

In the land of Dinosaurs

I heard today that author and screen writer [Michael Crichton](#) died Tuesday.

I did like the movies based on his books (at least the ones I saw), but I really enjoyed the books. Especially the Jurassic Park books. His books kept me on the edge for the entire read. So much better than the movies. I think that is because my imagination is so much more creative than any digital or Hollywood effect.

Another loss in the creative world.

Hollywood Musicals

The big film style from the 40's, 50's and even into the early 60's was the Musical. Just did some background checks on Musicals in Film history.

In the 2000's only one musical won best picture (Chicago 2002)
In the 1990's there were no musicals winning best picture, If you count Disney's Beauty and the Beast only 1 musical was nominated.

In the 1980's none and I didn't see any nominated

In the 1970's none, I counted 3 nominations.

In the 1960's there was West Side Story (1961), My Fair Lady (1964), The Sound of Music (1965), and Oliver! (1968) with many others nominated

In the 1950's there was An American in Paris (1951), Gigi (1958) and again many others nominated

In the 1940's Going my Way (1944) again there were many more nominated.

Now I realize that Academy awards are not a good indication of all the films made, it makes some logical sense to me that if more musicals are being made more will end up in the nomination process. That is just everyday statistics. So, I'm wondering, What happened to the musical? I may have to explore this when I have more time. The other question is, why do local community theaters always have to put on a musical? Never mind on that last question, there isn't a budget for big special effects and action movies, I mean plays.

Post Script...

Fascinating sidebar for me. I started thinking of musicals was when I was discussing Fred Astaire with one of my daughters. I made the comment on how he made all of his dance partners look good, even the inanimate ones.

Four Movies for Halloween...

Turn out the lights, sit in the dark and watch these movies. By today's standards, they are not scary. By the standards of the time, people screamed in the theaters.

Number 1 on my list, I've written about before. Dracula with Bela Lugosi, the first well know Dracula, and one imitated more often than any of the others. Lugosi's vampire became the standard.

Number 2, The Wolfman with Lon Chaney Jr. State of the art special effects of the day when he changed into the Wolfman.

Number 3, Frankenstein with Boris Karloff. Created life goes out of control to destroy its creator and all the things the creator loves.

Number 4, The Mummy with Boris Karloff. Karloff gets to act in this movie and it is worth seeing. His voice and facial expressions are wonderful

Find them, watch them and enjoy.

Happy Halloween

Children of the night...

What music they make...

In keeping with the Halloween season, I thought that line was appropriate. Bela Lugosi's role as [Dracula](#) still is one for the ages. Today, that movie seems quaint and common, but in 1931 it terrified the audience. I've been told and read that the 1922 silent movie [Nosferatu](#) was even more chilling. Someday I must see that film.

Other versions of Dracula were horrific, bad, funny and just plain campy. There was Dracula vs Frankenstein, Dracula vs Batman. There was a Son of Dracula (Young Dracula) and an Old Dracula. Dracula was even [Dead and Loving It](#). He even discoed in [Love at First Bite](#). Today there are many more vampire stories out there, they all started with Dracula.

Why this fascination? Hard to say. Terror lurks in dark places. We as a society gather in light areas. We bring light into the dark. We try to chase away all shadows. Vampires, werewolves and their ilk are creatures of the shadows and dark. They strike a nerve with us. They chill our bones. They the moral of a story. Live a good life and evil will not happen to you. Stay with the group, do not go off alone after dark. There is evil out there and it has a name.

Today, we try to scare ourselves and we call it fun. We have horror movies, haunted mazes and houses, horror books. Things designed to get a bit of thrill in our lives. Things designed to get our blood flowing.

I do love the Halloween season. I wish that our haunted theater had been a reality, now I have no plans for Halloween. I'm too old to go "Trick or Treating" and I know of costume parties yet. Last year, even without the party, I put on my Dracula cape and went around the local area. Maybe this year, I'll shop at Wal*Mart.

And what brought all this up...

