



Video 21 – An Alternative Christmas Message

[Cut to Christine.]

Hello. First of all, I must wish everyone a merry Christmas. This festive period is full of happiness and joy, loving and giving, but we must not forget about those in need at this time of year... those in panto.

Whilst the audiences begin to shout “Oh no it isn’t,” and the gender-challenged Dame begins to warble, it’s worth remembering that Formula 1 this year has been likened to pantomime – a scripted farce where the main focus is entertainment rather than quality.

It’s easy to laugh off such suggestions but upon closer inspection, there have been certain panto-alike incidents this year, that warrant a second look.

Every good pantomime has a hero and a villain. Presumably this year’s Prince Charming has been Lewis Hamilton, the polite, well-meaning innocent who’s goal is to make sure the event culminates in a happy ending. The villain of the piece is harder to identify, although there are many contenders. One would have to suggest that Max Mosley deserves such an accolade, given his attitude towards the fans, and the likelihood of them booing when he enters stage left.

Audience participation is vital to the success of a good pantomime, but it usually involves a concerted effort from the stalls to get your point across, and the main players on stage ignoring every word you say. This sounds very similar to F1 this year, with fans, bloggers and journalists offering constructive criticism, while drivers, teams and the FIA actively encourage this phenomenon but end up ignoring any useful suggestions anyway.

The story behind a pantomime is usually based around popular children’s tales, Cinderella, Snow White, Dick Whittington. Sometimes elements of many stories are drawn together to create an intricate fiction, merging characters from all walks of life. Specific pantomime regulars spring to mind, such as Widow Twanky, the Ugly Sisters, and the Seven Dwarfs. It would be much too easy to cast Formula 1 drivers in the roles of Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Sneezzy, Dopey, Bashful and Doc.

The most important and pivotal character in any story is, of course, the good fairy. She facilitates all the wonderful things that happen, by waving her magic wand. She is often dressed in pink.

I feel as though I should draw a comparison between the pantomime horse and some regulars in the F1 paddock, but I feel designating one person to be the back end would be just too cruel. It is the season of goodwill after all.

The future of Formula 1 has been looking a little shaky, with long-time fans turned off by the obvious scripting, and new fans disappointed by the championship results. However, never fear. The best parallel we can draw between Formula 1 and the panto season is that it comes round every single year without fail, it will continue to do so, and at some point, in the future, if you stick with it and don’t give in to the sheer inanity of it all, you will find something that will make you smile. And it might, just might, make it all worthwhile.

Thank you for listening to my Christmas message. Enjoy the rest of your day.

[End credits]