

efficient army of disease fighters in your bloodstream. And, yes, it is true that the knowledge that you already have these blood cells "on the payroll" means you can save big money on your food bills. It is true that Americans waste millions of dollars each year specifically choosing expensive foods that will not exercise

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the body's natural defenses against disease. Every word I said along those line was absolutely true. And just because one--and only one-- member had a negative reaction eating something I suggested hardly invalidates the money-saving power of my idea. I see now that I promised AT&T and that deputation of doctors only that I would not repeat that budget stretcher. And since some of the rest of you are complaining you want more, well, here goes.

May.

That's right. May. The month of May can save you big money. It can also give you a lot of hassle.

What am I talking about? I'm glad you asked. Most people need to buy calendars each year. And when do you buy them? November and December, right? These are the same months that your favorite stores look like W_h_e_r_e'_s_W_a_l_d_o? pages. Am I right? And then you go out to buy calendars, desperate to have them by New Year, right? And what is your selection? You pay \$7, \$10, maybe \$12 for what is essentially twelve photographs. Some claim to give you more. Some are sixteen-month calendars with the additional months being the September through December that have just passed. However, since nobody sells you a calendar that ends with August, and since you are the kind of person who buys calendars, you probably already have calendars. An additional calendar for the last third of the year is useless. It is all part of the American dream of selling the public something it does not need.

If you are like me, you absolutely detest digging through those piles of calendars of college-age young adults showing off their glands and body parts. Repulsive, aren't they? Right!

And you end up paying big money for a calendar just so that when the new year rolls around, you're covered. Then January 2 you go

out and see calendars slashed to half-price. Through the month of January the price is cut again and again. By the end of the month the selection is down somewhat, but you can now get what is left for two or three dollars. If you are willing to not buy a calendar until the end of January you can make a big savings. But who wants to go through January without knowing the date? Well, this is where May comes in. Don't throw out your old calendar; turn it back to May. Leap year or no leap year, May and January have the same number of days: 31. Leap year or no leap year, whatever day January starts on, May started on in the previous year. That gives you a whole month to look for cheap calendars. If need be you can use the previous June for February. But the third week of January is just about the best time to buy a calendar.

One suggestion, though: find a calendar with a good photo for May--it will be up longer than any other picture in the calendar.

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(Sorry if this came too late to be used this year. All my budget stretchers now have to be approved by the Board of Health and that took time.)

2. Isaac Asimov died on April 6, 1992, of heart and kidney failure. I will not list all of his 375 books here, but will say that he was one of the first science fiction authors I can remember reading, even before I realized it was he: I read all the Lucky Starr books (written under the pseudonym of "Paul French") back in junior high school. And of course I read the Foundation trilogy (back when it was a trilogy!). The Old Guard is passing away: first Campbell, then Heinlein, and now Asimov. Luckily for all of us, their writings remain behind as a monument to their influence on the field. [-ecl]

3. E_n_t_e_r_t_a_i_n_m_e_n_t_W_e_e_k_l_y (number 112, April 3, 1992, page 10) reports: "BOOKS: Cyberpunk writer William Gibson's next book, A_g_r_i_p_p_a_(A_B_o_o_k_o_f_t_h_e_D_e_a_d), will be available only on computer disk--with a virus that will make it impossible to print on paper, the author hopes. 'The whole piece is an investigation of the nature of the ownership of information,' says Gibson, whose 1986 cult novel, N_e_u_r_o_m_a_n_c_e_r, will also be published on disk--without

viruses--next year...."

Well, strictly speaking, it won't be a virus, but an attempt to copyguard it. One report says that it will be a sort of "click-the-mouse" to turn the page thing, and that once a page has been turned, it is erased. According to Tom Maddox, it is aimed more at the art market and is poetry. The package consists of a "bronze booklike object" and include etchings and a diskette with the poem. (Thanks to Barbara Cormack for sending the story along to me.) [-ecl]

4. And finally, two corrections. First, a correction to last week's MT VOID. The last line of Mark Leeper's commentary on the Oscars should have read, "Given that, it is probably clear that this was a candidate for Best Picture without being a candidate for the Best Director nomination." And second, the issue that went out this morning (labeled 4/3/92, Volume 10, Number 40) was an odd mish-mash of last week's and this week's issue due to lack of proof-reading. Please discard it; this is the real this week's issue. [-ecl]

