



has the sign that says "Marx Brothers Abattoir." (I always wondered what kind of film that would make.) We still have "Child's Funeral Parlor" and it's just down the street from the Bates Lodge, but neither is as effective as Marx Brother Abattoir.

THE MT VOID

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MURDER AT THE DIOGENES CLUB by Gerald Lientz  
THE BLACK RIVER EMERALD by Peter Ryan  
Berkley Books, 1987, 0-425-10606-3/0-425-10607-1, \$2.95 each.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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These are Sherlock Holmes books only by the broadest definition. In each one, the reader is placed in the persona of Dr. Watson's cousin. Then some mystery that Holmes is too busy to solve turns up and you get to solve it instead. The books proceed in the typical fashion for role-playing games: choose a course of action at some points, use a random-number generator at others, and track through the results of these. The one innovation in them is that you don't have to carry a pair of dice around to read/play the books--they provide you with a random number table and also with a random number at the base of each page (just open the book at random to choose a number).

Both give you spaces to keep track of equipment, money, and clues you have gathered. The first, however, doesn't appear to make use of these to any great extent. This means that whatever you decide to do early on has little, if any, effect on what you can do later. The second gets more into the swing of role-playing and so what you can do

and what you know as the game progresses is much more dependent on choices you have made earlier.

The real problem is that neither one has much of Holmes. He's there to introduce the problem, then he disappears until the end when he reappears to tell you whether your solution is correct or not, and if not, what's wrong with it. One might ask why you should bother chasing clues, interviewing people, etc., since Holmes manages to get the right answer without doing anything. I'm pretty much of a completist, but even \_ I didn't buy the third book.

## HOUSE OF GAMES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review: Psychiatrist, disenchanted with her efficacy, gets involved in an adventure of sorts. See the film before you read too many reviews; this is a difficult film not to spoil in the reviewing, but it is a really good script by David Mamet who earlier this year did \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ U\_ n\_ t\_ o\_ u\_ c\_ h\_ a\_ b\_ l\_ e\_ s. Rating: +2.

David Mamet is becoming a name to conjure with. I first noticed him about a decade ago when he had a play on Broadway called \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ W\_ a\_ t\_ e\_ r\_ \_ E\_ n\_ g\_ i\_ n\_ e. That play, set in 1939, wove together chain letters, the World's Fair, and the great American paranoia myth that the auto companies have an engine that runs on water, but they've hushed it up.

Much more recently Mamet wrote \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ U\_ n\_ t\_ o\_ u\_ c\_ h\_ a\_ b\_ l\_ e\_ s, an enjoyable screenplay

unencumbered by concern for historical accuracy. \_ H\_ o\_ u\_ s\_ e\_ o\_ f\_ G\_ a\_ m\_ e\_ s has a Mamet screenplay and Mamet also debuts as director.

Lindsay Crouse plays Margaret Ford, a successful psychiatrist. Dr. Ford has doubts that she really can help any of her patients. Against the cautious rules of psychiatry she gets involved in the personal life of one of her patients and, in doing so, meets Mike (played by Joe Mantegna). That is not saying much about the plot and my personal recommendation is to stay away from any reviewer who is going to tell you any more about the plot than that. If you really want to know more about the plot to know if you will like the film, take my word for it, you will probably like  H o u s e o f G a m e s . It has humor, it has suspense, and it had the audience spellbound.

My biggest complaint with  H o u s e o f G a m e s  is that even when the final credits roll, the audience is still waiting for the other shoe to fall. No matter how many shoes fall in a film like this, you still expect that there will be another one and another one. And what further creates that feeling is that  H o u s e o f G a m e s  is so entertaining, it seems like a much shorter film than it really is. Perhaps a plot twist or two predictable. Lindsay Crouse's acting is a little wooden. But Joe Mantegna is mesmerizing on the screen. His is a piece of nearly perfect casting. Siskel and Ebert both admitted to talking to the screen when they saw this film. I'm glad I didn't see it with them, but I do remember grinning at the screen a few times. I rate  H o u s e o f G a m e s  a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE MASKS OF DEATH

A film review by Evelyn C. Leeper

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It isn't often these days that one gets to see a new Sherlock Holmes film. Well, okay, so it isn't  e n t i r e l y  new, having been made in 1983, but it's definitely an improvement over watching the umpteenth rerun of  H o u n d o f

\_ t\_ h\_ e\_ B\_ a\_ s\_ k\_ e\_ r\_ v\_ i\_ l\_ l\_ e\_ s (any version). Tyburn Films, who made a few horror

films in the 1970s and then seemed to vanish, has gathered together almost all the great classic names from Hammer Films to make this film.

Directed by John Elder, starring Peter Cushing as Holmes, with John Mills as Watson, and a whole slew of familiar supporting actors and

crew, \_ S\_ h\_ e\_ r\_ l\_ o\_ c\_ k\_ H\_ o\_ l\_ m\_ e\_ s\_ a\_ n\_ d\_ t\_ h\_ e

\_ M\_ a\_ s\_ k\_ s\_ o\_ f\_ D\_ e\_ a\_ t\_ h is based on an original

screenplay. Aside from an irritating tendency to shoehorn in famous lines from the Canon that don't belong there, and the unfortunate decision to re-introduce Irene Adler as a character (why do so many Holmes pastiches do this?), this is quite a satisfying movie.

The film is set shortly before World War I. Holmes is semi-retired, but a request from the Home Secretary to assist in a matter of great urgency convinces him to resume his career for a short time. At the same time, Inspector MacDonald from Scotland Yard comes to ask Holmes's advice regarding some unusual deaths. Naturally the two threads cross, giving a story that is considerably more interesting and believable than the contrivances set in World War II for Rathbone and Bruce. Cushing has played Holmes before, and does a good job in this film, showing Holmes as an older man than he is usually portrayed. Mills is good as Watson, and the supporting cast is excellent, with the exception of Anne Baxter, who does not convey the impression of irresistible beauty and charm that with which Doyle imbues "The Woman."

The availability of this film is its only problem. I believe my copy was taped from a premium cable channel, but I'm not sure which one (it was given to me by a friend). I had hoped in this centenary year that more such rare Holmes films would be shown, but that appears to have been a false hope.