

I recommend the series very strongly. In the mid-1970s I worked in Detroit when the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) broadcast the first season. What a reaction! People who had never expressed any interest in science fiction

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before then would have animated lunch discussions about the previous night's episode of "The Survivors."

The plot of "The Survivors" is that almost all of the world has been killed by a virus. There are perhaps 7000 people left in Britain, in any case so few left that no two people who knew each other prior to the virus are now both alive (or at least can now find each other). Pockets of people are trying to form again into small societies. Some work out, some do not, and the question of what makes a society work is central to the series. There are three or four groups of people claiming to be the British army, none of which have any real claim to the title. Some group try to grab up pre-existing food and resources, others try to start farming anew. The story is very intelligently executed. Don't expect a lot of special effects, but do expect some very good writing and some very compelling situations.

One of the reasons I am showing the series is that I would like to see people writing their local PBS stations and requesting that they get the series. A friend is making me copies from a San Francisco area PBS station's broadcast, so it is in syndication. I have a source, but it loses a lot of the thrill if there aren't people to discuss the series with.

Uh, there is one difference. I wrote to WLIW, Channel 21 from Long Island, and told them pretty much what I just told you. Apparently they believed me. Last Saturday they ran episodes 1 and 2.

If you can't make it to the fest, or even if you can, I do recommend the series. I would have told you sooner, but I only found out Saturday morning. If you get Channel 21 the series runs at 8 PM on Saturdays. Believe me, the series is worth getting.

2. The Holmdel Cinema Club is selling half-year memberships for \$12. People interested in joining should contact Tom Skrobala (908) 957-5446. The films are shown at 8 PM on the wide screen in the Holmdel auditorium.

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Fri 7/31 Playtime
Wed 8/12 House of Games
Fri 8/28 Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll
Wed 9/02 Ay, Carmela
Fri 9/18 Children of Paradise
Fri 10/02 Saboteur
Wed 10/21 Pauline at the Beach
Fri 11/06 Return of the Secaucus Seven
Wed 11/18 Radio Days
Fri 12/04 Wages of Fear
Wed 12/16 The Last Holiday

Now what can I tell you about them?

HOUSE OF GAMES is a pretty good keep-em-guessing film. Not great but very well-written by David Mamet (THINGS CHANGE, THE UNTOUCHABLES). Joe Mantegna gives a really magnetic performance. Don't read anything about the plot before seeing the film. Anything you know will give away a twist.

SABOTEUR and RADIO DAYS are among the better films of,

respectively, Alfred Hitchcock and Woody Allen. SABOTEUR is pre-Technicolor (at least for Hitchcock) but is a good adventure.

I am a little less keen on CHILDREN OF PARADISE, but I know of a lot of people who think this is a really great film. It is about life in a theater troupe. RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS 7 was imitated later by THE BIG CHILL. It is mostly talk, but the point is the conversation. Good, but not my taste. I like other John Sayles films better, but it is worth seeing.

BUT...But... THE LAST HOLIDAY is what I consider to be Alec Guinness' best performance. It is a great, bittersweet tale I must have seen six or seven times and am in a hurry to see again. Do see this film, if not here, whenever you can.

And to prove that classic foreign films need not be dull, we have THE WAGES OF FEAR. I drove into New York just to see this film the first time I saw it and was almost ready to drive in to see it again. This is a simple story but my eyes were glued to the screen through the whole last two-thirds of the film. It is a genuine edge-of-the-seat film.

Sure, I would like to convince you that a half year membership is a good deal. And the club could afford to sell some more memberships since there are fewer and fewer young people joining the club, since AT&T is not really hiring. But it should be obvious from the above, that I am not going to tell you every film is great. I will say that I think that the overall deal is really very good and very worth the price of the ticket. The price is less than that of two

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evening tickets at the local theaters and you will on the average see much better films than you'd see at local first-run theaters. The last two films are worth the price alone at the price charged in New York revival houses.

