his work and I found it very dark. Nobody else was doing anything like that, it was very imaginative. And Mobius! He's brilliant! The French artist. He's tremendously well known. He worked on Heavy Metal and many other publications.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

One of my favourite scenes is when they spot that crazy looking spaceship. You know, that horse shoe. Sitting there on a hill... It's beautifully done. And then that whole scene with walking into it. And when they discover the whole vault with all the eggs in it. You just jump a mile when he's attacked. Obviously a scene when she puts a space suit at the end. The bravery she displays. She's determined to survive. She never stops, she never crumbles, she never cracks. She's such an admirable, strong character. It's fantastic. And also when the pods are opening... It looks like a deserted control room and then all of sudden one by one the pods open up. It's brilliant, the whole film.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The whole film is designed specifically to scare you. There are jump cuts and... the chestbuster is one of them. Or when Dallas is in the air shaft and shines his torch and it's there. It's the shock. A huge shock. Or when a facehugger attaches itself. It jumps out of the egg. It's a jump scare.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It reminds me kind of a Philip K. Dick book in that you often don't know what's real. And once you come up with the idea that the main character is a clone it's like 'wait a minute'. So there are those clones working together and there is another one... So how many of those things are there??? So you don't know what's real. That's something I liked very much about this film.

I think that like *The Thing*... The question is 'who are you?'. 'What are you?'. And on the other side the things are not what it seems. Nothing is what it seems. Gradually, as the film progresses, you learn a little bit more, and a little bit more, and a little bit more. Until you finally learn what the secret is. Which is more accounted for in the written science fiction. It's more slow moving, it's more deliberate and it's less dependent on splashy effects. So the movie to me kind of like *Solaris*, is more of a literary kind of experience.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I found it absorbing. I was caught up in it. I was wanted very much to find out what the hell was going on. I was very interested in it. I was quite absorbed by the movie.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

We covered that.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I have deliberately not read anything about the movie. I didn't want it spoiled. People were saying it was good and I figured it will be given the actor. But I did not have really any set expectations.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Probably my favourite scene is when they found those clones. It's not a visually arresting movie. Its power comes from the story and the revelations that you learn as it goes along. But visually it's not particularly interesting. Which is fine because it's not what the movie was about. It was not about the splashy things, special effects or all that.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Yes, when he sacrifices himself. How can you not feel empathy for the poor son of a gun? And then again once you find out that the clone made to earth and managed to sabotage what the company tried to go. You've got the story wrapped up right there. Everything resolved. It's beautiful.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Mind blowing CGI. Just amazing. I expected it to be good because I really like James Cameron and I really liked all of his movies. I knew how long he's been working on that thing. So yeah, I had some expectations, I hoped this is going to be a good thing. It surpassed my expectations. It was an immersive experience on the whole planet. Everything: plants, insects. It was insane. It was so... It had whole ecosystem worked out. It was just nuts. It had good performances but really the animation and the CGI came to the fore. The story was ok. I enjoyed it but the point of this movie was the visual aspect. That's what I remember the most. Animals, fights and the battles.

I think that the story has some resonance. It's exploitation of the native civilisation / culture. You come in and you basically are taking over. Old story that Avatar does very well. Fairly movingly although the characters, I think, for me are less well drawn and less interesting than some of the characters in his other movies. In Terminator you got Sarah Connor, Kyle Reese. Those characters have more of an impact, at least on me. I remember those characters more vividly than any of the characters in Avatar. And you can say the same about Aliens. Those characters are one of the best ever created. None of the characters in Avatar are as compelling as those. I think part of the problem was that he was so interested in presenting this world and to paint it for you that he lost a bit of the script and a bit of the drama. That's just my opinion.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I've only seen the film once, many years ago. I think there was a scene when they're on those flying creatures and one of the characters is trying to jump from one dragon to another. The movie did not grab me really strongly in terms of the story. I have to admit: of all three movies Avatar is probably the weakest in terms of the story. At the same time being visually superb.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I'm sure there are but to be honest with you I don't remember.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

In terms of my enjoyment and my appreciation I got to put Alien first. I got to put Moon second and I got to put Avatar third. I think Alien is a masterful updating of a 50s science fiction movie. With the relaxed structures of violence and swearing and skin. You couldn't do it in the 50s. On that level sophistication

of the model work is just amazing. It's hard to find any fault. Moon is a more literary type of science fiction in that it presents you with a puzzle that is relatively little visceral or emotional involvement there. You have empathy and sympathy for the character because you want to find out what happens next. And you do feel certainly for him when you learn this predicament: he's going to die really soon. It's moving in that way. Avatar is a superb exercise in film production and presentation insofar as creation of the unified world. There isn't really anything that was quite like it. Characters are ok, I think the story could be more dramatic.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I think my big take away from a movie would be the story. I see a lot of movies that are relatively unsophisticated in terms of effects but still are amazing in terms of the story. There is a nifty little time travel movie called Safety Not Guaranteed.

D: Dave gets overexcited because of Aubrey Plaza.

And it's great. It's a primarily a character study. Right at the end, right at the very end there is a bit... But throughout it's a character study on, I presume, a really small budget.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think the best science fiction has meaning. Again, going back to Forbidden Planet. There is something to think about. In a lot of science fiction movies there isn't a lot to think about. It's just a popcorn movie. You go in with your girlfriend, you sit there, eat popcorn. You come out and it's 'ok, where are we going for pizza?'. Whereas Forbidden Planet it's something you come out and you are like: 'let's talk about that. It's very interesting'. There are some movies you talk about and some you forget right away.

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: AI

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 68

Sex: X Male

Nationality: American

Education: 2 years college

Father: High School

Mother: High School

Occupation: Web content manager/IT currently a freelancer artist

Father: Industrial engineer

Mother: House wife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 60

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 500 dollars / year

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes (not since 1999)

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting Yes

Blogging Yes (used to)

Cosplay No

Fan art Yes (used to be very active in fanzins – covers and illustrations plus publishes books)

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

Writer himself

### **Interview 18. 19-11-18 Shanehar**

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

I would say The Matrix. The reason is because it was such a radical idea. I saw the original Matrix 13 times in the theatre.

D: I saw it over 300 times already and I keep watching it.

It's one of those movies where you pick up a little bit more every time. You catch the little things.. Like I don't know, were intentional or what? Like when Morpheus is giving Neo pills... You see one pill in one hand and another pill in another hand but in Neo's glasses you can see both...

D: Neo isn't wearing glasses

What? What do you mean?

D: Not in these scene. But you are right that pills appear...

On no, sorry. You can see Neo in both of his glasses.

D: That's right. And I'm quite sure that's intentional. It's like creating the meaning. Because it's choice. It's a binary choice. So you got two options and they are like two different paths. So they are reflected as singular choice but for Neo...

Sh: Right, right, right. You see him on both sides.

D: Yeah.

Sh: Room numbers... From the beginning of the movie ait's at the end. It's a trip... The whole idea behind the Matrix is just a concept of it... You can be in the Matrix and you wouldn't know. A computer simulation could be that advanced.

D: That is a possibility but in terms of The Matrix being an allegory there is like a primary terministic screen implied by producers. The primary reading is... Because what they show in the movie is a portrayal.. Actually it's not a portrayal... The actual book is much smaller. So, there is this book, Simulacra and Simulation [showing him my copy of the book on the webcam] shown in the film... It looks different... It's where Neo hides software, when Choi comes to him.. You know, 'follow the white rabbit'.

Sh: Right, right..

And also a bit of this book is quoted by Morpheus: 'Welcome to the desert of the real' and the desert of the real comes from this book. Except for this, in the original script the book was meant to be referenced for the third time. It was meant to be mentioned. It was meant to be: 'Just like in Baudrillard's book' but it didn't feel so cool as a dialog so they cut that bit and kept the desert of the real. So in here basically Baudrillard basically says that the map precedes the territory. That we are so gone in the social construct that everything around us is basically agreed. That it's not real anymore.

Sh: That's... I agree with that. When I go to work I drive part way and I use other transportation so I do not feel the traffic that much. And when I'm on train everybody is like... Where is my phone.. Everybody in on they're phones. That's what everybody is doing. Everybody is on facebook, nobody even notices the real world going by anymore. Considering when The Matrix came out, smartphones weren't even a thing. And so that message being delivered... It's sort of being fulfilled upon. People really are in the virtual world. Look what the Facebook did to the world.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

There's this that shitty B movie Dracula 3000 that has Coolio in it. It's awful.. I don't even think I finished watching this movie, it was that cheesy. It's a sequel to Dracula 2000... It's horrible...

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

You know, it's funny because it's one of the movie you said we will discuss. The Moon. It really just kind of... It was boring, it really was forgettable. I remember few scenes in it and it just was like... there were some intense moments in this movie but for the rest of the time it was kind of like 'meh'.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Well, obviously it has to include science but it's got to be like it has to have technology or concepts that are not already available. Because in order for it to be fiction it has to be... Even if you take something like Star Trek. Star Trek has a lot of technology we don't have and so that makes it science fiction. It's got to be some sort of technology that doesn't exist or something in the future, like far in the future, or it has to have some sort of like... Yah... That would still be technology. It needs technology that doesn't exist. It's possible or we think it's possible but we don't have actual understanding how it would function. Like Iron Man's arc reactor. That's science fiction. If you use any other medium to make something work it's magic and that's fantasy. If you go by Arthur C. Clarke quote you could say the same. Any technology sufficiently advanced will be indistinguishable from magic. Usually in science fiction it's clear that it's technology.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

You have to have high tech. I can use Star Trek as a brilliant example. The reason Star Trek is so popular is that it's highly plausible. It's got to be detailed also. There is a manual that explains like the transporter system. It makes it plausible because some fans would understand that the transporter would never work because of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle so they put a device in there, the piece of tech that compensates that. It's believable, so you got to have that. And the detail has to be there.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I would say it's both because if you look at films like Alien where you have the H. R. Giger stuff – that's art. And it's amazing. And some of it is just pure entertainment. Like, Avengers is so mainstream, American just in your face entertainment. The story in it came from the comic books but it's not a tone of substance to it. It's just people with powers showing them off. And it's all flashy and colourful but other than pulling from comic book history there is not much of canon to it. So it's just pure entertainment. But it can be very artistic. Like in The Matrix. You could say that the ideas expressed in The Matrix are very artistic. It takes the artist to weave those concepts together in the way that they're still visually and mentally appealing to watch.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Absolutely. I think that a great deal of our technology comes from what people try to make after seeing science fiction. Like Alexa. I have four of them. In my kitchen, in my living room, in my daughter's room. You can use them like intercoms. But when you ask Alexa 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' it says 'I want to be a computer from Star Trek'. Which, you know, they just say 'computer' and it just gives them the information. If you think about it... They can just say 'computer, who is blah, blah, blah...'

And it will just spit out the information. It answers them seamlessly. So this concept of being able to voice command a computer seamlessly. Asking questions with normal sentences and get comprehensible responses. Something what people were working on... You're seeing that technology.. People are trying to develop. And I'm certain that the inspiration comes from Star Trek.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I used to be... It shows mostly in my audiobooks. I used to listen to any sci fi. But I tend to lean more towards the futuristic space stuff now. I think it's because, first of all, films like The Matrix are... Anything really with that level of depth doesn't really sell greatly. There's a great movie that came out a little after The Matrix. Equilibrium. That was a great movie, I saw it a bunch of times. It's still that psychological concept. We live in that world where we're chemically altered so we don't feel emotions and you have one of the people who are supposed to enforce that lifestyle and he stops doing that. And he's a legitimate fucking badass. They can't just come and take him.

I think over time my tastes changed to... I like everything but it seems like there's a major criteria that make me really enjoy a science fiction film. One is when it has some historical reference. I don't care how far back it goes and it doesn't have to be real. Like in Predator vs Alien. There is an old installation from Predators in Antarctica. That kind of stuff. Some old thing to it. Something historical is referenced. I like when there is some technology, AI, anything about the time travel. It can be shitty.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Sigourney Weaver and the chestbuster. I don't know if it really means a lot to me... I've never really looked at the meaning of Alien. It's a good science fiction movie that has a great premise. But if try to figure out what this movie is really about it's a triumph of humanity, a small force of humanity against that extremely powerful, evil force. The xenomorphs are kind of like a nameless, faceless, analogue for tremendous evil, you can't let it loose in the galaxy.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

The chestbuster, everybody remembers that. They spit up rice and stuff right before it comes out of his chest and then it's like... Everyone around the table is in shock, everybody just takes off... They're like 'what the fuck was that'. And that's without a doubt the most memorable moment in the whole movie. It's the first time anyone has seen it so no one has an idea what it was. And then it escapes! You are like 'what the fuck was that???' even more. Your next thought is the space jockey... Of course. They arrive there and it's... It's got a hole in its chest... The bones are busted outwards. They don't even say that. You don't even know what that means but once you've seen movie twice you're like 'yeah'.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It made apprehensive the first time, like it kept me nervous. It kept you at the edge of your sit, you didn't know what was going to happen. One of the things that scares the shit out of my mind are those guns... When they're blow the hole in the queen and the juice spreads and all..

D: that's Aliens...

Oh right, I always confuse the two because I saw them right together. It was a lot of suspense. What is this thing, are there more of these things? All that stuff. That suspense.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

No, I was young. I just heard it's a movie about some aliens, I didn't walk in with some expectations.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think the chestbuster, that's the shocking thing. But also the android going crazy. Those are probably like... But honestly it's like... When I think about favourite scenes I always end up with Aliens. Because the scene with that big forklift thing... That's the most memorable to me. The original Alien movie is just a lot of action. I think the chestbuster and the whole android going crazy. That's that or a facehugger. When you come close and it opens up and you can see it move around there. You don't know what the hell it is and it just jumps on the dude. That, but without the doubt the chestbuster scene is the most memorable in the whole movie.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Not really, that kind of stuff doesn't jump out on me until later... But we're going to get coming back to the chestbuster scene. Because obviously they're trying to shock and the succeeded. Throughout the movie they worked on creating suspense. So the facehugger, right. It jumps on the guy and now it's on him. He's just in the infirmary, with the bags moving... So it's keeping him alive but why. They try to cut it off, acid blood comes out so they can just study it and try to work out what's going on. And then it's just fall off. What the hell was that about? It doesn't look like it did anything to him, he's acting normal... There's till clearly a lot of the movie left so what now? So there are these scenes of high intensity and calm. Calmness. Something is going on but nothing is really happening, it's just business as usual. And then the chestbuster thing and it escapes. And again, nothing is really going on. Now what's going to happen? So it has some moments like that. It's intense and it's quite. Intense and quiet, intense and quiet.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Boring. I thought it was really slow. There was a lot of almost... There was too much time of him on camera like... killing time. So you're essentially watch someone killing time but you see little things like

the sticky notes. Like all the sticky notes all over the robot thing... Like immediately that tells you that this guy has been there for a long time. And he's obviously fucking bored too. They really got that across, that boredom. The loneliness.. All that comes across immediately. You can put yourself in that dude's position. And you're like on this long ass mission away. Completely isolated. What was interesting about that movie was that it's just all fabricated. He's reliving it over and over again. When he finds his dead self later, the clone or whatever... You see, this is why the movie was forgettable to me. I don't even remember the process of exactly what happened. I instantly knew what it was going to be. I've just seen enough sci fi. It was an interesting concept but to me there wasn't enough of meat behind it. They tried to make you feel the way he was feeling but to me it wasn't very interesting. Because if you think about what we were talking about earlier: no high technology, no historical point of reference. I mean the robot was kind of high tech but not really. Just not enough of advanced technology.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Yeah, when I watched like the previews it seemed interesting. I think it's one of the movies that I downloaded. Ad what I do.. I go and find movie that were recently released and would go and watch the trailers and when I find a trailer that I like I download it and I watch a movie. Moon was one of those. The trailer was more interesting than the movie. Trailers are kind of misleading. They take parts of a movie and they put them out of order... It effectively sold it to me but when I watched it I was like... [disappointed, unimpressed]

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Him finding the clone. That stands out to me. That was kind of an intense moment in the movie, like 'what the fuck is going on'. That kind of got your mind going. That was probably my favourite scene. And actually at the beginning, when he sits there and talks to the robot and you see those sticky notes. That kind of set the tone for me. He's been there a long time. He's got stickers all over the robot. This is not news to him, this is normal. Like everyday stuff. Obviously it's a routine for him. That set up the tone for me.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Post it notes were specifically designed to set that tone. This guy is far away, he's alone and this is routine for him. Every day is the same. And the robot's mobile parts were all dirty. So that was definitely intended to make you wrap on the idea he's far away, this is his only company and to him it's just a daily fucking routine. He's just going through the motions.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Visual candy with lots of eye candy. But first thing I think of are the avatars themselves. Blue aliens, the Navyy.. So I actually saw that movie few times, quite enjoyed it. There were some interesting little things that I noticed. Like for example the natives have four fingers. And the human avatars have five fingers. So like avatars that humans control they have five fingers because they're built off our DNA, They had to be able to match the DNA thing... The four thing would cause a dissidence. You have to have five fingers. That was interesting to me. But they had all the Navyy parts. That was interesting. It's very visually explosive, the same kind of thing like Avengers.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was just visually appealing. Really, the first time I watched it the whole time I was trying to see that blue chick's tits. That really distracted me a lot.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think scene when he captures the big bird thing. That was cool. When he hops down on it's back and wrestles it. Because his concept is if that's the biggest thing in the sky why would it ever look up. So he goes above it to catch it. It's smart. I like that. And that's whole of the prophecy and all that shit. Another cool scene is when he's trapped inside the... He's in like a mobile base or some shit... He's stuck there and the chick is outside with the knife, like defending him. That was a cool scene.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The storming of home tree was obviously meant to make you feel like the ancient ancestral home is being destroyed. You're supposed to feel bad for them. It gets you to root for them. You already know the Navyy respect this place, for them to it be destroyed would feel like Rome being destroyed.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Alien, Avatar, Moon. Alien is more kind of like a suspense science fiction horror movie. It's designed to create fear and suspense. Avatar is an eye candy. Lots of explosions, etc. And Moon is at the other end of this spectrum. It's not a lot of visual appeal, it's all psychological. It's all made to make you think.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

For me it's mainly story. Backstory, technology. It doesn't have to be super visually appealing. Like Alien. Because there's not a lot of crazy graphics in there but there is interesting technology, there is an interesting technology. I like eye candy just like everyone else. If a film looks flashy I'll watch it.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think so. It has to be glued with something. Like with Alien and space jockey. There's kind of circling back to that moment. Or when you have meaning like in Avatar. If you look at the movie like Moon, there wasn't any meaning to that. Just a guy doing some shit and finding out something is fucked up. Alien movies, all of them, you still have that company to get that xenomorph as a weapon. There's that element in the Alien movies...

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Shanehar Almighty

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 40

Sex: X Male

Nationality: USA

Education: College

Father:

Mother:

Occupation: Senior systems administrator

Father:

Mother:

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Whole life

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month:

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

#### **Interview 19. 19-11-18 Joel**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Close Encounters of Third Kind. It's probably for two reasons. One is that it may have been the first one that I ever saw in the cinema. Even at young age I think that I saw that. Also I watch it every year and it always holds up. I don't think there's something wrong with it, I don't think there is another science fiction film that has been better yet.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Oh that's a hard question. I always find something good in most movies. Probably... Not this years but Predator that came up before this one. I thought it was awful.

D: Predators.

Yeah. I just thought it was really low key and the story just didn't go together. New one is the first Alien or Predator movie I haven't gone to see in the theatre, I think. I just didn't see a reason to.

##### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Oh sure. I know exactly what you mean... Everything on Netflix seems very generic. Like the Predators, the part of it was it was generic. It was one side, the other side, trying to get home, working out some shit. That's it. And actually the most recent Alien movie was like that too. I thought it was very generic too. Especially when you have that franchise which is not generic at all. You look at Alien 1 and 2 and even 3, honestly. Because Covenant seemed generic. It was the same story over again. There's a ship on the planet, they don't know why, what do you do? You're going to get eaten by a bunch of monsters. And because I think there are a lot of science fiction films now that are not generic. They're really well done. Did you see the movie Coherence?

D: Yes, like different realities. And there is that comet flying which causes like split reality and they see the same house they are at...

I thought it was done right. You either stay with it... Because it got slow here and there... And also after 2001... So slow is not bad... But Coherence was my favourite movie of the year.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

I think you have to have sort of... Preferably some sort of tech... Technology involved.

D: But there was no technology in Coherence.

No, there wasn't. You're right, there wasn't but I think it falls under that term of science fiction because there was that science of it. Of the parallel... things... So science, that's the other thing that you need to have to some sort of science... Whereas fantasy, which always gets misunderstood as science fiction... You don't need science, you don't need technology for it. You don't need it to be any era that you want... And trolls and whatever. That's the difference to me between them. And science fiction has to have sort of movement towards the future. Something that is moving towards a future, may not be our future but a future.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

I think the story is the most important part. It has to make sense. I know it's really general but it does. There's a lot of science fiction that doesn't make sense. You know. I like Star Wars. Star Wars make sense. You may not like all the movie but they at least go together, somehow. So that's the first thing. And really strong characters. That would be for any film I guess but I think if you don't have strong characters in science fiction it's not going to hold you attached. Characters you can relate to or care about. Whether they're villain or not. You care what happens to them. Captain Kirk for example. He's an asshole but you care about him. You want Enterprise to be ok.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it's both for sure. I like to be entertained by anything I watch.

