

be such a smart move, becoming bodyguard to a Senator whose mental state is utter chaos. For the job entails an excursion into the Dream Machine, which assaults not merely the senses, but reality itself.

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Plunging into and out of hair-raising adventures, combating an extra-galactic threat to Earth along with defending his own sanity, Florin comes to astonishing discoveries about the universe he lives in and defends.

2. It was like a throwback to another age. I don't remember when it was I first saw the coming attraction, but it was like no trailer I had seen in years. It was a fast-paced, exciting trailer for a film called R_o_b_i_n_H_o_o_d: P_r_i_n_c_e_o_f_T_h_i_e_v_e_s. There were no plastic monsters, no gore effects, just Kevin Costner running around, scaling walls, escaping the Sheriff's men--that sort of thing. Maybe the adventure film that doesn't have a lot of plastic is coming back. I can dig that.

Now I see an article about the upcoming film in C_i_n_e_f_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_q_u_e. It is headed by a quote: "There was no point in retelling the myth unless it had a different, fresh and novel approach to make sure '90s audiences would respond. They've had enough of cops, robots and space." So far so good. Except I am not sure my tastes are exactly like what a filmmaker thinks a '90s audience wants. Isn't it they who have the appetite for the cops, the robots, the space (hey, I like space!), and all the gooey plastic.

Now I want them to tell the story right and they seem so far to be doing it. I mean, a lot of the story is the ethnic conflict between the ruling Normans, who'd conquered England, and the Saxon populace. That could even have a flair of relevance. Yeah, relevance! That would be nifty. Then I went on to read, "The new film's approach to the legend can be [the writer's] description of the Merrie Men as medieval Hell's Angels. Add to that [the director's] observation that '[Christian] Slater [as Will Scarlet] plays a 12th Century James Dean' (complete with Rocker quiff), the overall opinion that Maid Marian is a 12th Century feminist, and

the fact that this film's humor is of a very contemporary nature." And the scriptwriters were paid a reported \$1.2 million for this redefinition. The description goes on to say that without King Richard's good influence, England had reverted to paganism and human sacrifice and the Sheriff has apparently made a pact with dark forces. They have written in a part for Robin to have a black sidekick, played by Morgan Freeman. Freeman says his character "is more cultured and respectful than the rest of the band, a central truth about the Moorish race of the time. In the course of events I introduce Robin to gunpowder, Telescopes, and even a Caesarian operation." Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is to be Maid Marian. Both good actors, but Mastrantonio is wrong for Marian and Robin did not have a black sidekick. Nor did dark supernatural forces of evil fit into the original story.

This all strikes me as very much a dumbing down of the original material and a pandering to very '90s tastes. And this looks like

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it is supposed to be a quality production. If a multi-star, big-budget production has so little respect for its original material, what about the cheap productions. Will they have more. I guess if you wanted to find productions with respect for their original material, you'd be watching M_a_s_t_e_r_p_i_e_c_e_T_h_e_a_t_e_r. Continuing through the same magazine, I see a quote from Stuart Gordon on his P_i_t_a_n_d_t_h_e_P_e_n_d_u_l_u_m: "We focused on the character of Torquemada, which was not part of Poe's story." For yet another film, director Tom McLoughlin says, "Stephen King is our modern-day Edgar Allan Poe." (Bzzzt! Sorry, Tom, but King is no Edgar Allan Poe. But thank you for playing.) And then there are many pages on the making of that classic of the screen T_e_e_n_a_g_e_M_u_t_a_n_t_N_i_n_j_a_T_u_r_t_l_e_s_I_I. Well, that's why I have a house with 16,000 books, most faithful to the original because they a_r_e the original.

3. It's been a while since we explained the Club, and we've gotten some new members, so here goes:

Science fiction at AT&T? It seems like a natural, doesn't it? AT&T are the people who build those impressive bulbous buildings at World's Fairs and places like the Epcot Center. Bell Laboratories has a reputation for being the starting point of the future with

the invention of nice little gizmos like the transistor and the laser and discoveries like the background radiation from the Big Bang. Well, in 1978 when Mark and Evelyn Leeper (your humble authors) came to Bell Labs, science fiction activity was a handful of people who shared a subscription to the Science Fiction Book Club and traded off books. It wasn't that there was a lack of interest, but nobody wanted to take on the awesome responsibility of organizing a club for AT&T employees. It was something of a struggle to find ten people to say they were interested.

