

"Sight"

The Glassy Eye



By
Dave
Meile

Because it is a relatively slow week for watching weirdness on the tube, I'm going to do something I've been wanting to do for a long time: hip readers to some good reading. Several items I cover are just plain practical for anyone who enjoys movies. Others concentrate more on my own personal tastes, which are certainly not for everyone. You have been warned.

"The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film," Michael Weldon (Ballentine Books, 1984, \$16.95)

Sure, you're sick of seeing me quote and refer to this book, but it's the Holy Bible as far as I'm concerned. To the uninitiated, Weldon describes "psychotronic" films as ranging from "sincere social commentary to degrading trash. They concern teen-agers, rock 'n' roll, juvenile delinquents, monsters, aliens, killers, spies, detectives, bikers, communists, drugs, natural disasters, atomic bombs, the prehistoric past and the projected future." With 3,000 film descriptions emphasizing horror, rock and science fiction, it is blissfully devoid of snobbery and pseudo-intellectual meanderings. It has more than 800 pages of film synopses (in alphabetical order), great photos, original movie ads ("Two great blood horrors to rip out your guts!") and Weldon's own intelligence and wit.

Some entries are written by Bob Martin, Charles Beesley and Akira Fitton. Weldon is working on a second book. He also writes a column for "High Times" and reviews videocassette releases for Video Review.

"TV Movies," Leonard Malin (Signet Books, \$4.95)

Written by that famous wimpy-looking guy from "Entertainment Tonight," this work is for the layman, not the real couch potato. Films are chronicled here with naggingly brief descriptions including stars, running time, director, year, synopses and video availability. Each film is rated from the waste of celluloid getting a "bomb" to what Martin (and his six researchers) consider classics, which are rated from three to four stars. A convenient coffee-table book that helps you decide whether you might be wasting your time on certain flicks. Drawbacks: the briefness and Malin's consistent prejudice toward most low-budget films (no matter what the genre). Rarely do they rate higher than two stars.

"Rock on Film," David Ehrenstein and Bill Reed (Delilah Books, 1982, \$9.95)
No self-respecting rock 'n' roll

fan or movie buff should be without this little 300-pager, which surprisingly is one of the first good books that chronicle the history of rock music in a concise, easy to read, reference-book fashion. A lengthy introductory chapter accurately links "juvenile delinquency" films like "The Blackboard Jungle" and "The Wild One" to Elvis and the emergence of the '50s rock 'n' roll exploitation films. Then it zips through the importance of the Beatles and "A Hard Day's Night" without being redundant. The chapter finally moves onto every music subcategory your heart desires — rockabilly, R & B, reggae/ska, new wave/punk and even some jazz. Synopses, cast and credits, running times and songs are cataloged for 483 films, obscure and mainstream. One has to wonder if the authors watched all these films because there are frequent errors (Eddie Cochran does not sing "Come on Everybody" in "Go Johnny Go!" 1959). I wish he did. But this is nitpicking about a book that was long in coming and well worth the wait.

"The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network T.V. Shows 1946-Present," Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh (Ballentine Books, \$14.95)

Someday when I'm rich, I'm going to buy my own television station and run nothing but old television shows 24 hours a day. Not junk like "Hogan's Heroes" or those classic two-year old shows like "Different Breaks" and "Gimme a Stroke," but cool stuff like "Batman," "Shindig," "Hullabaloo," "Outer Limits," "Thriller" and "The Green Hornet." At least a hundred shows from the '50s and '60s would be worth seeing today, and all of them are listed here. Each program is listed by network, first air date, last air date, casts and significant highlights. You'll delight in reading about shows you didn't even know you remembered ("Captain Nice," "Mr. Terrific"), and trivia hounds will have plenty to pour over. Did you recall that Dave Letterman was a regular on the puerile 1977 summer-replacement show "The Starland Vocal Band Hour?" Who can forget prime-time works of art like "The San Pedro Beach Bums," "Pistols 'n' Petticoats" or "My Mother the Car"? A nostalgic experience that will leave you somewhat bitter toward local TV stations. The many interesting old programs just sit around gathering dust.

Magazines, periodicals, fanzines, etc.

"Filmfacts; The Magazine

of Unusual Films & Television (bi-monthly, \$2.95)

Fangoria, a rag devoted to head-chopping, gut-wrenching gore films used to run occasional articles and interviews detailing independent '50s and '60s horror and sci-fi productions, but has now gone almost exclusively for the 13-year-old "gorehound" crowd. This leaves the door wide open for this excellent magazine out of Illinois. The first six issues of this young work reveal book and video reviews, feature articles on directors, make-up artists, films of crazes (like the "big bug" sci-fi's of the '50s) and interviews with underrated scream queens like Yvette Vickers ("Attack of the Giant Leeches") and Beverly Garland ("It Conquered the World"). Lots of great photos and original movie poster reproductions. A great magazine. Give it a try.

Films in Review (10 issues a year, \$2.50)

Film Comment (bi-monthly, \$2.95)

Film Comment, while focusing on new, mainstream releases, is still a good source for occasional articles on new independent filmmakers and cult films. The latest issue has an article on Sir Alec Guinness, a hilarious look at religious films by drive-in critic Joe Bob Briggs and a look at recent offerings like "Raising Arizona." Films in Review has been around about 30 years, and though it tends to ignore anything really offbeat, it's still a nifty, digest-size periodical with film reviews, retrospectives on actors and actresses, complete filmographies and some excellent features.

The punk and independent music "fanzines" of the late '70s and today are not really a new idea: Hundreds of such "homemade" publications has been devoted to horror and science-fiction films since the mid-'60s. Some are sloppy, Xeroxed jobs, while others are labors of love done by unsung scholars. It is practically unavoidable that there are too many interesting ones to mention here, but two that are definitely of interest to horror and science-fiction fans are:

Midnight Marquee (published every October by Gary Svehla, \$3.50. Write Gary Svehla, Back-issue office, 4000 Gleham Ave., Baltimore, MD 21206)

Magick Theatre (published irregularly by Raymond Young, \$5.95. Write Raymond Young, P.O. Box 446, Baldwin, N.Y. 11510-0129)

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