

# Fight the Future



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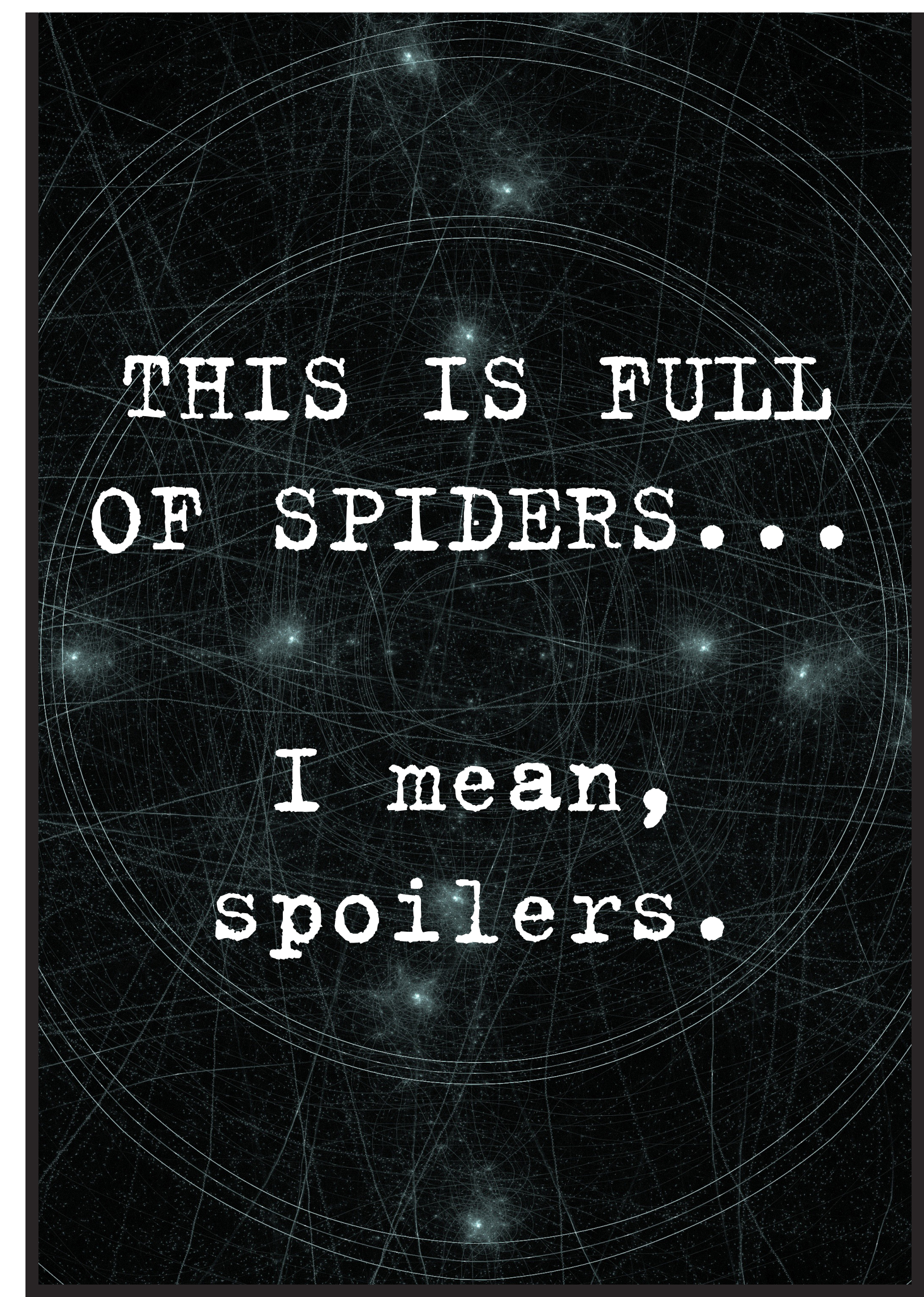
DARK EXTROPIAN



MUSINGS







THIS IS FULL  
OF SPIDERS....

I mean,  
spoilers.







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## The Future Composts The Past



*Logan* isn't a Sci-Fi, it's a Western that just happens to be set forward in time. Its setting is one of the many excellent characters in the film. Its design fiction elements just one of the standout performances.

*Logan's* vision of 2029 proves Bruce Sterling's line that "*the future composts the past*" in the most effective way since *Looper*.

Grounding it as a progression from the present establishes that they're in our world, not a sci-fi superhero universe full of marvels separate from that of mortal's.

Phones look the same as today. They still go flat at inconvenient moments. Needing to find a charger breaks up the back story infodump.

There's no futureshock in this film. TVs aren't holographic.



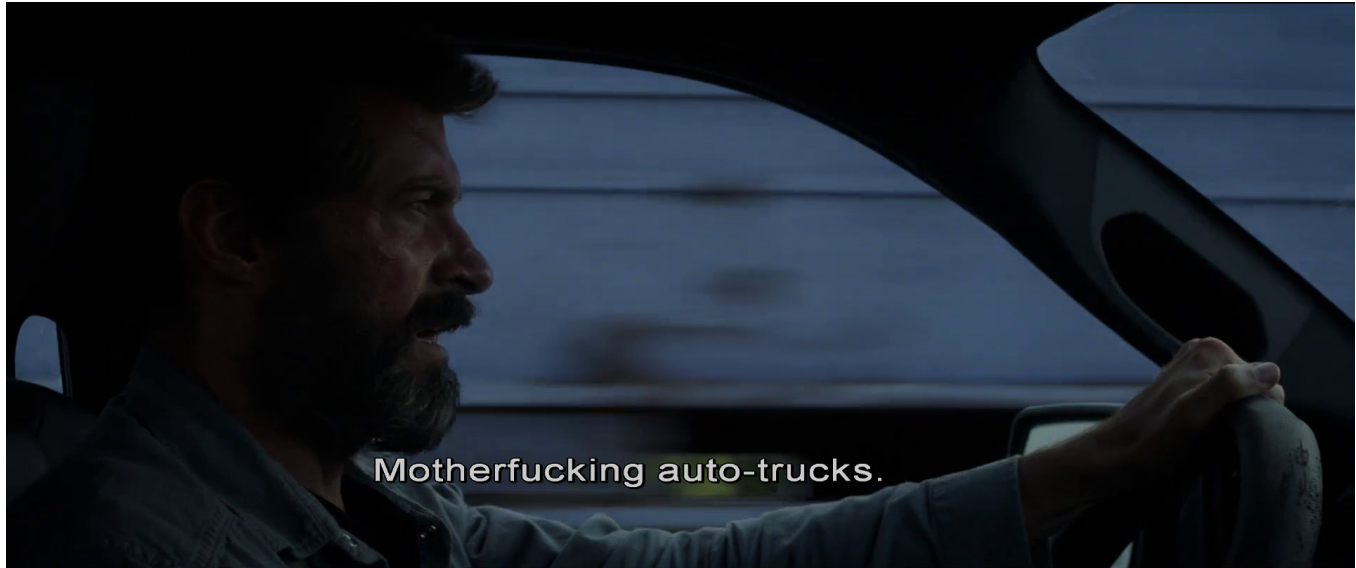


There are no sharks eating Marty McFly on the sidewalk as in *Back To The Future II*'s 1989 vision of 2015.