D: Can art be entertaining?

Absolutely!

D: And can entertainment be art?

I think it's true in some way. It should be entertaining a bit. But not everyone will be entertained in the same way. We use the example of Coherence. I was entertained by this movie. My wife was asleep. And she just didn't care for it. And she likes science fiction. She especially likes the superheroes films, which surprises me. I don't particularly find superhero films to be science fiction to be honest. But she does. So she watches that... She's absolutely seen Close Encounters, 2001 and all the old stuff and we

go to pretty much all the new stuff that we can with the 9 years old. So Star Wars is a possibility but Predator – no.

D: So how is it both?

I do think that some filmmakers go for either one or the other. They either try to make entertaining film that can reach the masses or they're making something that's art for them and still reach the masses. If they get it. I tend to like the art films more. Maybe I'm wrong but I would consider 2001 an art film first and entertainment second. Back when it came out, which was just before my time... But my mom told me that people rushed to that movie and then when it came out they either loved it or they absolutely hated it. There was no in-between. I really believe that's the art and entertainment part.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Yes. And in a couple of different ways. Firstly, the entertainment value. Obviously. But looking at the technology of what we have right now. I don't even think that that comes without science fiction. And the best example is Star Trek. The person who created the first cell phone created the first cell phone because he was a fan of Star Trek and he liked the flip recorded. And that's why he designed cell phone the way he did. So without that... That boggles my mind... That a film or a tv show said 'oh we can do this'. Anything though.. The tablets that we have today... I've read a bunch of articles that there are scientists working on food replicators... Which would solve world hunger. So science fiction influences... And the fact that here in America we have a space shuttle that's called the Enterprise. I think it's really interesting.

Also when you look at the dystopian films... Those things could happen... Certain things... Living where I'm living now, with the president that I have now... You know... You never know. It's so easy to see that kind of a thing happen.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

When I was growing up I was definitely into the big blockbuster. Star Wars, Star Trek, that thing. Now if someone said you can only watch one I would go for independent film almost every time. I just want something different. I know not every independent film is different but a lot of them come from the place we don't see in big features. So I think that's *the biggest difference* for me. [double check if that's what he's saying]. And I wish they had more independent movies in the theatres but they don't. Where I used to live... I moved from Ohio to Wisconsin, two different states. And in Ohio, almost like a block away from me there was an independent movie house. And they were there for 25 years and shown every type of independent film of every genre that they could. That's all they shown, you would never see Star Wars there. Phenomenal. They closed down because they couldn't keep... [not enough profit] There were times I would go to see a film and it was just me.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

My initial thought is that it's probably one of the most important films ever made. Without it filmmaking doesn't move forwards. The things that they did in that film... With how they shot things and the horror of it is.. You don't see horror done like that all the time. It was definitely scary but not... I think Alien is a very important films. Even if you don't enjoy it. I think you have to say... You can say you don't like that movie but you have to respect it.

D: Do you think there's something in this film in terms of society?

Sure, exploration. I think.. We want to explore and sometimes, as human beings, when we explore we think 'oh, we'll explore, we'll see these scientific things, we'll see something that's pretty or whatever' but what if you land on a planet and you're exploring and meet alien. But more so, if I were to say one thing I would say it's an important film for film makers.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Scared the hell out of me. I don't know how young I was because I would think I saw that much later than it came out. I wouldn't be allowed to see it. Of all the films I've seen and I saw a lot of films... There are two films I remember being scared at... And that was Alien and The Wizard of Oz. When the witch comes. I was probably 3 or 4 when I saw The Wizard of Oz but I remember being absolutely frightened of the witch.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It was just another film at the time.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I love when they first enter the facility because you have no idea what's going on. And the head popping through the chest, that's huge... And I'm trying remember if it's Alien or Aliens where the robot melts... That's another one.

I just always thought it was neat how they made those scenes. They essentially land and they're going to walk to this ship and at that point they don't know what it is. It's dark and there's smoke coming out of it... And it's immediately scary... And you don't know why. That's what I like about it. Somehow they induced the sense of fear without really telling you what was scary.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think the first scene I mentioned. I think they absolutely tried to strike fear. And would say there were a couple of other scenes where Sigourney... They wanted you to feel for her. Like when she's walking and you don't know what's happening. She's looking for her friends, you feel for her. You don't want her to be alone. You kind of already know who's gone, you know, but she doesn't know. I think you are really tugged on the heart string in that scene. I know a lot of people feel that way about Alien. The horror and the action of it. But to me, in the middle of that is just relationship movie. And there are a lot of different ones. There is the crew, there's also relationship between Sigourney Weaver and the alien. And even though.. I didn't like Alien 4 but without that first relationship of those two characters [Ripley and alien] you don't have the ending four films later... Even though she's a clone you don't have that alien relationship. That's another thing about the movie is that people take different things from it.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Effectively... Film like no other movie. I did not have expectations of the film. And then once I was done with it... It's a movie that has you sat and thinking about what I have just saw. I've never seen anything like it before. I am pretty good in catching the things in twists and I didn't see that thing coming for a mile... Not at all... That he was recurring... I thought it was shot immensely well, especially parts when this buggy is going on the surface. So it was also... There are not a lot of movies that I go back and watch again but I watched Moon several times. To really try to see how they were showing you what was actually happening. But you didn't see it the first time. I think they did it in such a way they never told you he was a clone, obviously, and I was just like, were they giving you clues? Were there little things... I feel like I should watch it again, I haven't watched it in a couple of years. Phenomenal film. If you ask me to describe it with one word it's phenomenal.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was almost like rediscovering what film was supposed to be. Because it was so well written and Sam was great, as well. I remember feeling, at the time I was just so tired of movies. They just weren't doing anything for me. I didn't care for Iron Man 500... And then Moon came and I felt this is what it is supposed to be about. The only other film that has ever done that for me was Coherence.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I just felt like I was inside the movie. I really felt connected to it. Connected to Sam. Seeing his struggle.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I liked the reveal that he's a clone. That's just because of the surprise of it, I didn't see it coming. I love the scenes when he's in the truck... I love the way that they shot that. I think there are couple of scenes

inside of the truck as well, he's talking... I'm not a huge fan of CGI for CGI's sake... If you can do it for real, even with miniatures... Just do it.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I don't know about feel... I think it was a movie specifically designed to keep you in the dark about the twist... And that's what it was doing. I mean I did feel the main character's isolation. You could feel he was alone. You could think about how you would feel if you were that way.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Horrible... I hate Avatar. I respect the film. I can absolutely see how hard they worked. But the movie itself... It dulled me... I feel like it was purposefully trying to make a universe. Like... They talked a lot about that, like the Marvel universe or DC universe. That never seemed forced. Whether you liked the film or not the culture of it was just there. With Avatar I just.. The whole time I thought he was forcing this universe... And why? And then I heard about the sequel and possibly the third... I don't get it.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember feeling disappointed. But I think my disappointment was... I've seen most of John Cameron's work prior. And The Abyss... Phenomenal film. It set my expectations for Avatar because his previous work was neat. Even Titanic. You can like the story, not like the story for Titanic but it is an amazing film when you get down to it. How they created it and did it. I felt the same with the Abyss and I never felt like that about Avatar. I think it's 100 times better than Avatar.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I remember the one scene where the female and male are romantically linked, in the trees. I think that was cool, they were sitting on the tree. Because of it being romantic. That was well done. In fact the whole film her character was the only one I cared about and that's fine if that's what he was going for.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think there were moments they were trying to make you think or feel something, I don't think they achieved it. Especially with the romantic part with her... They definitely were trying to do that... I mean feel a little bit of it but I never felt like... to care for them... One of my favourite things to watch is wrestling. Fake, I get it, but they always make you feel for the character. You worry... You feel for the Rock.. [not in Avatar]

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Moon, Alien, Avatar. I think Moon, for me, is one of the smartest films ever created. So for me it takes precedence over Alien. Alien is great but that's why it takes precedence over Alien. It's smart, really story is great, you don't see the twist coming. Alien – great movie but you know what's coming. You're already eaten. And Avatar I just didn't like.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Probably the script actually. I really want a good character. But when I think about it... That would be for any film. Any type of film. For science fiction I think the use of technology is really important to me. I want to see what they think will happen with technology and I want it used smartly. How they use the technology for the film.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think every film should have meaning. You know, in the American society at the minute, I don't think so. I want it to have a meaning for me. The best part to me about Star Trek is their hope that we all will get along, because that's what it presents. They present the unified Earth. That's important to me. And I think a lot of science fiction does it. Even with the dystopian stuff. They all try to make it better. I think that comes across in science fiction better than in any other genre. Because not only does it say 'we hope for a better future' but they also say 'here is how we make a better future'. This is what we should do, it's like offering the solution.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Joel

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 42

Sex: X Male

Nationality: American

Education: Ba Communication                      Father: College (associate degree)                      Mother: MA

Occupation: Health and Safety Trainer/Filmmaker/Musician

Father: Sales/Retail                                              Mother: Lawyer

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? About 35 years (maybe little more)

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £100

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	Yes
Collecting merch	Yes
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	Yes
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	Yes (some time ago)
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	Yes (privately)

### Interview 20. 21-11-18 John

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

My favourite science fiction film is probably... And I change it because they come up with better ones... But I really like Arrival. Time aspect of that. When they look at time, it's nonlinear. Dennis Villeneuve, he's fantastic.

I was introduced to science fiction by my mother. And she's started me out with The Lord of the Rings when I was 9 years old and then she introduced me to Asimov because she knew I really liked science. I just bought all the books and read them.

First of all, Arrival talks about extra-terrestrials. Which anybody that's in to science fiction has to be interested in extra-terrestrials and the fact that universe is so big we just don't know. And what we don't know, we don't know. We don't know if anybody's out there but it seems to me as a science fiction fan that the universe is too big to have developed life elsewhere, the intelligent life. And, of course the thing about Arrival is the heptapods. Here, on Earth, are known as extremely intelligent animals. But their use of time towards the end of the movie... It starts at the beginning because time is shifting all way through it, you're curious what's going on. And at the end you get to see that the aliens view time from a different perspective. Because we view time as linear, like from morning to night. They look at the time in a context of what it creates in the universe. That's a bubble that just exists.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Dune. Well, I don't know, maybe it's just Dune. It's really hard to take to film. It's just the film was kind of gross in a way. And it didn't really appeal to me, it wasn't very sciency. Absurd at times whereas the book wasn't absurd at all, it made sense all way through it. Herbert was really a genius being able to develop a story, the characters and bring them to life and he still kept.. All the political... And the science it were very good. But the film just didn't do that. And I don't why... They had all the money in the world. And they had some pretty good actors there. I don't think the fucking director read the book. That was probably the worst... I was disappointed... I watched it through and I was disappointed. I saw it on TV. I've never watched it twice. Once was enough to me. But I've seen Arrival probably 3 times. I like to watch it every six times.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Yeah, I watched one last night called Stasis. It's on Netflix. It was... Going into stasis, your mind went up to the past and inhabited another body. There were two factions, as usually, fighting each other. In a future, people don't want anybody going to the past to solve the problem. They want to keep things the way they are because they have the power and all the money and all. And there's the audience's underdog going back and trying to change things. Mostly to get rid of the Kabal which runs everything. It was interesting and all but the dialog was really not very good. It was really cheeky and it didn't have any great actors in it. Young girl that was in it was pretty good. But the people running the show were terrible actors. Didn't deliver their lines very well. And it wasn't a very big budget. But it was interesting... I'll watch anything science fiction but I won't just look at it and say it's crap. I'll watch it and make a decision afterwards.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

It needs to have science in it. It has to be based in the roots of science. Either quantum theories or time... Or space... Especially space... Needs to have figured out how to travel long distances in space. And technology. It needs to have technology far more advanced than what we have now but we're slowly going there. Good science fiction takes technology we have now and just moves it to the future as a natural progression. That to me is what makes science fiction. It's believable.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

It has to hold my interest. Right from the beginning. And typically... When *Arrival* came out.. I said OK. *Aliens*, that works for me because I'm interested in that. I'm interested in how someone like Dennis Villeneuve would portray an alien invasion, for lack of a better word. It's really interesting how Villeneuve uses the Chinese as villains. They were ready to drop a bomb on them. At the end they save it but they were to blow them up and eastern Europeans weren't happy about them [Heptapods] either. There's a tendency towards violence which you can expect from today. Because what people don't know they fear. And so Villeneuve was able to get that across really, really well.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

It's definitely entertainment for me. I read before I go to sleep every night. That's pretty much that's all I read, but not exclusively. Science fiction, as much as I can. And it's getting harder and harder finding good, newly written stuff that could capture my attention, so I keep reading older things over and over. There's an awful lot of sci fi that's a military sci fi. It's all about space wars and battle on the ground. It's all military stuff, there's not much of intellectual stuff. Even *Dune* was very intellectual series of books. It covered a long span of time and it appealed to the intellect. Which is why Arthur C. Clarke and Heinlein and Asimov... They appeal to the intellect, they keep you thinking whereas the military ones is just battle after battle after battle. It's political and somewhat sociological which doesn't really interest me, that stuff. I understand the reason they put that in there. I don't even pay attention much to politics here other than listening Donald Trump being idiot most days.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Well, science fiction probably drives a lot of scientists. If someone is involved in the actual science they're going to be excited by science fiction. And Neil deGrasse Tyson, he's taken over from Carl Sagan. Now Carl Sagan was always interested in science fiction but he knew it was fiction.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

Well... It really haven't. I'm still looking for the intellectual books and movies. Books that make think and if I like them I'm going to read again, and if it's a good movie I'm going to watch it again. Really good books and really good movies make you think. They leave you wanting more and make you think more about stuff. But if you're not interested in science fiction there's nothing anybody can do to make you

interested in it. Some people disliked Arrival.. It's just too much fiction. The thing about science fiction is that it expands you mind and by making you think it actually expands your brain. And thereby affecting some of your reality. Because once you've changed you're thinking some of your reality has changed.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I was blown away by the movie. First of all it has all elements that I like. It has space, it has mystery and it has aliens. Those are the tree things you need in science fiction book or movie to grab my interest. And a good story around it.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I saw Alien when it first came out and all I saw was Alien. All I needed to see. I was going to see this movie no matter what. I was just blown away by the movie. And not just the movie itself. It was a subgenre of science fiction. It was horror science fiction. I wasn't expecting that when I went to see the movie so I was divided when I saw it. I remember seeing the poster but I didn't think it was going to be a horror film. I never saw it as a horror film. It's a really good thing that they never shown how the alien looks like. It left enough to my imagination to figure it out.

What do I remember about watching Alien for first time? I found that not all aliens are going to be friendly. That life can develop somewhere else radically different. And because they don't know what or who we are, they don't think like us, they won't be able to interact with us.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

When I came out of the movie I had to walk two blocks to get to my truck and a fucking cat jumped out of a tree and it scared the shit out of me. That's a good indication of how much that movie got under my skin. I was still thinking about it as I walked. Alien is brilliant. And the other movies that followed up were ok, I watched them couple of times. But they're not going to top Alien. It's the first. It's like The Matrix, even the third and second The Matrix film can't top the first one.

D: Yes, I say The Animatrix is more Matrix than the sequels.

Yeah...

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

None. I was a science fiction geek. That was 1979, I was three years sober. And of course Star Wars was out there too. Star Wars is interesting but I'm not per se a star wars fan. I probably have not seen all of the Star Wars movies. To a science fiction geek Alien is like 'wow'. There hasn't been anything good for science fiction for a long time. Prior that we had 2001... Which is brilliant, the book is brilliant and the movie is brilliant.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Oh, I mean the movie is just full of great scenes. I think one of my favourite scenes is when they get into that alien spaceship and they find the pilot... You know later on... When you see Prometheus, you know what went on. But when they walked in there was really interesting. When you are as much into science fiction as I am you're interested in, first of all, what's the alien look like and what the ship looks like. And then you realize the ship is enormous so you have to suspend disbelief to realise the people of an alien race... They know physics as far as it can go. They have total understanding of physics so they can build and transport very large machines, larger than we can imagine... Machines 20 kilometres long that travel through space. So that scene when they enter the spaceship, they walk through it was very interesting to me. The movie is so well made that you no longer see that one scene moves to another scene. He doesn't dwell for too long. That was Ridley Scott. He doesn't dwell on one thing for too long so you can get bored with it or you can find any flaws in it. He moves on to something else and you discover eggs. The movies is so well paced. I'm a science fiction geek, how can it not follow my interests.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Again, go back to when they first enter the ship and they see that alien skeleton. Or when the robot... When I'm watching a film I don't just look at what's in front of camera. I look to the side, what the actors are doing... And the artificial being that was there... He had a look about it that made me think this guy is going to play an important role and I have to pay attention to him.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Boring. It was very slow paced and I couldn't figure out what was going on until halfway through the movie I started to think 'wait a second, something is not right here'. Whereas Alien you know right away you're going to go to another spacecraft so that keeps you excited. Moon was just the same thing over and over again. Then things start to change and at the end of the movie they tie it really well but at first half of the movie was really slow, it didn't hold my attention. I only saw it once. I forgot how many times I saw Alien, many times.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Well, I was really interested and excited about them mining the Moon which seems to be the most logical thing to do for us. To use the Moon as a base to go elsewhere. And the other thing... When he was walking around in his habitat that they were able to create that, the gravity. So that was interesting. It holds my interest. I don't just watch Sam Rockwell walking around, I don't just watch a singular character.

[he contradicts himself because he said before it was boring]

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Moon is not a movie for an action oriented science fiction fan. It's a movie that is designed to get you to think... It was so slow at the beginning and I couldn't figure out what was going on.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Well, I'm trying to remember. I think when he sees himself in the machine... That's when it started to makes sense. Why he had such a short contract, because he had such a life span. That was very interesting scene because it creates a lot of tension. And if you are a fan of science fiction you start to put two and two together really quickly. He's a clone, they haven't figured out how to make clones properly so they die. It's like in Blade Runner.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

When he saw himself in the machine and then his other self comes to save him. It was so slow at the beginning.. And the loneliness, I wondered if I would be like after 3 or 4 years all by myself. No contact with humans other than video. And we are approaching this because of social media. For a lot of people that's the only way they connect.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Well now when I think Avatar I wonder how it would look like if I had an avatar... Could I do that and the answer is yes. But we move to that problem now. There is a reality of my body and the unreality of the avatar that I now inhabit. You occupy a physical body. We put his intellect and his beliefs into the avatar and the avatar is completely different. Like this guy can't walk and avatar can...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I went with my son and I was so doped that it was too much for me but I watched it again later.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Well, the thing is that Avatar had this theological aspect to it, that everything is connected. There were these natives here and they have similar beliefs to these from Avatar. That everything is connected. So that was fascinating. I am personally very involved with few Indians and it is relevant. And Moon is. This is the thing about science fiction that if it's done right it's relevant to today.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

The only expectation I had was that the director made some amazing things and I wasn't disappointed.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Of course it did. It exceeded my expectations but at the same time the whole military thing really kind of bugged me it now that's relevant to what's going on.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The dragons. That was an amazing scene. Just finding a dragon and using their tail to connect. That was a fascinating thing. You have a way of connecting that is outside of our experience, They have a way of connecting to animals and plants that is outside of our experience and that guy, the avatar is amazed by it all because his experience is a human one. He's not connected to anything. He's connected to his life. He's doing this so he can walk again. And then he becomes sympathetic towards them and that appealed to me.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The tree of souls. Also the idea of death not being death... That of course has been worked many, many times. You simply become another avatar. So again we have the theological element. It falls within my personal beliefs.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Ok, well first would be Arrival... And then would be Alien and then would be Moon

D: But we're not talking about Arrival.

Oh. Avatar first, then Alien then Moon. Well, they're not different. They all have essentially the same message. We're going to get out there and we're going to discover things beyond our understanding and we're going to figure out how to deal with them. And that is what all those films say to me and that's what I say to people. We are going to travel to space, probably not in my lifetime, and we are going to figure it out. And we still carry our humaneness with us.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Wow, that's a tough one. I'm a big fan of dialog but I also am a big fan of the soundtrack in relation to the cinematography. I love soundtracks. I even buy soundtracks. I still have 2001 soundtrack on vinyl. If you watch Alien again listen to the soundtrack, what's going on. They are totally sucking you in to death and they do it brilliantly. Which is why the ending is brilliant with that. We have the soundtrack. We have her breathing, panting almost in her suit. And you can imagine her heart beating. You can imagine all that and that's my experience while watching that. My heart bit gets elevated. My breathing speeds up a little bit. I'm really taking in a lot of stuff. So the film maker achieved what he wanted to achieve with me.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yes. Of course. We were just talking about it, how it's relevant in today's world. And science fiction... In Star Trek their communicators were our cell phones, the flip phones. And we now have machines that can scan human body, which comes right out of the Star Trek. That's completely relevant. Science fiction is important because they push the envelope of what "we think is believable" and make it "believable". They take unbelievable and make it believable.

