

come out at same time in one big lump when you cannot appreciate them. In an attempt to smooth out the lumps I have decided to give you my own predictions for the next twelve months.

September, 1994: The current fashion of teens to wear untied shoes is superseded by a new fashion when Michael Jackson is seen in public with his fly accidentally unzipped.

November, 1994: A special Congressional committee is convened to investigate alleged links between the President of the United States and the Symbionese Liberation Army. Bob Dole announces he believes if there is indeed any connection, however slight, the people have a right to know the full story.

December, 1994: David Zyglund wins the National High School Geography Bee when he correctly finds Florida on an unlabeled map of the world.

March, 1995: A special congressional committee is convened to investigate alleged links between Bill Clinton's Arkansas gubernatorial staff and Hurricane Andrew. Bob Dole announces he believes the hurricane was the result of criminal negligence rather than overt action on Clinton's part, but still feels that Clinton should be made liable for any damages. He recommends that people suffering losses sue the President.

April, 1995: Bears discover fire.

July, 1995: A rally for peace and harmony in New York City turns violent following a jostling incident. Cars are overturned and two Korean groceries are torched.

August, 1994: Senator Robert Dole suggests to a CNN reporter that Bill Clinton should be held responsible by voters for any environmental damage to the planet Jupiter during his administration.

AFTERWORD: I write these pieces sometimes several weeks in advance

of their actual publication. After I wrote this piece I saw other articles on a similar theme talking about accusations against Bill Clinton. There was, for instance, an article in the August 8th U. S. N e w s a n d W o r l d R e p o r t asking in humorous cartoons if Clinton could be tied into the murders of Lincoln, Kennedy, and Julius Caesar. My idea came first, but they published first.

It is true that you really have a dilemma. You don't want to exempt a President from having to face justice for wrongs that he has done. But at the same time you do not want to see him tied up in litigation for the can be brought on by anybody who wants a little media attention. Speaking as somebody who actively voted against Clinton, I think the man has the makings of an uncommonly good President given a reasonable amount of support. And I suspect that fact could be why we are seeing all these accusations. Hearing about all these supposed Clinton conspiracies I am starting to wonder if there isn't just one big conspiracy, and that one is

against Clinton.

And on the very unlikely chance that even 1% of these accusations are true, and I don't for a moment think that they are, but if they are I want you to remember just one thing I said in this article. Namely, I didn't vote for him.

2. One of our members, Glen E. Cox, would like to advertise his own free fanzine for anyone who's interested:

"In a fit of hubristic madness, I began First Impressions in January of 1993. I needed a reason to write more, and since I have never had the drive to sit for hours and hours just simply creating like some Leepers I know of, but am the world's best at making up games for myself (no comments, thank you), I decided that I would write a page in my Daytimer for every book that I finished the moment after I finished it. This is known generally as a reading diary, but I thought I was inventing it. (I have a tendency to reinvent the wheel, and mine usually turns out to be square.) I

began sending it out to friends, then I branched out to sending it to people I saw posting on the net and who I admired, then I started advertising it in my signature. Know I've sunk to a new low and actually asked Evelyn if she would mention FI in the MT VOID newsletter. God, some people have no shame."

Here's an example of what you'll see in First Impressions, from my pick for the best book that I read in 1993:

A.S. Byatt, POSSESSION
[Random House, 1990, ISBN 0-394-58623-9]

I am stunned.

How often do you finish a book, slowly turning the back cover to close, as the hair on the back of your arms twitches upward with the electricity of mingled pleasure and sadness? This happens less often for me as I grow older, but at this moment I sit stunned for I have just finished this wonderful book by Ms. Byatt and I am not yet willing to surrender the feeling.

Yet, I also am urged to write this. The best writing--storytelling-- does this to me. Even as I marvel at what I have just experienced, I also am goaded to try my hand at miracles as well. Like the child who sees the magician at school and rushes home to ask the parents for a magic set. Like a child I am, to want to sit at the same table as Ms. Byatt, but yet I must, for maturity begins by imitating adults.