3. Paul Chisholm makes the following suggestion for people who receive the MT VOID electronically and read it on their screens rather than printing it out: "If you don't want a lot lot of blank lines at the beginning and end of each "page," and you use a Mail-derived user agent (such as mailx or Post), trying piping your

message through uniq before your favorite pager. If you have a PAGER environment variable in your .profile, you could try something like:

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> pi 'uniq | $PAGER'
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If not, try a variation on one of the following:

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> pi 'uniq | more'
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> pi 'uniq | pg -n'
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uniq will collapse two or more blank lines into one. (It will also get rid of lines that are duplicated, one after another, for other reasons. This rarely happens.)" [-psrc]

4. Reminder: instructions on how to get the Hugo-nominated short stories were included in the previous two issues of the MT VOID. [-ecl] Guinness SABOTOUR

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 908-957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience.
-- Miguel de Cervantes

HONEY, I BLEW UP THE KID
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Silly but undeniably enjoyable satire on 1950s science fiction films has the Szalinski family accidentally enlarging their baby to Brobdingnagian proportions. Somewhat better than it really deserves to be. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4). (Relevant diatribe follows the review!)

At the current rate I would expect by the turn of the century the film industry will have churned out more take-offs, pastiches, and satires of 1950s science fiction films than there were science fiction films made in the 1950s. None have ever seemed very good to me, but H_o_n_e_y, I_B_l_e_w_U_p_t_h_e_K_i_d is at least more light-hearted than most. (Of course, the title may sound less good-natured than intended, but all the ads make sure everybody knows in just what sense "blew up" is intended.) This is, of course, the sequel to H_o_n_e_y, I_S_h_r_u_n_k_t_h_e_K_i_d_s, and though H_o_n_e_y, I_B_l_e_w_U_p_t_h_e_K_i_d began life as a script for an unrelated film B_i_g_B_a_b_y, it was worked into a sequel for the previous film. Actually, it was to have been much the same plot as T_h_e_A_m_a_z_i_n_g_C_o_l_o_s_s_a_l_M_a_n with a baby. Echoes of that film still abound in the script.

In the years since the last film, a typical soulless corporation has taken over Wayne Szalinski's scale-bending projects and is trying to magnify and reduce objects without much luck. Rick Moranis as Wayne continues not to get much respect in spite of being the genius behind it all. Still, it is only Wayne that can make things work and even he cannot do exactly what he wants. What he accidentally creates is a two-and-a-half-year-old Adam Szalinski who grows when he passes through electromagnetic flux. (Conservation of matter? What's that all about?) We end up with a ten-story baby clomping his way through Las Vegas--even the same streets that Glenn Manning, the C_o_l_o_s_s_a_l_M_a_n, walked. This giant, however, is not shot off of Boulder/Hoover Dam. There is only a poster of the dam to remind us of the original. Incidentally, as well all know, any satire of 1950s science fiction has to have a small role for either Kenneth Tobey or Dick Miller. This time it's Tobey's turn, with him playing a security guard.

Standards for special effects have come a long way since T_h_e_A_m_a_z_i_n_g_C_o_l_o_s_s_a_l_M_a_n (special effects in Bert. I. Gordon films were always particularly bad!). While in H_o_n_e_y, I_B_l_e_w_U_p_t_h_e_K_i_d it rarely is difficult to tell how an effect was created, there are only a few effects that genuinely look wrong. The only really bad effect that I noted was a full-size model of a baby chest and arm in the background. The arm just does not move as wildly as it does in

the surrounding scenes. Kudos should go to the "Baby Wranglers" listed in the credits, since Adam (played by Daniel and Joshua Shalikas) seems always to do exactly the right thing at the right time. And it is true that the fictional Adam and the real life Shalikas all seem to be extraordinarily well-behaved.

My rating for this light-hearted piece of summer fluff is +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

... Diatribe follows.

