

MT VOID 02/23/24 -- Vol. 42, No. 34, Whole Number 2316



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The latest issue is at <http://www.leepers.us/mtvoid/latest.htm>.

An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at

http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

Middletown (NJ) Public Library Science Fiction Discussion Group:

The only local meetings left are in Middletown, and they are in-person. The best way to get the latest information is to be on the mailing list for it.

Mar 7, 2024 ROLLERBALL (1975) & short story "Roller Ball Murder" (1974) by William Harrison

<https://instruct.uwo.ca/kinesiology/378/files/essays/roller.pdf>

Mark's Picks for Turner Classic Movies for March (comments by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

During the daytime on Wednesday, March 20, TCM is running an entire slate of horror/suspense films from what is known as the "Pre-Code Era", that period before the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code (popularly known as the Hays Code) in 1934. Pre-Code Era films had more sexual references, more violence, more drugs, stronger female characters, and generally stronger social commentary than those that came after this period. (Although none of them were as unrestrained as the films that have come after the

end of the Production Code--just watch the original 1932 SCARFACE along with the 1983 remake.)

So here are the films they are running March 20, with TCM's descriptions and our comments:

6:30 AM The Mad Genius (1931)

"A deranged ballet teacher will stop at nothing to keep control of his protegee." We have not seen this yet, so have no additional comments. Directed by Michael Curtiz and starring John Barrymore and Marian Marsh.

8:00 AM Doctor X (1932)

"A reporter investigates a series of cannibalistic murders at a medical college." This film has a very early use of both Technicolor and Lionel Atwill, who went on to become a horror film staple. Directed by Michael Curtiz, and also starring Fay Wray and Lee Tracy (in a supposedly comedic role).

9:30 AM Svengali (1931)

"A hypnotist falls in love with a girl using his powers to turn her into a great singer." Directed by Archie Mayo, with John Barrymore and Marian Marsh reunited as the stars.

11:30 AM M (1931)

"The mob sets out to catch a child killer whose crimes are attracting too much police attention." One of the classics of cinema, it made Peter Lorre a star. Director Fritz Lang had previously done DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER; DIE NIBELUNGEN: SIEGFRIED; METROPOLIS; and WOMAN IN THE MOON, and after fleeing to Paris (in 1933) and later Hollywood (in 1934), became one of the great film noir directors.

1:30 PM Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)

"Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale of a scientist who unleashes the beast within." Directed by Rouben Mamoulian and starring Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, and Rose Hobart. When MGM made a remake with Spencer Tracy in 1941, they tried to buy up all the prints and suppress this version by Paramount, but most people agree that the Frederic March version is superior.

3:15 PM The Most Dangerous Game (1932)

"A big game hunter decides to stalk human prey." It features Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong, James Flavin, and Noble Johnson, who all also appeared in KING KONG the following year, and which used the same sets. In fact, director Ernest B. Schoedsack was the producer (and uncredited co-director) of KING KONG as well.

4:30 PM Rasputin and the Empress (1932)

"True story of the mad monk who plotted to rule Russia." Directed by Richard Boleslavsky, with a cast from a theatrical dynasty: John Barrymore, Ethel Barrymore, and Lionel Barrymore. The same story was made by Hammer Films in 1966 as RASPUTIN: THE MAD MONK, with Christopher Lee as the title character.

6:45 PM Thirteen Women (1932)

"A mysterious Eurasian tries to murder the 12 boarding school roommates who treated her like an outsider." We have not seen this yet, so have no additional comments. Directed by George Archainbaud, with Irene Dunne and Ricardo Cortez (that great Latin lover, who was born Jacob Krantz and was the son of Austrian Jewish immigrants--welcome to Hollywood!). (Okay, I guess that was an additional comment.)

[-mrl/ecl]

Other films of interest include:

SATURDAY, March 2

4:00 AM Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)
6:00 AM The Great Dictator (1940)

TUESDAY, March 5

8:00 AM A Tale of Two Cities (1935)

WEDNESDAY, March 6

5:00 PM America America (1963)

THURSDAY, March 7

3:00 AM Hamlet (1948)

TUESDAY, March 12
 10:30 AM Transatlantic Tunnel (1935)
 12:30 PM Things to Come (1936)
 2:30 PM The Time Machine (1960)

THURSDAY, March 14
 5:15 AM The Wasp Woman (1960)
 5:30 PM Sweeney Todd: Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1982)

FRIDAY, March 15
 12:00 AM The China Syndrome (1979)
 2:15 AM Network (1976)

SUNDAY, March 17
 5:30 PM Finian's Rainbow (1968)