P_o_s_s_e_s_s_i_o_n is a book about words, so how unsurprising that I was thinking of these words that I would write upon finishing *its* words. I made mental notes to myself--"remember this passage" or "here, here is a meaning not to be forgotten." I can only hope to do justice to my past impressions of this book in this first impression.

First of all, this was not an easy book to read. As I commented to some people when I was only a hundred or so pages into it, the plot so far is the ultimate in boring, yet the

writing is so good that I find myself continuing to read. Then I got stuck. But I must stop and give a little summary of the actions in the book for those who haven't read it. There is a story within a story. The outer story is the discovery by Roland Mitchell of an instance in the great poet Randolph Henry Ash's life previously unaware to scholars, namely a connection with a little-known poet named Christabel LaMotte. The story of LaMotte and Ash forms the inner story. As a character says,

"Literary critics make natural detectives...You know the theory that the classic detective story arose with the classic adultery novel--everyone wanted to know who was the Father, what was the origin, what is the secret?"

What is the secret, indeed. The need to *know* the secret, to *possess* it, spurs Roland to track down the elusive link between Ash and LaMotte.

While the story of the two poets is beautiful and complex in its own right, the meta-story of Roland and the rest of the Ash/LaMotte scholars has a lot to commend it as well. Although the beginning seems to be about boring, dry academics, Byatt is actually setting up the characters in the best way, showing you what they are like, and when things start moving later, nothing seems unnatural.

The title says so much. This is a story of "possession" in all its myriad meanings, just as words so often do double and triple duty in the best poems. I am tempted to go through every definition of the word in the O.E.D. and then cite an example from the book, but instead I'll just do a sampling.

When Roland discovers the letters that begins the search (and the novel), instead of presenting them to his supervisor, Prof. Blackadder, he keeps them in his possession. The possession of the letters and memorabilia from Ash's life is a consuming interest of the American counterpoint to Blackadder, Mortimer Cropper. Ash declares himself to be possessed by La Motte; Roland and his partner, Maud Bailey, are possessed by the search. These are just a few of the many aspects of possession in the book.

I said before that I had gotten "stuck" in the book. About a hundred pages in, Roland and Maud discover a correspondence between Ash and LaMotte that fills about 35 pages. Byatt captures the Victorian letter style perfectly, almost to perfectly for this modern reader. Full of run-on sentences--often connection by dash after dash--the letters are of utmost importance to the plot, just as the Ash and LaMotte poems that grace the beginnings of each chapter. However, a modern reader understands how to read poems. The letters I tried to read as part of the novel rather than as letters, and immediately found myself frustrated and bored. I put the book down and read something else before returning to trudge my way through the letters. After that, the book was a joy to read.

The poet Christabel LaMotte is quoted in the book as saying, "A writer only becomes a true writer by practising his craft, as a great artist may experience with clay or oils until the medium becomes second nature, to be moulded however the artist may desire." This could be read as the "First Impressions" credo--the reason why I write these impressions.

I looked at P_o_s_s_e_s_s_i_o_n in the store when it first was published and several times after. I had finally made a decision that I wasn't going to read it, based on my perception of the subject material and its length. However, Mike Godwin responded quickly to my call for feedback in "Installment Six," and recommended this book. I'm glad that he did, and I now pass on his recommendation with my own. This is a wonderful book. [Finished July 14, 1993.]

If you would like to join the mailing list (with no obligation and nothing more to buy EVER), just drop me a line at write@free.org. The mailing list is free, but the books described may prove to be too much for your pocketbook ... looking at mine, *something* got to it!" [-Glen E. Cox, write@free.org]

3. Upcoming Films Presentation (film commentary by Mark R. Leeper):

This year the World Science Fiction Convention was held in Winnipeg. The upcoming film presentation at each year at the World Science Fiction Convention used to have reasonably detailed looks at upcoming films by people who are actually working on the films. And for me anyway that made it one of the high points of the convention. After a few years the style was changed and a single publicist would come and cover several films, not all of which had he worked on (obviously).

