



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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Mini Reviews, Part 3 (THE MOVIE MAN, HITLER'S HOLLYWOOD) (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

Two films, both documentaries:

THE MOVIE MAN (2024): THE MOVIE MAN is a documentary about Keith Stata, a resident of Kinmount, Ontario, who was a fan of movies. When many of the older cinemas around him closed, he decided to build a new one with the ambiance of a movie palace, but on a small scale. He also started buying up movie projectors and film and nostalgia memorabilia, which he displayed in the hallway. Gradually he added four more cinemas, and many more hallways. (There is an amazing tracking shot at the end through the hallways.) People came from long distances to see first-run films, and his "museum". In the process he also started taking in stray cats.

Then came 2020 and COVID-19. Forced to close for two years, Stata deals with on-going expenses for the buildings (and the cats) with no income. Will this be the end of Highlands Cinema?

This reminded me of Errol Morris's documentaries about quirky people. It is likely to appeal more to fans of those than to general cinema fans. [-ecl]

Released at a festival 12 February 2024.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt21916284/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_movie_man

HITLER'S HOLLYWOOD (2017): This is a fascinating documentary that is annoying to watch because of the incompetent subtitling. The German dialogue of the movies that are included, and the German words of film critics, are translated as "burnt in" subtitles. If you turn on closed captions, anything said in German is captioned "[in German]", overlaying the translations! Given narrator Udo Keir's accent, closed captions would be helpful, but they totally obscure too much of the rest. (I watched it on Kanopy, but I assume the subtitling is the same elsewhere.)

Anyway, HITLER'S HOLLYWOOD covers the thousand or so films produced in the Third Reich, glorifying order, community, simplicity (in childlike heroes), Hitler, and death.

It discusses, for example, how the use of various optical tricks and techniques promoted the idea of illusions, of a permeable border between reality and unreality, of the unsureness of one's own perceptions.

There were no horror films or fantasy, the film says, because there was enough horror, and because the Third Reich was built on fantasy. (But then later it discusses MUNCHHAUSEN (THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN) (1943), clearly a fantasy. MUNCHHAUSEN is available on Hoopla and Kanopy.)

Trivia: Ingrid Bergman starred in one film in the Third Reich, DIE 4 GESELLEN (THE FOUR COMPANIONS) (1938), which she later attempted to erase from her history. She was part of the attempt to replace the stars (and directors and others) who had fled to England or the United States.

This film discusses dozens of actors and stars unknown to the non-German world. Alas, there are not enough captions identifying the actors, directors, or films being shown. (I find seeing names and titles makes them easier to understand, particularly in a foreign language or accent.)

Keir seemed to imply there was a sound remake of METROPOLIS, also with Brigitte Helm, but apparently he was talking about L'OR (GOLD) (1934), which was the only science fiction film made in the period. Keir also said there was "a Lawrence of Arabia decades before David Lean", but he was referring to DURCH DIE WUSTE (ACROSS THE DESERT) (1936), a film based on a novel by Karl May, and set in the 19th century Ottoman Empire, *not* a film about Lawrence of Arabia. These are not the only times when the figurative language gets in the way of actual understanding.

Douglas Sirk, one of the great Hollywood filmmakers of the 1950s, did a few movies in the Third Reich, the best being LA HABANERA (1937) (available on Kanopy).

There was a 1934 film JEW SUSS (a.k.a. POWER), which was a satire critical of anti-Semitism. But there was also a 1940 film JUD SUSS (JEW SUSS; SUSS, THE JEW) directed by Veit Harlan, a major director in the Third Reich, and later tried for war crimes. The lead actor wanted to withdraw, but was forced to remain when Goebbels threatened his Jewish stepson's safety.

Another infamous film was DER EWIGE JUDE (THE ETERNAL JEW) (1940), which compared Jews to rats and vermin. (There have been recent echoes of this in American politics.) This is available in the Internet Archive.

Of these films, and of the Third Reich in general, Hannah Arendt said, "What convinces masses are not facts, not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the illusion."

Harlan's film KOLBERG (BURNING HEARTS) (1945) was compared to GONE WITH THE WIND in its glorification of a "Lost Cause" and the people who fought for it. This is apparently available on YouTube, at least for now. Harlan also did VERWEHTE SPUREN (COVERED TRACKS) (1938) based on the same urban legend as SO LONG AT THE FAIR (1950) and an episode of ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS.

Trivia: GROSSE FREIHEIT NR. 7 (PORT OF FREEDOM #7, or GREAT FREEDOM No. 7) (1944) was set in Hamburg, but had to be finished in Prague after the bombing of Hamburg destroyed most of the city. This is available in the Internet Archive.