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Johnny

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 66

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British (lives in Canada)

Education: University

Father:

Mother:

Occupation: Business ownere

Father: Air force captain

Mother: Housewife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 55 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 0

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info	
about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	Yes

### **Interview 21. 21-11-18 Aaron**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Probably the second Alien movie, Aliens. The suspense. With the radar scenes in particular. Just thinking about it I'm getting goose bumps. Hearing this tune... I also saw it as a kid... I definitely identified with Newt. Being that same age and seeing this kid going through this... With adults but she survived the slaughtering of the whole other group of adults... That was... Knowing that you could live through the worst.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Oh man... There is bad on purpose...

D: No, just bad.

Probably... Jeezzz... Uuummm... I mean, Core. The Core. That was pretty bad. Bad acting, bad writing, bad science. There's so many SyFy original movies... Do you mean theatrical release only or TV movies as well?

D: I mean the Wonder of the Cinema.

The SyFy channel original movies... That's the whole... That even if you paid... There are some things that I saw in the theatre. That probably would have to be The Core. It's probably the most objectionable.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

That's the catch 22 – recall the unrecallable. Something I just did not care for... I got one. There was one that came out sometime in last 5 years. There were 4 or 5 friends, they all got a piece of some alien technology... One got a helmet, one got a gauntlet... That was dumb. And oh, The Pixels...

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

I mean... As long as it's got some sort of advanced technology premise... Or... There's a lot of social sci fi... They're really blurry on the line with the rest... Things are not necessarily more advanced but things are different. Social sci fi... There was one that came out recently that I haven't watched yet.. It's called Her. About a guy falling in love with his cell phone. That's not lasers, blasters or anything like that. There are things like expansion of science based ideas. Whether it's studying people. You know that is still science.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Of course there are like the basics of the good story. Like a plot... But the basics have to be there of course. Something that I come away thinking how we should do things in the future. Or how we should go about... Anything...

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I would definitely say both. I would say that for one... Most are really entertainment... Before we had moving picture we had standalone pictures... People would stare at them, appreciate them and enjoy them. That's entertainment. As an artist, when I go about making a painting... It's not about making something pretty. It's about how am I going to meet the viewer's array through the canvass? I want them to see everything there. I want something leading to something else everywhere. And that's engaging. That's what gets people to stand and look at the painting and appreciate every detail. Because there is. There is a pattern that has been created. I'm doing this to show them the idea. It's more than just the line. It's the way I show it. It tells a story. That's where the saying 'a picture is worth 1000 words' comes from... There's a whole story in every single one.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Oh for sure. They have a great influence on society. They're self-fulfilling prophecies. Spaceships, cell phones, hover boards now. People see it and they want it real so they will work for generations to make it real. Or kind of the opposite – they see what they don't want. They are inspired to work to bring society away from that downfall. It works like a bad omen. Cautionary tale.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I think I've relaxed a little bit. When I was a teenager I did not like Star Wars... I was a Trekkie... It had to be hard science fiction. And at one point I think I saw some documentary about Star Trek. They were talking about how the script was written. And the writes would just go and put 'techno babble here'. And somebody would come in and just write stuff that would seem like it makes sense. Yeah, it's all based in theory and hypothesis that are real but they're not proven and there's nothing that says that a lightsaber is any less real than a warp drive.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Excellent movie. One of the things I liked about it, especially after rewatching it, is the fact that they did the most believable job explaining why the scientist didn't do scientist's job. Because there is always that... In every science fiction movie some scientist does some totally unscientist thing to do... Like breaching the code... Like poking the thing with his own fingers... The fact that it was kind of a... People being insubordinate because they were trying to do the right thing and they didn't know the right thing to do because they never experienced that for realsies... Yeah, it's just an excellent horror movie. It's got amazing tone, a very palpable threat... Creepy. H. R. Giger... That guy did an amazing job on those designs. It taps into just so many primal instincts. Like at the same time it's got a human look but it's got like a live predatory look... The skittering, the prowling all over every surface... Yeah...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I had seen Spaceballs before I saw Alien and there's the chestburster scene... So I was like 'oh, that's where it's from'. So that took the tease right out of that. That did nothing for me but... When Ripley is cornered, I think... And the small head comes out just inches from her... That stands out...

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It has classic horror movie vibes... I enjoy horror movies but I think when I first saw it it was pretty creepy, pretty intense. Yeah. I guess just gripped by suspense and fear.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I didn't know that that [Spaceballs scene] was from Alien. And then I saw it and as soon as he started freaking out I was like 'is that...'. Because I heard that Spaceballs was all satire and it all has been pulled from somewhere for the most part... I was watching it with a couple of friends who were freaking out and I was just waiting for it. Other than that... That was maybe 5 seconds of fore warning. It definitely didn't freak me out as much as my friends... And it was just because I guess I saw something like this popping of someone's chest before.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think it would have to be that first scene where they bring him in with the compromised suit.. Just that set up. I really, really liked that. It's because what I said.. That believable 'everybody is just anything' and that's why they pop out. Something sets this terrible thing in motion and it's not because somebody's trying to be evil or experimenting on people.... It's not outright being evil for evil's sake... Even the android... He is an android.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

When Ripley is talking to Mother, or using Mother. It kind of discovers 'they fucked us, they sent us here'. I think that actually set me to mistrust the corporations pretty early.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Powerful. Pretty emotionally disturbing. It's n emotional rollercoaster. It's pretty much just a weird mystery and that's how they kind of pull you in and you can kind of feel it coming... You can put two and two together and they let you do that. Once you realise this guy is a clone you're like 'he's not talking to his girlfriend' or whatever... But then when he makes that call and finds out that his wife is dead and his daughter is 15 now... It's pretty rough.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I deeply regret not giving it the attention it deserved the first time around. I am pretty sure I fell asleep first time.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I think it was meant to be a little deceiving. At first you were meant kind of wonder... But he definitely disambiguated it pretty well. Pretty early after he has met himself about being a clone and the robot just asked him 'are you hungry?' and the robots aren't supposed to just dodge questions. That's pretty fucking obvious. And they have already started discussing it so it was suspected and then as soon as robot just refused to answer the question I was like 'ok'. And then I wasn't... Even though I realised the whole clone thing... And that he wasn't talking to the family... I still wasn't prepared for the gut punch of him talking to his daughter and not being able to say 'I'm your father' or anything. And then, at the end of the call you hear her call for her dad... And it's the same voice. And that was just... I have never even considered that that was a possibility... That he's... That he never even went to the fucking Moon... Just to make a clone up there, just because you can... Every three years... How many there were? At least 10? Uuuuhhh... It's pretty disgusting to imagine people making a decision to do that just because they can. It falls on the same theme of Alien – the corporation just carrying about the bottom line.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think... When they first kind of start to get along. But they still kind of struggling with it. They're playing ping pong. The older clone is kind of having father-son moment with himself... He says... When he first invites him to play he says 'do you want to play ping pong? I can show you how'. And... The clone that has learnt things since he was cloned... Like having that ability... I guess you can assume they're clones, they know all the same stuff. But they're not a successive clone. They're all from the same seed so they all have the same implanted memories which apparently don't include ping pong. That kind of made me shattered...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Oh for sure. The call with the daughter was definitely specifically designed to be a nerve wrenching moment. And the dialog with the robot was put there like a plus sign.... Like you got two over here and you got two over here. Here's your plus sign, you've got four now. That was deliberate choice of dialog.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Pocahontas in space. It's about the native portrayal... That what's really sells the idea... And they kind of went with the stereotypes when they designed those aliens and their culture. They just didn't try very much to differentiate the culture and make it original. They're paying the price for it in everybody's memory forever.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was visually impressive. It had a solid setting but I walked away just feeling that it was just a great showcase for 3D. At the same time the things that stand out the most were when the 3D failed. When it broke the immersion more than increased it. One moment in particular was when the tree of life or whatever was being destroyed and burning. And there were ashes falling in front of the action. They tried to create a lot of depth and they pushed it out just a little too far, where the stuff was really close. Because it was so close it was disappearing too fast. Just in your field of view but long enough for you to establish that there is a box around your field of view. I mean it was visually stunning and then that ash floating just too close... Like 'Oh fuck, I'm watching a movie'. It just broke immersion. I remember it was in the lower left corner of the screen. I remember this better than the action in the film.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It didn't really stir any deep emotions... Not like two other films. It was more just enjoyment. I felt like they took their time to make it pretty. It just didn't... I don't know... I identified a little too much with the villain... I would like a cool mech! I don't care about the aliens, I would like to drive a cool mech.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I guess that final fight. That's a good, long fight... It's got good stakes. The whole climax. From when they decided to try to unite the tribe. It was a pretty good third act. If you ignore the plot and everything, just good action but it didn't have anything new to say.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I mean... I'm sure somebody thought that this sex scene was going to do it for somebody else...

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I'd say Alien, and Moon is very close second. If I would be about to recommend them it would matter very much if somebody is a horror fan. If a horror fan – yes. Otherwise Moon. And I'm a horror fan. And Avatar somehow strikes the 4. Moon somehow takes up two spaces and Avatar... Just dimensional space stuff...

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I mean as a visual artist I'm definitely attracted to things with a strong visual tone, a style... So cinematography. I also... I do roleplaying games so richly creative world visually... Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings... Those were impressively fleshed out worlds. Covering every aspect of life.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I'm inclined to say no... But what I said would inclined otherwise... I just like if it's fun and I can forget it. It doesn't have to be art. I think like... There's an old 80s movie called The Explorers. It's a kid's movie. So it doesn't present any new ideas as far as science goes and it's pretty bad science but it's fun. It's superfun.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Aaron Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 35

Sex: X Male

Nationality: American

Education: Ba (in fine arts)

Father: College

Mother: College

Occupation: Office manager / special projects jewellery  
Mother: Labour and delivery nurse

Father: Mental health care

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Since I can remember

Inherited from parents

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £40

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging Yes

Cosplay Yes (when socially acceptable)

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

### Interview 22. 22-11-18 James

#### D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?

I'd say... To say specifically one is very difficult but I'm a huge fan of Star Trek series. Probably Star Trek II Wrath of Khan. Because it really, to me, it gave the entire Star Trek franchise, from the film perspective, a kick the need to turn more mainstream. Because the initial problems it had with the first film is that it wasn't seen as anything that got people's attention. And with the second one it came back to the original series with the character of Khan but it also has a real emotional impact. The one with... The original.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I don't know if it would be considered sci fi. It came out of a computer game... It is considered sci fi.. The film called Mutant Chronicles... It's got like steampunk... and... I fell asleep watching it... I just could not understand the appeal of it. People I watched it with said it was brilliant and I couldn't believe it. Because nothing seems to happen, it just goes on and on and on.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Sort of middle of a road... Hmm... There's nothing that comes to mind. You're either amazed with it or you think it's terrible. Because when it comes to anything what is mediocre it doesn't usually stay in your mind.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

In my opinion science fiction is something that will transport you from ordinary day to day life it shows something that's either completely impossible or it will show you something that has ability to take things apart and make it something brilliant. It transports you out of the ordinary into the extraordinary.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

To make a very good science fiction film it is something that will keep you... As I said it takes you out of the ordinary into the extraordinary. It will keep you enthralled. And it gives you probably... Thinking about all the problems in the world... It gives you ability to get out of that. To feel free and to feel, like in Star Trek, you're looking at the best thing that could happen. But for really good science fiction film... And it's probably quite similar among many other films.... To me something is really good... It transcends the film. It might influence you in your day to day life. To do a lot of things. The greatest example would be Ghostbusters for me. The most recent one. Because few years ago I attended convention focused around Ghostbusters. For the first time I saw what fandom can be like. I saw people in costumes, with amazing attention to detail. I've only been to three conventions in my life but Ghostbusters is the first one where I saw other people who created Ghostbusters club across the country. There are these things in the entire world. I'd say that enraptures brilliant sci fi film. It will give you something that can be built upon.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it can be both because it's all entertainment but art is subjective. The best way I can describe art of it is when you look at some shots that are used in sci fi films. Their beauty, the camera work, the camera angles. For example a film like Tron Legacy. The visual... That film visually is phenomenal. It can be art because, well other people may disagree, you are looking at something that is constructed so beautifully and phenomenally. Unlike anything else and that's probably the best. Aesthetics of it.

D: We kind of agreed that art can be entertaining now. But is there something except for aesthetics.

Hmm... I couldn't really answer that. I'm not too sure.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I would say they do because any film... Science fiction is a good example of this... They take things that are part of reality and they also mirror what's going on in society. So I say they're very important. In the most recent remake of King Kong, I would say it's important, they made a comical nod where they were discussing the facts and Nixon was supposed to be in the office. And it shown the things that happen the things that happen with current administration in America. So I'm sure in general it is important.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

From being a child my sci fi interest was mainly from Star Trek. And Ghostbusters came from being a child and seeing the cartoon, things like that. So I grew from the things that were available from me. Now, interestingly, when I was a child I probably didn't know that many people who were fans of sci fi... So the question how it grew is probably more through the people I knew as I was getting older. From when I was a child and going to a teenager. I met different people who could educate me more about film, told me about different films that they saw... So I think what it grew into is probably going just from interest in two or three different sort of films to learning more about films and cinema. Becoming fan of the certain people's work. So as I got older I went from a narrow view and just seeing films as an entertainment to becoming part of community and appreciate film also for visual aesthetics. So rather than just seeing the story I would go and look at it thinking it's visually brilliant and wonder how it's done.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Probably John Hurt. It's the chestburster scene. I have an interest in relationship with alien. Because in all the years I never saw this film. I was aware of it but I've never seen it. So my initial knowledge of it came from the fact that my mother... When it came out... Went to see it with one of her friends was so horrified because I suspect she wasn't fully aware what she was going to see. She thought she was going to see something nice like E.T. and was greeted by this rather gory sci fi. I guess to me it was this scary forbidden film that as a child I was too young to see but I've heard things about it.

It means something that had huge impact on the way the films were done. It's like a huge starting point for films in general. It's interesting, looking at Alien and looking at Moon. You see very similar patterns to them. I guess Alien had impact on the way films were shot, the way how they were selling this idea... It was a pioneer horror sci fi sort of film but it shows you a completely different sort of aesthetic. Which is.. Star Trek was always nice and shiny and beautiful. Alien was dirty, grimy. And I guess there was an element of some sort of realism to it. So like you can imagine being on a ship or submarine. It's going to be crap, it's going to be horrible. People having to live together... On top of each other almost.. So that was a big sort of thing. I see it as something that had an impact. Even similar sort of set design in

the TV series Red Dwarf. To me Alien really is a starting point of huge amount of other things. It led to comics, it led to books, it led to an acceptance of sci fi not just being sci fi but also being horror hinged. And another thing... Strong female lead. Up to this point not really seen... I think with Alien it flips whole battle relationship on its head because you have the strong female leading Ripley. You also have the things like facehugger, chestbuster... It's almost men being... It's almost a rape of a man but it's also birth.. The horror of putting the giving birth onto a man.

D: It's very subversive...

It's also changing the context of the birth to sheer horror. So maybe in some respects with Alien is hitting this idea that there was a rape and there's been this birth that's unwanted and unloved.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was probably maybe 13-14. To be fair I thought it will be more fast paced. It was sort of a forbidden thing, like I said. Tried to watch it with my friend who was banned from seeing it by his parents... But I watched it.. It was so different than what I thought it would be. Because, again, I was used to clean lines and nice sort of shiny set...

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

And I was looking at it thinking: 'My God, this is grimy and dirty'... And people running around, all showing the inadequacies in themselves... Yeah.. I just remember being sat, watching it in my parent's house thinking 'this is something totally different than anything I have ever seen before'. And I kept thinking 'that's that girl from Ghostbusters'.

**What did you expect before watching it?** I expected it to be almost more like Aliens, what the sequel was. More an action film. Alien is a slow burner. Once it gets going you're on a rollercoaster to hell sort of.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

To be fair the first time I ever saw it I was a bit underwhelmed by it because I was expecting something more fast paced. I liked the film but I expected more of a boom, boom, boom from it. But you get a lot of it later in the film.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Oh yeah.. .One of them is when they're going around the space jockey's ship. Before the facehugger hits. Because at that point you think... They're just basically researching what's going on. I've never seen anything like that happen... And the visual amazing aesthetics of it and also for a favourite scene... Ash gets clubbed and his head comes off.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Maybe not a scene but a whole way it was shot with inducing claustrophobia. Certainly comes to light when they're going round these corridors in the ship because you know alien is around but you can't see it. That really... That had impact on anyone who was watching because it goes back to that thing of a child in the haunted house. The fact you know something is there. You know something is going to get you. It's the jump shock of it. But if you imagine it watching it in a dark room... Alien itself is dark... It's somewhere in the dark...

One thing I'd like to add to the Alien... It's interesting that the computer to the ship is called Mother. It's almost trying to create this family aesthetic [means rhetoric] of these people together. So you've got this idea that the people you're supposed to trust... the corporation who are running these people actually they don't always have your best interest in mind.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I always think of the Moon... But when I think of the film itself it's loneliness. Extreme loneliness. For me personally Moon is quite an amazing film actually. I knew nothing about... Until you and I have discussed it as a topic here [online, as topic of the interview before it] I never really knew much about it. I never properly sat down and watched it. I watched it and I thought it was brilliant. Because it starts like a film being about that guy on the Moon and he's just constantly hanging to the thought that he's going to get out. And it's far more than that. And there's a real twist moment in there. But to me what it means is that loneliness. I think it's a film where I can see real visual influence from Alien.

D: Yes, it is very industrial. Pipes, cables. And it is also very claustrophobic.

Yes, that confined, claustrophobic feeling to it.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

So the first time I watched it I was very much taken aback by similarities with Alien. Confined space, corporation having an impact. But it's one of those things you go right in... Because how it goes with the character being in some sort of incident... It's giving well the realistic view of what would happen if you're stuck stranded on a base, with no one to talk to but a robot or computer. He's a very lonely, lost character in it.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I was engrossed in it as the story went on. It made me feel very sad for the character. It gives you insight to what it must be like living and not knowing what's happening. It's also the fact... The real impact I had from it is that idea of clinging to hope. That something better is around the corner which is overriding the

science fiction element of it. I kept thinking: 'this poor character... He's going to be ok, someone's going to come'.

D: Does it have any cultural element?

Culturally it's probably the sub context of it. It's probably... It looks at the fact that we, in society are more and more removed from other people. So we try to connect on internet... So does this movie suggest that he people remove themselves from society... Get jobs where they are removed...

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

My favourite scene.. Mainly for wow factor... Was when he comes in with the other cloned body. It's like 'oh wow, now we're really taking it'. What's going to happen now?

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The part where he learns that the time has passed... Because that's a real emotional, gut-punch moment... He thinks it's a couple of years when in fact it was 15 years and then thinking 'oh God, there is the real Sam Rockwell's voice' [on Earth in the narrative] so everything he lived was a mystification. That film... From the emotional point it sets the empathy... From that perspective it was more than I thought it will be.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Hahahaha – that's what I think about. The film I see as being awfully hyped. I thought it will be a huge failure but it did incredibly well in the box office. It had the same problem as Titanic, you know it's going to crash with an iceberg. [means it's predictable].

The advancement of technology. The game changer of the way how the films are being made. The fact it came from a huge amount of motion capture. I know the motion capture has been around before but without Avatar you wouldn't have the technology...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I've been just blown away by it visually, astounded by the beauty of it. The fact that... Whilst it was something completely different in one respect I felt elements of similarity with Moon and Avatar... With this idea of large corporation that impacts everything. Upon first seeing Avatar I was obviously thinking of brilliant aesthetics and technology things... But it made me think about the impact. Like when I watch a film, and think: 'hey this can be compared to the way Aborigines have been treated, etc to this idea of society that maybe it doesn't have to be like that'. Or rain forest, something larger.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

**What did you expect before watching it?** My expectation was that I was going to see this big, bombastic film which of course I did but my expectations were sort of different because the main character was someone who was disabled. Which possibly you don't see enough in those films.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It probably had a bit of negative impact on me. Because you don't know what to expect but I remember going and thinking 'come on, you got to really impress me'.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Hmm, difficult one to think.. .Probably the one where Jake is attempting to disable a bulldozer. I liked that.. That really got my attention. I just thought it was like his allegiance. The jump from the army guy to do more for the nature and the people. So the guy who initially think is a here gets reassigned as a villain of the film but then he sort of manages to... Similarly like with other films he manages to sort of save himself.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Hmmm... You meant to think we have to look after nature...

