

Fornax #17

Fornax is a fanzine devoted to history, science fiction & gaming as well as other areas where the editor's curiosity goes. It is edited/published by Charles Rector. In the grand tradition of fanzines, it is mostly written by the editor. This is the April 2017 issue.

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What is Chivalry & Sorcery?

Chivalry & Sorcery (C&S) is one of the single best creations in the entire history of Role-Playing Games (RPG's) that nobody outside of the ranks of the hardest core RPG fans have ever heard of. The First Edition of Chivalry & Sorcery was released in 1977 by Fantasy Games Unlimited (FGU) a company whose superior creations were generally well-received by hard core RPG players, but which was all too often ignored by the news media. C&S has generally been considered by those who have played to be one of the absolute best RPG's ever made, if not the best. However, as with the case with FGU games in general, only hard core RPG players appear to be aware that C&S even exists with both the general public and the news media being oblivious to its very existence. Not for nothing was C&S the official favorite RPG of the members of the Little Rock Science Fiction Society (LRSFS), at least during the time that I lived in Little Rock during the years, 1997-2000.

Chivalry & Sorcery can be best described as a mixture of fantasy and history. The game creators made every effort to make the game as historically accurate as possible while still having the necessary flexibility to have such fantasy elements as wizards and monsters. In many ways C&S was a groundbreaking game. This was the game that pioneered the use of the term "game master". It was the first game to place the setting over the game mechanics. C&S was the first game to have levels for monsters.

Their efforts resulted in artistic success even though commercially C & S has never been one of the most successful games around.

The original creators of C&S, Wilf K. Backhaus and Edward E. Simbalist did not care for the lack of realism in Dungeons & Dragons. They created a new, far superior, gaming system that they called "Chevalier." They printed up a number of copies of Chevalier with the idea of showing it to gaming companies, hoping to get their creation turned into a big time game. In 1977, Backhaus & Simbalist went to Gen Con, already a big gaming convention, to offer their creation to TSR. There, they encountered TSR founder and president Gary Gygax yelling and screaming at one of his employees without mercy. Not wishing to ever be in a situation where they would be at Gygax's mercy, they went to Lin Carter's roommate, Scott Bizar, who already had a flourishing gaming company, Fantasy Games Unlimited (FGU). Backhaus & Simbalist made a deal with Bizar making Chivalry & Sorcery a FGU game and they never regretted it.

C&S differed from the established Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) game in that it offered its players a realistic experience. Its combat system was at the time the most detailed and realistic yet to be in a RPG. It also offered its players a realistic feudal society. The historical customs in this game were drawn from real medieval life. C&S was set in the Middle Ages with the code of chivalry, feudalism and even the Roman Catholic Church when the latter was a moral institution. Unlike D&D and most other RPG's, C&S was in the main an historical game, albeit one with fantasy components. There are monsters in C&S, but they are more realistic than in D&D and other RPG's. Also, these monsters were based on medieval legend. Truly, C&S was the Middle Ages brought to game form.

Unlike D&D and most other RPG's, C&S is firmly rooted in historical scholarship. The first edition of C&S was originally published with over 130 pages of instructions in small print. The rules were both complex and yet well-structured in such matters as interactions in medieval society. The magical system in C&S included over a dozen different forms of magic.

C&S also plays like a natural game. Unlike other RPG's, it does not have arbitrary and artificial limitations on characters. For instance magic users could wield weapons such as swords. The only rules and limitations on the characters in C&S were based on historical rules and customs instead of any conceptions of "game balance." All this made C&S the very first true RPG. It really was a game in which players could pursue any goal that they wished to achieve.

Another way in which C&S differed from all preceding RPG's was that it included guilds. Primarily, these were groups of magical practitioners. However, as in real medieval life, there were guilds of blacksmiths and artificers. Combined with the peasantry, C&S made it possible for players to recreate the medieval economic system. It is no exaggeration to say that C&S was the first true role-playing game. It was a game in which an entire world was created.

This world included societies, history and magic. The characters were free to pursue any goals that they wished to.

However, C&S was not a perfect game. Its layout was poor and it was graphically unappealing. Subsequent editions have improved the game, but not enough to make it a breakthrough hit. Another aspect that limited its appeal to gamers was the very things that made it such an outstanding game: its attention to detail. The rules for C&S are a book in their own right. The rules are highly complex and difficult for even the most dedicated game master to get a handle on.

All of this is most unfortunate for C&S is a game that to this very day stands out for its qualities. The game is backed by the historical scholarship that informed it, its well thought out rules, its intelligent design and its innovative world construction. Chivalry & Sorcery is superior to Dungeons & Dragons in every way. It is the very model of a complicated, well-executed role playing game. To this very day, it is unsurpassed as a RPG.

Unlike Dungeons & Dragons, there has never been any evidence that C&S fosters unhealthy attitudes such as an obsession with the occult. Instead, being a scrupulously history based game, C&S has encouraged young people and others to have a healthy interest in history, especially that of the Middle Ages. There is also no evidence of even so much as a single gamer committing suicide because of C&S. This is in direct contrast to D&D, where there are dozens of documented cases of suicides that were directly related to that game.

There have never been any magazines based around Chivalry & Sorcery. Likewise, only a very few gaming magazines have published anything much about C&S. There also have not been any board games based on C&S. The people and companies responsible for C&S also have not created any fantasy worlds based on the game. There have also not been any movies produced based on C&S. Nor for that matter have there been any Saturday Morning cartoon TV shows based on C&S. There also have not been any electronic games based on or inspired by C&S. All of this is unfortunate, since all this has served to limit the game's appeal.

Following the game's original edition, there have been several follow ups.

Later Editions:

C&S has gone through several revisions. Two things that all of these versions have in common is that they are superior to Dungeons & Dragons in all of its forms and yet C & S has never been as popular as D & D.

Second Edition, issued in 1983:

The 2nd version had 3 rules booklets. These rules were better written and more concise than in the original game. There were no fundamental changes to the game, but the rules were both clarified and simplified. The medieval setting was divided into three distinct time periods, each with its own distinctive types of armor and weaponry. This eliminated anachronisms that were present in the Original Version of the game and also made it more realistic. Another innovation, that would be imitated by many later games, was the creation of skill sets for the characters. The mass combat system was removed from the game and the whole wargaming aspects were downgraded in order to emphasize the role playing aspects. The end result of all these changes was to make C&S a complete simulation of Medieval Europe.

Third Edition, issued in the Fall of 1997.

After C&S sank into obscurity some time after the release of the 2nd Version, a new company, Highlander Design, issued a new version and added a new game creator to the mix in the person of G.W. Thompson. The most striking aspect of this revision was the downgrading of the historically realistic aspects. Instead the fantasy elements were strengthened at the expense of the historical accuracy. There was also the creation of an official fan club, The Loyal Order of Chivalry & Sorcery that has since gone out of business. The new version also included a new skills system. The new version failed to improve C&S's market position although it did sell well to the game's loyal fans.

Fourth Edition, issued around 2000:

This was caused the "Rebirth." The game was bought by the British company Britannia Game Designs Ltd. (BGD). Some of the medieval references and game play mechanics from earlier versions of the game were restored. The game was made simpler. The "Laws of Magick" were added. However, sales did not meet the makers' goals and as of now, C&S has been discontinued.

The Future of C&S:

The future of the great game of Chivalry & Sorcery is murky at best. There has been talk about creating a "light" version that would be significantly less complex than any of the previous versions, but as of yet, there has never been any firm announcements to this effect. In 2011, Britannia Games Limited issued something called "C&S Essence." However, this game seems to have little to do with C&S other than the title. Rumor has it that Britannia is working on upgrading C&S Essence to make it more like the original game, but as of yet there have not been any kind of official announcements confirming this.

BASEBALL

Archived Interview from 2004 with Northwoods League President Dick Radatz, Jr.

Interview with Northwoods League President Dick Radatz, Jr.

Dick Radatz Jr., president and co-founder of the Northwoods League , recently did an interview with Independent Thinking about both the NWL and the summer collegiate baseball phenomenon in general.

Independent Thinking: Why did you leave pro baseball despite your success with the Red Sox organization?

Dick Radatz, Jr.: It was a mutual decision. I wasn't growing in the organization and there were no positions available up the ladder. I had been in Winter Haven for 7 years and wasn't learning much at that point.

IT: What is summer collegiate baseball, and why is there a market for this?

DR: Summer Collegiate Baseball is baseball that collegiate players participate in during the summer when they are not in school. I think there is a market for most any kind of baseball that is promoted properly. For example, look at the ever increasing popularity of the Little League World Series.

IT: Are the players paid or is this amateur activity? Also, what is the level of competition you would best equate summer collegiate baseball with?

DR: Our players cannot be paid due to amateur status. The level of competition in our League would be somewhere in between Rookie and Short Season A Professional baseball.

IT: What inspired you to co-found the NWL as a collegiate league instead of as a minor pro league?

DR: Purely economics and timing. In other words, our budgets are about 1/4 to 1/3 that of a professional Class A team. And, let's face it, the reason a number of our markets were open were due to professional budgets outgrowing them. We always thought that the Midwest League should be a 100 game season. The weather is such a factor up here in April and May. The timing of this concept fits the weather pattern in the Upper Midwest.

IT: How popular has summer collegiate baseball been with the fans? Any specific reason?

DR: Very popular. We've grown in attendance from a little over 69,000 in 1994 to over 625,000 in 2004. A litany of reasons for this. The evolution of the League and getting better and better venues and the growing expertise of our owners and staffs. Familiarity with the League both regionally and nationally.

IT: Have colleges been cooperative in allowing NWL to recruit their players? Why or why not, any examples?

DR: This area gets better with age. We play more games than any other Summer Collegiate League. So if you are a position player you can get a lot of at bats, with wood. As a pitcher you are positioned in a 5-man rotation as you will be in pro ball. I think our League helps develop players better than any other summer venue in this country.

IT: How would you rate the success of summer collegiate baseball on the business level? On the level of preparing players for the pros?

DR: We are a very successful business. On a scale of 1 to 10 we are a 9.5. We were the first for-profit Summer Collegiate League, so we broke new ground. Since 1994, two other for-profit leagues have been formed in emulation and I think more are coming. We feel our preparation of players for entry into pro ball is superior to any other summer league in the country and have statistical data that back that statement up. In other words, the Northwoods League office undertook a statistical analysis of the last three draft classes, 2001-2003. We used the highly regarded Cape Cod League as a study group, and looked at alumni of both Leagues that had signed pro contracts in those three drafts. We emulate the experience of professional baseball at the lower levels in a manner that gives the amateur player a professional experience before signing that pro contract. Despite having a decided disadvantage in draft status, the Northwoods League alumni taken in the first 21 rounds of the draft had higher batting averages as a group in their first year of pro ball at all entry level classifications, Rookie, Short Season A, Low Class A and High Class A. Further, of the player's in this group,

2001-2003, the Northwoods League alumni who were pitchers, had higher winning percentages and lower ERA's at every level.

IT: How successful has the NWL been in getting players up to the MLB level?

DR: We have 19 alums who have played in the Major Leagues and over 200 currently in the minor leagues of Major League organizations.

IT: Do you see summer collegiate baseball as being in direct competition with minor league baseball? Why or why not?

DR: No. The reason being is that we are typically in different markets. If we were in the same markets we would be direct competitors.

IT: Did summer collegiate baseball leagues pre-date the founding of NWL in 1994? How did the NWL change summer collegiate baseball or the concept of summer collegiate baseball?

DR: Some summer collegiate leagues are ancient. The Cape Cod League is over 125 years old. The Central Illinois Collegiate League has been around a long time and so has the Great Lakes, Jayhawk and Alaska. We certainly didn't invent the concept of summer collegiate baseball, but, we did invent the concept of making it a business. I think this is truly changing the landscape of summer baseball.

IT: How would you explain the success of summer collegiate teams in such cities as Duluth and Madison that previously had been unable to sustain minor league baseball?

DR: Two things. One is the expertise of the ownership and staff in marketing baseball. Two, is that, again, we are playing at the ideal time for weather in the Upper Midwest.

IT: How does summer collegiate baseball compare to the minor leagues in ability to draw fans?

DR: People have only started putting an emphasis on attracting fans since we came along. I can't speak for the other leagues, but, the Northwoods League draws superior or competitive numbers to many low level pro leagues.

IT: If you had a chance to go back to the start, what would you have done differently in developing the NWL?

DR: When we started the League owned all the teams.

Since no one had ever tried this we couldn't convince anyone to buy a franchise. Now we have 12 independent owners with some franchises worth millions. Logistically, it was a nightmare trying to competently promote all the teams as owners. It almost caused our downfall. Luckily, we sold our first franchise in 1995, Waterloo, IA.

IT: How big in total number of teams do you envision the NWL becoming, and how big in terms of exposure?

DR: I didn't know if we would get to 12, but, here we are. Now with the demand and the way our teams are drawing we are getting inquiries for potential franchises almost daily. I think 16 is very realistic and we'll evaluate again when we get there. There's only so many markets in the footprint. As far as exposure, I think we need some cooperation between some other leagues and we could make this nationally exposed in terms of television. We are already national in our own little baseball world.

IT: Do you believe that summer collegiate baseball will one day rival the minor leagues/independent leagues in popularity?

DR: The Northwoods League is doing that now. I don't see all of Summer Collegiate Baseball doing it, mainly because they have been not for profit for so long. Change comes slow in baseball.

IT: Have there been any problems in recruiting players? Why?

DR: Yes, there is a perception that since we play the number of games that we do, that pitchers get abused. This may be our biggest hurdle. We have expanded our roster from 20 to 22 to 25 and just two weeks ago added another (26) to fight this perception. We rarely get pitchers that pitch more than 75 innings any more, but perception is reality and we are dealing with it.

IT: Why was the Summer Collegiate Baseball Association formed?

DR: If you notice, it is made up of the three for-profit Leagues currently in existence. The only other option was the NACSB and that organization just offered nothing to us. They had no influence with the NCAA, did nothing to add exposure to the member Leagues and were just not progressive. But, let's face it, not for profits don't have to be progressive. They had dues of \$25 per team per League and many people complained about it. You can't do much with a \$3000 a year budget. In addition, it was created by an old Cape Cod League commissioner and is currently run by the Cape President, Judy Scarafile and everyone dances to her beat. The SCBA was created to give our Leagues more exposure, possible inter-league competition and possibly meld our buying power,

as we buy more of most products, balls, bats, etc. than the non-profit Leagues.

IT: Is there any chance for inter-league competition in summer collegiate baseball, or with independent leagues, minor league teams, et. al?

DR: I think there is a chance, but there are a lot of obstacles. The NCAA doesn't like it and to quote an NCAA liaison to Summer Collegiate Baseball, "We don't want to see Summer Collegiate Baseball get big."

IT: How would you rate the way the news media has covered the NWL? How SHOULD the media cover the NWL?

DR: I think it has been fine. Some markets are always better than others. Sometimes we have to sit back and say, hey, we're only 11 years old. It will all get better if we keep doing the fine job we're doing.

IT: What is your vision of what the baseball landscape will look like a decade from now?

DR: I think what has happened in the last 10 years is amazing. The first pro independent league survived. For profit summer collegiate baseball. Minor League teams in the suburbs of Major League teams...and doing well. I see competition, hot and heavy. Teams and leagues will come and go. What I hope for is progress, and I think it's coming. A lot of the old boy network is getting out of Major League Baseball and new, innovative, progressive minds replacing them. I would like to see wooden bats in the collegiate ranks, as the reason for the aluminum bat (money) is no more. I would hope, the powers that be, would recognize the developmental tool that Leagues such as the Northwoods have become and perhaps form relationships with them. Logic does not always rule in baseball. I would hope that at the Major League level that money would not be the determining factor in success. I see more independent leagues and teams that don't have to be, or want to be governed, by Major League baseball arriving, because, as demonstrated, they can be successful.