Today the "Holmdel-Lincroft Science Fiction Club" is, as far as we know, the largest science fiction society in New Jersey (please hold your applause till the end) with over 200 members. Sponsored by AT&T, through good times and divestiture, as an unadvertised fringe benefit for its employees (AT&T, incidentally, contributes only space--they take no responsibility for the actions of the Science Fiction Club, just as the Club takes no responsibility for the actions of AT&T--it's a comfortable relationship), the Club has members at 30 AT&T locations and activities at two (Lincroft and Middletown, New Jersey). At those two locations and Holmdel there is also an active science fiction lending library packed into whatever spare office space we can muster. There are also tri-weekly meetings, typically to discuss a book chosen at a previous meeting, but we also show videotapes, sponsor book exchanges, listen to radio recordings, and generally do what we can to keep out of mischief over lunch hour.

The binding thread of the Club is the weekly science fiction notice (the MT VOID), which features slanted editorials, more slanted book

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and film reviews by members, tidbits of juicy gossip gleaned from members attending science fiction conventions, and arguments between members. (But you know about that--this is it!)

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

Morality is simply the attitude we adopt toward people whom we personally dislike.

-- Oscar Wilde

ANARCHAOS by Curt Clark
Book reviews by Frank R. Leisti
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Imagine a world whose cycle around the its sun matches that of the rotation of the planet. That world is Anarchaos, and its sun is named Hell. A world where there are no rules, where anything is legal, where a brother has died and gone buried with no questions asked.

Rolf Malone, brother to the now-dead Gar Malone, voyages to Anarchaos with two other gentlemen, a missionary and a businessman attempting to recover some machinery that was leased, yet never paid for. The Union Commission, the only representative of the planet to take an interest in these gentlemen warned them that the odds were such that only one would survive their stay on Anarchaos. Rolf, just out of prison for manslaughter, had lost all of his weapons at an earlier customs check on a planet that he wasn't even staying at. Now, alone, defenseless, and looking for revenge it was him against the planet.

The plot revolves around Rolf's investigation as to why his brother was killed on this planet. Even Gar's high position in the Ice company, with a guard present did not help him stay alive on the planet. Rolf, in his way creates conditions of lifelessness around himself, and as a reward, gets taken away as a slave to work in a mine. His changes in mental attitude, the boring and exhaustive work that he is forced to do prevents his mission for revenge, until circumstances change and he loses his hand. With new incentive for revenge, he escapes, get captured again and -- as he puts it -- loses the battles and wins the war.

Considering the aspects of an anarchial society living on a planet that has no night on one side and no day on the other, certain plausible events would push people in the direction of rugged individualism or utter despondency or ruthless malevolence towards others. What is surprising is the longevity of such a world with such a society. Curt Clark has certainly painted a bleak outlook on such a society, yet does not touch the other aspects of life on such a planet when it is outside of Rolf's experience.

I would rate it at a +0 on the Leeper scale, enjoyable and lacking in the other parts of the implications of such a planet and society.

LA FEMME NIKITA
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: This is a French sub-titled film for people who would never go to a French sub-titled film. That is the up-side. The down-side is that it does not provide very much for people who would see a French sub-titled film. This is violent adventure fluff similar to less respected American films. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4).

This sort of plot has been done many times before in American films. Most notably, it was done in the film R_e_m_o_W_i_l_l_i_a_m_s: T_h_e_A_d_v_e_n_t_u_r_e_B_e_g_i_n_s based on the "Destroyer" books of Murphy and Sapir. Some super-secret government agency wants to create an assassin without a background so they start with someone whom the world thinks is dead, but who is not really. Maybe they even arrange the purported death, and then they train this "zombie" to be their agent. Nobody misses the person; nobody can trace the person either. That story told competently, but without too much in the way of new twists, is the currently playing French film L_a_F_e_m_m_e_N_i_k_i_t_a.