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

The best would be Alien because it was a humongous game changer... Nothing really like it... Second would be Moon and third would be Avatar.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Personally it's the story but also the... every film I see soundtrack has a real impact on me. Soundtrack in some respects can have more emotional impact that you realise.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Everything has to have some level of meaning or it becomes pointless. It has to represent something. It should be more... I like to watch something that makes me think about something.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: James

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 36

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: Ba Horn / and Postgraduate form of studies

Father: Degree

Mother: Degree

Occupation: Housing/Retail

Father: Chef Executive

Mother: Main grade officer

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 30 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £20

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes (memorabilia)

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting Yes

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction Yes (privately)

### Interview 23. 22-11-18 Jeff

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

That's really hard but I have to say John Carpenter's The Thing. It is tightly filmed.

D: Do you mean it's solid or claustrophobic?

I think it's claustrophobia. It's so tightly... Right from the very beginning. Some of the acting in it is great. It's got this feeling about it's so well filmed and they make such a good use of... When you look into how the film was made, things really stand out. Things like... Some little things. At the beginning of the film, when they go to see the Norwegian base. Which is all burnt out which is the actual set after it burnt it down at the end of the film. And they reused it. So what you see at the beginning is what they blow up at the end. I know it bombed at the box office when it came out. It was released against E.T. No way was it going to win. Movie like that is... I think the ending really does it. The end of the movie is not a full stop. It's a question mark. And there are not many movies that are willing to do that. And Moon does that. One theory is that used the lighting technique. One of the things that came out recently is that director used the lighting technique to identify infected people. If you had a glint in your eye, if you had the reflections in your eye you human. Otherwise you are infected. And right at the end of the film they used that technique. When you look at the Kurt Russell's eyes you see little reflection of firelight. And you look at Charles' eyes and there's no reflection.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

That's difficult because there are some really bad ones. I'm thinking something towards late 70s. I mean Star Wars came out and that has set up benchmark. [Before] You had 2001, different benchmarks in the subgenres. But then you got some of the Roger Corman movies. He's a director. He did some amazing horror movies with Vincent Price. Like Mask of the Red Death. That's a horror movies, he did whole bunch of those. But he thought he could do sci fi and I think he came out with Battle Beyond Stars. That's what I would call good bad. It's bad but it's good. Not sure if actually directed. A lot of things from Battle Beyond Stars was reused many times later. I mean, they reused everything. They used things from it in a recent film, I did see a film called Creature, that's terrible.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

That's actually quite difficult. It's a forgettable sci fi... That's difficult... Star Trek IV. Star Trek The Motion picture was... It was empty. It was all grandeur, big ideas and stuff but it felt like a big room with like couple of things in it. And then you had Star Trek II Wrath of Khan which was like 'oh my God, this is amazing'. And then a couple films after that it was just meh. You had that, you hit the nail on the head and the next couple of things didn't do it.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Premise of the story. Well, it's different for every one but the wonder of the science fiction story is that it can be set anywhere. It's how you got to that point when the viewer starts viewing what's happening. I think it's introduction of something that's fantastically possible. You've got medieval situation and you introduce something that is clearly not in the world. So from the medieval perspective they see dragons and monsters. From the protagonist perspective he sees alien he's trying to kill and you have the alien. Because audience understands it's from another world and so the protagonist. I would say ... it is a

really good example. Because for multiple perspective operating in the same world. We know it's not magic although it is for them.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Something that can actually... Again, it's the suspension of disbelief. It's when you know it's not real but something inside of your head says that it's possible.

D: Could it be more real than it seems? Could science fiction be about something very real although...

There are so many movies do that. 2001, again Moon is very real. But you've got movies... There's a recent movie with Johnny Depp, Transcendence. It's a logical progression of the direction we might be heading in. It's kind of near future... It's not so far away.

You could consider V for Vendetta as a science fiction. [I coded it for mega-field because of it being adapted from a comic book]

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it still depends on a film. For me a sci fi entertainment would be things like big blockbusters. So like Marvel movies.. I mean I know it's superheroes but there are so many sci fi elements... Star Wars, you know, that's escapism. That's 'I'm going to sit and watch it because it's fun'.

D: Can art be entertainment?

Yeah. I think some of the movies from the 60s were very arty. For example Barbarella. Using Barbarella I would say it's mainly because they tried to project the style and arc of the time into a future setting. Actually the movie overall is not the best. From a style perspective it's just dripping in... Not just camp but just style... Maybe a different movie would be better... It was very much reflection of period. I think some 70s films could be examples as well. Silent Running. It's a very arty film. I think movies of that type... It is the big entertainment stuff and there's the... I'm just trying to think what arty movie is...

D: Do you think that any of the films we will talk about could be considered art?

I think Moon could.

D: Exactly.

Alien is kind of half way art, mainly because the source material, Giger. It wasn't the film's actual source material, the art direction was sourced from Giger. Avatar.. Probably not... I'm just trying to think about... There was this band... You, the band Asia... And their album covers. They're rock band. When Avatar came out the artist for covers was asked what he thought about his art on screen and he had nothing to do with it. It's very difficult with sci fi movies because they tend to be very heavily reliant on cinematography and creative arts within a movie. Because a movie isn't really... You can film a sci fi movie in an environment that is absolutely not a sci fi environment and it is not reliant on environment

as story setting. Whereas a lot... I would say the dominant motive of sci fi... The setting is almost as much an actor as the actors in it.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Absolutely. They're seen as entertainment, predominately. They tend to be... I mean, escapism is main... Reason that sci fi.. Modern sci fi is... Is being able to go to another world and all the crap in the real world. You can set on the side and just... Even if it's really depressing like Avengers 4... A modern sci fi movie gives the viewer an ability to put all the worries to one side. You can just go to the cinema and disappear.

D: So is that art then?

That's escapism.

D: So what about it as art?

I don't think society recognises it as art. Even though a lot of it is, like for example Solaris. That is very thought provoking and art like, dream like in its presentation. So that I would consider art but some would not consider it art, they would just consider it sci fi. Some people... It's very... It's extraordinarily dependent upon content of the movie and the viewer's perspective.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

From my perspective... When I was really young my dad would wake me up late and we sat down at night and we watched Silent Running and it blew me away. I was just seven years old. My dad led me to it. And as a result I had an early appreciation of the entertainment perspective and now I have a better appreciation of the art perspective. So I think the viewer's expectations change with their experience. Both in terms of taste but also understanding what they are watching.

I'm a big, big fan of what I call a quiet science fiction. Things like Quite Earth, Moon. It's a sci fi setting. But environment and setting draws person to a story. Things like Quiet Earth.. It's so desolate and then they understand what's going on and there are very few ways out. Even The Thing has it. It's all isolated and then everything concentrates on that one spot. This is where everything is happening. These movies have a particular feeling about them. It's very difficult to describe. Sci fi elements and environment are secondary to a story. I enjoy the big spectacular Star Wars... They're fun but if I want a quiet evening and a film that I would personally enjoy that would be my choice. I've been fed on a diet of sci fi. A lot of it was a really good sci fi. From a very young age. Like Close Encounters. If you watch a movie with a better appreciation of what you're watching you can see the points in the movie when it changes... You've got the beginning and then you have a moment when it flips. So from an early age I was just like 'wow, huge space ship'. Now that I'm over I can see how it changes in the story... You can see the plot points where the story changes, even the mid way point. If you pause it and you look halfway through a film. Like in Jaws. Almost in the middle, it flips from being on an island to being on a boat.

## ALIEN

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Obviously my first thought is the creature. It was Giger's design. It was genre defining. It moved from the Godzilla guy in suit to 'oh my God, what is that?' That would be my initial thought. Basically Alien is a bogeyman story. That's what it is, it's the thing in a cupboard. The thing where Dallas is... It's like screaming 'it's behind you' and then it just turns right. And it's not just there, it's in your face. And it's not in Dallas' face, it's in your face.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I watched in on BBC. I watched in little 14 inch colour TV, on a bed, at night. It was **a perfect environment** because it meant that if I really didn't want to know I could just do that (covers his eyes). I saw it in comfortable, safe environment but having been taught sci fi before that I went in to watch it with certain set of expectations. A lot of space horror films have gone up to that point and they kind of failed. Not because of their concept but because implementation. Alien nailed the implementation so broad that everything after it was compared to it.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Alien was one of the first horror sci fi movies that I watched with the loan of detachment... Being able to separate the horror from reality. Jaws gave me nightmares. It's a similar kind of thing. Post Jaws... It changed the understanding in my head. So there was level of detachment that I can apply to Alien. And it was one of the first horror sci fi movies that I can actively watch and enjoy it for what it was.

**[Note: he has inherited some cultural capital from his father who fed him science fiction so with that capital he's capable of a degree of pure gaze]**

You can actually look at creature... It is absolutely gorgeous. Giger hated it because they covered it in slime and stuff... But when you see the photos of it dry... It's a predator... It's absolutely beautiful. I can appreciate it for level it was aimed at but also know how it got there.

My expectations of film were quite simple... It's a horror film and it's a sci fi film so I expected to be scared and disturbed by it but I also expected... Already having been thoroughly stepped in sci fi... I had other movies to compare with. Already been familiar with films like 2001 and Silent Running I had expectation set about a level of cinematography involved. So I was expecting things like high quality sets. If you compare... The set direction on Alien but they deliberately went out of their way to create used spacecraft. Nostromo has been around. It's dirty, it's gritty. But also my expectation was met because I was expecting... Not so much bright and shiny but a fact that it was used space. It was lived in. You look around the ship and you're thinking 'why have they done that?, What is that?'. When you compare it to a ship Silent Running which was very open but also confined. That particular style has

carried over from 2001 and can be seen very clearly in Alien. Most of the ship is refinery and is different by living quarters and cantina.

I think those expectations actually allowed me more immersion in the story itself. Not just the monster, **allowed me to separate the scares from the story.** And the majority of **people** probably will **remember more scares than Ripley refusing to let them back in to the ship.**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think my favourite scenes are probably iconic... One of them is when you see the grown alien for first time. They're looking for Jonesy, the cat. Harry Stanton gets taken. I think that scene is another of those tipping point moments. Because until that scene you had this tiny thing running around. Like, yeah, it nasty. It chewed its way out of someone's chest but it's manageable. And suddenly... That's not manageable. Something changes. You move from chasing something the size of a cat to something that is 8 feet tall and full of teeth. The dynamic of the film tips.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There are... The horror traits. Jonesy the cat hissing. Just fills the screen and it's just a full on hiss. That's primal. Or in the vents, when alien reaches out. Primal reaction... It runs tension and then you see the creature. You can actually it's logarithmic.. Because... From the cat to the actor to the creature. If I remember rightly. From a constructed scene point of view. You can actually see it going up and up and then bang. The cat sets the expectation. The actor set the realisation and then... creature.

[he seems to be experiencing effects of the soviet montage]

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Talk about chalk and cheese, Alien and Moon. But from the art direction perspective you can see they're from the same stock. There's this similarity. Even though it's much gentle... Way more clean but the underlining story is absolutely horrifying. In Moon crew really is expendable... It's also thing... If something is going to go wrong.. Doesn't matter what you do – you can't avoid it.

But basically Sam. Sam Rockwell. He just blew everything away. Before that, he was just an actor. But in such a playground... It's so many different characters from one character...

Moon to me is... I'm trying to think... It's not experiment... It's an exploration in characterisation. It's taking an environment, putting somebody in it and then treating this person in multiple ways and seeing which way they'll go. All in the same environment. It's just beautiful. But it's a study in characterisation.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember... basically sitting on a sofa and thinking that I've heard about this movie. Unfortunately, because of my condition I can't go to cinema. I remember it was on Sky Movies. I decided to watch it not because... Again, it was one of those films that came across my path, I didn't go looking for it. But when I started watching it I realised what it was. It was just like... I've added it to my movie library for instance. It's a must have. If you appreciate sci fi you must have it.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Covered

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think my favourite one is 'we are people'. Final discussion with Gerty. It's at the end. I think it's when Sam tries to get into transport. I think that scene basically defines movie. There's stuff that happens after that but that particular conversation is... That scene and I think the rover scene. When rover comes out of the Moon base. That... They're miniatures... And they should be proud of it. It was not CG. They did it the old fashioned way...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Again... That 'we are people scene' is very emotionally charged. But also when he gets the radiation dosage... The first accident. He gets radiated. And also the subsequent scene where his clone comes to get him. That one is emotional and also... It's double edged. You've got one clone discovering the other one and it's like 'what?'

There are three scenes... The radiation when he's almost dying... The double edged when he's discovering what the fuck is going on. But also from the other guy's perspective it's 'what the fuck, man? Oh, I'm being rescued. By ME'. And there's the scene where he discovers the other clones, underneath. And it all snowballs from that point.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Ironically not about the characters but about the world. From the personal perspective, as a writer, I'm very interested in world building. When you look at the world where the story is set on. It is so well developed. I know we only see a small part of it but even that small part... You can feel rest of the world. It's a living world. So my first thought of Avatar is how well defined it is.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I saw it in cinema, before I got ill. And we saw it in 3D. It was really spectacular. And again, all those very blockbuster type roots. Starting story, this middle bit... And you can see, right in the middle. Defining point. I think the tree comes down right in the middle. You can see the points of narrative.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

At the end – a bit exhausted. Avatar when you first see it is a salt on the senses. Especially when you see it in cinema in 3D. It was like standing in front of avalanche. Avatar defined 3D movies. The entire 3D movie vision.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I went into watching Avatar with the expectation of seeing blockbuster movie. I went looking for entertainment. I wasn't expecting anything high-brow, I wasn't expecting anything arty, like for instance Moon. What I was expecting was to have fun. That's what Avatar does. You get some additional stuff along the way. So you get the world building stuff. You get the amazing special effects, without question. Some of characterisation sucks. Some of it is very two dimensional. The actual characters are not very deep, they're also linear. So for example Cameron regurgitated Burke character from Aliens. The corporate guy. If you compare him to Burke. In Avatar, there was that bad corporate guy. If you take a look at Aliens... They're the same character.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Not sure I've got any favourite scenes to be honest.. Oh no, that's not right. I do have one favourite scene and it's actually when they arrive. Space ship coming in to orbit. I think that particular scene actually **sets the expectation for the film. It's... I crossed the Atlantic for the first time. It's a lovely leading. It's a good introduction. [he focusses on the narrative]**

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Oh Blamey.. How many? The tree coming down. There's a lot of emotional build up and then it's just like a nuke going off. Complete disregard for anything. It doesn't matter who you are. If you are in a war zone you don't want to be there. And that scene is deliberately about... The build-up start the quarter way in. When the corporate guy says they are sitting on the biggest deposit of Unobtainium they want. So the build-up is just before that. You are introduced this is central to society. From that point this is a slow build-up of tension and then ka boom. You know it's coming. You know what's going to happen. But when it does happen... You're plugged into the mains basically.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I wouldn't rate Avatar as high as the other two. Not from any technical stand points or anything but from a personal feeling. Moon and Alien are difficult. I would actually put Alien second. Mainly because to me Moon is come to sci fi. It's like 3 feet of snow outside, bottle of whiskey and like having the big pot of

stew. You can just sit there and you can just hug it. Alien is very much a fizzy pop. Whereas Avatar is... I just can't be arsed.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I collect soundtracks. I love soundtracks. Soundtrack can make and break a movie. Get it wrong and it's a disaster... There was a recent movie and it was completely wrong... Like electronic soundtrack is given to the movie which deserves a full orchestral soundtrack.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

It doesn't have to but it helps if it does. You could take Avatar. Cameron actually went into making Avatar with the idea of humans making bad things to humans. You can see it as plain as day but it's a bit **preachy**. But in Moon the story is good and the bad thing is that the corporation basically set up just entire environment just to keep him there as a slave. But that is on the periphery. Rather than slapping you in the face with it Moon is more like 'if this is what you are looking for that's what happens'.

[maybe the most discursive from all three].

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Jeff

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 47

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: HND

Father: Basic

Mother: Basic

Occupation: Long term illness

Father: ----

Mother: -----

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 40 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £10

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions

No

Collecting merch	No	
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	No	
Collecting props/costumes/memorabilia	No	
Online forums	Yes	
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes	(rather paying attention to the information that appears in the stream of information)
Tweeting	No	
Blogging	No	
Cosplay	Yes	
Fan art	No	
Fanvids	No	
Fanfiction	Yes	

#### **Interview 24. 23-11-18 Mark Ay**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

I think it would have to be Stanley Kubrick. 2001 A Space Odyssey. I saw it when I was about 12 so it had come out for a while but it was around again in the cinemas so I went to the movies for the first time. Probably... I think my mother brought us to see it. And it was in the theatres so it wasn't like a TV show, it was amazing. It was hypnotizing.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Hard to remember the bad ones because you just throw them out of your mind. Actually you know what's funny? Somebody on one of the facebook groups for science fiction movies suggested that everybody in this group go and take a look at this film and it was a film made by somebody in Turkey. I think it was called Zora or something. Initially, it started visually quite entertaining. Some of the wardrobe was really kind a little bit theatrical. Initially I thought: Hey what is this? This may actually turn out be pretty good film. But then it very quickly... Turned very bad. Dialog was very bad and then it became obvious the

story didn't have anything there. There wasn't a real story in it. Almost as if the whole film was about showing of what they can do as filmmakers. Actually it's Gora. Spelled like an acronym G.O.R.A. I couldn't pass the first 15 minutes. I enjoy theatrical science fiction but I prefer science fiction that really pushes the science. And allows to intellectually learn interesting things about the science but then it has a story to it. If you have a really crappy science and then you have a really mediocre story then I'm not interested in it.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

A film where very often a science is depicted as something that came from the future. Some sort of scientific extravaganza arrives so there's an element of time. There are two elements: science is not of the current time. So if I'm watching a film about the people of my time then it would be something where a scientific breakthrough or impossibility arrives either through time travel or a through something ancient that has been discovered. Like when we watch Alien or when they discover something in the ice in a cave in Antarctica. Alien technology. Element of time and science that is not of our time. And of course fiction.

D: Do you think it's all fiction? Can it somehow be about our contemporary lives or do you not think so?

I think science fiction often tries to use science fiction as a lens where today might go if we'll follow certain ideological paths.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Well I think there's possibility, obviously, for science fiction to be either one. I've always enjoyed art films more than entertainment. When I was young we all went to the theatre and we watched what would be screened. Sometimes it was to realise that I spent a lot on popcorn and the movie wasn't that absorbing. But there are also art house films. Solaris is both, entertainment and art house. A lot of people don't like Tarkowsky because of pacing.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

I think they do. I think science fiction films had a big opportunity to allow people to understand. A lot of authors create a story and want to say something. I think there is a big role there. Also I think as well early science fiction was clearly entertainment but I think today we have a sort of maturity to science fiction. I think Contact was one of the first mature science fiction films.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I think science fiction films matured over last 50-60 years and I matured along with them. Initially I was watching science fiction for the wonder of possibility how science can change everything around me for the better. My science fiction taste matured towards films like Contact or Interstellar.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Sigourney Weaver. I think over time her activity in cosplay... Alien is such an iconic film that she's always been up front as a sort of like one of the leading women in science fiction that sort of gets involved in a film in big way. Whatever the film was about her Sigourney seem to have surpassed it.

D: And let's be honest: she's very beautiful as well.

Yeah, when we saw Milla Jovovitch in Fifth Element she was a new age Sigourney Weaver.

D: Multipass. I feel like watching Fifth Element.

When I come back and think what the film meant to me, it was I think the first film I can remember that had sort of a plausible infestation of alien life into our little commune here on Earth. There are other films I assume that also approach this subject but this film was so very plausible. Humans have gone and started exploring and eventually I've a feeling we're going to encounter something we don't wanna bring back with us. To me this was one of the biggest things that this film represented.

D: When you think about it, it's actually passed the era of exploration. It's already exploitation.

Yeah, exactly. That was the part of plausibility. It was the first one I can remember that created this sort of: yeah, we're out there and we are doing what we always do: we try to exploit, trying to get money. Now Elon Musk is trying to do that. We're almost actually doing it but Alien was one of the first films that had it in a story why we're out there in the first place.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time? What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I watched Alien when it first came out, just fascinating, you know, how this creature is tracking you down. It was definitely well done, it's not just a science fiction but it's horror too. So they did both of them very well. So you can look and say 'what a great science fiction they made' but if you'll remove science fiction bit there's still horror. My friends and I, we remember going and that it was science fiction and also horror. We were used to things like Halloween and so forth but Alien was a novelty.

I don't think I was influenced by expectations. Looking back what it all meant to me. Horror bit was great but for hardcore science fiction people it was still amazing.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I was a while since I watched it. I watched it many times when I was younger. I was more entertained by horror films so I hadn't watched it probably 20 years. Scenes that come to mind are the ones in the corridors. Alien is kinda hunting them down and tracking them. They're isolated from themselves on that ship.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

You have to remember how many Alien films there are since the first one. I'm subjectively tinted by other films, I don't know which one is which one. There was a time in the first film. They had trapped the alien and they started to really learn about it. I may be mistaken. It's been too long. I don't know.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Equipment malfunctioned, response not recorded.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Equipment malfunctioned, response not recorded.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Equipment malfunctioned, response not recorded.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Equipment malfunctioned, response not recorded.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I remember sort of scenes of this guy going crazy. I assumed this guy is crazy, it's just so interesting how this film kept me involved in it but I can't pick any specific moment per se.