Thank you to Mr. Radatz for donating his time.

Essay

Eating Its Foot, and Standing On Its Food

By

Dr. Robin Bright

Buddhism arose in India through the Vedas (1700-1100 B.C.) of Australoid immigrants inhabiting the Indus valley of India.¹ The Vedas contained descriptions of the world as *avidya*,² that is, `delusion`, which was the basis of the Hindu religion's teachings against ignorance. In Hinduism gods and goddesses indwell within the body's *chakras*, which gave rise to the teachings of Guatama Buddha (563-483 BCE) in India as a system of spiritual elevation through the activation of the body's *chakras*, which were physically identifiable as locations along the human spine that became centers of conscious awareness as the individual became more intelligent through their developing of knowledge about - and within - the natural and artificial environment they dwelt in. In simple terms, *chakra* activation met with characterological - and phenomenological - changes in the externality mirroring what was going on within the individual in terms of their developing level of spiritual attainment. Or, in other words, the *chakras* were a `ladder` to heaven comparable to the Ascension of Christianity's Jesus, who was killed by the Romans, but had Resurrection and Ascension to heaven after teaching the Jewish `chosen people` of Palestine under occupation by the Empire of Rome the simplest of precepts conferring Salvation: `Love your neighbor as you love yourself.` (*Mk: 12. 31*) The popular children's game, `Snakes and Ladders`, began in ancient India as *Moksha Patam* (`the ladder to Salvation`),³ and for Christians it reflects upon the role of the angel, Satan, who was turned into a serpent by God for rejecting God's plan that the human host should be greater than the angelic host. God gave to Eve, the first woman, and Adam the first man, `the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil`, which it was death to taste, in order to enslave the human race in memoryless ephemerality, that is, climbing the *chakra* ladder wasn't what the snake wanted humans for.

God told Eve her `seed` would have `enmity` with the `serpent's seed`: `You shall crush the head of the serpent with your foot, but he will bruise your heel.` (*Gen: 3. 15*) Because saurian evolution in the Mesozoic period, 248 m.a., preceded human evolution in the Jurassic period, 220 m.a.,⁴ the winged angels of God correspond to winged saurians as the `fallen` angels of God, that is, a winged intelligence that was dominant upon the Earth before humans,

so Jesus' disciple, John, describes Satan as a 'red dragon', because the 'serpent's seed' are those who bomb from the air: 'The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war on the remnant of her seed.' (*Rev*: 12. 17) In terms of Hinduism and Buddhism what that means is that the human can't climb the ladder of Ascension to heaven because of the snake. Although Adam is understood to be a man, in Judaism Adam is a hermaphroditic anthropos,⁵ that is, Eve's emergence from the rib of Adam, created by God from the side of the first man, is understandable in two ways. Adam was a futanarian woman with penis' semen of her own and so capable of self-fertilization, a species' survival trait, or she was what Jewish law and history, that is, the Torah and Talmud of the *Old Testament* of the *Bible*, call 'the female spirit of God', the Shekinah. According to Christianity there's a difference between spirit and soul, although in Egypt, where the Jews were slaves before their exodus to Palestine, the terms 'Ka' for spirit and 'Ba' for soul reverberate in the name of the temple of Abraham in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where 'the Egyptian woman', Hajer, bore Ishmael, the founder if Islam through his descendant, Mohamed, that is, the 'Ka Ba', because Islam and Judaism are futanarian religions seeking the union of women with 'woman's seed'. Consequently, men and women represent the world of delusion, that is, *avidya* in Hinduism, which is *samsara* in Buddhism.⁶ The gods' interactions with goddesses represent the demons besetting futanarian humanity's attempts to waken into full conscious realization through the capacity of 'woman's seed' to sexually reproduce brainpower to escape slavery.

In parasitology the parasite that emerges from the host to kill it is termed 'parasitoid',⁷ which is what war is the manifestation of. Consequently, Jesus' Messianic birth from his mother, the Virgin Mary, was uncontaminated by male semen. He was 'woman's seed', which is why he was killed by the Romans, who represented that evil parasitoid nature, Satan, that didn't want 'woman's seed' to ascend the ladder of conscious development to run her own race and escape slavery to colonize the planets amongst the stars of heaven above the Earth. Jesus was the redeemer, because his Resurrection and Ascension to heaven through the power of God prefigured that of 'woman's seed', although Christianity's neglecting of the theme in its proselytizing is badly damaging. In Judaism a Jew can only be born from a Jewess, that is, women are Jews, so Jesus was called the 'Second Adam' because he was born from his mother, the Virgin Mary, as a Jewish man with 'woman's seed'. Judaism was founded by Isaac, son of the wife of Abraham, Sara, who barren thereafter gave Hajer, 'the Egyptian woman', to Abraham, and Hajer subsequently bore Ishmael, whose descendant Mohamed received the *Koran* (610-30 C. E.) from the angels of God who'd been told that the human host was to be greater than the angelic. According to the *Koran*, Jesus wasn't killed by the Romans, but had Ascension to heaven,⁸ and the *Koran* is the authority cited for the Moslems polygamous marriages of four wives, which affords the possibility of human futanarian sexual reproduction of brainpower from 'woman's seed' to escape the 'red dragon' of war and ascend to the planets amongst the stars. In short, the *Koran* amongst the Moslems in Islam presents Jesus' teaching as a *chakra* ladder, whereas Christianity's *New Testament* of the *Bible* of Jesus' teaching depicts Satanism's attempt to prevent the Ascension to heaven of 'woman's seed'.

In other words, the world's religions are a part of a coherent whole viewed from the perspective of humanity.

What has puzzled monotheism is the belief amongst Hindus and Buddhists that bodies contain gods and goddesses, for example, the cow in Hinduism is sacred,⁹ because it constitutes a microcosm in which gods and goddesses live and have their being in the same way that the *chakras* situated along the human spine are depicted as having indwelling gods and goddesses. Eve emerged from the side of Adam, according to the *Bible*, which suggests that she was an indweller. Science has attempted to explain animal soul as separate and distinct from humans often by reference to Jesus' Holy Spirit, which he said would teach after him and, as the 'Second Adam', the 'spirit of God', that is, the female Shekinah, was expected to emerge from his side as the 'Second Eve' after it was pierced by the Roman guard, Longinus, upon Jesus' death after he was taken to the hill of Calvary outside the city of Jerusalem by the Romans and nailed to a cross of wood whereupon he died: 'Surely, this was the son of God.' (*Matt: 27. 54*) However, insofar as Jesus' Holy Spirit corresponds to Eve, the 'spirit of God' is what science defines as the animal soul,¹⁰ which is the basis for eating animal flesh, that is, because the flesh is that of an animal with an animal soul, it's for eating. Consequently, the Hindu and Buddhist *chakra* ladder is indicative of a war in nature between the devourer and the devoured, that is, for the evil parasitoid unredeemed nature besetting futanarian humanity's 'woman's seed', women are food. The ancient Egyptians explained 'Ka' and 'Ba' as the 'spirit' (Ka) of 'woman's seed', and her soul (Ba) body,¹¹ which are for the sexual reproduction of the human futanarian race to the planets amongst the stars of heaven above the Earth. Men's devouring warfare explained humans as food, because they're saurian nature.

The structural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss,¹² argued that the human brain was limited by its ability to perceive, and male braining through the progressive extinguishing of 'woman's seed' damns the human brain, so its able to perceive even less than it could. Consequently, humans are becoming blind. In his work on food, Lévi-Strauss observed there was a 'culinary triangle' derived from nature by humans and based on food preparation, that is, raw flesh was transformed by fire into cooked food. Although Lévi-Strauss argued that this was a basic cultural activity upon which civilization was built, men's socio-economic history of breeding 'woman's seed' as food to be devoured by its worship of war as a god belies the structural anthropological basis of Lévi-Strauss' assertion, that is, saurian parasitoid nature breeds men for war and the devouring of 'woman's seed'. In ancient Greece, for example, which is held to be the 'model of democracy', homosexuality in pederasty for war was institutionalized and women's host wombs were enslaved for that purpose. The Satanist perspective is that, if humans are blind, they'll never see a way out of their slavery and, leaving aside a concomitant inability to produce brainpower, if there isn't any 'woman's seed', humans will never even produce eyes to see with. In short, structural anthropology is the science of describing the death of the human brain and its eyesight.

Or, in other words, Lévi-Strauss` culinary triangle doesn`t describe human development, but its fall down the *chakra* ladder to a point from which it can`t distinguish between eating its foot and standing on its food.

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Fiction

Idiots from The Planet Idiom

BY

Robin Bright

Odium strode through the *piazza* on his way to Idiotic's palace gates. He was Lord here, despite the opinions of the masses, he thought to himself. There'd been a move to alter the idiocy of the planet Idiom, but he'd `put his foot down`. The young would have to bear with the instruction of their elders for quite some time yet; forever in fact. He chuckled with manly merriment. It'd been a simple process ensuring that the rule of the ancient idiots of idiom was maintained. The education gurus of the Ministry of Idiocy had besieged the lawmakers in the corridors of power in a move to revolutionize the ways in which the children received their instruction, so that obedience was no longer demanded of the idiotic in infantilism, and there might once more be adults growing upon the planet Idiom. But Odium had squashed the rebels' protests by referring them to the basic educational maxim of his predecessor; Idiot XXII. If children received the education merited from those who wanted to be able to think for themselves, it would mean the end of fatherliness in favor of individual development without askance. What would the fathers do without children to instruct in the nonsense of previous generations? They'd have to find something else to do, apart from devise means of making wars in order to kill the populations and ensure that there was a new crop of educable youth to train in the ways of the insensibly foolish, which is what the planet Idiom was for.

In recent years, they'd developed the B2 stealth bomber, `Spirit`, in order to creep up on people from a great height and destroy their cities in the name of Jesus` Holy Spirit, which was an excellent unpreviously thought of usage of idiom. When Jesus` Holy Spirit was thought about, the idiots of Idiom instantly conceived of black manta like shapes from the depths of the sea stealthily emerging to zoom about the skies of Idiom and drop, or otherwise deliver, mega-death to the planetary surface. Although it wasn't exactly in keeping with Jesus` maxim, it was idiomatic: `Love your neighbor as you love yourself.` (*Mk: 12. 31*) Jesus had taught of the Holy Spirit that would teach after him, and the Roman guard at his crucifixion had stuck his spear into his side and rooted about in there with it to see if he could get the Holy Spirit to come out of there and give him a lesson: `Surely, this was the son of God?' (*Matt: 27. 54*) According to the *Bible*, the first woman, Eve, emerged from the side of Adam, the first man, which had suggested to the Romans that Jesus` Holy Spirit would emerge in the same way,

if Longinus the Roman guard could get close enough to cut Jesus' side open with his spear, which was why the Romans had him taken to the hill of Calvary outside the city of Jerusalem and nailed him to a cross of wood there where he was tortured by the guards of Rome until he died.

What the Romans hadn't bargained for was that Jesus would experience Resurrection and Ascension to heaven in accordance with God's plan for 'woman's seed'. God had told Eve, the first woman, in the *Bible*: 'You shall crush the head of the serpent with your foot, but he will bruise your heel.' (*Gen: 3. 15*) Odium of Idiom had understood it perfectly. The children were to understand it idiomatically, There wasn't any concrete realistic interpretation for God's words to Eve. It was idiomatic. The serpent was described in the *Bible* as giving Eve the 'fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil', which it was death to taste, to Eve, saying 'You shall be as gods.' (*Gen: 3. 5*) The *Old Testament* of the *Bible*, which was superseded, according to Christianity, by the *New Testament* teaching of Jesus Christ, was the history and law of the Jewish 'chosen people', that is, their Torah and Talmud, and the figure of the serpent was the angel, Satan, transformed and placed in Eden by God for rejecting God's plan that the human host should be greater than the angelic. God told Eve her 'seed' would have 'enmity' with the serpent's, because Jewish tradition was that Adam was a hermaphroditic anthropos, that is, self-fertilizing. In human terms, Adam was a futanarian woman with 'woman's seed', so when Odium said he was 'putting his foot down' on the planet of Idiom it was biblical. Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary, birthed Jesus uncontaminated by male semen, because he and she were the prefiguration of the Resurrection and Ascension of 'woman's seed'. God intended she should sexually reproduce human brainpower to take the species to colonize the planets amongst the stars of heaven above the planet Idiom, which had become the new name of Earth after idiomatic expressions had been universally adopted by its rulers to ensure brain slavery for its peoples.

In Christian iconography, Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary, was depicted crushing the head of the serpent with her foot, because that was how the human futanarian race expected to run and escape from host womb slavery in parasitism to the 'serpent's seed' that somehow untold millennia ago had inveigled itself into the futanarian womb of 'woman's seed' to steal her penis' semen and replicate itself to kill her species. In parasitology, a parasite is termed 'parasitoid', if it emerges to kill the host, which is what men had been doing for millennia until their latest B2 'Spirit' bomber costing US \$ 1 billion each to operate and maintain had been too much for the peoples of the planet Idiom to ignore. The sight of the fruits of the propaganda Empire of Hollywood, Babylon, USA, producing images of penniless babes for the Idiomians to marvel at with 'bug eyes' was an image of the absence of the futanarian race, because the footrace had been 'put down' idiomatically before its children were able to be educated in the sexual mode of reproduction of the human species.

Producing `bug eyed monsters` like science fictional warlords was what the Idiomians had taught themselves to do, and by the late 20th century, HIV/AIDS, as the latest STD `bug` spread by men`s mixing of blood, shit and semen in each other`s anuses in rejection of human futanarian `woman`s seed` had effectively ensured that only BEMs would be seen on the planet Idiom in the future, because through the `biological weapon` of the biblical `blood plague` (*Rev: 11. 6*) women were kept in fearful faithfulness to their ring slavers for warfare waged against her own race.

In ancient Greece, which was held to be `the model of democracy` on Idiom, women`s host wombs had been institutionally and parasitically enslaved for homosexuality in pederasty for war against the human race. The *Bible* explained that men and women were a single male brained creature wearing each others` clothes as a transvestite `TV` waging war against itself for the entertainment of the evil alien parasitoid devourer: `The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.` (*Rev: 13. 15*) Although the `TV` television machine hadn`t been invented until 1926, the image of the `beasts` had been transmitted like a contagious plague since at least this description of the `woman`, Babylon, from the *Bible*, who gave her name to the capital city of the Persian Empire, and later to the capital of the entertainment Empire, Los Angeles, Hollywood district, west coast California state, USA: `Mystery, Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the abominations of the Earth.` (*Rev: 17. 5*) Without human futanarian `woman`s seed` to sexually reproduce brainpower, the species would only be a `TV` manufactured as 66.6% `recurring` of the human `remnant` of `woman`s seed`: `And the dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war on the remnant of her seed.` (*Rev: 12. 17*) Or, as Jesus` disciple, John, observed in his prophetic apocalyptic *Revelation* of the period of global conflict that would precede God`s giving perdition to the evil, as the eternal unendurable pain of their punishment, while the rest of humanity recieved a new heaven and Earth: `Let he that has wisdom have understanding. The number of the beast is the number of a man and his number is six hundred three score and six.` (*Rev: 13. 8*) Or, in other words, `666` was the number of the men of Idiom`s anti-democratic disenfranchisement of `woman`s seed` in misogynist dictatorship masquerading as the wolves` `shepherding` of the people.

