

west were the New World. Behind the world made famous in T_h_e
H_o_b_b_i_t, T_h_e_L_o_r_d_o_f_t_h_e_R_i_n_g_s and T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n there lies a
vast background of history and linguistic exercises that only now
is coming to light.

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In 1980, Houghton Mifflin Company (hardcover) released U_n_f_i_n_i_s_h_e_d
T_a_l_e_s, a collection of narratives ranging from the Elder Days, the
First Age, til the time of the Ring War and beyond, the Fourth Age.
The narratives were written by J. R. R. Tolkien before his death
and edited, annotated and published by his son, Christopher. With
this book, Christopher Tolkien began a continuing project of
editing his father's papers and exposing the reading public to the
vast works and notes behind the three major works. He has
subsequently released T_h_e_B_o_o_k_o_f_L_o_s_t_T_a_l_e_s_I and I_I, the early
works of Tolkien, begun in 1916-17 when only 25, the beginnings of
the myths and legends of Middle Earth and major parts of what was
later T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n. T_h_e_L_a_y_s_o_f_B_e_l_e_r_i_a_n_d, long narrative
prose concerning that land, and T_h_e_S_h_a_p_i_n_g_o_f_M_i_d_d_l_e_E_a_r_t_h,
including the Ambarkanta or Shape of the World and the Lhammas or
Account of Tongues, continued this revelation of a world under
construction. The final set of books begins with T_h_e_R_e_t_u_r_n_o_f_t_h_e
S_h_a_d_o_w, one of the first drafts of the epic L_o_r_d_o_f_t_h_e_R_i_n_g_s,
where we can see Aragorn metamorphose from a shadowy figure named
Strider to a great Ranger of the North.

The quantity of material available concerning Tolkien's works is
the first clue to the depth of the world view and conception. He
was fascinated by languages and took great care in constructing and
deconstructing the names and places of Eldar tongues. One can see
the progression of the elves from more earthy fey and fairy-like
people to the epic figures such as Feanor, Galadriel and
Glorfindel. The names likewise changed as well, for example
Thingol and Melian were named and renamed several different times.
Beren (of Luthien and the Silmaril fame) was both a man and an elf
during different points in Tolkien's writings. In T_h_e_B_o_o_k_o_f_L_o_s_t
T_a_l_e_s_I_I we discover the Dwarves were in early conceptions Gnomes,
short stunted Elves of a different tribe, rather than creations of
the Valar Aule. Of course the early works hold much confusion, as
Christopher Tolkien notes, lands and geographies change and

contradict, names are changed in some works and not others, Tolkien's conception of the relative stature of men and elves changed several times.

As a gamer I am both fascinated and not surprised by the vast amount of material behind the printed word. When designing a campaign or world, one generates a lot of information that the players never see for it is either supplanted, supportive or lost. As Christopher is doing with Tolkien's papers, if I were to show someone all the game notes, they would learn things which would explain much about why plots or events happened. Fascinating though is the information which was supplanted or discarded which provides inspiration. Tolkien's early pantheon included the Lord and Lady of War, Makar and Measse, who never appeared in T_h_e_S_i_l_m_a_r_i_l_l_i_o_n (B_O_L_T_1) and Melkor had a feline underlord, Tevildo, Prince of Cats who became the great wolf who bit off Beren's hand (B_O_L_T_2). A Game Master should always be willing to steal a good

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concept or plotline, alter it to his/her needs and present this to the players for their enjoyment. Tolkien provides gems in abundance for needs such as this.

Tolkien is not the only author whose works have been expanded beyond the original printed text. Roger Zelazny helped write a G_u_i_d_e_t_o_C_a_s_t_l_e_A_m_b_e_r which pokes about in the famous edifice. Stephen Donaldson's D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r_o_f_R_e_g_a_l_s contains a story, "Gilden-Fire," which was edited from T_h_e_C_h_r_o_n_i_c_l_e_s_o_f_T_h_o_m_a_s_C_o_v_e_n_a_n_t due to space. Atlases for Middle Earth, The Land, Pern and the like abound. Lin Carter has written several works looking behind the works of Tolkien, Lovecraft and others. And as well known there are a score of adjunct books to Middle Earth itself: guides, glossaries, quizzes and biographies. If you enjoy and are inspired by an author or genre these books are well worth looking for though be careful to separate the wheat from the chaff for both abound.

[-andrew durstan]

2. On general principles I do not like earthquakes. Well, of course not many people do and last week the number of fans of earthquakes got even smaller. But I think I dislike earthquakes

for a different reason than most other people do. I think that earthquakes have been avoiding me and I wanted to try a small one to see what it is like. I mean, I like roller coasters and other sorts of shake-you-up amusement rides. I like violent electrical storms. Somehow I have never come to believe that really violent storms can be dangerous. I guess I believe it on an intellectual level but not on an emotional level. Maybe I'd feel different if a bolt of lightning had clobbered me and singed my clothes down to my jockey shorts. On the other hand I can still hear myself saying after such a bolt, "Wow! Did you see that one!"