Showing the autotrucks as "cabinless trucks" recalls how cars were first presented as horseless carriages.

It's a gritty future, with passing references to

Having their smarts in the undercarriage is



more charismatic megafauna going extinct.

Prosthetics are grafted on, requiring maintenance and tweaking. These are upgrades that've come at a cost.

The first viewing, the only thing that bugged me was the "motherfucking autotrucks" running them off the road, nearly taking out those poor horses.

an excellent rendering of fully automated transport. This scene showed a future that'd composted the past.

So why were the trucks blaring their horns? As if their machine vision had only just detected a collision, not been long aware of the potential thanks to lidar/radar etc and compensated for it.

I missed the explanation they dropped later







on. That the EvilCorp™ had likely hacked the autotrucks to kill the resistant, nailhouse<sup>1</sup> family - until I rewatched it.

First time round it was drowned out by the vision of the mutant farm machines in the GMO'd cornfields.

There is a lack of familiar branding in *Logan*. You rarely see anything but the Hypno brand or the Canewood logo, both of which function as design fiction elements unique to its internal universe.

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<sup>1</sup> Chinese neologism for homes belonging to people (sometimes called “stubborn nails”) who refuse to make room for real estate development. [\[Wikipedia\]](#)

Nothing can date a film worse than featuring a popular brand of its time that hasn't lasted halfway to the future its depicting.



Think of the ATARI logo in *Blade Runner*. ‡







Am I the only one that started thinking about Cyclonopedia during the #AmericanGods finale?



#thesentientooze files

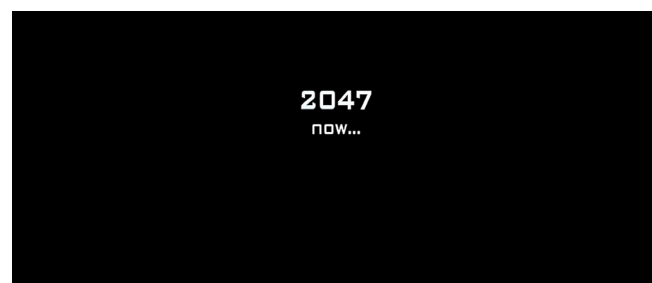
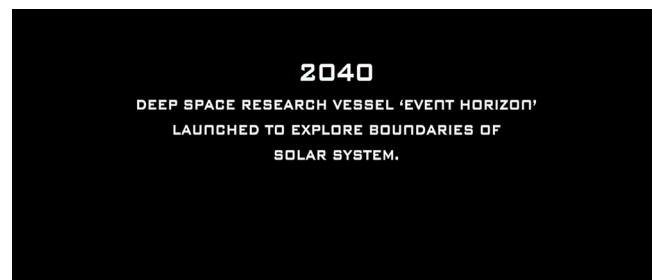
It's funny, the things that catch your eye, that capture your attention when you're rewatching old movies. One night it was the patches on the jackets of the crew of the Lewis & Clark in *Event Horizon*, and how they function as a design fiction element in projecting the present into a future in space.

We start with our soon-to-be mad scientist, Dr. Weir, played by Sam Neil. He's wearing a) an IASA patch - letting us know that the future in space is capital-I International - just look at the variety of races and accents in this movie after all - and an Australian flag, where the Union Jack has been replaced with the Indigenous Australian Flag; likely a cue that Australia has become a Republic by 2047. Finally! And that much is believable.

But the fictional future breaks apart as quickly as the ship that got this rescue mission team out to Neptune.

The Brits in the crew are wearing, not Union Jacks, but EU flags... with a bunch more stars

## Flags in Space



on them... because future?

Twenty years ago, when this film was made, the EU seemed like it was only going to get bigger n' stronger and be that political bloc of the twenty first century. Hell, two years ago, the idea that the UK would #brexit was widely considered laughable. And yet, here we are.

Which brings us to the third nation in space. The good ole, eternal USA. Of course it's gonna last forever!







Just like, in the early 80s, in seemingly every single piece of cyberpunk fiction, the Cold War never ended... and yet, the USSR didn't last out the decade.

So, what's the odds of there being a functional USA with a space program in 2047 given current political conditions?

Extrapolate from the Trump years and what do you get?



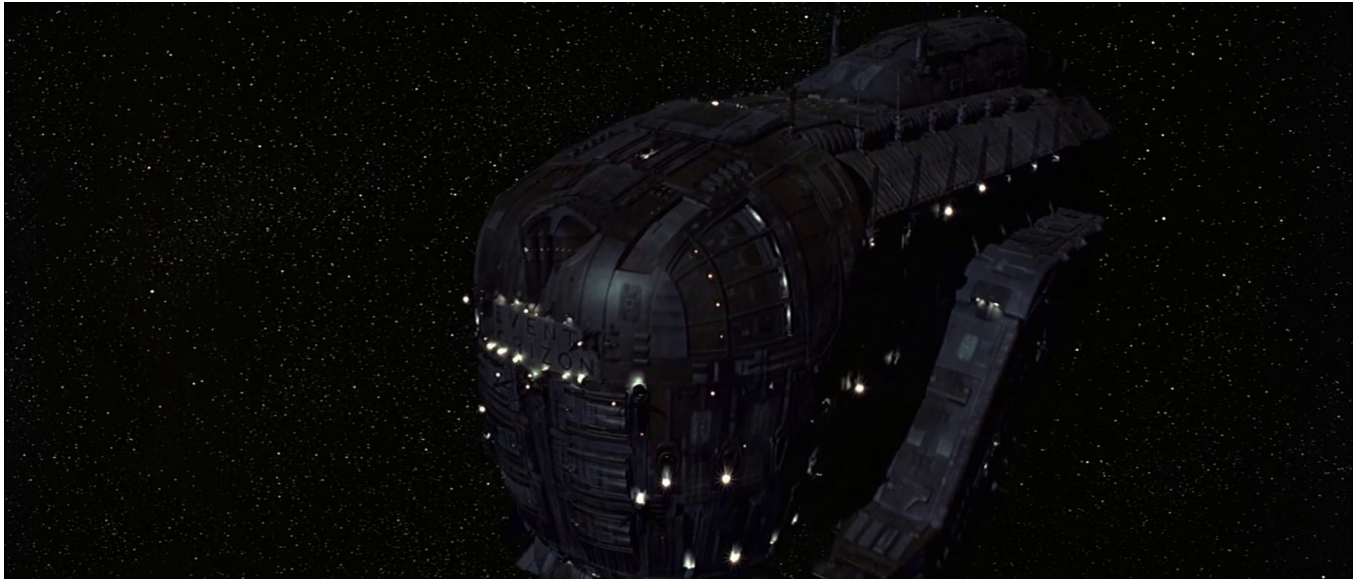
If I was pitching a space future today, Morpheus's shoulder would have a flag with a bear on it.

