

Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 1/22/88 -- Vol. 6, No. 30

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

 D A T E T O P I C

- 01/27 MT: Magic Versus Science (MacCaffrey, Norton, and Stasheff)
- 02/10 LZ: DRAGON WAITING by John Ford (Recent Fantasy)
- 02/13 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: Lou Aronica
(phone 201-933-2724 for details)
- 02/20 New Jersey Science Fiction Association: TBA
(phone 201-432-5965 for details)
- 02/17 MT: TBD
- 03/19 New Jersey Science Fiction Association: TBA

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 mtuxo!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619 mtgzz!leeper
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866 homxb!tps
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-6142 lzfme!lfl
MT Librarian: Will Harmon MT 3C-406 957-5128 mtgzz!wch
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
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1. The topic for discussion in the Middletown cafeteria this week was suggested by Beth Eades: Magic vs. science - when is science magic and vice versa? Her further elucidation on what this topic covers is:

How do you tell if a book fantasy or science fiction? We could also discuss the plot device of explaining magic as psionics (or psionics as magic), and the way authors use advanced science to appear as magicians. (Books that come to mind are the "Warlock" series by Christopher Stasheff, "Waldo" by Robert Heinlein, Anne McCaffery's Dragon books, and Andre Norton's early "Witch World" books. (Actually

Norton may not be a good author to read; I think her books are more of a case of magic in one world being science in another and the translation occurs when you cross the world boundary.) Anyway I'm sure there are other book that you can think of.

THE MT VOID

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Well, apparently not everyone could understand Bob Hoskins' Cockney at the last film festival. Well, let's try a good American voice, clear, and free from accents and half grunts. The voice is that of Clint Eastwood. Clint has come a long way since he killed the title spider in TARANTULA. Some of his work is of uneven quality, but we of the Leeperhouse festival are showing on January 28 (7 PM) his two best films (at least in my opinion), two films which show that when he directs himself he has a real eye for creating fully-developed characters.

Best of Clint Eastwood

BRONCO BILLY (1980) dir. by Clint Eastwood

THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES (1976) dir. by Clint Eastwood

BRONCO BILLY is a comedy-drama about a down-on-its-luck Wild West show in a world that just isn't impressed by Wild West shows anymore. Just when things seem to be at their worst, a willful runaway heiress gets mixed up with the show and things go from really bad to worse. Sondra Locke and Scatman Crothers also star.

If you think you know what a Clint Eastwood Western is, you should see this atypical little gem, THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES. Wales is on the run from his own former commanding officer at the close of the Civil War. But the story is secondary to several well-honed character portraits of the people Wales runs across. Not the least of which is a laconic Indian played by Chief Dan George. The film has a good script and Eastwood's first direction job show surprising talent. (Perhaps due in part to Philip Kaufman who started directing the film until Eastwood took it over.)

2. Well, we've really done it, folks. We have screwed up the ecology of the world with the greenhouse effect. You know, the effect of putting too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and that is keeping the world artificially warm. And they say if the

world warms up by just one or two degrees, it will have disastrous effects on the world's agriculture. Well, now some scientists say that the world already has warmed up by several degrees. The theory is that the world should naturally be headed into an Ice Age and the greenhouse effect is holding it back. Of course, in an Ice Age the temperature gets a l_o_t colder. It would really screw up the world's economy. But that way would be pure and natural. Organic even. And here we are keeping temperatures artificially pleasant. Now don't you feel bad? You missed Halley's Comet and now you're going to miss seeing big sheets of ice coming down from the North and chewing up buildings and landscape. You know, life's tough.

3. We have received a letter from Erik Schreiber, who lives in West Germany and is interested in corresponding with fans in this country. He would like information about American fandom and offers to tell something about German fandom in exchange. If you

THE MT VOID

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are interested in writing to him, he gives his address as:

Club for phanttastic Literatur
Erik Schreiber Hafenstr.
18 D-3500 Kassel
West Germany

Since he gave "West Germany," I presume that is okay, though its official name is "Federal Republic of Germany." Of course, if you said "Federal Republic of Germany," the Post Office would probably get confused. I wonder sometimes if there is a central post office in New York to which all foreign mail is sent, staffed by experts who know world geography cold and know all the names that different countries go by. I somehow can't picture the people who staff a post office in rural Iowa being able to figure out how to route mail to the Ciskei, Nauru, and the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Of course, none of this has anything to do with poor Erik, who's sitting there waiting for your letters. (Though he can get by in English, this might be a great chance to brush up on your German.)
[-ecl]

