

# A Little Push From J.S.

I just finished watching a little movie that was released last winter/early spring that received little notice but was released by the same distribution company as *Knowing*. Unfortunately, the latter got more publicity. I will direct you to a much more in depth description of [Push](#) from [taylhis](#). I will say that I absolutely adored this little gem. It is very action-packed and filled with enough twists and turns to keep me glued to the seat. Much more enjoyable than watching a NASCAR race.

What I found fascinating was the choice of casting the male lead. Chris Evans previously played Johnny Storm aka The Human Torch in *The Fantastic Four* and its sequel (odd that I have not seen *Rise of the Silver Surfer* but from what I have heard... I'm not missing a great deal... maybe one day). In *Push*, Mr. Evans plays Nick who has the power of telekinesis... the ability to move objects with one's mind. My question is: has any other actor played more than one character with a unique superhuman ability? I know multiple actors have played the same superhuman character (Batman, Superman, the Hulk, etc) but I think this reversal is unique. The closest I could come up with is Hayden Christensen who played Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars* episodes II and III and went on to star in *Jumper*, but that is a stretch.

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## Death In Arena Seats

Ok... ok... if you have seen any two of the now four *Final Destination* flicks you know what you are going to get. Tonight, Megan and I went to a very nice cineplex which has

very comfortable stadium seats very spacious to catch the latest installment aptly titled *THE Final Destination* (is this a sign that this will be the last final destination?) Judging by the box office from last weekend, I wouldn't be at all surprised to see The FINAL Final Destination hitting big screens in a year or two. It even beat up the latest installment in the Rob Zombie reboot of the Halloween franchise. I have yet to see the previous film... I really enjoyed the original John Carpenter creation with Michael Myers wreaking havoc in a Captain Kirk trick or treat mask.

This time, a young man has visions of death while sitting at a stock car race. After the premonition, Nick quickly begins to warn his three friends and others seated around him of the approaching doom. I assume the travesty was due to either the age of the venue or faulty construction. A few days later, the body count begins to climb as the survivors of the tragedy at the track die horrible, mysterious deaths. Nick "sees" visions of these deaths and eventually comes up with the pattern Death is playing out. But can Nick and his twentysomething aged friends stop the pattern before Death visits them all one by one?

I wouldn't say that I liked or disliked the movie... I'm on the fence on this one. As I previously noted, this has been done before only with four different locations for the starting off point (a commercial airline flight, a highway pileup, and a theme park roller coaster were the previous three). Plus as with most films of this genre, there was an ample amount of blood and gore. But Megan and I both agreed that while it has been done before, it was fun... maybe it was the company. Selected theatres also have the added attraction of 3D something that seems to be making a comeback as of late in both horror and animated features.

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## **A Case of MPD?**

Monday night at rehearsal, we had about half the cast present without either of the directors. This greatly limited the amount of work we could accomplish. It was decided that we would once again run lines. Quite often in these situations, actors are asked to read multiple roles. I ended up being three of the four male parts. At times this was quite humorous but most of the time it gave me even more insight into my own character; who is Harnell Chesterton and what makes him tick (or in terms most theatre performers can relate: What is his motivation? UGH!) I believe I have a firm grasp on Mr. Chesterton's persona. However, for reasons that will hopefully be quite clear to those in the audience, I am having a bit of trouble with his lines, but they are getting there. I have such a grasp that the assistant director told me that I was perfectly cast. Two weeks in and my reputation has already preceded me! C'est impossible! No worries... by week's end, I should be good. I just need to visit my area Goodwill's for a white dinner jacket.

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## **Maybe I Am The Evil Child After All?**

I don't know where it comes from but maybe it is one of my talents that have been hidden within myself for the past 3.5 decades. Within the last few months, I have scared the heck out of two of my favorite people. A few months ago on the way

to what can only be termed as a questionable phrase at the moment (a play reading meeting or was it the other kind), I dropped off Beeber's bouncy seat which I had possession of following a visit to [Admin](#) and family's cabin at a nearby campground. I entered the house and I don't know why I was so quiet but [taylhis](#) saw me and jumped at least a foot off the ground. I can't wait until our gang ventures to other spooktacular haunts as the time draws even nearer.

Earlier today, I was headed to the backroom to get the mop to use on the beauty shop floor. My mother was getting something out of the fridge which blocked my path, so I waited a few seconds. As she turned around, not only did she jump even higher than 12 inches but also let out a blood-curdling shriek that scared me half to death. My heart was pounding perhaps not as hard as hers but pretty fast, nonetheless. After she calmed down a bit and caught her breath, she raced to the bathroom before she really had an accident. Then we had a good laugh about it. I find this incredibly strange because I can come in after 2AM and she hears me attempting to quietly climb the upstairs steps as I am often informed of the next day.

Honestly, I did not know I was so evil or at least stealthy. I tell you... try to do something good can sometimes really backfire.

