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Mini Reviews, Part 14 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the fourteenth batch of mini-reviews, this week animated fantasy.

BLIND WILLOW SLEEPING WOMAN (2022): BLIND WILLOW SLEEPING WOMAN is based on several stories by Haruki Murakami. Katagiri is a failing salaryman in Japan who one day finds there is a giant frog that talks and sings to him. This is actually a fairly common theme in animated films from Japan, along with the theme of the natural as supernatural, which also appears frequently in Japanese folklore.

There is also a young man whose girlfriend is fixated on watching television reports of the earthquake and tsunami of 2011. There is a teenager who is dissatisfied with with her life. There are also UFOs and sex. The stories intertwine, but there are several different animation styles used to tell them. [-ecl]

Released theatrically 14 April 2023. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4), or 6/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9320184/reference>

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

THE MAGICIAN'S ELEPHANT (2023): THE MAGICIAN'S ELEPHANT, based on Newbery-Award-winning author Kate DiCamillo's classic novel, is an animated family film about Peter, who is looking for his sister, and is told by a fortune teller to "follow the elephant". He has to perform three impossible things to get the elephant (though not necessarily before breakfast). All in all, a fairly standard story, but that is what a younger audience wants, not a revisionist fairy tale.

[I keep wanting to type "The Magician's Nephew--I can imagine why. :-)]

[-ecl]

Released theatrically 10 March 2023, streaming 17 March 2023. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4), or 6/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2560092/reference>

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

THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL and India (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I was watching THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL and I found myself fascinated by its depiction of India. But I found myself thinking that when I went to India I had hoped to see the India that Douglas saw or even that the Evelyn of the movie saw, while the India I found was more like that of Muriel (who is old and cranky, but at least eventually open to new experiences) or Jean (who has very specific ideas and won't change them). Was it because I was more like Muriel or Jean? There may be some of that, but I'm not sure how Douglas or Evelyn would have reacted how they had cow sh*t thrown on their shoes two days in a row. [-ecl]

Streaming Problems (letter of comment by Hal Heydt):

In response to [Mark's comments on streaming film "stuttering"](#) in the 12/08/23 issue of the MT VOID, Hal Heydt writes:

Possible--inexpensive--solution. Get a Raspberry Pi and use that to stream the film to your large screen. (I'd suggest the latest version, the Pi5, for best results.) [-hh]

Evelyn responds:

The only time we have this problem streaming with Chromecast seems to be during screener season. (Maybe we just don't Chromecast all that much the rest of the year to notice it.) So we're not looking for even an inexpensive solution, but a free one. Not to mention I have no idea what a Raspberry Pi is. Dropping the resolution sometimes helps--and sometimes not. [-ecl]

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

Excerpted from my review of THE BEST OF FREDERIK POHL in the 09/04/09 issue of the MT VOID:

"Happy Birthday, Dear Jesus": If "Day Million" seems to have a lot of its ideas fixed in the past, "Happy Birthday, Dear Jesus" seems depressingly prescient, with the commercialization of Christmas gone amuck. All those people who keep telling us that everyone should have the Christmas spirit and *love* all the store decorations et al should read this. I mentioned this a few years ago in conjunction with China Mieville's "'Tis the Season". In the latter, I wrote, "The worst fears of the Religious Right have come to pass, and the celebration of Christmas is prohibited. No parties, no holly, no mistletoe, no trees, But it is not political correctness gone wild. And it has nothing to do with the First Amendment and the separation of church and state (in part because Miéville is British, writing for a British audience). No, it's because all of these things have been trademarked and so you can't have a Christmas tree, you must have a Christmas Tree(tm) and pay a license fee for it. The same with Holly(tm), Mistletoe(tm), and so on. 'It felt so forlorn, putting my newspaper-wrapped presents next to the aspidistra, but ever since YuleCo bought the right to coloured paper and under-tree storage, the inspectors had clamped down on Subarboreal Giftery.' Frankly, Miéville's 'nightmare future' seems far more likely to me than the nightmare future of Christmas being forbidden because of political correctness. After all, one cannot now sing 'Happy Birthday to You' in public without owing royalties on it! The Miéville and the Pohl get added to 'Newton's Mass' by Timothy Esaias in my mental list of stories that *I* would put in a Christmas anthology, were I ever to undertake such an unlikely task. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I am the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and Fries.
--Stephen King

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