And probably a Blue Origin patch to go with it. ‡

coming soon to the public internet. A new project from the mind who's got you this very magazine... prepared to enter the posthuman world



## A Haunted House in Space



The magic site is, simply, the place where the hidden-ness of the world presents itself in its paradoxical way (revealing itself – as hidden). In some cases magic sites are like magic circles, constructed by human beings for specific purposes... More often than not, however, the magic site spontaneously happens without any human intervention. The magic site need not be on sacred ground, and it need not have special buildings or temples constructed for it. It can be in the darkest, most obscure, hidden caverns or underground fissures. It may be an accidental or unintentional site – the site of an archaeological dig, the site of a mining operation, the site of a forest or underground subway tunnel. Whereas the magic circle involves an active human governance of the boundary between the apparent world and the hidden world, **the magic site is its dark inverse: the anonymous, unhuman intrusion of the hidden world into the apparent world, the enigmatic manifesting of the world-without-us into the world-for-us, the intrusion of the Planet into the World.** If the magic circle is the human looking out and confronting the unhuman, anonymous, hidden world, then **the magic site is that hidden world looking back at us.** It is not surprising, then, that whereas the magic circle evokes vaguely anthropoid creatures (demons, ghosts, the dead), **the magic site creeps forth with entities that are neither animate nor inanimate, neither organic nor inorganic, neither material nor ideal.**

~ *In The Dust of this Planet* ~

*Event Horizon* isn't a Sci-Fi; it's the horrific tale of a haunted house in space. It's about a mad scientist, Dr. Weir, and the cosmic horror that his experiment unleashed, one that he increasingly embodies as the film progresses.

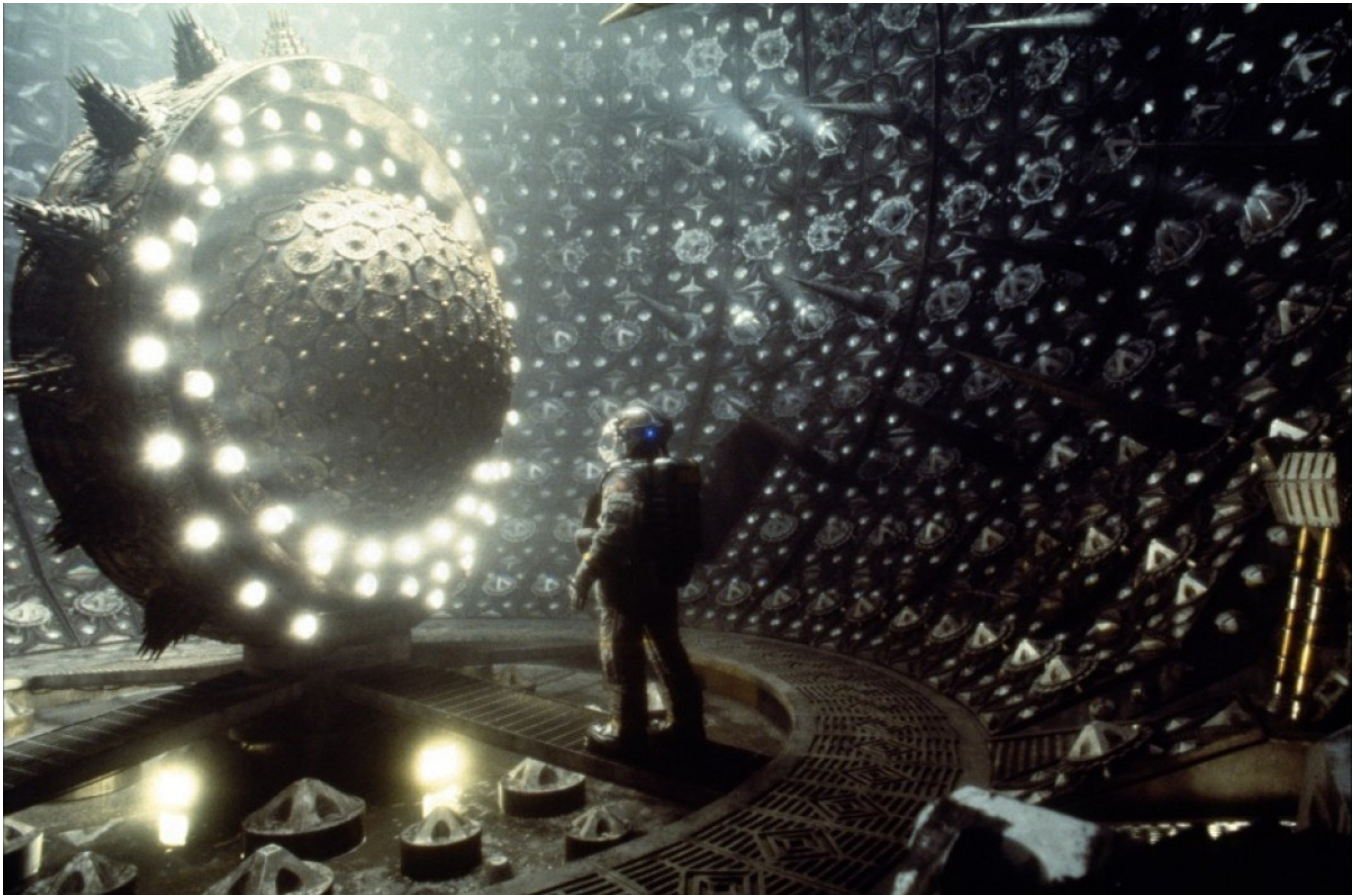
The Event Horizon may be the name of the ship, but what the film is really titled after is the edge between our reality and the Lovecraftian beyond.

The gravity drive of the ship, that's meant to give it FTL capabilities, is powered by a tame black hole, and the boundary of that black hole is the "event horizon." It's in crossing this threshold in his attempt to 'break the laws of physics' that the mad scientist releases a cosmic horror upon the crew of both ships.

*Event Horizon* then serves as a perfect example of the creation of a "magic site," as Eugene Thacker describes it *In The Dust of this Planet*.

But the result of this mad scientist's experiment doesn't just have disastrous,





horrific results... it transforms the ship itself. The Event Horizon *becomes* the cosmic horror; it becomes a '*genius loci*.' The ship becomes a living thing.

Thinking about this, I realised there's a franchise of films involving a similarly supernatural ship. One that sits at the opposite end of the genre spectrum, and with its mirror image shows just where this film could still go if it chose.

In the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series, the Flying Dutchman crosses the threshold to the Underworld and returns, and it succeeds where the Event Horizon fails; it never lets its crew leave - "*part of the crew, part of the ship*."

If you pay attention to the end of this cosmic horror, though Captain Miller (Laurence Fishburne) sacrifices himself to kill Dr. Weir (Sam Neil) - now one with the ship - and destroy the gravity drive, blowing the craft in half so the surviving crew can escape on the

lifeboat module - the whole ship was alive, so the cosmic horror lives!