In Judaism the futanarian tradition was that a Jew could be born only from a woman, which is why Jesus was born uncontaminated from his mother, the Virgin Mary, because that`s how humans were born. Although Christianity thought that the Judeo-Christian tradition was against Moslem Islam, because Judaism was founded by Isaac, the son of Sara, Abraham`s wife, Sara`s barrenness and giving of her maid, Hajer, to Abraham, whosubsequently bore Ishmael, who was the founder of Islam through his descendant, Mohamed, who received the *Koran* (610-30 C.E.) from the angels, was a continuation of the human futanarian tradition of `woman`s seed`. Consequently, the US` war against Moslem Islam using its B2 `Spirit` bombers against the women there in their one-piece coverall of the traditional burka keeping their bodies secret apart from their eyes` visibility,

was a war against human futanarian `woman`s seed` secretly breeding amongst the four wife Moslem families of the women of Islam in fear lest the eyes of the West besotted with the ubiquitous nudity of their brainless and penniless babes should detect their existence and seek their deaths.

The US` deployment of their B2 `Spirit` bombers following after the development of their original `beast`, the B1 bomber, represented the peoples` of Idiom putting their foot down whether they liked it or not, because they didn`t understand the idiom to begin with as no one had bothered to explain it to them. As Odium and his predecessor, Idiot XXII, had planned. If the children, who were kept artificially prone to illness and death by the huge expenditure on luxury items like the B2 `Spirit` bomber, weren`t taught the meaning latent in the idiom they learned by rote and expressed unconsciously, they`d remain ignorant in their ephemeral memoryless role as cannon fodder for men`s wars against the human race, which would never escape from its alien parasitoid devouring for the entertainment of the evil couch potatoes sitting at home watching the `TV` warring against its selves. God had promised Eve Redemption and the `fruit of the tree of life`, which was immortality, although she and Adam would have to labor while Eve experienced labor pain, before Jesus` birth as the redeemer uncontaminated by male semen was born. Jesus` death, Resurrection and Ascension to heaven prefigured that of `woman`s seed` devising starships to take her humanity to colonize the planets amongst the stars of heaven above, which was the Redemption of science and technology productive of rejuvenative medicine and longevity to defeat death in grown intelligence and escape Idiom forever.

The gleaming spires of Idiotic were clear in the evening air. The Lord Odium reflected upon how the city had been built after the model of the ancient Greek Ilium of the Greek poet, Homer`s *Iliad* (760--10 B.C.), which related how the Greeks had sailed their ships to the city of Troy somewhere in ancient Asia Minor and had laid siege to the city of Troy where Prince Paris had ensconced Helen, wife of Menelaus, brother of Agamemnon, king of Sparta, who`d so taken exception to Paris` abduction of the famously beautiful Helen that he`s ordered the Greek soldiery to set sail for Troy and capture it to restore Helen to Greece. It`d taken the ruse of the huge hollow wooden horse left outside the gates of the city to be taken in by the unsuspecting Trojans to where the Greeks emerged to enslave the host wombs of the women of Troy for homosexuality in pederasty for war against `woman`s seed` and spread their Greek contagion further. Odium reflected on the ritual that had attended the founding and building of the new city of Idiotic, and how the people had willingly embraced the `Trojan horse` of viral acceptance.

Now the people`s council voted a huge sum of money each year to the sucesors of the Greeks, the `geeks`, to devise `bad machine code` to infect the computer brains of their enemies, and so ensure that the human futanarian race of `woman`s seed` wouldn`t receive the machine assistance it needed to process information and store knowledge in its memory banks to invest in the future of a colnization of the planets amongst the stars of heaven above through starship technologies developed and implemented, as a space program, with the aid of the artificially created computer peripherals supportive of human brainpower.

Odiom smiled insidiously as he recalled how the young were always indubitably duped into participating in the ritual contamination attending the founding of each new city on Idiom. Following tradition, the city elders hid inside a huge hollow wooden horse after the model of the Greeks before Troy, where they were taken in by a cadre of schoolkids, unaware of the significance of the `Trojan horse`, to within the gates of the Idiotic city where the Ancient Keepers of Stupidity fatuously appeared to great applause and opened the Viral Halls of the Bad Machine Code complex of buildings there.

Traditionally `geeks` were circus freaks who ate the heads of chickens, which was a useful idiomatic obfuscation of the truth. By infecting the brains of the computers that assisted human brainpower, the geeks effectively beheaded the species, that is, they devoured its chicks` heads, before the chickens could reach maturity, and anyway there weren`t any cocks in the hen house to begin with, so there weren`t actually any chicks or chickens` heads either, because the geeks had already eaten them. As `woman`s seed was long extinct, there hadn`t been any real cocks` heads for ages, which meant that the output of chicks and chickens` heads by cocks was a fiction. The cocks were as headless as the chicks and the chickens, that is, the human race was a chicken without a cock, although despite its penislessness it was still able to run brainlessly while the geeks infected its machine brains to ensure that those eggs wouldn`t be fertile either. Now computer scientists were developing the PC terminal whereby the personal computer functioned as the provider of sex education doctored to deny that the human futanarian species of `woman`s seed had ever sexually reproduced its own brains` powers to escape from its PCs. As long as the people believed what their PCs told them the human race was terminated, that is, death sentenced to extinction by a machine beheaded by geeks to prevent it telling humans how to sexually reproduce without having their heads eaten by the alien parasitoid devourer.

Idiocratic thought maintained that rule throughout Idiom could only be maintained by the rigorous instructing of the young in idiomatic phrases, which they`d be progressively unable to understand, but would use unconsciously, as if they thought that they could, and so ignorance in unconscious stupidity would become normative, and the powerful elite of the geeks would continue undeterred, unrepentant, unobserved, and unperturbed; despite Jesus` disciple John`s apocalyptic observation that men who preferred viral activity in homosexuality in pederasty for `biological war` against `woman`s seed` were irredeemable: `Men cursed the God of heaven for their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.` (*Rev: 16. 11*) Without human sexual reproduction of brainpower amongst `woman`s seed`, the evil alien parasitoid devourer`s `biological warfare` against human nature would continue, as PCs terminated the species kept artificially ignorant by the geeks` pogroming the race with its virus of human `software` biotechnological contaminants. Idiocratically, PCs were understood as `politically correct` by the young, but the idiocracy understood that they were policemen ensuring that the human futanarian species of `woman`s seed` were censored until the race was terminated through lack of sex education. In short, by preventing humans learning about sex the geeks had beheaded their race as alien parasitoid devourers.

The modern day geeks had found a way of eating their chickens` heads without swallowing them. If humans didn`t produce any children then the geeks had successfully consumed their brains by removing their penis. Or, in other words, the geeks had invented the penisless and brainless race which ran around headlessly without any prospect of escaping from its unconscious enslavement to the `serpent`s seed` of host owmb slavery in parasitism for devourment by the evil alien parasitoid monster of which the geek elite were its doom`s harbingers.

The Roman poet Virgil recorded in book two of his *Aeneid* (19 B.C) how the ancient Greek priest Laocoon`s words had reverberated throughout the subsequent generations of humankind: `Beware Greeks bearing gifts.` Interpreted by schoolchildren as an idiomatic phrase warning them against Greeks generally, the gifts went ignored and the result was the sexually transmitted disease (STD), HIV/AIDS, that is, the human immuno-deficiency virus that produced the acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome which resulted in organ collapse and bodily death through brain infection and ultimate extinction of the individual personality in agony. In Idiom it was possible to purchase a packet of Trojan condoms, but it hadn`t been possible to explain to the generations after Laocoon that the idiomatic `gifts` of the Greeks were an `incurable killer disease` sexually transmitted by homosexuals in pederasty for war aganst human nature, because it was idiom that kept the people in unconscious ignorance and ephemerality, which was necessary for the evil enslaving alien parasitoid devourer to maintain in order for it to continue enjoying the extinction of the race it`d made into a TV for that very purpose.

The couched potato laughed mirthlessly and tuned in to an old TV episode of *Hawaii Five-O* (1968-80). It liked to watch the buttoholes surfing in the opening credits to the show`s beginning. It was indeed listening to The Butthole Surfers, a band whose track, `Pepper` (1996) from the album, *Electriclarryland*, was one of its favorites, because it didn`t like the almost universally popular *Five-O* theme by Morton Stevens, which was `surf music` for `beach bums`, whom he distrusted, because beachcombers were too independent. In this episode of *Five-O*, actor Jack Lord in the role of the 50th state of Hawaii`s police officer, Detective Captain Steve McGarrett, will say `murder one` to his sidekick, and `Book `em Danno.` He always invariably does, which delights the couched potato in his viral lair, because he`s the number one murderer on the planet Idiom, whose been parasitoidly devouring the human species through its buttoholes ever since its can remembered. It`s the episode, `Number One with a Bullet, Part 2,` in which McGarrett says, `It was a bastard like you who killed my father.` His father, 42, had been run down and killed by someone who had just held up a supermarket. The couch potato was behind the wheel, and the supercriminal is continuing to put the human species` foot down acceleratedly:

`Marky got with Sharon, Sharon got Sherice.

She was sharin' Sharon's outlook on the topic of disease.

Mikey had a facial scar, and Bobby was a racist.

They were all in love with dyin', they were doin' it in Texas.`

THE BIRDS

by Gerd Maximovic

(translated by Isabel Cole)

On the skyscraper which belonged to the ESAU Laboratories in London - a mighty shimmering metal thing whose windows mirrored themselves in blue elegance - sat a crow, preening its plumage. It polished its beak, ruffled its feathers and kept looking around as if paying close attention. It seemed as if it understood my words and thoughts, as if it heard the voice within me.

Five minutes later, as Doctor McFarlane, a man weighing a good two hundred pounds, drove up as well, the one crow had become a dozen, lining the concrete ledge, while the director of the institution (who was now thinking about his gold teeth) paid them no notice, for the institution was located in an extensive, well-groomed park.

I trembled a little; no one had ever yet undergone such exertions. But a quarter of an hour later feathered creatures settled down there as well - where the wires of the pylons ran - white and with great red beaks, perhaps borne by the fresh wind of the nearby lake, or perhaps drawn together by a premonition, as if they knew how important this day could become.

In the bird house adjoining the London Zoo unrest had broken out, for the nets which were supposed to restrain these animals were holding no longer. And Turnbull, the keeper on duty at the time, was attacked furiously by two or three falcons which he had been trying to capture with a net, so that he bled from face and hands.

An hour later the sky was dark with feathers and pinions coming from all directions, and on the radio it was announced that a jumbo jet had crashed; great black clumps of birds were caught in its engines. Neither had the institute escaped the march outside its windows.

For some time curious and increasingly anxious faces had been appearing at the windows, which now were only being shut quietly. And through the panes avid faces could be seen, pressing telephone receivers to their ears importantly, people shaking and nodding their heads:

"Yes, yes, we don't know what's going on either!"

"I wish to speak to the Minister of Science!"

"Certainly, certainly, something must be done! I demand that the fire department be called in!"

"No, wouldn't it be possible to send a squadron of fighter jets over here to put an end to this uproar?"

"Am I going crazy?"

"Come over yourself and have a look! It's terrifying! I've never seen anything like it! The women here are already going hysterical! Of course, of course, we need help!"

"What we do here? But you know that we're carrying out special research on the highest level of secrecy!"

The mood on the ESAU grounds grew more and more oppressive, perhaps also because of the heat which had London in its grip on this August day. I saw a side door open, and Karin - yes, it was Karin - stepped up to the gate (probably to have a look), and retreated, frightened,

as she saw the ranks of heavy fowls which perched on ledges, in niches, on the hedges, on the roofs of cars, or simply on the ground.

Poor Karin, I had to think. Do you even know what the people are really doing there? Do you really believe the fairy tale about peaceful psi research? As I considered this I noticed that she was frightened. She had the feeling that something in her had taken off on its own, as if she herself had a dicky-bird in her breast.

And quite involuntarily she thought my name: Where can he be now? Why did he break out? He was such a promising medium!

I felt that there was more. Now - from a distance, for I was in the windy hut, reeling in dream and dark - I suddenly felt that she was thinking of me too, picturing little things.

My thoughts were interrupted by two Phantom Hunters which flew low over the laboratories, breaking the sound barrier just above the enormous gathering of ruffled bodies, which appeared to the pilots as a blackly moving sea.

Two or three of the typical detonations were heard as the air vortex glided from the wings. Half a dozen windowpanes broke with a crash. And perhaps a hundred birds, startled, rose up into the air, returning a few minutes later to one of the spaces among their comrades.

The two Phantoms came again, and the pilots, who could see one another, gesticulated. Again the dull explosions resounded, and once again turmoil broke out among the jays, the falcons, the gulls which now increasingly brightened the picture.

The hunters thundered closer a third time, and one of the men in the turret pointed down. But the gesture was helpless, and he shook his head. Yet there was suddenly a shudder within me, as if I were being seized by an inconceivable power. The impression I felt was so overwhelming that I ran reeling into the hut and, nearly blind, against the door, until I was able to calm myself again.

And then I saw that the firmament - which had a sulphurous cast, and in which the setting sun burned red - grew dark once again, but in an eclipse which had to be straight from the Bible - perhaps as if the Lord had sent all the locusts of this earth in punishment.

But they were birds, as I began to tremble again, and I could not say where they came from. Enormous, mighty swarms of such creatures, advancing from all directions toward the ESAU Laboratories in London, flying in broad fronts and changing direction as if on command. Tens of thousands of pinion-bearers, with sharp beaks, in perhaps the largest formations which had ever been seen over London, knowing blindly which flight maneuvers to execute.

Now the pilots, about to return a fourth time, had also looked over to the horizon. They gesticulated, they spoke into their microphones, and then the first, with a sudden jerk, put his aircraft into a steep climb. But, while a red glow still smoldered above the hosts of birds, it had become completely dark, and in this darkness, if one had eyes, one could see how the jet hunter plowed through the massive walls of bodies and how they smeared the hull, clogged the power units with their shattered bodies, broke into the turret like bullets and unmanned the aircraft in the wink of an eye.

I could not see exactly what was happening with the other jet pilot. He seemed to have found a gap near Kensington, and when he escaped it was a weight off my mind. Now I too felt the confusion and panic which rose in the heads of the leaders, including that of the dictator, to which I had no real access.

I noted the hectic activities which went on, not only with ESAU and the government. Heathrow was already shut down. All arriving flights were rerouted.

In this hour, as the sun set, radio and television programs were interrupted worldwide to report the meager information, as well as numerous rumors and speculations.

I froze within, for although I knew what I was capable of, I had not reckoned with this. Everything went black, and I heard the chatter of the birds, their hollow cries, saw them preen their plumage. It seemed to me, as I lost consciousness, that white veils were rising from the Thames and that there was movement in Nature, a whispering, as if conscious life had entered it. And I knew, staggering and reeling, that this had to do with me. But now the tension had become too great, and I knew, after all, that the greatest achievements take place in the state of unconsciousness.

And I remembered - still staggering and reeling - while my soul wavered. Yes, I remembered, and the images rose up once again, one after the other. At first it seemed to me that I was looking into a deep well, for there, far below, my hunted face was mirrored in the water, and my lips burned.

At last, I thought, I had some peace and quiet. I had escaped them, it seemed to me, at least for a few quarter-hours. But I would already hear my pursuers in the psychic noise, and the baying of the dogs and the helicopter in which they flew over the grassland in the south of England.

A sip of water - I don't know how I found it. Perhaps I drew the moisture from the depths with special abilities. Or perhaps it was only the bucket which stood at the edge of the well. I can't say, and I really did not know my own powers either.

For do we not sleep and dream all our life, and are we not like the monstrous progeny of divine fantasies, nothing more than the expression of what HE is? And do we not wrinkle our foreheads in sleep as if with HIM, as we reach other human beings in our nightly unconscious thoughts - almost as if a common aether connected us all?

