

At The Movies

Don't Myth These Movies

Science fiction is the new mythology of our time, and as is the case in so many areas, the changes are coming so rapidly that we have the rare opportunity to actually watch the mythology being formed. Most of the individual efforts will undoubtedly be forgotten and absorbed over time into a collective myth according to their inner usefulness and depending on the direction that history takes, but it is interesting nonetheless to see what these personal visions offer.

With summer's "youth" movies upon us, we have two unabashed fairytales that give a modern twist to the age-old theme of the youth coming of age and wrestling the father's authority for himself. These films, *Return of the Jedi* and *War Games*, also share the dreadful contemporary awareness of the possibility of war as an instrument for global annihilation. But their underlying attitudes are very different.

Without going into details and spoiling the fun for those who haven't seen it, *Return of the Jedi* is—as any six-year-old will tell you—great fun, high excitement, and total escape. This begs the question of whether it's actually an appropriate movie for kids to see, but that's academic as most of them already have. Yet despite the abundance of (an-)droids and space-age apparatus, the archetypes this movie is based on are pretty conventional: on the one hand, the fascist state—the Empire; on the other, a motley band of "individuals" who are as collective as they come: Han Solo, the original macho man; Princess Leia, brave as she is good, coming to the rescue with feminine feeling and intuition; and an assortment of helpful animal instincts in the form of Chewbacca, the droids (interestingly) whose electronic nervous systems can sense things the humans miss, and an aboriginal band of teddy bears. And of course—and more differentiated than the rest of these—Luke Skywalker, who with the help of his interior guides and of the Force, is searching for the source of his own power and learning to trust his intuition. With his mind-powers and his conscious effort to redeem his heritage, Luke gets pretty New-

Age there for a while; but it is right here that the logic of the movie falls apart. For while Luke is waging his interior battles and working on "overcoming his anger," what are all his friends doing? waging war for real and venting their anger and going for all-out annihilation of the other side. Peace through war. We've heard that before from Mr. Reagan. And this is why the message may be seen as a bit confusing for children, not to mention the intense though bloodless violence.

War Games is perhaps less obvious as a fairytale since it also has such contemporary relevance in its theme of the great danger of accidental Global Thermonuclear War. And it is the truth or reality of this theme which makes it so powerful. But it is no less a story of a youth coming to grips with his own power, and through the combination of his innocence and his ingenuity helping to redeem a seemingly hopeless situation.

In this framework, the convenient improbabilities of its plot are no more disconcerting than talking animals are in fairytales. Again there is a father-figure to redeem—not the actual father, which is a written-off relationship, but the character of the scientist Falken, the wise man who has given up until the young people wake him up and rekindle his feelings. Without him the game is lost. And again the machine—the machine that can learn—is one of the important characters, as a kind of secret friend to David, as one of the players of this lethal unwinnable game, and finally as a kind of harbinger for humanity (we may hope) when it learns just in the nick of time how futile its game is. The machine actually comes to represent the spiritual awareness of humanity. And if a machine says so, well . . . you gotta believe it.

So *War Games*—like *E.T.* last year—actually seems an attempt at a new myth, rather than a rehashing of the old contradictions. And whatever happens on the historical plane, this seems a hopeful sign: that in these critical times even our commercial mythmakers are trying, trying to turn it around and help us find a new framework to adjust our reality to.

—Pamela Seaworthy

ACDC: Let There Be Rock: Midnight movie at the Bijou, June 22-26. 686-2458.

Blue Thunder: West 11th Tri-Cinema (342-4142) and Springfield Cinema (726-9073), June 23 on.

The Big Sleep: Cinema 7, June 30-July 6. 687-0733. Stylish detective story starring Bogart and Bacall; playing with *Divas*.

The Black Stallion Returns and The Black Stallion: Oakway Cinema, June 24-July 7. 342-5351.

Divas: Cinema 7, June 30-July 6. 687-0733. For those who missed it the first time around, or who want to go again, this will be the last chance for a while to see this lyrical French thriller, with its haunting operatic aria and New Wave aesthetics; the film will be pulled out of circulation after this showing. Playing with *The Big Sleep*.

Flashdance: Cinema World, June 23 on. 342-6536.

The Flight of the Eagle: Cinema World, June 23-29. 687-0733. True adventure story based on the unsuccessful 1897 Swedish attempt to fly a helium balloon to the North Pole. Stars Max von Sydow.

The Grey Fox: Bijou, June 23-July 7. 686-2458. Beautifully photographed Canadian Western; the story of Bill Miner, a gentleman outlaw who, after serving 33 years for robbing stage coaches, gets out of jail in 1901, face to face with the twentieth century.

The Man with Two Brains: Valley River Twin, June 23 on. 686-8633. With Steve Martin.

Octopussy: Valley River Twin, June 23 on. 686-8633. A new James Bond film.

Porky's II: Springfield Cinema, June 23 on. 626-9073.

Psycho II: Cinema World, June 23 on. 342-6536.

The Return of the Jedi: West 11th Tri-Cinema, June 23-July 7. 342-4142. The third film in the Star Wars series wraps up many mysteries from the earlier movies and adds great excitement of its own, including an unprecedented array of special effects.

Stroker Ace: Springfield Cinema, July 1-7. 736-9073.

Superman III: Cinema World, June 23-July 7. 342-6536. Having exhausted other plot possibilities in *Superman I* and *II*, Superman tries being obnoxious for a change. Richard Pryor is good.

The Survivors: West 11th Tri-Cinema, June 23 on. 342-4142.

Tootsie: Springfield Cinema, June 23 on. 726-9073. The comedy of the season: Dustin Hoffman makes a great actress. Don't miss it!

Trading Places: Cinema World, June 23 on. 342-6536.

Twilight Zone: McDonald, June 23 on. 344-4343.

War Games: National, June 23-July 7. 344-3431. Computer fantasy gets confused with reality when a boy and his computer begin to play Global Thermonuclear War . . . a close call.

The Year of Living Dangerously: Fine Arts, June 23 on. 747-2201. From Australia by the director of *Gallipoli* (Peter Weir), the story of three Westerners in Indonesia during the revolution of 1965.

Yellowbeard: Springfield Cinema, June 23 on. 726-9073.



Philip and Pam Boulding of *Magical Strings* perform original compositions and arrangements of traditional Celtic music on both wire and nylon-strung Celtic harps, hammered dulcimers, field organ and penny-whistle. June 28th at the Community Center for the Performing Arts, 8:30 pm.

CINEMA 7 Atrium Bldg. 687-0733

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