

survive. And they are selfish little monsters too. They don't care about anyone but themselves and any copies of themselves that are around. They don't even care about each other. And what is so nasty about them is when they reach a decision, they put the idea in _ y_ o_ u_ r head and make you think it was _ y_ o_ u_ r idea. It's like Obi-Wan saying, "These aren't the droids you're looking for."

THE MT VOID

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Now I know some of you are going to think I'm nuts. A gene doesn't vote and it cannot hypnotically gesture. Right? "What I do is my idea, and I never even think about my genes." Right? Well, do you go around thinking about oxygenating your blood? No, you just breathe. Every animal breathes and virtually no animal or human thinks of it in terms of oxygenating blood, but that is why they do it.

These little monsters want to eat so they make you hungry. They decide they want to eat in the future so you go to work. Whenever you look at someone else they size up how many copies of them are likely to be in that other person. You look at your kids and they figure there are lots and lots of their copies in your kids, so they tell us families are nifty things for us to want.

In B_r_o_a_d_c_a_s_t_N_e_w_s Albert Brooks observes "Wouldn't this be a great world if poor and needy were a turn-on?" Why isn't it? Because each of these guys looks at the poor and needy and decides the genes in these people cannot support it in the manner to which it has become accustomed. When a bigot looks at someone of another race as a potential employee, the little jerks inside take a vote and say, "Uh-uh. Not many copies of us in him!" Someone who looks more like the bigot is more likely to get the job because there are probably more copies of the same genes in that candidate. Then the government comes along and says (sort of), "Tell your genes we will cut off the nutrient flow if you don't hire more equitably." The genes make a little face but grudgingly say, "Okay, so we can stay around to make more copies of ourselves, go ahead and hire the black."

Our courting rituals are really these little monsters trying to find other genes that will co-operate well with them. Why do parents want to see their children married and having kids? Their genes are saying, "Our copies should make more copies." But, hey,

make sure that they join with good genes that will be able to make still more copies of us and provide good nutrient flow." In general, what we find sexy is pretty well correlated to having genes that will co-operate well with our genes. Actually, considering a gene's urge to preserve its copies, it is a little surprising that it doesn't urge us towards incest but, at some level, the genes or perhaps something higher seems to know that this is not a good way to create copies of itself that can go on making copies. While we are on unpleasant subjects, I will mention in passing that it the mind too weak to overrule the urgings of these beasties that turns to rape. Why the genes urge some people to rape should be obvious at this point. These little beasties have a bigger fixation making copies than the sixth person in line for a Xerox machine.

So ask yourself next time you feel like going out and cruising chicks whether it is really you who wants to do it or is some gene playing a Lamont Cranston on your mind?

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THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Somebody took what would have been a poor re-telling of P_h_a_n_t_o_m and proved it could be made much, much worse. Believe it or not, they threw in time travel and an immortal Freddy Krueger-esque killer. I thought I was a completist enough to want to see all versions of the semi-classic story, but this was a total and contemptible mess representing the producer's profound and cynical disrespect for his audience.
Rating: -3.

To date there have been four movie versions of T_h_e_P_h_a_n_t_o_m_o_f
t_h_e
O_p_e_r_a. The title role has been played by Lon Chaney, Claude Rains, Herbert Lom, and Maximillian Schell. Now there have been four and a tenth. It is clear that somebody was serious about making a version of

the semi-classic story and somebody else was not. Nominally Dwight Little is the director of the new film, though his name is pasted over somebody else's on the posters. So what we get is an exquisitely clumsy cross between a lackluster but traditional telling of the story and an episode of "Freddy's Nightmares."

Christine Daae is an opera singer in modern-day Manhattan who finds an old piece of music by a forgotten composer who was also a serial killer. She decides to use it for an audition for an opera. During her audition she is coshed on the head by a sandbag and suddenly, with no apparent bewilderment, she is an opera singer from the chorus in 1884 London. The story that is then told is just barely recognizable as a version of T_h_e_P_h_a_n_t_o_m_o_f_t_h_e_O_p_e_r_a. A great but unknown composer has made a pact with the Devil that if his music should become immortal he would sell his soul. The Devil adds his own little amendment by gouging pieces out of the composer's face. The Phantom can make himself almost normal, but only by sewing pieces of live flesh into his face--so much for the romance of the mask. The Phantom now lives under the opera house and teaches his Christine, mercilessly torture-killing anyone who gets in his way. He skins two people alive and beheads two others. Meanwhile Christine is bewildered as to why she is able to remember the words to sing to the Phantom's music--not remembering that she learned them in New York. Classic scenes such as the chandelier scene and the unmasking are dispensed with entirely--well, sort of. Later when the story returns to the present it turns more into a traditional supernatural molester story.

I cannot imagine how this film turned into such an unholy mess. Only part of the mess can be explained by saying they had a gory version of the traditional story and well into the shooting they decided they wanted to turn it into a totally different film. That would explain the

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change of directors. It would also explain the credits "Screenplay by Duke Sandefur, Based on a screenplay by Gerry O'Hara." Somebody must have decided they could not sell Robert Englund as anything but a supernatural, unstoppable killer like his Freddy Krueger. The result is

a sort of a P_e_g_g_y_S_u_e_S_i_n_g_s_f_o_r_t_h_e_P_h_a_n_t_o_m_o_n_E_l_m_S_t_r_e_e t that is a crude hoax that will disappoint Phantom fans, Freddy fans, and everybody

in between. I would like to give this film a full -4 but for a little nice opera and a few scenes that were almost an okay adaptation of the story I will give it a -3 on the -4 to +4 scale.