

'John Hancock on a Load of Old Tat'

by Chris Brake

Synopsis

A sci-fi icon tires of the convention circuit.

Age Range

50+

Gender

Neutral

Length

3 - 4 minutes

THE SCI-FI ICON:

Three days in and my hand's cramped up.

More resembles a spaghetti spoon now, than anything you'd happily call an appendage.

But the fan base likely won't give a fig.

Their raison d'être is get my John Hancock scrawled across their collectible tat.

Damned be the welfare of the rheumatic actor begrudgingly doling them out.

And so few of these, and I'll say it, *vultures*, are truly there for *me*.

I mean, *really* me.

They're there for the ink from a sci-fi icon's pen, that's all.

Most of them are autograph dealers getting products to flog for the cottage industry that is me.

I'm a top dollar eBay listing these days, you know.

In fact, I've been known to do my own auction whenever I'm short on cash.

Demand and supply, and all that jazz.

And the mortgage won't pay off itself.

It's magic meeting a genuine fan though.

Some sad sack who found their soul was fed from watching me perform.

They're my people.

That's *my* tribe.

As long as they don't endeavour to get too close though.

I don't do hands-on contact with Joe Public anymore.

No hugs.

No handshakes.

Just chummy badinage.

I stopped all that after a spiky meet-and-greet down on the Isle of Wight.

Some super-fan with a fungal growth got a bit too pally in a photo-op, so I sent them packing and they lamped me in return.

Lost two weeks of work with a broken nose.

And I picked up their fungus to boot.

Spent the best part of March doused in E45, so I'll not be reacquainting myself with the Shanklin contingent any time soon.

In fact, I think this convention shall be my swansong.

I'm not overkeen to trot myself out for signings after this.

It jades you, this "work".

Whoring out my hand.

Oh it's lovely of course, when you make a child's day, but their demographic is a drop in the ocean compared to the hoards of old nerds.

Not to mention the grifters of course.

The ones hoping that you'll peg it soon, so the value of their signed stash goes up.

I'm already planning my posthumous revenge though.

When I snuff it I'll have my loyal assistant flood the market with autographs galore.

The saturation will kill the value, and they'll be left with tat they can't shift.

I'd rather be landfill than line their pockets.

Serve them right.

Soulless ghouls.

Making a mint in my name.

They'll just go and latch onto someone else though.

Another old thesp who's ventured to space via a soundstage in Slough.

Then *they'll* be the chosen one.

The icon du jour.

The Sisyphus of the sci-fi circuit, pushing their pen up that hill.

Poor sod.

But the baton must pass, and pass it shall.

So after tomorrow I'm done.

I shall turn my pen to other pursuits.

A new chapter to write perhaps, instead of my name, over and over again.

Hoping I've still got some ink in the well though.

I'll be back here with a gammy hand if not.

No, there's got to be more to life than signing.

Than being a slave to that pen.

If not, then I'll just pop the lid back on.

If my ink's run dry.

Either way, I'm done with all this.

It's over.

I'm resting my hand.