4. We'd had a complaint that the name "MT VOID" discriminates against other locations. This is true. However, we can't use

"AT&T" in the name. Hence the club is named the "Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society," which still discriminates against AL, DR, ER, FJ, HR, LC, MH, PK, SF, WH, and 78L. If anyone can put all those initials into a name, please let me know. Until then, the "MT VOID" at least reflects where it's being published. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

A PERFECT VACUUM by Stanislaw Lem
Translated from the Polish by Michael Kandel
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971 (1978, 1979), 0-15-671686-0, \$3.95.
ONE HUMAN MINUTE by Stanislaw Lem
Translated from the Polish by Catherine S. leach
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985 (1986), 0-15-668795-X, \$4.95.
Two book reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This is a review of two real books of reviews of 18 imaginary books and one real one. The real book reviewed is A_P_e_r_f_e_c_t_V_a_c_u_u_m, which is the first book reviewed in A_P_e_r_f_e_c_t_V_a_c_u_u_m itself.

Though these are called reviews, they are more summaries of the works than the sort of "thumbs-up/thumbs-down" writing that people think of when they hear the word 'review'. So what we have here is really Lem writing about various philosophical concepts that would normally take a full book in a condensed format. In many ways, these "reviews" are more like "Cliff's Notes" for non-existent books.

Some of the books described are take-offs on recognized literature. G_i_g_a_m_e_s_h (yes, that is how it is spelled) is to the Gilgamesh legend what Joyce's U_l_y_s_s_e_s is to the O_d_y_s_s_e_y and Lem spends his review doing the same sort of dissection on it, word by word, phoneme by phoneme, that critics have been doing to Joyce for years. G_r_u_p_p_e_n_f_u_h_r_e_r_L_o_u_i_s X_V_I is a novel about how an ex-Nazi in Argentina recreates the pre-Revolutionary French Court in the jungle; Lem's description of it makes it sound as though it descended from the literary surrealism of that country. B_e_i_n_g_I_n_c. shows us the world as the result of elaborate computer planning of individual lives, a huge choreography of humanity; it reminded me immediately of Borges' story "The Babylon Lottery."

Many of the philosophical points are intriguing enough that one wishes for more elucidation on them. In D_i_e_K_u_l_t_u_r_a_l_s_F_e_h_l_e_r (C_i_v_i_l_i_z_a_t_i_o_n_a_s_M_i_s_t_a_k_e) Lem postulates that humanity has tried to give meaning to its frailties and weaknesses by claiming they are part of a larger plan of things, the way to a higher state of being. When k_u_l_t_u_r--technological civilization--comes along and shows us a way to overcome these handicaps, to accept them we must admit the meaningless, the futility of all that has gone before. People had for millennia explained that pain in childbirth was necessary as part of some plan; when anesthetic came along, people at first rejected it. An acceptance of it would, after all, negate all their rationalized and mean that the pain women had gone through for so many centuries was unnecessary. So it is now that various means of "correcting" nature have been developed, many people cling to the old ways rather than admit the "unnecessity" of all the suffering that has gone before.

T_h_e_N_e_w_C_o_s_m_o_g_o_n_y presents a startling, yet consistent, answer to the Fermi Paradox ("If life is as common in the universe as calculations would indicate, why haven't we been contacted yet?"). Whether Carl Sagan would buy into it is another story entirely.

D_e_I_m_p_o_s_s_i_b_i_l_i_t_a_t_e_V_i_t_a_e and D_e_I_m_p_o_s_s_i_b_i_l_i_t_a_t_e_P_r_o_g_n_o_s_c_e_n_d_i are

"must reading" for alternate history fans. The former consists almost entirely of tracking all the things that must have happened for the supposed author to have been born: his father must have married his mother, which in turn depended on them meeting during the War, which in turn depended on dozens, nay, hundreds of other events. For those alternate history authors who think that they can change one thing without changing others, this chapter should come as a revelation.

Many of the books described are larks. R_i_e_n_d_u_t_o_u_t,_o_u_l_a_c_o_n_s_e_q_u_e_n_c_e is a book written entirely in negations ("The train did not arrive. He did not come."). U-W_r_i_t_e-I_t gives the reader blank pages and strips containing fragments of some great novel and lets her rearrange them at will (has Gary Gygax patented this yet?).