The film opens with four French punks breaking into a pharmacy to steal drugs for one of them, a nineteen-year-old woman who is clearly in a bad way. The robbery goes wrong for just about everyone involved: the owner of the pharmacy, the police that he calls, and the would-be robbers. Three of the punks are killed and only the young addict survives. She identifies herself to the arresting police as Nikita. This Nikita is not just bad news--she is deadly to anyone around her. The record later said that this woman committed suicide by an overdose of tranquilizers, but she is in fact administered them by injection and they are not lethal. Then begins the process of turning her from a sociopathic killer into a controlled weapon.

While L_a_F_e_m_m_e_N_i_k_i_t_a is playing mostly in art theaters, it is not an art film any more than D_i_e_H_a_r_d was. This is a slick, light-weight, high-violence adventure film. Much like R_e_m_o_W_i_l_l_i_a_m_s, the story of the training of the human weapon takes about half of the film and it is by far the best half. In both films the actual missions that the character

is assigned are rather shallow and silly exercises. One mission seems to be only a make-work project where the organization has done everything but actually pull the trigger and sends Nikita (at great expense) to pull the trigger herself. It is not that Nikita is so great a marksperson since the shot seems an easy one. Nor is it professionally done, since she leaves the gun barrel out a window for about five minutes while she waits for her orders. Nor is it that she is still untraceable, since by this point she has a reasonably permanent new identity. The whole sequence is there only to add some comedy and a little more action to the film.

_ L _ a _ F _ e _ m _ m _ e _ N _ i _ k _ i _ t _ a stands as testimony that English-language film makers do not have the patent on silly action-adventure. This one is a likable see-once-and-forget sort of film. My rating: +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

TRIPLANETARY by E. E. "Doc" Smith
A book review by Frank R. Leisti
Copyright 1991 Frank R. Leisti

Delving into history with the old stories that I remember reading some thirty years ago, I have come across the Lensman series, written by E. E. Smith. I can still remember climbing into a bookmobile at the school and checking out the various books that I could buy. I was intrigued by the _ G _ r _ a _ y _ L _ e _ n _ s _ m _ a _ n story. After reading that novel, and discovering that there were other books in the series, I would save my allowance and venture to the bookstore to buy the first book of the series, _ T _ r _ i _ p _ l _ a _ n _ e _ t _ a _ r _ y, and then the next and so forth. Looking back into my collection of science fiction, I remember the most joy I had with the Lensman in believing that an organization developed as futuristic policemen were in a war against a superior opposing force.

E. E. "Doc" Smith wrote this series as a historian, knowing the past from accounts mentioned from the Lensman's Galactic Patrol. Yet, in the _ T _ r _ i _ p _ l _ a _ n _ e _ t _ a _ r _ y story, the beginning basis of the Lensman, the opposing forces of Eddore and Arisia are introduced and their original meeting noted by this historian. Although lacking in continuity, the idea of two very old races, with totally opposing viewpoints and backgrounds coming together in our universe to wage an all out war of immense proportions - using galaxies as their base of operations, seemed to be quite new to me.

The civilization of Arisia arose from our universe, before the formation of multi-star systems and galaxies which could support life. They moved through all of their stages in life's struggle, up the stages of civilization until they no longer required physical bodies or physical necessities. These mind beings roamed the universe, thinking very high order thoughts - such as the total reconstruction of the history - both past and future of the universe. One such visualization of the elders of Arisia contained a conflict with another race of physical beings with great mental abilities, a race of immortals that were capable of splitting into two grown beings with a complete set of the parent's memories. This warrior race had completely destroyed their universe in an very vicious fight against their own kind. After this destruction, they joined together for their own reasons and moved themselves and their planet through different universes until they arrived at our own.

The elders of Arisia, having seen or forecast all of these events wiped out the memory of the encounter from the minds of the Eddorians. With their plan in place, Arisia waited many millennium until mankind had obtained the stars. It is these stages in the history of Earth, where Arisia worked on various bloodlines, shaping, changing, selecting the various characteristics of both men and women in their plan to create the penultimate couple who would bring forth children of immense

power and abilities. T_r_i_p_l_a_n_e_t_a_r_y deals with the peoples of Atlantis, a race doomed to destruction because of the interference by the Eddorians. The next downfall is that of Rome, with the almost insignificant events around a fracas at a party of Nero's. Other stories deals with events around World War I, World War II, and the upcoming World War III. Finally, with the destruction of the earth well in hand, the Eddorian altering the plans of the earth leaves and Arisia steps in to clean up the debris in anticipation of the arrival of the First Lensman, Virgil Samms.