I noted with some disappointment that the credits of H_o_n_e_y, I B_l_e_w U_p t_h_e K_i_d acknowledge similarities to the story "The Attack of the Giant Baby" by Kit Reed. C_i_n_e_f_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_q_u_e reports that after Reed saw a promo for the film she took the Disney organization to court over similarities to her story. Actually the Reed story concentrates on the nastier aspects of babies and shows them magnified. If, indeed, Reed thinks she invented and owns the idea of over-size babies getting loose and causing problems in her 1981 story, I might suggest that she read (or re-read) the 1904 novel T_h_e F_o_o_d_o_f_t_h_e_G_o_d_s by H. G. Wells. The mechanism for creating the giant baby is in the realm of physics in the new movie. Reed's mechanism is nearly identical to Wells's. That is, she has the baby eat a food with fantastic growth properties. I seriously doubt that the Wells estate has taken Reed to court, and I can tell you for a fact that her story bears no similar acknowledgement to Wells. Science fiction has been in the past a field where people could feel free to play with others' ideas and put new twists on them. But I suppose as long as some people in the field have deep pockets and other people have greed, that can no longer be the case. Be it here noted that the concept of giant babies causing problems has somehow been transferred from the Wells estate to Reed. Presumably the concept of time travel is still the property of the Wells estate. David Brin probably owes royalties on uplift to either Wells for T_h_e I_s_l_a_n_d_o_f_D_r._M_o_r_e_a_u or Nigel Kneale for Q_u_a_t_e_r_m_a_s_s_a_n_d_t_h_e_P_i_t. Invisibility and alien invasion again revert to the Wells estate who effectively own a controlling interest in modern science fiction. So it goes.

A STRANGER AMONG US
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Yes, it's pretty much what the television ads make it look like. Melanie Griffith stars in a plot not unlike that of Witness, but with Hasidic Jews. Of course, it is not often we see the Hasidic community in film. And Sidney Lumet keeps the film consistently intriguing and often on a philosophical level. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4).

At first look AStrangerAmongUs looks a trifle too formulaic

to be a Sydney Lumet film. Lumet's films are usually hard-hitting

and very original. Just a few of his films are TwelveAngryMen;

FailSafe; the superb, intense film The

Pawnbroker; TheAnderson

Tapes; MurderontheOrient

Express; DogDayAfternoon; and

Network.

This does not sound like the kind of director who would make a

retread of Witness. But that is certainly how the television ads

make this film look. It looks like Witness retold, but set among

the Hasidic Jews of New York City. Is that what AStrangerAmong

U_ s
is? Well, yes and no. Yes to the extent that it certainly is a murder mystery that will take a police detective into a totally alien culture from what she--in this case she--has known. And she does learn to respect that culture. It even has many of the faults of W_ i_ t_ n_ e_ s_ s. It is about a lot of things, like violence and sex, that members of the community would try to avoid. And at the same time it idealizes that community (and doing both at the same time _ c_ o_ u_ l_ d be viewed as hypocrisy). On the other hand, Orthodox Jews are a major and important of the culture of New York City, like Chinese and Blacks and many others, but how often do they show up in major films? How many films take the audience into this community? The only other film that comes to mind is Jeremy Kagan's _ T_ h_ e_ C_ h_ o_ s_ e_ n.

Police Detective Emily Eden (played by Melanie Griffith) is having second thoughts about her life. By being too much of a "cowboy" and not following proper procedures, she just got her partner and current lover stabbed and nearly killed. She feels guilt about that and at the same time she is dissatisfied with her life in general. She is given a light assignment. She is to investigate the disappearance of an Hasidic diamond cutter who may have run off with some diamonds. Visiting the family of the missing man at first gives her the discomfort of sticking out with her short sleeves, her short skirt, and her profanity. However, the investigation becomes a murder case that she must move into the Hasidic community to investigate.

