

Review: Star Trek Into Darkness

{originally written 2013 May 23, then banished to the Drafts folder for no good reason when I never got around to finishing it.}

Spoiler-free review: A solid sophomore outing for the NuTrek crew, but it's no *Wrath of Khan*. ===== Spoilers follow ===== And this movie so desperately wants to be *The Wrath of Khan*. The good: Zachary Quinto is awesome as Spock and Simon Pegg continues to rock as Scotty -- even if this engineer is significantly more slapstick than Jimmy Doohan's. Sulu was a non-entity and Chekov was a caricature of a caricature. Uhura was every bit as kick-ass as the original one is implied to be. I like that the new Enterprise is not cramped -- there is a lot of wide open space inside the ship, including what I believe might have been a food court -- but it doesn't seem as obsessively *functional* as the original incarnation. It's a little embarrassing that, given a second chance at portraying the Sikh, Khan Noonien Singh, Paramount managed once again not to find an Indian actor who might match the part. On the other hand, if you're going to cast an Anglo as Khan, you couldn't do better than [Benedict Cumberbatch](#). He is far and away the best thing about this movie. His Khan is informed by his Sherlock Holmes but is not defined by him. He is crisp and intelligent. You actually believe this guy and his 72 followers might actually have pulled off world domination -- and he exudes the same menace in the present of the movie. He is as logical as Spock and as driven as Kirk -- indeed, he's what you'd get if you let Spock run wild. Cumberbatch brings the same air of obsession as Ricardo Montalban. His smug superiority is also wonderfully understated. Though he barely mentions it, he makes clear that he sees Kirk and crew as little more than bugs.

So what doesn't work about *Into Darkness*? Well, the entire last act is both superfluous and obvious. Pretty much from the moment Admiral Marcus shows up in his dreadnought, the endgame is plain to see. I like how Spock gets the upper hand on Khan, but anyone could tell that Scotty wouldn't be able to keep him stunned. Likewise, though Kirk's role-reverse act of sacrifice is cleverly done, its eventual resolution and his revival was telegraphed in a manner Samuel Morse would appreciate. Also, doesn't this mean that Bones has given the Federation effective immortality -- or at least, immunity to radiation?

Update: 2016 Feb 16

This movie aged surprisingly badly. I have never rewatched it, which is perhaps unfair, but I have never been moved to rewatch it. At all. It just sort of evaporated from my universe. All the online criticisms were valid. It's a second movie of boldly

The Mongrel Dogs Who Teach

Thoughts on teaching, politics, life in general
<http://www.adfinemfidelis.net/mongrel>

going... nowhere, actually. The reversal of Kirk and Spock lacks heft because we're just not invested in these versions yet. There isn't the same decade-long friendship that ends up having to be sacrificed; there isn't the decades-long hatred that needs to be satiated. Everything is rushed and cheap.

The dreadnought plot might have carried its own movie but it fails in this one. The introduction of the Klingons is heavy-handed and pointless. J.J. Abrams commits the cardinal sin of the newbie writer: He tells, rather than showing. All of the world-building seems rushed and half-baked -- and that is saying something, considering (a) he has a half-century of *Trek* to call on and (b) the first movie didn't set all that high a bar itself.

After the genuine gee-whiz fun of the reboot, this outing proved to be a disappointment -- a verdict that grows clearer with passing time.