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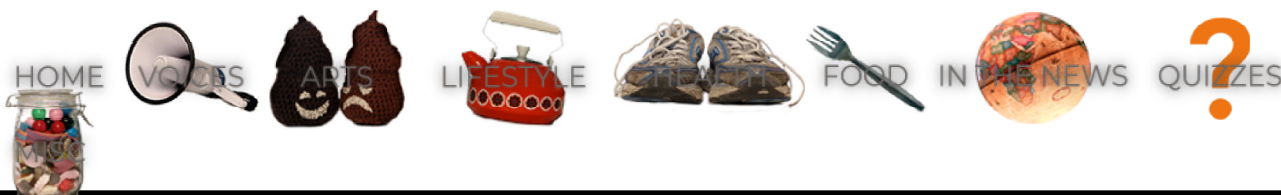
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Written by Maureen Younger

ARTS

Outlanderish sex: Why going back in time makes for better nookie

With season two about to premiere this weekend, *Maureen Younger* set herself the onerous task of checking out the love scenes in the first season of *Outlander*, and discovers why explicit sex combined with old-fashioned romance hits the spot.

Posted on 08/04/2016



Worth unlacing a bodice for: *Outlander's* Claire Beauchamp (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan) share a tender moment. All photos: Sony Pictures Television/Starz.

To my mind, sex scenes can at times seem superfluous, a lazy way to make up for a lack of character development in a script and a cheap way of pulling in the viewers.

I remember watching *Basic Instinct* and *Casablanca* within days of each other. The former was touted as featuring the most explicit of sex scenes (clearly by someone not au fait with French cinema) and *Casablanca*, well, is *Casablanca*.

Basic Instinct left me cold both about the protagonists and their relationship; *Casablanca's* love story was far more enthralling and had me paying good money to see the film at the cinema despite having already watched it several times on the telly. And in *Casablanca*, the most Ingrid Bergman ever did was take off her hat.

Then there's the fact you have to watch most love scenes while fighting creeping incredulity. There's the heroine, generally in her 20s, often inexplicably attracted to a man at least 20 or 30 years her senior. (She also has the incredible bad taste of being half my age and seemingly half my body weight but that's by the by).

Following foreplay, which often consists of a passionate kiss and, if she's lucky, a squeeze of a breast (that's *not* foreplay, guys), our hero whacks it in. Unbelievably our heroine doesn't wince in pain. (I know she's young but how naturally lubricated are these women?)

Instead she reaches the orgasm of her life quicker than it takes Usain Bolt to run 100 metres. Surely, even if you were faking it, wouldn't you count at least to 60 before starting to moan? Or maybe I'm just unusually scrupulous when it comes to creating a semblance of realism.

"Claire and Jamie's relationship is given time to develop, so you're willing it on just as much as they are. And above all, in the age of Tinder, sexting and revenge porn, it's unashamedly romantic."

Talking of realism, where's that romantic pause in proceedings as the guy puts on a condom, or that similarly romantic moment when you are telling the guy he IS putting on a condom? Or that tender post-coital moment reaching for the toilet roll or, if being slightly more upmarket, box of tissues?

There are a few on-screen love scenes that stand out for me: Dennis Quaid and Ellen Barkin in *The Big Easy*, Jenny Agutter and David Naughton in *An American Werewolf in London*, and Charles Aznavour and Marie Dubois in *Tirez sur le Pianiste* (*Shoot the Pianist*). Yes, that's right, Charles Aznavour. Just check out the movie, it's wonderful. And of course, although I might find numerous sex scenes superfluous, it doesn't stop me from watching them.

Back in the 1980s, *Hill Street Blues* caused a sensation with the bedroom scenes between Frank Furillo (Daniel J Travanti) and Joyce Davenport (Veronica Hamel), particularly when we'd see Joyce's back and realise she had no clothes on. Oh, those halcyon days!

Nowadays a lot more is expected of our actors. Enter *Outlander*, which contains some of the most explicit sex scenes I've seen. (What can I say? I don't watch porn.)