If one was so inclined, you could easily have the further adventures of Starck and Cooper in some *Alien*<sup>3</sup>esque reboot/sequel: *Hellraisers of the Caribbean Quadrant*. ‡

# PIRATES OF THE CARIBB

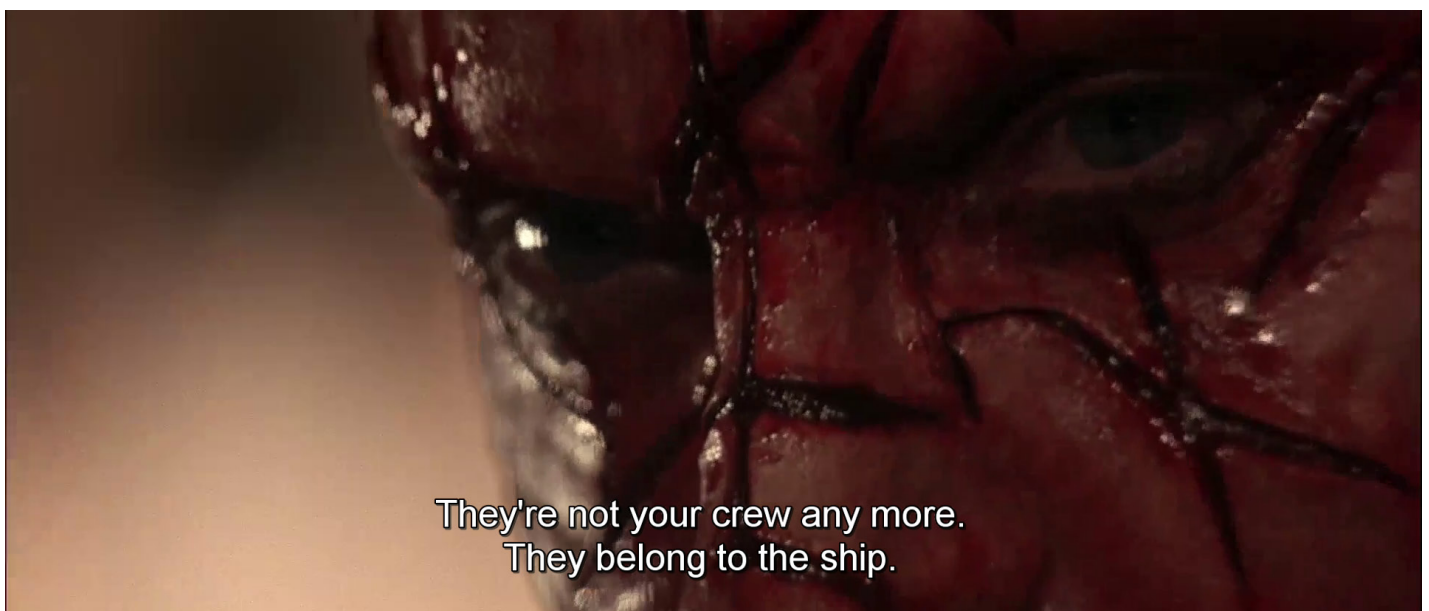
*"Part of the ship, I*



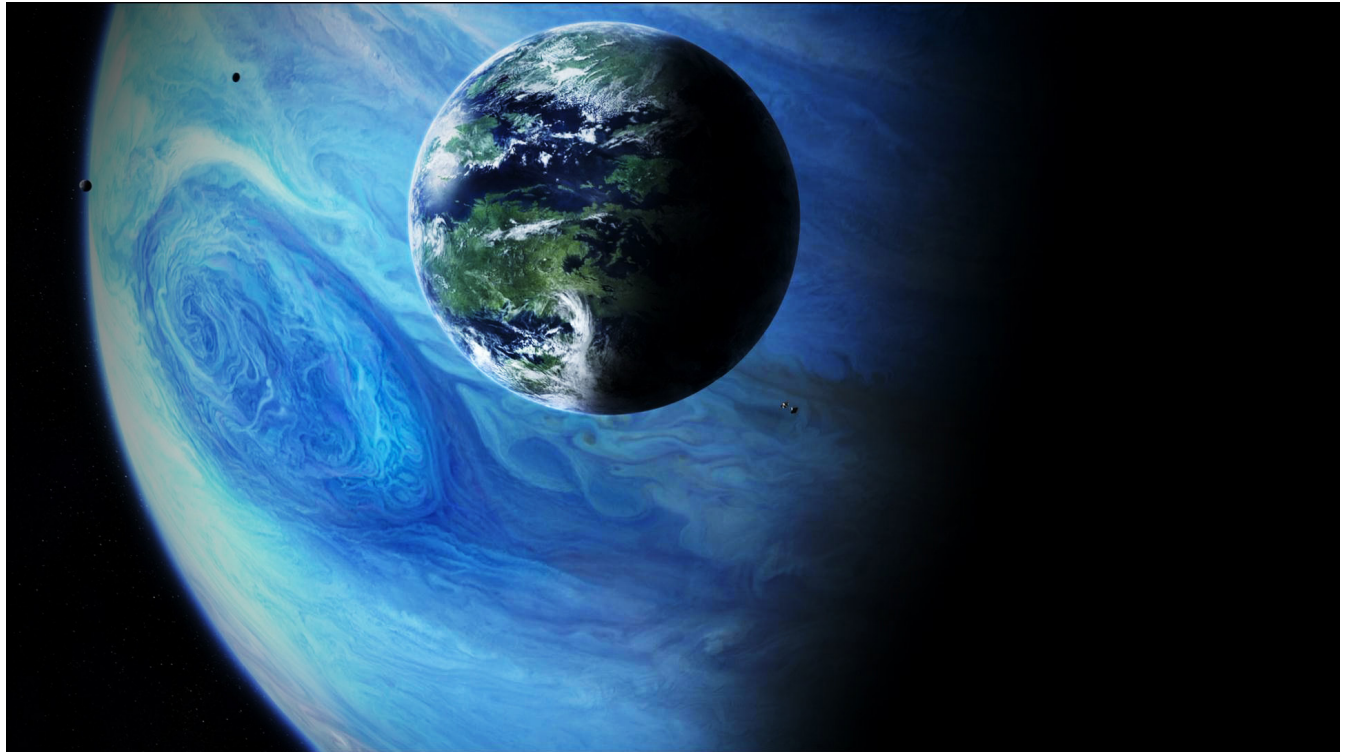


# BEAN & EVENT HORIZON

*part of the crew."*



## DeExtinction and Alienation in Space



The world Pandora in *Avatar* is another instance of the *genius loci* in Sci-Fi - though I favour the reading that the whole moon is a post-singular (techno)ecology designed by some galactic engineer for the lulz. #clarkeanmagix

Which adds an extra layer to the 'white man saviour goes native' [trope](#). Like, what kinda god-like asshole designs a scenario like that? Assuming they got bored and sent humans in to their perfect snow globe world to fuck things up? Are we all just entertainment for 5D entities? #foodforthegods

Which makes the upcoming experiential theme park, [Pandora - The World of Avatar](#), super meta.

An engineered reality for corporations - the artificial entities that run this world - to

harvest the increasing leisure hours of humans as we approach a promised land of near full automation. #robotruleok

In the extended cut of *Avatar* we learn more about life on its near-future Earth. This gives contrast to the paradisical 'new world' the alien invaders - that would be the humans - seek to destroy in order to acquire the magic mineral; Unobtainium. Which is what now fuels human civilisation.

