

Sci-Fi Flashback:

'The Man from Planet X' exemplifies space invader genre

Melanie Decelles

STAFF WRITER

"The Man From Planet X" is a 1951 film directed by Edgar G. Ulmer chronicling a newly discovered planet that appears to be hurtling towards Earth and the strange refugee that reaches us first.

The film opens with a beautiful black and white sequence of an old castle on an abandoned moor framed by dead trees as our narrator, John Lawrence (played by Robert Clark, who would go on to act in many space invader themed movies) writing an article about all that has happened on this moor before he goes out to face the enemy.

The film jumps back in time to Lawrence getting a cable from an old war buddy telling him that he has a news story that Lawrence could report on. Lawrence meets with a Professor in America to find out more about what his friend, Professor Eliot, is talking about and is told that new planet seems to be heading straight for Earth!

While that is very exciting info the actor playing the American Professor can't seem to muster up any enthusiasm and you spend most of the scene wondering why he cares so little that the world might end. Is it part of the plot? Does he have an escape pod? Nope, he just can't be bothered.

Lawrence then travels to Bury, Scotland; an incredibly isolated town where, conveniently enough the strange new planet will get the closest to Earth. Lawrence is picked up by Professor Eliot's daughter Enid.

He immediately begins flirting with her despite having known her since she was a child and the flirting continues full speed for the rest of the film.

At the abandoned castle they are staying at, on the moors, Lawrence discovers that another old acquaintance has been invited to work on the mystery of the new planet.

Dr. Mears, a former student of Profes-

sor Eliot's, is very kind to the audience by immediately scowling and looking generally untrustworthy so we know not to believe him.

There is a brief vague discussion about Mears' time in jail and how he's a jerk before the plot moves along. His convicted felon status is never discussed again.

Later that night on a romantic stroll on a desolate wasteland of a moor, Lawrence won't let a minute go by without hitting on Enid, a woman young enough to be his child. While they're out they find a strange piece of technology that they can't decipher and so they bring it back to the professor.

Professor Eliot thinks that it might have come from space! Dr. Mears thinks that if he can get his hands on the science behind the lightweight steel its made out of he might become an industry leader.

After all the excitement, Enid drives Lawrence back to town, to the inn, on her way back up the moor her car's tire pops and she has to walk back up to the creepy foggy castle. Enid sees a strange metal wreckage on the moor and walks over to it, obviously. She peers inside a window on the side of the structure and sees one of the greatest paper mache heads the world has ever known.

Screaming, she runs back to the castle and gets the her father and Dr. Mears to find out what the creature is.

I won't spoil the rest of the movie but I strongly recommend it for anyone who likes examining how far film making has come in a fairly short amount of time.

The movie isn't a stereotypical action film either, it also has its poignant moments, at the end of it all Lawrence wonders whether or not everything would have happened the way it did if the whole torture thing that went down didn't happen. The answer: Maybe.

I also recommend it for the distrustful cops, awkward fight scenes, some of the most terrible fake accents I've ever heard, and the cute little man purse that Lawrence carries his binoculars in.



Image courtesy of impawards.com

Shimer College performances of 'No Exit' begin next Wednesday

August Lysy

STAFF WRITER

Over the past month and a half, under the direction of Erica Barnes, students from Shimer College have been working hard at preparing a performance of Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit." As one of the students involved in the production, I obviously encourage everyone to attend. Nevertheless, apart from my own bias, I believe our performance merits viewing in its own right, and so below is a brief interview I conducted with our director Erica Barnes, who can perhaps better describe the production from the spectator's perspective.

First, a brief bio of Barnes, provided by her from the website of her current theatre of residency, Knife and Fork: "Erica Barnes is a director, producer and collaborative artist. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts, with a concentration in Directing from the University of North Texas. In 2003, Erica co-founded and was co-artistic director for Blank Line Collective, a

collaborative, movement-based theatre company. In the past, Erica has worked in collaboration with State Theatre and Collaboration, two other Chicago-based theatre companies. Currently, she works with Knife and Fork, a theatre company that she herself co-founded. Erica has training in Laban Movement, Theatre of the Oppressed, and modern dance, but obtained her most valuable knowledge in the rehearsal room, witnessing an ensemble of bodies, rhythms, and ideas converge to create a piece of theatre."