Lem gets his shot at reviewers (of real books, presumably) in his review of P_e_r_i_c_a_l_y_p_s_i_s when he says, "Joachim Fersen, a German, wrote his P_e_r_i_c_a_l_y_p_s_e in Dutch (he hardly knows the language, which he himself admits in the Introduction) and published it in France, a country notorious for its dreadful proofreading. The writer of these words [i.e., Lem] also does not, strictly speaking, know Dutch, but going by the title of the book, the English Introduction, and a few understandable expressions here and there in the text, he has concluded that he can muster as a reviewer after all." Given that the premise of P_e_r_i_c_a_l_y_p_s_i_s is that so much bad art is produced that the good art is hopelessly swamped, and hence all of it should be destroyed to simplify things, the need for reviewers would be diminished were it taken seriously at all.

In O_n_e_H_u_m_a_n_M_i_n_u_t_e, Lem restricts himself to only three books, and hence can devote more time to each one. O_n_e_H_u_m_a_n_M_i_n_u_t_e is an encyclopedic description of what everyone in the world is doing in a single minute, sort of like those photographic books of a day in America and a day in the Soviet Union, but much much thorough and restricted. Lem describes it as deriving from the G_u_i_n_n_e_s_s_B_o_o_k and books such as T_h_e_F_i_r_s_t_T_h_r_e_e_M_i_n_u_t_e_s. For example, he claims that 53.4 billion liters of human blood are pumped per minute. (I assume those are American billions, rather than British billions. If you assume 5 billion people, that's 10.7 liters per minute per person. Sounds about right. Of course, this is set in the 21st Century, so 5 billion may be off.)

T_h_e_U_p_s_i_d-e-D_o_w_n_E_v_o_l_u_t_i_o_n says that since insects are much less susceptible to radiation than huge computers, future weaponry will consist of swarms of specially engineered synthetic insects. (Has anyone thought of Lem as one of the original cyberpunk authors? He has

certainly dealt with robots and computers for longer than all these new upstarts.) And T_h_e_W_o_r_l_d_a_s_C_a_t_a_c_l_y_s_m is just another way of looking at catastrophe theory.

Both books are interesting exercises in fantasy, or perhaps meta-fantasy. Another of Lem's works, I_m_a_g_i_n_a_r_y_M_a_g_n_i_t_u_d_e, is a collection of introductions to imaginary works, and I hope to get to that soon. Of these two, however, I would recommend A_P_e_r_f_e_c_t_V_a_c_u_u_m first. If you enjoy that, you might try O_n_e_H_u_m_a_n_M_i_n_u_t_e, but the former does offer a more varied menu than the latter. And I think the former has some far more interesting ideas to provide food for thought for the reader.

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD II
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Entertaining but unimaginative retelling of _ R_ e_ t_ u_ r_ n_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g_ D_ e_ a_ d with younger protagonists. An occasional clever joke but in general a degradation of this branch of the series. Rating: 0.

1. And now let us speak of the generations of the Living Dead. Now Richard Matheson was mindful of the popularity of vampires that stretcheth back to Dracula and yes, even unto Varney. And he said, "I shall make me a modern vampire story." And he took unto himself a typewriter and there was born a writing called _ I_ A_ m_ L_ e_ g_ e_ n_ d. And the fans looked upon _ I_ A_ m_ L_ e_ g_ e_ n_ d and they dubbed it pretty good.

2. Now _ I_ A_ m_ L_ e_ g_ e_ n_ d begat three films in degrees that varieth. And their names are _ I_ n_ v_ i_ s_ i_ b_ l_ e_ I_ n_ v_ a_ d_ e_ r_ s, _ T_ h_ e_ L_ a_ s_ t_ M_ a_ n_ o_ n_ E_ a_ r_ t_ h, and _ T_ h_ e_ O_ m_ e_ g_ a_ M_ a_ n. The two younger admitted their parentage, but not the oldest. The two older were meager of budget, but not the youngest. But it was the middle one, _ T_ h_ e_ L_ a_ s_ t_ M_ a_ n_ o_ n_ E_ a_ r_ t_ h, than became the father

of

generations. It starred Vincent Price and was made in the distant land of Italy.

3. And it came to pass that in the land of Pittsburgh there dwelt a lowly maker of television commercials. And his name was George Romero.

