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1. A while back I complained about the new WAR OF THE WORLDS television show that is coming up. What I thought was absurd was that in it is the premise that we really were invaded in 1953, just

THE MT VOID

Page 2

like George Pal showed us, but we all have just sort of put the knowledge out of our heads and forgotten that we were beaten so badly and have survived by a (very literal) d_e_u_s_e_x_m_a_c_h_i_n_a. How can we forget something like that? Well, I am here ready to apologize in print to the producers. Putting all thoughts of the Martian Invasion out of our heads is e_x_a_c_t_l_y what we would do, as something I just saw recently reminds me.

What I saw has little to do with the television series. It was a poster. The title of the poster was "Great Moments in the History of Space Exploration." What were the moments? They were things like the first footstep on the moon, the launching of the first space shuttle, I think there was a picture of Sally Ride--that sort of thing. Well, these moments all seemed to have something in common. Can you see what it is? Right! They are all from the A_m_e_r_i_c_a_n space program. They are all events from the program that has recently been out of space for 32 months. There was not one picture of what has led up to a program that right now has a permanent space station. There definitely is in this country a will to ignore the fact that we are being beaten, not 35 years ago, but right now. As long as it is out of sight, it remains out of mind.

We are too busy taking justifiable pride as mammals that the hare was the first mammal to cross the finish line.

2. On October 15, the New Jersey Science Fiction Society (NJSFS) will hold its annual mini-convention, CONCOCTION, at the Masonic Temple in Belleville from noon to 10 PM. Mark Rogers, creator of "Samurai Cat," is the Guest of Honor. The \$4 admission charge covers the art show, dealers' room, panels, discussions, and more. For more details, call Nancy Decker (201-438-3990).

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DEAD RINGERS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: David Cronenberg's latest is an adaptation of the novel T_w_i_n_s by Wood and Geasland with Jeremy Irons playing twin brothers. The acting and the technical work are good but the storyline is slow, muddled, confusing, and self-contradictory. Rating: 0.

Every two or three films David Cronenberg takes another few steps up the ladder of recognition. His S_t_e_r_e_o and C_r_i_m_e_s_o_f_t_h_e_F_u_t_u_r_e are experiments that went wrong. I did not find them worth watching. Then came S_h_i_v_e_r_s (a.k.a. T_h_e_P_a_r_a_s_i_t_e_M_u_r_d_e_r_s, a.k.a. T_h_e_y_C_a_m_e_f_r_o_m_W_i_t_h_i_n), R_a_b_i_d, and T_h_e_B_r_o_o_d. These are diverting for horror film buffs, but not actually good films. S_c_a_n_n_e_r_s and V_i_d_e_o_d_r_o_m_e were actually good and earned him a respectable following in his own genre. With T_h_e_D_e_a_d_Z_o_n_e, T_h_e_F_l_y, and D_e_a_d_R_i_n_g_e_r_s, he is building respect from general audiences. In fact, until very near the end D_e_a_d_R_i_n_g_e_r_s is not really a horror film at all. It is something else; perhaps "surreal" comes the closest to describing it. In other ways it is

unlike other Cronenberg. Of all Cronenberg's major films only T_h_e_D_e_a_d_Z_o_n_e has less blood and less observable deformity. Note that the deformity does not fit into the plot, but seems sort of plastered on and, unlike in most Cronenberg films, is limited solely to dialogue and some absurd renderings of medical instruments. One wonders if the mutation plot was even in the source of the story (T_w_i_n_s by Bari Wood and Jack Geasland).

The story is about identical twin gynecologists (Beverly Mantle (played by Jeremy Irons) and his brother Elliot (played by Jeremy Irons)). These twins are so identical that even people who know them well cannot tell them apart (partially due to the fact they they even have facial marks in the same places). (Of the two actors, Irons is probably the more charismatic and often shamelessly steals scenes from Irons. From childhood Beverly and Elliot have shared interests, classes, experiences, even lovers. They imitate each other so well that they can hand lovers back and forth without the lovers suspecting. Then a new lover comes along, Film star Clare Niveau (played by Genevieve Bujold) who discovers she has been handed off. She chooses one of the twins over the other and that asymmetry opens a Pandora's box in the brothers' relationship.

D_e_a_d_R_i_n_g_e_r_s is a spotty affair that sometimes makes sense and sometimes does not. Irons does as good a job of split-screen acting as has ever been done. And makes no mistake, that is difficult acting. Nobody nominated for an acting Oscar this year will have worked harder than Irons, yet the chances are virtually non-existent that Irons will get industry recognition for his part in D_e_a_d_R_i_n_g_e_r_s. But the plot of the film is plodding and ponderous. Some things that happen are never very well explained. In some scenes it is unclear which brother we are seeing. The final scene of the film is flatly impossible given what has led up to it. Because of the flaws, this gets a low 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

EIGHT MEN OUT

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Intriguing account of the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal, well-directed by John Sayles. Like M_a_t_e_w_a_n, it is a good piece of historical story-telling with an intentional political edge. Rating: +2.

