



**Bell Labs (HO) Science Fiction Club News** (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

According to the Asbury Park Press, the Holmdel (NJ) Public Library is moving into Bell Works from its present location in the basement of the Holmdel City Hall. When the Science Fiction Club at Bell Labs in Holmdel disbanded in 2001, its book collection, numbering about a thousand books, was donated to the Holmdel Public Library. The paperbacks were mostly sold through the Friends of the Library, but the hardcover books were added to the library's collection.

And now they're coming home.

See <https://tinyurl.com/void-holmdel-library> for details on the Library move. [-ecl]

**I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF** (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

This month marks the 60th anniversary of an experiment by American International pictures. AIP almost exclusively made B-pictures and let distributors pick them up (cheap) then and show them with an A- picture. The makers of the A-picture would get a much bigger chunk of the box-office gross. AIP wanted the whole pie. They made mostly horrific movies and they played best to a teenage audience. They would make films that specifically targeted the teen audience and run two as a double feature. And they would run them around Thanksgiving for the holiday rush. The films they ran were I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF shown as a double feature with I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN.

The quintessential AIP film of the 1950s was I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF. It was a major marketing victory for the company. The title is a subtle joke making it sound like a contemporary confession magazine story. If that was intended, it is one of the few subtle touches of what has to be seen as a weak film. It was paired in the theaters with the still weaker follow-up, the quickly cobbled self-imitation I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN. In both films the real villain is a scientist played by Whit Bissell. In fact the latter film was not even AIP's idea but the suggestion of distributors. The release plan was an experiment to see if a B- film double feature would draw as much of an audience as an A-Film and B-Film double feature. The pair played in some first-class venues Thanksgiving of 1957 as a lesson to the major film producers to keep their prices down so to productions like AIP made according to AIP executive Samuel Arkoff.

Following the B-film double release did not really catch on but the experiment did show that there was a strong market for teen films. Films made for cable, the modern equivalent of the old B-film today aim for a younger audience.

I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF was a melding of the juvenile delinquent and horror genres. This film was then and has since been taken as a profound look at juvenile delinquency by some critics who should know better. In fact, I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF shows little or no understanding of juvenile delinquency. Werewolves had little to do with juvenile delinquency. The story centers on an otherwise meek boy whose problem is that he flies into uncontrollable rages when he is startled. This makes him prey for a scientist who is supposedly giving him psychological help, but is actually controlling his occasionally regressions to his prehistoric fore- bearers, who perhaps were part wolf. This premise is, of course, not so much scientifically dubious as it is purely hokum, partly hooley, and mostly poppycock.

A third film was spawned from I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF, entitled HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER. It is a film that manages to use the teenage werewolf and Frankenstein while still escaping being in the fantasy genre. It is set at the American International Studios. In this film the makeup man who created these two monsters drugs the actors to kill at his command in monster makeup. Of the three film, I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF is the best. I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN was made very much as a rush job and really looks it. Probably what made this film as popular at the time as it was its focus on teens as the main characters. It was a younger audience who were the box-office mainstay of science fiction films, but the majority gave them adults as characters with whom to identify. The science fiction films that had teenage leads like Steve McQueen of The Blob often did much better. This became an unfortunate trend in films decades later, but here it was still fresh.

Michael Landon, who plays the teenage werewolf went on to become a minor icon on television playing Little Joe on "Bonanza" and later the father on "Little House on the Prairie." Also notable is Guy Williams in a minor role as one of the police. His good looks would soon win him the title role in a Walt Disney TV-series "Zorro" and later as the father in "Lost in Space." A nice surprise is the presence of Vladimir Sokolov as the Romanian Pepi. Sokolov generally had small roles in good films like THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN.

The teenage werewolf is not a totally ugly dog. Cinematographer Joseph LaShelle whose work is generally uninspiring manages to make some creative touches in the attack scenes, using first a subjective hand-held camera and an upside-down camera in the gymnasium attack. Some of the feel of film noir is created on Tony's return to the Rockdale where the street and ever a stranger seems to be threatening. In a clever way the film uses other horror films. Brandon's reason for regressing Tony is to somehow save the world. How will it do that? Well this film does not say, but you can use one of the reasons from another film like THE WEREWOLF.

