

It was somewhere about 1962 when a couple of local TV stations got the idea to start running one or two horror or science fiction movies after 11:30 on Saturday nights. I got a double feature every Saturday night. This was where I first saw a lot of the genre films from the 1950s and 1960s. Once a week I saw two of these films. Until that point most of these films I would have mostly seen in stills in monster magazines.

Oh, I forgot to mention monster magazines. The monster magazines came along in the early 1960s. Horror movie fans could get a small dose of horror films by leafing through magazines like FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND and CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN.

Thanks to digital technology I can share with you the first issue of a monster magazine I ever got. Those days I could get a small dose of horror films any day by reading about the films in the poorly written and profusely illustrated monster magazines. This is the first FAMOUS MONSTERS I ever got for myself. And some sister publications

http://archive.org/details/Famous_Monsters_of_Filmland_019_Teachbug

Some other magazines in the same vein:

https://archive.org/details/Horror_Monsters_01_1961_Charlton_DM/

https://archive.org/stream/Spaceman_01_July_1961#page/n55

https://archive.org/details/Monster_World_01_1964_jodyanimator

FAMOUS MONSTERS and its sister magazines like MONSTER WORLD and SPACEMEN really inspired the popularity of monster magazines. But editor Forrest J. Ackerman had one bad habit that alienated my friends and me. They refused to give a negative comment to any film. It became obvious immediately that his taste could not be trusted. FJA lived in a Cloud Cuckoo land where every film was equally fine. CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN did have some intelligence in its opinions. But CINEFANTASTIQUE (which came along later) had critics who were serious and dependable. [-mrl]

THE MONSTER THAT CHALLENGED THE WORLD (1957) (film retrospective by Mark R. Leeper):

CAPSULE: Besides the title of the film this film delivers less than expected in most categories. This 1957 film delivers a lot in the talk department and not so much in the logic department. The plot concerns giant-8 foot, man-eating mollusks that hatched in Southern California's Salton Sea. The monster kills only a small handful of people, and most of them have done something normally considered dangerous or stupid anyway. The film is directed by Arnold Laven and written by David Duncan and Pat Fielder. The film is short on thrills. Rating: high 0 (-4 to +4) or 4/10

Movie monsters were already starting to get to be routine by the time that this one came along. THE MONSTER THAT CHALLENGED THE WORLD was based on a story by minor science fiction author David Duncan, author of such stories as "Occam's Razor." Perhaps Duncan's biggest claim to fame is as the author of the story adaptation of THE TIME MACHINE that was it self adapted to be George Pal's version of the film.

The screenplay by Pat Fielder borrows the pseudo-documentary style used in THEM! It also borrows from THEM! the idea to use a full sized mechanized monster. Here, however, it is decidedly less animated and much more obviously a clumsy mockup. The filmmakers also apparently had only one monster model and had to make it represent several. Similarly THEM! had had only one full-sized ant and the front half of a second one.

The film has the Navy noting several mysterious deaths near the Salton Sea in Southern California. An earthquake has released the eggs of prehistoric giant mollusks. They hatch out, creating a man-eating snail-like creature. Actually, only in a few scenes do we see any more of the creature than its trunk and head. Even then the head seems very un-mollusk-like. A mollusk has feelers around its mouth; this creature seems to have mandibles instead. The title comes from the fact that if it escapes to the All-American canal just a mile or so away and then to and from the Gulf of Mexico it will spread worldwide.

Tim Holt, who stars as Twillinger, in better days had played more convincing romantic leads and cowboy heroes. In this film he seems to be getting a little fat and he walks with an odd posture. He is not particularly good in the role and is out-acted by Hans Conreid, generally a comic actor, but here in a serious role.

There are not many good touches except that mollusks are a different concept for a monster. The first bad touch of the film is to have the mollusk rear out of the water in the middle of the Salton Sea. This creature is a bottom-crawler, not a swimmer. It could rear out of water only where the water is shallow enough for the creature to stand. There are certainly times that the acting is overdone to the point of inviting laughter. The sailor who first sees the mollusk gives a hammy, exaggerated face of terror. A mother bereaved over the death of her daughter gives a performance that had to be an embarrassment. The story builds to an extremely contrived climactic threat to be overcome and the script never gives much reason to believe that the

Navy has killed all the monsters. There is a line where someone says the Navy got them all, but there is little reason to believe that is true.