Now even that is not usually done any more. There will be maybe one or two "look inside" presentations, but most often what you have is a publicity film that covers some of the same territory but with more hype and less detail. The film will be of the sort of short that also runs on cable stations. Or a studio may just the same trailer that they show in theaters. These days the amount of special inside information that one gets is small compared to the amount of gloss and hype. Even so it is getting harder to make the current crop of films look good since there really seem to be fewer interesting films being made and a lot more like J_u_d_g_e_D_r_e_d_d. For someone wanting to know about upcoming films, there generally is more useful information even from E_n_t_e_r_t_a_i_n_m_e_n_t W_e_e_k_l_y (this year it is the August 26 issue) than from the World Science Fiction Convention film presentation. The earlier films were the least promising; the second half of the presentation seemed to contain the better films.

JUDGE DREDD

This was the only real presentation. This film, based on the comic book, is set in the world of the 21st Century with towering skyscrapers. There has been a good deal of class stratification in the society that is background to the film so that the bad neighborhoods are all over at ground level and the higher you are, the further up you live. It is an interesting metaphor, but it really doesn't work if you give it much thought. Apparently the police force in this society are called the "judges." A judge is, from the looks of things, a little bit of judge, a little bit of jury, much more a policeman, and a whole lot an executioner. The title character is the meanest of the judges. In the comic book, you never see Judge Dredd's face, but in the film you can be sure you will see that he is played by Sylvester Stallone, but a supporting cast including Max von Sydow and Juergen Prochnow. The presentation showed several production sketches with what they want the city to look like and especially what care they are lavishing on designing the guns. This one is a futuristic pump-action shotgun, that one is a handgun that shoots six kinds of bullets. The talk was about 20 minutes and totally failed to mention

anything at all that would interest me in seeing this film.

SPACE GHOST

Back when I was young there was a cartoon that I never watched called _ S _ p _ a _ c _ e _ G _ h _ o _ s _ t. This seems to be a resurrection of the character for TV syndication with more intended humor. It seemed pointless and weak. The words did not even fit Space Ghost's lips. It was an odd choice for this audience, but I suppose there might have been a fan or two in the room.

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TWO STUPID DOGS

A joyless presentation with a promo tape for a cartoon series from Hanna-Barbera. Apparently like "crazy" and "bad," the word "stupid" is becoming a positive. This one is chock-full of gags like telling the dogs to "shake" and having them stand up and dance. Stupid is the word, all right.

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

The most popular author in America has disappeared. Sam Neill plays a detective looking for him and the search leads to finding a town where something Cthulu-like seems to reign. This is John Carpenter's adaptation of an H. P. Lovecraft horror story. The trailer implies that there is something very non-human at the center of the problems that you do get to see this thing, but beyond that it is tough to judge the quality of the film. Juergen Prochnow is in this one also.

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE

Apparently this film is about the return of Freddy Kruger from what was promised to be his death in the last film. It is Wes Craven directing again for the first time since the first film. For those who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they like.

DON JUAN DEMARCO AND THE CENTERFOLD

Johnny Depp plays a Latin who believes himself to be the legendary Don Juan. He is sent to a psychiatric hospital where women on the staff cannot help but fall passionately in love with him. Some people, including his doctor (played by Marlon Brando), become convinced he really is Don Juan. The film appears to be like T_h_e_y M_i_g_h_t_B_e_G_i_a_n_t_s with sex. Faye Dunaway also stars.

THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS OF HERCULES

Just what the world needs: a weekly TV show with beefcake and sandal. The trailer made it look only mediocre, but even that may be a moral victory for whoever made the trailer. There is a special effect in showing Hercules defeat a giant in the trailer and it looked okay, but unimpressive in a world that has toaster graphics.

