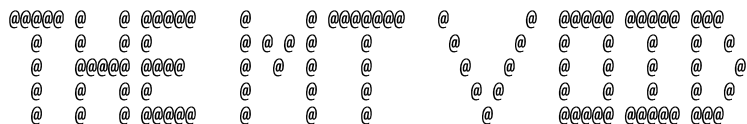


# MT VOID 01/12/24 -- Vol. 42, No. 28, Whole Number 2310



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### Mini Reviews, Part 16 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper and Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the sixteenth batch of mini-reviews, all animated films.

THE MONKEY KING (2023): THE MONKEY KING is an animated film in the style of Pixar rather than Disney. That is, the dialogue is in the sarcastic style of "Shrek" rather than the somewhat less snarky style of "Frozen". It is also a prequel to the classic "Monkey King" legend, "Journey to the West", or perhaps more accurately, a secret history. The Monkey King is as well-known and recognized in China as Mickey Mouse is here. Because the film is a prequel, it requires no prior knowledge of the Monkey King in viewers, though the final scene assumes some recognition.

(For older audiences, there is definitely an homage to THE COURT JESTER in the rhyme about which tree is poisoned.) [-ecl]

Released theatrically 11 August 2023. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4), or 7/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8637498/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_monkey\\_king\\_2023](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_monkey_king_2023)

THE INVENTOR (2023): THE INVENTOR is a combination of stop-motion animation and hand-drawn animation. It is a biopic of Leonardo da Vinci, but it concentrates more on his scientific pursuits than on his artistic ones. This seems strange even to the characters in the film, who in what could be described as "meta-dialogue" keep asking, "Why can't you be satisfied with just painting pretty things?" [-ecl]

Released theatrically 15 September 2023. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4), or 7/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5822848/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_inventor](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_inventor)

ROBOT DREAMS (2023): In ROBOT DREAMS, a man builds a robot as a companion. After spending time together, they are separated when they go to the beach and the beach is locked off with the man on the outside while the robot is still on the beach. What we see are a series of the robot's dreams, as well as some less pleasant realities. What makes this film unusual is that there is no dialogue or dialogue cards--it is entirely visual. [-ecl]

Released at festivals 20 October 2023. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4), or 6/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13429870/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/robot\\_dreams](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/robot_dreams)

### **The Evolution of TV** (comments by Art Stadlin):

[This originally appeared on a retirees' mailing list; reprinted with permission.]

I have mixed feelings about the evolution of TV. My experience:

1960's--In the suburbs of Philadelphia we got four OTA VHF channels (3, 6, 10, 12), and 12 wasn't so clear because their tower was down in Delaware. We were probably the last on our street to get a color TV--a 25-inch RCA in a big wooden cabinet. Some UHF stations started to pop-up (17, 29, 48). We improved on "rabbit ears" with a Radio Shack antenna mounted in the attic, which really helped stabilize local channels. It also brought in Harrisburg (8) and Baltimore (13) when the atmospheric conditions were right.

1970's--In college in Melbourne, FL, we got two Orlando OTA channels (6, 9). NBC (2) WESH's tower was too far away up in Daytona. If I recall, sometime during this decade, the FCC gave permission for WESH to move their tower to the Orlando tower farm in Bithlo. And back in Philly, the FCC gave WHYI (12) permission to move their tower to the Philly tower farm on Domino Lane. I think it was the '70's when Philly UHF 17 bragged about their 5,000,000 watt transmitter. But UHF stations had trouble getting viewers.

1980's--Soon after moving to Neptune, NJ (to work in Holmdel), Cable TV came to town. Wow! 36 channels, all with clear reception!!! And all the NYC and Philly FM stations too!!! "Cable-Ready" TVs became a thing, the VCR went viral. TBS (WTBS-Atlanta) was a "super station." CNN was born. MTV played music! A couple of video disk systems (optical and vinyl) tried but failed to catch on,

1990's--DirecTV brought even more channels! And in these early days, did not carry local OTA TV channels. Instead, they supplied an east and west coast channel from each of the big three networks. (I don't think FOX had an OTA TV network yet.) I enjoyed the CBS station from San Francisco.

