

MT VOID 05/12/23 -- Vol. 41, No. 46, Whole Number 2275



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An index with links to the issues of the MT VOID since 1986 is at
http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

NORTH BY NORTHWEST (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

I am 72 years old and I have earned the right to speak my mind now.

There is no way Cary Grant could have pulled Eva Marie Saint up to the ledge in NORTH BY NORTHWEST. She's dead. [-mrl]

Mini Reviews, Part 22 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the twenty-second batch of mini-reviews, all films of the fantastic:

PK (2014): PK is a 2014 Indian science fiction film about an alien who is visiting Earth. Within the first five minutes of his arrival, someone steals the device for recalling his spaceship. But unlike E.T., PK looks entirely human, even if he acts a little weird, and talks a little strange. And the weirdness is how PK gets his name: people keep calling him "peekay", which is Hindi for "drunk"--or "tipsy", as the subtitles would have it. (The latter makes him sound like an alien Topper or Thin Man.)

PK does have the same problem as E.T., but instead of hiding in closets or within Halloween costumes, he interacts with society, which he does not entirely understand. (Example: he sees someone hand a vendor a 20-rupee note with Gandhi on it, and get some food in return. So he collects all the pictures of Gandhi he can find--postcards, flyers, posters--and tries to exchange them for food.)

So this is much more a "first contact" story, with the convenience of PK able to acquire language skills fairly early on through telepathy. But the real focus of PK (the movie) is religion, as PK tries to petition God--some God, any God--to help him get his "remote" back after seeing everyone around him asking God for favors. Needless to say, it doesn't work, and PK develops a philosophy

that deals with this.

There is also a love story that serves more as bookends than as a through-thread, and a few songs, but no major production numbers. Its main virtue is as a science fiction film. [-mrl/ecl]

Released 18 December 2014; US release date unknown; currently on Netflix streaming. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4), or 7/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2338151/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/pk>

MIDSOMMAR (2019): In MIDSOMMAR, three friends travel to Sweden to observe the midsummer festival at the farm/commune of another of their friends. It is probably not much of a spoiler at this point to say that this film bears more than a slight resemblance to THE WICKER MAN, although the "outsiders" here are not quite as clueless as Sergeant Howie. For starters, one of them is doing his thesis on midsummer festivals.

This is a 2019 movie, so not surprisingly, there is more sex (and gore) than in the 1972 WICKER MAN. (FWIW, Britt Ekland's dance in THE WICKER MAN is far more erotic than the more explicit sex of MIDSOMMAR.) There are also more special effects, though they are primarily in the service of either the gore, or various hallucinations, rather than any possible supernatural elements.

Of interest to those who follow folk horror (see our review of WOODLANDS DARK AND DAYS BEWITCHED in the 01/06/23 issue), but obviously THE WICKER MAN (the original from 1973, not the 2006 remake) should be seen before this. [-mrl/ecl]

Released 03 July 2019. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8772262/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/midsommar>

WE HAVE A GHOST (2023): WE HAVE A GHOST is a family-friendly (PG-13) horror comedy about a family that moves into a house with a ghost who tries to be scary, but is actually totally lost. He has no memory, can't talk (but can groan), and doesn't even seem to have come from the house. (He apparently can interact with the real world, but no one ever thinks to have him write answers to questions that might help solve his mystery. For that matter, his interactions with the real world seem inconsistent, or as one character describes it, "We can't touch you, but you can touch us?" [-ecl]

Released on Netflix streaming 24 February 2023. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4) or 5/10

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7798604/reference>

What others are saying: https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/we_have_a_ghost

Roddenberry Archives Project and Otoy (comments by Greg Frederick):

Here is a link for the Roddenberry Archives Project and Otoy below <https://home.otoy.com/roddenberryarchiveaug22/>

And here is a link for a two-minute film called "Regeneration" which has an old CGI Spock in a hooded outfit and then a younger Spock (real actor) in a blue uniform: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXU2Ob8gYY>

The blue uniform Spock is an actor heavily made up to look like Spock (the likeness is amazing). Nimoy died in 2015 but look at the actor they got recently to be part of the Roddenberry Archives project to recreate old Star Trek episodes like "The Cage".