So what has happened to all these films? Some are or have been available (TITANIC, MUNCHHAUSEN, JEW SUSS, THE ETERNAL JEW, several of Leni Riefenstahl's films), but usually for reasons specific to each film. Most are probably buried in archives somewhere, available only to serious scholars.

At the end, text indicates what happened to the major people involved: Hans Albers, Ilse Werner, Ferdinand Marian, Veit Harlan, Kristina Soderbaum, Helmut Kautner, Erich Kastner.

This is definitely recommended for cinema fans. I would also recommend the book FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER by Siegfried Kracauer, which covers the period before that of the Nazis, but does have a section on the period immediately preceding that of this documentary, which gave some hints of what was to come. It also has a supplement on Nazi wartime propaganda films. [-ecl/mrl]

Released theatrically 11 April 2018.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6566624/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/hitlers_hollywood

Online Film Critics Society (OFCS) Awards Announced TOPIC:

Best Picture: Anora
Best Animated Feature: Flow
Best Director: Coralie Fargeat - The Substance
Best Actor: Ralph Fiennes - Conclave
Best Actress: Mikey Madison - Anora
Best Supp Actor: Kieran Culkin - A Real Pain
Best Supp Actress: Margaret Qualley - The Substance
Best Original Screenplay: Anora
Best Adapted Screenplay: Conclave
Best Editing: Challengers
Best Cinematography: Dune: Part Two
Best Original Score: Challengers
Best Production Design: Dune: Part Two
Best Costume Design: Dune: Part Two
Best Visual Effects: Dune: Part Two
Best Debut Feature: Vera Drew - The People's Joker
Best Foreign Film: All We Imagine as Light
Best Documentary Feature: Dahomey

Technical Achievements

Choreography - Wicked
Makeup and/or Hairstyling - A Different Man
Makeup and/or Hairstyling - The Substance
Sound - Dune: Part Two
Stunts - Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga

Lifetime Achievement Awards

Rick Baker
David Cronenberg
Clint Eastwood
Elaine May
Christine Vachon

Special Achievement Awards

Ava DuVernay, for brilliant work of her own and for supporting a new generation of female filmmakers.
Barbara Crampton, super supporter of indie first time filmmakers.
Nicolas Cage, for his infinite capacity to constantly surprise everyone.

Best Non-US Releases

Acting (Sophie Fiennes, United Kingdom)
The Adamant Girl (PS Vinothraj, India)
Cloud (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Japan)
Direct Action (Guillaume Cailleau & Ben Russell, France)
Disco Afrika: A Malagasy Story (Luck Razanajaona, Madagascar)
Dying (Matthias Glasner, Germany)
I'm Not Everything I Want To Be (Klára Tasovská, Czech Republic)
The Moon is Upside Down (Loren Taylor, New Zealand)
The Other Way Around (Jonas Trueba, Spain)
Subject: Filmmaking (Jörg Adolph & Edgar Reitz, Germany)

Founded in 1997, the Online Film Critics Society (OFCS) is a professional association for online film journalists, historians, and scholars with a mission to further the growth of an informed film audience, to promote awareness of the Internet as a source of news and commentary, to provide a forum for the OFCS members to communicate and discuss ideas about journalism and cinema, and to encourage a high standard of journalism across the online media. The OFCS consists of nearly 300 members around the world; nearly one third of the organization's membership are based outside of the United States. The Online Film Critics Society explores the nature of film from historical, sociological, political, emotional, technical, and other perspectives and appreciates film as a medium for art and a mode of entertainment. Learn more at www.ofcs.org.

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Once again, I find myself in the middle of several books, so as yet unable to write about them as I want to. I was reading STAR WARS, VERILY by Ian Doescher (Quirk Books, ISBN 978-1-594-74637-6) for our February book discussion. The discussion was postponed until March due to a scheduling conflict, but in the mean time I had started the book.

The "gimmick" of this book is that this is the story of STAR WARS, told in iambic pentameter Elizabethan English. In other word, STAR WARS in the style of William Shakespeare. Or of Christopher Marlowe, if you prefer, but a far smaller number of people will understand that.

And it's passable enough, but the problem is that it *is* a gimmick, and one act (of the five) was about all I could read before it started to wear. Obviously, this is not a universal opinion--Doescher has done eight of the nine "Star Wars" movies in this form, and the ninth is scheduled for this September. I suppose there are more "Star Wars" stories than the first nine, but I suspect Doescher will stop there. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

... the moral is that the "intuition" of a genuine
[leader] prove superior to normal reasoning--a moral
well established in German hearts until Stalingrad.
--Siegfried Kracauer

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