Gene Fowler JR's first directorial outing is uneven at best. The party sequence is at best lame with failed humor. The day-for-night photography is unconvincing. The story is all about Tony's rage, but we never find out why Tony has such rage. We are told that he grew up without a mother, but surely that does not cover it. Pepi recognizes the signs of a werewolf attack from being from Romania, but the werewolf in this film is really a regressed person. Who in Romania is regressing people? Last but not least the werewolf makeup is garish and exaggerated.

This is weak fare, as one would expect from American International Pictures. It is a film that got lucky and had far more impact than it deserved.

[A modified version of this column has appeared on my hard drive for me to figure out what to do with it.]

[-mrl]

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#### **DAGUERREOTYPE** (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

**CAPSULE:** Kiyoshi Kurosawa, a writer and director almost unknown in the United States, is superb at creating an atmosphere of dread and suspense as he did with PULSE. This film is a cut below that film. A famous fashion photographer takes daguerreotype pictures of his daughter in memory of his dead wife. His new photographic assistant has his own ideas that will stir things up. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4) or 6/10

I just do not know what happened to talented film director Kiyoshi Kurosawa. He had made a small handful of sublimely creepy horror films, but after then he seems to have decided to just avoid that style of the horror genre. Either that or his films stopped coming to the United States. His CURE (1997) was a police procedural involving a man who could just brush against someone in the street and that innocent person immediately became an unstoppable killer. His PULSE (2001) involved hell filling up and the damned returning to Earth. His SEANCE (2000) was a remake of the film SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON with supernatural implications the original film did not have. Sadly, of his work few films seem to have come to our shores. Now in short order two of his films have appeared, but they are nowhere the quality of PULSE. DOPPELGANGER (2003) is rather tedious and DAGUERREOTYPE (2016) is a simple melodrama with a sadly predictable ending.

Stephane (played by Olivier Gourmet) is a famous fashion photographer. His hobby is daguerreotype photography. He used to take daguerreotype pictures of his wife, but she died, leaving him scarred by the loss. Instead he takes daguerreotype pictures of his daughter, Marie (Constance Rousseau). The daguerreotype process is extremely taxing on the subject who must remain totally motionless for fifty to seventy minutes while the image is etched in steel plate. Stephane turns a blind eye to the pain and discomfort he is subjecting his daughter to. He hires a new assistant to help him, Jean (Tahar Rahim). Jean becomes fixated on the beautiful Marie. But Stephane possesses Marie. And Jean wants to loosen his grip her.

The pacing is slow and some shots could have been a little more closely cropped. The film's 121 minutes could have been cut back a bit. But the film is undeniably atmospheric. The first half of the film contributes far more atmosphere than plot, but that reinforces the overall grimness of the circumstances. This is Kurosawa's first film to be shot outside of Japan. The film is in French and takes place in France.

Kurosawa is a master of subtle silent scares. He could be the Val Lewton of Japanese film. But style without story for it to serve is incomplete and is a pointless exercise. If Kurosawa is not going to meld story and style I can only suggest that he study his earlier, creepier horror films. I rate DAGUERREOTYPE a +1 on the - 4 to +4 scale or 6/10.

Film Credits: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4628882/combined>

[Note: Kiyoshi Kurosawa is not related to Akira Kurosawa.]

[-mrl]

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#### **LET IT FALL: LOS ANGELES 1982-1992** (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

**CAPSULE:** A single documentary written and directed by John Ridley covers the entire Rodney King Incident from the decade-long buildup of anger to his high-speed chase to the riots that lasted for five days and did an estimated one billion dollars in damage and in which sixty people died. The style of the documentary is not groundbreaking, but it has a flow of witness testimony combined with footage of the surrounding events. The slow build-up of racial resentment increases over a decade of time until the release of hostility seems inevitable. The film is seemingly a very complete look at a decade of increasing racial hostility. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

Last summer there were several cases of apparently the same story from different parts of the country. Police would deal with a man--usually black--being the victim of police brutality and/or racism. And the treatment was met with protests and protests that "black lives matter." To one degree or another they all were repeating the scenario of the Rodney King beating, the Rodney King Trial, and the Los Angeles race riots known as the Rodney King riots. LET IT FALL: LOS ANGELES 1982-1992 documents at length the story of the Rodney King riot, the trial that led up to the riots, and the years of racism that led to the Rodney King beatings.

