



TRANSCRIPT

Film Review – *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest*

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The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest is the final episode in this three-part Swedish series and because I reviewed the first two episodes I felt obliged – for the sake of completion – to have a look at this last one too. The series has proven to be somewhat of a roller-coaster ride for me. I was very scathing about the first one – *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* – but I found that the second episode – *The Girl Who Played with Fire* – was a much better experience.

Unhappily, while the final episode takes up the story where the second one left off, it does not continue the dramatic integrity of the second episode. In fact, it is as dull as dishwater – a tiresome, overlong plod of a movie.

In my review of the second episode, I noted that its considerable energy came from the fact that the character of the girl – Lisbeth Salander – is allowed more space to manoeuvre. This clever, computer-savvy slip of a girl - a Goth with the martial arts skills of James Bond - provided us with an intriguing character as she set about wreaking vengeance on the men who had abused her during her childhood and teen years.

The second episode concluded with work still to be done in the vengeance wreaking department so, given the pattern established by this second movie, we had every right to expect that the final episode would build to a fever pitch of retribution. No such luck. There *is* retribution, but much of it transpires in a tedious courtroom sequence where The Girl is relegated to the role of a grimly uncommunicative defendant rather than the crash bang avenging angel that she plays in episode two.

The other downside to the diminished role of The Girl is that we are afflicted with greater exposure to the earnest endeavours of the investigative journalist – Mikael Blomkvist. There seems to be very little to make us care about this character apart from the fact that his heart seems to be in the right place. In addition, as played intentionally or otherwise by actor Michael Nykvist, the man has the range of facial expressions of an average cabbage.

So much for the characters – then there are the inadequacies of the plot. Conspiracies abound. There is a Secret Society. As many of its members seem to be geriatric men in the last stages of age-related diseases it is not clear why they should pose any more of a problem for the wider community than, say, your local Rotary club. But that is not the view of our intrepid investigative journalist. He is determined to publish a magazine-sized expose of this group to alert the world to

whatever dangers that they represent. However, eventually when, after much shilly-shallying, he *does* publish the piece, it seems to have no bearing at all on the outcome of the plot.

Then there's the Evil Psychiatrist who once had The Girl in his clutches and is now determined to have her re-committed to his charnel house of horrors. We kind of suspect that he will get his comeuppance but, by the time this comes around, I, for one, had mostly lost interest. Of course there are also the Secret Files. These are the contents of two folders of documents which promise to Reveal All – whatever the "All" is. These precious documents are guarded separately by The Journalist and his heavily-pregnant sister.

The Journalist – I've begun to think of him as Bumbling Blomkvist - allows *his* file to be nicked from his home and his *sister's* file is stolen by a handbag thief when she is out strolling. As pregnant as she is, she is in no condition to give chase. Now, in most dramatic scenarios, the existence of Secret Files is a really serious plot mechanism. Entire movies have revolved around the Secret Files. However, in this movie there is no need for concern because once the files are stolen, they no longer appear to have any further bearing on the plot.

And so on it goes. If all this is beginning to sound like the plot of an ancient Saturday matinee serial then that is certainly the impression that began to form in my mind as I whiled away the running time of the movie. Was it two and a half hours or two and a half days? The sad thing is that if you have seen the first two episodes you, like me, will probably want to go and see it just to round-off the trilogy. Just brace yourself for disappointment.

I gave *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* just one and half stars.

If you don't want to spend your money as well as being disappointed I guess you could wait for the show to come to a television set near you – which it will, eventually. It was, after all, made for television in the first place. Now this gives me the opportunity to do something that I have rarely done in my reviews and that is to say a few words about what's on television.

Over the past several months, the ABC has scheduled a number of made-for-TV movies and short mini-series which have been absolutely first class. All have come from British sources, although some have been co-productions with sources in other countries – in particular, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, South Africa. At the moment there is a three-part series running on Saturday nights called *Strike Back*. You might recall the titles of some of the others: *Collision*; *U Be Dead* and *Kidnap and Ransom*.

All of these – and a few others – have been outstanding productions featuring excellent screenwriting, professional acting performances, sure-handed directing and, probably, quite substantial budgets. The productions have all been engrossing, tight-as-a-bowstring dramas. And their themes and content have not been for the faint-hearted. Devotees of Miss Marple and Inspector Barnaby may find them a bit of a challenge. But – here I am saying it – seek them out in your program guide and sit down and watch them, yes, on your TV set.

However, in the meantime, I will *still* see you in the back stalls.