

half-forgotten lore and legends rather going off to another continent and raiding their culture. Alvin Maker is the seventh son of a seventh son and he is very much a magical child.

THE MT VOID

Page 2

In RED PROPHET, Card continues the saga of Alvin Maker. The book is primarily concerned with Alvin growing up and growing into his power against the backdrop of political ambition, intrigue, racial conflict and westward expansion. This book looks at the Indians and the conflict between them and the settlers. Card does a good job of presenting the underlying conflict in worldviews that precipitate many of the more immediate conflicts throughout the book. The red prophet of the title is the spiritual leader of the Indians who is mystically connected to Alvin and whose destiny is intertwined with his. The book is well crafted and does not cheat in its resolution - the characters grow, but they do not have any "battlefield conversions" that are at odds with all the previous development.

2. Usually in this notice I try to stay away from politics and I try not to be maudlin. This time I think I am going to do a little of both. Friends in both Michigan and Massachusetts gave me condolences when they heard I was moving to New jersey. That was nearly twelve years ago. Before that I lived in Southgate, Michigan. Let me tell you about the Southgate Public Library. It was closed on weekends. During the week it was open from 3 PM to 6 PM. That's all. Well, the kids who wanted to use it could go after school and libraries are for children, aren't they? Adults have other things to do. I went once or twice when my holiday schedule permitted and discovered that the choice of books was well in keeping with the hours. It had about one third the books my high school library had and it surely was not the most intelligent third.

Of course, my high school was in Massachusetts, one of the more intellectual states, or so I thought. I went there this past weekend. The current brouhaha is over state Proposition 2-1/2. This nifty little bill allowed allowed people to vote themselves a tax cut (or least least avoid a tax hike) at the expense of some

non-essential services. It passed. Right now Holyoke, Massachusetts has had to close its library for all but a few hours a week and books are not allowed to circulate at all. Nearby towns may help out Holyoke, but they too are strapped for cash. (Not that I come from Holyoke, thank goodness, but I wonder how Longmeadow is faring.)

I live in Old Bridge, New Jersey now and I went to the library there tonight as I do three or four times a month. Besides books it loans tools, personal computers, novels on cassette, CDs, records, and magazines. It shows films--good films, too! It loans videotapes of recent films, classic films, and even obscure classic films. They also have plans up for how the library is soon to be expanded. I don't know how much of my taxes are going to it, but it is a bargain at three times the price. If a bill like Proposition 2-1/2 comes along in New Jersey it would probably pass. After all, nobody likes taxes. I just hope the people of New

THE MT VOID

Page 3

Jersey are not given this particular democratic choice.

3. I am listening to the radio and they are playing a piece called "St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds." Now I know something about St. Francis--his giving up riches for poverty, his love of animals, his simple ways, his getting a city named for him--but I guess I never heard that he actually went out preaching to the birds. I don't know if he was trying to reach the intellects of his day or what. I do know something about birds. I know that just about every sin you could accuse a human of is relatively common among birds. The only exception is blasphemy and that only because they need a human to teach them how to do it. True, there is a lot of room for improvement but I might question how effective St. Francis thought he could be. I mean, how would the birds react if, for example, St. Francis told them (as he believed) that the Messiah had come and, tough luck, birds, he was another species. How would humans react to being told that a Savior had come to the world, but unfortunately He was a moose. Could we relate to a Moosiah? How about if your spiritual savior was a squid? Would you care about what a squid has to say? For that matter Christ is always the ideal human. He loves children, He heals the sick, He has the answer to all kinds of moral

problems. These are things valued in human society, but perhaps not so much so to birds. In a world where the ultimate achievement is to fly up really high, swoop down really fast, and splat a white one dead center on a newly washed shiny chariot, could St. Francis have convinced the birds that Christ could have measured up? Somehow I doubt it. Perhaps it is best to leave the birds alone.

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

Take my word for it, if you had seen but one day of war
you would pray to Almighty God that you might never see
such a thing again.

-- Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: A much fictionalized and glossed-over account of the first year of Jerry lee Lewis's musical popularity and his marriage to his 13-year-old cousin. The film will be most remembered for Winona

Ryder's performance. Rating: 0.