The glimpse we get in the prologue of what they're doing with it is a very *Blade Runner*'esque vision.

A climate ruined. People walking the streets in gas masks. And, casually playing in the background as Jake Sully gets dressed in his tiny apartment with its wall screen TV, news of the de-extinction of the Bengal Tiger -



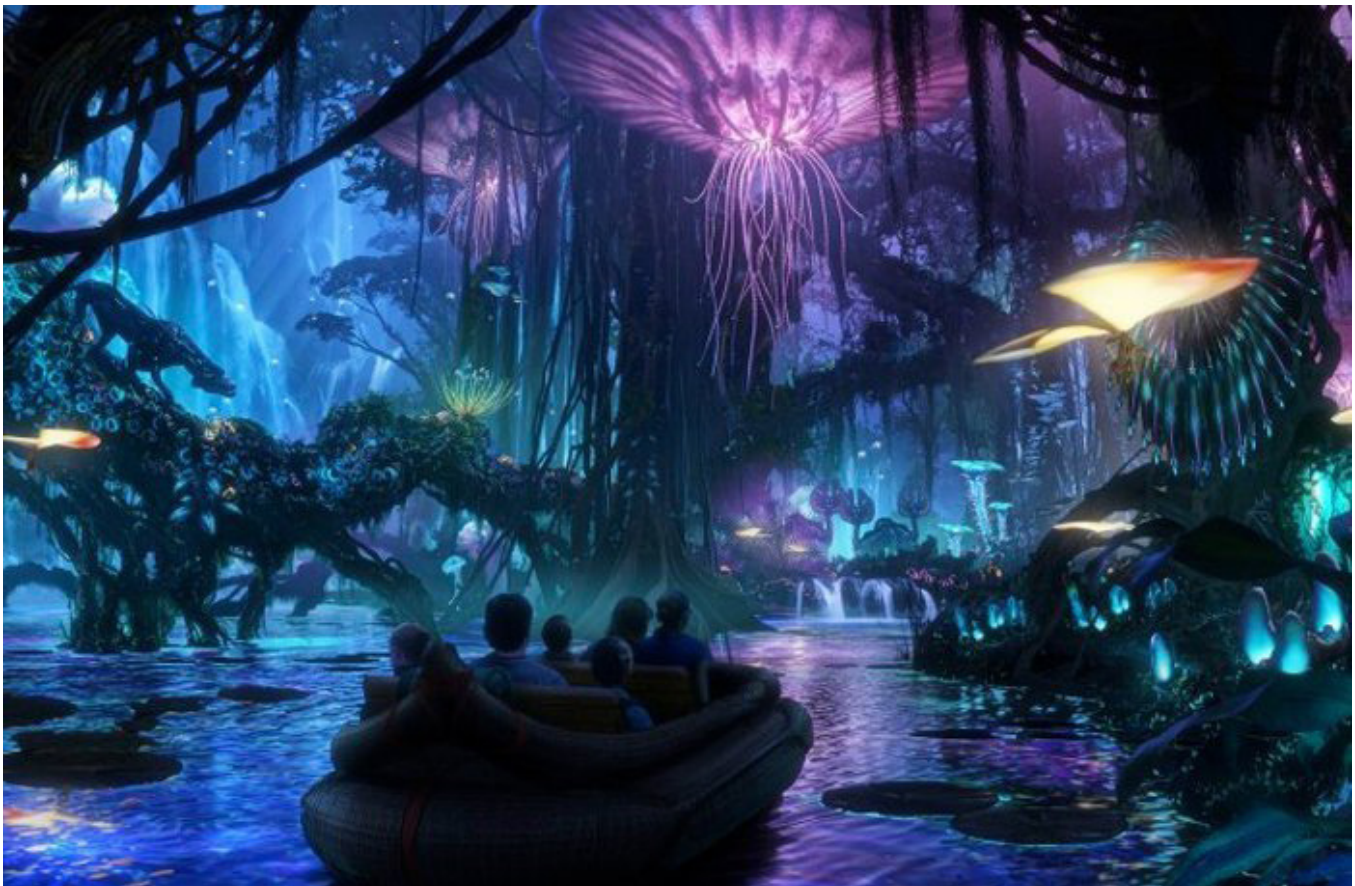


just one of several animals, they say to be resurrected after a hundred years by Chinese scientists.

Are they actually seeking to repair its habitat and reintroduce these predators?

Or just use them as the latest attraction for their zoos?

Which, viewed this way, makes the whole film a commentary on both alienation and playing god.







Exploiting/ruining cultures living - at least to their own mind - in sync with their environment, as a part of the ecology, with a rich spirituality vs being an intergalactic world-ruining virus with power armour and delusions of control.

Like *Prometheus* then, its asking the question:

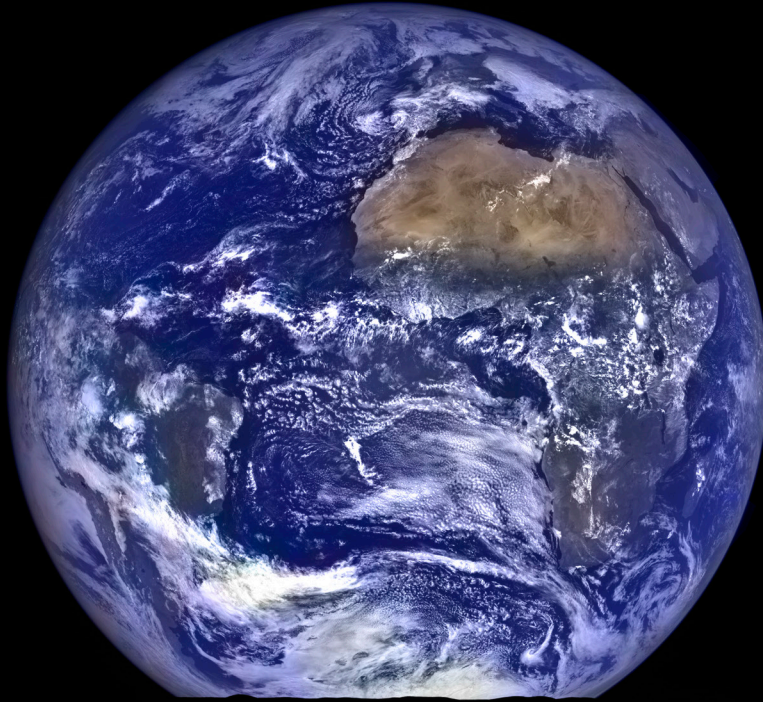
*what could humanity build if it wasn't so busy escaping its alienation and instead embraced - and took responsibility for - its own approaching galactic engineering capabilities? #astrognosticism ‡*



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համակարգի միջոցով:



THIS IS NOT A PLACE OF HONOUR



THE  
(DE)EXTINCTION  
LETTERS

VOLUME 1

## A Positive Panspermia Tale



How often do you get to watch a positive panspermia tale? Where the organic alien invasion doesn't destroy life on Earth, but restore it.