As you can imagine, Shimer College is very proud to have the opportunity to have her working with us on creating this production—and from personal experience, I can say we have all benefited immensely from her knowledge of theatre and performance. Here are her responses to some of my questions:

Why did you want to direct this play?:

I have wanted to direct this play for many years now. It's quite popular to produce in Chicago, so really good versions pop up in the theatre community every year. I'm happy Shimer

allowed me to produce my version of the script and provided a very talented pool of actors from which to choose the cast of four.

What would you say your vision is for the production?:

My vision is to tell the clearest version of the script as possible. This script is, at times, incredibly funny, and, at other times, truly sock-you-in-the-gut sad. And how human it is to feel the range of emotions in between in just 90 short minutes! I have a background in physical movement and character development, and, while I wanted the actors to touch on the very real emotions of the characters, I also wanted to create very clear pictures of those emotions for the audience. The set is a triangle in the middle of the room, with the audience seated on all sides. I wanted the actors to feel trapped in the "harsh angles" of the room and I wanted the audience to view all sides of the characters and to partially create the walls of the room—a sort of room with eyes in the walls, if you will.

The play takes place in "hell," does it

not?:

It is not a play about hell. "Hell is other people," as Sartre's character ultimately concludes. In this play hell is a metaphor. I would like people to come and see the play and figure out what they think "hell" actually means.

As you will discover when you come to see the play, "No Exit" is a play consisting of four characters, three of whom are confined to a room. No one knows the other, and in the ensuing 90 minutes after their bizarre first meeting, each will discover more of the others than perhaps they ever wanted to know—not to mention discover parts of themselves they never wished to confront.

Shimer's production of "No Exit" is hosted on the second floor of the 3424 S. State St. IIT building. It runs from Wednesday, November 20 through Saturday, November 23. All performances are at 7 p.m. except for the Saturday performance, which is at 3 p.m. and tickets are FREE—first come, first-served, so arrive at least twenty minutes early, as there is no late seating. Hope to see you there!

Tech[nology]News:

GameStick lacks build quality, games, makes up with price

Austin Gonzalez

STAFF WRITER

GameStick is another Android-based micro-console entering the foray to fight it out for this holiday season customers.

At \$79 this little console is priced to sell. GameStick brings a whole new meaning to the word micro. Just 3x0.5x1 inches, the GameStick has a smaller form factor than some USB thumb drives.

GameStick has a male HDMI port in the front to be plugged directly into a television and a micro USB port in the back for power and not much else. The GameStick tucks neatly away inside the back of the controller for easy travel. Featuring an ARM A9 processor, 8 GB internal storage, 1GB RAM, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi this

little console is an achievement in its own right.

GameStick is a major competitor to the also relatively new Android, micro-console OUYA. A much less ambitious project than OUYA, Gamestick required only \$100,000 in start-up funds, as compared to \$950,000. Gamestick received a lot of enthusiasm and support garnering \$650,000, in total only 7.5% of OUYA's budget.

Regardless of this budgeting difference, Gamestick is much the same to the OUYA, just smaller. GameStick's adventurous development turn-around took eight months and OUYA took about a year. Both cater to casual gamers looking for social gaming on the big screen. Neither have access to the Google Play Store, instead they opt to have their own markets. Every game, on either platform, is required to have a free-to-play element, whether it be the full game or simply a trial. Both suffer

from a lack of current games while they wait for ports from the Play Store and for dedicated designers to pull through on their promises.

Internal storage and CPU capabilities aren't too different and both utilize their respective modified versions of Jelly Bean, Android's OS. Not surprisingly, reviews are lukewarm for both especially when dealing with hardware, particularly their controllers. Being in the sub-\$100 category it will be a tough fight for whomever comes out on top through the holiday season.

Without comparing the two further, the GameStick itself is a phenomenal device with a few draw backs. Most notably, the device is the more portable than a ham sandwich. Utilizing USB ports found on modern Smart TVs, it becomes a simple plug-and-play console. I've paired it with a battery power micro projector to showcase this with friends and it is nothing

short of amazing to everyone who sees it in action. Are you going somewhere on vacation? GameStick fits in your back pocket and will be ready to play in your hotel room all night long. I was worried about controller connectivity issues considering the small receiver that is behind a TV, but I found the controller to be snappy. The controller is unfortunately light and is mainly plastic; I worry about the longevity of the device, especially if I travel with it. The games so far really aren't showcasing the hardware, but then again, there aren't many games to begin with. Ultimately, for only \$79, I find it hard to speak too harshly of anything in particular.

GameStick and OUYA are what they are: Android micro-consoles. If nothing else they show what can be achieved through competition, but I believe they will pave a new and uncharted path in the way of gaming for the future.