

conspiracy-theorists) might have us believe. Antimatter and matter annihilate, but the quantity of antimatter allegedly contained in Vittoria's canister would take a facility like CERN billions of years to create. But, ok, it's a movie, let's pretend.

Well, as I said, I tried. Finally, the weight of pretending got too much to bear, under the battery of all the other words thrown in as cross-bracing to the precarious plot. There's a bandying-around of phrases such as "the new god, Science" and (of course) a rant about the audacity of physicists in devising "the God particle", but no engagement in a real dialogue (literally) between science and religion. Vittoria is not only a beautiful particle physicist, but is qualified too in "bioentanglement", which apparently makes her conveniently expert in toxicology and pathology at the precise

moment that a plot hole opens up. We even get an odd vignette in St Peter's Square about stem-cell research. You see, once you realize one of the 'facts' isn't what it seems, it all comes crashing down.

Then there are some oddities that really could have been ironed out of the screenplay. How weird is it that a Harvard 'symbolologist' who has been campaigning for ten years to access Vatican-held original documents by Galileo Galilei speaks no Italian and doesn't understand Latin? Ewan McGregor, in the role of Camerlengo to the deceased Pope, gets saddled with an awkward biographic speech about losing his parents in a UVF bombing (ah, he's supposed to be Irish?) and then being trained as a helicopter pilot. Without wishing to spoil the plot, I think I can reveal that later in the film when his character does get into a helicopter, it

doesn't make it all one iota less preposterous knowing that he is qualified to pilot it.

At the film's premiere in Rome, Howard contended, "Despite all the supposed controversies, despite all that's been said, remember that it's just a film." I don't think that's good enough. You can't appropriate all this stuff — the Renaissance splendour of Rome, the marvel of CERN and its physics, the ongoing confrontation of science and religion — string it together in a manner so cavalier, and then say "it's just a film". Not if I'm supposed to enjoy it. □

REVIEWED BY ALISON WRIGHT

Angels and Demons is now on worldwide release from Columbia Pictures and Imagine Entertainment.

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Boldly going...where?

FILM

The most recent voyage of the Starship Enterprise is without doubt the most exciting and thrilling in many a ringed moon — massively enjoyable. With *Star Trek*, J. J. Abrams and crew have performed the seemingly impossible task of taking a franchise equally enriched and

encumbered by a considerable canon, and producing something new and vital, all while pleasing existing fans by acknowledging this heritage.

In the now popular tradition of the prequel, this film traces the backstory of the crew of NCC-1701 (The Original Series to the uninitiated), detailing how they all came to take their places aboard the Enterprise. Conflict is brought about by the "seriously disturbed Romulan", Captain Nero (Eric Bana), who blames Spock (Zachary Quinto) for the destruction of his home-world and swears transtemporal revenge. The Enterprise and its not-yet crew set about putting paid to his diabolical plot.

The action is compelling and the special effects exceed even the considerable expectations of fans. What is unexpected, however, is that the film is crackling with witty reference, both spoken and visual, to other science fiction, especially previous Star Treks. This device enables



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the film to please long-time fans while simultaneously reinvigorating the Star Trek project to entice a whole new generation of Trekkies.

Sadly, this scorching display of talent masks a serious failure. Central to science fiction — and Star Trek in particular — is the exploration of contemporary social and political problems, in a future setting. What has lent such endurance to Star Trek is its sustained ability to deliver moral and political ideas in a popular format, thus securing a place in the hearts of many fans. It is a disappointment that this movie disavows such responsibility. Captain Nero, rather than embodying any ethos, is merely an evildoer to be hunted down. Such an asinine central plot reaffirms, rather than opposes, the

infantile public discourse of our day. Indeed, some characters, such as Chekov (Anton Yelchin), seem to appear on screen only for us to laugh at their comedic foreign accents. Such apparent racism is unbecoming of a franchise founded on the idea of describing an idealized multicultural society.

We trust, however, that like the young crew of the Enterprise, the crew behind this fantastic film will grow into their role and set their prodigious abilities to not merely telling a story fabulously well, but, in the best tradition of Star Trek, telling a story worth telling. □

REVIEWED BY EDMUND JACKSON

Edmund Jackson is chief engineer aboard a quantitative hedge fund.