2000's--Took the Lucent 5+5 offer and relocated to Bradenton, FL. I bought a card for my Windows tower PC that would allow me to record video and store MP4 files. Homemade some TV antennas, mounted them in the attic, and played with TV-DX ("e-skip" and tropo tunneling). Got some stations over 500 miles away in Alabama.

2010's--The big shift from Analog to Digital TV. We bought our first flat screen TV (\$2,400 for a 46-inch). And High Definition (HDTV) was defined as anything at least 720 pixels. Verizon FiOS came to town. Fiber to the home! Discovered Roku and started streaming stuff. Wife said she would never stream, but then got hooked on it. Regular Cable TV / FiOS TV gave us hundreds of channels that we never watched.

2020's--Subscribed to too many streaming services, but my wife disagrees. She watches something on each service! We downsized to a condo. Was asked to lead a team to select a new TV / internet provider for our 207-unit complex. After a "bake-off" with four potential providers, we selected Blue Stream Fiber, which supplies IPTV using the TiVo platform. About 150 channels of TV, including a Sports Tier (with NFL, MLB, etc), two TV boxes, cloud DVR, and 500/500 internet--all for \$74/month/unit. Seeing lots of 4K and 8K drone videos with stunning images on YouTube.

Future--I'm starting to learn about "Next-Gen" TV, which the FCC approved and is live in dozens of cities. Key points: ATSC-3 (Next-Gen) is \*not\* backward compatible with ATSC-1 (what we have now). But rather than a flash cut, FCC is allowing both to operate in parallel for 10(?) years. Technically, the newer standard offers better reception / less pixelization, mobile reception, something about 2-way / internet capabilities. I certainly will be learning more about this in the coming months. It's not without controversy. A patent dispute has caused LG to remove Next-Gen capabilities from their new TVs. And some converter boxes are not able to decode OTA content protected by copyright encryption. All sounds way too experimental at this point in time. More here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@AntennaMan>

I started by saying I have mixed feelings about TV's evolution. To boil it down:

+ I like that we get more and more choices, including lots of FREE choices.

+ I like the crystal clear video and high resolution.

- I wish it were easier to locate programming I like, but it's nice to have all these services making "recommendations" for me.

- It will be annoying if it comes to a point in time when my wonderful 65-inch top-of-the line LG TV becomes a brick because ATSC-1 is shut down.

- The competition between streaming services appears to be \*raising\* prices (as they produce exclusive content).

- I'm annoyed by having to pay streamers to show me ads. (I canceled my paid subscription to Peacock.)

[-as]

**INFINITY POOL** (letter of comment by Tom Russell):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on INFINITY POOL](#) in the 01/05/24 issue of the MT VOID, Tom Russell writes:

"Not leaving the resort is surprisingly common.

Also not getting off the cruise ship, even in the Galapagos...

And not reading anything more than the cruise/resort brochure. [-tr]

Evelyn responds:

You mean like the people on our four-week tour of China who didn't read that all the meals in China would be Chinese food? [-ecl]

Tom also writes:

Thanks to the Holmdel (NJ) public library DVD rental selection, and the Netflix subscription TV service, we saw three science fiction movies in the last three nights. We liked THE ADAM PROJECT more than either the Tom Cruise [MISSION IMPOSSIBLE--DEAD RECKONING, PART 1] or Harrison Ford [INDIANA JONES AND THE DIAL OF DESTINY] movies. [-tr]

**Greek Drama** (letter of comment by David Goldfarb):

In response to Taras Wolansky's comments on surviving Greek drama in the 12/01/23 issue of the MT VOID, David Goldfarb writes:

In vol. 42 #22, Taras Wolansky is quoted, "... we have nineteen plays of Euripides, because his plays were actually popular." [-tw]

I'm not so sure I agree. There's a lot of luck touching what has survived from antiquity. Take the Roman poet Catullus: we have 116 poems by him, and they are uniquely identified by a number. "Catullus 25", "Catullus 98", and so on. Why is this? Because this is the order that the poems appear in the \*one\* volume of Catullus's poetry, of which \*one\* copy survived to modern times. It's all too easy to imagine an alternate history in which a bookworm crawled left instead of right, and Catullus is as lost to us as Sappho.

