



Your New Entertainment Bud



Lines Immortal

"You brought two too many."

Once Upon a Time in the West
(1968)



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From the Editor's Desk

It's spring and a landmark for Filmspheric which saw the posting of its 100th review in February. Also, March was busy so no issue last month but if you are wondering why the St. Patrick's Day greeting is still posted on the left, it's simply because it's not too late to beer up!

And now let me share the big news: my book of movies is out! Yes, *ScreenScope with Ernie (Vol.1)* was published just days ago. See the last page of this issue for book details.

There is no Q&A in this issue—for lack of time again. I hope you'll enjoy the substitute entry on page 3.

In support of indie filmmaking, I'm also going to stretch my

schedule to make time for a few indie film reviews for the site Indie Clips: <https://indie-clips.com/>. It'll be easier to do reviews of indie shorts but won't mind seeing a few indie features a month to review.

For film writers out there, check out the interesting contest on page 2 for likely participation. I'm really tempted to write and submit one for participation.

The news section I feel is pretty sad in that each month we lose some senior stars (sometimes young ones too). In February, it was Robert Duvall. Last month, it was Chuck Norris, the action cinema legend. I honestly don't even want to think of losing any this month. Let's hope we get a break, at least for 30 days, from

losing our childhood heroes to the world of spirits.

Thank you for your time and feel free to reach out via the Contact Form on <https://www.filmspheric.com>.



Ernest Dempsey

April 11, 2026

The Fabulous 5

Over the past month, I didn't get to see many movies but the ones I did see turned out to be gems in their respective genres. So here are the top picks from that list. Note: The full title of the true crime TV movie is *Cries Unheard: The Donna Yaklich Story*.

1. *High Anxiety* (1977)
2. *Breakdown* (1997)
3. *The Robe* (1953)
4. *The White Tower* (1950)
5. *Cries Unheard* (1994)

- Comedy
- Thriller
- Faith/Spiritual
- Adventure
- True Crime



Screenopticals: Directorial Ethics and *Children of Men*

Since the last issue, I posted two more screenopticals on Filmospheric though without any connection between them – but for one little thing, namely my questioning mode.

The first screenoptical critically looks at the issue of directorial ethics in filmmaking. The idea for writing it came from seeing a story about legendary film director Ingmar Bergman, of Sweden, while he worked on the production of *Winter Light* (1963) – a great movie in my

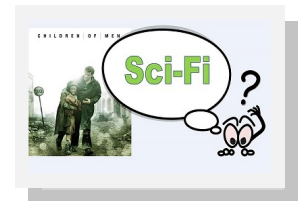
opinion. I compare and contrast it against another filmmaking legend – Alfred Hitchcock, who was accused of misbehavior on the sets of his films.

The second one questions the placement of Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006) in the sci-fi genre by movie database sites. In fact, a listicle in *Collider* even included it in the 10 most grounded sci-fi movies. And my response: say what?

Why it's not really a sci-fi but a

dystopian political thriller is the focus of my article. And the question goes straight to the fundamental criteria for a movie to be called a sci-fi film.

Read these screenopticals on Filmospheric site (carousel).



Fictional Selves will be released Oct. 6 and is available for preorder now, wherever books are sold.

FilmBuzz – Usual, Unusual, and Unheard

- ◆ Legendary actor Robert Duvall dies at 95. (National Today, February 18)
- ◆ Kyle MacLachlan's memoir *Fictional Selves* will be published later this year. (Crown Publishing)
- ◆ Netflix abandons Warner Bros. bid; Paramount set to take over. (The Epoch Times, February 26)
- ◆ *Evil Dead* actor Bruce Campbell reveals he has cancer. (X, March 3)
- ◆ Chuck Norris, action legend, dead at 86. (USA Today, March 20)
- ◆ Mel Gibson set to return to Scotland for *Braveheart* 30th anniversary tour. (Smooth Radio, April 9)



Scripter's Haven – Reno Tahoe Screenplay Contest

It's fun and it's free to enter! This spring screenwriters get a chance to write a 10-page script that could be the beginning or ending of a feature film they are required to watch online. The movie called *Target List* is free to watch on YouTube, Tubi, and Fawsome.

Deadline: May 31, 2026

The winner will be hired on an assignment to write their next feature film!

To learn more and enter the contest, visit the link <https://filmfreeway.com/RenoTahoeScreenplayContest>.



The story begins here and now...

