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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
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Mini Reviews, Part 9 (film reviews by Mark R. Leeper)

Here is the ninth batch of mini-reviews, three documentaries about war.

APOCALYPSE '45: This documentary looks like it uses colorized newsreel footage, but it is actually restored color footage. (There probably was some overlap between this film and the television series "World War II in Color".) It is a look from the beginning of the Pacific War to the end. Among other things, the film examines the motives of the people dropping bombs on civilians: are the victims evil because of what their government was doing or had them do? The largest segment of the film is saved for Okinawa, although Hiroshima was also covered at length. Released 08/14/20; not yet available on streaming. Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4)

THIS IS NOT A MOVIE: In comparing reality to FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (his inspiration to become a journalist), journalist Robert Fisk says, "This is not a movie," meaning journalists don't always help get the bad guys. Fisk believes that news must be seen before being believed, and he does not believe it is required to give equal time to each side. His expressed preference is to give time to the victims (though perhaps the coverage of 9/11 shown does not follow this policy. A large section of the film is spent on the massacre at the infamous Sabra and Shatila Refugee Camp. Released 09/09/20; available on Amazon Prime streaming. Rating: high +2 (-4 to -4)

DESERT ONE: This tells of the major event of the Carter presidency, the Iran hostage crisis. The film uses comic-book style illustrations to recount the events. Elsewhere it has a fairly standard documentary style, and at times the incidents are genuinely moving. Released 08/21/20; available on Amazon Prime and on DVD from Netflix. Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4)

[-mrl]

Space News (comments by Gregory Frederick):

The latest SpaceX test (SN10) worked; except that the rocket exploded a few minutes after it did land successfully. They have more work ahead but they are making progress. The video linked below shows that only three of the crush-able landing legs deployed and the rocket was still coming down too fast. The large landing impact force probably caused fuel lines and/or a fuel tank to break causing the explosion and fire.

Video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CF9mdMI1qxM>.

Also, I recently watched DESTINATION MOON (I have not seen it in years) and as I watched it, I was reminded that their Luna rocket-ship was using a similar propulsive landing method as Space X will use on the Moon with their Lunar Starship. I realize that almost all 1950's Sci-Fi film rockets landed this way (except for WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, CONQUEST OF SPACE and probably some others) but it just is so interesting that 1950's Sci-Fi films seemed to have the right idea about landing large rockets on the Moon. [-gf]

Mark replies:

I'm convinced. Here's my two bucks. [-mrl]

Greg responds:

I read where George Pal and Walter Lantz were friends and so Lantz would then his character to Pal's film. [-gf]

Mark observes:

That seems to be just what happened.

And don't forget Pal worked Puppets into The TIME MACHINE. He was loyal to his friends. [-mrl]

More Space News:

CNN reports, "For [Octavia Butler's] pioneering work in the world of sci-fi, NASA named the site on Mars where the Perseverance rover touched down "Octavia E. Butler Landing."

"Her guiding principle, 'When using science, do so accurately,' is what the science team at NASA is all about. Her work continues to inspire today's scientists and engineers across the globe--all in the name of a bolder, more equitable future for all," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, in a statement. [-CNN/NASA]

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

Our discussion group for March did the novella "Enemy Mine" by Barry B. Longyear and the film ENEMY MINE. (We did not cover the novelization by David Gerrold and Longyear.) The novella was written in 1979 and seems rather cliched now. The original attitudes of Davidge and Jeriba seem to be patterned after attitudes from the Vietnam War, and everything seems just too convenient, plotwise. (For starters, they seem very similar biologically, and learn each other's languages much more quickly than two totally different species with two totally different speech organs.)

I found it revealing that the Black actor plays the alien--it might have been more interesting the other way around, but it *was* 1985. The Earthman tries to kill the Drac, but later the Drac saves the Earthman, so the Drac is in some sense the peacemaker.

The movie uses meteorites instead of waves, probably for budget reasons as well as dramatic effect. The movie also has weird creatures, but no snakes.

I found the Pepsi product placement a hundred years in the future unconvincing. (In the novelization, it's Coca-Cola; in the novel it doesn't exist.)

In addition to the echoes of the Vietnam War, there is a comment on the reproductive rights debate: "With you humans, birth is a matter of choice, but with us Drax, birth just happens." [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I used to look at [my dog] Smokey and think,
'If you were a little smarter you could tell me
what you were thinking,' and he'd look at me like
he was saying, 'If you were a little smarter,
I wouldn't have to.'

--Fred Jungclaus

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