Is it not the same from Betelgeuse to Cassiopeia, and from Sirius to Rigel? And do we not find the harmony of nature, the animation of everything in every body of water, in the flowers and the trees? Is it not true that something unites us with all of creation, since we are a part of it? And because of this, can we not guide animals and people like puppeteers, when consciousness deserts us?

I do not know the answer. I know only that I awoke in the ESAU laboratory. Was it the surroundings? Was it the experimental arrangement? Was it the people who had the beginnings of abilities? Was it McFarlane, the director, who wants psychic warfare? I cannot determine what it was, but that which I always knew or sensed entered my life with an impact as if I were newborn, as if I had dreamed and dozed away my previous life, as if I had been an infant and had finally awoken to myself.

Of course they knew of me in the institute, of what I could do. I can still see their hard and cunning looks as I came there, innocent and naive. Yes, I felt McFarlane's thoughts, which he never voiced clearly. They wanted to begin mental warfare. With human emanations and with apparatuses the enemy was to be driven insane.

Even more, the pressure from outside was needed to hold the country together inside. Even a limited atomic strike would have been welcome in order to weld the population of England together.

In the hut I felt sick as I thought of that. Pitchforks stood in the corner, and dust danced in the sun. I had collected myself somewhat. I think one finds oneself only in battle. They had lost my trail, and I had fallen asleep.

In the night I was woken by voices and, again, the sound of motors. I crept up to a crack to peer out of the barn. And there I first saw men with flashlights in their hands, trudging straight up the hill to the hut. And lights in the air - red and green - coming from the helicopter from whose belly the white ray of a search light fell, as if it were reaching for me with a gigantic finger.

Then I heard the dogs, which heckled and barked, and Jock said in a hoarse voice, almost wiped out by the wind, words which I more sensed than heard: "He must be up there, Bruster. You see, I was right after all. He's disappeared into the hut there!"

"I just don't understand," murmured Bruster, "how he endures it. He doesn't have a chance against the white wall which we're erecting psychically. To think that he doesn't give up...!"

He smiled grimly: "He would have gotten such a good post!"

I thought: They want to kill me. They've become afraid of me. For them I'm unpredictable. I'm a security factor which they can't calculate.

I felt dizzy again, again this inner reeling as I read the thoughts of the helicopter pilot, Spence. He too wanted to destroy me. He was planning to burn me with Napalm, and it gave him a sadistic pleasure to think of the incendiary canisters on board.

But in the midst of this reeling, as the strange impressions bombarded me, I suddenly felt a wild joy which seemed to come from within. There was a person - Karin? - who was thinking of me. Someone who seemed to kindle a light within me, and as if in shock, as if in intoxication, in terrible anticipation I could see a mighty, bright flame flickering.

"Are you ready?" Bruster asked the pilot over the walkie-talkie.

And the dogs growled below, but something was wrong with their heads, and now they rolled their bloodshot eyes, and foam dripped from their flews.

"Yes," replied Spence, but in a hysterical voice.

For something was wrong in his skull too, and he did not know what; he only sensed that he would go mad at any moment; but he did not want to go mad. His father had been insane, and his sister, and he wanted to be normal at all costs. Yes, he too had the talent, but he was on the other side.

"You are mentally ill," I planted grimly in Spence. "You have completely lost control, lost your orientation. You will end in a dark night. The lights in your brain will soon burn out. They're coming now to take you away! Ha, ha, they're taking you away!"

"I can't handle the helicopter," Spence gurgled down to the ground in a trembling voice.

For in his own ears there was now white noise, which I created, and he tasted blood on his tongue, which he had torn.

"What," bellowed Bruster, the file-leader, from below, "have you completely taken leave of your senses?"

"I can't see anymore," howled Spence, "I think I'm going blind!"

"Man," thundered Bruster, "pull yourself together! This morning you were in great form, and you're a good pilot, you know that! Get a grip on yourself!"

And for a moment it really seemed as if Spence had sobered up.

I said to him: "It comes from inside. It's very quiet. You can't hear it, only feel..."

"What!" cried Spence in a cracking voice.

And then I stepped quite openly in front of the hut to have a better view of the sky. And I also looked at the men and the dogs, who were already raving as if with rabies and could hardly be held in check by the keeper.

"There he is!" one cried, and pointed to me.

But the dogs had really gone sick in the head, and they began to bite, the foam dripping from their mouths. Yet my persecutors, who were unable to grasp this and tugged at the collars, looked up at the helicopter, which had only just been hovering perhaps a hundred meters quite securely and calmly in the air, and which now suddenly turned and dove at the men and the dogs, starting to go into a tailspin. But I had left poor Spence enough to be able to wave to his comrades, who - as they realized that he was coming at them - scattered.

But then it had already happened. I saw a terrific flash. A jet of flame shot up, and it was as if flaming fountains were thrown up to all sides. And then the entire hill burned, an immense pallid cloud of smoke billowed up and darkened the sky, and in quick succession I heard two or three explosions as the benzene tanks caught fire. Soon a black silence took the place of the white noise, for with the men the dogs had died as well.

Karin was frightened when she thought of me.

"Bruce, is that you?"

I nodded in the hut.

"You are commanding the birds?"

Yes, I said inside me.

"Don't you believe me?" I asked in the gathering twilight.

She shuddered anew, tried hard to believe it. But there was the doubt that such a thing could be possible. But she was a professional and had worked on these experiments. What she was unable to understand was that the effect, which - in all previous series of experiments - could only be called a weak force, had broken out with such intensity.

I looked at her. Her narrow features. The blue eyes. The blonde hair. I looked at her as if I desired her, and she was frightened again.

She thought: What will become of us?

I said: "I don't know. We'll have to give it a try."

"Did you always have your worries about it?" she wanted to know.

"Yes," I confirmed, "all the unfiltered information. The white noise and the brown chaos. Do you know what it's like to be flooded with redundancy?"

"I can imagine."

But in this moment, in which we had come closer to one another than ever before, someone came up to her - McFarlane? I couldn't see clearly - and distracted her. Confused, she lost my thoughts. And now, immediately, the doubts came too, as I sensed. The magnetic field of the man reached for her with full force. But that could be changed.

I smiled grimly. Who does the gift come from? I thought. Do we live fruitlessly? Are we only vain subjects who indulge only our own narrow interests? I remembered that one would be lost in the free noise outside. One would be caught in the diverse, intersecting, above all negative imaginings of the many unconscious people. Life would only be possible if everyone had a positive mastery of this power, insofar as it was given them.

Now I knew what I wanted again. Now I was full of new certainty. I smiled as the sun sank behind the green hills, and I sensed, thinking of the birds, that there must be others like me - outside the laboratories of the dictator, people who had shunned these laboratories because they had not wanted to cooperate with him.

I lay down in the straw for a while, to relax and summon back my strength. In the night, as the moon hung high and the situation had calmed down, the attack began. Suddenly, without warning, the feathers of all the birds began to rustle, they beat their wings, their croaking cries rose up like warnings that nature should not be sinned against.

It was a massive throng of black and white and speckled warm bodies which circled the ESAU building in the silver light of earth's satellite. Which swung in formations never seen before - and destroyed all the hopes of the sleepy people in the institute (who had not dared to leave the building) that the worst, the harshest part of this inconceivable natural phenomenon had been overcome.

Suddenly a tremble seemed to go through the universe, a vibration, a whisper. Then the first hundreds of feathered friends plummeted down upon the test block like missiles, and panes shattered on the broad front, the glass appearing as strange rainbows in the moon-bright night and in the light with which the masses of birds had been beamed in makeshift fashion.

Then, a few moments later, as the merciless bodies collided with full force against the massive entrance portals, and as those made of glass immediately shattered - and as they stormed the ventilation shafts with a furious screeching and plunged into the chimneys - they knew in the laboratories, and in London as well, that the calculation would not have worked out. And with all the probes, still oriented in the direction of Moscow, the weak force which caused this could not be detected.

Tanks, flame-throwers and water cannon which had been kept in readiness since evening were brought to the front. But as long as the teams - only in protective clothing - crouched exposed on the vehicles, they were attacked by shrieking bombs which hacked their eyes and faces and hands. The tanks of the second brigade, which was stationed near the capital, remained caught as if in gigantic black and speckled snowstorms. And where flame-throwers were brought in, the teams burned as well when the violent rising wind changed.

On an impulse, in a spontaneous gesture, I caused McFarlane, who - to my knowledge - had driven at least half a dozen of the most gifted experimental subjects insane, to seek the basement, reached through flimsy wooden doors, for the doctor - in his cowardice - thought he would be safe there.

But hardly was he below when the birds followed him, having destroyed the testing procedures, the machines and instruments in furious attacks. I no longer have a precise recollection of the director down there in the basement. I only remember how he covered his face with his hands. Now, as ever, I see his victims. And from that distance it was also difficult to tell what there was actually McFarlane and what belonged to the pieces of equipment such as clothing, insulation material and so forth.

As dawn broke the ESAU grounds, cordoned off far and wide, presented an image of destruction. The corpse-mountains of cold feathers barred all entry. Some of the buildings (although no one else had been injured - apart from a few scratches) still smoked slightly, destroyed in the swaths of fire triggered by short circuits.

In the first rays of sunlight, which grazed the destroyed tanks and the other tools and containers (which were covered with the corpses of birds like an oily, shimmering flood) as if with search lights, the doors of the buildings were opened, after the makeshift attempt had been made to clear away the heaps of bird corpses through the shattered window panes.

The members of the scientific staff staggered - haggard and with distraught eyes - into the open. There were surely those among them who thought of Hitchcock's film,

and who now saw it differently. Although I was exhausted, I had to smile. But then, as I saw Karin, who had only a few abrasions, I grew weary; never yet had anyone undergone such a great exertion.

And as I lay back in the hay again and sensed that Karin was beginning to follow my trail, I felt simultaneously that further away - in the head of the dictator and in other brains - there rose concern and fear as to what was really going on. For in the meantime it had become clear - after communication had been taken up with Moscow and other cities - that similar projects were being worked on there as well, but that the attack had not come from there.

As I nodded off - I had only planned half an hour - I also registered the impulse that there must be an amplifier near the spot where the helicopter had crashed, and that the place should be investigated, using shields as far as possible. But that could not disturb me any further as I entered the realm of dream and memory. For I also registered friendly impulses from the bank of the Thames, where the houseboats lay. And in the last moment before falling asleep I thought of Karin.

From Boom to Fortune

By Charles Rector

The first time that I visited the silver mining town of Platteville, New Mexico, it was a booming town of roughly 2,000 people. My best friend, Fred Lancaster, and I pulled our wagon in front of what had been described to us as the town's best hotel. It really was not all that much, but compared to the lodgings found in other boom towns that we had visited, it was pretty nice. For a dollar a night, we got a room and enough water for bathing. For another dollar, we got a decent dinner. Such were prices in the good old days.

Because we did not arrive until late in the day, neither Fred or I were able to attend to our business. The night was not exactly conducive to sleep given all the hell raising of the sort that normally went on during nights in boom towns such as Platteville. However, both my friend and I were eventually able to achieve a decent amount of rest for our big day.

We spent the next day taking notes and sketching the layout of the town. We especially took note of the bank's location as well as the locations of the local churches as well as the location of the sheriff's office.

We wanted to make sure when our gang hit the town on the designated Sunday, we would be able to take the bank for all that it was worth with minimum interference from the churchgoers. We were going to break into the closed bank and apply dynamite to the vault. As for the sheriff, we planned on killing him anyways on account of general principle.

It was during our walking around taking notes while trying not to act in a conspicuous manner, that a freighter named Dwight Nelson approached us and offered a couple bucks if we could help him with his load for the silver miners. Fred and I said sure why not and we were in it quick.

Mr. Nelson's load consisted of mining machinery. He needed it moved from his storage depot to a wagon drawn by a mule team. Fred and I expressed skepticism that mules were preferable to horses, but Nelson was quite sure that mules were the right choice. We helped to load the wagon and checked the harnesses to make sure that all was right.

After Mr. Nelson inspected everything, he bade us get on our horses and follow the mule team just to make sure that all would work out. Once all the preliminaries were finished with, we were off for the main silver mine.

It was not a good road and it made for some pretty rough going. However, the mules proved equal to the task and we were up at the mine with our cargo by noon. The mining equipment was unloaded and soon the silver mine was producing the precious ore at a faster pace than previously.

After we returned from the mine, we conferred with our boss and the rest of the gang, it was decided to proceed with our larcenous plans. We did and killed the sheriff and two of his deputies in the process.

All of the above happened 20 years ago. Now, times are different with the advance of civilization and the collapse of the outlaw culture. Following the end of the Spanish-American War, Platteville was renamed Cuba City to commemorate our liberation of that island from the hated Spaniards. Although the silver veins have largely played out, the fact that the railroad comes through the town has guaranteed its survival.

Book Reviews

The Killers edited by Peter Dawson

Although he is not well remembered today, during the age of the pulp magazines, Jonathan Hurff Glidden who wrote under the name of “Peter Dawson,” was a leading pulp author. Although Dawson wrote a dozen Western novels, it was as an author of short stories and short novels that he made his mark. That being the case, it was most fitting that he should be the editor of this outstanding anthology of short Western fiction.

The Killers was originally published in 1955, two years before Dawson’s untimely passing. It comprised eleven pieces of short fiction all of which had been previously published in leading magazines of the time. Oddly enough, none of these stories were by Dawson himself even though he wrote a great many tales about gunslingers.

Of the writers of the stories included in this volume, only Steve Frazee and Elmore Leonard is still well known today. The other writers such as Verne Athanas, Tom W. Blackburn, Will C. Brown, L.L. Foreman, Bennett Foster, and several others have faded into the mists of time.

Most pulp magazine writers were primarily short fiction writers so when the pulps died off during the 1950’s, many of them were either without places to submit their work to or they found that the remaining publications interested in their work reduced their payment rates. Since paperback books paid poorly, many of these writers wound up quitting fiction writing to either write nonfiction or else quit trying to write for a living.

The Killers is a book of old time Western pulp writing. It has been out of print for a time, but it’s worth hunting down at used bookstores and other places where you can find secondhand books.

The Laughing Gorilla by Robert Graysmith

Robert Graysmith is currently the single best true crime book writer in America today. He really goes into the nitty gritty, seemingly leaving no detail overlooked. For instance, he looked into the Zodiac murders case and out of all the evidence, was able to deduce that one Arthur Leigh Allen was the mass murderer. To this day, it seems completely incomprehensible that the legal system failed to arrest Allen and try him on charges of being the Zodiac killer. His books on that case, *Zodiac & Zodiac Unmasked* remain must reads.

When you read one of his books, it seems a shame that he never became a police detective.

His book **The Laughing Gorilla** tells the story of the first serial killers to afflict America. These were the first killers to go from one town to another leaving corpses in their wake. This was different from previous murder cases that law enforcement had to deal with.

The book's title derives from the fact that the original serial killers were large, hulking brutes popularly known as "Gorilla Men." All of these real life monsters were described by witnesses as laughing maniacally. These Gorilla Men were fodder for the yellow press of the time who used their sensational coverage of the Gorilla Men and their crimes to sell boatloads of newspapers.

These crimes infuriated Captain Charles Dullea, who was the leading advocate of reform in the notoriously corrupt San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). He led a campaign that literally turned the SFPD upside down. The end result was that the SFPD became a much better and more effective organization.

The Laughing Gorilla is an excellent True Crime book that really delves into an important, though neglected, real life mystery that played a role in the evolution of one of this nation's most important police departments.

Movie Reviews

Air Speed (1998)

Over the years, a consensus has formed among movie buffs that the 1959 flick *Plan 9 from Outer Space* is the absolute worst movie ever made. So firm is this consensus that a certifiable cult has grown up around both this movie and its writer/director/producer Edward D. Wood, Jr. Wood's life has been chronicled in books, documentaries and even a feature length film directed by Tim Burton with Johnny Depp playing the awful filmmaker.