THURSDAY, March 21
 5:45 PM The Haunting (1963)

FRIDAY, March 22
 6:15 PM Blithe Spirit (1945)

SATURDAY, March 23
 12:00 AM Duel (1971)

TUESDAY, March 26
 9:45 AM Green Mansions (1959)

WEDNESDAY, March 27
 9:00 AM Tarzan and His Mate (1934)
 11:00 AM King Solomon's Mines (1937)

SUNDAY, March 31
 6:15 AM The Green Pastures (1936)
 10:00 PM King of Kings (1961)

MONDAY, April 1
 2:30 AM A Slightly Pregnant Man (1973)

The Hugo Awards Controversy (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

The 2023 Hugo Awards given at Chengdu have been the subject of much discussion, even in the mainstream media, when it was discovered that the Hugo administrators had decided to proactively rule ineligible any works or people who might offend the Chinese government. This included BABEL by R. F. Kuang, which had won both the Nebula and the Locus Award, and was considered the front-runner for the Hugo.

If you want to read more about this, here are some links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/feb/15/authors-excluded-from-hugo-awards-over-china-concerns>

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/17/books/bookupdate/hugo-awards-china.html?unlocked_article_code=1.W00.F5Uu.sK7pDvPrrZ1t&smid=url-share

<https://www.vulture.com/article/hugo-awards-china-censorship-controversy.html>

<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a46612912/science-fiction-hugo-awards-2024/>

<https://www.salon.com/2024/02/16/hugo-awards-scandal-china-censorship/>

<https://gizmodo.com/hugo-awards-2023-eligibility-controversy-apology-china-1851261196>

<https://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/4474312-neil-gaiman-paul-weimar-writers-excluded-hugo-awards-fear-offending-china-report/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/oaznm7WrBLZQZxPQ/?mibextid=WC7FNe>

[-ecl]

Terry Bisson (letter of comment by Peter Rubinstein):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on "England Underway" and THE STONE RAFT](#) in the 02/16/24 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Rubinstein writes:

Is it possible that Terry Bisson spoke Portuguese? [-pir]

WONKA (letters of comment by Gary McGath and Paul Dormer):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on WONKA](#) in the 02/16/24 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

Roald Dahl's CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY has some highly disturbing features, yet somehow he gets a pass. A few days ago I was struck by an item that crossed over elements of Harry Potter and Charlie, and the former was presented as the one people might not want to touch.

In the original version of Charlie, the Oompa Loompas were Africans who were brought over and kept in isolation. They were slaves or close to it. As I understand it, the new WONKA totally rewrites this story.

Dahl's reaction to Khomeini's murder contract on Salman Rushdie was to heap contempt upon Rushdie: "This kind of sensationalism does indeed get an indifferent book on the top of the best-seller list--but to my mind it is a cheap way of doing so." On another occasion he said, "There is a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity."

I'm not saying people shouldn't read his books; it's no longer possible for him to benefit from their sales. But I find it bizarre that people give him a pass so easily while spewing hatred on someone who deviates from the orthodoxy on trans people. [-gmg]

Paul Dormer responds:

Just recently, Victoria Coren Mitchell, the host of the quiz show "Only Connect", made a snide comment about Dahl and his anti-semitism when he was the answer to a question on the show. Didn't know that, but then, not an author I was familiar with growing up. [-pd]

Evelyn notes:

In the 01/26/24 issue of the MT VOID, I commented on LIVES OF THE WIVES by Carmela Ciuraru and wrote, "... the only couple whose work was familiar enough to me to make their story meaningful was Roald Dahl and Patricia Neal, and there seemed nothing exceptional about it (other than his racism and anti-semitism)." [-ecl]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I am having a bit of a problem keeping up with my reading, because podcasts are coming fast and furious. There are my regular podcasts ("Classical Stuff You Should Know" [weekly], "The Coode Street Podcast" [biweekly], "House of Hammer" [biweekly], and "Terry Talks Movies" [three or four times a week]). But Dan Carlin's "Hardcore History" just dropped a *six-hour* podcast that is part two of "The Twilight of the Aesir" (about the end of the Viking Age). And "Now Playing" decided to do a retrospective series on the Universal "Frankenstein" films--or at least the first four of them.

Which is to say that my time is being eaten up by these. Dan Carlin's podcasts really should count as an audiobook, I suppose, and I highly recommend them. The latest, for example, ends with the observation that the older religions had the belief that if people stopped remembering the gods, they faded away. This was a concern of Thor's, apparently, but Carlin claimed that more people have heard of Thor now than ever knew of him when he was being worshiped. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Cross country skiing is great if you live in a small country.

--Steven Wright

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