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1. The Leeperhouse film festival by now must have films of every genre but one. I cannot think of any war movie we have ever shown--at least no film set in World War II. Well, I had a request to have a film festival with T h e G u n s o f N a v a r o n e as the second film.

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It was not easy to find a second film to pair it with, but I had just gotten another reasonably enjoyable film also set in World War II. So that is it then, I guess. On Thursday, Novemebr 7, at 7PM, we will show:

Airplanes and Artillery

MEMPHIS BELLE (1990) dir. by Michael Caton-Jones

THE GUNS OF NAVARONE (1960) dir. by J. Lee Thompson

MEMPHIS BELLE is a fictional story based on a true incident (in spite of people saying that the story is true). The Memphis Belle was the first B-17 to complete twenty-five bombing missions over Germany. That meant that the crew had earned the right to go home. The media made it a big event. This film about the twenty-fifth mission becomes an essay on what it felt like to fly the big one and all the different ways a flight could end in disaster. It is hard to believe all this action would take place in a single mission but it still makes for an exciting--if cliché-ridden--story. John Lithgow and Matthew Modine star.

Well, what do I have to say about THE GUNS OF NAVARONE? This is a legendary adventure film. This has a superb cast, solid suspense, Oscar-winning special effects, and a classic score by Dimitri Tiomkin. Based on an Alistair MacLean novel, the film stars Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn, Stanley Baker, Anthony Quayle, and Irene Pappas.

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 908-957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

If a man possesses no knowledge of reasoning, he is incapable of expressing truth.

-- Avicenna (Ibn Sina)

TWO EVIL EYES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Two famous horror directors tell two stories that are said to be based on Edgar Allan Poe stories. Poe would not have recognized the stories and certainly would not have liked them. If you want to see it, do so quickly. It will disappear soon. And that's just fine. Rating: -1 (-4 to +4).

Poor Edgar Allan Poe. For the longest time he has been the acknowledged master of the horror story. How often have films claimed to be his stories. Yet I can honestly say that I cannot think of a single film that was a faithful adaptation of a Poe story. Roger Corman came a little closer than usual in a 1961 quickie called T_a_l_e_s_o_f_T_e_r_r_o_r in which Richard Matheson adapted three stories: "Morella," "The Black Cat," and "Facts in the Case of

M. Valdemar." "The Black Cat" had "The Cask of Amontillado" mixed in but it was clear that Matheson had at least read the Poe. Now two of these stories have been re-done in _ T _ w _ o _ E _ v _ i _ l _ E _ y _ e _ s.

_ T _ w _ o _ E _ v _ i _ l _ E _ y _ e _ s is not so much an anthology film as two one-hour films, each possibly made for cable, stitched together to make a feature film. In each case the films borrow from Poe--or from other Poe films--but these can hardly be said to be adaptations. Both are updated to the present, since as long as the writers are inventing they might as well save money doing it. George Romero wrote and directed "Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"; Dario Argento wrote and directed "The Black Cat."

In "Valdemar" Poe told the story of a man who dies while under hypnotic trance and, though the body is dead, the trance remains, so the body has become a sort of obedient zombie. This telling throws in an unfaithful wife (played by Adrienne Barbeau, of course) impatient for her husband to die. In her scheme to inherit hubby's fortune she has a doctor hypnotize her husband. When the husband dies she pops him in the deep freeze, not knowing that while the body is dead, the mind is alive and still in a trance. The story gets muddled with doorways to other worlds and omnipresent gore, both of which would have surprised and shocked Poe.

Dario Argento's "Black Cat" is a long, complicated, uninvolved bore. But then rare is the Argento film that is not a long, complicated, uninvolved bore. Harvey Keitel plays an art photographer who likes to get scenes of urban violence. As comes as no surprise to anyone, this guy is also pretty much a twisted cookie. He drinks too much and abuses his live-in girlfriend, an irritating violinist. The friend adopts a stray black cat who runs

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around the house making more like a puma than a house cat. The piece drags incredibly and, while the story is not entirely predictable, the twists do not seem to be to any valuable purpose. There is a lot of blood spilt, but other than that there isn't much to laugh at at all.

_ T _ w _ o _ E _ v _ i _ l _ E _ y _ e _ s is two wasted hours. My rating is -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

LITTLE MAN TATE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Good acting, good direction, but a really bad screenplay and story trying to make us all thank our lucky stars that we are not geniuses. This film insults the viewer's intelligence in specific and intelligence in general. This is the most paranoid view of the highly intelligence since _ S _ i _ m _ o _ n. Rating: -1 (-4 to +4).

Poor Pinocchio! He was a wonderful magical puppet, but he knew it was much better to be a real live boy. Then there was Mr. Spock. He seemed to pride himself on his logical Vulcan side. But every chance the writers get they showed how much better it was to be human. Kirk's eulogy also said that of all souls Kirk had met, Spock's was the most human. Being a normal human must be the best thing in the whole universe. And look. We're all human. There are so many humans around, this just has to be Best of All Possible Worlds. And you and I are the best things to be. Just normal everyday people. Oh boy!

Fred Tate (played by Adam Hann-Byrd) is like one of the child geniuses in _ C _ h _ i _ l _ d _ r _ e _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ D _ a _ m _ n _ e _ d. Daddy is nowhere to be found

and Fred clearly does not get his genius from his mother's side. But at what looks like age two he is already reading labels on dinnerware, much to the amazement of his mother, Dede (played by Jodie Foster, who also directs). By age seven he is already brilliant in eight or nine different ways, including painting, poetry, mathematics, and music. When he is given a math problem he and the audience see the numbers float by in a pretty blue stream.

Fred is discovered by Jane Grierson (played by Dianne Wiest). Grierson heads a sort of institute that is funded in some way we never find out. Its opulence surely cannot all come from tuition. Her institute seems to collect dossiers on emerging child geniuses, screen them, and choose a select few to be given all the resources they need to develop to their full potential. It seems to work sort of like the similar organization in _ T _ h _ e _ F _ u _ r _ y. One of the children from this sort of environment seriously tells an interviewer, "I'm working on an experiment involving lasers, sulphuric acid, and butterflies." Oh, buy, that sure doesn't sound like much fun for the butterflies, does it, boys and girls? But then, we all knew that geniuses develop things like H-bombs because they have lost the human touch. Lucky you and I still have it, huh?

Well, as it turns out, Jane Grierson has her problems too. She is a genius, which means of course she eats funny things. She likes

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macrobiotic foods that make the normal side of Fred vomit. She listens to genius music by Mozart (but by the end credits we are back to people-oriented music like Cole Porter). And she does not know how to deal with people at all. Fred becomes the object of a tug-of-war between Dr. Grierson, who wants to develop his genius, and his mother, who wants him to be more average.

Oddly enough, just about everything I did not like was the script. Except for her choice of material, Jodie Foster did a good job with the film. Dianne Wiest turned in a very good performance, as usual. Like Kathleen Quinlan, another actress I admire, Wiest seems to have an aura of both vulnerability and courage. It is as if she has been badly hurt but has picked herself up and is carrying on.

Adam Hann-Byrd really plays a young genius very well. In spite of the script not knowing how geniuses behave, Hann-Byrd really does seem bright. Both Hann-Byrd and Wiest are more engaging than Foster. Foster seems satisfied to be the hero of the film and does not do much to steal scenes from the other two. Foster maintains our interest in the characters in spite of the weak script.

Overall I give this film a low -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