D: I have just noticed I've lost 9 minutes of the interview due to the equipment malfunction.

That's ok, we'll keep going.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

To me it was the amount of time to make that film and to me it was like a huge dedication. It stands out as a huge project. I think of it more from a perspective of filmmaking than just audience watching a film.

D: What about the meaning?

There's a whole idea in it of humans exploring and exploiting the indigenous people and having them bending to the will of a republican idea because they've got money to make.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember having the sort of CGI feeling of the people. It was kind of creepy. Kind of it was also sort of elegant. The facial expression and the CGI of the people in the film was well done.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

There was so many things in this film. It was... The flying islands... So many things visually that were very enticing, very well done obviously. So somebody was making this film for 10 years. It had so much to offer visually. Story was very obvious about indigenous people and the exploitation of them. I think it was just visually great film.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

When they were exploring the forest. That was very... Fauna and flora lighting up.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Nothing in particular.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I think Alien, Avatar and Moon. Well I think the connection of horror and science fiction in Alien was unreal. It was a combination of really what science can do: they can create even a horror story. I think it did it even better than Moon. And than Avatar did. Avatar had a good story although it was a very obvious story. It also had great characters, they had the great visuals. Not much in terms of science. It was sort of a predictable science. It sort of was 'yeah, ok, whatever'. But entertaining value was great.

And Moon was much more nebulous. Low key. I think it was well done for what it was. But I think just as a kind of a film what it is... Special in how it was written but not as good as the other two.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Well I think the cinematography is big. It has to be visually seamless for me to enjoy science fiction. The science has to be very interesting, plausible. The story, the actors have to also sort of be there in order for me to watch the film.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yeah, I think it does. Avatar for me it sort of example of very obvious meaning they tried to sort of push. I think it was its downfall. If I was to choose one thing it would be that the moral of the story was weak and obvious. There was nothing left. If it wasn't visually great film I would have just turned it off. But because it was so great looking you were visually entertained.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Mark Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 54

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Canadian

Education: College / aviation technician

Mother: College

Occupation: Aircraft technical training developer

Mother: Business Administration

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? All life (from age 7)

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 0

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch No

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

#### **Interview 25. 23-11-18 Richard**

##### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Aliens. I think it's amazing for several reasons. One, what it did for the franchise. It was a completely new take on what was... Alien was a slow paced psychological horror and they turned it into a psychological horror. On top of that there are some characters. Amazing characters. I like the progression it brings to Alien universe in general.

##### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Something like either like Galaxina... Or Ice Pirates... Very bad.. Or maybe actually Flash Gordon. I really don't like that film. There are so many science fiction films. And the other one, this kind of raunchy one... Barbarella. And Zazdroz. Saturn 3... Mia Farrow and Kirk Douglas. I think it's over-sexualisation. It depends how tastefully it's done. But it's male sexualisation which makes me quite ill. And things like Flash Gordon and Zazdroz... They wear leather... Like G-strings and shit. I don't like sexual content in films at all. Sex in science fiction is real debasement of science fiction. I even find that scene in Blade Runner... That's an important part of the plot but I find it very unnerving.

##### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Oh, I don't remember any of those. Like anything...

##### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Well, there are a lot of clichés... I don't really know what that definition would be..

D: But what do you think? Your personal experience.

Oh, sure. Right. The futurism, the technology. Some kind of social commentary is good, that's always helpful. I like that. That futurism, really, just taking you into that fantasy world showing you what could be possible future for us. Also yeah... High use of technology. Electronic sounds, electronic visual, gadgets... That kind of thing. Also... In order to explore our usual physical world you need to explore time travel, another dimension.. But also like invasion... You know like The Thing from Another World... There's not much technology focus, it's just a guy in the costume.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

I'd say really good score. Good creative art direction and plot that challenges the way our society is working, the way of our thinking.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

They are huge inspiration to scientists. A lot of science we developed was based on imagination of our science fiction authors. It's totally art. Like art is entertaining. It's totally an art form.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Very much. They're often fore warning. They are glimpse to our future. They're inspiring to us but showing what our world could be. Respectively it could be a Blade Runner universe in 50 years or it could be a post-apocalyptic hell. But then also it could be a socially evolved. Yes, it does matter.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

First science fiction I was into was back in the 80s. It would have been.. It started off with comics and very soon to Star Wars. The merchandise... I remember I got loads of Star Wars merchandise on my sixth birthday which would be worth a lot now. And then I went through a bit of a darker period with my parents splitting and I had to live somewhere very poor, in London. And Forbidden Planet was on TV. We had like a little, old TV with a coat hanger for the aerial and it was just an amazing, colourful world, just beautiful. And then shortly after that I saw Blade Runner, I must have been about 7 or 8 when I saw Blade Runner. And it was like that, the place I was living. It was in North London, in a rainy winter.. It was just like so close to what I was living in and there were fancy elements as well. Really impacted me hugely. Those two films in particular. I wasn't Doctor Who fan, I wasn't Star Trek fan. It was Blade Runner and Aliens. We look for something we can relate to.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

There's always been one scene which is always... Means to me a lot. Because of the music, there is very haunting string passage in one section when Dallas is going into the tunnels and Sigourney is tracking him. The most eerie music. Violin string section comes on and that has haunted me. Whenever

I think of Alien I always think of this scene. It's more personal. It's the build-up and suspense of the scene. Absolutely amazing.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It gets a bit difficult for me here because my first experience with Alien was when I was very young and I'm not aware I was able to watch it but I had the illustrated story book. Which is very good. I think it's Dark Horse or something like that. That was my introduction to it. I read the illustrated story book a long time before I saw the film. It would be difficult for me to watch it then even if my parents would let me watch it. But I knew the story inside out because I read the illustrated story so much and my uncle got job... He worked in pinewood studios as an editor and he worked on Aliens. He was a second assistant editor on Batman and he was a second assistant editor on Aliens. I can remember my mom telling me when I was 11, even earlier... She was like 'Simon is working on Aliens, do you want to know the plot?'. I was like 'yeah, tell me what happens'. And my mom was telling what she heard, whole story of Aliens and later on we managed to get the director's cut through him, back in the 80s. It's not like the director's cut you have now. It was hours and hours of footage. He was taking it home to work, and just to watch it himself as well. He actually cut celluloid. It was obviously rough cut of a rough cut of a rough cut and I can remember watching one of those director's cuts and it was very long. And it was absolutely mind blowing. But that was Aliens. The only reason I mentioned this is because I was familiar with story for Alien. I can't actually remember when the first time I watched it was.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

I can't remember... This would have been 35 years ago. But later... Just... I was overwhelmed. Not scared, not terrified but just energized, excited. I don't have big fear. It takes a lot to get me scared.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It became a totally positive experience. It was like watching realisation of everything. I knew what was going to happen, it was done so well. There are not that many jump scares in it.. Four or five little jump scares, it's not like movies today. It's quite low on jump scares. It made me jump but in a good way. When you got someone like Ridley Scott it's done well. It's not just loud, screaming.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

My favourite scene is Brett and Parker talking about doing the repairs. Because I'm an engineer myself. I love that scene. I love the fact that... I love the play between them, I love the way the have to fix some shit, stuff is always going wrong. And there is a moment when Ripley comes. I really love this scene. And Dallas' death. I love that being taken to a believable vision of future. I can relate to those guys a lot, personally. This also works in Blade Runner. Like working's man reality.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The chains hanging from... The ceiling in docking bay. Chains hanging with water dripping down at Parker. Oh, he's Brett. That really... It's so... Also, very close to Blade Runner. It's really cold, harsh, industrial environment. It's like.. What are going to do in this place? They know there's a monster running around, this is like the worst. THE worst. That sets the environment really well.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Brilliant Moonscape shots, with a little truck going across Moonscape. That to me is more, in that film specifically, had more of an impact than Sam Rockwell and Kevin Spacey and the plot in general. The cinematic, visuals is what did it to me. Throughout the whole film. I think the interior shots are so close to Nostromo... But the external shots, they're just beautiful.

It actually reminds of an earlier science fiction story. And I love the play between the two characters when... It's one person meeting himself. What would you do if you would meet yourself and how would you approach the personality clash against itself? How would you relate to the person who is yourself? Would you get along, would you not? It's very similar to a story by Stanislaw Lem called The Seventh Voyage. Lone astronaut and he keeps meeting himself except he's not a clone, he's like a future echo from 24 hours in the future. The whole story is about him trying to get himself to do something. So it's the same except Moon is clones. But it's a short story, give it a good read, you can read it in one hour. It totally trips you out, puts you in that situation. It's almost like taking LSD.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I anticipated it for a while, I knew it was coming. I knew it was going to be good. It wasn't lost on me, I already knew about it and I just really loved it. I wasn't blown away but I was entertained. I think to a less experienced science fiction fan it would have been mind blowing but as I said I already knew that story quite well from a few different films and books and comics. It was the originality but just a generally good film.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Just the exploring in the space cruiser. Oh, the ping pong table, that's pretty cool. Isn't it similar as well to what Ridley Scott does in Covenant? David teaches another David to play a flute?

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think the social isolation is very well conveyed, probably in scenes he's talking to his wife. The fact he's so socially isolated... I can't really... It's throughout whole film. Before he meets the other clone it's just him and robot Gerty. And in terms of characters Kevin Spacey's character is very interesting because you never know whether to trust him or not. He's the representative of the company, it was in so many films.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I really disliked that film. I think it's unoriginal. I think the special effects are rubbish, characters are shit, plot is terrible. My first... It's heavily based or steals from a novel by Ursula K. Le Guin called *The Word for World is Forest* which is about an American army invading like a forest world and them going to war with the indigenous aliens. That's the plot of Avatar so he basically ripped that off.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was disappointed, I didn't like characters and I didn't like the hype around it as well. As soon as something gets that hype I know it's not going to live up to it. It's not going to be a science fiction movie for me. Ironically, *The Word for World is Forest* was a social commentary for Vietnam War whereby she's... That forest world isn't populated with Vietnamese but instead it's populated with Alien creatures who go to war with American war. So initially that was good. That does something, creatively. It's a social valid commentary but then Cameron tries to capitalise on that and not really doing it justice. It's really another of the mill sort of story. He doesn't treat it right. I found it tasteless, substance-less. And it's not very well thought out. Plot has a lot of holes.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Army scenes are cool. I like the soldiers, the mech suits are cool. I would have... I do like... I'm a sucker for jungle sci fi. Any film that can take predators, any film that takes place in a jungle usually is like 'yes!'. I would watch it a lot. But Cameron somehow fucked that up as well. It's not... It's too colourful and fairy tale like. If you look at it now.. CGI hasn't stoop up. It's very obvious CGI. The environment are great but the characters are completely obvious. I don't buy it. I think it's done more for computer games that technology then it has done for movies.

D: Maybe it evolved, all that making characters younger now..

Oh yeah, that's a good use of it. But the story doesn't make sense. Why create clones of aliens, there's no logic to it.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Probably the jungle. I mean.. There are some amazing landscape shots when you're seeing the planet from a distance but close enough to see the beauty of the land. Those are nice.. But I think the jungle is the... I would say the jungle. That's what it's designed to do but it just didn't do it with me. It's exactly like the Ewoks. It's commercialised. To me the best science fiction films were underground films. But even like Forbidden Planet. It was groundbreaking. Also commercial, it's a big budget picture. The War of the World as well. But back then they had more substance, they had proper writing. Now it's different. Commercial film just goes out and it literally brainwashes people. There's no substance. I would much prefer films that would really challenge me.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Obviously Alien the top, Avatar at the bottom. How are they different? They kind of descend in style. It goes kind of very... Almost like steampunk, Alien. It's like Blade Runner, like cyberpunk. Rusted ships, realism. It's like going from Alien realism to Avatar Fantasy. And Moon is half way inbetween but not in a bad way. Avatar is just an extreme fantasy. I never liked fantasy films.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Totally depends on a film. But maybe the plot. It's the one thing. If the plot is not there. You can have the most beautiful film in the world but if plot is not there... Very strong opening scene, I like. Or even just... The credits.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Totally. Could something meaningless be worthwhile if science fiction still... I think it's very important. If you look at science fiction that doesn't have a message they're always terrible films or series. And it's what science fiction does best.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Richard

Chosen pseudonym?: Artist name Signal Jacker

Age: 43

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: MA (nonsubmission)

Father: BA

Mother: A levels

Occupation: 25 years as a sound engineer / producer artist

Father: Computer Programmer / Jazz pianist

Mother: Housewife

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 38 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: up to £150-200

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes (not as often)

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art Yes

Fanvids No

Fanfiction No

### Interview 26. 24-11-18 Carol

#### D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?

My all-time favourite would be golden age or classic because it was on the very frontier of science and I really like science based science fiction. That's my favourite. That's not what I like exclusively but that's what I started from reading a lot of science fiction. There is some innocence, sincerity and excitement that I didn't see in contemporary stuff. So that's my favourite.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I don't like things that would be extremely sexual.

D: Yeah, sometimes you just don't need this in a film.

Yeah, I don't want pornography mixed with my science fiction.

D: That's right, pornography isn't cinema.

Not to me.

D: It's not and it never will be.

I apply that to a lot of different things to. I'm smart enough and imaginative enough to fill out the blanks. There are times that I would prefer to just define things myself. I think it's insulting and very distracting.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Star Wars... Now, I'm not a Star Wars fan. I didn't care for Avatar either. This isn't a genre but I don't like Tom Cruise and I don't understand why he keeps doing science fiction stuff because I think everything he does is just awful. But I watched The Mummy and everybody hated it but I quite liked it. And he looked not bad for an old man. I'm pretty good judge of that.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

I want something that has a science feature. I want something that reflects true laws of physics, first of all. I want it to be true to how world works. Otherwise I will dismiss it so it need to be strong in science. I don't like too much of CGI, I find it very difficult to process. What did I see? Pacific Rim? It just gave me a headache. It was too much, it was too Hollywood. I just want to see limited CGI and if it's going to be used I don't want the uncanny valley. That really bothers me. It's a Japanese term where technology creates a robot that is not quite human enough and it leaves you feeling unsettled and creep out. And that's that.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Well, first of all I'm going to see something where I'm not going to be questioning the science. I'm not going to be distracted. I would prefer something... I don't want to see a really famous actor in it. I would find it distracting. So... Sigourney Weaver... No one has really seen her before. But now that's all I'm going to see. Tom Cruise, Indiana Jones Harrison Ford. I don't want to see the actor, I want to see the character.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. I can think of things that are both, I can think of things that are art and I can think of things that are entertainment. Ok, for example in the first Star Trek movie, the one that was in 70s... Now realise I saw all those movies when they came out, because I'm that old. It's hard to explain after seeing Star Trek

the TV show and it's low budget, cardboard set to go to the theatre and see this 15 minutes pan around the Enterprise... I got chills thinking about it. How majestic it was. A lot of people didn't like it, it was a beauty shot. To me, as a fan, to linger over those details of Enterprise... It was breath taking. And that was artistic moment.

D: In terms of aesthetic and something more... Essence of your fandom, details about the subject of your love. Something like nostalgia also.

Yeah

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Oh absolutely. Because for a lot of people that's their only contact with science. Their only contact with technology and impactful ways. I said impactful because sometimes technology can serve us and sometimes it can destroy us. And a lot of people don't consider that. And science fiction does.

D: Can sf invoke a much deeper reflection.

Yes, but it's such a collaborative effort... We're talking mostly about cinema?

D: Yes.

That would be such a collaborative thing that it would be difficult to attribute it one artist. Think about Steven Spielberg. And Kubrick was able of that vision...

I think it can change lives. I remember the first science fiction book I've ever read. When I turned 50 my husband found it and bought a copy for me and I re-read it and it was wonderful. For me... I was 8 years old. It changed my life. I had no idea you could feel that.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

You know, I think... I'm really pondering this. I remember seeing *Forbidden Planet* which was like the first serious science fiction but I also watched *Lost in Space* and I still watch it on TV every week. I would watch it with my family, I would sit on my dad's lap. For me that's something we did every week. We'd sit as a family... And you need to realise: that was 1960 TV. It was so sweet. And it was beautiful cast. I'm still on Bill Mummy fan page. The cast was wonderful. It was stupid and honky and it had really bad monsters in a rubber suit but I loved it. That was bad science fiction, it was awful but I loved that.

I have very, very low basic taste in a lot of things.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I saw it when it was in the theatre and it scared the hell out of me. The scariest movie I ever saw.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I can remember I saw it in Houston Texas and I can remember who I saw it with. I remember everything. The first thing that was so strange about the movie was that it was first time that I saw a grubby space ship. Like an oil tanker, with water dripping and it wasn't clean. That was really different, that was really strange. It was the most alien 'alien' that I have ever seen. It was logical, it was beautiful. It adapted... It was really genius. Alien, again, never saw anything like it before. There was a museum, a traveling exhibit and I saw the model. The life size model, it was exquisite, it was beautiful. That was very imposing. You don't see people cosplay that one.

I remember the preview. And you had A, L, I, E, N and then it said 'In space no one can hear you scream'. And that was very novel because you always heard... Star Wars... With the space ships screaming through space.. And that always annoyed me. So that was the first clue I had that this was going to be something different and that this was going to be something elegant. Because that was very elegant, compared to what you usually saw. When I went to the theatre I had high expectations. If the advertisement is so elegant, someone put some thought into this film it had to be something beautiful. And it was. It didn't let me down.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I don't think it did. But I did recognise that the advertising campaign was something different. It wasn't cowboys and Indians shoot them um. Just the campaign for it was something that was eerie... Because it didn't tell you anything... It's weird, now that you're asking me these things are coming back and I hadn't thought about that in years and years... That's so cool. Seeing that advertisement... And I was probably seeing something lame in the theatre. But seeing that made want to see it in the movie because it wasn't a hammer hitting me on the head. They showed nothing. It was just A, L, I, E, N. That was a trigger right there. I love aliens! And then 'In space no once can hear you scream' so I knew it was going to be something smart. I knew it was going to be scary. Because it said 'scream'... David, I never thought about it before so it unfolds as I'm talking.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it?**

I didn't know it was going to be so... It scared the shit out of me. I was so, wow, yeah. There were several of these moments. When it pops out of this guy's chest... Oh my God, that was... WOW. No one saw that coming. Of course you thought everything would be ok, like we always get in the Hollywood ending. The guy had been attacked, he had recovered, having a meal, fellowship... and haaaah... After that there were no rules.

The other thing that was so extraordinary about this film was having a woman as a hero. Well, you always had women like Katherine Hepburn, Joan Crawford and Betty Davies so you had some actresses that were such a powerful presence on screen but there we seldom in a true position of authority like Ripley was, she was the actual captain of the ship. She was fearless, she was cunning, she was smart, she was something that was really, really new for me. I was born in the 50s and not just that – I was born in the south so I was raised as a southern woman. And I was raised on the Bible principle. The ma

was the head of the house, the little girl should not be seen or heard. All these things. So seeing Ripley was fabulous.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The interior of the shipwreck. That was pretty cool. The scale of it. So large and mysterious.. And what was it... Any scene with an alien. The way it mutated and transformed. That was so unexpected. Obviously the chestbursting... I think it's a shame that they did not show the scene where the guy is wrapped up in a web, like a cocoon. It's a shame they left it out because it's very scary. It might have been too much. I know they edited it out because it dragged down the story. Because... He begged to be killed. He knew what was going to happen. Her being in this position, having to kill a crew mate... That was pretty powerful as a character development.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I was pretty much on terror the whole time. It was so unexpected and so scary... I was so upset when they were all having a nice meal together, he'd awaken... After that I didn't trust anything I saw. I don't think there was any other thing I felt that fear. And I cared about Ripley. I was very invested in her wellbeing. And I was worried about the cat. I really love animals and I was so afraid they were going to do a cheap shot...

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I think it's the loneliest movie I've ever watched. I'm glad I didn't know that character was renewed. I think the film unfolded the way I think it supposed to because I felt his horror and his shock when he found out that everything was a lie. I thought that was all very well executed.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I did not have very high expectations. I was watching it because I had rented science fiction movies that everyone has to see... I think I had I looked at imdb. It had a high rating.. It was much better than I thought it's going to be. It was on that list of movies that everyone should watch, I had it recommended. And it was pretty good.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

The monotony, the isolation. But I can also understand the motivation for living that lifestyle. For him it's temporary. Profit. I do that in my private life. This shall pass and if I can get through this it's going to get better and that's what makes me live. The idea.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I really only watched because it was on that list so I didn't have any expectations except that the movies I did know I did enjoyed so I was probably going to enjoy this.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I only watched it once. As I recall... I liked any scene with a robot. I was glad he was there. But I can't think of a scene. I think visually, as far as taking me to the environment of the Moon. Outside, in a truck. It's funny that I can't think of one scene.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

With that movie I have more of a general feeling. In general I thought it was smart, I thought it was really evocative of... I thought it was really realistic and logical. It wasn't anything specific, it was everything. It was a thoughtful film. And the twist, it really snuck up on me. And it was very satisfying. And it was disturbing but very effective. I got invested in the ordinariness of the character. How I can relate to him, I can relate to the loneliness, I can relate to wanting to do something for your family... I can relate to that and then to find out he wouldn't... It was all for nothing, he was just a cog in a machine...