Cutting It Short – Yanking *Aliens* Out of the Series

Writing the article about *Alien 3* for my book *ScreenScope with Ernie* (see page 4), an interesting connection within the series of the first four movies revealed itself. Given the ending of the original *Alien* (1979) and the beginning of *Alien 3*, we can remove *Aliens* (1986) – i.e., the second movie in the series – entirely by making just a couple changes without messing up the storyline. Can you guess what changes?

It's simple – let Ash's character live in *Alien* and remove Newt's

character from *Alien 3*. In other words, Bishop is not needed in *Alien 3* (since Ash serves as the android carrying the secret) and *Aliens* can be yanked out of the series without necessitating any other major adjustments. Now Ripley's fleeing EEV at the end of *Alien* crashes on Fury 161 in *Alien 3* with the story still intact.

This observation fits neatly in my assessment of *Aliens* that the sequel contributes very little to further the plot of the original movie and mainly relies on guns and guts (combat action) for

entertaining the audience. Only the first and third movies in the series actually contribute to the plot's progress.

So what are your thoughts on it? And can you think of any other series in which one or more movies can be subtracted without an overhaul of the script?



Retro Fandom – *Sapphire & Steel*

Sapphire and Steel of the late '70s to early '80s remains a classic sci-fi mystery series with a cult following. With a haunting atmosphere and incorporation of paranormal elements, the series remains a unique work of its time. Thanks to Archive.org, now the series is available in its entirety in the public domain for free viewing.

The series was created by Peter

Hammond and the title roles of Steel and Sapphire were played by David McCallum and Joanna Lumley.

Ghosts, time travel, and many mind-boggling phenomena were investigated by the protagonists – who are not really human.

Check it out at: <https://archive.org/details/sapphire-and-steel-1979-1982>.



Retro — aka traveling back in time, and there are several ways.

Film Quiz – The Declined Oscar-Winning Role

In the Quiz Corner today, you get the answer for the previous quiz: the beautiful actress from the '80s and '90s TV and film is British actress Amanda Pays. The image of Pays posted in the previous quiz is a screenshot from an episode of the British show *Dempsey and Makepeace* ("The Hit," Season 2, episode 8).

For this quiz, it's a behind-the-scenes/movie trivia question.

What was the famous lead role in a thriller that Michelle Pfeiffer declined and the actress who did it won an Oscar for it?

Send your answers to: editor@ernestdempsey.com.





Order at LuLu.com



The book is here!

Movie reviewer and critic Ernest Dempsey takes fans of sci-fi, horror, mystery, and thriller movies on a reading tour through his critique of 50 movies from Hollywood and international cinema. These essays offer analysis and/or assessment of movies in these genres in relation to essential elements of filmmaking and their literary, cultural, moral, and philosophical implications.

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<https://www.filmospheric.com>

Been There, Seen It! – The Villisca Axe Murder House

Summer 2023 was an adventure for me as I visited my friend Josh in Iowa while he was housesitting for a colleague of his who was traveling abroad.

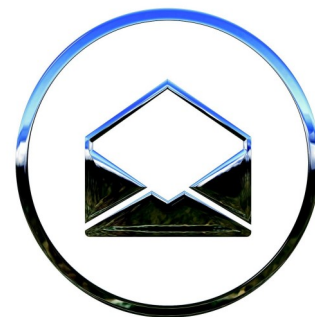
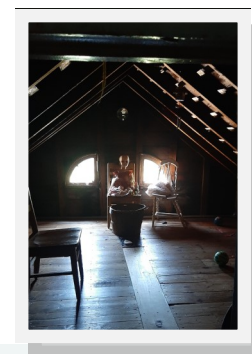
While his colleague's house didn't have any horror story attached to it, the Ax Murder House in the nearby town of Villisca surely had – so how could I keep myself from seeing it?

The murders in question were committed in 1912 and the victims included six children and two adults. The house has since been turned into a tourist attraction as it is said to be haunted with the spirits of some of the victims. I personally

visited very briefly and didn't see any ghosts myself. The property manager showed me a pic on his phone that clearly showed the ghostly image of a child.

But the house has a haunted feel to it – maybe because in the visitor's mind the story of the murders creates all kinds of thoughts. Or maybe it's really haunted! In any case, a great place for horror fans to visit. I learnt that in 2016 a movie *The Axe Murders of Villisca* was made based on the case. I haven't yet seen it but it's on my list.

The place has a website: <https://murderhouse.com/>.



Write to Us

Send us your two cents on cinema/movies/TV and Filmphernalia will publish along with your name and location (city/state/country).

Write to:

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