I guess it is official now, at least in my own mind: John Sayles is now one of the major film directors of the day. He slowly built a reputation with R_e_t_u_r_n_o_f_t_h_e_S_e_c_a_u_c_u_s_S_e_v_e_n (which pre-dated T_h_e_B_i_g_C_h_i_l_l but was a sort of B_i_g_C_h_i_l_l with real people), L_i_a_n_n_a, and T_h_e_B_r_o_t_h_e_r_f_r_o_m_A_n_o_t_h_e_r_P_l_a_n_e_t. But he really scored with M_a_t_e_w_a_n, the Eisenstein-esque account of the coming of the union to a West Virginia coal mining town. He took what was reportedly a modest budget and made an epic historical film. E_i_g_h_t_M_e_n_O_u_t is a cut or two below M_a_t_e_w_a_n, but a pretty decent film in its own right.

E_i_g_h_t_M_e_n_O_u_t is the story of the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919. In that year seven players on the Chicago White Sox found themselves between the carrot of mobsters offering them bribes and the stick of owners who made large profits but did not pay a living wage and who cheated on their promises of bonuses. (The eighth man of the title maintained that he had never accepted any bribes.) Watching the results of this triangle from a distance are, on one hand, sportswriters and on the other, the kids who are the real fans of the game. Then some hoods with ties to the notorious Arnold Rothstein want to fix the World Series but are rebuffed by the players until one of the players is denied a bonus he was to have gotten if he won thirty games. It seems he won twenty-nine and would have won more if the owner of the club had not pulled him out of some games. After that, one-by-one the players surrender to the lure of a little easy money. The willingness of the Sox to be bribed starts a sub-plot of betrayal in Rothstein's organization, a sub-plot (incidentally) that Sayles never ties up.

In some ways E_i_g_h_t_M_e_n_O_u_t makes a good companion piece to T_h_e_N_a_t_u_r_a_l. Both are poetically filmed stories of early baseball, criminal influence, and the ever-present sportscasters' commentary to a public hungry for sports news. But, perhaps because it is a true story, E_i_g_h_t_M_e_n_O_u_t lack T_h_e_N_a_t_u_r_a_l's clean and uncomplicated storyline. Actually, the film is more likely to invite comparison to M_a_t_e_w_a_n with its photography, its historical storyline, and several overlapping actors (including Sayles himself). E_i_g_h_t_M_e_n_O_u_t is the best sports film since T_h_e_N_a_t_u_r_a_l. Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

GORILLAS IN THE MIST
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: A substantial and provocative film, G_o_r_i_l_l_a_s_i_n_t_h_e_M_i_s_t tells us the story of Dian Fossey, who made herself one of the leading experts on mountain gorillas and who fought for their preservation. Rating: +2.

G_o_r_i_l_l_a_s_i_n_t_h_e_M_i_s_t is the biography of Dian Fossey, a physical therapist who dropped her entire life and went to live in Central Africa to study gorillas. It is the story of a passage from being a naive and selfish young dilettante to being a lion of a woman, fighting for the survival of the mountain gorillas of Rwanda.

As the film opens, there is little admirable about Dian Fossey (played by Sigourney Weaver). She rudely arrives in the middle of a lecture by the famous Dr. Louis Leakey (played by Ian Cuthbertson). She even borrows a pencil for notes and apparently does not return it. She doggedly follows Leakey, however, to persuade him to hire her to use her therapy skills to take a gorilla census. After a series of misadventures, she discovers the skills to approach gorillas and even to make unprecedented physical contact with them. This minor victory and a new-found instinct to protect the gorilla family she comes to know transforms her from a shallow amateur to a woman with a cause. Almost immediately she recognizes the dangers that others of her species pose to her new-found family, and she finds clever and crafty ways to outsmart the poachers who prey on the gorillas.

For a while Fossey considers a relationship with a N_a_t_i_o_n_a_l_G_e_o_g_r_a_p_h_i_c photographer who has come to do a story on her work. And there is where the film makes its biggest mistake. At this point the film decides to concentrate on the mating habits of humans. Director Michael Apted wastes the unique locale and the characters to tell a rather dull love story that goes on entirely too long. Luckily it does not become the major thrust of G_o_r_i_l_l_a_s_i_n_t_h_e_M_i_s_t.

After this rather annoying diversion the film returns to the main storyline. G_o_r_i_l_l_a_s_i_n_t_h_e_M_i_s_t is at its best when it shows how Fossey learned about the gorillas or how she fought poachers to help preserve the species, not when it concentrates on the love life.

G_o_r_i_l_l_a_s_i_n_t_h_e_M_i_s_t is something of a departure for director Michael Apted, whose best known film is the remarkable 2_8_U_p, the documentary that interviews the same group of people at ages 7, 14, 21, and 28. Yet both films show an interest in how apes and men inherit what they are and what they will become. Interestingly the film's associate producer and the source of its special effects is Rick Baker,

a superb creator of makeup specializing in realistic portrayals of apes. Almost undoubtedly he also acted in the film though his name is not listed among the "mimes" in the credits. (He proves once more that the shoddy ape work he did in the title role of the 1976 King Kong was forced on him and below his standards.)

At its worst Gorillas in the Mist is no worse than mediocre and it does achieve moments of magnificence. Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