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Wow... Not fan of Avatar. For many reasons. Well, I had more expectations from James Cameron, for starters. Because... I love Titanic. Avatar was pretty and I thought the world it created was aesthetically very beautiful. But there was nothing original in it for me. I have seen those things before and done much better. But for people who are not sci fi fans... They were acting like, you know, they had just literally discovered a new planet.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was first 3D movie that I had ever seen with the glasses. And I hated that. It was an overload for me. It was too much for me to process. I didn't want to put out so much effort. I want to enjoy a movie because... But because I was putting so much effort in adjusting to the stimulation... So that was not enjoyable for me. I don't need the music cranked up... Too much sugar, too much salt... I don't want to be overwhelmed... Like I said, it was the first movie I have seen in 3D and it was so much.. That might be another reason why I'm not a fan. That's how most people operate – they like to be overwhelmed. They like... It's so American, I can't speak for anyone else but I know that around here we want things faster, brighter, bigger. Hotter, colder, and you know, more and more and more. That dismays me...

Look at the president... He's over the top. And everything doesn't have to be over the top all the time... That's what I will say about the president and Avatar.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It pissed me off because it's a tired, old message. I had read... There were science fiction stories written in the 50s that had people as avatars and they would assume those bodies and they would go to the planet. The planets were much better, they were more interesting. The characters, the reasons, so... Anyway, I had seen it the million times, I didn't like the fact that it was presented as this incredibly innovative story.

There was a tremendous amount of hype to the movie. I could hear about it for years before premiere. And it was delayed... I think the actual premier was delayed. So the anticipatory excitement because I was already aware of all these innovative technics used and I knew it was going to be science fiction and I knew it was going to be on another planet. It had a pretty good cast. I had pretty big expectations, all the elements were in place for a fabulous movie. It was really no more than a big, noisy Disney movie.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

End credits ;) Naah, I'm just kidding. When the lights came up, aaaa. I didn't hate it that much, I was entertained. But as somebody who likes science fiction that much I felt cheated. It was a very pretty movie but I've seen a lot of pretty movies.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Everything in it. There was just so much attention put to... 'Oh this guy is an avatar and humans are going to wreck it and destroy the environment because that's what humans do and blah, blah, blah...'

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Oh, easy. Alien, Moon and Avatar.

D: And we covered through the interview how they are different. Because we actually spoke about this throughout the interview. We established that quite well.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Well, it's important that I'm not going to be questioning the science.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yes. I want everything to have meaning. That's only time when art is valuable, when it has meaning. Otherwise it's noise.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Caroll-Anne

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 62

Sex: X Female

Nationality: Texan American

Education: MA (nonsubmission)

Father: MA

Mother: MA

Occupation: Secondary school Science teacher / Department of Defense

Father: Attorney

Mother: Librarian / Authour

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 55 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 10 dollars

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art No

Fanvids No

Fanfiction

No

### **Interview 27. 24-11-18 Iuri**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

I would say 2001. It's a combination of a lot of things. Old classic things like alien life, artificial intelligence. Evolution... And visually it is stunning too. Even the special effects put up perfectly even today. Almost 20 years after the movie is set.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I can't think of... the worst... The Resident Evil movies maybe... Most of them are guilty pleasure like... Something you know the plot is nonsensical... And it's just another zombie movie. Video game adaptations are always a good contender for the worst movie.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

Maybe it's because Moon is one of the case studies in your study... But one that came to mind was Mute. Serious step down from Moon. The whole plot exists for one reason of having that cyberpunk world built up around it. But the actual plot is completely... Forgettable, to put it nicely. Like the world building is great but everything else isn't.

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

There has to be speculative element of some kind. Not necessarily about some technological speculation but it has to be there somewhere. There are movies completely about some farfetched futuristic concept and there are some more of a character study but there are speculative elements.

#### **D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

I guess if the idea explored is especially original that should always help... But I guess the same things that make a good movie... Good story telling, good world building... World building is more important for this genre than any other I guess. You have to make a believable world as oppose to the movie that just takes place in regular world.

D: Does it have to be realist? To realistically depict life?

I don't think if it's realistic or not makes a movie necessarily good or bad. You can have something completely absurd like Doctor Who or something that is more grounded, like The Expanse. And they're both great. The level of realism of premise is not what makes it good.

#### **D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

Both. I don't believe something can't be art just because it's entertainment. There are overlaps between the two. The difference between the art and entertainment is a tricky one. Entertainment is about getting a reaction from people. And entertainment is also about getting the reaction from people just not necessarily nice one. More about making you think or reflect. And there are examples that do both or just one. In my experience the ones that are exclusively aimed at entertaining usually end up shallow. Too shallow. I think even Marvel movie usually tries to include some kind of reflection or message. Their primary goal is entertainment but they tend to add something to it even if it's on a simplistic level. But they do, more so than a Transformers movie. They don't even bother to give them even some sort of continuity...

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Definitely. It's a genre asking a lot of important questions about current issues and trying to anticipate issues that would probably come a little later. Depends sometimes how to confront an issue without confronting an issue. It's like: it's not about that, it's about aliens and humans. A metaphor about something happening today.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I don't know. As I grew up, sure. But in general not much. I prefer movies now that wouldn't be different from the films from past.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It's one of my favourite movie even and I think of a blend of sci fi and horror. It's the picture of xenomorph that pops up. That image of the creature. In the first movie.. It doesn't even show the monster that much. But it has such an iconic design.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember I watched it as a kid. My father was watching it and... I was really young so it's really fuzzy but my mom says I was terrified. I was really young, it's a bit of a vague memory.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Uneasy but also very curious with it... Fascinating but also unsettling... Especially the whole body horror element got to me. My worst nightmare was that I had a facehugger and I actually had to kill myself to stop whatever was in my chest. It was fucking horrible.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Not really, I wasn't expecting anything. I knew it's a good movie and that was it. I guess I knew it was going to be scary.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think at the beginning... When they're landing on the planet and there's the space jockey and a whole in his chest... It's so... Atmospheric and really... Alien. Mystical is a good word for it. Because everything is so different from what you would expect. The ship has its own bio-mechanical look, the scale is off... The space jockey is giant but is not the scale you would expect... It's like whole thing is off. That's carefully crafted.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Like it was specifically made... The whole movie I guess. They used a lot of usual traits of those movies. Like the silence with the sudden loud noise that startles you... The camera angles make you feel like there is something hiding... They frame shots like they want to feel the creature is crawling over head or just around the corner... They use that a lot. There's whole false alarm thing... There's a scene with a cat I think...

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

It's a little less automatic to be honest... It's more of an image that comes to mind. The image of him standing alone in the spacesuit... That loneliness before the whole thing with the clone. Isolated, million miles from anybody else. Isolation, loneliness I think is the first thing to come to mind.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Honestly... I actually had a lot more expectations about that one.. It was more recent... I already had Internet and I've read about reveals and what it was about... I think I downloaded it. Well, I didn't actually read the reviews because spoilers... But I saw it was well spoken of. People think it was good. Dude isolated on the Moon... I remember knowing more about what I was going to watch than Alien.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Strangely there's something oddly comfortable about this situation he is. At first. He's got his little place... When you watch it looks actually nice... But he is in that not nice situation. It's appealing. For me.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Well... It did in that I was expecting it to be good and it was but I didn't know anything about the actual story other than the actual premise so it was nice that they didn't give everything away in the trailer. And that's it.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Not as much as a scene but I liked how they played with the expectations with the AI. Like voiced with Kevin Spacey, he's like creepy with the smileys.. You look out for the guy. He's got that AI voice... And he's going to backstab the main character at some point and then he backstabs the company to help the main character. They didn't make him deliberately like HAL from 2001. Whereas HAL was obsessed with the mission and willing to sacrifice people to achieve it the computer from Moon is the opposite, helping the character go back to Earth at the expense of the company's interests. So it jeopardises the mission to help the character, rather than the other way around. I really liked that play on expectations.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Use of the camera. The exterior shots. Filmed from afar to heighten how isolated he is from everything else. And Sam Rockwell's acting makes you lean to the whole idea that his character is crazy, so that's deliberate too. The thing about the computer too, how he was made deliberately to look like some evil artificial intelligence and then he ends up helping him.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Well... The visuals... I remember how pretty it is. And the whole Dances with Wolves thing... I'm sorry but that comes to mind too.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was, if not the first one, one of the first 3D movies I watched. It was the novelty of it. Just being dazzled by visuals...

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Made me think... This must have been fun to make... Designing creatures. I like that so it made me think this must have been real fun to make them.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I expected exactly that. That it would be beautiful and a spectacle of the movie. So that's the expectation I had. The plot.. Not really but that. If I had gone knowing absolutely nothing about it then it would be more surprising... I knew what I was going to watch... You know, like The Matrix. I barely knew what the plot was about...

D: That was the idea. They didn't let you know. The main campaign was 'What is the Matrix?'

Exactly.. I thought Trinity was the villain at first. She was killing people without giving it a second thought...

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

More at the beginning of the movie, I guess. My experience is a lot about the visuals.. .So those are my favourite scenes, the scenes about the world building. **[he can design 3D]**

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The whole movie has this environmental message that they wanted to get across. So a lot of this is steering towards that. Like the way the Navvy interact with their environment. Makes you feel like their way is better than ours. Better than the way the humans acted. It ends up giving that notion that the progress and environment aren't really reconcilable because both sides of it a bit saturated. Like there is one moment or another when you think... Wouldn't be peace more lucrative then fighting the natives? They didn't even think about negotiation. It was way too easy... Like the humans are acting against their own interests jut to be more destructive.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

First is Alien, definitely. Second... Would be Moon with Avatar close third. There are two, or three main aspects you.. There's the visual aspect. So Avatar would be the winner but then nothing in those visuals is especially original. You have dragons basically. Floating mountains, not original... At the time it was made all that was ok. It's pretty amazing... An artist Roger Dean. He made album covers in the 70s... Anyway.. He used floating islands a lot... He actually sued Cameron... But anyway, the visuals are impressive but they are, to a degree inspired by the others. And there are the visuals in Alien that are more out of this word. Then there's the other aspect which is the plot. Moon has the most complex of these three movies.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Good storytelling.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Definitely, as I said before it's depends on what aspect of movie you look at.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Iuri

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 30

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Brazilian

Education: Ba

Father: Ba

Mother: Ba

Occupation: Freelancer 3D designer / SF writes

Father: Programmer

Mother: Programmer

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Since he can remember / Parents were fans of sci fi as well – a lot of influence from parents

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: 0

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions No

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging No

Cosplay No

Fan art Yes

Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	Yes (creates own maps in Warcraft games)

### **Interview 28. 25-11-18 Magda**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Star Trek First Contact. The one that brings together characters from both series. And why? Because it shows determination of a man and a battle for humanity. There is one pretty moment in this film. There are two films I like, this one and... There is a moment which takes maybe 10 seconds. There is a moment where Picard sits in the Borg's body and speaks to the people. The general idea is that if someone turned into a Borg then that's it, the end. He's been assimilated and they chose him as a representative so he can work human kind in Borg's favour and so on because they don't have any chances anyway. And there is a close on his face where we see a tear on his cheek. It's like 5 seconds of the film. It is worth to see the whole film for this moment.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I don't remember because usually if a film is very bad then I shut it down. I can tell why it was bad but I don't even remember the film... It was just boring... Not even the narrative but the way of storytelling and production quality. Acting for example... For example, if I know a guy should be depressed and broken and he looks just angry for example. I remember such a film but it was so long ago that I can't even recall what it was.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

It doesn't matter if it's science fiction or not. There wasn't a moment that stayed with me, in my memory. Or it was predictable. Yeah... A good film will work even with poor visuals. Won't work as good with poor acting whereas if the narrative drags already only five minutes into the film and I already know how it will end then it's not good all.

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Reality grounded in true background.

D: So for example a WWII film would be a science fiction film...

Oi, wait... That's just one characteristic... That it needs to be based on some... Well... Generally I'd say that it's something presently unreal, impossible but it might happen in the future. I think this might be the simplest explanation.

But it can be different. All films say something about present values and problems. Or from my perspective the at least reference our reality in some way. They speak of some values.

#### **D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Oh, now wait a moment. Firstly, the narrative. If there's no quality in narrative... Secondly, if there's a plot related to the real world. I seek something I can relate to present world. Something that touches current problems and not necessarily in an obvious way. Thirdly, it is a superb film when it's related to a reality I live in, to the Polish circumstances and living conditions. Somewhere there I can make a little reference to the country I live in. Acting is important because if the actors are bad then it's just a bad experience. And when there are overdone special effects. Where there are special effects instead of the narrative. The it is a bad film to me.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

It's hard to say... Is film one of the arts?

D: Film actually is one of the arts, yes.

If then it must be art. But it depends which film. It needs to be approached individually when evaluating a film. Because you can't class all films as an entertainment. Not all of them are entertaining in a way that leaves you breathless because of how spectacular it is. For example if I knew what kind of a film *Moon* is... I wouldn't watch it.

D: Why is that?

Next question please :P

D: We'll get back to that.

It's like with everything else... There different kinds, different narratives of science fiction films. Every one of them has... Some are lighter, others are more difficult. Some have references to difficult problems and other speak of something lighter. For example a science fiction about love is a light film. But not always.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Of course, and greatly as well. It's very easy to convey meaning in science fiction which might not necessarily be seen by the audience at first. And it's easier to appeal to a teenager with a science fiction than drama or a war film but all of them could potentially be about the same thing.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I'm progressively more demanding regarding films. Once I was able to watch any science fiction film and not anymore because if I can see it's kind of a film which... Is like a filler, or mediocre, then I just don't watch it. I know there exist 1000 other things which I can watch instead because they're much more interesting. I look for films which carry some values and aren't just a graphic overlay.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Every time I hear this title then I see a poster for it. The one with the alien's head, the black one... I don't know if it's exactly from *Alien* or generally from *Alien* franchise. I saw it somewhere... Such a connotation that it's available somewhere. It's not my idea of an alien but we're talking about the film so automatically I think of this. Because it's such an iconic monster. If we wouldn't be talking about the film then I don't know what I would think of. But because we talk about films... But if someone would ask me, like on the street, what come to my mind then it would probably be something else. Something more neutral. But we're talking about something else so that's what it is. But, I found something that connects those films. *Alien* show people as an awful kind. Focused on the money, profit and not minding the good of the people. And that's appalling in all three of those films. But except that common motive each one of them talks about something else as well.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It surprised me in a way that... I am generally sceptical about films everybody speaks about. When I hear about something then because I hear about it everywhere I don't feel like watching it. That's why I haven't watched it for so long, until you said it's for the interview [we're friends in the real life]. It surprised me because once I started it then it really is a kind of a film you watch from the beginning to the end. You watch it and not... It's very involving, interesting. There is something in it that makes it predictable but that's because I watch it so late in my life and I could see where it's going. The narrative though... It's constructed in such a way that I wasn't exactly sure if it's going to end the way it does... I thought that maybe, probably, but it wasn't obvious at all.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

During the film I wanted to say: "don't go there you moron" to every single one of them individually and together as a bunch. Well, I don't know. You watch it thrilled. It's something I like in films. When he's going for those eggs. On one hand you know he shouldn't go there and in fact should get the heck out of there but on the other hand I'd do exactly the same. I'd try to see what that was. I remembered that.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Yes, but fortunately they haven't been met. I thought it's just another film about killing and alien invasion. I just imagined it as such a film. You know, until I see something... What can I expect before I even see the film? Most of the alien invasion films relies on them bringing apocalypse and good bye. So that's why I haven't seen *Alien* for so long. All this convention impacted me in a way that I put it on side for later until just recently.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

When she takes that cat and goes into that thing... Because I had a feeling that cat won't make it. And another moment like this, when they left that cage. These two come to my mind immediately. Because alien doesn't give a damn about the cat and hunts people. That's interesting, it makes you think. The cat stayed fine and everybody dies although they try to fight that monster. But, he left the cat alone, right?

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There are a lot of moments like that. There's a moment like that every three minutes. In these regard this film is amazing. Darkness is one thing. Fog. The unknown, fear. Confusion. Something, somewhere... But I watched it only once. That thing about the cat for example. Uncertainty, the inability to tell what will happen.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I can tell you I don't think anything except it makes me think of the actual Moon. I didn't know the film, the title told me nothing. All I could imagine was the Moon, something in space. I'm terrified and preferably I wouldn't talk about this film at all. The things human kind would do. Here it's just simply... A long time planned something ethically, like... amoral. I don't exactly know what to think. It was so amoral that I don't even want to think about it. That we could go this far with it... It's probably possible and probably some perverts have plans like that and it wouldn't be a problem for them. I just don't know what I can tell you.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

That I don't want to talk about it. I think that is enough [she jokes]. It's a difficult film which touches on problems we can't really solve. It was a more difficult viewing than *Alien*. Maybe because this one was more real... In a sense that it didn't regard aliens. It was possible to relatively quickly work out that something is wrong but not what exactly. Only at the end we know that's not the guy that should have been [there].

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

As I said, I was terrified.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

All conversations with his wife. Because each time it's a different "copy". All moments when he suspects something and tries to find out something from the machine but its misleading him. And there's also a great moment when they show the corridor with the clones. It shows the scale of the operation. Every clone serves three years and that corridor seems endless, you could say.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Here those are the moments that don't give any certainty. They actually make things more questionable. Exactly to plant it out there, to mislead. Like that guy being buried in the buggy. That's the first of those

moments where I began to wonder if it's the same guy. Like it induces a panic that the protagonist is hurt but suddenly we find him well and we can only guess what happen.

## **AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what**

Cyberspace. Although I know the films I will always think of the cyberspace when I hear the term "avatar". But I didn't expect a film about cultural differences but something set in the cyberspace. In comparison with other two this one sucks. It's a typical blockbuster, just entertainment. But you can find some advantages.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

Well, I went not because of the story but to see how the 3D has developed. And that actually the only amusing thing in this film not in the sense of the world building but the accuracy of the details.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It didn't change my life, you know. [Adds sarcastically] I was drunk with happiness...

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It was widely marketed as the coolest film ever and everybody who has seen it told stories of how cool it was. I'm sceptical about films like that. I remember I went to see it in 3D because it was a 3D that was worth of seeing.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

When the night falls and they run around the forest. Brilliant scene. Chiaroscuro and all that but it's about the visuals. It's cool when he flies that first dragon to catch another. Generally it's a visually pretty film so there are a lot of scenes where I can see "something". But I forcefully seek a reference to anything more, anything.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

More of a visual "wow" thing...

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Well, it's obvious that *Moon* is the best. *Alien* and *Avatar*. *Moon* touches on possibly the most unethical problems of human kind. Problems of the human kind which we can't really solve, makes you think. Generally nobody will leave the cinema theatre and say that it's just another film. *Alien* is a nice thing to watch, it touches on some problems but... I don't have a moral hangover... I watched it, I can think about some things but it's exactly a film you come back to because it bothers you. You realize that *Moon*

is closer to the reality than *Alien*. We don't know any aliens. But we are able to clone something. And it's possible how thin the boundary is. In *Alien* there are relationships and some problems but it isn't as unethical like it is in *Moon*. And then there's *Avatar*. I'm not even going to comment on that.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

The script is important to me. Some background, action isn't the most important. I always try to get something out some situations, some references to reality, and some values some so I focus on all that mostly... Acting is important. Special effects are less important. Film may even be black and white. Presently only few films in a whole mass of them are valuable.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Well it does matter because it makes you think, helps maybe... Maybe someone will see something in it. There is a chance that maybe someone will see something in it.

## Face Sheet

### I. Participant

Respondent: Magdalena

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 34

Sex:  Female

Nationality: Polish

Education: MA

Father: HNC (zawodówka)

Mother: College

Occupation: Teacher

Father: Mechanik

Mother: Technik chemik

### II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? Nie pamiętam, ponad 20 lat

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £10

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions  Yes (rzadko)

Collecting merch  Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items  Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info	
about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### **Interview 29. 26-11-18 Craig**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

Oh God... Oh shit man... It's horrible... Ok... I'll give you a film... Starship Troopers. Because science fiction films for me are 99% a huge disappointment if their being made from a book. Because the adaptation is not correct and almost always the small innovations but the director are wrong. And Starship Troopers is the only film I've seen was very nearly an exact portrayal of the book and was very exciting. I liked the excitement of the film.