TIMECOP

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Jean-Claude Van Damme kicks his way into another science fiction film which looks a little better than his U_n_i_v_e_r_s_a_l_S_o_l_d_i_e_r. The downside is that the film is directed by Peter Hyams who tends to make bad judgements about what to do with science fiction. Ron Silver is a politician from the future who uses backward time travel for money (e.g., knowing when some famous gold shipment took place) and political gain. Van Damme is the title character sent back to prevent nasty changes in the timestream. I sat next to a woman who had attended an advanced screening and said that it really is a good piece of science fiction built on time travel paradoxes. She thoroughly enjoyed the film.

STREET FIGHTER

Jean-Claude Van Damme has a second film coming out. This is based on a popular video game of the same name in spite of the fact that Jean-Claude Van Damme seems to be spending none of the time in the film fighting anywhere near a street. Raul Julia plays a dictator who has captured a herd of American hostages and intends to execute them if we don't either hand him a chunk of the GNP or send over a crack commando team for his minions to fight with. I am amazed they could get Julia into the silly looking pseudo-military uniform complete with cap out of a Blackhawk comic and cape out of Zorro. The real question is whether they be able to capture the intelligence and depth of character development in the video game. Initially it looks like they won't.

FRANKENSTEIN

The trailer for F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n is the same trailer that has been playing in theaters for months. Kenneth Branagh directs as well as taking the title role. The publicity shows nothing of Robert De Niro as the monster. The production looks very stylish and this one is certainly on my must-see list. One wonders what kind of liberties it will take with the story. A faithful adaptation of the Shelley novel would probably move too slowly to be cinematic. Certainly that was in the one faithful version to date, V_i_c_t_o_r F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n (a.k.a. T_e_r_r_o_r_o_f F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n). This version looks a lot more melodramatic, if one can judge by the trailer. Certainly this is the film I am most eagerly awaiting this year.

STARGATE

This looks like a big budget science fiction spectacle about an odd artifact discovered by an archeological dig in Egypt which proves to be a gateway to a parallel world. This world is supposedly where the ancient Egyptians got all those weird ideas about architecture and what gods look like. Today we, of course, know a

lot better what gods and buildings should look like. The film stars Kurt Russell and James Spader and is spending a lot of green

recreating the desert culture of Ancient Egypt. In the alien world there are pack animals that look very much like fugitives from _ T_ h_ e _ D_ a_ r_ k _ C_ r_ y_ s_ t_ a_ l. I didn't see a credit but that leads me to think that Brian Froud may be involved somehow. There is an open question of why equipment on the other world is done in motifs with Earth animals like jackals and falcons. Jaye Davison of _ T_ h_ e _ C_ r_ y_ i_ n_ g _ G_ a_ m_ e appears.

RAPA-NUI

This is a story of love and passion on a South Sea island. In this case it is Easter Island at the time when the natives were erecting the famous giant stone heads. The story looks like it could almost be a remake of _ T_ a_ b_ o_ o. South Sea Island romances sounds like a cinematic idea whose time has come and gone. This one will succeed with me or fail depending on how interesting they make the background culture.

THE SPECIALIST

Sylvester Stallone and Sharon Stone star in a film about a woman who hires an explosives expert to get revenge on the Cuban-American crime figures who murdered her family. How very timely! The nasties are Rod Steiger and Eric Roberts. James Woods fits into it somewhere also. I think that all the acting talent is in the supporting roles. This one looks like sex and explosions. Luis Llosa (_ S_ n_ i_ p_ e_ r) directs from a screenplay by Alexandra Seros (_ P_ o_ i_ n_ t _ o_ f_ N_ o_ R_ e_ t_ u_ r_ n).

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

There is not much to be told from the trailer for this adaptation of the Anne Rice novel. The film looks to be stylish. Tom Cruise does not look at all silly as the Vampire Lestat. In fact he may even look as good stiff in a high collar as he looked dancing in his underwear. Rumor has it that Anne Rice fought having Cruise cast. But like Frederic March, Cruise might well overcome his "pretty-boy" looks to become a decent actor. Certainly Neil Jordan is a good director with a fresh eye for the supernatural as he showed in _ T_ h_ e _ C_ o_ m_ p_ a_ n_ y_ o_ f_ W_ o_ l_ v_ e_ s. Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas, and Christian Slater also appear. The ad seems an imitation of the trailer for _ F_ r_ a_ n_ k_ e_ n_ s_ t_ e_ i_ n.

