



In THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER, Alan Arkin plays a deaf-mute forced to move to a new town to be near a hospitalized friend. There his life touches those of many of the people around him, particularly the family of the house where he boards. Arkin and Sandra Locke were both nominated for Oscars. Also in this

THE MT VOID

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adaptation of the novel by Carson McCullers are Stacy Keach, Percy Rodriquez, and Cecily Tyson. Normally we would show films in the order in which they were made, but since this is the less commonly seen film, we will show it first.

Harper Lee's novel TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD was adapted by Horton Foote, who won an Oscar for the script. Gregory Peck won an Oscar for his role as a Southern lawyer who becomes hated in his town for defending a black man (Brock Peters) accused of raping a white woman. The story is seen through the eyes of his two young children. The film earned five Oscar nominations in addition to the two it won. It was nominated for Best Picture (losing to L\_a\_w\_r\_e\_n\_c\_e\_o\_f\_A\_r\_a\_b\_i\_a) and Best Score. Robert Duvall makes his film debut in a brief but memorable role.

These two films have something else in common, incidentally. Both are long--so please try to be on time.

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There is no creed so false but faith can make it true.  
-- Henry David Thoreau

THE TIME AXIS by Henry Kuttner  
A book review by Frank R. Leisti  
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It is often a pleasure to reread some of the old science fiction books that I have accumulated in my library. T\_h\_e\_T\_i\_m\_e\_A\_x\_i\_s by Henry Kuttner is one such book. This book, copyright 1948 was published by Ace Books, Inc. and has that fabulous price of \$.40 on the cover. It was from an earlier time of science fiction, which really hit home when it stated that the periodic table of elements had been increased by elements 85 and 87, astatine and francium.

To view such a work of time travel, such as T\_h\_e\_T\_i\_m\_e\_A\_x\_i\_s, is to remember an earlier time of the Bohr atom, and the painstaking investigations into the happenings of the universe. This type of time travel used the method of a particular point within the earth that flowed through time -- keeping separate space and time within the three-dimensional oval space that constituted the time axis. The story involves four travelers of time, a doctor, a scientist, a military man, and a journalist. The full circle of time is evident, when the

scientist has uncovered the Time Axis and has found himself, a younger version of the the doctor, the military man and the journalist within the oval space past the events of time.

We discover the story as the journalist writes it later, before he begins his journey on through time -- like some roving reporter. From the various beginnings, we discover that an ancient artifact of the Cretan Empire was a futuristic Pandora's box that when opened by some scientific society, would force them to venture ahead in time to combat the terror of nekron, "a new form of matter, the death of energy -- a pattern, a dead null-energy pattern of negation" of both space and time.

Of course, predestiny plays its hand upon the world and these four time travelers move into the Time Axis and are interrupted in their journey to the end of time to get involved in a small event, where they come face to face with their duplicates. Their memories complete, they find the situation not to their liking and are forced to defend themselves and move back into the Time Axis.

Finally at the end of time of this world, with the Face of Ea, who has summoned them to do what they need to do -- rid the universe of nekron.

While quite simplistic in terms of its writing -- covering events and involving the paradoxes of time and the universe, it was a wonderful story from earlier years and it brought back to me the desires that I once had to read all the science fiction in the world -- to imagine worlds, galaxies, and universes beyond that of the ordinary. From our roots in reading science fiction, whether for pleasure or for

imaginative fun, this story brings back those innocent years of reading for the wondrous worlds that could be created by someone's imagination and effort.

In terms of today's work, there are but a few ideas placed here and a weak character development show the weak side of this book. Yet, it was one of the early works -- from which others drew their strengths and ideas from. On the Leeper scale, it rates a low -1.



## THE GRIFTERS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: A lot of impressive names cooperated to create a surprisingly unimpressive f\_i\_l\_m\_n\_o\_i\_r crime story. This film pulls its punches by throwing in absurdities at the wrong moment and has at least one surprisingly vicious scene. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4).

A "grifter" is a con-man (nobody calls them "con-persons"), someone who makes a living by fraud. There are little cons and big cons. A small con will net pocket change and maybe a busted jaw. A big con can net in the millions and can get you killed. Con men have been portrayed as likable in T\_h\_e\_F\_l\_i\_m\_F\_l\_a\_m\_M\_a\_n and T\_h\_e\_S\_t\_i\_n\_g. They are seen with a kind of dark awe in H\_o\_u\_s\_e\_o\_f\_G\_a\_m\_e\_s. Perhaps the most realistic view and by far one of the dirtiest is in T\_h\_e\_G\_r\_i\_f\_t\_e\_r\_s, a new film with a superb pedigree that still disappoints. What is the pedigree? It was a novel by Jim Thompson, a crime-story writer who is only now, after his death, reaching his greatest popularity. The film adaptation of his A\_f\_t\_e\_r\_D\_a\_r\_k\_M\_y\_S\_w\_e\_e\_t is also in current release. Thompson also occasionally did screen work, co-scripting one of the great films of all time, Kubrick's P\_a\_t\_h\_s\_o\_f\_G\_l\_o\_r\_y. Thompson's G\_r\_i\_f\_t\_e\_r\_s was adapted for the screen by Donald Westlake, himself a popular crime novelist and author of books such as B\_a\_n\_k\_S\_h\_o\_t. The film was produced by Martin Scorsese, who directed f\_i\_l\_m\_n\_o\_i\_r crime films such as M\_e\_a\_n\_S\_t\_r\_e\_e\_t\_s and T\_a\_x\_i\_D\_r\_i\_v\_e\_r, and directed by Stephen Frears, who also directed M\_y\_B\_e\_a\_u\_t\_i\_f\_u\_l\_L\_a\_u\_n\_d\_r\_e\_t\_t\_e, S\_a\_m\_m\_y\_a\_n\_d\_R\_o\_s\_i\_e\_G\_e\_t\_L\_a\_i\_d, and D\_a\_n\_g\_e\_r\_o\_u\_s\_L\_i\_a\_i\_s\_o\_n\_s. As close as it would be possible to have a spectacular f\_i\_l\_m\_n\_o\_i\_r film, this is it. Still, this turns out to be just an adequate crime story, little more.

