

Director: David Lean (_ B _ r _ i _ e _ f _ E _ n _ c _ o _ u _ n _ t _ e _ r , _ G _ r _ e _ a _ t
_ E _ x _ p _ e _ c _ t _ a _ t _ i _ o _ n _ s , _ O _ l _ i _ v _ e _ r
_ T _ w _ i _ s _ t , _ T _ h _ e _ S _ o _ u _ n _ d _ B _ a _ r _ r _ i _ e _ r , _ T _ h _ e
_ B _ r _ i _ d _ g _ e _ o _ v _ e _ r _ t _ h _ e _ R _ i _ v _ e _ r _ K _ w _ a _ i ,
_ L _ a _ w _ r _ e _ n _ c _ e
_ o _ f _ A _ r _ a _ b _ i _ a , _ D _ r . _ Z _ h _ i _ v _ a _ g _ o , _ A _ P _ a _ s _ s _ a _ g _ e
_ t _ o _ I _ n _ d _ i _ a)

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Screenwriter: Robert Bolt (_ L _ a _ w _ r _ e _ n _ c _ e _ o _ f _ A _ r _ a _ b _ i _ a , _ D _ r .
_ Z _ h _ i _ v _ a _ g _ o , _ A _ M _ a _ n
_ f _ o _ r _ A _ l _ l _ S _ e _ a _ s _ o _ n _ s , _ T _ h _ e _ M _ i _ s _ s _ i _ o _ n)

Score: Maurice Jarre (_ T _ h _ e _ L _ o _ n _ g _ e _ s _ t _ D _ a _ y ,
_ L _ a _ w _ r _ e _ n _ c _ e _ o _ f _ A _ r _ a _ b _ i _ a , _ D _ r .
_ Z _ h _ i _ v _ a _ g _ o , _ T _ h _ e _ P _ r _ o _ f _ e _ s _ s _ i _ o _ n _ a _ l _ s ,
_ R _ e _ s _ u _ r _ r _ e _ c _ t _ i _ o _ n , _ A _ P _ a _ s _ s _ a _ g _ e _ t _ o _ I _ n _ d _ i _ a ,
_ M _ a _ d
_ M _ a _ x _ B _ e _ y _ o _ n _ d _ T _ h _ u _ n _ d _ e _ r _ d _ o _ m _ e , many more)

Cast: Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Alec Guinness, Arthur Kennedy,
Jack Hawkins, Donald Wolfitt, Claude Rains, Anthony Quayle, Anthony
Quinn, Jose Ferrer

Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Cinematography,
Best Score

2. Warning: There is a _ S _ t _ a _ r _ T _ r _ e _ k spoiler in item 4.

3. [From the NY Times, April 28, 1988] MINNEAPOLIS, April 27 (AP) -
Clifford Donald Simak, a newspaperman and an award-winning writer
of science fiction, died Monday at Riverside Medical Center in
Minneapolis. He was 83 years old.

Mr. Simak wrote more than two dozen novels, several nonfiction
science books and hundreds of short stories during his 37-year
career as reporter, city desk editor and science editor for The
Minneapolis Star and The Minneapolis Tribune.

Among his better-known titles are "City," published in 1952; "Way Station" (1963); "The Visitors" (1979) and "Skirmish: the Great Short Fiction of Clifford D. Simak," comprising stories he published from 1944 to 1975.

He received three Hugo awards, regarded as the Oscar of science-fiction writing, and three Science Fiction [Writers] of America Nebula Awards, including the Grand [Master] in recognition of his entire collection of work. He was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 1973.

Mr. Simak was born on a farm in southwestern Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin for a short time. He taught school for several years before taking the first of several newspaper jobs in 1929. He began his career with the Star and the Tribune in 1939.

Many science-fiction writers wrote of invincible supermen, but Mr. Simak wrote about common people who didn't always win.

"I have tried at times to place humans in perspective against the vastness of universal time and space," he once said. "I have been concerned with where we, as a race, may be going and what may be our purpose in the universal scheme - if we have a purpose.

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"In general, I believe we do, and perhaps an important one."

Mr Simak's wife of 56 years, Agnes, died in 1985. He is survived by a daughter, a son, and a brother.

4. Well, as promised, S t a r T r e k: T h e N e x t
G e n e r a t i o n has killed off
a major character. Lots of folks I know were hoping it would be Wesley. If you ask me I think every starship needs a Wesley crusher. But it turns out that the first major character to bite interstellar dust is Yar. Well, I never liked that name. It always sounded like something Robert Newton would say when he was playing Long John Silver: "Yar, me maties, there's treasure for

everyone down on the Worf." Yup, she's on that big Enterprise in the sky.

Anyway, do you know the difference between "prime" and "choice"? No? Well, you're in good company. The crew of the Enterprise always seems to treat the Prime Directive as if it were the Choice Directive: follow it only if the scriptwriter chooses to. In this episode, the crew had found the only known member of an alien species and were proceeding to flame-broil it with phasers. It wasn't bad enough that the Earthers invaded this poor thing's planet; they also have to start frying him/her/it/whatever.

So in the resulting melee Yar bought the farm. okay, at least she went out fighting. That is in the grand adventure tradition. But could they leave it at that? Noooo! Flash to the funeral--in fact, that's just what the transporter did with most of the main characters. Anyway, who is there? Not one person from the Security Staff. These people worked with her and didn't bother going to the funeral. What does that tell you? Anyway, they are at the funeral and a three-dimensional photographic image of Yar shows up over the grave and tells everyone how they've been just swell. I mean, is that a reasonable ending for the militant Yar? Here, she went out fighting and the writers still make her final scenes maudlin. Should this be the way Yar ends? "Not with a bang but a whimper..." Like something out of "The Holo-men." I mean, geez!