Now, however, there is a recent flick that bids well to replace *Plan 9* in the Hollywood hall of shame. This is the 1998 movie **Air Speed** that is a disaster flick in more ways than one. This movie is so goofy that it makes 1980's **Airplane!** look like a serious drama by comparison.

Elisha Cuthbert stars as Nicole, who is one of the most spoiled rotten brats ever to besmirch the silver screen. Nicole is 13 years old and her proudest achievement in life thus far is the sheer number of elite boarding schools for rich little girls that she's been kicked out of. She is completely alienated from her parents and for good reason. Her parents care only for making as much money as they can and spend as little time with her as they can.

However, due to her misbehavior, they have arranged for her to come home on their private jet which looks a lot like a large passenger aircraft. She is confined to a huge room that could not possibly fit into even the biggest aircraft known to man. In this room are 2 folks who are best described as Dull Man & Dull Woman, both of whom give the impression that they'd rather be dead than be with Nicole.

As the fickle fingers of Fate would have it, the guys in the cockpit pilot the aircraft straight into a storm just 5 minutes away from the airport. Lightning strikes the plane, sending blue lights that the filmmakers intended to simulate high voltage throughout the plane. Everyone on the plane dies on the spot except for Nicole who is miraculously spared without a scratch. The lightning blows a huge hole on the side of the plane where the room is, yet there is no wind inside the airplane or air suction. Clearly, God is on Nicole's side.

The guys in what must be the world's shortest airport control tower are not exactly panicked. The air traffic controller is a Hairy Guy who looks more like a street vagrant than a seasoned professional. Enter the parents who act as if the whole thing is an inconvenience for them. The father is especially pathetic since he acts as if his daughter's being in mortal peril is no more bothersome to him than if he had been told that his luggage would be delayed a little bit.

Hairy Guy concocts some schemes to rescue Nicole involving a air tanker. In one scheme, the tanker's arm is to extend into the hole into the stricken aircraft and a guy on the tanker is to walk across the arm like a circus trapeze artist at 20,000 feet or so above the Earth with both planes flying at high rates of speed. Yes, you read that right. When that idea doesn't work, Hairy Guy comes up with the idea of having Nicole's plane land on top of the tanker. Yes, you read that right too. Even though the automatic pilot obligingly shut itself down, this gambit fails to work.

The tanker is forced to withdraw due to turbulence and then everything goes wrong. The automatic pilot comes back to life, so poor Nicole can't continue her flying lessons. The radio and cell phone both go dead, so she can't talk to Hairy Guy anymore. Then, the air in the plane suddenly realized that when there is a hole in the side of the plane, there is supposed to be air suction and before you know it, one of Nicole's expensive shoes is flying out into the atmosphere and her hair becomes all messed up.

Now, if this was anything like real life, the thoroughly unlikeable little brat would get herself killed trying to land the plane. However, this is Hollywood and Nicole is quickly able to solve all her problems simply by banging the controls with a baseball bat. The automatic pilot shuts off and the air suction comes to an end. What happens next should be easily predictable by even the most naive movie fans.

Air Speed is a disaster. Unless, you want to spend your time deciding if this really is worse than Plan 9, avoid it at all costs.

Alexander (2004)

During the first decade of the 21st Century, there were a number of historical epics being made. Of these movies, perhaps the worst one was Oliver Stone's 2004 flick **Alexander** that was ostensibly based on the life and times of Alexander the Great, one of the greatest conquerors the world has ever known. Unfortunately, this big budget motion picture turned out to be just another Oliver Stone production that was made with utter disregard of the facts.

It is fitting that someone like Oliver Stone who had butchered recent American history in many of his movies did the same for ancient history in this movie. The major battles in this movie are sloppy, over edited and consumed with CGI. Stone could have studied the Victor Mature films of the 1950s, many of which did the historical epic thing much better and in a more interesting manner than **Alexander**.

Specifically, this is an unfocused movie. Even though Alexander the Great was a man who did many interesting and important things during his short life, the movie was all over the place. The movie just jumped around all over the place, it left out many of the key incidents of his life. There really was no real plot to speak of. This is a movie that really had no real beginning, middle or ending. Oftentimes, the narration mentioned things that should have been shown to the viewers.

This movie is supposed to make the case that Alexander the Great was either a bisexual or a homosexual, but all you see in that direction is just so much silliness. There are repeated scenes in which actors tearfully hug each other. Things get to the point where it just seems like overkill

This may not be all that surprising given that Stone's earlier movie *JFK* had it that a president of the United States was assassinated by a homosexual conspiracy. The talents of many actors and actresses are wasted in this dreary movie and its awful script. An example of the alleged dialogue in this movie: "And you, unbreakable Antigonus!"

Oliver Stone is no stranger to making awful movies. *Natural Born Killers* was unbearably bad while *The Doors* was not only bad, but it butchered the story of one of the greatest bands in American history.

This movie is a festival of wimpy wiggery. The hair on many of the actors in this film look more like mops than real hair. Additionally, it seems as if all the actors have Irish accents.

Alexander is a movie that is nearly three hours long. The life story of Alexander the Great was such that it needed to be told as a three hour long film. However, as screwed up as this Oliver Stone creation was, it did not deserve to be that long.

This is a movie with zero redeeming qualities and as such it should be avoided at all costs.

Baby Face Nelson (1995)

One thing that Hollywood continually messes up is the history in movies set in historical times that are about actual people from the past. This is unfortunate since movies are potentially a great teaching tool. The excuse that film makers generally make for historical inaccuracy is that changes have to be made in order to make the movie interesting.

One historical personage is that of Lester Gillis aka George "Baby Face Nelson." Nelson was one of the most infamous bank robbers of the 1930's. His exploits were such that an historically accurate movie about him would be most entertaining especially since he was associated at various times with the likes of Al Capone & John Dillinger. However, this was not the path taken by executive producer Roger Corman in the making of 1995's Baby Face Nelson starring C. Thomas Howell as the legendary criminal. This movie twists and distorts Nelson's life story beyond recognition.

The problems with this movie begin with the casting. Martin Kove is cast as the infamous gangster John Dillinger despite the fact that Kove does not look or sound like Dillinger or, for that matter, like any kind of gangster. In this movie, Kove has long red hair with a mustache that is way much too thick to be Dillinger's. Another questionable casting decision is that of F. Murray Abraham as Al Capone. Except for the fact that they both have black hair, Abraham looks nothing like Capone. C. Thomas Howell sports a mustache throughout the entire show as Nelson, yet the real Nelson preferred the clean shaven look. A related problem is that Nelson's friend and accomplice John Paul Chase was renamed in the movie, "Paul Chance." What is the sense of casting actors who look nothing like the persons who they are supposed to portray?

After a perfunctory scene featuring Nelson as a little kid, the movie begins with Nelson already a bank robber who's enjoying the high life. He meets and romances a dime store clerk named Helen Womack who he eventually marries. Nelson also serves for a time as an enforcer for Al Capone. In real life, Capone and Nelson came to an amicable parting of the ways. In the movie, Capone and Nelson are riding in a car when Capone starts screaming at Nelson, hits him in the mouth twice and then throws him out of the car.

One of the worst aspects of this movie is the way that law enforcement is portrayed. Law enforcement is clearly cast as the real bad guys with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in particular made to look bad. In this movie, FBI agents shoot people for the hell of it while gangsters like Nelson shoot people only for a reason. In this movie, Nelson is a heroic classy killer with his own code of ethics who was superior to the scumbags in the police and FBI. In real life, he was a cold blooded killer who killed for the sheer enjoyment of it. In the movie, Nelson is portrayed as a brave man who is a crack shot. The FBI agents can't hit most anyone they shoot at except Dillinger's girlfriend at the wedding of Baby Face and Helen. The FBI is also pictured as being basically a bunch of cowards who are not cool cats like Nelson and his friends.

The final scene of the movie where Baby Face Nelson finally goes down for the count against the FBI is a particularly bogus job by the film makers. In real life, 2 FBI agents spotted Nelson driving a stolen car with his wife and accomplice Chase with him. Once the agents started chasing him, Nelson pulled over and took out his guns and engaged in a battle with the agents. In the end, both Nelson and the agents died, but the wife and accomplice were able to make their getaway. In the movie, Nelson and friends are in their car headed towards the Canadian border where they are confronted by 10 FBI agents and a Canadian border guard. There is a massive shootout in which Nelson winds up dead and his wife and accomplice captured.

The bottom line is if you want a movie that is about the life and times of George Baby Face Nelson then this movie is worthless. To this day, Hollywood has never made a good, historically accurate, movie about Nelson despite the profoundly dramatic, not to mention tragic life he lived.

Fast Five (2011)

Fast Five was one of the best escapist films of 2011.

Usually, when a movie series gets to its fourth and fifth installments, its creative wheels are spinning off the tracks. However, in the case of the *Fast and the Furious* series, the opposite is true. The third installment, *Tokyo Drift* was the best of all. And now, we have **Fast Five** that is almost as good as its predecessor.

As with the previous *Fast and Furious* movies, this is purely an escapist flick. As such, this is a movie that helps you get away from your problems in the real world in a fun way. This is not a film that has any artistic pretensions. And it is loaded with all sorts of cheese -- goofy dialogue and unrealistic stunts. Many of the characters are really cool and are all sorts of bravado. There are also a lot of car chases, explosions, and a well-thought-out heist. There is a lot of genuine suspense that adds to the enjoyment of the audience. This is a quintessential action flick.

There are a number of familiar faces in this installment as well. Jordana Brewster, Vin Diesel, and Paul Walker all return from the previous movies. Although she has aged since the first of this series, Brewster is still quite beautiful. Likewise, Walker is still a handsome guy.

There is a new actor in the mix in the person of Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, who plays a significant role as a law enforcement official for the U.S. government agency known as Diplomatic Security Services. Johnson and his gang of loser federal agents all wear tacky T-Shirts that help make them look sleazy. As with all too many of his previous movies, Johnson adds nothing to the flick with his profound lack of acting talent.

One of the best aspects of **Fast Five** is the cool cars. These are luxury sports cars of the sort that most of us can only fantasize about ever owning. Watching these cars in action really adds to the escapism. However, there is also a lot of violence in this flick -- too much for little kids. As a result, it should have been rated R instead of the PG-13 that it received.

In any event, **Fast Five** is a great action movie. It comes very well recommended both as a rental as well as a movie that you will want to watch over and over again. This is a movie that deserves to be in your personal movie collection.

Fool's Gold (2008)

Fool's Gold is an aptly titled flick because you are a fool if you spend your gold on this trashy travesty of an alleged major motion picture. It's like an extended version of a bad television situation comedy come to the big screen. **Fool's Gold** is filled with all sorts of alleged humor in the form of jokes and crazy stunts that all fall flat comedy wise.

Basically, **Fool's Gold** plays like an extended episode of *Three's Company* except for the added perversion and an idiotic adventure element involving lost Spanish treasure from the 18th Century. In this movie, the character equivalents of Jack and Chrissy have a bad argument, fight, then get confused. In a daze, they go to the local bar where they encounter the landlord, his wife and the landlord's goofy friends. Yes, it's as bad as this sounds.

Fool's Gold stars Matthew McConaughey as Ben Finn Finnegan, a likeable if incompetent treasure hunter. His obsession with finding Spanish treasure has led to the dissolving of practically his entire life including his marriage to Tess (Kate Hudson). Fortunately, Tess is able to get hired by the eccentric millionaire Nigel Honeycutt (Donald Sutherland) and Ben Finn is able to persuade the man who hired his former wife to bankroll his adventures in the deep blue sea looking for long lost gold. Complicating matters is Honeycutt's voluptuous daughter Gemma (Alexis Dziena) who is out to seduce Ben Finn.

A further complication is that there is an evil rap music star named Cordell (Malcolm-Jamal Warner) who also has ambitions regarding the Spanish treasure. Cordell has hired an evil treasure hunter named Fitch (Ray Winstone) to find the treasure first and this duplicitous duo are determined stop Benn Finn at all costs.

At first glance, this seems like a promising scenario for an exciting action thriller. However, the execution of this outline into a decent movie proved too much for the filmmakers. The movie creators were clearly aiming for a sitcom type flick and added the adventure stuff simply for padding to get the movie to feature length. How else to explain the failure of this flick to really get into full gear with the treasure hunt and related action?

The direction by Andy Tennant falls well short of Tennant's usual work. All too many scenes in **Fool's Gold** drag on and on to the boredom of the audience. The acting is uniformly bad with both Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey turning in what may well be their all time worst performances. The music is lackluster. This movie's only saving grace is the excellent cinematography by Hollywood veteran Don Burgess.

In the end, **Fool's Gold** is a movie to avoid like the plague.

The Four Feathers (2002)

The 2002 version of **The Four Feathers** is inferior to the classic 1939 version. In fact, one could make the argument that the 2002 version is the single worst film adaptation of A.E.W. Mason's classic novel. This is especially pathetic given the gigantic budget that the 2002 remake was made with.

The story of **The Four Feathers** is one of cowardice and redemption. An officer in a British regiment, Harry Faversham (Heath Ledger), resigns his commission just before his regiment departs for a faraway campaign in the Sudan. Consequently, 3 British officers as well as his fiance Ethne (Kate Hudson), give him a grand total of 4 white feathers signifying their belief that he is a coward and a disgrace to Britain.

The 4 feathers sting Faversham and jolt him to the reality that is Victorian Britain. There, members of the aristocracy are expected to serve as officers and gentlemen in the British armed forces. For someone such as Faversham to decline service when a war was on was to engage in an unthinkable action. His behavior has the potential to paint a lasting stain on both himself and his family.

That being the case, young Faversham comes up with a plan to redeem his honor.

His intention is to travel to Egypt and then disguise himself as a tribesman and infiltrate the enemy forces in the Sudan. He would then be in a position to potentially rescue the officers who gave him the white feathers and return the feathers to those officers. Additionally, as an infiltrator, he would be in a position to sabotage the enemy's designs and thereby aid and abet the British forces in their quest for ultimate victory over the enemy.

Up until this point, the 2002 version followed both the novel and the previous movie versions. However, the makers of the 2002 version decided to throw in a pointless subplot involving a Sudanese native. This subplot threw the entire story completely off kilter.

There are other problems with the 2002 remake. The beginning of the movie is rushed through and you do not get close to any of the characters. Throughout the movie there are numerous references to friends and the value of having friends, but the movie shows none of this. Its all tell without any show.

Another problem is historical accuracy or lack of it. In this movie, British soldiers are shown wearing red jackets on active duty in 1898. Red jackets had already ceased being part of the British wartime uniforms some time before 1898. The last time that British soldiers wore red as part of their combat uniform was in 1885.

One could go on and on about the deficiencies and shortcomings of this particular cinematic version of **The Four Feathers**. Eventually, it would all become redundant. The bottom line here is that this is was not a well thought out remake and that you need to exercise caution in deciding whether or not you want to spend your hard earned money on it.

The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid (1972)

Ever since its early days, the American motion picture industry has shown a great willingness to invent fictionalized history in the name of telling a good story. Only problem is that quite often, the revisionist history created in Hollywood is less interesting and not as good a story as what really happened. One such movie is the 1972 flick **The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid**.

This movie was about the abortive bank robbery by the Jesse James gang at Northfield, Minnesota in 1876 that resulted in the near destruction of the gang at the hands of local townspeople who fought back against the criminals with their own guns. What happened in real life was a thrilling example of local folks taking the law into their own hands to thwart criminal activity. This is something that you would think would make for a great subject for a motion picture that Hollywood could both get the facts right and make a great movie.