So too with Euripides. In ancient times, someone issued a Collected Works set with plays in alphabetical order: and it just so happened that one copy of the volume covering eta through kappa survived. And this is how we still have "Electra", "Helen", "Heracles", "Children of Heracles", "The Suppliant Women", "Ion", "Iphigenia in Aulis", "Iphigenia in Tauris", and "Cyclops"--through sheer luck. "Hecuba" also fits into this sequence, but there is other evidence that it is part of the "select" plays that were used as school exercises rather than these "alphabetical" plays.

If we see that seven select plays of Aeschylus survive, and seven select plays of Sophocles, and nine select plays of Euripides, then Euripides no longer seems so much of an outlier, I think.

(Nine select plays and nine alphabet plays equals eighteen: one play that was traditionally thought to be part of the select group nowadays is thought to be a misattributed later play by someone else, with the same title as one by Euripides.) [-djjg]

Evelyn responds:

This is what I love about the MT VOID readership--the amount of diverse knowledge they have. So can someone tell me who coined the term "Year of the Four Emperors"? (And similarly for "five" and "six".) [-ecl]

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

I'm working my way through my "need-to-get-through-interlibrary-loan" list, so I'm reading a bunch of random stuff, though perhaps not quite as random as Marco's reading list in THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. (\*)

THE DIARY OF A BOOKSELLER by Shaun Bythell (Melville House, ISBN 978-1-61219-816-3) is Bythell's second book about his bookseller experience in Wigtown, Scotland. One can sympathize with the issues he has to deal with--including some very peculiar, and often obnoxious, customers, but he is less than perfect. For example, he sells books online (as do most booksellers these days), but in 2014 he was, frankly, terrible at it. Apparently if you ordered a book from him, there was a 25% chance that the order would be canceled because he couldn't find the book. One hopes he got better at it.

The book is interesting in parts, but there are other parts (e.g., having to do with salmon fishing) that I skipped over. This was somewhat true of the other books as well, so he is consistent.

(Apparently I read and reviewed this about a year ago, along with two other of Bythell's books, but I guess they all ran together in my mind, and I hadn't removed it from my ILL list. So I shouldn't be too harsh on Bythell about misplacing books ...but 25% is still high.)

(\*) These were PRINCIPLES OF MODERN BANKING, HISTORY OF PIRACY, PAINTINGS OF OROZCO, MODERN FRENCH THEATER, THE JURISPRUDENTIAL FACTOR OF MAFIA ADMINISTRATION, DISEASES OF HORSES, NOVELS OF JOYCE CAREY, and ETHNIC CHOICES OF THE ARABS. Alas, these are made-up titles. Well, there are books titled "Modern French Theater" and "Diseases of Horses", but those are hardly distinctive titles.

ATOMIC DREAMS AND THE NUCLEAR NIGHTMARE: THE MAKING OF "GODZILLA" (1954) by Peter H. Brothers (CreateSpace, ISBN 978-1-5089-7583-0) is a self-published book that could use an editor--there were quite a few misspellings and typos. I also seem to remember at least one misstatement of fact, but since there's no index, even if I could remember what it was about, I probably couldn't find it. In spite of these flaws, the book is highly rated on-line, and indeed, it has all you wanted to know about the making of the original "Godzilla" film, and then some. It does not really cover the American re-edit, though it does include complete shot lists for both GOJIRA and GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS! (The exclamation mark is in the title, not my comment on the sentence.)

Brothers has also done similar books about the films of Ishiro Honda and other kaiju and horror topics. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

We cannot tear out a single page of our lives,  
but we can throw the whole book in the fire.  
-- George Sand

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