

up to a very slow time of development. Man, in his conquest of space, has sent a warship to guard colony ships to a wonderful planet. Upon arrival, everything looks perfect and the colonists begin setting up on the planet. Then terror strikes at the heart of the colonists. It appears that over 90% go crazy and kill

THE MT VOID

Page 2

others or themselves. This is the story of those shocked survivors. The Admiral of the warship has lost a number of his own people, so the remaining colonists can not be removed from the planet, and they certainly can not stay. Admiral Nakamura, a high Zen master, creates a path for the colonists, their only way of staying alive. After living only a few days, he dies leaving the colonists to follow his way. The main part of the story takes place 200 years later when one follows a different way and becomes the Way-Farer with his vision or "satori."

There are a number of references to the Zen philosophy and the colonists are forced into adopting the life of Zen monks. Lifestyles of ronin and monks, beliefs and actions force one to think before following blindly with others. The Mushin, invisible creatures that feed on emotion are the cause of the colonists' concerns. Yet, they quickly recognize that after eating the emotions, they lose their source of food. The struggle between the colonists and the Mushin represent the basis for the conflict as one person, Jerome, finds his way. The lessons of life, fulfillment, and enlightenment are brought to light in this book. Representatives of humankind show up as distinct people when you discover their sacrifices in the primitive world. The presence of the Zen koans really brings insight into the life that they lead. I found this book to be very enjoyable when I read it for the first time. Like a great resource, I have read this book many times and each time I am able to sink deeper into the philosophy and the struggle which is our life. This is only the first story of the colonists who live on Kensho.

KENSHO is the second book about the life struggle of the people on the planet Kensho. Two centuries have passed since the Way-Farer redirected the course of the people on that world. Now, they face another crisis, civil war when the Sword of Nakamura, the symbol of the Way-Farer, is missing. The Plains Lords are against the

Brotherhood and Sisterhood council. The only ones concerned with Kensho are the Seekers of the Way of the Sword. They mount a search for the sword, knowing that in looking for the sword, they will not find the sword. Resolution of the conflict is unique to say the least.

This is another fine book about the interactions between people, ideals, visions, and the Mushin. In this book, we find out more abilities of the Mushin and their interactions with Kenshokind. The life struggle, illusions of reality, and the simplicity of living are lessons learning in the reading of this book. We discover that there is a cult group of artisans and scientists who pass on knowledge gained from the Admiral's warship, before such knowledge was repressed by the Council. Although the life is simple, we see the complex planning and actions by people who act only for their own good - clouded visions. We see the clear action taken by those who act for Kensho even though the cost is high. I

THE MT VOID

Page 3

really liked this book as it extended the world created in the first book. The ideas of Zen philosophy and the interactions with symbiotic life are explored in a realistic and powerful setting. I can see the way that one must travel. Every re-reading brings forth hidden meanings from the text and increases my enlightenment.

SATORI, the third book, and I hope not his final book, brings forth the conflict of the people of Kensho with the newly restored man of Earth. The men from Earth are not the people that we can relate to, indeed they have become very religious in the ways of Power. Earth has suffered through a purge of scientists and of the followers of Zen. What is left has gone out into space to reclaim the lost colonies. Kensho, having adjusted to the Mushin, must face the challenge and must find a way to avoid destruction from this new man. A spy is sent to assassinate the current Way-Farer while a Kenshoite is kidnaped for examination and information. The new way of life on Kensho has shocked the men from Earth. The conflict is shown generally between the old and the new philosophies as well as on an individual level where it can mean life or death for the kidnaped Kenshoite.

In this book, Schmidt shows us a world which we could have, if we

applied our technology with the right philosophy. Our current world of pollution, gas running automobiles, chemical factories, makeup and pharmaceutical requirements leave much to be desired when compared to the coexistence of the Kenshoites with their world. This could be the shape of our future - a new vision for man. Many comparisons can be made with our world, with the exception of the symbiotic life - the Mushin. It may be that we alone can not shape the world in the way that it should be without them. The dream that others can relate openly with you, without hidden hostilities and other emotions that the Mushin would react to is something to be reached for in this world. The life of a person living along their Way is glimpsed here in these three books. I trust that you can enjoy them as I have. [-frl]

2. And some comments from Karen Morrisey on Mark's various ramblings:

Food preference: A recent issue of "Parents" magazine had an article on food preferences. Foods really do taste differently to different people. For example, Brussels sprouts contain a substance (I don't recall the name) that is tasteless to some people, but very bitter and very unpleasant to others.

Survival: It seems sensible that genetic traits that impair the ability to survive would fade from the genetic pool. However, that does not mean that only "good" traits survive. It also seems sensible that neutral traits, ones with no significant effect on survival, would stay in the gene pool.