D: They didn't have the suits in the film.

I know what you mean but it was enough sort of hinted... I'm not sure whether Heinlein was... Yeah... Hmm.... But propaganda instrument... What I liked about that is that Heinlein was far more serious than... Film made it absurd. But you know, they did by portraying what he's said. I really liked it, that they put forward the idea of propaganda in its message and it looked absurd. But I don't think it looked absurd to Heinlein. I think when Heinlein wrote it... That was what he thought, believed. So I liked that sort of a play.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Ah... Absolutely hated... I could give about a thousand. I really love science fiction and I'm very critical of something that is not good. The one I really hated in recent times would be John Carter of Mars. It was the example of the directorial interference in the plot. And I'm a big fan of the writer... There's whole series Princess of Mars, there's a book John Carter of Mars... But it was all the interesting elements when he was writing and had a plot device with these priest guys... It was clearly made to build a series. The film was clearly designed to make a series and the problem with this was that there was a device in the film that allowed him to go anywhere on Mars. He would just appear. So whatever John Carter

did, as a plot device because his opponent would be there before him. That collapsed the entire film. What it meant was that nothing that John Carted did was important. And I really hated that.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

To me Jurassic Park was an icon for everybody seeing it for the first time when it was made. For everybody else, not of that time it's just an intellectual exercise. Just a good film... I quite liked it... And The Matrix.. It's my son's favourite film. He's autistic and obsessed and he talked to me about it for years. But to me, again, The Matrix I rate extremely highly... But again I wouldn't emote to that film. I would enjoy, I would think about it... What I would be thinking is just basically based on a lot of conceptions of Philip K. Dick. I would be going like 'Philip K. Dick had all those ideas about alternative reality for years'.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

Oh... Shit... Really tough questions.

D: In your opinion. Never mind the books, critics or anyone else. Just how do you think?

Escape. Definitely escape. I have to... The filmmakers have to either create an alternative reality which is believable. Or when humans are faced with really difficult circumstances and overcome them. That works on two levels. One would be Robinson Crusoe on Mars where the guy is isolated and deals with the psychological element. And the other is any post-apocalyptic film where the band of survivors has to get through... But the reality has to be convincing. Convincing and human. An escape into the world where the humans are faced with other problems.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Hmm... Authenticity. And the example... It works two ways of course... When they use the costumes. The way the character wear them and how they personalise them. That small detail. You have to be sucked into the world. You have something that is not real, you want it to be real and you'll take anything to make it real. Good director does that kind of small tweak... It just gives you a hint of the believable film. I was going to say... The problem is, to me, it operates on two levels. One is the marvellous science fiction film with great concept, great authenticity. And on the other extreme there's something like Barbarella which I love equally. Barbarella is just so fucking stupid I love it. Maybe it's for everyone or maybe it's just for me but I like the concept but I also like ridiculous absurdity, comic book... Further it is from reality the happier I am. I also like these sort of generic things... Spaceships, villains...

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it's all things to all men. I have a certain general feel about art. I think art is great and I think science fiction films are strafing towards art and they're doing a great thing. But there's also the craft

aspect to the art. If you want to make a painting you need to learn how to paint. So you need some sort of craft ability and I think there's balance in particular movies... When they have the concept but they don't have craft... They won't work. So conceptual films, which often critics see as fantastic... And you look at it and you think this is basically fucking boring. Good one would be... Solaris by Tarkovksy. Which I saw and I sort of enjoyed it in a sort of cerebral way but something at the back of my head said... You can send messages to friends when you watch it.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Oh yes, definitely. They might not matter depending how the world goes... But without science fiction which is a more public, popular... Films kind of excite public imagination and somehow direct them towards or point them to do things... I think it helps people to consider the planet. Any science fiction author who is good usually looks ahead. For example post-apocalyptic movies now... You can see it coming... One of my favourite authors is Philip K. Dick. He was writing in the 1950s and some of the concepts... I sometimes wonder is maybe his mind was sort of unhinged and maybe he sort of has seen the future... Incredible. He predicted... In one book, in one short paragraph he said... He introduced a side character who was at a cigarette party. You imagine this. This was like 1955 and he's got a character who went to an illegal cigarette party. He opens the door, the smoke comes out and he goes 'o shit, they're all smoking cigarettes'. You now, not marihuana, not LSD. Like he predicted without even thinking about it that cigarettes would one day be seen as really, really bad. So bad that they become illegal. You can see that happening. That is one trivial example...

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

Hmm. My first science fiction was about 5 years old. That would be Fireball XL5. Children's program. Jerry Anderson, but very early. They animated puppets. My taste changed in a strange way. I think I moved from conceptual science fiction towards adventure science fiction. And I would identify that with getting older. So you're no longer the powerful, strong young guy you were...

D: You're now even stronger. 'You broke a boy in me but you won't break a man'.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Innovative horror. Evoked feelings of claustrophobia and sexual excitement as well. When Sigourney Weaver, when she's changing. At the end, with the alien in the background. That was just 'wow'. Confusion of emotions. You desperately want her to get out and suddenly she's dropping her gear. And you go 'oh no, I want to help her and now I want to fuck her'.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember being glued to my seat. I was with my friend, actually a pilot. And the two of us were sitting, watching a film. And I remember that feeling when you're watching a great film and you sort of wanting to say 'this is really good' but you can't because you're really compelled to watch. And that was it. Totally compelled from start to finish. Feeling you wanted to tell that this is fantastic but you couldn't because you had to see what happens next.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Covered the feelings.

It was actually when it came out. So the year that came out.. Because it was so crucial... I distinctively remember that we just went to watch a film. No expectations... Sort of 'I like science fiction'. And we didn't see any reviews, it was just a case of having a ticket. And it was astonishing because it blew both of us away.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Definitely that Sigourney Weaver scene. Outstanding scene, in my head. And the one where he's hung up... When the alien takes the black guy... At the time that was... And also the tunnel scene, the shaft scenes... And the one that everybody mentions but it didn't come to my mind first... It's the exploding stomach. But that... The other scenes were all... Were special themselves. Because of authenticity. You were watching it and thinking 'this is how it would be'. Also with the crew. I worked at the oil rigs briefly, at sea. And I haven't seen it first, I've seen the film much earlier but... And that's exactly how it's like.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

No.

## **MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

I would say isolation. It hasn't a great impact on me really. Two words to define. Mental breakdown.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember I would watch anything science fiction until it disappointed me. I remember being slightly disappointed. Maybe psychological portrait...I probably would see something more active and at the time probably I was less interested in psychology.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Quite depressed, it's a depressive movie.

**What did you expect before watching it?** Yeah, I probably did exactly opposite to Alien. I thought: oh great, it's science fiction, sounds very interesting. I probably built it up too much in my head.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

Definitely... I think I remember feeling thinking I hoped it would be great because of the Moon and that sort of thing and I remember thinking it was too much psychology.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I just can't remember...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

No.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

America. Fucking elaborating... America redefining its imperialism...

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I remember quite liking the early scenes and that feeling that I was going to be disappointed. Because my degree is social anthropology and it was about alien people. So basically I was too familiar with the concepts and the way it was going to go. I thought nothing is going to interest me in this because I've read and saw it all before.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

It made me feel bored and also cynical. In terms how the film would go... I knew.. I basically immediately categorised it as about the American experience with Indians... You can't call them Indians now.. Indigenous people. And as soon as I saw that I had it in my head how this is going to go and that this is about the contact of cultures. That our culture are going to be really bad guys who will do really bad things... And I felt that weave of sort of disappointment 'here we go again'.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

When I saw the critics of I really expected it what it was. I would say yes and no [about being influenced]. Yes I definitely prejudged the film but I'm intelligent enough to know I was exactly right about it so I watched again since and I thought: 'no, you were fucking right'. The same shit.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

A struggle.. I like death scenes... I like when the young guy got... The floating islands... And he was a young here, typical young hero... And he jumps, typical young hero. Does all the action and gets killed. That was quite emotional. That resonated emotionally with me in a cynical sort of way. I knew he was going to die...

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I think this is a difficult questions. I spent most of my time observing and making these judgement how the directors have pushed me into these corners. And the occasions like Alien, when didn't do this, were only because it was a great film. So they transcendent my critical judgement. And Avatar, at no point did I think anything other than 'I'm watching this as a critic'. So yeah, the all fucking film was a design... One cliché after one cliché and you know where this is going and just read any book on indigenous people of America after the 1960s and you're going to get this he falls in love her and the rest of the film...

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Well it's Alien 1, Moon 2 and Avatar 7. I would say that Alien was an absolute boundary point in science fiction. In science fiction and horror. This was really not seen before as far as I remember. Ok, we had the stupid Godzilla and whatever but this was the first one that really, really got you. You basically redefined the idea of going to space, the reality of the film and actually being there like an office, like a factory you can relate to that. Absolute boundary in science fiction. And Moon... I know less about this film because my memories of it are not great. I mean... I don't dislike it. I was just a bit disappointed in it because maybe.. 'Just me'. At the time maybe I wasn't really interested in this. Moon in comparison to other two is just essentially psychological. Avatar is just Wild West revisited from 1960s onwards.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

It works on different levels... I don't know... If I'm watching for the craft I sort of lost interest in the film... So I rarely see something that amazes me.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I have to think about this. I does matter. You know, well I think with particularly science fiction film and how they have social impact... It's important that this genre offers ideas. I think planet is in bad shape and I think we are fucked. And science fiction can help to explain this to people and maybe indulge it and offer solutions. Science fiction inspires young people and scientists.

## **Face Sheet**

### **I. Participant**

Respondent: Craig

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 59

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Scottish

Education: Ba Social Sciences (social anthropology) / Postgrad teaching certificate

Father: Basic

Mother: Basic

Occupation: Musician

Father: Civil service / executive office

Mother: Typist

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 55 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £15

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes (horror)

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items Yes

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia No

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging Yes

Cosplay No

Fan art Yes

Fanvids No

Fanfiction Yes

**Interview 30. 25-11-18 Alan Meredith**

**D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

A: My favourite all time sf film. Probably 2001 because it's the first hardcore science fiction film that I've been to see.

**D: Is that the only reason why? Because it's your first hardcore sf?**

A: Eemm... A lot of people think it's a bit slow but I was blown away by it.

**D: Would you expand a little bit on that hardcore?**

A: For example it's something like Avatar. It's basically just special effects around fundamental cowboys and Indians plot. 2001 that was original, special effects for its time were ground breaking. I mean, ok, the guy made a mistake of naming it 2001.

**D: Is it really a mistake?**

A: 2001 already happened and nothing happened. But, other than that it's just a brilliant film.

**D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

A: There was a film called Somneous. It's like they took... They made a decision: What's the worst science fiction film you could make? And that is what they came up with. Plot was rubbish, the special effects weren't great, it was discontinuous to the point where you suddenly had 5 minutes, 5 MINUTES, following a jellyfish around the tank. No obvious connection to the rest of the film. Just non sense.

**D: Have you even seen a film A Ghost Story?**

A: No.

D: It actually works there.

A: It doesn't work in Somneous. I will take a look.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

A: There was one called Passengers. That was... I enjoyed it.. But... Special effects were good, the ship was good but I didn't give a good rating.

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

A: Space ships are always a help. I always am drawn by a good space ship.

**D: What if there are no space ships in the film? Does it mean it's not a science fiction film?**

A: You can have science fiction in various genres but to me if there's no space ship it's got to work harder. But just basically a futuristic set up. It's such a broad question really. Even something set deep in the past in an alternative history... That would be science fiction. Almost anything can be it.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

A: Scientific consistency. It should have a plausibility, like 'yeah it could happen' but it has to be consistent within itself. If it contradicts itself. Oh that brings me to a dark hole.

**D: Yes, it needs integrity.**

A: Integrity, yes. It needs to follow its internal structure. Good special effect. Some don't need them. Some don't have them. It's a think I would look for. It's technology. It's gotta be well written.

**D: What do you consider well written? Would Transformers 6 be well written in your opinion?**

A: Yeah. I haven't seen TF6 but I've seen the first TF. I mean, OK, it was clearly young adult but I would classify it as science fiction.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

A: I think it's entertainment. I think that the most of science fiction films that you see they're not really hard sf. If you want really hard, in depth science fiction you need to go into the books. Even if it's a film of a book they've take a lot of stuff out. And sometimes they put a lot of stuff in. Science fiction film is lightweight stuff generally./

**D: Generally. So is it always?**

A: Sci fi film that is trying to be art is not gonna be a good film.

**D: Really? You just have said that your favourite science fiction film is 2001 A Space Odyssey which is very artistic.**

A: Yeah, that's right.

**D: So that contradicts itself a bit.**

A: Yeah. I mean... I think maybe 2001 is kind of an exception. You know?

**D: I do.**

A: It was written by a science fiction author, you know Arthur C. Clarke? I would say 2001 wobbles on two in that respect.

D: I understand that.

A: I still wouldn't call it art. It's still entertainment.

D: Are you implying that art can't be entertainment?

A: No, art can be entertainment. But it depends what film is trying to be. If a film is trying to be art it will be less entertaining.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

A: Not much.

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

A: I wouldn't say it had. I still like the same stuff I liked. I'm getting better special effects so I'm happier. Also there's more of science fiction round than it used to be. It's becoming more mainstream.

## **ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

A: Scary film. Scary film. Yeah, scary film. It suffered from the things jumping out and going boo.

D: Is that all Alien is?

A: That was kind of it. But I recently bought a book and book is better than a film. Because they can't make the things jump at you out of the screen and go boo. They have to actually tell me the story. So I prefer books.

D: And you don't think that Alien tells a story?

A: It tells a story. Funnily enough it's... There's another film that has almost the same plot. It's set on the oil rig in the Antarctic Ocean. And it follows exactly the same story. Except special effects are much worse. You can still see it's a bloke in a crash helmet. Yeah, Alien has a story. I found it quite entertaining to watch but at the end of the day when all the film has is essentially things jump at you off the wall it wears on you a bit. The landing sequence of Nostromo, those were good. I think what glares on me is how Ripley went back for that cat. I mean, come on.

D: What? What about it? I mean, come on what?

A: She's set the ship to blow up. She's got to the escape pod. The count is timing down (HE SAID THAT), she's set to go, she's safe from the alien and she's says: I forgot the cat.

D: Yeah.

A: And you want to strangle the stupid woman.

D: Not really. I actually don't want to do that. I have a little doggie here and if my doggie would be in danger I would cover it with my body.

A: I suppose there are people who feel like that but I don't.

D: Well... And you don't think that Alien has any social relevance?

A: No, not really. It doesn't relate to any issues that I could think of.

D: Really? Ok, that's very interesting. Let's continue then.

Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?

A: I didn't actually watch Alien until it would be out for quite a long time. So I already had a pretty fair idea what was going to happen there. I didn't have that much suspense for me. I watched it, I enjoyed it. If I'd watched it when it first came out it would probably have had a greater impact.

D: It could, yes. So that's what you remember, yes?

A: I watched it when it came out on DVD. Well, video it was probably back then.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

A: At that time I wasn't all that good with scary things. I'm better now. I found that quite off putting that at some parts I had to leave the room. You know when it's going to go bad. You can tell. The people started doing stupid things. A lot of characters in Alien... They didn't act like they wanted to survive. They were doing stupid things. Ripley was the one who was going to live through it because she was the only one who acted like she wanted to.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

A: Yeah, people mention things so I knew what the plot is going to be.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

A: To be honest I have to say that if I haven't heard anything about it I probably wouldn't have watched it.

D: Really?

A: People tell you, you hear about it and you think 'Yeah, I'll watch that'. Space horror when the alien is just a ravaging monster. That's not going to appeal to me tremendously. They were talking about The Thing but they don't appeal to me this much. I need aliens to be intelligent, more than just a ravaging monster.

D: But it is very intelligent. Did you notice the realism in this film? How the Nostromo is dirty, it's a very realistic depiction of an industrial environment. And the dynamic of the relationships...

A: Ahead of this time. I watched another Alien film and I got more into it. I had a small input in the film Prometheus.

D: What was that input?

A: You know those cylinders with black stuff in them? I made that black stuff. I'm an industrial chemist and the company bought that stuff from me.

D: That's very interesting.

A: My train to fame.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

A: The external shots of the Nostromo when it's landing on the planet. And inside of the alien ship.

D: What about this scene, why this one?

A: I just like spaceships. That was a space ship and the outside of it. Landing on an alien planet. And the special effects by today standards are a bit shaky but then that was a top notch stuff. The fact that the smoke in the atmosphere. That the atmosphere was smog and foggy and you could see it swirling around the ship.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

A: Mostly something bad like when they go hunting the alien. You know it's not going to end well.

**D: So how was it achieved?**

A: Partly by... You can always tell by the music. When the music tells you things are going to go bad it's a subconscious clue. When the music goes dun, dun. Dundun. Duuun, dun. (imitates The Jaws theme) You know it's not going to go well. Also there's the fact that he's going hunting for the alien in the little, narrow spaces on his own. When in one of these horror films someone goes somewhere on his own you know it's not going to... It's either not going to end well for him or he's going to come back and find out that it didn't go well for everybody else while he was gone. It's a standard trope.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

A: Culprit shenanigans.

**D: What do you mean?**

A: This was like a big evil corporation screwing the little guy.

**D: And you don't think that this was the case in Alien?**

A: There was a nod of that. Ok, the corporation did have... There was the android. It was trying to cultivate the alien. It didn't come across as a big thing. It just came across as a routine that there's been an android and something came up. This wasn't like a big plot.

D: No, it was. I think you missed a part of the plot. Because that this was his mission. Given by the company. There are scenes committed to explaining that. That's why they were in this location in space. Because company knew about the eggs and the android's secret mission was to bring one. Crew expendable. And that's why Ripley cried in the film.

A: Really? I missed that!

D: You must have. It's a plot. The company knew about it and they wanted one back on Earth.

A: I missed that entirely.

**D: But a propos Moon. What do you think about it?**

A: I thought it was a great film. I liked the robot in it. It looked like the robot was going to be like HAL in 2001 but it turned around and it turned out that the robot was really trying to help them. For most of the film you had that impression like it's nursing them. It's a jailor. It's controlling them. But at the end it redeems itself. At the end of the day it's a machine. They programmed it to help. In fact very similar what comes out to the sequel to 2001, in 2010. It's been given conflicting orders. It's been given two sets of orders and it was trying to carry them out at the same time. So in 2001 he was told to lie and he couldn't lie so he killed everyone. And in 2010 it was told to look over and protect those people but also to screw them over for the company. It was trying to merge those two sets of the orders and that's how it came out. For most of the time it was doing what the company wanted to but the programming wasn't perfect and it gave it a latitude to help instead.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

A: It was a great film. It took a while to work out what was gonna happen. To work out that it wasn't a broken piece of telecommunication equipment. They were deliberately jamming the signal.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

A: At some point I started getting annoyed with the older version of the clone because it was behaving like an idiot but later it started degenerating so it wouldn't be behaving in the rational way. He'd been starved out of the oxygen also... (accident).

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

A: Unlike Alien I just saw that in the video shop. I never heard of it before and I just watched it completely fresh.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

A: When they discovered the awful truth. They went down underneath the base on Moon and they discovered the racks and racks and racks and racks of androids... Of the... Of the clones of him. That was very poignant moment when they... The scale of the operation.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There was the point when the robot unlocks the computer and he starts to get all the real information of what's really going on and you're thinking 'Hang on, this isn't going the way I thought it was going'. Which I enjoy when the film manages to do that.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

A: Special effects. The first time I saw that it was when it came out and I saw that in cinema in 3D. And, oh God, that was amazing. The scene when the night has just fallen and the torch goes out and you can see that all plant life is luminescent. The light patches where his footsteps go. I liked the initial sequence with the spaceship and the weightlessness. The weightlessness was done very well there. I got the DVD version and there are slightly different versions. On the DVD it shows you more of the initial. Bar fight, etc. Spaceship was great, in fact that's my wallpaper on my computer.

D: Very nice.

A: And all the aerial flying with the dragons was unbelievably well done. The whole film was about special effects. You notice the stereotype. It had to be the Americans who save the poor natives.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It was a feel good film. You identify with the poor aliens when the tree was shot to bits. You could identify with the characters. A feel good film really. Good guy triumphs, bad guys blown to bits. Everything turned out well at the end. It was about special effects. It wasn't a mind gripping sci fi. It was like 'Hey, look what we can do on the screen'.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

The scene where the helicopter is going amongst the floating mountains. Oh my God. That was just incredibly. You see all those mountains and things creeping out of it and you look and there's a guy climbing.

D: I don't remember that, I remember the panorama. Brilliant.

A: It was unbelievably good.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I enjoyed space ship, torch going out, flight of the dragon things...

D: How was it designed to invoke thoughts or feelings?

A: It was meant to think it's good. And when that torch went out and you could see those things lighting up you realised he wasn't going to die necessarily. He was in the situation where it was getting dark and surrounded by those wolf like things and all of sudden the light come up. Things weren't as bad as they seemed to be. I really enjoyed that part.