However, such was not the case. Outlaws have long been treated as being some kind of folk heroes by Hollywood, even though there is little evidence that regular folks thought of outlaws as being their idea of heroes. This particular movie was made in 1972 when there was a great deal of anti-establishment feeling in Hollywood that climaxed in Jane Fonda's infamous trip to Hanoi that year during which she openly cheered the murder of American troops and helped spread the canard that American soldiers were "baby killers." This anti-establishment feeling resulted in a number of movies in which criminals were the heroes and law enforcement were the villains.

The movie genre that was the most affected by this trendy anti-establishment sentiment was the Western. During the late 1960's, this feeling manifested itself in such films as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and by 1972 resulted in movies like *Dirty Little Billy* and *Bad Company*. One of the more extreme flicks in this category is **The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid**.

In this movie, the infamous Jesse James gang are the good guys. In order for the audience to fully sympathize with the would be bank robbers, law enforcement must first be made to look bad. Allan Pinkerton of the Pinkerton Detective Agency is shown bribing the speaker of the Missouri state legislature to ensure that none of the outlaws would receive any amnesty from that state. There are repetitive scenes of Pinkerton Detectives inside a train car, as Allan Pinkerton himself rails against the James/Younger gang, that quickly become unintentionally hilarious. The owner of the Northfield bank is repeatedly labelled a dirty man while the town's posse is pictured as being literally more evil and wicked than the outlaws themselves. The townspeople of Northfield are presented as being corrupt, cowardly and mentally incompetent apparently because they fought back against the outlaws and shot up the gang. Hollywood does not seem to understand the simple fact that bank robbers were not popular amongst the average folks since the money in the banks belonged to the average citizens.

There are other problems with this movie. It shows a baseball game that has nothing to do with the rest of the show. The game goes on too long, leaving the impression that it was included as padding to make the movie longer. There are long drawn out scenes of outlaws gawking at railroad engines that also come off as just more padding.

The characters do not have any depth beyond that of mere cardboard. You really do not care about any of the characters in **The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid**. This is a bad movie and is definitely not recommended.

The Hittites (2012)

The Hittites.

You might be wondering what that is. What is a Hittite?

Most folks don't know. This goes for college educated people, too. This is due to the fact that the U.S. educational system, including private schools, have done a poor job of educating people about the Ancient Near East (ANE). Most institutions of higher education don't even have courses relating to the ANE, and if they do, it's usually classes called "Ancient Greece and the Near East" in which the focus is on the Greeks, and the ANE gets short shrift.

Who, then, were the Hittites? The Hittites were an Indo-European people who entered Asia Minor, aka Anatolia, sometime around 2000 B.C. By 1600 BC, they had established a kingdom in an area that was called "Hatti." For the next 400 years, the Hittite Empire was one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, realms in the ANE. It was a leading force in the arts of war and diplomacy. The Hittites sacked Babylon, ending the dynasty of Hammurabi and defeated the Egyptian king Ramses II at the Battle of Kadesh.

There is also evidence that there really was a Trojan War. It involved a Hittite vassal state called Wilusa, whose capital was known as Wilios. There is a variant Greek spelling of Troy that is Ilios. The Trojan prince Paris from "T" by Homer is also known by the Greek name of Alexander. One of the princes of the Hittite vassal state of Wilusa went by the Asian name of Alakshandu.

Given all of this, one might wonder just why the Hittites are so obscure today while other ancient civilizations from the same time period -- such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians -- are so well known. One reason is that the Hittite realm was overrun by barbarians known as the Sea Peoples sometime after 1200 BC. Because the Hittites -- unlike the Assyrians, Babylonians or Egyptians -- never made a resurgence, they were forgotten other than some references in the Old Testament. By the time Homer wrote The Iliad, a few centuries after the events that he portrayed took place, the Greeks had forgotten all about the Hittites. Additionally, almost all of the archeological work done in the Hittite world was done by non-English speakers; thus, the great majority of published work about the Hittites was not in English.

Now that we are done with the history of the Hittites, what about the film itself?

The producers made expert use of digital technology, doing recordings on location in the Near East. The production took two years to complete. A number of experts, including several archaeologists, were interviewed. A great many actors were used in historical reenactments. All of this is very well done.

The Hittites is an excellent educational documentary about a mostly forgotten civilization. While its 2 hours running time makes it awkward for classroom use, it is acceptable for home viewing. This is a documentary that is well worth the wait from Netflix or any of the few video stores that are likely to carry such a unique DVD.

Lockout (2012)

If it weren't for *John Carter*, **Lockout** would have been the best science fiction flick of 2012. **Lockout** is one of those action-adventure films that really delivers the escapist goods. Best of all, it stars the remarkable Guy Pearce.

Pearce is what makes this movie work. Although usually associated with more artistic films such as *The King's Speech*, Pearce has also been in action flicks such as *Animal Kingdom*. Pearce plays hero Snow, who is well-armed with a full arsenal of weapons and wisecracks. Pearce is both exciting and funny. Only Guy Pearce could have pulled it off with such aplomb.

Lockout begins with Snow claiming he is being railroaded for the murder of one of his best friends. The case involves national security and alleged espionage on behalf of a foreign power. The top advisers to the U.S. president are involved in questioning Snow.

Meanwhile, the president's worthless, stuck-up soft-on-crime daughter, Emilie Warnock (played by Maggie Grace), is making a visit to Maximum Security #1 (MS #1), an orbiting space prison for the most violent criminals, who are all frozen alive for the duration of their sentences. Warnock cries and whines about how cruel and inhumane it is, but while visiting MS #1, she's taken hostage by one of the most violent prisoners around. He proceeds to free the rest of the prisoners, who then take over MS #1 while the president's daughter cries and whines about her poor little self while showing no feelings or concern about the other innocent people aboard MS #1.

As if often the case with this sort of movie, the president's advisers make Snow an offer he cannot refuse. Go to MS #1 and free the president's daughter, and all will be forgiven. And so Snow winds up on a desperate, do-or-die mission, which is how **Lockout** really begins. The remainder of the movie is all sorts of thrills, spills, and chills. Perhaps the best, not to mention the most unpredictable, aspect of this movie is Snow's unrelenting mockery of Emilie Warnock, though she admittedly deserves it. Snow especially rubs in the fact that her father is a worthless scumbag.

Lockout is a futuristic, action-packed, fast-paced thrill ride. Pearce's wisecracking character adds to the fun, and the rest of the acting is of an unusually high caliber for a science fiction movie. The directing and special effects are also high quality. It is a well conceived and expertly executed flick, and as such, **Lockout** comes highly recommended.

The Long Riders (1980)

One of the most interesting developments in the history of post-World War II cinema is the decline and fall of the Western genre. For decades, almost since the beginning of the American film industry, Westerns were the most popular genre. There were entire production companies and studios whose output was mostly or, in some cases, strictly limited to Westerns. There were many actors, directors and others in Hollywood whose work was limited to Westerns.

Now, all that is changed. Where Hollywood once released hundreds of Westerns every year, now hardly any Westerns are produced. On TV, the Western is in the same situation. At one point during the late 1950's, there were 15 Western TV shows. Many of these were highly rated productions such as *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, *Have Gun, Will Travel* & *Wagon Train*. Now, outside of a rare made for TV movie, there are no more TV Westerns. Even on reruns, Westerns are scarce. For all practical purposes, the only way to watch TV Westerns is on video and/or DVD.

For some reason, the public has lost interest in watching Westerns. For some reason, that lack of interest does not extend to reading Westerns as a visit to any bookstore will demonstrate. Perhaps this is a side effect of the growth of the SF genre. The new frontier of space has replaced the old frontier in the public imagination. Another possible reason is that in many ways the inner city has become a frontier area in a way as reflected in many recent movies and TV shows.

The decline of the movie Western is not the result of a slew of bad Westerns in the theaters. In fact, the quality of the Western cinema of the last few decades has been higher than that of movies in general. One good example of a great movie Western that did poorly at the box office despite its quality is the movie at hand, 1980's **The Long Riders** that was about the Jesse James gang and its ultimate downfall at Northfield, Minnesota in 1876.

The Long Riders is a movie where the producers went way out of their way to ensure high quality for their show. For instance, in most movies actors are cast as siblings without regard if they resemble each other. In this movie, real life brothers were cast as the brothers in the outlaw gang.

As a result, the roles of Bob Younger, Cole Younger & Jim Younger were played by David Carradine, Keith Carradine & Robert Carradine. The roles of Frank James and Jesse James were played by Frank Keach & Stacy Keach. The roles of Clell Miller & Ed Miller were played by Dennis Quaid & Randy Quaid. The roles of Bob Ford & Charlie Ford were played by Christopher & Nicholas Guest.

Not only did this casting result in brothers who actually looked like brothers, it also ensured that they acted towards each other on screen like brothers too. Even outlaws have families and loved ones too. This brilliant casting makes **The Long Riders** a classic Western. Of all the movies dealing with the Jesse James gang, this is the very best one. It is also historically accurate, which is an added bonus.

This is the very best Western of the 1980's. However, that is partly because there were so few Westerns made during that decade. One big reason for this dearth was the fact that **The Long Riders** was a dud at the box office. Hollywood took note of this and decided that if such a great movie such as **The Long Riders** could lose money, then the Western genre was a loser as far as the public was concerned. As a result, the production of Westerns declined considerably to the point where the Western is, for all practical purposes, a dead genre.

Meet the Spartans (2008)

Whenever there is a blockbuster movie, there is always a good chance that somebody will make a parody of it. Usually, these parodies come in the form of articles in humor magazines such as *Mad* or *National Lampoon*. However, there are parody movies made as well. Parody movies are generally intended to make fun of whole genres instead of specific moves. Also, parody movies are often made by talented folks such as Mel Brooks or the ZAZ team of David Zucker, Jim Abrahams & Jerry Zucker who were responsible for such parody gems such as *Airplane!*, *Hot Shots*, *Kentucky Fried Movie* & *Young Doctors in Love*.

However, the makers of **Meet the Spartans**, Jason Friedberg & Aaron Seltzer, have an abysmal track record as creators of parody flicks. This untalented duo have managed to be the directors, producers & writers of their movies. Both Friedberg & Seltzer were involved in the unfunny 1996 flick *Spy Hard* as well as the dreadful *Scary Movie* series. Lately, they have created a series of parody films consisting of *Date Movie*, *Epic Movie* & **Meet the Spartans**. Of this cinematic trio, only *Epic Movie* is anything but utter drivel and *Epic Movie* itself is hardly anything to write home about.

The plot of **Meet the Spartans** is poorly thought out and makes little sense. Its best parts come when it is parodying *300*. However, it all too often veers from making fun of *300* and loses its focus in the process. Additionally, some of the satire on *300* is poorly conceived so even that element does not elicit as many laughs as it should. To top it all off, there is a great deal of unnecessary vulgarity in what should have been a fun film for the entire family.

The movie opens with the inspecting of newly born babies to see if they have the requisite strength to be allowed to live and grow up to become a Spartan. Leonidas makes the grade and embarks on his training during which, among other things, he fights his grandmother. Once he nears the age of manhood, he is ritually cast out into the wild where he must kill a giant penguin to fully prove his manhood. Leonidas once again makes the grade and he is accepted both as a full Spartan, and as a future king.

While the above sounds pretty funny, its impact is pretty much lost on the audience. Part of this is due to the excessive vulgarity in which these plot points are executed. The main reason though is all the distractions from the satire of *300* that the filmmakers provide. There are scenes involving the 21st Century likes of Lindsey Lohan & Britney Spears as well as a scene in Malibu, California. In one scene, the Spartan queen wears a black Spiderman uniform. Most of these distractions are not funny at all. One wonders if Jason Friedberg & Aaron Seltzer were unable to come up with enough parody material relating to *300* and, as a result, chose to pad their movie with all this drivel.

In any event, **Meet the Spartans** is just simply not a good movie. It is funny when it parodies *300*, but not funny enough to work as a parody and it suffers from far too much vulgarity throughout. To be sure, it is a better than *300*, but since that flick is itself at the bottom of the barrel that is not saying much. **Meet the Spartans** is a movie to avoid period.

One for the Money (2012)

There are Hollywood stars out there whose behavior and/or viewpoints cause film critics to froth like rabid dogs. Movie reviews read like personal attacks and give the movie in question short shrift. One such actress to attract this kind of hatred is Katherine Heigl, and the movie unfairly maligned is her latest effort, the 2012 comedy-mystery **One for the Money**.

According to Bill Gibron of filmcritic.com, "Fans of the former Grey's Anatomy star needn't worry -- Katherine Heigl's self-guided descent into career irrelevance continues unabated." Roger Moore of the Winston-Salem Journal accused Heigl of engaging in a fictitious reality TV show called "Smart Women, Stupid Choices." Both of these critics appeared more interested in attacking Heigl instead of critiquing the movie.

Why such vitriol? According to Christian Toto on the Big Hollywood website, Heigl committed the alleged cardinal sin of "trash[ing] the movie that started her big screen career, *Knocked Up*, and caused a ruckus on the set of her ABC hit series by pulling herself out of the Emmy competition because she didn't think she was given award-winning material." Basically, Toto accused Heigl of having a "big mouth."

One thing that really seemed to get the critics steamed was the number of females involved in **One for the Money**. Heigl not only starred, but she put up her own money to gain the film rights to the bounty hunter character of Stephanie Plum created by Janet Evanovich. As lead actress and executive producer, Heigl saw to it that the director was Julie Anne Robinson and the screenwriters were Liz Brixius, Karen Ray, and Stacy Sherman. Clearly, some critics cannot stand the idea of gals making their own movies.

Stephanie Plum is the female bounty hunter created by Janet Evanovich in a series of 18 comedy mystery novels. Unlike other female bounty hunter characters, Plum is not a martial arts type nor is she especially efficient. Plum is actually incompetent -- so much so that she needs the help of a number of supporting characters, many of whom are strong males. Needless to say, Plum is hardly what you would call a feminist heroine.

One for the Money is a comedy-mystery flick about a recently divorced woman who has lost her job selling women's underwear at a department store. Desperate for employment, she tries her hand in the bounty hunter racket working for one of her cousins. With the help of some strong male characters, she is able to become slightly more proficient in her new profession while getting her man.

One for the Money is the best movie of 2012 thus far, although that may well be because of the almost uniformly awful films that have been released lately. This is a light, enjoyable show that was well-produced, directed, and generally well-acted. The cinematography is well above average. This is one of the few movies ever made that is actually better than the novel that it is based on. In short, despite whatever deficiencies Heigl may have in her personal life, **One for the Money** is a mystery flick that you will not want to miss.

Princess of Mars (Direct to Video 2009)

There is a small movie production company called The Asylum that specializes in making "mockbusters." Mockbusters are legal ripoffs of Hollywood blockbusters. Usually, mockbusters are created while the targeted blockbuster is still in production. Then, while the blockbuster is in theaters, the mockbuster is released direct to video. Examples: *Transformers* was ripped off as *Transmorphers*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean* was ripped off as *Pirates of Treasure Island*. The quality of these mockbusters varies considerably. The best example, **Princess of Mars**, was released three years before the blockbuster it was to ripoff, *John Carter*, came out.

Princess of Mars is based on the 1917 novel of the same name by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs was a writer with an exceptional imagination combined with a rare gift for expressing that imagination through prose. In addition to John Carter of Mars, Burroughs created many other exceptional characters such as Carson of Venus, David Innes, and Tarzan Lord of the Jungle. These characters and series helped make science fiction and fantasy established genres in American literature. Burroughs' books and stories were wildly popular back in the day. Hollywood has had the rights to produce movies about John Carter since the 1930s, but due to the difficulties of realizing Burroughs's fantastic visions of Mars, it was not until 2009 recently that any sort of movie was ever produced.