Spoiler: that's *Terminus*, and that's why I generally prefer earnest low budget sci-fis over science-fictional blockbusters.

Films featuring panspermia are usually horrors or dramas where a falling asteroid, passing comet or returning spacecraft brings

with it an alien life form threatening to wipe us out.

From *The Andromeda Strain* to the more recent *Monsters*, all the way back to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, panspermia is rarely here to help.

The closest I can think of is in *Chronicle*, though it's more of a #clarkeanmagix upgrade to posthumanhood for the three boys and one kinda goes *full Akira*.





But in *Terminus*, whether the seed has been manufactured by extrasolar agents, or is part of some natural galactic ecology, its purpose is clearly to heal and restore, not destroy.

crashes to Earth, and takes along a couple of humans to play Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden it creates once the planet's habitable again. Hinting that maybe all this has happened before.



In the middle of Nowhere, USA, during #theforeverwar set to escalate to Nuclear Armageddon, an outside force is seeding the Earth with the means of its salvation.

Unlike *The Abyss*, angelic aliens don't intervene at the last minute to bring the world back from the brink of annihilation.

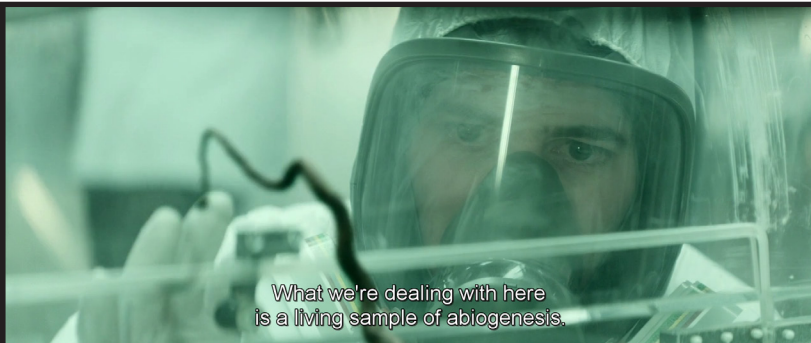
Instead, a star seed that psychically communicates the mechanics of its survival

As we're now learning, it's most likely happening elsewhere in the galaxy.

In the system currently called TRAPPIST-1, the planets - three of which are considered habitable - are packed so close together that asteroids hitting one world could transmit material to its neighbour. "*If any of those materials contained life, it's possible they could inoculate another planet with life,*" [scientists say](#).



At first we couldn't understand what we were seeing. Fluorescence in-situ hybridization identified the presence of hundreds of different alleles for each gene. But this genetic information isn't organized into chromosomes as we understand them. So far, we've isolated multiple sequences resembling various plant and animal strands. Some of these strands even appear to be human. What we're dealing with here is a living sample of abiogenesis.



What we're dealing with here is a living sample of abiogenesis.

"This precedes evolution. It's creation."

Evolution?

No, no. This precedes evolution. It's creation.

Making TRAPPIST-1 potentially home to a multi-planet ecology.

*Terminus* lets us consider the idea of panspermia in a positive light.

It's even thought that killer asteroids causing extinction events on our own world could have sent out chunks of rock containing life to orbit only to later return after the dust had settled, or nuclear winter ended, and re-seed the planet.

Which is good because it might just be how life works in the universe. Something that might be useful for our own (far) future role as galactic engineers. ‡

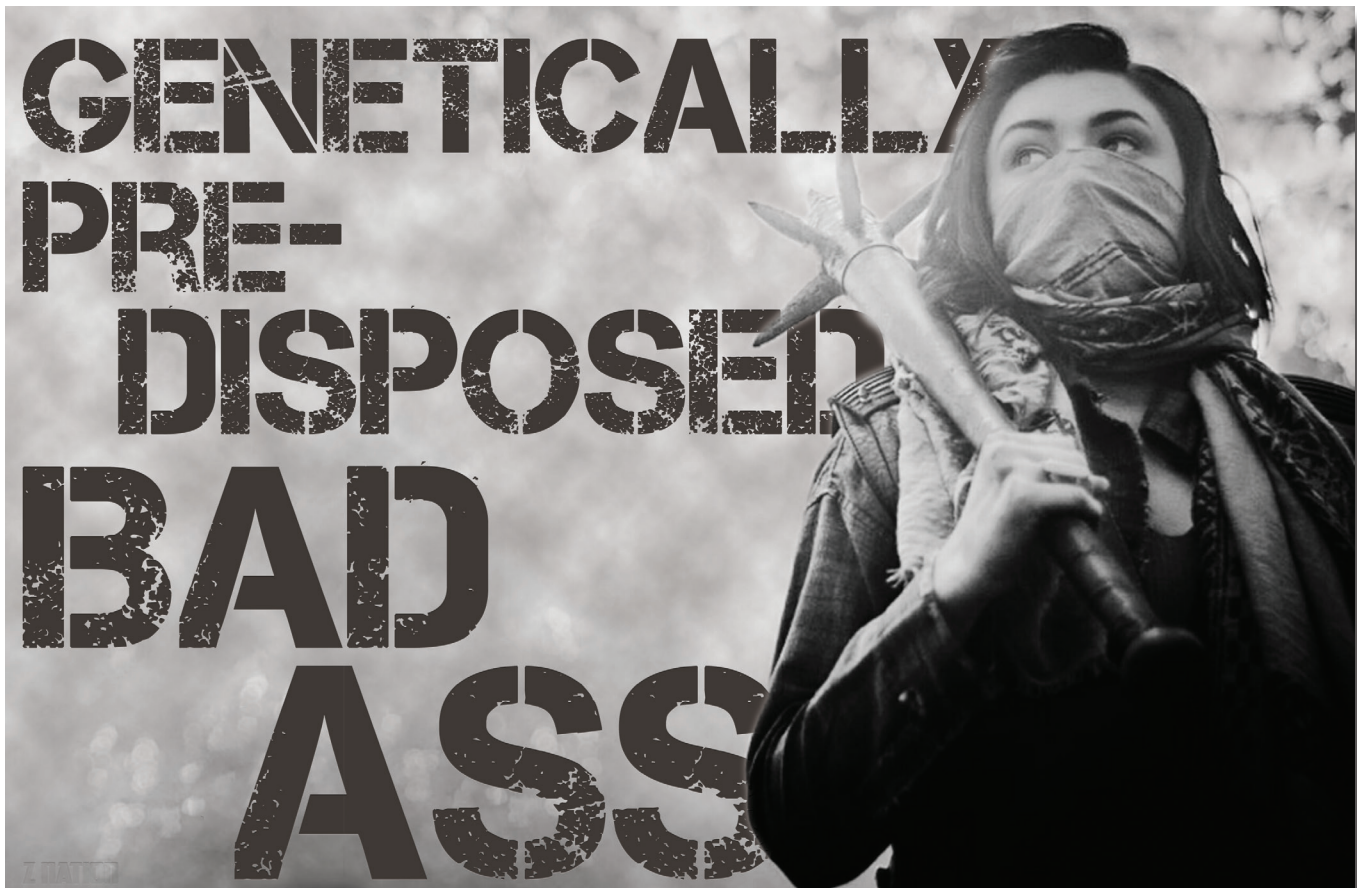


Arz our companion spazizs plobzinz a dziz wibh us? chazl ouz whz poglobzizn.world zo find ouz!