The Children of the Night, what music they make... Owls in the trees, a dog or coyote howling in the distance on a chill dark night. Yes, the children of the night make music, and to my ears there is nothing better...

And yes, this is a [play](#) our theater should do... if we don't do a haunted house in October, we should at least do one themed play...

Burn After Reading

I'm not a huge Coen brothers fan, but I do find their movies interesting. Like many of the Coen's movies, [Burn After Reading](#) is about normal people who come across an illegal way to make lots of money, become obsessed with it, and consequently watch their lives unravel. [Frances McDormand](#), a Coen brothers movie regular (and I found out why – she's married to one of them), was great in this movie. She plays a woman named Linda Litzke, a gym employee who is obsessed with reinventing herself via plastic surgery. She, along with a

gym co-worker played by [Brad Pitt](#), come across a CIA agent's (played by [John Malkovich](#)) disk at their gym and bumble through a scheme to use it as blackmail. They are truly a couple of idiots, and Brad Pitt's performance as the big doofus Chad is hilarious – might have been my favorite part of the movie, and this is not coming from a Brad Pitt fan or anything like that. Not that this movie is a comedy, don't get me wrong. I suppose it could be classified as a dark comedy, but I would say it's more of a suspense film with some comedic moments. As with any Coen brothers movie, there are numerous twists and turns, so I'm going to cut my synopsis short for fear of revealing any spoilers. Go see it, watch how the events unfold, and you'll be entertained. Besides Brad Pitt's character, my favorite part of the movie was how they told the story – as a case file being discussed by a couple of FBI agents. If you're a Coen brothers fan already, then I'm sure you'll love it – it is everything Coen: money, foiled scheme, setting – the Coens are famous for making the setting of their movies very integral in the plots, and this one is no exception. Washington, DC and the surrounding area of Virginia is the locale of choice for this one, and it's all very important to the relation of the events and how they unfold. This movie features a few Coen movie regulars like Frances McDormand, [George Clooney](#), and Richard Jenkins (who also gives a great performance as the forlorn gym manager, by the way – they really make you feel sorry for his character). Better than [No Country for Old Men](#), [The Ladykillers](#), and [O Brother, Where Art Thou?](#), *Burn After Reading* is second only to [Fargo](#) when comparing it to other Coen brothers movies in my opinion. An entertaining 96 minutes at the movies – this one goes by fast. And make sure you pay attention; if you miss something, I could see where it would be difficult to catch up – a lot happens in those 96 minutes!

I see I forgot about the Mummy

Not exactly, I just never sat down to write a review on this movie, but my "Clone Wars" review made me think of it again.

First question asked and answered. Is it a Mummy Sequel? They say so, but I really didn't think so. This guy was not a mummy, he was cursed and turned into a statue. Low and Behold somebody had a way to bring him back to life... Hmm

This movie was fun. The time in the theater just flew by. Statue people, unearth skeletons, and even Yetis. (Now where and why did they every find Yetis???)

Fun action flick, lots of comedy to keep it lighter, great scenery, and the good guys win. But best of all NO BUGS. The only thing that really bother me about the other Mummy movies were the various bugs that crawled into or around people. Just enough to make you itch... This movie no bugs.

Fun matinee movie, or a good rental. Don't bother (and I think it is gone anyway) going to the superplex for this one.

A long time ago in a galaxy far far way

Saw the latest addition to the Star Wars Saga yesterday with my family. Interesting movie, but I'm not sure it did much to

fill in the story for me.

As a stand alone movie, without any Star Wars background, I don't think this movie would even be in the theaters. The animation and story line were direct to DVD quality, or maybe in line with some of the offerings on Cable. Not what I would consider for a theatrical release.

That being said, this was a Star Wars movie. And of course another story in the life of the Skywalker family. Supposedly the time line for this is sometime between Attack of the Clones and Revenge of the Sith (Star Wars II and III). In that I was hoping it would expand the story a bit. I was disappointed in that.

