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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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BLADE RUNNER (film retrospective by Mark R. Leeper):

June 25 is the fortieth anniversary of the initial release of Ridley Scott's BLADE RUNNER. Given that it is forty years old there will likely be SPOILERS! BLADE RUNNER is notorious for the number of versions of it. I will be discussing the first one I saw (the U.S. theatrical version). There is also an international theatrical version, a U.S. television version, the "Director's Cut", and the "Final Cut".

The film has been connected with Warner Brothers, which is interesting because Warner Brothers does not have a real history of major science fiction movies (THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, THEM! and SOYLENT GREEN are probably the best known).

Due to an actors' strike during pre-production, Ridley Scott and his art department had a long time to develop the look of this film and they worked wonders--the art direction is exquisite. Scott and his cinematographer Jordan Cronenworth go overboard in trying to capture the film noir texture of this world. (Everything except the final scenes take place at night, which allows for very dramatic lighting effects, but makes one wonder exactly how much time has passed and whether the earth has stopped rotating.)

Scott also gives us a truly multi-ethnic, polyglot future with many different cultures blending into each other. But he also seems to revel in unpleasant images--viewer be warned.

Rutger Hauer's make-up resembles a well-known illustration from Olaf Stapledon's ODD JOHN. (The film THIS ISLAND EARTH borrowed the same makeup look for its aliens.)

Deckard seems to find that every clue leads him to the next location, which just coincidentally leads to the clue after that, much as in MOONRAKER.

One thing which always bothered me was the twisting of Deckard's neck, which as shown would break his neck. Perhaps this is the basis of the belief that Deckard is a replicant.

Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4)

[-mrl]

Scientific Accuracy in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (letter of comment by Jim Susky):

In response to [Peter Trei's comments on scientific accuracy in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY](#) in the 06/03/22 issue of the MT VOID, Jim Susky writes:

Peter Trei picked a "valid" nit in Kubrick's 2001:

"It always bugged me that (he) didn't attempt to simulate lunar gravity.... They missed a great chance too; when they pour coffee in the shuttle to the dig, the shot cuts just before the liquid appears. A slow motion shot of it pouring would have been great."

Given that Kubrick made extensive use of "overcranking"--it would have been a simple matter to show a slo-mo coffee ad--complete with vapor.

More "nitpicky":

"that shuttle is shown flying over the lunar landscape about a hundred meters up. While low orbits are possible, that's ridiculously low, given mountains, etc."

How long were the transit sequences en route to the big black slab? 30 seconds in all? Kubrick and team went to great lengths to assure realism. I suspect he chose a relatively "close" perspective to show off the detail in the shuttle--and to give a "goundlings" perspective. To suppose that the viewer would be "up in the air" (so to speak) would be jarring--and would take the viewer out of the magic. [-js]

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

BY FORCE ALONE by Lavie Tidhar (Tor, ISBN 978-1-250-75346-5) is a revisionist Arthurian history. It is the complete opposite of perhaps the best-known revisionist Arthurian history: THE MISTS OF AVALON by Marion Zimmer Bradley. But where THE MISTS OF AVALON focuses on the female and pagan elements, grounded in the land of Britain, BY FORCE ALONE is the story of how Arthur started as a minor juvenile delinquent and rose Al-Capone-like (or Tony-Soprano-like, for today's readers) to rule all of Britain as the "capo del capi", while Guinevere began as the leader of a group of female bandits.

Tidhar does some strange stuff (even considering the premise). "Merlin mutters pi. Pi is an irrational number--only such numbers hold power in an irrational place--and it is transcendental, which seems appropriate. And it is infinite, just like the Weald." (Well, no it's not infinite--its decimal expression is infinitely long.) He also goes on about the square root of two being irrational, which doesn't strike me as something the Merlin of this story would be that informed about.

"A butterfly as large as a fist flutters past Galahad's face as he bats it away savagely. ... 'Don't touch anything,' the crawler tells him. 'I warned you before.'" Is this a reference to the butterfly that flaps its wings and causes a hurricane, or more likely, the butterfly in Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder"?

Clearly, the description above will either make you want to read the book, or to run screaming in the opposite direction. (I'm clearly in the first camp, or I wouldn't be reviewing it, would I?)

Tidhar may have written some normal books, but most of the ones I know of have unusual plots: one has Osama bin Laden as a vigilante in a popular series of novels in a world without terrorism, another has Hitler as a detective in a 1939 London with a different sort of Holocaust. And CENTRAL STATION seems to have every far-future trope there is. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Theory is a park, practice is a swamp.
--S. C. Johnson

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