And Romero looked upon _ T_ h_ e_ L_ a_ s_ t_ M_ a_ n_ o_ n_ E_ a_ r_ t_ h and sayeth unto himself,

"Now there is how to make a horror movie for few pieces of silver." And

he spake unto John Russo, saying, "Write me a script." And in the

fullness of time there was _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g_ D_ e_ a_ d.

4. But _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g_ D_ e_ a_ d was poor of prospect and none had

heard of it and fewer cared. And it played only at theaters with big screens and no walls.

5. And Roger Ebert looked upon it and his eye was offended. And he

took unto himself a typewriter and spake unto legions of his anger, a

very grievous error. And the _ R_ e_ a_ d_ e_ r_ s'_ _ D_ i_ g_ e_ s_ t was among the legions who

heard his lamentations and repeated his words unto hosts. And the hosts

repeated the words unto multitudes.

6. And _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g_ D_ e_ a_ d prospered. And John Russo took

unto himself a typewriter and wrote the novel of the film.

&. And in the fullness of time George Romero saw that there were

multitudes who were mindful of _ N_ i_ g_ h_ t_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ L_ i_ v_ i_ n_ g

_ D_ e_ a_ d and he made _ D_ a_ w_ n

_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e_ D_ e_ a_ d. And in the land of Italy _ D_ a_ w_ n_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e

_ D_ e_ a_ d was known by the

name of _ Z_ o_ m_ b_ i_ e and multitudes had audience with it.

8. And Lucio Fulci said, "Here is how to make a film for not many

pieces of silver but which will call forth legions." And he made _ Z_ o_ m_ b_ i_ e

_ I_ I. And in the land of America there had been no _ Z_ o_ m_ b_ i_ e_ I, so there

_ Z_ o_ m_ b_ i_ e_ I_ I was called _ Z_ o_ m_ b_ i_ e. And in the lands of Italy and America

there were legions of filmmakers who looked upon the prosperity. And

they had envy of audiences of multitudes and of the smallness of the investment. And many made films like unto what they had seen.

9. And John Russo looked upon the storm and lo he was wonderly wroth. Had he not written the writing of N _ i _ g _ h _ t _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d? And the courts said, yes, he did. And lo, did this not mean he could also make sequels? But Romero said no, he knew whereof he wanted the series to go. But the courts spake unto Romero, saying "Give unto Russo equal right." And he did.

10. And John Russo took unto himself a typewriter and wrote a book called R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d. And in the fullness of time he made him a film called R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d, though it were not in the likeness of the book.

11. And George Romero made a third "Living Dead" film, D _ a _ y _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ D _ e _ a _ d. And it was released in a short span of days from R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d. And audiences looked upon R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d and many were well pleased. But when audiences looked upon George Romero's D _ a _ y _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ D _ e _ a _ d, many said that his day was done.

12. And John Russo was well used to writing novels from "Living Dead" films. And, yea, it came to pass that he wrote a novel of the film R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d and called it R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d. And some fans and librarians were wonderly wroth and spake in anger, saying, "One author cannot write two entirely different novels and give them but one title. For lo, many libraries are geared to the principle that if two novels have but one author they will have different titles. And if two novels have but one title they will have different authors." But John Russo turned his face from these people. And, in truth, few libraries had either book.

13. And it came to pass that R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d was popular unto its generation and it begat R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d _ I _ I.

14. Let us speak now of R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d _ I _ I and so that the ear of the mind not become weary, let us lapse into modern English.

R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d _ I _ I is a bit like R _ e _ t _ u _ r _ n _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ L _ i _ v _ i _ n _ g _ D _ e _ a _ d-- J _ u _ n _ i _ o _ r _ E _ d _ i _ t _ i _ o _ n. The story has been scaled sown so that two teens and one pre-teen can be the heroes.

Jesse Wilson (played by Michael Kenworthy) is bullied by the older

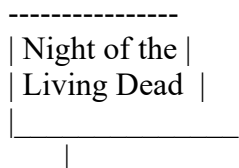
kids in the neighborhood. Chased by two big kids, he runs across a lost, hermetically sealed canister containing a living dead corpse. It is assumed you know from the previous film that the military has packed

corpses from a nerve gas accident in these canisters and opening them will lead to a new plague of zombies. Now, Jesse knows there are some things boy was not meant to tamper with. He is willing to leave the corpses alone, but his two tormentors (of course) have all the sense that adults have in this film (namely none). Soon the cat's out of the bag, the corpse's out of the canister, and a bunch more from a nearby graveyard are climbing for higher ground. The remaining story provides jolts but no surprises.