[-gf]

Mark commented:

Hard to believe. [-mrl]

Greg responded:

Yes, hard to believe. Wait till you see what AI (artificial intelligence) and CGI has done to de-age Harrison Ford for the new "Indiana Jones" film coming this summer. They are using AI to mine thousands of old Ford video images from his early films to re-create a thirty-something Ford for part of that film and then blended and animated his early face with CGI. [-gf]

A.I. Designs 3D Printed Rocket Engine (comments by Greg Frederick):

Looks like AI is already designing a 3D printed rocket engine. It's a design no human designer ever created.

Five-minute video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cms_v_OUXco

[-gf]

Re-Reading, Banshees, Mary Robinette Kowal (letter of comment by John Hertz):

In response to comments in various issues of the MT VOID, John Hertz writes:

I agree with E (VOID 2266, v. 41 n. 37 10 Mar) that CORIOLANUS (Shakespeare), THE HOBBIT (Tolkien), KIM (Kipling), MOBY-DICK (Melville), and Jane Austen are worth re-reading; and I have. I re-read the 1969 Penguin rev. of Harbage's 1967 ed'n of the COMPLETE WORKS (each play with its own editor; what H calls the "non-dramatic poetry" e.g. VENUS AND ADONIS, sonnets; introductory essays). I often quote Nabokov's "You never appreciate a good book until you read it at least a second time", see his wonderful LECTURES ON LITERATURE (F. Bowers ed. 1980), which incidentally has the best treatment of JYKYLL & HYDE I know (S pronounced the doctor's name jeek'l, it's Scots, as S was; to help pronounce N's name there's a book in it, na-*book*-off; he'd probably welcome [wherever he may be, 1899-1977] jokes on "Na book off", he used to point out that the difference between a thing's cosmic significance, and its comic significance, was a single sibilant).

My Irish friend insists there is only one banshee (VOID 2267, v. 41 n. 38, 17 Mar). I dunno.

Here's a further reminder of Mary Robinette Kowal's range (VOID 2267). Whe Discon III in the midst of its hardships found itself with no one in the chair, she stepped up to that task--which few pros have done; perhaps few could, it's very unlike their ordinary (if I may use that word) work. I was one of the Masquerade judges, as I often am; another was Jill Eastlake, as she often is; the third was Kowal--while chairing that Worldcon!--at which she was jes' find (hello, fellow POGO fans).

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

The title page reads:

Once Upon a TOME
The Misadventures of a
RARE BOOKSELLER,
wherein the theory of the profession
is partially explained, with a variety
of insufficient examples. by
Oliver Darkshire
Interspersed with several diverting FOOTNOTES
of a comical nature, ably ILLUSTRATED by
Rohan Eason, PUBLISHED by W. W. Norton,
and humbly proposed by the consideration of the
public in this YEAR 2023

(And the details: W. W. Norton & Co., ISBN 978-1-324-09207-0).

As you can tell, this book is written with a certain amount of tongue in cheek. However, while of interest to those deeply into books and bookselling, it is not as amusing as the books of Shaun Bythell (THE DIARY OF A BOOKSELLER, CONFESSIONS OF A BOOKSELLER, REMAINDERS OF THE DAY, and SEVEN KINDS OF PEOPLE YOU FIND IN BOOKSHOPS) that I recommended in the 02/10/23 issue of the MT VOID.

(I am not surprised that a company such as Norton, known for its anthologies of various branches of literature and its critical editions of classic works, would publish a book about rare bookselling. It did surprise me to learn that it is an employee-owned company, as opposed to being part of some media conglomerate.)

[-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.
--Sir Richard Stede

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