

actors do, what the crew does, even how the stunts are done. And at the same time he tells a lightweight tale of the loves and egos of the actors and the behind-the-camera people who come together to make a film. Truffaut himself plays the director, Jacqueline Bisset plays the star, and a good cast of French actors fill the rest of the roles. _ D _ a _ y _ f _ o _ r _ N _ i _ g _ h _ t won an Academy Award for Best

THE MT VOID

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Foreign Film. Maltin rates it 3-1/2; Scheuer gives it a full 4, his highest rating. This is really a film buff's film.

And when Truffaut is done, Bob Fosse shows you what it is like to be a Broadway director in _ A _ l _ l _ T _ h _ a _ t _ J _ a _ z _ z. Roy Scheider plays a very Fosse-esque director bent on destroying himself. Much more self-critical than Truffaut, Fosse tells about the selfish and self-indulgent lifestyle that led up to his open-heart surgery. He punctuates his story with surrealistic production number dreams. Ann Reinking and Jessica Lange co-star. Maltin gives it 2-1/2, Scheuer 3-1/2.

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My idea of politics is an open conspiracy to hurry these tiresome, wasteful, evil things -- nationality and war -- out of existence; to end this empire and that empire, and set up one Empire of Man.

-- H. G. Wells

THE NAVIGATOR
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: For the beauty of its photography and the originality of its concept this fantasy from Australia and New Zealand is the best that has been seen in America for several years. Yet it loses points because of a muddled narrative that leaves the viewer wondering what the story was really all about. Rating: +2.

It is March 1348 in Cumbria. In a small mining village there is the certain knowledge that the Plague is coming. Connor has been gone from the village for three months, much longer than expected, just finding out what is happening in the world. Perhaps the Plague has claimed him. His young brother Griffin waits for his return. And Griffin suffers from enigmatic dreams, perhaps visions, of another world and a mission of faith, perhaps an act of faith so great that God will

intercede and protect the village from the onslaught of the Plague. God wants the villagers to dig through the flat disk that is our world and come out on the other side, the Celestial City. There they are to forge a cross and place it on top of the mighty cathedral that commands the Celestial City. When Connor returns with news of just how close the Plague really is, the urgency of the mission becomes obvious. They dig through the disk and find the Celestial City, a city of great wonder, though to our eyes it is just your standard 1988 New Zealand city. Things we have come to live with are to the pilgrims' eyes great sights and great dangers. And so begins their adventure.

Stylistically filmed in black and white and in color, T_h_e_N_a_v_i_g_a_t_o_r beautifully re-creates the life in a 14th Century village and a comparable view of life in the 20th Century, though the color photography is much less interesting. It is a story told on many levels, not all of which are comprehensible. The style of story-telling is usually well told with the sort of duality of vision that T_h_e_G_o_d_s_M_u_s_t_B_e_C_r_a_z_y has. We see the familiar, but we also see it through the eyes of a strange culture. Only at one point does this duality break down into slapstick worthy of a Terry Gilliam.

T_h_e_N_a_v_i_g_a_t_o_r is an odd and murky fantasy that seems to be pointing to some deeper meaning that is somewhere beyond view. As a fantasy it edges out even this year's F_i_e_l_d_o_f_D_r_e_a_m_s for originality of idea. But in the final analysis the film narrative is muddled and the point of this exercise remains unclear. I give it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Cable in August

Film comment by Mark R. Leeper

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T_h_e_C_h_e_a_p_D_e_t_e_c_t_i_v_e (HBO)
L_a_d_y_i_n_W_h_i_t_e (HBO)

July's cable had quite a few really good films that I could

recommend, and I turned it into an article. I got a request to write such an article each month. Well, August will have a short list simply because there are just fewer films to recommend. two films I like are

TheCheapDetective and LadyinWhite.

Neil Simon wrote TheCheapDetective sort of in the same vein as

his MurderbyDeath. For some reason, very little of

MurderbyDeath

struck me as being particularly funny. On the other hand, TheCheap

Detective really did. This is a spoof of Humphrey Bogart films that

simultaneously retells Casablanca and TheMaltese

Falcon in a single

story. The fact the two stories do not fit together just becomes part

of the fun. There are very funny sendups of Peter Lorre and Sidney

Greenstreet. Then there is the battle of the national anthems....

