



# The Drink Tank

THE LEGAL ISSUE



## Hitchhiker's Guide Reviewed

What can I say, but I never read Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's series. I've tried, but perhaps it was the intelligence required to get the English comedy he wrote that slowed me and forced me to give up. On other hand, there is nothing I've loved so much as the BBC TV series. So, when I heard about the movie, I was interested...VERY INTERESTED. My darling girlfriend Gen and I joined up with a few friends of ours to see the opening night 7:10 showing.

As I had expected, at least a dozen folks had showed up with towels draped around their shoulders. More than a few had copies of the book with them and at least one person was fully decked out as Arthur Dent. The crowd was chatty, more so than a regular prime time screening. Lot's of folks talking about Star Wars and already complaining about the lack of authenticity of the film they had yet to see. Still, as the trailers ended (oh yeah, I totally want to see A Scanner Darkly) the film started in earnest with a bunch of dolphins.

There's where the fun begins.

The opening segment, featuring a singing pod of dolphins, is pure fun. It also is then that we are introduced to the voice of the Guide, played by Stephen Fry. His voice is voice is audio equivalent of 'Large Friendly Letters'. His voice is soothing and at the same time nuturing. Well played, humorous gay English man. Well played.

From that silliness, we're led to the set-up, Arthur trying to keep the construction crew from knocking his house down. The funny thing is that by clipping this and the scene in the pub into the more compact version they also managed to give us a far more American introduction. This leads to some fun interaction and a number of things which were jokes in the TV series, but were far wordier. The obviously conscious choice to make this less film with less vocabulary worked for me at times.

The cast. I liked them. I loved Arthur, played by the guy from The (British) Office. He is on-target with his presentation of an everyman Brit as would be pictured by an American. The TV Arthur is funny and realistic, but Richards is hilariously on with every stereotype that the US audience would have. His relationship with Ford is odd, though really, aren't we supposed to think that from the beginning?

Mos Def as Ford Prefect is far different than any of the other Fords that have taken on the role, but I like him. His interaction with Sam Rockwell as Zaphod Beeblebrox is great. I laughed at the way the two of them would play off each other with strange energy. It was almost as though the two of them knew they were the emotional heart of the film (and they are the emotional heart of the TV series) and they decided that it's a uproarious comedy and I thought it worked. When the two of them do the drinking of the Pan-Galactic Gargleblaster, they sell its effects so magnificently. There were times when I think that Mos Def was auditioning for the role of Cat in Red Dwarf, as he would get the excited dancey energy up.

Sam Rockwell. Wow. I mean, just wow. As Zaphod he was doing the best imitation possible of W in the middle of a cocaine binge. Seriously, he was the SF version of George the Lesser, right down to the accent that was





# The Drink Tank

## THE LEGAL ISSUE



borrowed from Will Farrell's imitation that made SNL so great in 2000. He was explosive and hilarious. He has always been the go to guy if you need a strange and funny actor in a movie (he was my favourite part of Galaxy Quest, for example) and with Hitchhiker's he's likely to get more roles as the manic nut. If there was one reason I was so entertained it was Rockwell's performance.

Zoey Dechanel wasn't perfect as Tricia McMillan, aka Trillion, but she was OK. Her natural state is the enchanted dreamer, though she plays the foul-mouthed hotty better than almost anyone else out there. She has a sort of radiance that works on the romance portion of the film, which I understand some complained felt tacked on. I liked it as the chemistry between the two of them was most honest.

The voice acting also seemed just about perfect. Along with Stephen Fry as the Guide, we have Helen Miren as the massive computer Deep Thought. She doesn't do much, but she sounds right for the computer that gives us the answer to life, the universe and everything. Thomas Lennon, a favourite of mine since his days in The State, played Eddie the Ship Computer. He's so up-beat and charming. Perhaps the best piece of voice casting was Alan Rickman as Marvin, the manic depressed robot. He was so glum sounding and at the same time, he seemed so natural. Add to the great voice the character design that goes to make Marvin into a cute little bobblehead. It's brilliant work.

