

Century proletariat revolution in the United States, followed by a civil war which results in a d_e_f_a_c_t_o Chinese takeover--but then many good books are based on equally unlikely premises. The question is whether the follow-through is both well-developed and true to the premise, and in this McHugh gets full marks.

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Undoubtedly the time McHugh spent living in China helped her to draw a believable Chinese, especially since it needn't be precisely the same as the present: time and events will effect changes in China, and outside of China her societies are blends of the Chinese influence with existing cultures. Even the main character, Zhang Zhong Shan, a.k.a. Raphael Luis, is a blend--half-Chinese, half-Hispanic. Though he "passes" as Chinese, he lives in fear that his Hispanic background will be discovered and his status lowered as a result. And he has other secrets, yet more dangerous.

McHugh's short fiction (her "Protection" was also nominated for a Hugo) shows her knowledge of China and this, her first novel, shows that she can project this into a future that has complexities which are to us at the same time both strange and familiar. I recommend this compelling story of a society and the people within it.

(More than likely there will also be discussion of J_u_r_a_s_s_i_c_P_a_r_k, dinosaurs, and Harry Harrison's W_e_s_t_o_f_E_d_e_n, a recent discussion book.) [-ecl]

2. Well, I guess it doesn't do me much good to say it now, but I k_n_e_w it was going to happen. I was even going to write a column about it at the time, predicting it was going to happen again and it has. There was a fire at the Spanish Riding School connected to the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. I think all the royal families of Europe are going to want to have their own fires now that the royal family of Britain had their successful fire at Windsor Palace.

You know that when you are as rich as the Windsors, it is darned hard to get public sympathy. But you know that family is having its difficulties. Oh, the kids are all going bad and none of them is really interested in carrying on the family business of monarchy. It is probably a little daunting also to think that some day you may have forced upon you the title of "Supreme Head of the

Anglican Church," particularly if really all you are looking for is a bit of crumpet on the side.

But then there is this fire and everybody wants to be sure the Royal Family is okay. But then the story still isn't over. How's the art collection? Most people in England may have been only dimly aware that there was an art collection. Suddenly the papers were saying that the Renoirs were undamaged and that there was minor smoke damage to the Rembrandts. Now everybody can "ooh" and "aah" at the royal art collection. It is better than being selected for "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." It gets the faces of the Royal Family published in the papers again.

But the price is that now every royal family in Europe wants their own fire. The Hofburg Palace fire is only the second "Me, too" fire; there will be more. Mark my words.

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JURASSIC PARK
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: As few films in the past have ever managed to do, Steven Spielberg has tapped into the mother lode of human dreams and sense of wonder. Michael Crichton's story may be "Westworld" with dinosaurs, but for once the biotechnology and the special effects are phenomenal. Rating: high +3.

When Apollo 11 touched down on the moon, I got this funny feeling in my back and in the back of my neck. This was where a dream that I'd had became a reality. The feeling was one of "Oh boy! Here we go!" and one of real anticipation. In Michael Crichton's novel J_u_r_a_s_s_i_c_P_a_r_k, a little girl drew a very detailed picture of the animal that had bitten her. And the expert looked at the picture and identified it as a known type of lizard. But several of the details were wrong in her picture and that type of lizard was not known to bite people. But the case was closed. And

then someone else looks at the picture and says, "Whose kid drew the dinosaur?" And even though it was just a story, I got that same "Oh boy! Here we go!" So I was hoping that sequence would make it to the film. It didn't. Instead, paleontologist Alan Grant (played by Sam Neill), not knowing what the Jurassic Park concept is all about, suddenly sees an incredibly majestic sight that is undoubtedly something he had dreamed of his entire life and he is so overcome with joy and excitement and wonder that he has to look away. And I was feeling just about the same thing the character was. "Oh boy! Here we go!" Who hasn't dreamed about getting the dinosaurs back? Now you can indulge that fantasy for two hours and people are going to flock to do it.

Michael Crichton's story itself is really a variant on W_e_s_t_w_o_r_l_d. A theme park is created with genuine dinosaurs, resurrected thanks to the magic of DNA cloning from blood found in mosquitoes who sucked on dinosaurs and then were preserved in amber. Two paleontologists, a mathematician, and a lawyer come to certify that the park is real and safe. Of course it turns out that the park is very, very real but just a bit lacking in the safe category. Neill's Grant epitomizes the stereotype of the soft scientist who does not get along with machines, even seatbelts. Laura Dern plays Ellie Sattler, a second paleontologist who lives and works with Grant, every bit his equal. Like Grant she is at first enchanted by the island where live dinosaurs live, but soon discovers that live dinosaurs have their downside also. Jeff Goldblum has many of the best lines as an obnoxious but witty chaos mathematician. He uses her acerbic wit to point out just what can go wrong with the implementation of billionaire entrepreneur John Hammond's (Richard

Attenborough's) plan for the park. Attenborough finds a human side to Hammond that is not apparent in the book. Instead of a vicious maniac for success, he is more enthusiastic but likable. Other familiar faces include Bob Peck (who has done some excellent work in the past, including the BBC's E_d_g_e_o_f_D_a_r_k_n_e_s_s), Martin Ferrero, and Wayne Knight.

