

scavenging the remains of our civilization. The holocaust was "not a bang, but a whimper," so the remains that are valuable include classic videotapes and other technological doo-dads that would be worthless after the usual sort of holocaust science fiction has dealt with. This sort of in-between situation is becoming more

THE MT VOID

Page 2

popular as a milieu these days, but Bull does it better than most.
[-ecl]

2. Anyone in Middletown who wants to carpool to Holmdel for the discussion, please contact Evelyn Leeper (x7-2070, mtgzy!ecl).

3. A few issues back I was writing about my Presidential campaign. I am now calling my party the None-of-the-above party. So anyway, I am about ready to announce a second platform for all you None-of-the-abovists out there. This has come after a great deal of conferring with my advisors.

Oh, does it surprise you that I have advisors? Yes, it is more than just Evelyn. I actually have a large staff of advisors out there to tell me about world events. They report to me on the hour and on the half-hour. I don't listen to them that often, but I try to give them my ear every day or so. Turns out they are the same advisors Saddam Hussein had and they helped him win a (somewhat belatedly announced) victory over some of the strongest countries in the world.

I say belatedly announced, because word of how we screwed up the Persian Gulf War had to wait until there was a Presidential campaign going on. And that brings me to my announcement of a plank in my platform. Most people will tell you that Presidential campaigns go on much too long in our country and it is much better in places like Britain, where campaigns for the reins of power go on for only about a month. Well, that is what the politicians want you to believe. Not me, though. The None-of-the-Above party recognizes that it is only during Presidential campaigns that anything gets done. It is only during campaigns that you get an inkling of what is going on.

You think it was just a coincidence that it was not until this

season:

- that you had a world-wide environmental conference that made each country state where it stood?
- that new evidence in Irangate (out of the papers for years) has come to light?
- that we find out that there were American MIAs held in the Soviet Union?
- that somebody asked Dan Quayle to spell "potato"?
- that there are witnesses who claim that they saw George Bush in Paris, presumably negotiating the delay of the Iran hostages?
- that American POWs from the Korean War were taken to China?
- that the Pentagon now admits that films it showed to the public and said were the destruction of SCUD sites were really only showing tanker trucks being bombed?
- that in the shooting down of the Iranian airbus, the ship was

THE MT VOID

Page 3

spying in Iranian territorial waters, expected to be attacked, and interpreted the airbus as such an attack in spite of the fact it was ascending rather than descending?

All this good stuff waited until a Presidential campaign. (You want to know how dependable it is? As I started writing this article I turned on CNN and got a new example, the China/Korean War POW story broke as I was writing.) Do you really think nobody knew till now that we had the kind of Vice-President who couldn't spell "potato."

If elected, I promise to work with Congress to lengthen the campaigns and shorten the term of the Presidency so that we can always have the benefits of a current Presidential campaign. I promise that within thirty days of my becoming President, people will already be campaigning against me.

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

A respect for the will of the majority is more harmful than respect for the will of God, because the will of the majority can be ascertained.

-- Bertrand Russell

THE LOST ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Ken Greenwald

Mallard Press, ISBN 0-792-45107-4, 1989, \$9.98.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Copyright 1992 Evelyn C. Leeper

This book came in and went out of print so fast that if you blinked you missed it. I did, and ended up having to pay more than cover price for it (at Whodunit? in Philadelphia which still had two

or three more copies). It comprises thirteen short stories based on the original radio plays starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce from the 1945-1946 season. The plays themselves are available on cassette as "The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," which includes not only these stories but several more from the series as well.

The stories themselves are rather pale imitations of Doyle. As radio plays they engage the listener's attention, but transcribed to paper they seem rather thin. Some are based on incidents briefly mentioned in the Canon (e.g., "The Adventure of the Notorious Canary Trainer"). And one of them even includes the daughter of Irene Adler--I'm beginning to hate t_h_e woman (here rendered as "THE WOMAN," making it sound as though Holmes is screaming every time he says it!).

All in all, T_h_e_L_o_s_t_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_s_o_f_S_h_e_r_l_o_c_k_H_o_l_m_e_s is probably of only minor interest and I can't recommend spending a lot of time looking for it or money if you find it.

%B Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
%A Ken Greenwald
%C ?
%D 1989
%I Mallard Press
%O hardback, US\$9.98
%G ISBN 0-792-45107-4
%P 203pp

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: The title is cute and some of the Valley Girl gags really are funny. But the horror elements are poorly handled and seem to have been chosen from other films for restaging. This one is cable fare. Rating: -1 (-4 to +4).

The one original vampire hunter and the best known was, of course, Van Helsing from Bram Stoker's D_r_a_c_u_l_a. Universal had the character in two films in the 1930s. Hammer had at least some character named Van Helsing (always played by Peter Cushing) in four different films. It created the idea that the Van Helsing family took it as a congenital mission to destroy vampires. B_u_f_f_y_t_h_e_V_a_m_p_i_r_e_S_l_a_y_e_r modifies this idea to say that there are a chain of women vampire hunters going back to the Middle Ages. It asks what would happen if the mantle fell on the shoulders of a Valley Girl who is less than totally bright (to put it charitably). Well, perhaps the idea has possibilities. We may never know. What we have gotten is a film that bears the earmarks of having been made from the first draft of a script, then edited by someone who was not interested in the material.