The film concerns three grifters. First there is 25-year-old Roy Dillon (played limply by John Cusack). Then there is his 39-year-old mother Lily Dillon (played by the oddly mis-cast Anjelica Huston). Unusually mis-castings have a pretty person cast where someone grittier is needed. Here it may be the reverse. Lily looks old enough to be Roy's mother. The story calls for her to be Roy's mother without looking it. She is supposed to look young and attractive, and while Ms. Huston really is the right age for the role--she was born in 1952--she looks too old for the role and dressing her in a sexy dress and stiletto heels does not do it. The third vertex of this dark triangle is Myra (played by Annette Bening), a bouncy young grifter with a background for big grifts. Often her bounces are out of her clothes and onto a bed, particularly when big money is involved. She wants to partner up with Roy in more ways than one, but she and Lily are just too similar and know too much about each other to get along.

(I will try to avoid spoilers in what follows but there will be minor spoilers.)

What is wrong with this story? Why is this only an adequate crime story? First, the plotting is less complex than you would expect. You have three devious characters and one would expect a really devious plot, but it fails to materialize. There are no big surprises in the plotting. The viewer never really feels gifted by the script. Second, parts of this film really do not make sense. The climax of the film is contrived and if it is not a physical impossibility, it is a very strong physical improbability. In another incident, a bullet is fired and the police conclusion about the incident seems completely inconsistent with what would have been the trajectory of the bullet. It is almost comical to imagine the incident as the police must be picturing it to create the required trajectory. While the previous problem in physics is probably from the novel, the trajectory problem seems to be Frears not thinking out the scene ahead of time and could have been avoided.

This is not a bad film, it just fails to materialize into a very good one. The scenes that should carry the dramatic impact lose it because of small absurdities. In my opinion, this film has been over-rated. It would have made a decent black-and-white in the 1940s and it still is just about that good. My rating is +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## HAMLET

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Unexceptional is really the word for the new H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t from Franco Zeffirelli. Gibson is okay as Hamlet but is nothing startling. Glenn Close is the only actor experimenting with her role. The scenery is nice but this much-trimmed re-telling is nothing Shakespeare would feel bad for missing. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4).

Generally in reviewing a film, first consideration is given to how good the story is. It is a little tougher to review a Shakespeare film because, whatever the good qualities of the story itself or even the dialogue, it is pointless to praise the gentleman who contributed them. H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t is a film that gets no points, positive or negative, for story. The question is not whether H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t is a good story, but rather whether this is a good H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t.

First of all, this is not so much H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t as H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t\_t\_e. Every line that's there is Shakespeare's, but not every line that is Shakespeare's is there. Franco Zeffirelli tells the story slowly, taking time to bathe the viewer in the impressive scenery, then cutting much of the play--half, I am told--to make it fit into two and a quarter hours. As



one expects from a Zeffirelli film, it is lushly filmed, though perhaps not so much as some of his other films, particularly the ones set in Italy. This film has less of the soft focus of, say, R\_o\_m\_e\_o\_a\_n\_d\_J\_u\_l\_i\_e\_t. The scenery is mostly in stoney castles shot with a much harder focus. Some of the exteriors look much like the real Elsinore, but the Scottish castles used for the interiors has far too much Celtic-looking decoration. Ennio Morricone's score is not only much less intrusive than usual, it seems nearly non-existent. Surprisingly few scenes have any score at all.

The important question is whether a popular actor like Mel Gibson can play a good Hamlet. In many ways Hamlet is very much a character of the 1990s. He has horrible family problems, he screws up his love life, and he has absolutely atrocious audience manners. Gibson's Hamlet, however, is surprisingly uninteresting and not particularly relevant to either Hamlet's time or our own. Gibson's performance makes no statement about the Dane that was not on the printed page. By contrast Glenn Close's Gertrude takes the incest a step further than Shakespeare's did by apparently being attracted to her own son. Alan Bates plays new King Claudius not very notably and even the great Paul Scofield seems unable to do much with his role. Helena Bonham-Carter of A\_R\_o\_o\_m\_w\_i\_t\_h\_a\_V\_i\_e\_w and L\_a\_d\_y\_J\_a\_n\_e needs a new character to play.

This film has too many problems to become the definitive H\_a\_m\_l\_e\_t the way Zeffirelli's is the best known version of R\_o\_m\_e\_o\_a\_n\_d\_J\_u\_l\_i\_e\_t. It is simply an okay retelling of the classic story. Rent H\_e\_n\_r\_y\_V instead. I give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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