The horror content of R_e_t_u_r_n_o_f_t_h_e_L_i_v_i_n_g_D_e_a_d_I is overly familiar; the graveyard humor occasionally hits paydirt but not often enough. To further confuse matters, James Karen and Thom Mathews, who died in the previous film but didn't realize it until hours later, reprise almost identical roles with different character names and die again in just the same way.

The best way to make a sequel to a popular horror film is either to tell a different story or to tell the same story but tell it more creatively (as E_v_i_l_D_e_a_d_I and, to a lesser extent, N_i_g_h_t_m_a_r_e_o_n_E_l_m_S_t_r_e_e_t_I I did). R_e_t_u_r_n_o_f_t_h_e_L_i_v_i_n_g_D_e_a_d_I does neither but does succeed in putting its tongue further in its cheek than its predecessor did. For the few good gags (and it spite of gross-out effects that give another sort of gags), rate it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Genealogy of the Living Dead



Romero | Russo

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Dawn of the Dead	===	(European) Zombie	Return of the Living Dead
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(Fulci)	Return of the Living Dead 2
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Day of the Dead	===	(European) Zombie II	(American) Zombie
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MY 10 FAVORITE FILMS OF 1987
A film article by Mark R. Leeper
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Every January somebody asks me to list my ten best of the previous year. This year I will head them off by publishing first. Note that these are not my idea of the ten best. I don't know what the ten best

are. These are the films I have liked the most (and the questionability of my taste is renown). If the rest of this article sounds familiar, it is just the capsules from the various reviews with some minor updating. Some I have up-rated from a +2 to a +3, based on later consideration. It is notable that six of them, including the top five, are historical films. None are set before this century, but they pretty much cover this century.

1. EMPIRE OF THE SUN -- Live a lifetime of experience in a short two and a half hours of film. A constantly inventive film conveys a sense of wonder about flight and a whole lot more. This is how to make a historical film. Rating: +4.
2. MATEWAN -- A great propaganda film in the best traditions of Sergei Eisenstein. An engrossing account of the birth pangs of the coal miners' union in Matewan, West Virginia, as seen purely from the union's point of view. Rating: +3.
3. HOPE AND GLORY -- John Boorman's reminiscences of childhood during the London Blitz form the basis of this unconventional but believable comedy. This film is filled with memorable characters and a child's sense of wonder at the War. Rating: +3.
4. THE LAST EMPEROR -- Impressive biographical historical epic gives an emotionally uninvolved account of the life of Pu Yi, the last emperor of China. Bertolucci tells us about historical events he should show us and shows us sex scenes he should probably only tell us about. But the sweep of history is certainly present and a great deal of change in China is obvious. Rating: +3.
5. HANOI HILTON -- This is a pretty credible story of POWs held by the North Vietnamese. In spite of what has been read into it, it is not a right-wing polemic defending the war. It is a tribute to the courage and ingenuity of POWs in defying their captors. As such it is one of the best films about the Southeast Asia war. Rating: +2.
6. HOUSE OF GAMES -- Psychiatrist, disenchanted with her efficacy, gets involved in an adventure of sorts. See the film before you read too many reviews; this is a difficult film not to spoil in the reviewing, but it is a really good script by David Mamet who earlier this year did The Untouch a bles. Rating: +2.

7. PRICK UP YOUR EARS -- The true story of the homosexual relationship of successful playwright Joe Orton and his equally talented but much less successful "wife," Kenneth Halliwell. This is a solid dramatic film. Rating: +2.

8. BROADCAST NEWS -- A winning romantic comedy also takes some reasonably good shots at the television network news business.

James L. Brooks (_ T _ e _ r _ m _ s _ o _ f _ E _ n _ d _ e _ a _ r _ m _ e _ n _ t) has made an adult film with solid characters. Rating: +2.

9. RAISING ARIZONA -- A frantic and funny comedy about an ex-con who steals a baby to have instead of the one his wife cannot have.

The BLOOD SIMPLE Coen brothers have made a second great film.

It's a screwball comedy filled with screwball characters. Rating: +2.

10. FULL METAL JACKET -- _ F _ u _ l _ l _ M _ e _ t _ a _ l _ J _ a _ c _ k _ e _ t has echoes of some of

Kubrick's best work. It is episodic, noisy, sad, and funny, and sometimes gives a distorted view but it is also a powerful film, without much competition. It is one of the two or three best films about the Vietnam War. Rating: +2.