At this point in the plot it becomes clear that the real story is about how Eden sees and interfaces with the community. The

actual mystery plot may account for about half an hour and is not the main thrust of the film. Instead we see conflicts of values and Eden's growing understanding of and respect for the Hasidim. Her lifestyle as seen by the Hasidim has been the victory of freedom over values. She sees theirs as the victory of values over freedom. She also will have a close relationship with Ariel (played by Eric Thal), a young scholar destined to be the leader of the community.

In some ways this film could have been handled much better. There is some spectacular photography of New York City. But once

inside the Jewish community every indoor scene is shot in annoying sepia tones. At times the sepia filter frustratingly obscures detail in the sets. It gives an artificial and uncomfortable feel to the film. Perhaps the Hasidic life is over-idealized. Everyone seems to be friendly and gets along with each other. It is possible that in a lifestyle this rigid there is less possibility for conflict, but whether that reflects reality or not I do not know. The mystery aspect of the story is just not given much time in the script. It is a little too simple and perhaps written a little sloppily.

Still, A S t r a n g e r A m o n g U s offers a view into a culture rarely shown in films. The background is the whole show. I give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

- Victor Halpern created the zombie film with the 1932 White
Zombie. He pretty much lucked out. The film is poverty-row
all the way. It has cheap sets, low production values, and bad
acting. But some of its images are undeniably very effective
and it manages the feel of a nightmare. Like Carnivalof
Souls, the film just clicks somehow. But was it luck or skill?
Four years later he made his second zombie film and it sank
like a stone. The idea just did not have appeal. Revoltof
theZombies was about bringing dead soldiers back to life as
zombies so they could be the ultimate fighting soldiers. So
UniversalSoldier is the second film that idea has sunk. Well,
admittedly, it is other problems that sink UniversalSoldier,
but it is interesting that this idea was used before.
- Van Damme is Belgian. He has a Flemish accent, sort of
guttural and Germanic. Maybe I am not that good with accents.
But I can tell you his accent is neither Cajun nor Creole. His
parents in the film certainly don't have accents like his. So
what gives? How did he end up with this accent? Maybe we'll
be hearing that Arnold Schwarzenegger has been cast as Sergeant
Rock!
- I guess Van Damme is now officially Carolco Action Figure(tm).
Carolco seems to cut these guys out with cookie cutters. They
seem to be martial artists with foreign accents, and the way
some people habitually smoke after sex, they pun after killing
people. I think they got the idea from James Bond films.
- Nice photography of Hoover/Boulder Dam. Also it is impressive
to see someone running down the side. To me that is more
impressive than all the acrobatic kicking which mercifully is
saved until the final reel.
- Why does the opening sequence remind me of Platoon?
- It is always nice to see Jerry Orbach, even if this film
underuses his talents.
- I guess when you die you forget how to eat, you forget many of
your polysyllabic words, and you pick up a funny accent. You
learn not to worry about your friends getting shot as long as
they don't smoke and they remember to buckle up. The after-
life must be a lot weirder than anyone imagined.
- I give it a low 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

COOL WORLD
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper
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- The title has _ g_ o_ t to be a joke. This is the ugliest and most uncool world I can imagine. Gabriel Byrne must be mis-cast since he just does not seem freak-o enough to have imagined this world. The parallel world would have anyone screaming to get out after fifteen minutes.
- The idea that comic artists are really seeing a parallel universe is an old one. I seem to remember in the 1960s they claimed that the current Flash lived in the same universe as the artists who drew the old Flash (the one with the Mercury helmet). but the old Flash was really in a parallel universe. And I'm pretty sure the idea goes at least as far back as 1930s fantasy.
- Cardboard scenery seems out of place. Cool World should be made of pure animation and live action. The cardboard scenery makes no sense.
- They seem to have made up the rules of the two universes as they went along and failed to explain some. Why does Holli have clown flashes? What does the spike of power have to do with any of this?
- There are a few clever little satires on other animated films and perhaps a good line or two, but the incoherent story just is not very interesting. It's a pity, since at least initially the concept seemed more complex and interesting than that of _ W_ h_ o_ F_ r_ a_ m_ e_ d_ R_ o_ g_ e_ r_ R_ a_ b_ b_ i_ t.
- The pun on Holli Would is pretty lame. Why repeat it in all the ads?
- Harris in 1945 is seeing a world that is in a cartoon style that would not be invented for another twenty years. He would

be used to animation of the Fleischer and Disney schools. That should make the Cool World seem even more alien to him.