So when I went to California for grad school, I expected at some point to feel an earthquake. Isn't that part of the "California experience"? Fer shur! And, yeah, they had quakes while I was there, but never large enough so I knew one was going on. No, I had to wait until I came to New Joisey. And I wasn't here very long before there was a quake with the epicenter walking distance from my house in a place called--get this--"Cheesequake." What a place for an earthquake! I picture cracks forming in the ground and out comes bubbling molten Velveeta. But I still haven't felt a quake of any real force. Not that I want to feel one like the one in San Francisco last week. That is a bit excessive.

One thing did strike me as rather odd. I was listening to the news coverage of the quake on one of the Ted Turner stations, of which there seem to be about 25. The coverage seemed to go in shifts: five minutes talking about the destruction, then five talking about the World Series, what state the two related ballparks were in, what it felt like to be in Candlestick Park during the quake--that

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sort of thing. Then they cut to an ad, obviously taped earlier in the day, where two sportscasters are saying that at 11 PM they will be discussing the move of the World Series to Candlestick Park and whether it will make a difference. I told Evelyn I thought it might.

But I cannot believe that the first thing everybody asks is, "What is going to happen to the World Series?" I mean, do people really care that much? It is getting so that I expect to hear, "The earth has fallen out of its orbit and is careening into the sun.

Tonight's hockey game postponed due to melted ice. We'll be talking to the Bruins' coach about the possibility of moving the game north. Details at 11."

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzx!leeper

Everything great in the world come from neurotics. They alone have founded our religions and coposed our masterpieces. Never will the world know all it owes to them nor all they have suffered to enrich us.

-- unsympathic character in REMEMBRANCE
OF THINGS PAST by Marcel Proust

The world owes all its onward impulses to men ill at ease. The happy man inevitably confines himself within ancient limits.

-- Nathaniel Hawthorne

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable man adapts the world to himself, therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

-- George Bernard Shaw

BLACK RAIN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Engrossing and moody travelogue of the dark side of Osaka. As an excuse for the atmospheric photography there is a police chase plot you have seen m_a_n_y times before. The plot is punctuated by a lot of mindless violence and action, but the atmosphere is really the film's main virtue. Rating: low +1.

A store near me sells a watch that comes with five watchbands of different colors and five watch faces to match. The ad says it is five different watches in one. The works, of course, remain the same. You just change some superficial outer trappings and the ad would have you believe that you really have a different watch. At times I think that the American film industry thinks that same way.

The story of B_l_a_c_k_R_a_i_n was a good one at one time. A cop is trying to bring a mean and violent criminal to justice. The cop screws up and his prisoner escapes. Now he has got to go out into the hostile environment to bring the creep to justice again. Fortunately, he gets someone to work with him. Unfortunately, he and his new partner can't stand each other. But working together for a common goal, against all odds, they learn to respect each other and finally get the creep. But they have also learned an important lesson in human understanding. Yes, Hollywood has once again remade R_e_d_S_u_n, R_e_d_H_e_a_t, 4_8_H_o_u_r_s, B_e_v_e_r_l_y_H_i_l_l_s_C_o_p, and by now probably a dozen other films that have that same plot, give or take a detail. I will give whoever first wrote that plot some credit, it would have been a good plot if it had been used once. Too bad it has become such a popular standard that good filmmakers like Ridley Scott feel they can get away filming it again and calling it a new story.

Now let's get down to a few of the specific details for B_l_a_c_k_R_a_i_n. In this case, the hostile environment is Osaka. The main cop is really two American cops. One is Nick a dishonest but basically good cop sleazily played by Michael Douglas. Nick's close shaves are many but always figurative--he seems to be able to go for what must be an entire week with the same two-day growth of beard. And if the Japanese think Americans are barbarians, Douglas's character more than justifies the viewpoint. The other cop is played much neater by Andy Garcia. They stumble onto a Yakuza execution in New York City and nab a major Japanese hood. However, escorting him to Osaka turns out harder than they expected. So they find themselves in a strange city in which they do not speak the language, escorted by a dour-faced Japanese detective, Masahiro (played in a nicely understated manner by Ken Takakura of T_h_e_Y_a_k_u_z_a). The story is really about how Nick and Masahiro learn to respect each other and how with motorcycle chases and gunfights Nick

regains his self-respect and becomes honest again.

If such a hackneyed plot is to be turned into a watchable film by anyone, it would probably be a Ridley Scott. Scott has directed some good films, though generally their weakness has been plot problems. His A_l_i_e_n is a very good film but almost entirely because of mood and great visuals, not because it has a stellar plot. Similarly, the visual sense of B_l_a_d_e_R_u_n_n_e_r outdistances the plot by miles. Scott's plots are acceptable (usually better than for B_l_a_c_k_R_a_i_n's) but it is the misty atmospheric feel of the film that makes his work worth seeing. Watching a Scott film is the health equivalent of smoking a pack and a half of cigarettes. Virtually every scene seems to have smoke or smog in it somewhere. He has smoggy scenes of New York, smoggy scenes of Osaka, smoky steel refineries, smoky police departments. But even if he is starting to do the smoky bit a little too much he has a fresh eye, particularly for accenting the alien in an alien culture. His Osaka is a Japan we have rarely seen before, from neon buses to smokey (of course) pachinko palaces.