Survive the zombie apocalypse! A new high action game you in  
America. Sign up now!





## Setting the post-apocalyptic scene

The one thing *The Shannara Chronicles* does exceptionally well is post apocalyptic set design.

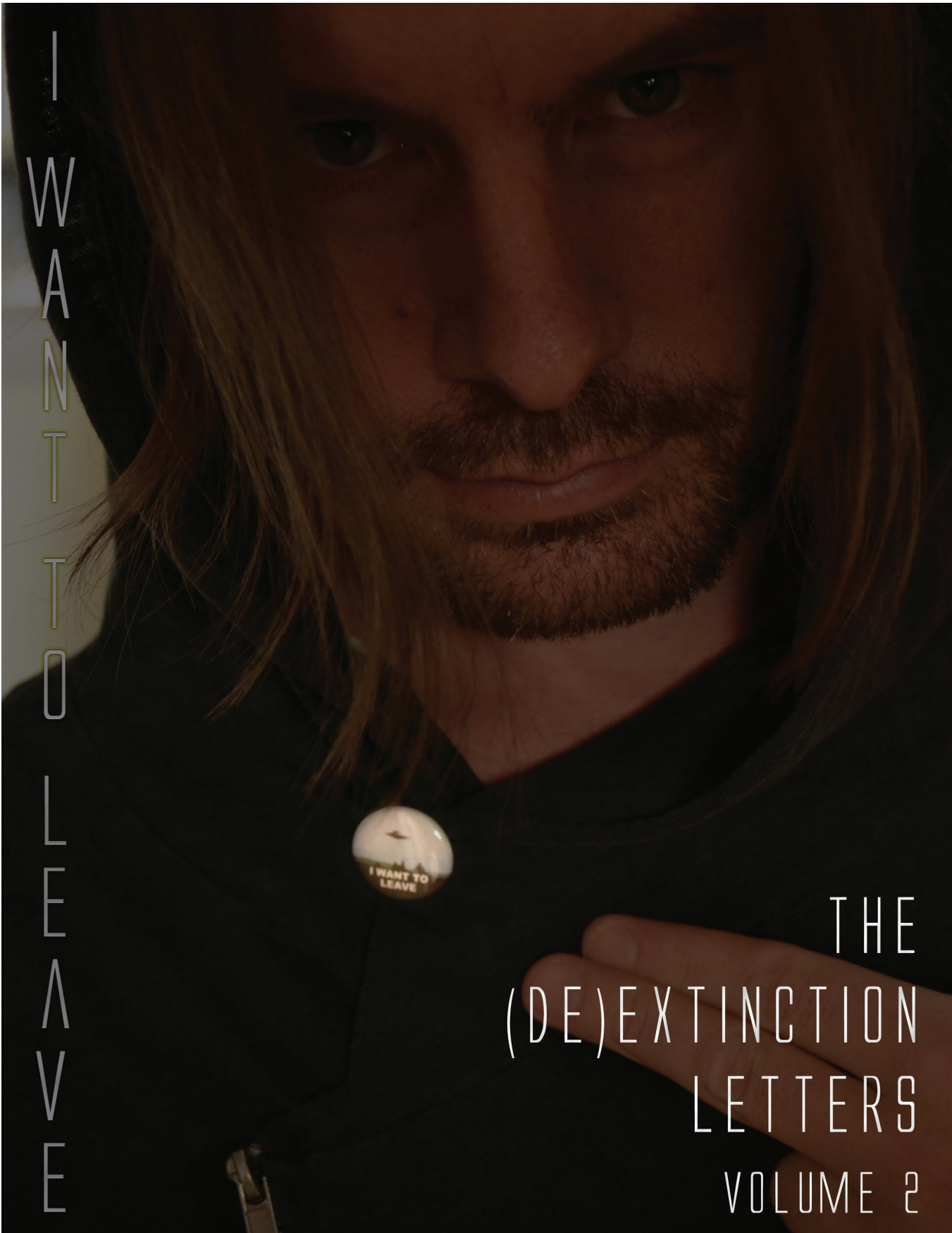
The clothes, and character design (by [Paul Gerrard](#)) are great, too. You have vaguely steampunk gnomes alongside full post-apoc trolls, and um... elves being elves and humans being *all too human*.

You can easily overthink just how a fantastical array of races came into being a mere three thousand years after human civilisation ended - and have time left over to wonder what life was like twelve thousand years ago, and beyond, when there were definitely a full Tolkien set of humanoids wandering around the planet, fighting, fucking and stealing each other's stuff.

Or you can watch an elf princess collect water from a ruined satellite dish, and try to figure out how trolls eat without apparently ever removing their gas masks. ‡







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THE  
(DE)EXTINCTION  
LETTERS  
VOLUME 2

# DARK MATTER

## The Future of Humanity

*Dark Matter* and *Killjoys* are two fun space operas recently screening on SyFy that, amongst the some notable things depicting various branching versions of the future.

*Killjoys* has gone from its initial premise of “the adventures of bounty hunters in space” to reveal a universe full of threats only they and their allies can deal with.

The third season opener sets up an epic class battle in space. It’s foregrounding two different branches of humanity, foreshadowing their eventual conflict.

These two classes are:

- Hackmods: the transhuman slave class. Fitted with black market augmentations at a black site space station, the Factory. Sold as indentured servants. Forbidden from being augmented past a certain level at pain of death. They have no personhood.



- The Hullen: the posthuman/alien elite. Humans that have bonded with the alien parasite contained within a green plasma at a covert installation. As #alienhumanhybrids

they have increased strength, endurance, self-healing abilities and are effectively immortal.



They are an #enemywithin that have been infiltrating political and corporate power structures.

Like back on Earth with Purity (aka #theblackoil) in *The X-Files*, the Elite have done a deal with the Alien Invaders - negotiating the terms of their eventual conquest whilst keeping the masses ignorant of their fate. #foodforthegods

The Hullen form a non-local hive mind similar to The Hive in *The X-Files*’s fellow traveler, *Dark Skies*.

Again, almost exactly like *The X-Files*, when the parasite is forced out, the host bleeds black oil from the eyes.



# ER & KILLJOYS

## Humanity in Space

the explosions, combat sequences, wardrobe changes, CGI space shots and set pieces are doing versions of humanity. Both are now in their third season.



One of the trio of Killjoys, John Jaqobis, took off with a Hackmod, Clara, at the end of season two. He's now involved in the Hackmods's fight against the Factory and for the freedom to explore their transhuman potential.

The other two Killjoys - John's brother D'avin and John's non-sexual life partner, Yalena - are fighting back against the Hullen takeover, and are looking for allies.

An army of transhuman superheroes would sure come in handy, especially if, having won their freedom from their human owners, they find a new bigger bad about to enslave them or wipe them out.

Knowing this show, this arc could take several seasons to play out. ‡


From the story of six people waking up on a ship with no memory, discovering they're the galaxy's Most Wanted... to becoming humanity's last hope in an intergalactic corporate war, *Dark Matter* has been layering its reality with posthuman elements.

