

1. I am writing this on the morning following an event of great national shock. The Republicans have chosen Dan Quayle as the Vice-Presidential candidate. Quayle is a young man, 41, and part of the interpretation is that the party wants to appeal to the Baby Boomer generation. This is a colossal miscalculation in this commentator's opinion. I know. I am from the Baby Boomer

THE MT VOID

Page 2

generation myself. (Okay, let's say late in the Baby Boomer generation, very, very late, okay?) I can tell you most of this generation are people who are getting along but haven't hit it big. Some of us even ride garbage trucks or clerk in stores. It's not going to appeal to us to see that had we played our cards differently we could have been Vice-Presidential candidates by now. That's more for people maybe twenty years or so older, we tell ourselves. Now this thing happens and every Baby Boomer has to face the fact that some slob our age--or in my case somewhat over--is making it big. And there are other similarities. Quayle's family owned newspapers. My family owned newspapers. The difference is my family kept ours stacked under the cellar steps; his family published them, so didn't have to keep them under the steps. In any case, this is all very sobering news and I hope the Republicans are prepared for the kind of backlash they will get from us politically-aware Baby Boomers.

(Political commentary is a sometimes-when-I-feel-like-it feature of the _ M_ t. _ V_ o_ i_ d. The opinions expressed are solely those of the author and he may not be playing with a full deck.)

2. All right, I mucked it up again. The correct volume and number for the issues since July 1 are:

7/1/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 1 (wrongly labeled Vol. 6, No. 2)

7/8/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 2

7/15/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 3

7/22/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 4

7/29/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 5

8/5/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 6 (wrongly labeled as Vol. 7, No. 5)

8/12/88 -- Vol. 7, No. 7

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A TIME TO REMEMBER by Stanley Shapiro
Signet, 1988 (1986c), ISBN 0-451-15484-3, \$3.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Stanley Shapiro is described as having received many "major writing awards, including the Writers Guild of America Award, the Academy Award, the Golden Globe Award and the Laurel Award." The Academy Award was for his script for P i l l o w T a l k and his other screen credits are for similar films. So when a writer of "glossy comedies" (as film historian Leslie Halliwell describes him) decides to write a serious time travel/alternate history novel, how does he do?

Frankly, not well. Shapiro's science is designed to let the story happen, not to make sense. He postulates that people in the lab from which the time traveler is sent back won't detect changes in the past until they leave the lab (because it's shielded), but also that after they leave the lab they will have b o t h sets of memories. This would seem to make the elaborate computer set-up described in the story unnecessary except as an example of that recent cinematic trend, product placement. (One wonders if Apple paid for each mention of one of its products, judging from the way trade names are used to excess. For

example, he says, "We then connected a video camera to a MacVision computer, which in turn is connected to an Apple Macintosh. The camera photographs the newspaper's pages, then the MacVision system digitizes the picture and puts it into MacPaint. Two powerful technologies are hooked up, video and the computer." Is this an ad or what?) In addition, the whole book reads more like a script than a novel, which I suppose shouldn't surprise me.

The motivation isn't strong enough, and the plot predictable. David wants to go back to the Dallas of November 1963 and stop Kennedy's assassination, hence preventing the Vietnam War and saving his brother Christopher who died in it. He botches it, creating an alternate branch in which he does not achieve his goal. His girlfriend Laura and Dr. Koopman (the inventor of the time machine) detect this when they leave the lab and so--you guessed it--Laura returns to Dallas one day earlier to bail David out. This is even more disastrous, and so....

Silverberg did this in U p t h e L i n e with fewer characters (one, to be precise, but he did have the advantage of a portable time machine). Shapiro's alternate universes are not exactly original--he has your standard fascist America, for example. I did find it ironic (intentionally, perhaps, on Shapiro's part) that in the fascist America among other things, "it was unlawful to advocate atheism. In keeping with religious beliefs, homosexuality was prohibited." Is this an alternate history or just Georgia?

A T i m e t o R e m e m b e r is not being marketed as science fiction. To the mainstream market, it may present some new ideas, but to the science fiction audiences it is a very mundane offering indeed. I would observe that as a story idea for a film, it does have some promise and would probably be aimed at a combination of the same crowd that made B a c k t o t h e F u t u r e so popular and those of us who grew up in the 1960s--there are great opportunities for 1960s' nostalgia here.