Other trivia: Adding to the confusion, it was discovered in 1981 that mitochondrial DNA is inherited only from the mother. Moreover, it was reported in a late 1987 issue of "U.S. News and World Report" that all humans alive today may share a common female ancestor. This conclusion was based on the examination of mitochondrial DNA taken from people from all over the world. The mitochondrial DNA of every person studied was considered to be basically the same. I have no idea what metrics were used for comparison. I wonder what other creatures share this common set of DNA with us?

Conclusion: I had one when I started writing this, but I don't remember it any more. Nevertheless, I thought you might find this interesting. [-kam]

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

FRANK NITTI: THE ENFORCER
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1988 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: In gangster films fidelity to the truth is a rarity. Frank Nitti, who has been misrepresented many times in film, finally gets an almost reasonable treatment in a film. There are still lots of liberties, but fewer than in most films of the genre.
Rating: low +2.

Last summer when Brian DePalma's T_h_e_U_n_t_o_u_c_h_a_b_l_e_s was released, I made the comment that nobody seemed to get the facts right about Frank Nitti, a gangster who was misrepresented by the papers in his own time and who became the regular arch-rival of Elliot Ness in television's U_n_t_o_u_c_h_a_b_l_e_s after the series had their Capone go to prison. DePalma had Nitti dying before Capone ever got to prison. Each had a polished pre-shaped image for Nitti to fit into the story they wanted to tell. Now ABC has made a film to tell just the story of Nitti himself. I watched it with curiosity to find out if someone was finally going to get down to the real gritty Nitti.

Well, something everybody gets wrong about Nitti was the idea that he ran the Capone gang after Big Al got sent up (DePalma got it wrong differently but even less accurately). The contemporary newspapers wanted to write about a single person running the gang and with Al gone they wrote the story as if Nitti ran the gang. In truth the organization of the gang became pretty complicated with different people having power in different areas. Nitti may have even thought that he was running the show, but in truth he did not command much obedience. Well, F_r_a_n_k_N_i_t_t_i:T_h_e_E_n_f_o_r_c_e_r makes pretty much the same mistake; at least if Nitti has competition running the mob, the film understates it for many of the years it was going on. Beyond that as far as I have been able to verify the facts in Carl Sifakis's authoritative E_n_c_y_c_l_o_p_e_d_i_a_o_f_A_m_e_r_i_c_a_n_C_r_i_m_e and M_a_f_i_a_E_n_c_y_c_l_o_p_e_d_i_a, the film has a sort of 50-50 hold on the truth. They get off to a bad start by saying that Nitti was born in 1888, making him four years younger than he actually was. Then the film has him seeking out Capone out of respect. Not so--Nitti had parlayed his job as a barber for small-time hoods into a fencing job before he had ever met Capone. The Capone gang sought Nitti out to sell him stolen booze. His skill at organization, not so much at killing, was the reason he rose in the organization. It did leave him in a good position when Capone went to prison, but not the undisputed head the papers made him out to be. Speaking of the papers, the film did get right that Elliot Ness was a headline hound who had little serious effect on the mob, but who was a hero in the papers. That seems to be the truth.

By padding the film with a love story and showing scenes of incidents like the St. Valentine's Day Massacre without telling what led up to them, the filmmakers have produced a story much of which is neither really accurate nor inaccurate. There is also some speculation stated as fact. The killing of Chicago Mayor Cermack is usually assumed to be an accident when he got in the way of an assassin's bullet intended for FDR. The film's claim that the assassin Zangara was actually trying to kill Cermack under orders from the Capone mob is only a minority opinion. Beyond that, much of the plot and particularly the muscling into the entertainment business and how it led to Nitti's death was all square with the encyclopedia facts.

F_r_a_n_k_N_i_t_t_i: T_h_e_E_n_f_o_r_c_e_r is nicely photographed in subdued colors that both satisfy the network's requirement for color and evoke some of the black-and-white feel of the classic gangster films or the sepia tone of the photography of the period. Anthony LaPaglia (playing Nitti) leads a cast of unfamiliar faces (one exception is Michael Moriarty playing a lawman). LaPaglia's troubled, introspective crime lord who kills for strategic ends but never for personal anger looks amazingly like a cross between Robert DeNiro and Sam Waterston. Overall, F_r_a_n_k

N_i_t_t_i: T_h_e_E_n_f_o_r_c_e_r is nearly as subdued as its colors, but as gangster films go it is not all that far from being accurate. As a fan of this

sort of film, I would say that F_r_a_n_k_N_i_t_t_i: T_h_e_E_n_f_o_r_c_e_r, with a 50-50

record for accuracy is far closer to being true than 99% of gangster films. And Frank Nitti, whom I have always claimed was misrepresented to the public, gets about the fairest shake from this film as any gangster ever gets from the movies. Rate it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. Not bad for a made for TV movie.