- Two - aka Portia Lin - is an advanced synthetic life form. The product of a secret corporate research program. Considered by them to be their intellectual property. Her nanites give her enhanced strength, endurance and self-healing to the point of being able to survive in space.



- The ship's android - Android - is shown early on to have "a flaw in her personality matrix," making her less robotic and more emotional. She gets a chip that increases her ability to pass as human from an underground android group. She was likely intentionally created to be more human-like by a pre-memory

## HACKMODS



Cheap, superhuman indentured labor.

Clara: Lesson one: the Factory creates different classes of hackmods. This arm here is "Special Order," so "Spec." Our buyers pay extra for unique hackmods, so the Factory treats Specs a bit better.

John: No escaping class systems, I guess.

So the rest of the hackmods, what, they're... they're, like, off the shelf?

Clara: More or less. Cheap, superhuman indentured labor. See that lady there? That kind of modding's called "Jumpers." It's a lot of courier, smuggling work. And that guy's a "Grip."

John: I'm guessing enforcers and muscle?


Clara: And you are an "Owl." Surveillance.

John: Collect the whole set and have a bunch of badass superheroes.

Clara: Superheroes usually have capes. Also, basic human rights.

## HULLEN

Yalena: Do you believe in monsters?



We're humanity's replacements.

Hullen Lady: Oh, I think I prefer heroes. Don't you?

Yalena: Well, every story has heroes. That's a given. But if I'm honest, it's the monsters that make the story. Because heroes are nothing until they know who to fight...

Yalena: The thing is, what if you can't see the monsters around you? What if they infiltrated your friends, your family, your RAC without you even knowing. What if the monsters look just like you?

HL: Ah, so we can drop the facade, then?

Yalena: Oh, let's...

HL: Well, as long as we're dropping epic truths, here's one. Hullen aren't monsters, sweetheart. We're humanity's replacements.

Yalena: Oh, you misunderstood. You are not the monster.

I am.



wipe Two - making her a second-generation artificial entity, like Winona Ryder's character in *Alien: Resurrection*.

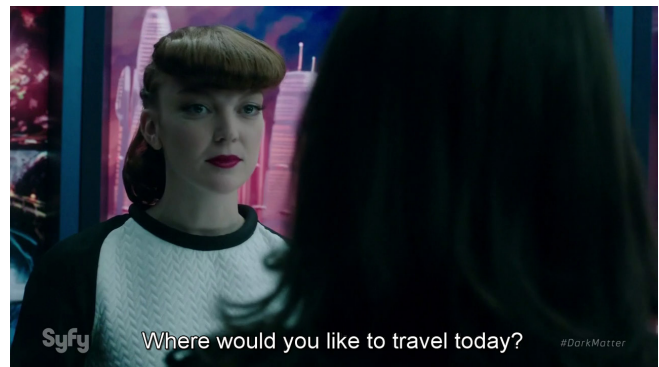


- Sarah, the girlfriend of Three - aka Marcus Boone - had an incurable illness and was kept in a stasis pod until a cure could be found. She died, but Five - teen hacker of the crew - rescued her consciousness from the stasis pod and eventually managed to upload it to the ship's database, where she now lives in a #whiteroom.



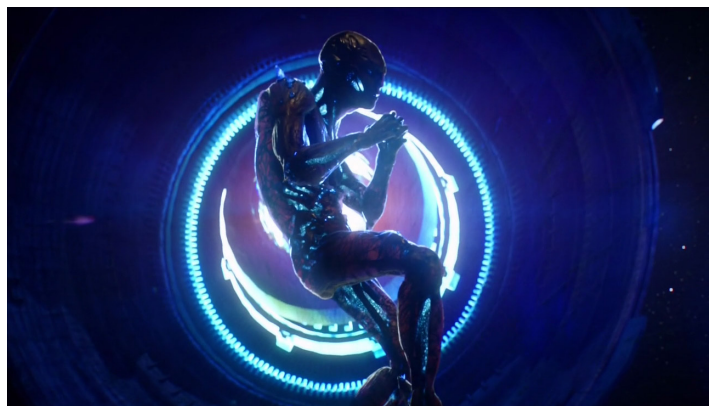
That a consciousness can be downloaded and treated as a digital file is the premise for the show (amnesia in space). The degree to which it can be manipulated is foreshadowed by a technology that creates a temporary clone body.

Initially pitched as an instant vacation service, it puts a person into stasis while their disposable clone enjoys risk-free activities in any connected location. The clone body's experiences are re-integrated with the user's when it returns to its pod for disassembly.



Buffering a consciousness and using temporary clone bodies to "beam" someone to another location is a nice update on a signature *Star Trek* technology that solves the flaws in that plot device. It will be interesting to see how this idea is explored as the show continues to evolve. ‡

Something I meant to mention in that overview of #KILLJOYS is that the Hullen give us the #galacticecology version of #theNeanderthalsDilemma. Something that is being explored with far more sophistication in #THEEXPANSE with their #alienhumanhybrids [see above]. So stay tuned for that...







# Image Credits

*American Gods*, season 1, episode 8, "Come to Jesus." Directed by Floria Sigismundi. Aired June 18, 2017 on Starz.

*Avatar*. Directed by James Cameron. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2009.

*Blade Runner*. Directed by Ridley Scott. Warner Bros., 1982.

*Chappie*. Directed by Neill Blomkamp. Columbia Pictures, 2015.

*Dark Matter*. Season 2, various episodes. Created by Joseph Mallozzi and Paul Mullie. Aired 2016 on SyFy.

*Event Horizon*. Directed by Paul Anderson. Paramount Pictures, 1997.

*The Expanse*, season 3, episode 13, "Caliban's War." Directed by Thor Freudenthal. Aired April 19, 2017 on SyFy.

*Killjoys*, season 2, episode 10, "How to Kill Friends and Influence People." Aired September 2, 2016 on SyFy.

*Killjoys*, season 3, episode 1, "Boondoggie." Directed by Stefan Pleszczynski. Aired June 30, 2017 on SyFy.

*Logan*. Directed by James Mangold. Donners' Company, 2017.

*Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*. Directed by Gore Verbinski. Walt Disney Pictures, 2007.

*Prometheus*. Directed by Ridley Scott. Scott Free Productions, 2012.

*Rick and Morty*, season 3, episode 1, "The Rickshank Rickdemption." Directed by Juan Meza-León and Wes Archer. Aired April 1, 2017 on Adult Swim.

*The Shannara Chronicles*, season 1, various episodes. Created by Alfred Gough and Miles Millar. Aired in 2016 on MTV.

*Terminus*. Directed by Marc Furmie. Storm Vision Entertainment, 2015.

*Z Nation*, season 3, episode 14, "Everybody dies in the end." Directed by Abram Cox. Aired December 16, 2017 on SyFy.

*Cover Image*: Deridder45, "Interstellar," <https://wall.alphacoders.com/big.php?i=530505>.

*Inset image*: Pete Linforth as HypnoArt, <https://pixabay.com/en/time-travel-black-hole-singularity-1777767/>.





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*Seeya next time!*