In the 1940s and 1950s the Los Angeles police department enjoyed a very positive reputation with the public. It probably was looked upon as favorably as any police department in the country. There was even a radio and later television program, "Dragnet", that was based on actual police cases and which made a star of Jack Webb as Sergeant Joe Friday, Badge 714. But as South Central Los Angeles filled with greater numbers of ethnic minorities there was increasing friction among Blacks, Koreans, Hispanics, street-gangs, and drug dealers. The police's style dealing with affluent whites was generally respectful, but their treatment of minorities was more one of exhibiting power and force. Police who would be in South Central LA were trained not only in self-defense but in how best to restrain offenders with chokeholds, tasers, guns, etc.

On March 3, 1991, King was captured by the California Highway Patrol after a high-speed chase. The arresting officers from the LAPD brutally and horribly beat him. What the officers had not counted on was that the beating was filmed on a video camera. The video seemed to be incontrovertible proof of savage brutality from the police. But there is no criteria of what force is excessive.

The police were put on trial and to the surprise of many the jury found them to be not guilty. After the famous tape of the beating is shown, it is hard to interpret the arrest as anything less than illegally excessive force. This sparked a race riot of huge proportion. More than sixty people lost their lives and the looting and fires continued for five days.

Much of the anger was taken out against Korean shop-owners who had done little wrong but whom the rioters identified with their oppressors. Writer/director John Ridley's documentary shows the violence of the riots, the trial that led to the riots, the incident that led to the trial, and the years of racism that led to the incident. It is all told by witnesses to the actual events, on and off the street.

The Rodney King beating should not have led to the unreasoning riot that it did. But if it had not occurred, something worse probably would have happened elsewhere. LET IT FALL: LOS ANGELES 1982-1992 stands with last year's O.J.: MADE IN AMERICA and I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO as a powerful retrospective on the dynamics of United States race relations. I rate LET IT FALL a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale or 7/10. The film had a limited theatrical release in April 2017 at its full length of 144 minutes and a television showing a week later cut to about 90 minutes.

Film Credits: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6379314/combined>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/let\\_it\\_fall\\_la\\_1982\\_1992](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/let_it_fall_la_1982_1992)

[-mrl]

**Motives and BLADE RUNNER 2049** (letter of comment by Andre Kuzniarek):

In response to [Mark's comments on motives](#) in the 11/03/17 issue of the MT VOID, Andre Kuzniarek writes:

I think you're correct about the Las Vegas shooter's possible motive, but I would add to that all the attention from the media garnered by these shootings. Notoriety is part of going out with a bang, and I think a phenomenon mostly associated with suicidal men. If they're going down, they're taking as many as they can with them, and might as well try to top the charts while they're at it: "Look at me, I was here!". It's probably been suggested many times that mass shootings might be curbed if the identity of the shooter was kept confidential. It's perhaps contrary to the principles of our open society, but when it comes to the First Amendment, we still curb wantonly dangerous speech. [-ak]

Mark responds:

Yes, I can see there is a definite attraction to showing the world that has treated you badly, there is a way to strike back and at the same time become famous, going out in a blaze of glory. We would be better off not reporting who the perpetrator is, but the Constitution probably does not allow that. [-mrl]

In response to [Mark's comments review of BLADE RUNNER 2049](#) in the same issue, Andre Kuzniarek writes:

Regarding "Blade Runner"s, I'm a huge fan of the original movie but agree it's not as cerebral as its reputation suggests. It did, however, come across more like real science fiction than the pulpy action fantasy that was preceding it, and I enjoyed 2049 precisely that same way, enhanced by 35 years of simmering since seeing the original. The think new movie really complements the original well and essentially elevates the original by extension. The cinematography was gorgeous but while

different, and what I saw on screen really came across as a lived-in possible future, as in the original. I was also gripped by synth-based score which harkened back to Vangelis' without aping it too much. I have to assume you were being wry about Sean Young, since the character of Rachel was a simulacrum generated for the film (extremely meta in relation to the character). My understanding is they used a stand-in, and only credited Young for having borrowed her features. [-ak]

Mark responds:

The woodenness of her performance and the Joan Crawford shoulders were probably intentional. It sounds like over the years her looks have changed but her voice had not. They probably used the same techniques as were used for ROGUE ONE, but in that case the wooden performance was more of a contrast with his normal acting. [-mrl]

**1987, BLADE RUNNER 2049, THE GHOST IN THE SHELL, and Guns** (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to the 11/03/17 issue, whole number #1987, of the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