GARGOYLES

Years ago the trailer for Willow showed skull-faced warriors on horseback and said "Forget all you know about good and evil." I thought this looked like a great idea. It sounded like the skull-warriors were going to be the heroes and perhaps the angelic looking creatures could be the villains for once. I was wrong, but I have long wanted to see that sort of thing done. I get very tired of this equation of pretty and good. In this apparent TV series the title characters are reasonable creatures on whom the French sculpture based gargoyles. They are living in of world where we humans assume they are evil just because they are ugly to us. There is some room there for interesting ideas, I suppose.

THE PUPPET MASTERS

Donald Sutherland stars in an adaptation of Robert Heinlein's 1951 novel about aliens taking over the minds of humans and the battle to stop them. The story was (probably) the inspiration for Jack Finney's novel TheBodySnatchers, itself adapted three times into films. Director Stuart Orme is counting on it cutting the mustard with audiences that he is adapting the earlier and hence more original novel. Right. The fact remains that audiences will probably see a lot of similarity in the two stories and the film will have to try very hard not to have a derivative feel. The alien creature is sufficiently creepy looking and realistic to make for some chills. The production values look quite good.

ED WOOD

I really dislike the practice of making fun of bad films or trying to pick the worst film ever made. That is really a search for the worst film that was ever good enough to get relased at all. It is sort of like looking for the coldest warm day on record. Ed Wood was a truly incompetent filmmaker who has become a cult figure for a bunch of mean-spirited, smirking film fans. That said, Tim Burton's EdWood bio-pic looks like it is going to be a lot of fun. I always enjoy films about filmmaking and Wood was a man with a lot of strange kinks in his head to make it even more interesting. Johnny Depp does not look a lot like Wood, but they at least make him up to look the type. On the other hand, they do a really terrific job on Martin Landau to make him look like the dying Bela

Lugosi. There might even be an Oscar nomination for Landau in the role from what I have seen. The filmclip made sure to show that Bill Murray was in the film as one of Wood's actors. Unfortunately Murray ruins the re-creation of some of the scenes by not at least taking the films as seriously as the original actors did. Larry Karaszewski and Scott Alexander wrote the screenplay and their only experience is co-writing P_r_o_b_l_e_m_C_h_i_l_d_2. Sarah Jessica Parker co-stars as someone reasonably normal compared to Wood, though she previously played SanDeE*, a character with her own weird kinks in

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L_A_S_T_O_R_Y. Jeffrey Jones and Patricia Arquette co-star also.

HIGHLANDER III

Oh, now look. The first H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r film, as shot, had fights, rock music, and an interesting fantasy about the implications of immortality. Then they decided they wanted a shorter film and sliced out something like nineteen minutes of the best material of the film. H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r_I_I: T_h_e

Q_u_i_c_k_e_n_i_n_g reportedly was awful, made no sense, and was just an exploitation of the property. It was a

way to shake money out of the fans of the first film. Now we are being told that H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r_I_I is a sequel to the first film and the second film is invalid. Didn't Toho try this with Godzilla and they just went back and made the same mistakes all over again? By lobotomizing the first film and then turning out a tripe sequel the producers have shown that they do not care about the fantasy element or the character. I will wait until I hear from somebody else that Fox did well by the immortality concept in H_i_g_h_l_a_n_d_e_r_I_I. And even then I probably won't believe it.

Well, that was the round-up. There was nothing I can say I really am desperate to see, though F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n and E_d_W_o_o_d look like they could be very good and S_t_a_r_g_a_t_e, T_i_m_e_c_o_p, and T_h_e_P_u_p_p_e_t_M_a_s_t_e_r_s might turn out decent also.

4. EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: The lives of a master chef and his three daughters are told with occasional interruptions to see how Chinese banquet foods are prepared. The film tells the story of four interconnected lives in one family in a film that is both a little long and still a bit rushed. Rating high +1 (-4 to +4)

Ang Lee is the Taiwanese filmmaker best known to American audiences for last year's charming but occasionally clichéd T_h_e_W_e_d_d_i_n_g_B_a_n_q_u_e_t. This year the fans of that film can enjoy his new film E_a_t_D_r_i_n_k_M_a_n_W_o_m_a_n.

Eating and drinking. Men and women. The title refers to two of the basic human urges. One is to consume food and drink; the other is to mate. These fundamental urges are central to Ang Lee's story of a great chef and his three adult daughters. Each of the four has a life of her or his own and each of the lives intersect at the

dinner table over almost pornographically seductive Chinese banquet dishes. Not since B_a_b_e_t_t_e'_s_F_e_a_s_t has food looked this sensually inviting in a film. (And, yes, I have considered L_i_k_e_W_a_t_e_r_f_o_r_C_h_o_c_o_l_a_t_e,T_a_m_p_o_p_o,T_h_e_A_g_e_o_f_I_n_n_o_c_e_n_c_e, and W_h_o's_K_i_l_l_i_n_g_t_h_e_G_r_e_a_t_C_h_e_f_s_o_f_E_u_r_o_p_e. Did I miss any?)

Eldest of the daughters is Jen (played by Kuei-Mei Yang), a sexually repressed chemistry professor who is just coming out of being shell-shocked from a college romance. The second daughter is Chien (Chien-Lien Wu) a successful executive for the Taiwanese national airline. Deep down she regrets that she never became a proficient cook and housewife since her father would not let her do the cooking. Third of the daughters is Ning (Yu-Wen Wang) who rebelliously works in a Wendy's Hamburger Restaurant to spite her

father's culinary tastes.

Then there is Chef Chu himself (Si-hung Lung). Knowing that he will soon lose his daughters and dreading an empty nest, he is losing his taste for life and has already literally lost his taste for food. In his attempts to connect he has adopted the family next door: a friend of Jen's and her mother and daughter. But nothing in this film is very far from food. Chu's relationship with the little girl next door is through his cooking. When the family gets together and communicates it is over one of Chu's carefully prepared meals. It is over meals that announcements are made to the family. Much of the screen time is spent showing exactly how Chu prepares his feasts. These interruptions would be irritating distractions from the storyline but they have their own interest value.

E_a_t_D_r_i_n_k_M_a_n_W_o_m_a_n is a long film at 123 minutes and at times the film moves slowly developing the relationships that form the four different stories. Lee is ambitious trying to tell so much plot, but even at more than two hours some of the stories end up a bit sketchy and rushed. In particular, Ning's story is slighted with a rushed telling.

But like T_h_e_W_e_d_d_i_n_g_B_a_n_q_u_e_t, this film will probably be popular in the United States for different reasons than it will be popular in Lee's native Hong Kong. Remove the Chinese culture from each and you have a story that is watchable but already a little familiar in this country. Neither plot is probably as common in Taiwan. But United States audiences may find that the view of the dynamics of a Taiwanese family is compensation. This story is not so well written or structured as last year's J_o_y_L_u_c_k_C_l_u_b. But it still is an enjoyable comedy-drama, perhaps a bit on the light side. I rate the film a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. Plan to go out for Chinese food after you see the film.

5. Montreal International Film Festival (a film festival review by *Evelyn C.* Leeper) (part 1 of 2):

I don't normally review films, leaving that to Mark. However, our initial plan for this festival was that we would not necessarily be seeing films together and so I figured I would review the ones Mark didn't. As it turned out, we ended up going to all the same movies but I was already prepared to write some reviews, so what the heck. I will, however, avoid repeating the same comments about the festival that he makes (regarding ticket procedures, etc.).