However, before Virgil Samms can create his Galactic Patrol, the earth must be subjected to the search for iron as a nuclear material by a water world. These fish creatures, with the beginnings of an "inertialess" field plunder and destroy the combined forces of Gray's pirates and the Triplanetary patrol. The adventures of the involved players brings out the beginnings of the Galactic Patrol and their

duties which are to be expanded across the universe, now that mankind can journey so quickly to distant worlds.

A powerful setting for a great series, with the ultimate goal being the creation of the Lensmen - a group of aliens and humans alike who have only the good of the common universe as their goal. A wonderful story, which brings forth the long range planning and the history of the universe all into one long story.

As can be determined, I found the series wonderful, even when it was emphasizing the dominant characteristics of a democratic society over that of a dictatorial, or business hierarchy as presented in the line of the pirates that fight the Galactic Patrol at every turn. I may be biased from this series being my first incursion into science fiction, yet I would rate this first story in the history of the Galactic Patrol a +2 on the Leeper scale.

WARLOCK

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Three years after the coming attractions ran, W_a_r_l_o_c_k is finally getting a release, albeit spotty. A prestigious producer, a good director, and a distinguished cast turn out a good drive-in horror movie made with care and imagination. The one flaw is a rather obvious borrowing from the plot of T_e_r_m_i_n_a_t_o_r. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4).

One of the odd mysteries of cinema of late has been "whatever happened to W_a_r_l_o_c_k?" Three years ago there were coming attractions that promised a horror film with a nice look. From what we saw it could have been decent or it could have been another special effects and gore film. But for three years it did not seem to get released either to theaters or to cassette. Finally, in 1991, the film is getting a spotty, here-and-there release and while nothing great, it is certainly closer to my best hopes than to my worst fears. Only on reading material about the film afterwards do I discover that the film had a pedigree that should have raised my expectations--perhaps to the point that I would have been disappointed when I actually saw the film. It is produced by Arnold Kopelson, who also produced P_l_a_t_o_o_n. It is directed by Steve Miner, whose H_o_u_s_e did have some good moments. It stars Julian Sands of A_R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w and Richard Grant of W_i_t_h_i_n_a_n_d_I. The film has a very nice look. It is clear this was not intended to be a film dominated by special effects. There is a little gore, about the amount you might find in a Hammer Films horror piece of the early 1960s. Most of the other effects are nicely orchestrated, and occasionally done with the subtlety to leave the viewer not quite sure what has just been seen.

The worst touch is that the basic plot is very similar to T_e_r_m_i_n_a_t_o_r. The film opens near Boston, Massachusetts, in the year 1691. A rather unappealing witchfinder, Giles Redferne (played by Richard Grant) has sentenced to death a rather charismatic sorcerer (played by Julian Sands). Our warlock escapes with a spell that catapults both him and the witchfinder into modern-day Los Angeles. There the warlock begins a mission to re-unite three separated sections of the Devil's Grimoire. When brought together they will tell the warlock God's most secret name. (This aspect sounds more as if it came from the Kaballah than from 17th Century European tradition.) Reciting that name backwards will uncreate the world which then presumably Satan can recreate by his rules. The warlock kills one of the two housemates who care for him after a somewhat rocky arrival. The other housemate he curses. Each morning she will find herself aged twenty years over the day before. This rapidly aging woman (played by Lori Singer) and the witchfinder set out to find and stop the warlock.

This is an oddly sexless film and that works in its favor. The plot is never stopped nor is its mood sabotaged for gratuitous scenes of titillation. Nor is the film padded out with long chase scenes. The film is 102 minutes long because there was just about 102 minutes of story to tell. Most of those 102 minutes show some imagination. Don't get me wrong: W a r l o c k is a drive-in sort of movie, not great cinema. It is not a ground-breaker even as a horror film. It is a drive-in movie that delivers the goods just about every moment it is on the screen. I give it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