Good points, well the battle scenes (and there were a lot of them) were interesting to watch, and the interaction of various members of the Droid army were very funny. The voices behind Count Dooku (Christopher Lee), Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson) and C3P0 (Anthony Daniels) were well done, especially since they were all in the other movies as the same characters. The other voice work was ok, but the main characters lacked some zing. Maybe this is my "the original 3 shows were better" mentality, but this show needed work.

Is it worth going to see? Cheap theater, cheap seats (two for one day, or bring your own bag day) sure, but if you're not a Star Wars fan, save you're money – wait for the rental.

Sleepwalkers

With the exception of [Thinner](#), I've liked most of the [Stephen King](#) movies I've seen. My favorite is [Storm of the Century](#), a Prime-Time Emmy Award winning made-for-tv mini-series that

aired in 1999. Every winter when a big blizzard is predicted in our corner of Ohio, we plan on being snowed in watching our Storm of the Century dvd. It never happens though; I think it has to do with trying to watch a 240 minute movie that's not for kids when we have 4 of them. But anyway, if we ever get time to watch Storm of the Century in the near future, I'll definitely blog more about it – it's awesome!

One of Stephen King's lesser known films, [Sleepwalkers](#), is a movie I saw as a teenager. I liked it back then, so when I happened to see the dvd on the library's shelf the other day, that's what I quickly picked up since I was in a hurry. My husband and I watched it the other night, and we both had the same opinion. A fun little horror film, nothing great but still entertaining. It is Stephen King-creepy, as only he can do, and much of the movie's creepiness has to do with the mother-son relationship; I won't go into detail except to say that it's extremely disturbing. [Brian Krause](#) and [Alice Krige](#) play the mother and son monsters who need to feed on a human virgin in order to survive. They morph into strange cat-like creatures, which is even more strange because cats are drawn to their house, yet deadly to the monsters at the same time. The special effects are extremely cheesy by today's standards and even laughable, but sometimes I'm a sucker for that kind of thing and really enjoy bad special effects – my favorite example of this is [Jaws 3-D](#).

While we're on the subject of Stephen King, as I mentioned, I like most of his movies that I've seen. I tried to read the book *Carrie* a really long time ago, but I found it hard to follow, either because I was a teen or because of the religious ramblings inserted throughout the book which were done in such a way that it's hard to follow because it's depicting Carrie's mother's craziness. But anyway, Stephen King is very talented, of course. He has a gift of making movies extremely creepy without stooping as low as many of today's horror movies do with the constant blood and gore.

An interesting event took place in his life that almost reads like one of his novels, well, actually it does since he wrote about it. On June 19, 1999, his life was changed forever when he was hit by a car while walking down a Maine road. There are two creepy coincidences about this incident. First, earlier that year, King had finished most of *From a Buick 8*, a novel in which a character dies after getting struck by a car. Second, the driver of the car, Bryan Smith, who was only 43, was found dead in his trailer just over a year later of an accidental overdose. He was found dead on Stephen King's birthday, September 21. The accident was inspiration for the *Dark Tower* series of books, and King is in talks with *Lost* co-creator J.J. Abrams to do an adaption of the series. Since I'm a fan of *Lost* and Stephen King, that might be something I'll have to check out. Until then, I'll probably be planning another snowy viewing of *Storm of the Century* this winter that won't come to fruition.

Speaking of movies...

Are you board of movies? Yes, that spelling mistake was intentional. You see, this post is related to movies that are about board games. There was an article in the local newspaper a few days ago about this topic (link below). I'm sure we all remember the 1985 movie based on the game [Clue](#), the 1993 chess movie [Searching for Bobby Fischer](#), and of course the Robin Williams movie based on the fictional game [Jumanji](#) (along with its Williams-less sequel [Zathura](#)). Now Hasbro and Universal apparently now want to bring us Monopoly, Candy Land and Ouija. Needless to say, due to my faith I will not be seeing the last in any form. Depending how the reviews go, I may or may not see the first two either. Candy Land?? I can only guess this will be a feature for children meaning

that I know of a certain Ohio couple who will be seeing it as they have four young ones, at least three of which will likely be interested when it is released. Anyway, I tire of writing this entry so soon after the last so just click the link below for the news story: [□](#)

[Hasbro rolls the dice on board game movies](#)

The Dark Knight – Review (finally)

Well, it took me two takes of this movie to feel comfortable writing much about it. The way I was thinking, watching it the first time, made me fail to see some of the better qualities of this movie. Hint to self, if you are going to see a midnight show, take a nap first. I didn't fall asleep, but my mind was thinking of different things way too often (see [here](#)).