There are a lot of bits I am just remembering as I write this. The film

loses steam in the last quarter, but until then enjoy the ride.

Another film that is good most of the way through is LadyinWhite,

a very skillfully told ghost story/mystery. The ghost story is far

better than the mystery, but this is a very well-crafted film. There is

a lot of good texture telling the story of an Italian-American family

somewhere in New England who get involved in a serial murder and ghosts.

The last five minutes or so are a little overboard, but not enough to

destroy the story. I would rank LadyinWhite with classic ghost

stories such as TheUninvited, though some of the style is closer to

that of SomethingWickedThisWay

Comes.

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY...
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Rob Reiner's winning streak of directing only very good films ends with a mediocre romantic comedy about two people who do not come off nearly as cute as the film called for them to be. There are some creative touches, but the main storyline is just okay. Rating: 0.

Rob Reiner is one of the few current major directors that most Americans can recognize by sight. He has put on a little weight since his A l l i n t h e F a m i l y days, but he is still recognizable. But more than just having visual recognition, he is also recognized as being a major directing talent. After T h i s I s S p i n a l T a p, T h e S u r e T h i n g, S t a n d b y M e, and T h e P r i n c e s s B r i d e, one tends to expect a lot from him as a director. One looks forward to a Rob Reiner film. However, this one was really disappointed by W h e n H a r r y M e t S a l l y..., a film that seems to assume it has a wonderful warm and winning story, but somehow just does not have a story to match its expectations.

The story is punctuated by interview insets, much like Warren Beatty's R e d s, but here we have older couples who love each other and obviously have had successful marriages, reminiscing about how they first met. And as far as that goes the film is warm. These insets take up only about six or seven minutes of the film and unfortunately it is in these insets that we find most of the characters we end up liking. The main line of the story is about how Harry got coupled with Sally, but since these people are more superficially cute than lovable (and not always even cute), there is something really missing in the connections between the insets and the plot. Harry and Sally first meet after graduation when Harry was something of a male chauvinist and Sally was just a little cold. They fail to hit it off. Flash forward five years. Harry is now something of a male chauvinist and Sally is now a little cold. They run into each other in an airport and fail to hit it off. Flash forward another five years to 1987. Harry is now something of a male chauvinist with a better sense of humor, and Sally is now a little cold and has self-doubts.

From there we follow the two trying to be platonic friends,

wondering if they should have sex, discussing if sex partners are sincere, discussing Harry's promiscuity, ad nauseum. Do we care? Sure, there is some voyeuristic appeal to hearing people talk about their sex lives. Do we care any further about these people as people? I did not. I had the feeling that when these people walked off camera they winked out of existence. Harry is a political consultant. I'm not sure what a political consultant does, but Harry's friends don't seem to be political consultants, and Harry never so much as reads a newspaper.

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This is not creating a character. Nora Ephron, the script writer, just filled in a blank labeled "Occupation"; she did not create a character.

Billy Crystal as Harry and Meg Ryan as Sally are attractive, engaging people, and I was willing to find out about their characters' sex lives while they were going well. It did not make for great cinema, but it is watchable. When their relationship starts to sour, both characters are pretty tiresome. W h e n H a r r y M e t S a l l y... is all right as a piece of entertainment for a little while, but it is by far reiner's worst film. I give it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

(One final note: Nora Ephron (a female) has a male character express the philosophy that a male cannot just be friends with an attractive woman without wanting sex with her. I can just hear a lot of women saying, "Ah-ha! I knew it all along!" In fact, the woman who lived next door to me in my first apartment said pretty much the same thing, eyeing me suspiciously. I will tell you what I should have told her. It is a paranoid myth and is false. You can go through life believing the worst of people and nobody will be able to prove you wrong. But for the record, women, it simply is not true of all men. If you use myth to rationalize negative behavior toward men, it is you who are in the wrong.)