As enjoyable as Crichton's story is, there is much that cannot be fully appreciated without actually seeing it. No description can come close to the visual impact of this film. It has been suggested

that J_u_r_a_s_s_i_c_P_a_r_k ranks with S_t_a_r_W_a_r_s and K_i_n_g_K_o_n_g (1933) as a giant leap in representing images on the screen. However, there is actually little here that is really a breakthrough in technology, though virtually every effect that has ever been used to show dinosaurs on the screen was resurrected and perhaps refined. There are hand puppets, dinosaur suits, stop-motion, and computer graphics, seamlessly and flawlessly integrated. It took about four decades, but somebody has finally surpassed Ray Harryhausen at showing dinosaurs on the screen. It no longer is easy to tell that this effect is stop-motion and that one was a computer image, and the dinosaurs look as if they were in the scene with the people, not rear projections. Clearly inspired both by the work of Ray Harryhausen and by a recent revolution in scientific dinosaur art and paleontology, these dinosaurs show a lot of anatomy, including the wrinkles, the breathing, the bone structure, and often tremendous scale. They do not drag their tails on the ground and even the heaviest sauropods will rear up on their hind legs to reach the tops of trees. The one major aspect of modern dinosaur art technical speculation that was left behind is choice of color. The fossil record, of course, is silent on the color of dinosaurs and some artists these days suggest that it is likely that dinosaurs were brightly colored, but J_u_r_a_s_s_i_c_P_a_r_k's dinosaurs are dully colored. Still, the film does give a real air of authenticity. When the credits say no animals were hurt in the filming, one wonders, "How did they film that scene without killing that velociraptor?"

It is a tribute to the special effects that in some of the horror scenes I was genuinely tense. A really good film will make me tense, though I have not been actually frightened by a film since I was nine years old. (And just as an aside, I treasure those moments when I was young and actually frightened by film. I did even then, especially being terrified by W_a_r_o_f_t_h_e_W_o_r_l_d_s before I was three years old. I am very thankful that nobody "protected" m_e from them.) But along with the horror are also the moments of joy and wonder. I am pleased that the John Williams score concentrates on the wonder, not the horror of having the dinosaurs return. It would be nice if that wonder might push some younger viewers into fields such as paleontology that pay off in sense of wonder and fulfillment of curiosity, even if they are not as financially rewarding. It helps that J_u_r_a_s_s_i_c_P_a_r_k is reasonably scientifically

accurate. Most skepticism seems to center around a belief that dinosaur DNA would deteriorate in amber over the tens and hundreds of millions of years. You could not really clone DNA that old. But even that is open to conjecture. What does seem odd is that at one point early in the script one of the scientists surprisingly finds a supposedly extinct leaf from something other than a tree. I do not think that its presence is explained by the premise of cloning.

The script does include reasonable debates as to whether this particular scientific wonder is really what the world needs. Because it is a disaster story, of course the anti-science side has the upper hand, though not all the anti-science articles are convincing. The theme voiced by the mathematician that life w_i_l_l find a way to survive at first is a warning that the dinosaurs will not be contained, but eventually applies to the people as well.

The script was co-authored by Crichton, and David Koepp with more than a little humor borrowed from such diverse sources as Buster Keaton and Gary Larson, as well as a few jokes of their own. In total, this is one of the most enjoyable adventure films in years. I rate it a high +3 on the -4 to +4 scale, but then I am biased toward science fiction.

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INCIDENT AT OGLALA
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Michael Apted gives us a powerful documentary about the 1975 shoot-out at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This is far more powerful than its cliché-ridden companion film T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t. Rating: low +2 [-4 to +4].

In April of 1992 I reviewed T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t, one of a pair of films made by British filmmaker Michael Apted about the Lakota Indians of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. I was and remain fairly negative on T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t because, as I said in my review, the story-telling was not very good. I see the story as being extremely cliché-ridden and weak. I did--and still do--think Apted's implication that Indian magic really works weakened rather than strengthened the film. (This was not intended as an anti-Indian sentiment, as I feel the same way about any magic in a non-fantasy film. As a strict empiricist, I just do not believe in the supernatural, religious or otherwise.) At the time I expressed my belief that T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t was the wrong film for the right movement and I expressed my hopes that I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l_a would be better.
It is.

In spite of Apted having more experience with fiction films, his fiction films are often melodramatic. His more political films seem to give loaded arguments, making the villains dehumanized nasties. His I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l is a solid piece of political argument that cuts right to the bone. It has its "good guys" and "bad guys" also, but they are condemned by their own words and by the testimony of people actually involved in the incidents. It is the authenticity of the documentary style rather than the whim of a fiction scriptwriter in complete control that makes I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l so much better than T_h_u_n_d_e_r_h_e_a_r_t.

The fundamental conflict documented in I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l is the conflict between the traditionalist Indians and those more for assimilation into the dominant society. In 1975 the two groups were so much in conflict that the Pine Ridge Reservation became a literal battlefield with both sides killing each other in a reign of terror that claimed over sixty victims, mostly traditionalists. The FBI aligned itself with the assimilationist Indians. On June 26, 1975, two FBI agents were killed in the violence. I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l is the story of that shoot-out, what led up to it, and the aftermath. One man, Leonard Peltier, went to prison and is serving two consecutive life sentences. The film gives apparently strong evidence that Peltier was railroaded. Major witnesses are discredited. Evidence used in the trial is apparently shown to have

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been falsified. In general, the argument is very forceful.

I_n_c_i_d_e_n_t_a_t_O_g_l_a_l is a powerful piece of documentary filmmaking, far better than Apted's companion film. The evidence shown here seems more than ample to justify a re-trial, so much so that it undermines somewhat Apted's argument. It is hard to believe the entire judicial system up to the Supreme Court is so corrupt that this weight of evidence would be insufficient to justify a re-trial. Like J_F_K, while it is not totally convincing, it certainly raises questions that should be answered. I give it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