Buffy seems to be majoring in sensual cheerleading at Hemery High School in the San Fernando Valley. In the opening sequences we establish that she is very now and awesome and, in her own words, "vacuous." Then a mysterious character named Merrick arrives on the scene and tells Buffy that she is next in line to be a vampire slayer. Why does he think it is she? Why did this honor come to be conveyed on her? Why ask why? The screenwriter didn't. Though Buffy is skeptical at first, when bodies start digging their way out of graves, she starts to reconsider.

So far the plot isn't so bad. We could stand to have a little more explanation for what is going on, but this film could still be decent. Then B_u_f_f_y sours very quickly. At least the horror aspects of the plot do. We get a few scenes of vampires reprised from other films as if borrowing their scenes also borrows their logic. There are scenes of the main vampire (played by Rutger Hauer made up to look like Edgar Allan Poe) catered to by his assistant (played by Paul Reubens)--the sort of thing you saw in the later and poorer Hammer films with Mike Raven. But why is this aristocratic vampire showing up in Southern California, so near to where this generation's slayer is being created? Is it coincidence? Is there a reason? We never know. It is convenient for the story that he be there, so he is. And given that vampires have kept their existence almost entirely secret all these years, why do they suddenly start

acting as openly and blatantly as Hell's Angels? Well, the film needed a spectacular third act and that logic is more important than story logic. This is a film that never fails to sacrifice its intelligence when that becomes convenient. Prime example: to show how dense the teachers are at Hemery High, their reaction to the vampire attack is to officiously drop detention slips on each of the victims. It makes no sense but, hey, maybe it will get a laugh.

The film does work a little better as a satire of the Valley Girl lifestyle; perhaps the writers understood that a little better than the horror aspects. But even there, there are problems with the basics. The plot has Buffy becoming friends with the local rebel who shaves off his beard for her. That sounds simple to show in film. But the beard disappears before the shaving scene and then returns. This is a lot more than a marginal continuity error since the film does focus on the shaving ritual. Another problem in script muddling is Buffy's satorial realization of what an enigmatic statement really means. The problem is that it is never explained to the audience.

B_u_f_f_y_t_h_e_V_a_m_p_i_r_e_S_l_a_y_e_r has a little humor that really is funny, some that is heavy-handed, and some horror film trappings. Unless publicity works overtime, B_u_f_f_y will quickly zap to its appropriate medium, video. I rate this a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

DIGGSTOWN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Copyright 1992 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: D i g g s t o w n is a fast, smart film about a con job worthy of the "Mission Impossible" team. Unfortunately, it leaves holes and unanswered questions and has an ending that is just not completely satisfying. It is, however, a good film to get the juices flowing. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4). (Following the review will be a spoiler section presenting script problems.)

Gabriel Caine (played by James Woods) is a con man about to be paroled and he is not waiting to be released to get into mischief. He has a scam in mind that could leave him owning a sizable piece of a redneck town. Diggstown is a town that lives and dies for boxing. It is named for a local boxing legend who once took on five men in one day. Now the town is covertly owned by John Gillon (played by Bruce Dern) who runs the town like a king. Caine, with a little help from some friends like card sharp and hustler Fitz (played by Oliver Platt) and a boxer, "Honey" Roy Palmer (played by Lou Gossett, Jr.) is going to put the squeeze on John Gillon in an absurd bet that Palmer can take on any ten locals. Once these two men set up an honorable bet, each is going to cheat in any way possible to win.

Steven McKay's screenplay based on Leonard Wise's novel T_h_e
D_i_g_g_s_t_o_w_n R_a_n_g_e_r_s races and forces the viewer to work hard to
keep
up with everything that is happening in D_i_g_g_s_t_o_w_n's 97 minutes.
This dialogue is fast and funny, though the film's best line
(starting "Just remember") is reportedly an ad lib by Woods clever
enough that the trailer is built around it. D_i_g_g_s_t_o_w_n is directed
by Michael Ritchie, who at some time decided to concentrate on
sports films like S_e_m_i-T_o_u_g_h, D_o_w_n_h_i_l_l
R_a_c_e_r, T_h_e_B_a_d_N_e_w_s_B_e_a_r_s,
and W_i_l_d_c_a_t_s. That may be a pity, since his one really superb film,
S_m_i_l_e is about a beauty pageant rather than sports. Ritchie's
D_i_g_g_s_t_o_w_n is not as good as S_m_i_l_e, but it is diverting. I give it a
+1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

(Spoilers)

There are problems with the screenplay. One is that Caine is
entirely too brilliant at knowing what his opponent will do. He is
prepared for eventualities that he would have no reason to suspect
would happen. Also, for him to choose the right set of the ten
boxers to involve in his plan requires knowledge that he is unlikely
to have had. Finally, the punishment at the end seems surprisingly
mild when one considers what has happened before.