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## From One Optimist to Another

I have always admired the work of Michael J. Fox. Although I usually had to find another tv in the house to watch his fabulous role as Uber-conservative Alex P. Keaton on *Family Ties*, the family did enjoy the *Back to the Future* trilogy and the original *Teen Wolf*. Another of my favorite Fox movies is

*The Secret of My Success* in which he plays a young man climbing the corporate ladder without really trying. I admit that I was not an avid fan of his second major series *Spin City*, during the course of which he made public his Parkinson's Disease diagnosis.

The past decade of Michael's life is chronicled in the excellent autobiography, *Always Looking Up: The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist*. The book is broken down into four extremely informative, touching, and HILARIOUS sections each showing how he has embraced his new life. His decision to retire (maybe not permanently) from acting, politics (ok so maybe not the best reading ever, but), faith, and family have all played a part in the creation of the Michael J. Fox Foundation which not only funds PD research but for other debilitating diseases as well.

While reading about his political views did get kind of dry, it did hold my interest with some of the humorous anecdotes that were a highlight of the entire book. I loved the dedication he pays to his wife, Tracy (who played his girlfriend Ellen on *Ties*), son Sam, twin daughters Aquinnah and Schuyler, and 8-year old Esme (who was born following Mike's diagnosis... COOL!) Cross-country road trips, playing guitar with The Who (it really WAS him playing Johnny B. Goode in *Back to the Future*), and his battle with Rush Limbaugh (the BEST part of the Politics section) are just a few of the remarkable tales he spins.

Through it all, one thing was quite evident: Mr. Fox's unwavering optimism. Never for one instant did I find that he was painting a picture asking for the reader's sympathy. It just proves the cliché that when one is given lemons he should make lemonade and who doesn't like a tall cool glass of lemonade.

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# I Can Play On My Trombone

One of the many things I look forward to at the beginning of the school year is to check out the fresh faces of the new faculty of my alma mater, particularly in the spot that seems to be a revolving door as of late. Let me say that from experience and word of mouth the previous band director will not be missed. However, the new director had to jump in quickly as days after her arrival, she had to get the band ready for the Festival of Flags parade. A group of 20 marching down North Michigan Avenue doing the best they could under the circumstances.

Reading the new instructor's bio in the hometown scandal sheet makes me think that she is very ambitious and hopefully will stick around long enough to bring some of these goals to fruition. Miss Reardon is a Sandusky native who graduated from UT. She plays the trombone, cello, piano, and sings. Very well versed. One of her goals is to bring musical theatre back to the EHS stage. AWESOME! It has been several years since Emily and I (can't remember who the dramatic director was) brought the "Nifty Fifties" to the stage. More of a revue of car tunes strung together by a flimsy plot, but fun.

Good luck to the new musical maestro!

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# J'ai Besoin Dix Bonbons

I have posted numerous times about my favorite teacher, role model, etc (it is very nearly the first anniversary of her passing). Tonight at work, I had a surprise when my high school French came into my line. "Bonjour, Professeur Peters! Comment allez-vous?" She looked really well. A few years following my graduation, she had some health problems. She asked me if I was still a Star Trek/Star Wars fan. AH, she knows me so well. I made flash cards of French vocabulary in the shape of the NCC-1701 ("No bloody -A, -B, -C, Or -D"). We would get bonbons or other rewards for creativity. I told her that I have been doing plays around the area over the last several years. She has seen pictures in the paper but has yet to come to any.

One of my favorite parts of French class was the video contest. I believe it was a countywide (or maybe even longer reaching than that) contest in which classes could submit short skits to be judged for prizes. How I wish YouTube was around back then. I did not think to ask Madame if she kept any of the videos. Anyway, the senior year video Nicolas, Thomas, Jean, and I made was by far our most hilarious. It was a cooking spoof in which we made *lapin a la moutarde* (or... rabbit in mustard sauce). Think the Swedish Chef (or Julia Child it was French after all) meets the Three Stooges and you pretty well get the idea. Whoever decided to give me the role I undertook, I'll never know but... it was memorable to say the least.

What a fun trip down memory lane!

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# I Am Playing The Part Of The Plant

000PS... wrong show... or is it?. Tonight was the read-through for my latest on-stage endeavor. I will say that reading the script with the actors (*sans* one) was an absolute RIOT! *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* is much more than an audience-participatory murder mystery, it almost plays like a melodrama. I believe I alluded to the fact that this is a play-within-a-play with the actors portraying actors on stage as well as the characters within a very Tennessee Williams-esque production. It will be quite a challenge to keep under control as the hilarity ensues throughout. All of the actors are on stage throughout the entire show. Among the colorful cast of characters are the actors within the local community theatre, the director, the teenage backstage manager, and an inept detective who I believe will be very reminiscent of Columbo (rumpled trenchcoat, tattered notepad, and all).