The plot of the movie version of **Princess of Mars** is unusual. John Carter is a modern day U.S. Army soldier serving in Afghanistan. Following a shootout with opium dealers, Carter is severely wounded. Instead of receiving medical treatment, Carter is subjected to a bizarre experiment in interplanetary teleportation. He winds up on a planet in another star system called Mars 216. Just how this is supposed to heal his wounds is never explained.

The plot of the original was somewhat different. Carter is a Confederate States Army veteran from Virginia. While prospecting out west, he is pursued by Apaches and attempts to hide out in a cave. Carter sees Mars in the night sky, and by some sort of miraculous teleportation, he winds up on the planet.

On Mars 216, Carter is successfully teleported both whole and free of medical problems.

However, he is taken prisoner by a race of aliens called Tharks. Initially, the Tharks treat him like dirt, but he wins their trust, and they eventually treat him like an equal. From this point on, the plot closely follows that of the original novel.

The producers of **Princess of Mars** made extensive use of the Vasquez Rocks geologic formation in Southern California for the Martian landscape. This area had already been used as the setting for many other science fiction movies. This means that the supposedly alien landscape is already familiar to movie fans. However, the fantastic special effects more than make up for this. The effects in this movie are on a par with the effects in big budget movies made 20 years ago. The makeup is also very good. The acting is pretty decent as is the direction. This movie was produced on a \$500,000 budget, but it looks like a production that was made on a much bigger budget.

Princess of Mars is a DVD movie that was originally made for the direct-to-video market and eventually wound up on cable TV. This is no small feat even for an experienced outfit such as The Asylum. What all this goes to show is that even at a half-million budget, it is possible to make a quality movie. **Princess of Mars** comes well recommended.

Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger (1977)

Without a doubt, the single greatest creator of stop motion special effects was Ray Harryhausen. Inspired by watching the original "King Kong" at the tender age of 13 to go for a career in the movies, Harryhausen soon focused his efforts on animation. Unlike most animators who worked in drawn works, Harryhausen's efforts were spent on taking inanimate objects and making them look as if they were alive. During the 1950's, Harryhausen came to be the leading creator of Hollywood monsters.

Harryhausen's star in Hollywood rose to the point where he became a movie producer in his own right. Since Harryhausen was a moral man, he devoted his productions to making family friendly movies as opposed to trashy sex and violence flicks. One series of movies that Harryhausen was responsible for was that of Sinbad the Sailor that was set in the days of the Arabian Nights. This series was unusual for both the consistent high quality of the movies and also the fact that in each movie, a different actor played the role of Sinbad.

As it happens, the final installment in Harryhausen's Sinbad saga was the movie at hand, 1977's **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger**. This film was also notable for both the quality of Harryhausen's animated creations as well as the fact that this movie's success propelled the career of a then largely unknown Jane Seymour. While this flick's box office was dwarfed by 1977's big hit, Star Wars, **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger** still left a lasting impression on its audience.

And just what kind of movie is **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger**? Well, there are some movies that are not meant to be great art. They aim to be nothing more than a fun way to pass time and eat popcorn at the same time. **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger** is one of those movies.

Patrick Wayne is great as the stalwart sailor Sinbad as he fights on behalf of the lovely Princess Farah (Jane Seymour). Sinbad ventures forth on an epic voyage to find the cure for the spell cast upon Farah's brother, Prince Kassim by the wicked witch Zenobia. Zenobia had transformed Kassim into a baboon in order to prevent him from becoming crowned Caliph and ruler of the realm. If Sinbad is unable to bring Kassim to the place where the wizard Melanthius (Patrick Troughton) can restore his humanity, then Kassim will remain a baboon forever and Zenobia's wicked son will be able to mount the throne.

In addition to a great story, there are other elements that add to this film's luster. Roy Budd composed some nice original music. The cinematography, directing and acting were all better than average. While Jane Seymour's acting was not very good, her beauty more than made up for it. A nice touch was the fact that the wizard Melanthius did not have any super powers except that of knowledge. The costumes and settings were beautiful. And Ray Harryhausen's stop motion special effects were the icing on this cinematic cake.

This is a most entertaining movie and is well suited for viewing by the entire family. If you just want to relax and have fun while eating popcorn, then this is a great movie for you.

S.W.A.T. (2003)

Once upon a time, in the mid-1970's, there was a lackluster cop show about police Special Weapon Action Team (S.W.A.T.) units called, with typical Hollywood imagination, *S.W.A.T.* that was distinguished only by a disco hit theme song. It was cancelled after 2 seasons and was forgotten almost immediately. The show proved a dud in reruns. Then, Hollywood decided that since a lot of other bad TV series had been made into movies, why not *S.W.A.T.*? The end result, as you might expect, is a mess of cliches and thrill free action movie drivel.

Colin Farrell stars as a Mr. Know It All Cop of the type that exist only in Hollywood productions. Michelle Rodriguez is supposed to be a horrible person, then pretty much disappears from the movie without a chance to fully develop her character. The script is laden with cliches and absurdly short lines.

Unlike the original series, **S.W.A.T.** makes no attempt to emulate real life cops and S.W.A.T. units. Olivier Martinez plays the super wealthy son of a European gangster family who is hunted all over the world.

After he is captured, he declares to the cameras that anyone who frees him from the police will be rewarded with \$100 Mil. This brings out the local lunatics in the woodwork, armed in true Hollywood fashion with all sorts of weapons that real-life criminals do not have access to. What ensues is something that has already been done to death in countless generic action flicks. When will Hollywood try making a movie based on a TV show that actually sticks to what that show was really about? Why can't Hollywood try making reality based movies instead of this cheap action fantasy melodrama garbage?

This is a strange movie in that it was made for a teenage audience that has no recollection of ever seeing the original TV show, not even in reruns. One wonders just why the studio did not turn to the countless quality TV shows of yesteryear that have not been made into movies first: *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, *The Adventures of Jim Bowie*, *Sky King*, *Ramar of the Jungle*, *Racket Squad*, *My Little Margie*, *The Public Defender*, *The Lineup*, *M Squad*, *Tombstone Territory*, *I Led 3 Lives*, etc. These shows have not been in the reruns in the past 2 decades or thereabouts, so they would be hardly more recognized by today's teenagers than *S.W.A.T.* However, any of these shows would be much better source material than *S.W.A.T.*

Then again, if today's Hollywood producers got their hands on *Mr. & Mrs. North*, then Mrs. North likely would be a prostitute while Mr. North would be her pimp.

Triggermen (2002)

One of the genres in filmdom that's the hardest to pull off successfully, if not the hardest, is the comedy drama or "dramady." Another undertaking that is difficult to pull off is ripping off another, successful, filmmaker's works without making it too obvious that your film is a ripoff. If a film attempts to pull off both feats simultaneously, then the end result is almost always an abortion. One such movie is 2002's **Triggermen**.

Triggermen is an attempt to rip off the likes of Quentin Tarantino & Guy Ritchie whilst being an action packed fun filled gangster flick at the same time. The film begins thusly: stuck in Chicago practically penniless, small-time British crooks Pete (Neil Morrissey) and Andy (Adrian Dunbar) can't believe their luck when a stolen briefcase nets them a bundle of cash and the key to a luxurious hotel room.

However, there is a catch: local mafia boss Franco D'Amico (Louis DiBianco) has mistaken them for assassins and expects them to knock off his chief rival Ben Cutler (Pete Postlethwaite). Meanwhile, the real contract killers or "triggermen", super sharp Terry (Donnie Wahlberg) and moronic Tommy (Michael Rapaport), are left wondering why the man who hired them hasn't got in touch.

Yes folks, **Triggermen** is also yet another entry in the beaten half to death cliché plot of "small time hoods after a quick buck get in way over their heads with big time gangsters." **Triggermen** certainly adds another notch if anybody's counting.

We have all been down this road too many times for black comedies like this to provoke more than an apathetic shrug. Especially when there is neither comedy or darkness to the movie.

Returning to the movie, matters get unnecessarily complicated when Terry starts to lust after Emma (Claire Forlani), the daughter of the man he's supposed to kill, and by the sudden arrival of Pete's obviously pregnant wife Penny (Amanda Plummer). Meanwhile, the small time hoods debate whether they should kill Cutler as their inadvertant employer expects them to or just simply cut and run. Instead of adding any humor or suspense to the story, these developments only add to the boredom of it all.

This film had a particularly good cast (especially Dunbar, Forlani, Morrissey & Whalberg) and then proceeded to waste the acting talent at its disposal. **Triggermen** could have been a pretty funny movie. It had all of the classic elements including incompetent villains, mistaken identity, money, pretty girl, etc., but was slow, boring, and most importantly, not funny.

Perhaps the biggest waste of talent is that of Neil Morrissey, star of numerous British TV series who had a shot at international exposure in this movie. Its a shame that the acting talent that he exhibited in this flick was completely wasted on such a pathetic film. Another wasted talent is that of Claire Forlani who has shown herself to be a quite talented actress in other productions. However, in **Triggermen**, her role required little more than sitting around looking pretty and trying to be polite to the thug who's trying to romance her.

The best part of **Triggermen** was the washed-out cinematography that gave it a fairly unique look. Another decent aspect of this flick was the fact that the end credits scroll backwards down the screen. That was a nice touch. It's a shame that the thought that was applied to the photography and credits was not utilized on behalf of the script or its direction. As a result, **Triggermen** is a flick to avoid.

Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970)

Tora! Tora! Tora! is the single best movie ever made about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It features excellent performances from acting talent such as James Whitmore, E.G. Marshall, Jason Robards, Joseph Cotten, Wesley Addy, Neville Brand, and Martin Balsam. The special effects are far more convincing than what's in modern movies. It also has some of the best music.

Best of all, the movie shows the sheer complacency on the U.S. side that enabled the Japanese to successfully mount the surprise attack.

While by today's standards, the movie may seem slow-paced, the details of the events leading up to the attack are gratifying and educational. The action is thrilling, well-paced, and in its use of models, actual planes, and other equipment, is extremely realistic with few distracting anachronisms.

What is especially impressive is the scale of the special effects. This was the blueprint for the quality of special effects in motion pictures before digital technology was introduced. No expense was spared. The aircraft used are all faithful reconstructions, which is rare in today's Hollywood. It would be awesome to see a documentary about how this movie was produced, complete with special effects that were far better than the CGI stuff in *Pearl Harbor*.

This is a fine movie that should be used by schools and war museums. History teachers should definitely use this film in their classes. In other words, this is history told at its best. This is a mature, thinking man's film.

This movie was nominated for a sizable number of awards, including the Academy Award in art direction, cinematography, editing, sound, and visual effects, and it won the Oscar for the latter category. It was also nominated for the National Board of Review's award for Best Picture and also nominated for the Eddie Award from American Cinema Editors, USA for Best Edited Feature Film. **Tora! Tora! Tora!** was also nominated for the Laurel Awards in the categories of Best Picture and Best Cinematography.

Tora! Tora! Tora! is the absolute best movie ever made about Pearl Harbor. It is far superior to Michael Bay's schmaltzy, inaccurate, and CGI-heavy soap opera *Pearl Harbor*. In fact, it is one of the absolute best movies ever made about World War II. It is a classic motion picture in its own right.

Website Reviews

<http://coalblue.org/>

Coal Blue Project

The Coal Blue Project is a website without a clear mission. In that way, it is a perfect reflection of the organization that spawned it. Is it the purpose of this organization to represent the coal interests in the Democratic Party in order to persuade that party to drop what amounts to a War Against Coal and instead embrace coal? Or is an effort to persuade folks who live in the coal producing areas of the USA who have traditionally supported Democrats that they should stick with the party and try to work within it to advance a pro-coal agenda? Whatever it is, the Coal Blue Project (CBP) organization has little to show for its efforts on behalf of coal miners and others whose livelihoods are dependent on a natural fuel resource that has been estimated to have over 450 years of untapped reserves in just the USA alone. According to an article from the Huffington Post, the CBP aimed to “generally work to advance coal technologies and find ways to keep coal in the energy mix.” Ever since CBP’s founding in 2013, the energy policies of both the Democratic Party have shifted decisively against coal. It’s a shame that the CBP has so little to show for itself as an organization, since it does have a very nicely designed website. For instance, it makes the case for what it calls “sustainable coal.” That is, unlike wind power or solar power, coal fired plants keep on producing electricity on a regular, sustained basis regardless of weather conditions. That makes coal superior to the “green energy” sources that were favored by the Obama Administration. Under the “Action” heading, the CBP has a number of well detailed and informative PDF’s relating to energy policy. Under the “Stay Informed” heading, the CBP has an archive of press releases and tweets relating to its efforts to influence the Obama Administration. However, it has nothing about the Trump Administration and that makes you wonder just how active and/or viable the CBP really is. As for how little both coal and people whose livelihoods depend on a strong coal industry matter to the Democratic Party nowadays, according to Michael Sainato in an article on February 10 on observer.com, the Democratic Party establishment is seriously considering abandoning rural America in favor of concentrating on both the big cities and the suburbs. If that comes to pass, then all the CBP’s work will have amounted to a wasted effort.

<http://nophillygrocerytax.com/>

No Philly Grocery Tax

Philadelphians Against the Grocery Tax is a membership organization of over 30,000 Philadelphians and over 1,600 businesses and community organizations who are opposed to the efforts of the political establishment in Philadelphia to create a regressive tax on grocery store items. Originally pushed as a tax on sugary drinks with the proceeds going to fund politically popular projects, the Philadelphia establishment is pushing to expand it to other grocery items with the idea of turning it into a city sales tax. As a levy of 1 ½ cents per ounce, that sugary drinks tax is especially onerous. On the typical 12 ounce can, that comes to an 18 cent tax. On a six-pack, that comes down to a whopping \$1.08. The tax has had a devastating effect on sales of sugary drinks. Within the city limits, soda pop sales are down about 40% while outside the city, sales are up about 15%. Hundreds of workers, including truck drivers, have been laid off as a result of this tax. Because of the effect that this tax has had on soda pop sales, Pepsi recently announced that it is no longer selling 2-liter bottles and six packs in Philadelphia. Despite the reduction on soda pop sales, the city claims that the tax is bringing in more revenue than originally anticipated. As a matter of fact, the city administration of Mayor James Kenney has recently announced plans to borrow \$300 million on the assumption that the revenue windfall from this tax is going to last despite the drop in sales. As for all the money that was supposed to be spent on politically popular programs, such as pre-Kindergarten education, that was a fraud since most of the new revenue has been spent on other things. The fraud and deceit of the city political establishment does not stop there. While the tax was billed as being on soda pop and other sugary drinks, in reality, it has been applied to a great many other beverages including Canada Dry, Gatorade, diet soda pop and practically everything sold at Starbucks. No wonder so many Philadelphians have banded together to oppose this tax. The website of Philadelphians Against the Grocery Tax is a pretty effective tool in the fight against the shenanigans of the city establishment as it is chockfull of facts that are relevant to this controversy.