Hey, you know the year 1987 was a pretty good year for me. Let's see if the same number results in a pretty good issue of MT VOID. [-jp]

In response to [Mark's review of BLADE RUNNER 2049](#) and [Dale Skran's review of THE GHOST IN THE SHELL](#) in the same issue, John writes:

Interesting that this issue reviews two movies I have yet to see: BLADE RUNNER 2049 and THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE. While I am interested in seeing both of them, the big question is, "Do I want to?" I have to admit that I am quite curious to see how BLADE RUNNER 2049 works compared to its predecessor, and I also have to admit that the only reason I want to see THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE is because all that Scarlett Johansson seems to wear in this movie is skin tight leotards, if even that. Oh, all right, the special effects look really good, too, but I think I can tell why this one tanked just by watching the trailer. It looks pretty, but that's about it. [-jp]

John also writes:

With that silly paragraph out of the way, onto a serious topic. Just yesterday, a mere three hours away from our home, another mass shooting happened, this time on a Sunday morning in a church while parishioners were in service. The result? Twenty-six dead, another twenty wounded, and the shooter was also killed after crashing his vehicle. The possible motive for this one may be simple: the shooter was ex-Navy, dishonorably discharged, physically abused his wife and child, and god knows what else was wrong with him. Seems to me he might have snapped: mental illness, or simply emotionally overwrought, couldn't handle his life anymore ... who knows? What really matters now is that more innocent people have lost their lives, and still--STILL--the NRA-owned and operated GOP, the Republican party, the party of our alleged president, refuses to dialog intelligently about doing something about creating reasonable and enforceable gun ownership laws. This really has to stop. I am sick and tired of every single politician saying, "Our prayers and thoughts are with these victims and their families." Prayers and thoughts are not solving the problem. This has gone too far, and I really don't care about motives anymore. This country needs reasonable and effective gun ownership laws. Debate all you want about motives: that's fine and dandy. But do something about these damned guns. [-jp]

Mark responds:

Your comment on gun regulation makes common sense and I happen to believe that a large majority of Americans agree with you. It is interesting that I wrote that editorial shortly after the Las Vegas shooting but being on the road I could not publish until the piece was no longer timely. It is a sad commentary that events have made it timely again. It is true that knowing the killers' motives would not help a whole lot, but it is better than getting nothing positive out of the incident. Our political system has been intentionally sabotaged and stymied. The official reaction is to treat these murders as if they were natural disasters. [-mrl]

**Ethnicity in Anime** (letter of comment by Kevin R):

In response to [Dale Skran's comments on ethnicity in anime](#) in the 11/03/17 issue of the MT VOID, Kevin R writes:

See this article about the "statelessness" and "lack of ethnicity" in manga/anime SF, and Japanese standards of beauty v looking Caucasian.

[quote]

Essentially, there is no ethnicity in futuristic anime. You could say it is wrong to try and place a character in our current world, because that goes completely against what anime artists strive towards. This is why the characters come in all different

shapes, sizes, and colours. The colour of a character's hair, eyes, or skin, is not referring to their ethnicity. It is referring to a lack thereof. Or at least until an ethnic tribe with blue hair and yellow eyes is discovered.

[/quote] - Why "Ghost in the Shell" Is Not Whitewashing  
Sam Bekemans October 11, 2016

<https://tinyurl.com/void-whitewashing>

I imagine making characters ethnically ambiguous in anime made export to Europe and the Americas more profitable, too.  
[-kr]

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

On our recent trip, we listened to MICRO by Michael Crichton (read by John Bedford Lloyd) (ISBN 978-0-062-19293-6). While the basic story was engaging, there was way too much padding. For example, we are introduced to a security chief early on, complete with description, but when another character first meets him two-thirds of the way through the book, we get another description. There are also long info dumps about creating toxins, crafting weapons, and so on.

Also, all the characters have very specific (and disparate) skills, which all turn out to be just what they or their companions need at some point. (And often, after they have served their purpose, they die abruptly.) As has been noted, this is similar to the James Bond films, in which the scene with Q delivering the gadgets is the last scene written, because the gadgets are really determined by what is needed by the script, not by any precognition by Q. [-ecl]

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Medvedenko: "Why do you always wear black?"  
Masha: "I am in mourning for my life."  
--Anton Chekhov, "The Seagull"

Quote of the Week:

quote

-- author

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