

Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
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1. You see more and more of these razzle-dazzle ads these days-- brought to you by your own public officials. For just \$1 you could have a chance to be wealthy beyond your wildest dreams. You could be so wealthy that the chairman of the board of Mitsubishi will

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look wistfully at your wealth. Out of pocket you would be able to finance a revolution IN CANADA! (Assuming some Texas financier does not beat you to the punch.) All you have to do is lay down one solitary greenback to play a state-run game with a name like Humung-O. Of course, if you actually look at Humung-O you realize that the odds are considerably worse than that you would become rich because your mother's recipe for chili would turn out to be a cure for AIDS.

Nonetheless, you still see the people laying down their money. And of course your public officials love the line that you can instantly become rich beyond the dreams of an oil sheik. They had to run for office and actually get elected before they could become rich beyond the dreams of an oil sheik. Along those lines I see Congress has made laws so that lack of action on the part of its members will mean these august and incorruptible lawmakers will get a whopping pay raise every year. (The law gives them the pay raise unless Congress moves to stop it.) They have set things up so they can, every one of them, claim to have been opposed to the pay raise, but in spite of their best efforts, they have been given a raise roughly the size of Mt. Rushmore. To hear most of them, they must feel so bad about the situation that they spend long nights weeping about it and blowing their noses into excess fifty-dollar bills. Still, somehow you never hear them volunteer to give the money back. So they cut funding for education and more of the uneducated masses think that the lottery is a pretty good idea.

2. Nick Sauer, frustrated in his efforts to trade away the following paperbacks at the recent LZ book swap, decided to donate them to the library rather than carry them back home with him, thereby lightening his load and increasing the overcrowding of my office:

Bradbury, Ray DINOSAUR TALES
Dozois, Gardner
 & Jack Dann eds. ALIENS
Hawke, Simon THE IVANHOE GAMBIT
Silverberg, Robert et.al. eds. CAR SINISTER
White, James SECTOR GENERAL

[-lfl]

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

PHANTASM II
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: P h a n t a s m I I is a parasite of a film that does nothing to advance the director's planned trilogy and only exploits the popularity of its predecessor. It panders to a teenage audience by making a teenager the only thinking character and by throwing in bits of other recent successful films. The parts of the film that are coherent enough to make sense don't; it's all spectacle and no characters or logic. Rating: -2.

Nine years ago there was a revolution of sorts in horror films brought about by advances in makeup technology. The idea of prosthetic makeup meant that you could show things on screen that could only be shown poorly on screen--if at all--in the past. If you wanted to show a man turn into a werewolf-monster on screen, you did not have to resort to pieced-together double exposures that had been the best way to handle

the effect since the 1940s. Pneumatic air bladders and mechanical effects allowed realistic-looking transformation effects on screen. With a concentration on new effects technology many low-budget horror films were made in a race to show the public new sights and effects. Artistically it was a disaster, as many of the films had little to offer but visual effects, many of which were intended to gross out the audience. For every C_a_t_P_e_o_p_l_e or T_h_e_H_o_w_l_i_n_g, there were a dozen films

that were purely a waste of time with no concepts behind them, no artistry, and a generally weak script. Somewhat above average was Don Coscarelli's P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m. It sold itself on a gross-out special effect (a sort of flying drill best not described), but all the strange things happening at the film's mortuary--some not frightening, but very strange for a horror film--turned out to make sense in terms of a more interesting science fantasy premise. Coscarelli has said that P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m was only the first part of a trilogy that would expand on the initial premise. P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m_I is the second film. By the looks of it, it may be the last.

Thematically, it is hard to believe Coscarelli is planning a trilogy because P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m_I does not advance the story at all. There is virtually nothing, certainly nothing of value, that is in the sequel that was not in the first film. Mike, who was a boy in the first film and is nineteen in this film (now he is played by James Le Gros) returns with his adult sidekick Reggie (played by Reggie Bannister) to play Rambo at whatever mortuary the Tall Man (still played by Angus Scrimm) has currently set up shop in. Since Mike is now nineteen, they have to add a sex interest for him and so they crudely add Liz (played by Paula Irvine) by claiming that for years she has been psychically linked to Mike and now they are finally meeting. Clever plotting!