5. I have to go now. Bad news. Evelyn has just handed me my mail and there is an announcement from my HMO. Apparently due to financial problems they feel the need to resort to a policy of triage.

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

BILOXI BLUES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Matthew Broderick recreates his stage role as Eugene Jerome, who goes to boot camp in Mississippi. The film's greatest virtue is the portrayal of the troubled and enigmatic platoon sergeant. It's greatest fault is that the enigma is side-stepped rather than solved. Still, this is a credible view of a World War II army boot camp. Rating: high +1.

There are lots of comedies about life in the military. There are

films like M_r_ R_o_b_e_r_t_s, S_t_a_l_a_g_1_7, B_u_c_k
P_r_i_v_a_t_e_s, S_t_r_i_p_e_s, and P_r_i_v_a_t_e
B_e_n_j_a_m_i_n. The first two may have been written by someone who actually had been in the military. Somehow the last three show very little sign that anyone in their production knew or cared what army life was about.

S_t_r_i_p_e_s is a Bill Murray comedy set in the Army as opposed to be an army comedy starring Bill Murray. No problem. Bill Murray has lots of fans and one setting for his comedy is as good as another. But I can see a

M_r_ R_o_b_e_r_t_s or a S_t_a_l_a_g_1_7 over and over. Watching S_t_r_i_p_e_s once--while

reading a magazine--was plenty for me. Whoever wrote it had a really

solid understanding of Bill Murray humor. The writer of M_r_ R_o_b_e_r_t_s

gave more of an impression of knowing the military. Someone else who had been in the military and knew it was Neil Simon. His B_i_l_o_x_i_B_l_u_e_s is not shallow, is not stereotyped, and gives the feel that much of it might have happened.

B_i_l_o_x_i_B_l_u_e_s follows the boot camp experiences of Eugene Morris Jerome (played by Matthew Broderick) and his interactions with his sergeant (played by Christopher Walken) and the other men in his platoon, especially Arnold Epstein, an intellectual, the barracks butt, and the only Jew in the platoon apart from Jerome himself. But the character who steals the show is the sergeant. His enigmatic and idiosyncratic ways of building discipline are the core of the film and overhang nearly every scene. His character is, unfortunately, much too easily dismissed by the events of the climax of the film, so we never really come to understand him. The mystery of why he chooses such odd and intriguing lessons of discipline is never adequately explained.

B_i_l_o_x_i_B_l_u_e_s is not a great military comedy, but it is probably the best thing director Mike Nichols has done in quite a long time. Neil Simon adapted--and rumor has it, greatly modified--his own autobiographical play. At least three actors repeat their stage roles. Besides Broderick, Penelope Ann Miller returns to the part of Jerome's first love and Matt Mulhern repeats as Jerome's sometime-nemesis Wykowski. But even in this modified version one has the feeling that this film is based on something real, not fabricated as a backdrop. Rate it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

BELLMAN AND TRUE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Enjoyable heist film from England has a plot that should interest engineers. Not a bad little film, if not up to some of the crime films that have come from Britain of late. Unfortunately, the soundtrack is indistinct and much of the dialogue is lost. Rating: +1.

One tends to think of the United States for crime films. (I distinguish between crime films and detective films; a crime film is seen mostly from the criminal's point of view.) Having had a large piece of English-speaking crime, we have also been readier to make crime films than has England. yet there have always been a number of modest little crime films made in England. Films like L_e_a_g_u_e_o_f G_e_n_t_l_e_m_e_n, T_h_e L_o_n_g_A_r_m, T_h_e L_a_v_e_n_d_e_r H_i_l_l_M_o_b, and T_h_e L_a_d_y_k_i_l_l_e_r_s have been likable but have not gotten much attention. More recently some better films have been made, including T_h_e L_o_n_g_G_o_o_d_F_r_i_d_a_y and M_o_n_a_L_i_s_a. B_e_l_l_m_a_n a_n_d T_r_u_e is a throwback to the earlier, more modest British heist films.

Bernard Hill plays Hiller, an electronics systems analyst who has accepted a 1000-pound advance to pas bank data to some criminals. Unable to deliver the data in any form but on magnetic tape, he runs away, only to be kidnapped (along with his stepson) by the people he was fleeing. They want more than their money back: they want an electronics expert to help them rob a bank. The film is about evenly divided between the story of the heist and Hiller's relationship with his son as they are caught up in the robbery scheme.

Frankly, being an engineer myself, I have a fondness for films in which engineering plays an important part and even tips the scales. T_h_e D_a_m_B_u_s_t_e_r_s--one of my favorite war films--is as much a film about solving wartime engineering problems as it is about soldiering. In a

sense engineering is the core of F/X. Engineering plays as big a role in this heist film as it does in the very enjoyable Australian heist film Malcolm. One sequence in the film, in fact, appears to be a direct theft from Malcolm. In a few places, the engineering in Bellmanand True seems to have gotten the facts wrong or underestimated the time to put together a sophisticated piece of toy robotics, but that can be forgiven.

The serious engineering problems, and the reason I really have to qualify my recommendation, is in the production, not the story. The simple fact is that the film needed subtitles. I had little trouble cutting through the thick Cockney accents of TheLongGood

Fridayor

MonaLisa. But I missed just too darn much of Bellmanand True because

the soundtrack seemed muddled. there are some clever and witty lines in the film, but some can be made out only by comparing notes with others. So as much of the film as I could understand I rate a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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