Rock and roll biographies are popular, of course, since T_h_e_B_u_d_d_y_H_o_l_l_y_S_t_o_r_y. G_r_e_a_t_B_a_l_l_s_o_f_F_i_r_e! promised to be a little different. First of all, this was going to be one rock biography that did not end in a snowy plane crash. In fact, it turned out to be quite different, but being different did not make it better. This is a film of uneven style, ranging from occasional drama to musical comedy in the style of B_y_e,_B_y_e,_B_i_r_d_i_e--complete with production numbers. The characters are flat and thin, and the relationship to truth or even credibility is tangential at best. Dennis Quaid's wild high-energy mannerisms break new ground in his acting, but surprisingly, newcomer Winona Ryder as his 13-year-old cousin and eventual bride is more than a match for him in attracting audience attention. It may well be that Ryder is remembered for this film more than Quaid.

The film is a v_e_r_y light treatment of Lewis's first year of popularity. A bigamist and a troublemaker, Lewis comes to live and make music with his uncle. His vision is to take the wild Black music he heard as a child and infuse it into rock and roll. He is attracted to his young teenage cousin who idolizes him and one thing leads to another. At the same time, his first recorded song is a stupendous success. We have all the standard cliched scenes, of course. We have the suffering rock and roll star playing someone else's idea of good music and failing, then playing his own style and being really popular. We have the unruly audience that is tamed by hearing the hero's music. One touch that is unusual is Lewis's conflict with his famous evangelist cousin, Jimmy Swaggart. But there is no substance to the conflict besides Lewis first paying lip service to Swaggart's pontifications, then finally openly defying them.

But really jarring are the segues into musical production numbers, such as a whole high school suddenly dancing to his music and doing cartwheels (what is a 13-year-old doing in high school?). Quaid supposedly wanted to sing all the songs but apparently while he can flip his hair like Lewis, he cannot do a passable imitation of Lewis's voice. Lewis re-recorded his songs for the soundtrack.

Far more than L_a_B_a_m_b_a or T_h_e_B_u_d_d_y_H_o_l_l_y_S_t_o_r_y, this is a quickly forgettable summer film. I give it a flat 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

DO THE RIGHT THING
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: With one film Spike Lee goes from being a one-film director to being a major Hollywood talent. This is a realistic film of insight, intelligence, and even some wit, but no easy answers. [Minor spoiler follows.] A likable "street film" turns into A_n_a_t_o_m_y_o_f_a_R_a_c_e_R_i_o_t. Rating: high +2.

Spike Lee, who charmed the critics and audiences with the low-budget S_h_e'_s_G_o_t_t_a_H_a_v_e_I_t, then disappointed people--at least me--with S_c_h_o_o_l_D_a_z_e, has made his third film and this time his work is both entertaining and important. Lee clearly did the right thing when he made D_o_t_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_T_h_i_n_g. This film is really the anatomy of a race riot. And it is a film in three dimensions. When it was over the kids from a black family sitting in front of me were disagreeing whether the blacks were at fault or the whites. I found myself thinking how wonderful to have a film with conflict and without having the good guys and bad guys spelled out for me. In fact, nobody is entirely right and nobody entirely wrong. That is what life is like. Lee is a good enough director that he makes some blacks and some whites likable, and some of each not likable.

D_o_t_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_T_h_i_n_g follows about 26 hours in the life of a neighborhood in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Most of the action centers around Sal's Famous Pizzeria. Sal himself (played by Danny Aiello) does not seem at all like the sort of person who would be the center of a race riot. He has a genuine affection for the people in the nearly all-black neighborhood. He takes pride that the local kids grew up on his pizza. Yet in the space of a few short hours on a hot summer day, small irritations would boil over into violence. Tantalizingly slowly, Lee shows us how that happens. We get to know the neighborhood and particularly an old drunkard nicknamed Da Mayor (beautifully played by Ossie Davis). But this film has many major characters and several stories being told at one time. Lee has given himself a major role as a black man working out his problems and frustrations. He has resisted the temptation to make himself either a good guy or a bad guy. He plays just one more person in the neighborhood.

One of the more interesting subplots concerns the mini-grocery run by a Korean couple. The locals wonder why this little grocery has proved so profitable when black businesses so often fail in the same neighborhood. Some of the locals are unsure just what their attitude is toward the Koreans. Do they resent them, admire them, or what? And the question will become even more pointed when the night brings violence.

Issues of attitude come up through the day as groups in the neighborhood come in contact with each other in numerous permutations. The issues are not just black versus white, but also whether violence is ever right. The film even concludes with contradictory quotes from Martin Luther King and Malcolm X on the justification of violence. This may not be the best film of the summer, but it is the most ambitious. It is this year's M_a_t_e_w_a_n, low-budget but satisfying like few high-budget films. This is an R-rated, perhaps a little strong for the children in the audience, but they seemed to have gotten a lot out of it and the adults even more. I rate it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

