

UGLY, PATHETIC, WHITE-GREY MASS!

E.T. was touted as "the most special, heartwarming, beautiful movie ever" by critics, advertisers, and the general public. At the time the movie was released, I had not been interested in seeing it. (Besides, I was a little too young to go see movies alone at the time, and my parents would not take me). The children at school were quite obsessed with the botanist; I recall one girl who would buy anything associated with E.T. and post it on her wall, near her bed, or on her clothes.

This confused me. I had never seen anything too lovable about the creature (this coming from a Muppet maniac with a side Snoopy passion who has most recently taken up an obsession with the new Star Trek). However, one day, while scrimmaging through a used bookstore called The Reading Corner for David Gerrold and Star Trek novels, I stumbled across a copy of E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial in His Adventure On Earth by William Kotzwinkle. I decided to blow the credit I was going to use for The Hobbit and get it.

Kotzwinkle's novel turned out to be one of the very best things I'd ever read. E.T. was an old botanist with a crush on Mary the Mother of Elliot (willow creature). He had

established communication through Speak And Spell, created his communicator by asking Elliott and Brother Micheal to shoplift a sawblade, wire, and blue paint from the hardware store, swiping Willow Creature's VHF tuner and Fuzz Buster, and getting Gertie to borrow some bobby pins, and ate M&M's and waffles with whipped cream. Near the end of the book, he got drunk, healed injured miners through the power of TV, decided to begin dying in Elliott's room, etcetera. There was this other character called "Keys," who studied aliens...was OBSESSED by aliens...and was going to great lengths to find E.T., because that was his dream.

And there was another opposing force, Lance, a nerd, who felt that E.T. was part his (oh, ha!) and wanted to get famous off of him.

Then I rented THE MOVIE. Oh, dear God, I should never have done THAT. E.T. The Movie was nowhere near the quality of the book. Everything seemed jumbled in the movie. Gertie was simply a little gurgling baby in the novel, but in the book, she was an intelligent six-year-old who wore makeup and wanted to be Bo Derek for Hallowe'en (who do you blame it on? Drew Barrymore? I do). Lance was nowhere to be seen, Keys was a minor character, and E.T. lost much of his charm. Realizing that in novels off

THE E.T. EXPERIENCE:

movies, the characters get better development, I can say that either great liberties were taken with the novel or one helluva lot of editing took place! But of course, there was that one unforgettable scene before E.T. was placed under the "care" of all of those machines. He(?) was lying on the bathroom floor with Elliott, an ugly, pitiable wrinkled white-gray mass, neck stretched as far as it would go, eyes squeezed shut, arms held out to Mary, and screaming in that electronic, cartoonish, ever-cute voice in agony, homesickness, and just plain hurt...while Mary was taking Gertie in her arms and running for the door...and these people in space suits walking around her like zombies...all of this happening while E.T. was dying...nothing I'll soon forget, and nothing any book could convey effectively.

I don't know what the message conveyed was. An ad for the Humane Society? "Be Kind To Aliens Week?" Mommy told you never to talk to strangers? What? It just didn't click. The movie confused me. It left me staring at the screen after it finished, thinking "Isn't there more?" and there

wasn't. I half-expected them to tack on a little moral, like they did in the old He-Man and She-Ra cartoons. Was there a point to the movie? If so, can someone please tell me what it happens to be? I'd appreciate it.

I can accept the critics' total agreement that E.T. was an excellent movie. There wasn't much in the movie that was easy to forget. But the novel, oh my god, the novel! Beauty and poetry! I'll always think of that as the movie they should have made.

Maybe I just should have gone to see E.T. in the theatres. Did it lose something in the transition? Should Steven Spielberg have condoned the use of black bands across the top and bottom of the screen, as they did in The Color Purple? No, I don't think so. I never found anything wrong with the medium of video. I kinda like it. Besides, they probably didn't change the version of the movie around any.

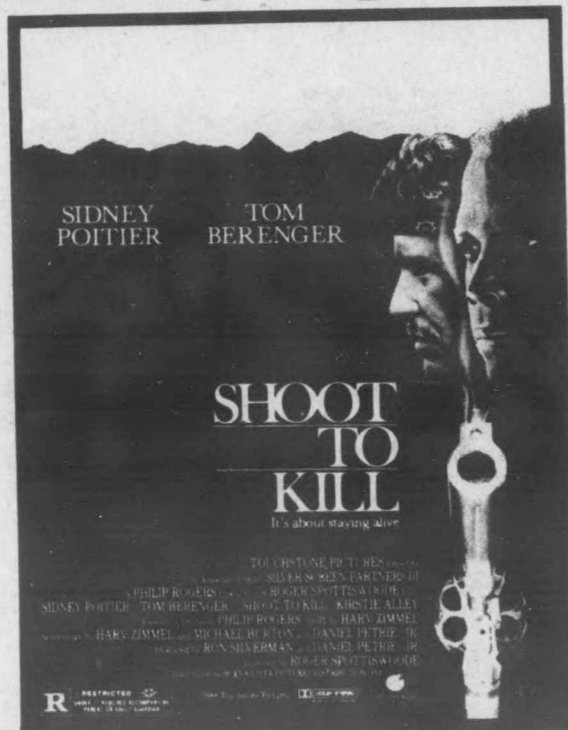
But I know I should NEVER have expected them to make a movie as good as the novel... or anything like the novel.

That's just the way it has to be.

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