

Explosions: Michael Bay and the Pyrotechnics of the Imagination

Mathieu Poulin

Aleshia Jensen, Translator

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An unusual mixture of biography, comedy, action, and analysis, *Explosions* takes a tongue-in-cheek approach to one of the most popular but artistically dismissed film directors working today. Mathieu Poulin positions Michael Bay as a subject of serious study in this fictionalized take on his life and career. Here, Bay is not a crassly commercial blockbuster director but a brilliant philosopher struggling to express his vision to the world.

In this alternate-universe version of Bay's career, Bay casually discusses Derrida and Eco. *Bad Boys* is a postcolonial text and *Armageddon* an existential treatise. He also has a regular life that's as action-packed as any of his films, wherein a simple trek across town is likely to turn into a frenzied chase scene. The story follows Bay as he struggles to be understood as a great artist while unraveling a mysterious conspiracy unfolding around him.

While the book's depiction of Bay himself is constructed, its readings of his movies are serious. There are real critics who dissent from the consensus and advocate for films like *Transformers* as legitimately interesting. *Explosions* is essentially a spin on the death of the author, ignoring the real context of Bay's work and creating a new one to get readers to reconsider him.

The book's other elements aren't as compelling as that exegesis. The comedy consists of the same joke told over and over, with Bay and other Hollywood figures who are considered "low culture," including singer Meat Loaf and producer Jerry Bruckheimer, holding erudite philosophical conversations. The action sequences are repetitive, and the dialogue is laden with cultural references.

Explosions is an amusing work of film criticism, narrowly focused on Michael Bay's oeuvre, that imitates Bay's style while dissecting it.

DANIEL SCHINDEL (November/December 2018)

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