There are more than a few issues with the script. It lags a bit in the middle, with some questionable choices relating to the relationship plotline between Arthur and Tricia. Of course they had to cut a number of lines, including my personal favourite exchange between Arthur and Ford ('It's a bit like being drunk', 'what's so wrong with being drunk?', 'ask a glass of water'), but all in all, the script was pretty good. There's no way they could have used all the jokes, but the ones they kept were the ones that had a chance with an American audience.

Now's the time when I gush over the effects. The Vogons are great pieces of design, very much influenced by The Wall, as I see it. The Vagon ships are great, as are everyone of the planet designs. The effects, like a guy with a dozen spindly robot legs, are great. There is a section where Arthur is flying over Earth with Slartibartfast, played by Bill Nihy, is absolutely breathtaking. Serious work went into that section and I thought it paid off. With the fun of the rest of the movie, a little magic was nice. I think it worked better than the flying part of the third Harry Potter flick.

All in all, see it. I thought it was a funny film. I thought it was a fun film. I thought it was a cute little love story. It worked, and even with my preconceptions from the TV series, I still really liked it. I heard folks talking afterwards and most said that it was at least good. You can't argue that the performances were funny, though some did dump on Mos Def. Still, I dug it a lot.

### ***The View from Higher Up*** ***David Gerrold- April 27th, 2004***

***After half a century of intense research, dedicated engineering, a couple hundred billions of dollars, and countless hours of time and energy, computers have finally achieved the intelligence of a virus. That's not bad for a mere half-century. It took nature millions of years. At this rate, who knows what computers will become in the next fifty?***





# The Drink Tank

THE LEGAL ISSUE



## ***Spirit of Gravity Reviewed***

If there's one thing the words of Nietzsche say to me, it's a whacky musical number. Maybe I'm the only one feels that way, but if you think about it, nihilism is just another way of saying 'I'm gonna try and mess around until I die'. Still, he had a way with words, and a couple of guys noted this.

Spirit of Gravity is an animated short directed by Victor Bellomo and David Pace, guys who met in elementary school and who still live in my former hometown of Sunnyvale, CA. David is a very respected photographer. I actually got to help him out with a shoot at my old museum building back in 2000 or so. I first saw it at Cinema Epicuria, the Sonoma Valley Film Festival, in 2004 and recruited it for Cinequest this year.

David and Victor, along with a great Trad Jazz band, play a jaunty tune with Nietzsche's words being sung by Victor. It's a bouncy tune with photo manipulation animation that is exceptionally joyous. Victor plays Nietzsche in his long johns and with heavy-duty fake Soup Strainer on his upper lip. The background is an Italian-inspired space city, it seems, where Harlequins and all manner of toy figures live. It's a bizarre world, but at the same time, it's beautiful.

There aren't a lot of screenings of this one left. It's been on the circuit for more than two years. You can still find info at <http://www.batnet.com/vbellomo/index.html>. Great, and strange, film.



On my Hugo Ballot (which I couldn't submit since I'm not a WorldCon Member) was Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zizou*. It's a funny, though dry, film with a cast of geniuses. Very well-acted, nicely shot and with humour in all sorts of areas, *The Life Aquatic* is one of those movies that some will get and others will despise. There is no question in my mind what the highlight is: there's a scene where Bill Murray's Steve Zizous is being interviewed by Cate Blanchet's character. While this is going on, an Orca is mugging for the camera through a porthole. I was on the floor while that was happening. If that wasn't enough, Capt. Zizou also has an open hostility towards dolphins. I'm so amused by that concept. The Zizou ship is also stocked with old computers. DO I need to say that it's obvious this movie was made for me specifically?

The Drink Tank is written, edited and produced by Christopher J. Garcia and put up on eFanzines.com by Bill Burns: The Mythical Kicker of Elves. All of Chris' words are reprintable in any medium with or without permission. The art and photos don't carry that same provision. Tough world, I know. For those kind folks who wrote asking about my Pops, he's doin' OK, slightly glowing, he claims. If you'd like to send in comments, drop a line to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org) or to 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd. Mountain View, California 94043. Claims Department 3 is taking reservations. Other than that, keep an eye out for next week with all will be revealed.