One thing we had to be careful of in deciding what films to (try to) see was what language(s) the film was in. Many of the non-English-language films are sub-titled in French rather than English. We prefer not to repeat my M_a_l_e_v_i_l experience: I went to see M_a_l_e_v_i_l at a science fiction convention in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, it was in French. Fortunately, it was sub-titled.

Unfortunately, it was sub-titled in Dutch. This time the only thing we had initially selected that had no English was J_e_a_n_n_e_L_a
P_u_c_e_l_l_e, P_a_r_t_s_I_a_n_d_I, and those turned out to be sold out

anyway. (The Cinema Imperial, a magnificent older, and larger, theater, had what they called "Softtitles," which is an electronic subtitling system similar to what is used for super-titles at operas. This makes it possible to show films subtitled in both English and French, with the English on the film itself and the French on the board, and that is what was done with, for example, the Chinese S_t_o_r_y_o_f_Y_u_n_n_a_n.)

The first night of the festival there were only two films,
K_a_b_l_o_o_n_a_k and N_a_t_u_r_a_l_B_o_r_n
K_i_l_l_e_r_s. The first, because it was the official opening of the festival, did not accept the coupons sold at ten for C\$45; the second was sold out by the time decided to try to go. In fact, before the festival even opened, about two dozen screenings were sold out, mostly French-language or high-profile films. (The one sold-out film that didn't meet either of these criteria was M_r_s._P_a_r_k_e_r_a_n_d_t_h_e_V_i_c_i_o_u_s
C_i_r_c_l_e--and that turned out to have been filmed in Montreal.) So we decided to spend our unexpectedly free evening ... going to a movie!

T_h_e_A_r_c_h_i_t_e_c_t_u_r_e_o_f_D_o_o_m, directed by Peter Cohen, Sweden, 1989,

1:59: "This fascinating film takes an amazing look at the Third Reich from the point of view of aesthetics, particularly Hitler's. With shockingly accurate logic and a wealth of visual material, the filmmaker offers a strong new answer to the question of how it could have happened in the first place."

This film starts at the beginning, discussing Hitler's early

School in Vienna. Some of Hitler's early water colors are shown (described as being of the picture postcard level), and indeed the fact that many of the upper echelon of the Third Reich were failed artists in one medium or another figures strongly in Cohen's thesis. This rejection of their work, it is implied, may have led to the Third Reich's rejection of modern art and its proponents as "degenerative," "decadent," and representative of a general decay in society. (Sound familiar?) Hitler declared that the Reich would save society from this decay. This was, of course, just another way of saying that art must serve the state.

Basing his artistic goals on his three obsessions--antiquity, Richard Wagner, and his home town of Linz--Hitler gradually expanded his artistic philosophy into other fields. Cleanliness, for example, was seen as an expression of beauty and stressed to the populace. Later, when the gassings of "undesirables" began, this could be presented as just another effort towards cleanliness. And Hitler fought the war not with 20th Century objectives, but with those of antiquity: enslave the enemy, level their cities, destroy the land. Had he not followed this policy, Cohen suggests, the Russians might not have opposed him so strongly.

Cohen uses only archival footage to demonstrate his theses. While he at times seems to drift somewhat off his purpose of showing the aesthetic basis for all of Hitler's policies, on the whole he covers that well and has produced a very engaging and thought-provoking film. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4).

T h e A d v e n t u r e s o f P r i s c i l l a,
Q u e e n o f t h e D e s e r t, directed by
Stephan Elliott, Australia, 1:42:

This is a "road picture," but what a road! Through the wide open spaces of the center of Australia travels "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," an old and not very luxurious bus, along with Priscilla's passengers, three drag queens on their way to a gig in Alice Springs. They meet various people (including the obligatory

meeting with native Australians), have adventures, and reveal their personalities and problems to each other along the way.

