

ARTS

Macho fluffbrains have *The Right Stuff*



Air-headed space jocks about to be elevated to Godhead.

The Right Stuff Westmount, Londonderry

review by Gilbert Bouchard

The Right Stuff is totally offensive in that it is probably the longest, most expensive Marlboro commercial in the world.

The movie supposedly chronicles the adventures of post-war test pilots and the original seven Mercury astronauts - the men who broke the sound barrier and flew the first few perilous rockets to outer space. But in a half-baked attempt to glorify these fried fly-boys, all the movie seems to be able to do is portray them as immature macho fluffbrains with a huge death wish.

If you believe the movie, the only thrill these men got out of life, was being the "fastest, highest, longest, etc. etc." Constant reference is made to the "demon" that inhabits the space behind each old record, the demon propelling men forward.

Endless boring scene after boring scene of record after record being broken in boring pseudo-documentary style, without bothering to give enough insight into the real men behind the rather dull records and aviation milestones. The movie doesn't even try to explain why these men were even testing these planes or rockets in the first place. In fact we're left with a sinking feeling that the Russian's first manned space shot was the sole incentive behind creating the American space program, and not simply a factor that accelerated NASA's efforts. The Right Stuff

proposes that half the Air Force, and all of NASA existed to give a dozen test pilots their jollies.

I still can't believe that all these test pilots were suicide mongers, deluded juveniles chasing demons that lurked behind each speed record, and that their wives were weepy weaklings, cowering behind their mates and dreading the day they're left behind coddling their fatherless waifs. Come on, give us a break!

But then again maybe the movie is right; maybe these men were real jerks, caught up in a vicious circle of macho ambition. Maybe the whole early space program was just an extension of the fertile American Macho-complex - a vast exercise in national virility. That could explain the drop in funding to NASA once space's "frontier" image wore off. Let's face it, the space shuttle is dull, dull, dull, and no place for a cowboytype, whisky swilling, foul mouthed, real man test pilot that the movie constantly pushed.

What is really frightening is that not only does the movie elevate these airheaded space-jocks to near Godhead status, but seems to advocate that the sole goal of humanity is to keep surging ahead, pushing to the limit, heaven forbid we actually look back, or even (gasp) look into ourselves.

Maybe it's time we stopped playing cowboy and indians on a cosmic scale and started worrying more about survival, time we stopped "pushing to the limit", and worried more about the damage we've left behind.

Dead Zone dies on screen

The Dead Zone Review by Gilbert Bouchard

The Dead Zone was consistent, consistently good acting by Cristopher Walken and Martin Sheen, consistently good direction by Canadian David Cronenberg, and a consistently hackneyed script by Jeffrey Boam from a piss-assed story by Stephen King.

Walken plays John Smith, a high school English teacher (who seems to teach only horror stories and Sleeping Beauty) who after a five year coma emerges with the power to foresee the future. And, horrors, Walken sees a vision of Senatorial candidate-president hopeful Martin Sheen (as the grubby, slimy, and all around ick politician Greg Stillson) starting a nuclear war.

The rest of the story is Walken hunting down Sheen. nifty huh?

Filmsy plots, wierd stories, even hackneyed plots I can take, but what really bugs me about this movie is the gaps in logic big enough to drive a MAC truck through.

First of all, the whole world seems to be so unseptical, so gullible. Walken has one very suspicious vision where he sees the child of one of the nurses treating him

trapped in a burning house, and of the basis of this one iffy vision (a scientifically unverified psychic occurence whom only the National Enquirer would touch) takes his powers as fait accompli, splashing him on the fron pages and the 6 o'clock-news, the the local police even come to him for help on a murder case.

In reality, Walken's so called vision could have been faked six ways from Sunday, and no respectable reporter who values his job would even touch it. Let's face it, dozens of people a day claim to have had, or to have been, lucky recipients of some psychic's accurate predictions, some of these cases are even documented and verified by trained parapsychologist. At best, any respectable paper would bury this kind of thing on page 36.

And as for police coming to a rookie, even a local rookie, ha! you gotta be kidding, for example the Edmonton police department refused to bring in America's top psychic on the Tanya Murell case. No police chief with an eye for re-election would solicit a psychic's help.

Plus the whole gimmicky coma bit only distances the audience from the protagonist. I mean, if he'd been born with the powers the audience could have identified, have gotten the old "that could be me feeling," but as the film stands when was the last time you lapsed into a five year coma.

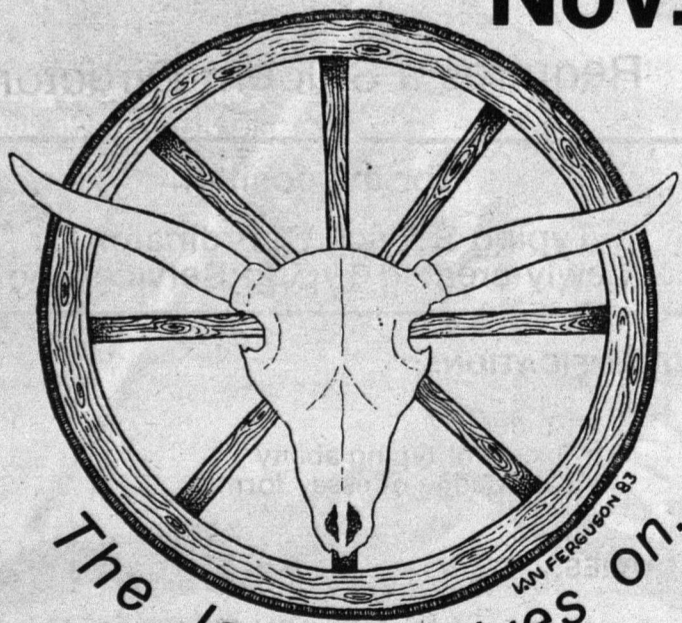
Then the title of the movie comes from the "Dead Zone" of the portion of the vision that the seer can change. King comes off like he invented this concept, but any psychic will tell you that anything a seer ever predicts is probable futures. In other words everything seers predict is in the Dead Zone.

The real conflict of this movie should have been the psychological explorations of two men following their own deluded visions: Sheen with actual visions of America with himself as president; and Walken, with his holier-than-thou I saw the future and I must change it (by killing you) visions. Two men chasing wisps, with no rational reasons for us to take either of them seriously.

What could have been a rather thrilling piece of drama, heavy on the ironic ends up being a mildly chilling piece of melodrama thanks to a really stupid script and story line. Methinks King should maybe churn out a bit less and (gasp) do a little research.

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