The faces of the mollusks' victims seem to either be bad plaster or papier-mâché or look most unconvincing. Also the dry-for-wet underwater scenes are unconvincing. The mock-up of the trunk of the mollusk is elaborate when it is standing still, but does not move realistically and it looks like the poorly done monsters in Italian strong-man films.

While most of the directing is fairly uninteresting, there is a scene of a water attack that is strongly reminiscent of the first attack in JAWS, made nineteen years later. Beyond that any objective evaluation of the film must conclude that there isn't much to enjoy here.

The concept of giant prehistoric mollusks endangering the world is just different enough to give the film some real novelty, but the underwater attack, done dry for wet, with the victim apparently falling into the mollusk's clutch is horribly crude.

This film was made for the bottom halves of double bills and even there it is disappointing. I give it a high 0 on the -4 to +4 scale or 4/10.

Film Credits: <https://tinyurl.com/void-imdb-challenged>

What others are saying: <https://tinyurl.com/void-rt-challenged>

[-mrl]

Hugo Award and Retro Hugo Award Winners:

Hugo Awards

Best Novel
THE STONE SKY by N. K. Jemisin

Best Novella
ALL SYSTEMS RED by Martha Wells

Best Novelette
"The Secret Life of Bots" by Suzanne Palmer

Best Short Story
"Welcome to your Authentic Indian Experience (TM)"
by Rebecca Roanhorse

Best Series
World of the Five Gods by Lois McMaster Bujold

Best Related Work
NO TIME TO SPARE: THINKING ABOUT WHAT MATTERS
by Ursula K. Le Guin

Best Graphic Story
Monstress, Volume 2: The Blood, written by Marjorie M. Liu,
illustrated by Sana Takeda

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form
Wonder Woman

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form
The Good Place: "The Trolley Problem"

Best Editor, Short Form
Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas

Best Editor, Long Form
Sheila E. Gilbert

Best Professional Artist
Sana Takeda

Best Semiprozine
Uncanny Magazine

Best Fanzine
File 770

Best Fancast
Ditch Diggers

Best Fan Writer
Sarah Gailey

Best Fan Artist
Geneva Benton

There are two other Awards administered by Worldcon 76 that are not Hugo Awards:

Award for Best Young Adult Book
Akata Warrior by Nnedi Okorafor (Viking)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer
Rebecca Roanhorse

Retro Hugo Awards:

Best Novel
BEYOND THIS HORIZON by Anson MacDonald (Robert A. Heinlein)

Best Novella
 "Waldo" by Anson MacDonald (Robert A. Heinlein)
 Best Novelette
 "Foundation" by Isaac Asimov
 Best Short Story
 "The Twonky" by C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner
 Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form
 BAMBI
 Best Editor, Short Form
 John W. Campbell
 Best Professional Artist
 Virgil Finlay
 Best Fanzine
 Le Zombie
 Best Fan Writer
 Forrest J Ackerman

PAYING THE PRICE FOR PEACE: THE STORY OF S. BRIAN WILLSON (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

CAPSULE: Brian Willson was a young man with strong conservative Republican attitudes and a strong conviction to use them to make the world a better place. When he enlisted in the army he was sent to Vietnam to do his part defending his country. Then came the day he looked down at his feet and saw the ground under him was covered with dead bodies including those of women and children, and his job was to kill more. He had done everything he should have. How could he have done all the right things and ended up a mass murderer many times over? It was then that he became an anti-war activist, anti-military, and anti-government. It had been a road that has cost him a lot, including both his legs, but he would devote his life to opposing the forces that had used him. This is the story of Brian Willson and the anti-war movement over his lifetime. Director: Bo Boudart; Writers: Allan Baddock, Susan Utell, Sharon Wood. Rating: +2 (-4 to +4) or 7/10