- I give it a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

CAPTAIN JACK ZODIAC by Michael Kandel
Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-29367-2, 1992, \$4.99.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Evelyn C. Leeper

Kandel began his career translating the works of Stanislaw Lem, or at least that is how he became known. And that off-the-wall style that Lem is known for has influenced Kandel and in this, his third novel (his first two were S t r a n g e I n v a s i o n and I n B e t w e e n D r a g o n s), he gives us a world in which the Soviets are nuking several of our major cities, but the real problems are the garbage strike and the traffic jams (the latter not helped by the occasional Soviet paratrooper squads landing on the highways). One character is trying to maintain a perfect lawn, but the combination of the greenhouse effect, radiation leaking through the failing ozone layer, and all the chemicals he has been using start to have some very undesirable effects. Meanwhile, our main character is trying to find his children: his daughter has become a mall zombie (no, not like in George Romero's D a w n o f t h e D e a d) and his son has taken and is traveling off in interstellar space. When you take one of Captain Jack Zodiac's pills, you really trip!

I can't really describe this book. The preceding gives you some idea of the flavor, but only some idea. Kandel flings his characters from one improbable situation to the next, on this world,

on other worlds, and even in the next world. Oddly enough, the Captain Jack Zodiac thread for which the book is named is one of the less involving ones (at least for me), though its solipsistic approach does reinforce the book's approach in general.

I definitely recommend this wild and wacky look at what just might be just around the corner (well, okay, maybe not the Soviet paratroopers, but I wouldn't dismiss the possessed chicken salad just yet...).

BEAUTY by Sheri S. Tepper

Bantam Spectra, 1992 (1991c), ISBN 0-553-29527-6, \$5.99.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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In B e a u t y, Tepper takes all those happy fairy tales and shows us the dark underside (or the dark truth, if you prefer). The title character is not the Beauty of "Beauty and the Beast," but Sleeping Beauty--or rather, would be except for an odd turn of fate in which she escapes the enchatment (well, a novel in which the main character sleeps the whole time wouldn't be very exciting--and yes, I've read "Rip Van Winkle"). After she escapes, Beauty latches on to some time travelers, goes to the future, has some unpleasant

adventures, travels back to our present, has even more unpleasant adventures, travels to the Land of Faery, has ... well, you get the idea.

Tepper has some good ideas but her execution of them frequently leaves something to be desired. Everything will be flowing along when suddenly she will break into a strident pro-choice speech (or more accurately, an anti-anti-choice speech). She also appears to be claiming that all the graphic violence we see and read about deadens us to it. I don't deny that this view may have some merit, but I think she shoots herself in the foot by using the Holocaust as an example: according to Beauty, people are so determined to prevent another Holocaust that they keep harping on the "first" one until no one cares. But it wasn't the first, and ignoring previous ones didn't do much to prevent or temper this one, so it's not clear that the reminding will or even can make things worse.

_ B_ e_ a_ u_ t_ y is full of enough unlikely coincidences and dire happenings, some of them telegraphed to the reader, to read like a latter-day _ M_ o_ l_ l_ F_ l_ a_ n_ d_ e_ r_ s. But Tepper has not mastered a light touch yet, and her messages get delivered with a resounding thud. For its injection of realism into the realm of fairy tale, _ B_ e_ a_ u_ t_ y is interesting, but it ultimately disappoints.