The fun begins when one of the "actors" is murdered. Each of the remaining thespians (on and off stage) and the audience itself is suspect. Everyone has a different motive for doing the poor sap in and it is up to Officer Bainbridge to discover whodunit, how, and why. Nothing is as it seems, the clues pile up at a hilarious rate, until the guilty party is revealed. In order to find out who did what to whom and with what it was done to whom be sure to come to the Huber Theatre October 9-11. A double show on October 10. Judging from the read-through this will be yet another memorably great production but aren't they all memorable...good or bad?

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# Greetings Starfighter!

*You have been recruited by the Star League to defend the frontier against Xur and the Ko-Dan armada.*

Thus begins Alex Rogan's adventures. In the beginning of *The Last Starfighter*, the teenager who dreams of escaping the dismal world of the Starlight Starbright trailer park finds freedom in the Starfighter video game. Little does he realize that the game is much more than your average quarter muncher. After breaking the high score on the box, a mysterious, fast talking man drives up in a futuristic car and whisks Alex off to the stars to play the game for real. So much for thinking escape meant going anywhere but city college.

Has it really been 25 years since I sat in a Dallas, Texas multiplex with my brother to watch this extremely cool movie? I have been searching for a long time for this lost gem from 1984 and until Tuesday have met with disappointment. I received an email announcing the release of a [25th Anniversary](#) edition but nothing on a regular DVD (ok, so it is available on [DVD](#)<sup>x</sup>, just was not at the store I was in). Last night, I introduced my niece and nephew to one of my childhood favorites (ok, so I was in double digits when it was released). Noah and Elizabeth really enjoyed it. Noah totally ignored his still playing Nintendo DS. At first, Elizabeth wanted to watch *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, but I convinced her that this is much better.

The space battle scenes look just like those of an 80's video game which is part of the movie's charm. Although the story of the young man longing for something more closely resembles that of Luke Skywalker, *The Last Starfighter* does not try to become the next great sci-fi franchise (this was a year following the release of *Return of the Jedi*).. No huge name actors and none that I can think of that became everyday

names: Lance Guest? Catherine Mary Stewart? The only name that is immediately recognizable (to me, anyway) is Robert Preston who plays the brilliant Centauri. Of course when I was 11 years old, I had no idea that he originated the role of Professor Harold Hill. I still would rather watch him in this even if the roles are similar in most respects: smooth talking traveling salesmen. Plus, the musical score for the movie is just great as any good sci-fi movie must have. A big, brassy fanfare plus heroic moments full of romance that get the adrenaline flowing.

I would say this is very family-friendly except for a few expletives spouted off by Alex's younger brother Louis. And it looks and sounds even better on Blu-Ray. I had to look to find that another lowlight of Lance Guest's career was *Jaws: The Revenge*. Not one I will be looking for anytime soon.

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## Requiem And Return

On November 12, 1992, the world's greatest superhero lost his life in an epic battle literally on the streets of Metropolis right in front of the Daily Planet building. The comic series leading up to the end of Superman and the events following are all chronicled in the novelization *The Death and Life of Superman*. The story begins as a monster (no better way to describe it) of unknown origin and power begins his ravaging of the Earth. Members of the Justice League, including Green Lantern and other characters I am not very familiar with, are incapable of stopping the beast which became known as Doomsday. Eventually, the Man of Steel himself joined the battle which stretched from ironically, the village of Bluffton, Ohio (a mere 90 minute drive from my hometown... WOW to think) eastward. Not sure if this was a tip of the hat to

the hero's creative team of Siegel and Shuster who grew up in Cleveland. The first part of the novel ends with the Man of Tomorrow's demise.

The last two sections detail the aftermath and the rise of the Supermen: four individuals all but one of whom claim to be the real deal miraculously brought back from the great beyond. There is the Last Son of Krypton, The Man of Steel, a Superboy (but don't call him, Boy) and a Cyborg Superman. But, is one of these the real Kal-El or are they each cheap imitations? They each have most or all of his power but all claim to have only bits and pieces of his memory. Some of the personalities exhibited by the four are less than the true blue, Boy Scout image portrayed by the original. However, by the novel's end, the real McCoy (HEHE) is revealed as well as the identities of the others.

I really liked the nods to past characters of the legacy and other small bits tossed in. Inspector Henderson from the Adventures of Superman tv series has a role. Landmarks and locations are given names calling to mind past Superman related people: Collyer Boulevard (for [Bud Collyer](#) who was the original voice of Superman in radio serials way before I was thought of) and many others. Fun to pick those out!

Overall, I think this was the best incarnation of the Death and Return saga. It started as the comic series that lasted an entire year. Then, the novel which was just so much fun to read. Finally a few years ago, an animated feature was made that left too much out to be really enjoyable. Thanks Chris and Lisa!