P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m_I is a very poor piece of storytelling. It assumes the viewer has seen the first a_n_d remembers it. After nine years, it was not easy. Even with a liberal piece of re-used footage, much of the film is incoherent and does not explain what is going on.

Unlike the first film, P_h_a_n_t_a_s_m_I very consciously attempts to appeal to a teenage audience. All the good ideas come from the teenager, who apparently is the only character who thinks. There is a

conscious effort to infuse the plot with heavy handweapons--sawed-off shotguns and flame throwers--popular with a teenage audience. There are also more visceral special effects. The first film pretty much contented itself with showing mustard-colored blood. P _ h _ a _ n _ t _ a _ s _ m _ I _ I's effects of showing creatures coming out of human bodies and machines burrowing in are state-of-the-art in an effects technology that has really taken a wrong and regrettable turn. That these effects should change so much, yet the scenes connected with the premise of the film are so unchanged, leads one to really question Coscarelli's values.

The script for P _ h _ a _ n _ t _ a _ s _ m _ I _ I contains a wide variety of logic flaws. The characters get their high-tech weaponry by building it themselves one night when they break into what is apparently a hardware store. For reasons unexplained no alarms go off. Among the goods they apparently get in the raid are shotguns and hand grenades. I guess you really c _ a _ n get all your hardware needs at your True Value Store! When they are all done, being basically honest, they drop a wad of money in the till. That leads one to wonder about the need to break in at all.

We have all seen in swashbucklers the classic tense swordfight scene in which the bad guy has the good guy down and raises his sword over his head for the last stroke and while the sword is up, the good guy uses the opening to go for the stomach and win. P _ h _ a _ n _ t _ a _ s _ m _ I _ I has the identical scene with chainsaws. Only one problem: the scene makes no sense with chainsaws. A broadsword needs some momentum to cut; a chainsaw does not. There is no reason to pull back a chainsaw so that your last stroke has more momentum.

One of the characters is in a villain's control at one point. The villain is about to pop her into a crematorium oven. For no reason other than to build tension, he starts doing other crematorium chores instead. Then when her turn comes, he puts her on the roller track leading to the oven and walks away. He then is surprised to find out she just rolled herself off the track to avoid the oven.

There is more, and worse, to say about P _ h _ a _ n _ t _ a _ s _ m _ I _ I. But suffice it to say that Coscarelli probably ruined his chances at a trilogy, and certainly a lot of public interest in that trilogy, by turning out such a bad excuse for a film. The biggest horror fan I know fell asleep on P _ h _ a _ n _ t _ a _ s _ m _ I _ I and later said she was glad she had. But if you have a nice comfortable bed at home, there's no reason to go and see this film at all. Thinking about the film I am tempted to lower it to a -3 on the -4 to +4 scale, but I will settle for the -2 I gave it in the theater. The only reason I said so much about a film I would rather forget is that I had a boring car ride from Massachusetts to New Jersey and I had to fill the time somehow.

Film Forum Gimmick-o-rama Schedule

The Film Forum in New York, in addition to their SF film festival, is also running a William Castle Gimmick-o-rama festival. Call 1-212-431-1590 for more details. The Film Forum is located at 57 Watts Street.

Fri-Sun 9/9-9/11 The Tingler (with Percepto)
Thirteen Ghosts (with Illision-o)
Mon-Tue 9/12-9/13 Mr. Sardonicus (with Punishment Poll)
Homocidal (with Fright Break)
Wed 9/14 Chambers of Horrors (with Fear Flasher & Horror Horn)
Wicked, Wicked (in Duo-Vision)
Thu 9/15 The Hypnotic Eye (in Hypnomagic)
A Date with Death (in Psychorama)
Fri-Sun 9/16-9/18 House of Wax (in 3-D)
House on Haunted Hill (in Emergo)
Mon 9/19 Polyester (in Odorama)
Macabre with a Registered Nurse (in attendance)
Tue 9/20 Paradisio (in 3-D)
The 4D Man (with \$500 if you can duplicate the stunt)
Wed-Thu 9/21-9/22 The Maze (in 3-D)
Third Dimension Murder (in 3-D)
The Mask (in Depth Dimension)

"Futuropolis and Timeless Tales of Fantasy," playing in the SF festival August 26 through September 1, is a mini-festival of animation. It includes "Beanyland," "High Rise," "The Plant," "Evolution," "Prehistoric Beast," "Futuropolis," and others.

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