This is a movie with a lot of style--not surprising, given the occupation of the main characters. In fact, one of the film's messages seems to be that when it comes to style, drag queens have it all over the rest of us. (The scene as the bus pulls out of Sydney is hardly subtle in this regard.)

TheAdventuresofPriscilla,
QueenoftheDesert has some things to say, but its value lies in the interesting characters, especially Terence Stamp as a transsexual drag queen past her prime, and the sheer pleasure of watching flamboyance on a grand scale. It may not be a great film, but it certainly is a fun one. Rating: +2 (-4

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to +4).

JackL.Warner,theLastMogul, directed by Gregory Orr, USA, 1:44:

I just know this will show up on television the week we get back--it is a made-for-TV film and that's usually how our luck runs. But we figured we might as well see a film about a film producer at a film festival. (Not too many agreed with us--while the theater for Priscilla was packed, this had maybe three dozen people all together.) Unfortunately, this is a rather run-of-the mill documentary.

Gregory Orr is Jack Warner's grandson--well, actually, he's the son of Warner's step-daughter (who by the way was the actress who played the young Bulgarian woman in Casablanca), which makes his claim to be Warner's grandson a bit debatable, and makes me wonder if the truth isn't being stretched elsewhere as well. (In fact, the photographs shown while the narrator is talking about the Warners emigrating to America include some of the Warners and many other which are just general archival photographs, yet no distinction is made.)

The film did have its interesting moments. Neal Gabler talked about the irony of Russian Jewish immigrants marginalized by American society, founding the industry that would eventually come to define American society. It was also thought-provoking to see the contrast between Warner Brothers Studios's actions during the 1930s, when they shut down operations in any country occupied by the Nazis, and in the 1950s, when they completely caved in to pressure from HUAC. (They had made M i s s i o n t o M o s c o w during the war at the express request of President Roosevelt, who wanted a film favorable to our then-allies and came under suspicion in the McCarthy era because of it.)

It seemed to me that Orr spent too much time on h i s story, even including a movie he made as a child, instead of concentrating on his subject. This will probably do well on television as a nostalgia piece, but doesn't have any spark beyond that. Rating: 0 (-4 to +4).

M i s s A m e r i g u a, directed by Luis Vera, Paraguay/Sweden, 1:33:

We chose this film in part because the description reminded us of S m i l e, an unfairly over-looked American film about a day in the life of a beauty pageant. (Vera was present at the screening and I asked him if he had seen S m i l e--he hadn't.) M i s s A m e r i g u a is much more political than S m i l e, but still contains a lot of wit and character development as well.

The film begins twenty years ago, when Evaristo Morales's father is killed by Sergeant Banderas, and Evaristo, still a young child, must flee for his life. It then flashes forward to the present, the day of the big beauty pageant in Amerigua, sponsored by many companies, including "Coca-Cola--always Coca-Cola," as the rather nerdy-looking reporter says.

The film primarily follows three of the contestants through the day: Rosa Morales, sister of Evaristo and mistress to the now-

Colonel Banderas; Maria Descamparo, fiancée to the Colonel's son; and Carmen Banderas, the Colonel's daughter. We also meet Inocencio Lopez, the reporter; Reencarnacion, the somewhat effete hairdresser; and various other characters who will shape the day's events.

Imbued with an atmosphere of magical realism and witchcraft, M_i_s_s
A_m_e_r_i_g_u_a is an entertaining film with political content (though the latter is fairly predictable and delivered as speeches as much to the audience as to the other characters in the film). The contrast between the old ways and the new is perhaps more subtle and runs as an undercurrent through the film, without a blanket declaration that one is better than the other. The English subtitles were not always perfect ("know" instead of "now," for example), but were readable, and usually fairly accurate to the Spanish dialogue (though I caught a couple of mistranslations, such as "damned town" for what is closer to "shitty town"). Rating: +2 (-4 to +4).

(Vera was apparently very impressed at how many people were in the audience for a 9 AM showing, since he commented on it not only when he spoke at the showing, but also the next day in a radio interview.)

(to be concluded)

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