I will give B_l_a_c_k_R_a_i_n a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale as an atmospheric travelogue. It was worth the \$3 I paid just to see a different view of Japan. I figure the plot comes along free, and that was just a bit more than what it is worth.

THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: Slow and bland story casts real brothers as character brothers in a slow, deliberately paced film about a piano-bar act. Pleasant but not really engaging. Rating: +1.

I don't know what you can say about a quart of vanilla ice cream?

T_h_e_F_a_b_u_l_o_u_s_B_a_k_e_r_B_o_y_s is the story of two brothers, Jack Baker (played

by Jeff Bridges) and his brother Frank (played by his brother Beau).

For 31 years they have played piano together and by now they have become an institution on the cocktail bar circuit. This is a film about the highs and lows of the cocktail piano game., where the highs don't get very high and the lows are only a little bit bluesy, and the men are laid back as all get out. As we meet our intrepid heroes they are just sort of getting along but they could be doing better. Brother Frank decides that the group could use a female vocalist so they audition and end up with sultry Suzie Diamond (played and actually sung by Michelle Pfeiffer). With Suzie's singing they start doing okay. They get some better bookings. On the horizon is a little low-key romance and a little low-key conflict.

Steven Kloves, who wrote and directed, does have have considerable

feel for his characters and his occasional comedy, light like almost everything else in this film, does work well some of the time. A case in point is a scene with Jack and Suzie, sharing a suite of rooms in a posh hotel, checking out each other's toiletries. Also neatly handled is a telethon the brothers sign to play at Frank's insistence, only to find it is a high school production to earn money for a gymnasium.

This is a style of filmmaking we have not seen for a while, perhaps since the Forties. The film builds a sort of laid-back piano bar mood and is never anxious to get anywhere. Pfeiffer gets full marks as a steamy torch singer, but when she is not singing she just squeaks by as acceptable. One may speculate that the sibling rivalry of the title characters may reflect some sibling rivalry of the actors, but it is hard to be sure. If the film is watchable, it is mostly for the attraction of the actors. The story itself is as slow and languorous as one of Ms. Pfeiffer's songs. Rate the film a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Noreascon 3
Masquerade Winners
(Courtesy of Jed Hartman)

NOVICE

- Hon. for Excellence for Wings -- "First Flight" Ann Livermore, Mary
Robinson, John Cryan
Hon. for Excellence -- "Scraps, the Patchwork Girl of Oz" Deirdre M.
Rittenhouse
Most Elegant -- "Azhriaz, Night's Daughter" Penny Lipman
Most Humorous Re-Creation -- "Darth Vader's Nemesis" Rene Whitney-simonson,
Season Irwin, Joe DePaula
Most Beautiful -- "Poseidon & His Bride Madame Tsunami, Creator of the Waves"

Nancy Lee Rogers, William Rogers
Best Re-Creation -- "Taarna" Shane Russell, Leslie Culton
Judges' Choice -- "Tackyana, the Costumer from Hell" Susan Lynn Toker
Best in Class -- "Mock Taa Dragon" Diana & Clark Van Hekken

JOURNEYMAN

Hon. for Excellence in Re-Creation -- "Soror Marium" Barbara Lynn Higging
Hon. for Excellence -- "The Sacrifice" Heidi Hooper, Mike Ventrella, Debbie
Walton, Craig Walton
Most Exquisite Detail -- "The Dragon Lord's Daughter and Her Hand-Maiden"
Cary A. Conder, Maria Bycar
Most Original -- "The Lamentable Tale of Prince Samisen & Lady Ritsuneko"
Fiona K. Leonard, Phil Gilliam, David Cook
Best Performance -- "Beauty and the Beast: the Final Chapter" Selina & Mark
Harju, Scott Rivard, Marita Acker, Kathleen Gibson, Thomas Atkinson
Most Beautiful Presentation -- "2010" Geraldine Sylvester, David Gordon
Best in Class -- "Theatre of the Vampires" Anya Martin, Cynthia Linaweaver,
Shawn Carter, Ginger Bickett, John Baker, Paul Marshall

MASTER

Hon. for Excellence -- "Music Box" Wendy Ross
Hon. for Excellence -- "Tribute" Animal X, Dorsey Flynn, Delian, Cobra,
Suzanne Tees, Carol Salemi
Best Re-Creation -- "Beneath the Opera House" Julie Zetterberg, Gregory
Sardo, and a helper
Best in Class -- "The Court of the Peacock King" Kathy & Drew Sanders,
Caroline Julian, Barb Schofield, Martin Miller, David Graham,
Reg Schofield
Best in Show -- "Dread Warrior" Deborah Jones