

## “Falling Skies” (on the other hand)

Video posted June 30, 2011

Something occurred to me as I was watching the latest installment of *Falling Skies* – and by “latest installment,” I mean what’s confusingly referred to as “episode three,” since the pilot consisted of episodes one and two aired back-to-back on the same night. Why not just call the pilot “episode one”? Maybe because that would have made it harder for iTunes to justify charging us double for downloading the pilot, who knows?

iTunes, incidentally, is the only way to watch *Falling Skies* online, bootleg notwithstanding. No free streaming at TNT, which was never the case and continues not to be the case at NBC for *The Event*, may it rest in peace. Plenty of swag for sale, though, at the *Falling Skies* website, and plenty of ways to be kept apprised of future swag-buying opportunities.

And because iTunes is the sole purveyor of *Falling Skies* episode downloads, if you don’t have an iTunes account already, you’ll have to set one up especially for this, which is not cool.

But I’m off-topic.

What occurred to me is that I’ve lost interest in *Falling Skies*, and after only two weeks, for one reason: truth really is stranger than fiction. And potentially much more entertaining. However well-rendered the skitters or sultry smart the leading ladies, their entertainment value is short-lived and insubstantial. Same goes for the pyrotechnics and the off-planet bugs that I’ve been watching leak brake fluid for decades.

I’ve lost interest also in the increasingly cloying family-friendliness ... the earnest parents, the selfless defenders, the courageous struggle, all the skin-deep devices and clichés so cherished by the blue pill-popping, tabloid-fixated mainstream.

The reality of the extraterrestrial presence – yes, I said reality – is so much more interesting, so much richer and deeper and more complicated than skitters or mechs or even that lovely mothership. Why doesn’t Spielberg use ufology



The cast of *Falling Skies*

as the basis for a science fiction series that’s less like a backseat blowjob and more like a full-blown affair with somebody capable of carrying on an intelligent conversation the morning after?

So what did we learn in episode three? What did it take 45 minutes to say? John Pope is a trained chef, harnesses can be removed from children without killing them (although there may remain a telepathic connection between those children and the skitters) and Tom Mason’s wife’s death might have been prevented if the man who was with her when she died hadn’t been a self-serving coward. That’s about it. Otherwise, there was a bunch of running and screaming and shooting and crying and one skitter did execute a bunch of kids by way of sending a message to the resistance.

Which makes them, like, all evil and shit. Didn’t see that coming, did you?

And right now you might be saying, “Dude! If you’re not enjoying the party, go home!”

Fair enough.

May I say before I leave, however, that life’s too short to drink totally imaginary wine? There is a ginormous storehouse of public domain science fiction source material being overlooked

Continued ...

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here, whether out of laziness or ignorance or lack of intestinal fortitude, I don't know.

War movies generally are set during wars that actually happened, so screenwriters study history. Movies of all kinds aspire to verisimilitude, so art directors study everything from art to architecture to engineering. The most compelling fiction is based in fact.

So I have to wonder if the current crop of science fiction movie makers are doing any research at all. Have they heard of Rendelsham Forest, Malstrom Air Force Base, Edgar Mitchell, Gordon Cooper, The Phoenix Lights, Stephenville, Hudson Valley, Kecksburg, COMETA, Project Blue Book, J. Allen Hyneck, John Mack, Budd Hopkins.

If those names aren't familiar to you, you really shouldn't be making science fiction movies. And if they are familiar to you and you're still making science fiction movies about bugs, how embarrassing for you.