THE ARCHITECT OF SLEEP by Steven R. Boyett
Ace, 1986, ISBN 0-441-02905-1, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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What if way back when raccoons had developed opposable thumbs and

apes had not? Well, then, maybe you'd get Boyett's parallel universe in which raccoons are the dominant life-form on earth. Boyett does have one human character, James Bentley, who has somehow found a gate to this parallel world while exploring a cave in Florida. Because of this, there are two main threads to this novel: the political intrigue of this other world, and Bentley's adapting to his new environment. The latter is told mostly by Bentley, the former by the first raccoon he meets, who just happens to be the deposed ruler of one of the "countries" occupying what in our universe is the southeast United States. Though this could have resulted in the reader feeling somewhat pulled in two by the plotlines, Boyett manages to handle it well. Bentley has an easier time of it than most people would, since he just happens to have once had a raccoon as a pet in our world. (If there seem to be an unusually high number of "just happen to"s in this novel, well, they don't seem quite so obvious at the time.)

There are a few other differences between Boyett's world and ours, but to describe them would ruin some of the book. The reader should be warned, though, that this book has ever appearance of being the first of a series (trilogy?). It is true that two years have passed and no second book has been forthcoming, so perhaps those who say the book stands on its own are correct. On the other hand, Frankowski's "Cross-Time Engineer" four-book series started at the same time as T h e

 A r c h i t e c t o f S l e e p and hasn't seen the publication of its second book

either, so who knows? If you're the type who hates any sort of loose ends, you may want to wait and see if future books in the series appear; if you're willing to accept that some issues remain unresolved, T h e

 A r c h i t e c t o f S l e e p is worth a try.

TUCKER: THE MAN AND HIS DREAM
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Francis Ford Coppola and Lucasfilm in top form bring to the screen the story of automotive legend Preston Tucker. The film is a tribute to American creativity and a lament about a system that wastes genius. Jeff Bridges refreshingly plays that increasingly rare hero of the screen, a man of genius.
Rating: +3.

Okay, I admit it. I like stories about engineers and engineering feats. My favorite war film is probably D_a_m_B_u_s_t_e_r_s. I liked T_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_S_t_u_f_f a lot, even if it in some ways trivialized the space program. I like tributes to intelligence and ingenuity, particularly if the ingenuity is in something other than a better way to clout someone on the head or drive a car in a car chase. It is about time filmmakers recognized that some audiences respect and have interest in other talents than those--perhaps some skills that can't be tested in a video game. The problem is that videogame skills are easy to make exciting on a screen. Intelligence, drive, and vision really require a good script. Francis Ford Coppola's T_u_c_k_e_r: The Man and His Dream has a good script. It is the first film I have seen since T_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_S_t_u_f_f that has a hero I would call heroic. Part of the reason is that both films are about true pieces of history, but also that both portray a sort of American engineering optimism of the 1940s and 1950s that seems to be very rare today.

T_u_c_k_e_r is the biography of Preston Tucker (enthusiastically played by Jeff bridges), who had visions of creating a car of superior design but who was brought down by the system in a true story that could have come from an Ayn Rand novel. It shows the design and the building of the Tucker--a futuristic car that the entrepreneur wanted to build in the years following World War II. This film is the anecdotal story of how Tucker assembled a design team, financed the project, acquired a factory, and sold the idea of the car to the public, and finally of the events that led to Tucker's name n_o_t becoming a household word.

A film about creativity should be creative and T_u_c_k_e_r is, in a lot of different ways. The film starts out as a public relations film for the Tucker Motor Company and with no discernible boundaries, segues into the real story of the film. Particularly creative are the ways in which the film visualizes telephone conversations. And even with the creative photography, T_u_c_k_e_r creates a period feel.

And speaking of imaginative things never done before, Coppola manages to turn Martin Landau's character (Abe) into someone likable and sympathetic. With the exception of an abortive effect during the second

Tucker

August 14, 1988

Page 2

season of S p a c e: 1 9 9 9, no one has ever tried, much less succeeded, at making this wooden actor seem likable. Landau even looks the part, or at least the type, something done by no one else major in this film, as Coppola seems intentionally to tell the audience. No matter--his characters embody a spirit that transcends physical resemblance. Also occasionally they say things that are intended more for 1988 ears, but always to make a point well-taken.

T u c k e r: T h e M a n a n d H i s D r e a m is the best new film of 1988. Rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