In *Outlander's* wedding episode, time-travelling heroine Claire Beauchamp (Caitriona Balfe) is forced to marry [Jamie Fraser](#) (Sam Heughan) as a legal loophole to protect her from further questioning by Captain Black Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies). Thus this episode charts the deepening nature of their relationship via the prism of three sex scenes.



First there's their awkward first shag. In a rather clever move by Diana Gabaldon, the writer of the *Outlander* books the series is based upon, Jamie is a virgin. Of course in real life any sane woman would be gutted on hearing this from a would-be paramour. However, when Jamie says it, you end up liking him all the more. Firstly, because Jamie comes in the form of the

delectable Sam Heughan; secondly, there is something intrinsically sexy about a good-looking man who isn't a player, and thirdly, because you suspect Jamie will be an incredibly fast learner (he is).

Later that evening, after getting to know each other even more, lust takes over, and Claire and Jamie realise they fancy the pants (well, technically it's shirts/shifts – just watch the episode) off each other and take unadulterated pleasure in each other's bodies.

Finally they make love: Jamie, having just presented Claire with his late mother's pearl necklace, one of the few items he has remaining of hers, informing Claire that she is likewise just as precious to him.

But why do these sex scenes work so well? I think partly because *Outlander* is allowed to breathe over 16 episodes. As such, Claire and Jamie's relationship is given time to develop, so you're willing to sit on it just as much as they are. And above all, in the age of Tinder, sexting and revenge porn, it's unashamedly romantic.



In *Outlander* we experience foreplay of the old-school kind. It's there in the looks, the flirting, the way Jamie and Claire gradually get to know each other and begin to care for each other in the previous six episodes.

And in the wedding episode before they get down to business, Jamie and Claire talk to each other. Jamie opens up to Claire and what's more, he listens to her, attentive not to just what she says but to how she acts and feels. Now that's a turn-on!

In a later episode there is a touching oral sex scene. Jamie is hard at work when there's a knock at the door; his head pops up, "No, no", he cries and dives back down. Apparently the male writers thought it best if Claire called the shots, but the women writers were adamant it should be Jamie.

They were right. Not only are you in no doubt as to how intimate these two have become, but there is the added advantage that Jamie Fraser's score, as fantasy male par excellence, zooms up several notches.

"Talking of realism, where's that romantic pause in proceedings as the guy puts on a condom, or that similarly romantic moment when you are telling the guy he IS putting on a condom?"

It later goes through the roof when you realise that, unbeknown to Claire, Jamie decides to help her return to her own time, and spends what he believes will be their last night together, refusing to make love but simply pleasuring her so he can watch her.

At this point I was sorely tempted to start Googling 'standing stones', because, as any single woman can vouch, you are more likely to find a man like Jamie Fraser by hurling yourself against a megalith in the vain hope that you too will fall back in time 200 years than by signing up to a dating website along the lines of www.findmeafitman.com (sadly not a real website).

So what does all this prove? Well OK, in the right hands, sex scenes *can* be an effective tool in encapsulating the emotional journey of characters and pinpointing the various stages in their relationship. But what *Outlander* really makes clear with its generous helping of old-fashioned romance is that even in today's cynical times, sex scenes, as with sex in real life, are much more engrossing when you engage the mind as well as the heart.



Outlander is back on Amazon Prime on Sunday night. Maureen's Outlander blog starts on Monday.

[@MaureenYounger](#)

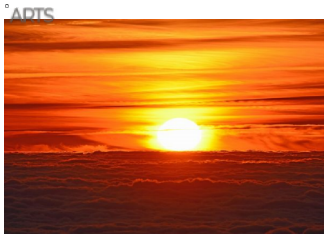
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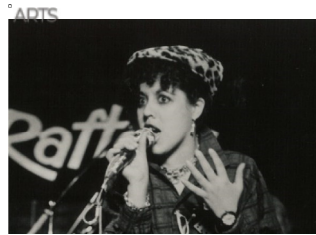
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