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

Heretical views arise when the truth is uncertain, and it is only when truth is uncertain that censorship is invoked. ... [I]t is difficult to find anything really certain outside the realm of pure mathematics and facts of history and geography.
-- Bertrand Russell

THE REAL WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Peter Costello
Carroll & Graf, 1991, ISBN 0-88184-738-0, \$19.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Evelyn C. Leeper

This book purports to be about the real-life crimes investigated by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. However, even though it basically delivers on its promises, it is disappointing and

dissatisfying.

In order to flesh the book out to an acceptable length, Costello was apparently forced to include many cases in which Conan Doyle's participation was minimal, to say the least. (By the way, I have yet to figure out if the second reference to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle should be "Conan Doyle" or "Doyle.") Arranging for a medium to hold a missing person's glove, or commenting in a letter on his personal opinion of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, does not constitute a high level of involvement.

Even in cases where Conan Doyle played a more important role, Costello gives only the superficial details. He doesn't analyze Conan Doyle's attitudes and thought processes, except to show links to the Holmes stories. Instead, he spends time giving his own opinion on the various cases. Given that Costello's credentials seem to be more literary than forensic, this serves no purpose except to annoy the reader who had hoped to understand more about Conan Doyle. In particular, an analysis of Conan Doyle's logical, down-to-earth detective versus Conan Doyle's own belief in spiritualism would have been fascinating, but is barely touched on.

Even on the mechanical level this book is a disappointment. There is no index, which makes it impossible to cross-reference anything. (There is, however, an extensive bibliography.) And as far as proof-reading goes, it seems to have gone entirely. Such a mass of misspellings, mis-capitalizations ("Holmes" as "HOLmes"), etc.--at least twice "separate" was spelled "seperate."

It sounded promising, but T_h_e_R_e_a_l_W_o_r_l_d_o_f_S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s fails to live up to its promise. Give this one a miss.

NEWSIES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The story of the 1899 newsboy strike in New York City is told with about the same liberty that M_a_t_e_w_a_n took. At the same time it is half-heartedly a musical. As a musical it is perhaps a misfire, but the historical tale is worth seeing.
Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4).

It is New York City, 1899. Life is hard if you are a boy on your own with no money. But if a boy is poor and needs work, he could buy newspapers at a cent each and sell them on the street for two cents a piece. You might earn a dollar a day that way. Or you might not be able to sell what you have and end up losing money. A really good newsie might get \$50 a week. Joseph Pulitzer (played by Robert Duvall) decides to raise the price to the newsboys by 10%. Seeing their livelihood drying up, newsboys Jack Kelly and David Jacobs (played by Christian Bale of E_m_p_i_r_e_o_f_t_h_e_S_u_n and David Moscow) decide to organize the New York City newsboys into a strike against the local newspapers. Pulitzer, deciding he has a fight on his hands, decides to play as dirty as he needs to win. N_e_w_s_i_e_s is the story of that strike.

Disney Studios tried something a little different with N_e_w_s_i_e_s. The historical film is currently at a low ebb since historical education is also at a low ebb. For once more films being made are set a_f_t_e_r the 20th Century than b_e_f_o_r_e. Still, Disney did make a historical film about an 1899 newsboy strike. Then they tried to aim it at both adults and children. Then on top of that they decided to make it a musical. This is an idea that is either audacious or nutty, depending on your point of view. So, does it all work? Well, sort of. My impression of the trailer is that it all sounded like a good idea except for making it a musical. Certainly once I saw the film I would say that its biggest problem is that it is a musical. The idea of a big pro-labor musical has a nostalgic feel reminiscent of Broadway shows like P_i_n_s_a_n_d_N_e_e_d_l_e_s. This certainly is a more engaging theme for a musical than "I'm in love" or "Let's put on a show" Like the vast majority of musicals. The problem here is that this is only half-heartedly a musical. There are only about six songs, so the viewer is generally thinking straight drama when a character or group of characters starts acting funny and with a jolt the viewer realizes they are going into a song. It may well be that making this a musical was an afterthought after Menken's success with B_e_a_u_t_y_a_n_d_t_h_e_B_e_a_s_t. I noted without minding that the film used Bale's and Moscow's real singing voices-if you really want to call them singing voices. David Fristrom, in a review of the film, noted the dances were not very well filmed and