<http://www.planetarystories.com/>

Planetary Stories.com

Planetary Stories (PS) is the name of one of the best, if not the best, science fiction webzines on the Internet. Planetary Stories is also the name of a website that includes not only the previously mentioned *PS*, but also the fantasy webzine *Wonderlust: A Magazine of Fantastic Speculation* and the general fiction webzine *Pulp Spirit* that runs stories that have the flavor of the tales that ran in the pulp magazines of yesteryear. *Planetary Stories* is a webzine that is unapologetically oriented around space opera. Space opera, a derogatory term for space adventure, was the bread and butter for such pulp magazines as *Planet Stories*, *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* as well as 1950's digest magazines such as *Imagination*, *Imaginative Tales* and *Super-Science Fiction*. In 1965, Sol Cohen bought both *Amazing* and *Fantastic* so he could have the reprint rights to stories from those magazines. He used those rights to create a number of classic stories magazines the two longest running titles of which were *Science Fiction Adventure Classics* and *Thrilling Science Fiction*. As those titles indicate, the bulk of the contents of those magazines was space opera. Even though there are no professional magazines that publish space opera anymore, it is arguably still the single most popular sub-genre of science fiction as evidenced by book sales. One longtime science fiction fan and writer, Shelby Ivy, saw this imbalance and in 2005 decided to do something about it. He recruited longtime fan, editor and writer Gerald W. Page and later on, fan Robert S. Kennedy and with them created *Planetary Stories*. At first it was just a single webzine website, however as time wore on, their ambitions expanded. In 2008, *Pulp Spirit* was added to the fold. Then, in 2010, *Wonderlust* was created. Since then the number of webzines have remained stuck at three. What's remarkable about this website is just how much good stuff has been published despite the fact that that it does not pay its writers anything and also that it has a word limit of 5,000. Artist contributors include the legendary Jim Garrison (who did all the artwork on a special issue of *Planetary Stories*) as well as Jerry Burge, Allen Kozsowski & Taral Wayne. Other webzine websites may feature artsy, pretentious, boring stuff, but you can always count on *Planetary Stories* and its companions to deliver the wild and wooly stuff that you crave.

<http://www.thrillingdetective.com/>

Thrilling Detective

Historically, when it comes to fandom and fannish enterprises, the mystery field has always lagged behind science fiction by a country mile. In terms of fanzines, for instance, there has always been at least 10 times as many science fiction fanzines as there are mystery fanzines.

On top of that, the quality of the average science fiction fanzine has been at least as good if not in fact superior to the mystery fanzines. This should not be surprising given how the concepts of fandom and fan writing/publishing arose in science fiction well before such concepts came to the attention of fans of other genres. However, in recent years things have begun to change. More and more mystery fans have taken to the Web writing about their favorite genre. Of these mystery fan sites, perhaps the most prominent operation is the Thrilling Detective website that is the creation of mystery writer Kevin Burton Smith. At first glance, Smith might seem like an unlikely person to engage in such an undertaking given the fact that he is a writer of vulgar, violent, trashy hardboiled mysteries. He also seems like a real piece of work given how on his personal website he brags about being banned for life from a prominent mystery related listserv. He even has a large picture of himself trying to look like Mr. Tough Guy. Smith also makes clear his disdain for the kind of mystery fiction known as “cozies”: tales in which all the violence is offstage, there is no sex or vulgar language and everything is handled in such a way that Queen Victoria herself would no doubt have approved of them. Instead, the Thrilling Detective website is primarily devoted to covering hardboiled mystery yarns and other violent forms of mystery fiction. There is a listing of hundreds of violence-prone detectives that you can click on their names to learn more about them. The website also covers what seems like almost every mystery film, radio drama and movie known to mankind so much so that what does not get covered such as the mid-1980’s comedy mystery TV show “Crazy Like a Fox” sticks out like a sore thumb. This website also both covers comics and web comics. It even has a great many nonfiction pieces by writers other than Smith. If you want to learn more about violent mystery fiction, then Thrilling Detective is the best place to start.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/>

Washington Examiner

Back during the early days of the Internet, it was widely predicted that there would be a great many Web-based magazines and newspapers. As far as webzines are concerned, those predictions have proved accurate. However, for the most part, the prediction of web-based newspapers have proved fanciful. The futurists who made these predictions thought that there would be original special to the Web newspapers being created. What really happened was that there were a number of print newspapers the publishers of which decided could no longer be maintained as a paper product. Instead, they became daily updated news websites. There are several former print daily newspapers that have made the transition to a Web-only existence such as the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. There are many more formerly weekly newspapers such as the former *New York Observer* that is now known simply as *observer.com*. And then there is the *Washington Examiner* that began its existence in 2005 as a free daily tabloid format newspaper that distributed in the Washington, D.C., metro area. In 2013, its ownership dropped the daily print edition and turned it into a weekly magazine while the news portion became a daily updated website.

In the past, the *Examiner* was known for its local coverage, but that was dropped in favor of exclusively political coverage. And not just any politics. In an age where mainstream news media coverage is heavily affected by liberal bias, the *Examiner*'s coverage is equally biased in favor of conservatism. Or more to the point, the kind of conservatism espoused by its owner, the oil tycoon Philip Anschutz. Like most of the rest of the domestic oil industry, Anschutz is a hardline opponent of the federal government's renewable fuels program that makes such plant-sourced fuels as biodiesel and ethanol available to consumers. The *Examiner*'s coverage of energy matters reflects that bias. Another striking aspect of the *Examiner* is that apart from columnist Michael Barone, there are not any prominent writers with the publication.

Websites of Interest

<http://www.bostonglobe.com>

Boston Globe

<http://www.thedailybeast.com>

The Daily Beast

www.rabbit.org

House Rabbit Society

<https://insidecablenews.wordpress.com/>

Inside Cable News

<http://www.labornotes.org/>

Labor Notes

<http://www.liverpoolsalon.org.uk/>

The Liverpool Salon

<http://www.nss.org/>

National Space Society

<http://www.shotsmag.co.uk/>

Shots Crime & Thriller EZine

<http://watchdog.org/>

Watchdog.org

Letters of Comment

Gerd.Maximovic@t-online.de

Dear Charles,

this is a Letter of Comment.

thanks for your eMail, Fornax 16 being attached.

I like to see my story therein.

Fornax is a good read, thanks to Google... How comes? You tell in your column „The Story behind the Story“, Google used censorship on you. Well, it's a pity that in a free society they are using such methods. I condemn this. On the other hand: the blocking up of your blogs on Google led to the creation of Fornax. And that's a good point. So Google helping to create interesting eMagazines? Yes, but unwittingly, of course.

Your story „The Killer and the Doctor“ is short, but interesting. Using dialogue is good. Please, write and publish more. And of greater length. (And, please, don't ask Google, if you are allowed to do this.)

Your movie reviews are okay. Why not using old material the readers of Fornax never have read before. But they have noticed more than one film. For instance, I watched „Quo Vadis“ many, many years ago. Later, I was reading antique authors (historians) like Dio, Sueton, Plinius, and others. Well, they also tell us, Nero was crazy. Making music of evil quality, and his entourage was forced to applaud. And foreigners, having arrived from far distant places of the Roman Empire, witnessing this behaviour, thought, those Romans they must be crazy. True, look at the history writers.

They tell you terrible stories about Roman Emperors, and funny ones as well. For instance, Cesar was gay (queer): he loved women AND men, and his soldiers made fun of it. True, look at Suetonis, for instance.

Baseball. In Germany they use soccer. But I lived in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Southern Germany. There are two US barracks. Beside the place where we lived there is the Hardt Kaserne, including a Bowling Alley. I worked as a pin boy there to raise money because I was very much interested (greedy!) to buy a lot of pulp SF (in German language). And we could watch sometimes US GIs playing Baseball there on the ground.

So, pulp SF I urgently had to buy. Well, among those novels (often abridged by the poor translator, who did not only translate but also who had to cut the often voluminous books) were highlights like van Vogt's „Space Beagle“ (also excellently filmed by Ridley Scott) and John D. MacDonald's „Wine of the Dreamers“ (or in Britain: „Planet of the Dreamers“). Not to forget an excellent German author, as far as you look at good entertainment in those times: Clark Darlton, that's the penname of Walter Ernsting, the greatest SF fan in German language countries till today; he founded the German SF fandom after the war, and he was it's good spirit, soul and master. In merit of him, in my book „Aus den Erinnerungen eines Lehrers“ (Memories of a Teacher), I dedicated a whole long chapter to WE, as they named him in fanzines, to praise und celebrate this outstanding wonderful character. Well, and he published there several SF time novels which I liked very much at those times (beside van Vogt and others).

My enthusiasm went so far as to make portraits of some US authors (being published in fanzines). So I wrote to John D. MacDonald, Ray Bradbury, Damon Knight and others. And, believe it or not, they all did answer the poor young SF fan from Germany (about 17 years old, I believe). Damon Knight even was kind enough to send me his book „In Search of Wonder“ with a German dedication. At that time he was married to a German woman so he understood some German. And Bradbury? When I told Waldemar Kumming, another great German SF fan and friend of Walter Ernsting, that Ray Bradbury had answered me, he couldn't believe it. So I sent Waldemar the old-fashioned Bradbury-letter (there were no eMails at that time, they didn't even think of the Internet) to Munich (where Waldemar still is living). And then he, Waldemar, believed it, and returned the Bradbury-letter to me.

You see, you will never stop enthusiasts. And Google, by the way, will neither.

Well, end of the Letter of Comment.

Kind regards,
Gerd

{Lots of interesting stuff in your LOC. Always noticed just how much better read that Europeans are in the classics than we Americans are. You say that you want to get published more often in Fornax? Well, you can also submit nonfiction articles as well and you can get one fiction piece and one nonfiction piece published in the same issue. By the way, how does the German fandom of today compare to that of yesteryear that you wrote about in your letter of comment?}

miltstevens@earthlink.net

April 1, 2017

Dear Charles,

What makes this letter of comment different from all other letters of comment? For one thing, the subject matter is Fornax #16. For another, it's written on April Fool's Day. There probably isn't any significance to the juxtaposition of those two facts.

One of your comments seems to indicate that you feel you are in competition with other fanzines. I suppose you can look at it that way, but mostly fanzines aren't competitive. Your fanzine is your thing. It reminds the world that you are still there. You are what you are, and your fanzine is what it is. (If I keep on in this direction, I risk falling into a puddle of metaphysics.)

I think most people have a limit as far as how many reviews they can read at one time. With book reviews, I can read three or four at a time. Presenting me with twenty book reviews at one time overwhelms me. If I were to try reading all twenty reviews, I would start forgetting one as I read another. I will generally read reviews of books I have already read. I want to see if the reviewer agrees with my opinion. I don't use book reviews as a buying guide. I have been reading SF for a long time, and my tastes are undoubtedly jaded. I need a heavier jolt of novelty than the average reader might need.

I've watched a lot of movies totally, but I don't rush out to watch new movies. I went into a movie theater twice in 2015 and not at all in 2016. Some types of movies I will watch and others I won't. Quality isn't the main consideration in my movie viewing. Below a certain level, I will turn a movie off after a few minutes. However, I don't watch movies just because they are well made.

I've never played Dungeons & Dragons. I hadn't thought about the game being influenced by Tolkien. I thought it had come about as part of the natural evolution of games. If you took Chutes and Ladders, Clue, and Monopoly, and put them in a blender, D & D might be the result. Tolkien tells an archetypical story, and archetypes are powerful things. For a consideration of archetypes, you should try "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" by Joseph Campbell.

Yours truly,

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PS: I have thought about that article on crime analysis. I'm not going to do it, but I have thought about it. Once I explained one thing, I'd have to explain another. It could go on forever. I did give you my opinion of the article. The people who published it should have checked around before doing so.

[The article that Milt is referring to is <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-02-08/serial-killers-should-fear-this-algorithm> Turns out that Milt is an old hand at crime statistics with the <http://crimeanalyst.org> as well as with the LAPD in days gone past. Crime stats played a big role in a recent bestselling book called *Ghettoside* that I will be reviewing here soon. Basically, its a true crime book with about 100 pages of padding with statistics and amateur sociology and author Jill Leovy's opinions about the police. As for the movie reviews, you don't have to read them all at once, however, this will be the very last issue with a huge number of reviews in one issue. Never read anything by Joseph Campbell, but this summer I'll give that book a try.]

tyrbolo@comcast.net

Hi Charles,

Thanks for the latest Fornax.

Politics is only interesting in reasonable doses. The current mad rush to blame a single individual for the ills of modern nations can be a bit wearying to say the least.

Robin Bright might achieve a bit more credibility with a tiny bit of research. Glaring errors might seem easily waived in the post modern thought world but old fartes like me prefer something with a few less discrepancies.

The evolutionary adaption process continuously builds variants of existing species, with that wide range available some will be better adapted to environmental changes which cause the others to die off. Without Prescience (ability to see the future) deciding that Aspergers is the next great leap forward for humans is ignoring how the system of evolution works. It is a process and for most folks a badly understood process. My money is on Downs folk as the next step to replace Homo Emo Irrationalis. : ^)

Charlize Theron looks pretty good as Kusanagi (Ghost in the Shell). I've always liked Motoko mostly for her attitude at work and play. If Hollywood has run out of comics to move to the screen there's a treasure trove of Anime to be ripped off for ideas. I'd love to see China Fukunaga cast as the adult Railgun Misaka.

Purcell is up for TAFF. He's the originator of Askance a zine of notable proportions. Where I learned of the Bronies.

Warm regards

Dave

Hi Charles,

There are a couple of RPGs that are based on religious societies. The Glorantha epic of Greg Stafford comes to mind. Another is Tekumel by M A R Barker. GURPS has a religion sourcebook as well but most of them are dependant on the GM of a group for the religious elements. COC is all about religion in the sense that humans dimly based understanding of the universe is explained in religious terms. A much more damning critique of RPGs is that the ancient societies were horribly paranoid and distrustful of strangers, perfectly willing to think the worst of any others.

We are much more enlightened these days. You can see that from the good folks reaction to D&D or the decision to wall off the people who harvest our crops.

Born into the age of plenty moderns can't imagine a world in which failure to actively farm is a death sentence for your community. That means that most efforts are committed to eating regularly and those with leisure for other things have to pull their weight in a way that is obviously useful. Nobles and Priests were circumscribed with community acts not just lazy feasters on the bounty of others.

An odd band of ne'erdo wells heavily armed and belligerent would be hung almost on sight. The one characteristic you see even in modern Wizards is to keep their mouth shut tightly about what they are up to. That's why you don't see much realism in RPGs or medieval fantasy.

Western doctors

Doc Orr was a GP in Grand Junction Colorado. One dark night two drunk cowboys showed up at his door. One had a badly broken arm, compound fracture with the bone sticking out. Once the injured man was on the table for operating his companion loudly proclaimed that if his friend died he would kill Doc.

Doc laid out his instruments on the tray for the operation. The last item he put there was his Colt 45 with the remark that if the patient was going to die, he would know it first before the friend did. As Doc made the first cut into the patient the heroic friend passed out at the sight. He did not arouse until the operation was over.

Once you have been around the Net long enough you'll see that the whole thrust of Silicon Valley idiots is about framing the narrative. The guidelines are just a facade used to mask this off from most. They literally can not abide the idea of an alternate viewpoint being aired in any venue where it might challenge their reality tunnel. It is not going to get any better until the whole business model of advertising driven crapola implodes. Once they tossed their do no evil motto Google should be approached with your hand firmly over your nether orifices.

I'm a bit confused by your assessment of Butch Cassidy. My Grandfather knew him and the few stories I heard about him didn't exactly constitute a cold blooded killer type. I guess the farther you get from the real west the more heinous the outlaws are presented as being. Where Butch came from, if you exhibited cold blooded killer behaviors you would not live long enough to become an outlaw. Not many shades of grey in the local moral codes.

Movies have always been a propaganda arm, as such they should never be taken at face value for their presentation of anything you don't have personal experience of. The focus is too narrow to be particularly meaningful. I like uplifting tales of American heroics by our glorious armed forces too. However I know that it is as phoney as Disney if compared to the real behaviors.

Thanks for the ish.

Warm Regards

Dave

{My father, who had a PhD in History, had a strong interest in both the West and in Westerns, told me that Butch Cassidy was a pretty vicious guy. Billy the Kid was also regarded by his contemporaries as being a really bad guy. However, in the years since Billy the Kid, like Butch Cassidy, has received a dose of revisionist history and now looks much better to people now than he did back then. It's possible that your grandfather knew the nonviolent side of Butch Cassidy and never got to see his outlaw side in action. As for the RPG's, I've never played any of the ones you mentioned.}