Now on to the movie itself. The Dark Knight's title says it all, this movie was dark. The character of Batman is dark, the character of the Joker is extremely dark. The City of Gotham and its police force is dark. The only light in the movie is the new District Attorney, Harvey Dent. The unmasked hero Gotham needs.

The show starts with a mid-day bank robbery, by guys in clown masks. One by one the clowns off themselves and others. A Joker run scheme to rob banks that hold mob money. This was a great introduction to the character of the Joker. Harking back to various stages in DC comic book history, this Joker is not just a raving lunatic, he is also a cold and calculating killer. Anything that will forward his plans is OK with him.

This is the darkness that the Joker brings to the movie.

Batman and his past bring up his dark side. His actions may be making the criminal element of Gotham react with the likes of the Joker. Confronting these inner demons is the life of Bruce Wayne/Batman. This Batman has depth. The perfect counterpoint to the Joker. He says he has one rule, where the Joker has no rules. This one rule separates Good from Evil, and Order from Chaos.

In watching this movie it is easy to be taken in as to exactly what the Gotham Police, DA's Office and Batman are fighting. The movie is about the confrontation between Batman and The Joker. Every other plot device, and character development drives home that point. Batman on one hand is trying to protect the people and City he cares about. The Joker is trying to destroy the same. A big game devised by The Joker to test the mettle of Batman. The Joker and Batman are polar opposites again, destined to battle for the control of the city of Gotham.

To get this across the acting need at a very high level. The main actors all portrayed there parts very well. I really think the 'new' Rachel Dawes was a much better fit. She seemed more like a hard nosed attorney to me. I don't think I would have wanted to get in her way. Lt. Gordon (Gary Oldman again) again made this role his. Even the minor roles were good, I really liked the fake cop Rachel Dawes, he seemed like someone the Joker would hire.

Now my biggest concern of this movie is that it is 2 1/2 hours long. That is a very long movie. I saw this movie the first time at our little local theater for the Midnight show. At the prices that you pay for a movie, the \$5 and \$3 matinee prices usually make up for the fact that this is not the latest in movie theater seating or comfort. For this movie it was definitely a factor. The second time I saw this movie was at a newer theater with full stadium seating. The extra room and

comfort of the chairs made the movie fly by. I no longer had the feeling that the movie should be ending soon, based on the number of times I shifted in my seat. I'm sure that seeing the movie once before helped to keep my attention up too, but I know the seating comfort helped a lot.

The sick and twisted plot of the Joker is to cause as much panic and chaos as possible in the City of Gotham. He is working to get control of all of the Mobs in place. He is working to cause panic in the streets. He is working to destroy Batman and the New DA. And for most of the movie it appears that he succeeds. Destruction, violence, murder and mayhem are his stock and trade. He robs a Mob bank and then breaks into their meeting saying he wants to be hired to kill the Batman. He then takes over one of the mobs.

Many people die until the Joker finally reveals most of his plan to Batman just after he is captured. The end of the show Batman is in a different place than he was at the beginning. At the beginning he is an overlooked vigilante, at the end a hunted vigilante, never to be overlooked again. Did the Joker win this battle?

The saddest part of the movie is this line from the Joker:

You just couldn't let me go could you? This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. You truly are incorruptible aren't you? You won't kill me out of some misplaced sense of self-righteousness, and I won't kill you, because you're just too much fun. I think you and I are destined to do this forever.

This looks like a lead in to a certain sequel, but with the death of actor Heath Ledger, if one comes about it, this quote will remain just that a quote. I can't see them putting another actor in the place of this Joker. Played in a way never seen on the screen before, and probably never seen again.