he is probably right, thought I might not have picked up on it. I did like the song "The World Will Know," which had almost some of the force of L_e_s_M_i_s_e_r_a_b_l_e_s. Incidentally, please note that the name of Pulitzer's newspaper is "The New York World." The script has some fun with that name; if you miss the name, you miss the point of some of the word-play. When Pulitzer says, "When I created the World..." it is intended as a subtle statement that Pulitzer is a megalomaniac. Instead it sounds like he is certifiably insane.

As for the story of the strike, it has a minor Dickensian tone crossed with obvious Disney touches. Visually the old New York was created with perhaps too many obvious matte shots, but maybe in a musical we expect a pat plot and make allowances for some of the visuals being less than authentic-looking. In spite of the nits that can be picked, there is enough substance to appreciate here. I might not recommend N_e_w_s_i_e_s but I rate it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Occasionally very funny dialogue is not enough to rescue a story about the lives of two basketball hustlers who basically live for the game. The story off the court is basically pointless and has holes large enough to stuff a basketball through. Rating: -1 (-4 to +4). (After the review is a spoiler section listing plot absurdities.)

Billy Hoyle (played by Woody Harrelson) is a natural basketball player. The game is his whole life. And he has a natural advantage. Billy is white and, as the title suggests, everybody thinks only blacks can be good at basketball. One day Billy hustles Sidney Dean (played by Welsey Snipes), who is also a part-time hustler. Sidney suggests that the two of them join up as a hustling team. Each needs money. Dean has a wife and son and a semi-legal part-time job that does not pay enough. Hoyle is on the run from two thugs because--are you ready for a twist?--he failed to throw a game after he'd told some gamblers he would. Billy has a girlfriend also, who spends her day memorizing trivia facts in the hopes that someday she will be on J_e_o_p_a_r_d_y. The hustle has Sidney offering to play two-on-two playground basketball and his opponents

can choose any partner for Sidney they want. Sure enough, they always pick the white guy with the stupid look on his face.

So what we have here is a black and white male bonding film. We see in great detail how the two get along, how they occasionally don't get along, and how basketball conquers all. We see how each relates to "his woman." When things get dull the wise and wordly Sidney gives Billy some fatherly advice like "listen to your woman." And there is genuine pathos as we learn Billy's terrible secret that being white, he just does not have the talent to slam-dunk the basketball. (Spoiler: guess what happens in the climactic scene of the film? And in slow motion, yet.)

W_h_i_t_e_M_e_n_C_a_n't_J_u_m_p was written and directed by Ron Shelton.

Shelton previously did the nice B_u_l_l_D_u_r_h_a_m and the very good B_l_a_z_e.

While some of the basketball photography is okay, in terms of dramatic tension it degenerates into the cliché of slow motion photography. Only the rapid-fire insult-trashings on the court give the film interest value. This one is skippable. I would give it a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

=====SPOILER=====

Plot problems:

1. So what if a security guard for J_e_o_p_a_r_d_y owes a favor? How does that get a contestant on the show?
2. Why did just the right question categories show up on J_e_o_p_a_r_d_y? Another security guard favor? Not likely.
3. On J_e_o_p_a_r_d_y you have to wait until a question is read before you can hit the button.
4. No organized crime enforcer is stupid enough to fake having killed someone to fulfill a contract. It is a really good way to get yourself killed if anyone sees the victim still alive.
5. The bet is that you are to play against Sidney and one other person of your choice. This guy over to your left owes you money. On your right is your best friend since second grade.

Then there's the kid with the missing arm. And that one over there can't dribble a basketball without tripping. There is a seven-year-old watching behind the fence. And over there is a tall, athletic white dude, somewhat nerdy, whom you've never seen before. Which one _ w_ o_ u_ l_ d_ n'_ t you pick? Ever? But if the hustle doesn't work the whole film makes no sense.