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**D: How would you personally rank those three films?**

Avatar was the best, then Moon, then Alien.

**Why? How are those films different from each other?**

Well, Avatar I enjoyed the spectacular special effects. Moon... It was a mystery there. How come there were two versions of him there. How did he get out of the wreck and you find out he didn't but there was another version of him. It was a mystery, it took me in directions. But Avatar still wins. Alien. I never really had a warm place in my heart for the monster films. It's just a thing that intends to kill everyone. This never appealed to me. So that's why to it's the bottom one.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

To my mind it is special effects and a good plot what I'm looking for. As I mentioned before I always found films to be lighter things. If I wanted a serious thing I'll go and read a book.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Yeah, it's always a plus but it's not necessary. Films... You've only got an hour, two hours and if film will turn all preach the chances are it might run out of the steam. It might lose its impact. I'd rather stay stupid when I'm watching a film. If I want the intellect I'll read a book.

D: Thank you for your time!

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Alan

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 61

Sex: X Male

Nationality: British

Education: Chemistry degree

Father: Doesn't know

Mother: Doesn't know

Occupation: Chemist

Father: Electrician

Mother: Housewife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? As long as he can remember, since 4 so about 55 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £10

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions	No
Collecting merch	No
Collecting limited edition/rarer items	No
Collecting props/ costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	No
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	No
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### **Interview 31. 28-11-18 Gustavo**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

That's tricky. I can say what I used think. Now I can't be sure. At least some years ago, and it's still pretty good – Blade Runner. I think when I saw it for the first time it was really cool. I didn't understand all the bits. Because I was something like 10 years old so I couldn't understand much but more and more I stared watching it... It would seem even deeper and it would seem there was still world related creativity there so it was cool. For me that was one of the top things. Something I could call some good sci fi when I was young.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

I don't know if I could name one particular. At least for me... I don't want to sound like a snob but I think there is a lot of more bad movies than good in sic fi. Especially with the... I don't know, I'm having a hard time trying to think of something. I don't usually finish them. I don't know, I don't focus that much. Especially, I don't know, something from the 90s. There is this movie... Especially ending can kill a movie. There's some movie with Sam Neil. There's this ship going through...

D: Event Horizon...

And towards the end they enter hell.

D: Yeah, Event Horizon. With Laurence Fishburne as a captain of the ship.

Yes, Event Horizon. I don't know, the first half was really cool and really nicely paced. Now I remember, I was really, really disappointed... The first new movie he made about the previous stories about Alien...

D: Prometheus.

Yeah, Prometheus. That one. Proper bad movie.

D: What do you think about the second one? Alien Covenant?

I haven't watched it. I think I watched some bits on Netflix but I haven't watched it [all]. I think I went with high expectations and it makes it worse. There were so many options, so many possibilities in such a good franchise to make it still some commercial entertainment for some many people... And they go for... I don't know... I liked engineers at the beginning, Noomi Rapace. Story begun like I wanted to know some more but after that it was just people running.

**D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

There are movies I don't even try to watch... Jennifer Lawrence... For example Hunger Games. That one started interesting but then it was bit boring. But there is one with Mila Kunis for example. I don't remember the name... It's something like... Beautiful people fight against Big Brother

D: Jupiter Ascending

Yeah.. Those ones, heroes fighting against evil planet rulers sci fi king...

**D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

That's a bit tricky. Because I never know exactly how to differentiate or how to describe science fiction from science fantasy. I think I put all together. What defines science fiction is basically technology or not necessarily technology but it has something to do with alien worlds, alien universes or how we transcend our reality into something... Because... Black Mirror is science fiction. You could make a Black Mirror with smart phones if you made it in the 80s. It's really cool science fiction. There are some science fiction movies that are not... I don't need too much visual high tech. I don't mind it when it's well used but I don't need it. That's why that movie, Jupiter Ascending, is too flashy and it really bores me. When it's too commercial I have issues.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Science fiction is more about telling a good story... To have this concept. Not about cool visuals.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I never know... I come from the different background so for me it's difficult to define art but in general I think it can be both. It can be what we would call art film with science fiction movie and I think you can cover... Let's say Guardians of the Galaxy. That's actually fun. It has a lot of sci fi. It's commercial and

it's a bit of fun. Sometimes you need something lighter and it's good. They have really good characters also. Very cool. There's a small racoon. I never believed it will work until I saw the film. Really cool. And in some moments you feel pity about him when you see they experimented a lot on him. It's funny but it's quite real at the same time. That's cool. It's not just a clown, he has real personality.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Oh yes, definitely. Basically making science fiction is creating... It's something like a branch of fiction. It makes you wander, analyse and be critical about things you have. And many good science fiction movies actually happen not so far from now so they need analytical thinking. For example Handmaiden's Tale? For me it was amazing. Even if it's not your cup of tea, the kind of theme they're touching... It's so relevant in this moment. It's a perfect example for saying science fiction is really important. Because it makes you think a lot.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I suppose really I was more into fun stuff. I think even now I like Star Wars very much but I grew to appreciate slower, different films. Even now there are films that take a lot of my effort. I appreciate them but they're not easy to watch. But I know it's a cool film, sometimes it's an older film. I try to charge my mental batteries to watch Stalker again. It's difficult but it's a good film. Stalker is a bit hard, it's a bit too slow for me. But [new] Blade Runner – I can watch it... I have to be a bit awake but it's not a problem.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Knowing the movie? I don't know... It's something like... It's not horror but it's terror for me. I love it. When I first watched it.. I was young so it scared me. It was really exciting. It was really cool. I love that you never really see the monster. For example... That's why I explained I don't like flashy things. I like flashy things when it's serves the story. The less they would show him it was even worse and worse [in terms of terror, as an advantage]. If I was making a film, I don't know, I saw it in Star Wars... Even if it's fiction it needs to be real. Everything was dirty and used and nothing looks clean and that made it look like really messy kitchen. That was cool, that made it real for me. And there are a lot of things that happen that have nothing to do with film being sci fi. You can even see social stratus between the characters. You can see whether they're mechanics, lower wages, not getting on with others... They're the people.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I was pretty scared but curious at the same time. It made me feel a bit cool and uncomfortable. Now it's not that scary for me but in that time I was really, really amazed.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Covered

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

No, I don't think I had expectations. I just knew that it was this science fiction film and it was mysterious. I didn't know anything specific about this film so I went in a bit blind. I didn't know much. I didn't even know it was a bit spooky. Or bloody.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I have two. The kitchen scene. The famous kitchen scene. I think three: kitchen scene, the part when they speak with Ash after his decapitated. It makes you think that the orders were pretty fucked up. Because they... He's saying to their faces like: I am something like the dungeon master and you're... You know. And the other part is speaking with the technical guys about repairs. And they were just playing with her. Just making it hard because they can. Because 'I don't like you because you have more money than me', or whatever. That's what I love about this film. Because it feels pretty real. Because you can see how it's similar in the real world when someone is fixing your car. It felt quite real. For sure.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Well the whole film, I think, it feels isolated. It makes you feel that you're inside all the time. They made you feel quite uncomfortable, that's why it works. Like you're one more of the crew that they never put on camera but you're inside. I think Ridley Scott managed to make you feel uncomfortable and really when he's breathing it's really close to you. It works. Completely.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

[That] It's really, really good and very sad. It's well done. You have basically one actor having conversation with himself. That can be a pretty boring movie. But you're like hooked completely. It's very nice. First thing it made me think... It made me think a lot about artificial life basically. I don't know if it would be called artificial but when you think about ownership and how capitalism really can own people. And

it made me think how in future there might be things that can happen that way. Because they can control your life and it doesn't matter how popular or something you are. You feel like a complete being and you don't know that and you live your life. It's like The Matrix a bit.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I think I didn't know much. I heard about this in one conversation. Someone said it's a really good film and I could trust this person. When I'm curious about something... The less I know, I prefer not to know anything. So for example if my friends have good ideas, some recommendations I just want to hear the title and I don't want to hear anything. And after I watch the film I really enjoy reading reviews and watching making of and everything. Moon, I didn't know that much. I didn't know about this film at all, just from this guy.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I saw it not so long ago... Nothing in particular that it's really big deal for me. But when the things are escalating between two clones. Especially when the older one is starting to get worse and worse. And the other one doesn't really care about him and you start feeling pity about him. He kind of tries to block himself. Like 'I have nothing to do with that guy who looks absolutely like me'.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

Making it you feel them pretty much like humans and some moments like assholes. You can say 'oh come on, you deserve that' but after that... I don't know. You may have friends that sometimes you want to hit them in the face and tell them to shut up but some other times you understand. You say, 'ok, sorry. I should hear you more'. So when you see that situation you feel more, you understand all this 'human being' is to be spoiled completely. I think there is that connection. Just towards the end you see him entering the pod. It's going to create whole that shock about this company. It's a bit too happy for me.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

This one it was really hard not to see, it was difficult to escape it. Looked cool, maybe a bit too 3D for my interest in particular. Still, looked cool.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

It was a bit uncomfortable for me but that's not exactly the movie but because how it was presented. The movie made a big effort to make you watch it with 3D glasses. I realized after 3 or 4 more movies I realized I don't enjoy that. It gets in the way that. It was fun but for a moment it was a bit exhausting. The design was good, the design was clever. It wasn't just 'let's go, uh, ah' but everything fit with the story and the world. It's really, really well made.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Cameron has made plenty different film but even if has really commercialized it's a really commercialization. It's not like the guy who makes Transformers. He makes movies that everybody is going to like but he has a background there. Something solid that is holding, usually, his films. In general he knows how to compose the whole bit. I think it didn't get me to think as the others. It was a lot of fun, it was still very interesting. The kind of theme they approach about that is holding the story together it all that fucked up capitalism that is destroying the ecology. A bit too fairy tale, it's not that smart in this way, but it's still a lot of fun. But it's not a film... For example I think I have watched Avatar maybe once more. Alien I watch several times, Moon at least three time but Avatar is not a film I would go back for the story but more for the visuals.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I was pretty happy. I didn't like it to much but it was ok.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

Definitely not towards the end because it gets a bit boring. I think but at the beginning when gets to the jungle and it's all very colourful. Discovery of jungle, it's really cool. It lit up. Everything was literally connected. It looks cool and again it's complete with the story. It's not just done for the effect.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

In that way I don't think it was that smart. It's a bit cliché. It doesn't make me think 'oh my God, maybe we should...'. Feels a bit fake. It's like putting a sigh: 'Stop wasting, I don't know, planet'. You don't connect that much. Nothing is really intriguing. For me it's simple, but maybe it's not for jungle people, or someone who has attention problem maybe...

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

I will go Alien, Moon, Avatar. Alien... Many things have to do with watching it for the first time. Alien has a bigger space in my heart because I watched in some moments. I still think it's very good, I still can watch it in any moment. It has aged well. It's really, really solid. Moon, I would enjoy it more if I wouldn't watched Alien. It's for older people. Not for young people that much. But I think it's cool and develops really in interesting way and it's a real sci fi. Avatar is important but not very deep. It broke some ground but it's not that deep.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

I wouldn't think in those terms when I watch of movie. I would start thinking in those terms... Just directing, or the style, or the acting... After I watch the film. I do the same thing with any movie because I like films in general. So... I just want to enjoy the film and to feel trapped by the movie and no to think: 'come on, now you made me feel... Now I know I was watching the film'. After that I start analysing sometimes... I'm an artist, I illustrate some stuff. I do comics so I like story telling so I analyse a bit more. But when I'm watching a film it's just... Either I like it or not and I feel everything works together.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

Absolutely yes for me. Even if you're watching Guardians of the Galaxy. It doesn't mean that you need to rethink your life and analyse the universe but sometimes, something simple. Friendship. It's not complex, pretty simple but it can be very nice and it's really important. I think it's absolutely necessary.

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Gustavo

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 43

Sex: X Male

Nationality: Peruvian

Education: MA (nonsubmission)

Father: MA

Mother: Secondary

Occupation: Graphic design

Father: Advertising creative director

Mother: Housewife

**II. Engagement with the field**

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 27 year

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £20

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes (sometimes comicon and steam punk other times)

Collecting merch No (used to)

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia	No
Online forums	Yes
Seeking info	
about new SF projects	Yes
Tweeting	Yes
Blogging	No
Cosplay	No
Fan art	Yes
Fanvids	No
Fanfiction	No

### **Interview 32. 29-11-18 Susan**

#### **D: What is your all-time favourite sf film, and why do you love it?**

First Terminator and Aliens. Second Terminator was more special effects. First was more serious and it had more thought provoking questions.

#### **D: What is the worst SF film or what are some bad SF films?**

Oh my God, the worst! I hated Dracula with Gary Oldman. If I could have walked out I would have. I hated Prometheus. Not too keen on The Fifth Element. My husband watched it all time and I think I got bored of it. I really hated the Gary Oldman Dracula version. Because of his portrayal of Dracula. There've been so many versions of Dracula and this one was just nothing original. I'm sure that after this conversation I will come up with even more that I hate.

#### **D: Have you seen SF films that you'd describe as very generic or ordinary SF?**

That's the majority, isn't it? That Prometheus. The first one and the second one. I really hated it. It (Alien: Covenant) was actually Prometheus but with different name. I felt cheated there. Torture. Assassins Creed also was like that. Any of the... I don't dislike them but... Any of the Avengers movies. Any of those superhero ones. I enjoy them when I watch them but then I forgot them.

#### **D: What makes a film a science fiction film?**

It has to have an element of ... Some sort of something from space. Travel or space weapons or something.

D: So what about such a film as Children of Men? Have you seen it?

Yes. Would I consider this a science fiction? Yes, a speculative fiction.

D: Exactly, because science fiction comes from under an umbrella of speculative fiction.

**D: What makes a good science fiction film? What do you like about science fiction films the most?**

Has to have like clever... Well, like any film. Got to have well written plot and good actors and I suppose the science fiction elements have to be original and plausible. It has to be a believable, it can't spring out of nowhere.

D: So does it need to be a realist film? Does it need to portray life in the realistic way?

As long as everything is consistent and it fits together then it creates the believable world and you can buy it. It can't just be sitting on its own.

**D: For you, is science fiction film art or entertainment, or both?**

I think it is more entertainment. It's also science-fact. Raises it to the upper level. It starts as a fiction and becomes reality down the track.

D: Can art be entertainment?

Well I suppose it can. Also it can be bloody rubbish. It can be kind of... It can be excluding people. If they got the idea that it's art. Then it can feel like it's excluding certain people that they wouldn't understand. I prefer science fiction as an entertainment because that's something that everyone can enjoy and praise. There are some films that I feel when I watch them... They try too hard to be clever and arty. To an extent that I've lost the meaning of the movie. I don't know what they are trying to say to me.

**D: Do SF films matter, in society and in our culture?**

Yeah, I do. I think it opens people's eyes to possibilities and it sometimes sets someone on a path of thinking 'what if'. And it leads to innovation and inspires to push boundaries of what we do. And it's just great. It allows you to live in the world you wouldn't live otherwise. Multiple lives rather than just one.

**D: Are some science fiction films more important than others?**

**D: Tell me about how your tastes in SF film have changed over time.**

I'd probably go and see most of them and then it would depend if the movie was constructed well or not. I still have a very broad taste in science fiction, I still seek the entertainment so I would go to see the most of things that come out. Unless it would seem so bad that I wouldn't go near it. If the trailers are really bad... I do avoid movies like Transformers, I do avoid superhero movies unless someone close to me actively wants me to go but I won't go actively looking for superhero movies or transformers movies. I absolutely love alien invasion or a disaster movie. I would see any disaster movie. Even if afterwards it would turn out really bad I would go and see it.

**ALIEN**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Scared. Took me three times to see this movie in its entirety. I can still remember those feelings. My brothers have dragged me to see the first one. I only saw 10% of it and they tricked me again and took me to the cinema and I spent most of it watching a wall. By time I got to the third viewing I actually was able to watch it. It was pretty scary. That quite a xenomorph. I'm quite empathic. I tend to put myself in the movie so it was pretty scary. When I hear the title it's that instant memory of fear that I think of. It was probably facing my fears. It's a bit like skydiving. It was between what I can and what I couldn't take in. When I think of it then I suppose it means conquering my fears. Getting into something really. Of course I was a fan ever since. I collect memorabilia. I love those first two movies and I was slightly disappointed by every one since.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

Scared and excited. I think it was first really realistically scary monster ever being really created. It was as xenomorph as you could possibly hope to find. It was exciting, yeah.

**What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I don't think I had... I don't think I knew what I was in for... It wasn't anything like films we've seen up to that point. Giant ants and Blob. Until Alien Blob was the scariest, it gave me nightmares. In a perspective... Blob and Alien... That was kind of level of scary movies I had.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I think the one where captain is in the tunnel looking for it and she can see... She's tracking it. Oh my God, that was... I think at the end she gets in the pod, she thinks she's safe and it's there. She has to overcome her fears, absolute terror, to go and to still be active to do something and survive.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

The whole scene of them sitting around the table, chatting... You just know. Creating that sense of the calm before the storm. And it works.

**MOON**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Surprised I think. I didn't know anything about it when I put it on and I enjoyed it. I remember it had surprising ending. It was a quite little movie my impression was. Movie that had that nice pacing all along, almost lazy.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

I don't remember much about it. I remember thinking that it drives you to thinking you're watching one kind of a movie and it turns out something else.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel? What did you expect before watching it? In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

I don't suppose it made a huge impression. I was presently surprised that it had a twist at the end that I haven't seen coming. But then I pretty much moved on and haven't thought about it anymore. It's what you would expect to happen when you see someone this alone, to start talking to himself and I thought that it's what happened. It's one of those movies you don't hear people talking about. You watch it and it's a nice surprise and you wonder why on Earth haven't I seen this before.

D: Because it requires thinking.

There wasn't much action in it haha

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I have a vague memory of him just driving along rocks and stuff. I remember and like the loneliness of it the most.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

I don't think I can recall it. I can recall Sam Rockwell. That's about it.

**AVATAR**

**What is your automatic thought when you hear (*the title*)? What do you think of this film, what does it mean to you?**

Fun movie. Just fun. Meh. It didn't have any life changing effect if that's what you mean. I was very impressed with it at the time. I remember thinking it had very nice special effects but yeah, I enjoyed it. Certainly. I was wowed by the special effects. I remember that. As time gone by it has lost its amazingness.

**Tell me what you remember about watching the film for the first time?**

The story line it was ok but it was all special effects. I remember Sigourney Weaver and her character. **Still looked like** Sigourney Weaver.

**What do you remember about how the film made you feel?**

I was wowed from the **creativity** and special effects.

**What did you expect before watching it?**

I think we've heard a lot about it by that stage, about the special effects so I went in to see something very impressive.

**In what way did this impact on your view of the film?**

It probably did. I've been finishing it and I was like: It really was amazing special effects and all that.

**Any favourite scenes? Why? (what do they make you feel, what's in them that makes you want to return to them/remember them)**

I've only seen it once, you see. I remember the forest scenes. I remember basketball scene.

**Are there any moments in those films you noticed where you'd say they were designed to make you think or feel something? What was it and in which scenes?**

There were a lot of social justice kinds of the scenes. Very much parallels rain forest being destroyed. I think it worked quite well.

**D: How would you personally rank those three films? Why? For you personally, how are those films different from each other?**

Alien, Moon although I don't remember it too well... But I remember the feeling of being impressed by it. And then Avatar. Alien made such an impression so I can probably remember it scene by scene so obviously it has go up there. And Moon I remember it being a clever movie. But I only have seen it once in my life so I don't remember it so well. I must have seen it when it came out and I thought it was an old movie by then because no one said anything to me about it. It has a feel of a much older movie. And Avatar was innovative so it made an impression and, well, story wise it was really... Weak.

**D: What do you focus on while watching a science fiction film? Is it the cinematography, script, acting or something else? Why this?**

Story, that's about that.

**D: Does it matter if science fiction has meaning?**

I think it gives it more depth, for sure. You can enjoy science fiction on a surface level just for sheer entertainment of it. Whereas meaning gives it more depth and much deeper sense of enjoyments.

**Face Sheet**

**I. Participant**

Respondent: Sue

Chosen pseudonym?:

Age: 55

Sex: X Female

Nationality: Australian

Education: MA

Father: High School

Mother: High School

Occupation: Public Servant

Father: Police / Business owner

Mother: Teacher / Secretary / Real estate property manager

## II. Engagement with the field

For how long would you say you have been a fan of science fiction? 43 years

Estimate how much you spend on fandom goods, on average, in a month: £ 50

Do you engage in activities related to science fiction fandom:

Conventions Yes

Collecting merch Yes

Collecting limited

edition/rarer items No

Collecting props/

costumes/memorabilia Yes

Online forums Yes

Seeking info

about new SF projects Yes

Tweeting No

Blogging Yes (occasionally writes for blogs but doesn't maintain them)

Cosplay Yes

Fan art Yes

Fanvids No

Fanfiction Yes