On June 5th of 1989 there were student protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The Chinese government ordered a column of tanks to the site of the protest to use force to put down the rebellion. One student stood up to the tanks, risking being run down. The soldiers in their tanks had to decide if they owed their loyalty to the state or to humanity. Luckily they chose humanity. The incident echoed an incident two years earlier at the Concord (California) Naval Weapons Station. On September 1, 1987, a United States citizen was peacefully protesting the United States government producing and selling weapons for the Contras of Nicaragua. The citizen, Brian Willson, informed the command at the station that he would be on the tracks to stop the train from hauling weapons. Instead of negotiating out of the situation the train plowed right into Willson. Willson survived but lost both legs and received a fractured skull. He now walks on prosthetic metal legs.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR PEACE: THE STORY OF S. BRIAN WILLSON recounts the experience of Brian Willson. He was to become an effective force for exposing and fighting government atrocities. On the most important day of his life Willson turned against the military and his mission. Willson to this point felt at every step he had made had been a moral action. This day he was doing reconnaissance on a village that the army had bombed under the belief that it gave sanctuary to the enemy. Willson concluded was no evidence that the people were anything but innocent. But the Americans had bombed the village nonetheless. He had taken only what he considered moral actions to reach this point of his life. However, the moral steps had led him into being a mass murderer, albeit one under orders. That day turned Willson into an anti-war activist. The film gives the story of his life leading up to the realization moment at the fishing village and the actions that later led up to him losing his legs. And it tells details of his resistance up to the point the train hit him. With immense courage he continued his efforts to support the Peace movement wherever the government was ordering people killed.

The film also tells the story of the anti-government protests in Willson's later life. When Willson laid his body on the train tracks he laid his life on the line to do the right thing that he thought he was doing in Viet Nam. In candor it should be noted, however, that the incident was accidental. While the film does not accuse the government or the military of intentionally causing the incident, they do imply the government intentionally allowed the accident that destroyed Willson's legs. Few people love this country so much that they could make the sacrifice Willson did.

In its coverage of the anti-war movement the film says that in the years from 1950 to 2000 the United States has

- overthrown 60 democratically elected governments
- dropped bombs on 30 nations
- attempted the assassination of 60 foreign leaders

Those are strong accusations. The filmmakers also discuss our military's connections to the economy:

- Currently, more than 1 million U.S. personnel are stationed across 175 countries.
- The U.S. government has increased its military budget by nearly 90% since 2001, and currently stands at \$700 billion per year.
- Once veteran health care and interest is accounted for, the United States is paying \$1 trillion per year for war itself

and preparation for war.

- The U.S. Government spends 10 times more per citizen on average for military costs than most other industrialized nations.

Several well-known figures participated in the making of the film including Martin Sheen, Daniel Ellsberg, Alice Walker, and Ron Kovic. Peter Coyote narrates the film.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR PEACE is an eye-opening documentary I give a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale or 7/10.

One odd note: Ron Kovic and Brian Willson led very parallel lives, going from starting as super-patriots to becoming anti-war activists. They were born on the same birthday date but five years apart, each born on the Fourth of July.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR PEACE: THE STORY OF S. BRIAN WILLSON is available on DVD and digital stream.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5068830/reference>

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

[-mrl]

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

N. K. Jemisin's three consecutive Hugo Awards for the three books in her trilogy is a first, and noteworthy enough that CNN television reported it. Rebecca Roanhorse is the first author since 1980 (and the only one besides Barry B. Longyear) to win the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Campbell Awards in the same year. (The Campbell Award was not created until 1973 and the Nebula in 1966.) And while some men won for Dramatic Presentations, Fanzines, and other collaborative efforts, all the individual awards were swept by women this year.

As far as the Retro Hugo Awards, BAMBI? BAMBI?! If BAMBI could beat CAT PEOPLE, there is no justice in the world.

UNCHARTED: LEWIS AND CLARK IN ARCANE AMERICA by Kevin J. Anderson and Sarah A. Hoyt (ISBN 978-1-4814-9323-0) starts with the premise of "The Sundering". When I read this I was sure that the term "The Sundering" was used by Jeffrey E. Barlough in his "Western Lights" series. I was right, but it turns out that when one Googles "the sundering", the entire first page of results are for the "Forgotten Realms" series.

Anyway ... Anderson and Hoyt postulate a world in which the Americas have been mysteriously cut off from the rest of the world in 1759. However, for some reason Thomas Jefferson still financed the voyage for Lewis and Clark in 1803, though in this case it is as much to find out if there is a way back to the Old World via the Pacific Ocean. They start out with all the same people as in our world, though the survival rate is much lower, because in addition to the Sundering, magic has returned to the world, complete with revenants and dragons.

My problem is I prefer historical speculation over magic, but Anderson and Hoyt spend most of the book on the magic part. For what it's worth, it also seems to be more a young adult novel. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's probably worth noting. Oh, and Amazon says it is the first of a series, but it does stand on its own. It's good for what it is; it just wasn't what I was looking for. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Oaths are but words, and words are but wind.
--Samuel Butler

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