

MIXED REVIEWS

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In the February 1993 issue, Games Magazine editor Will Shortz announced a new puzzle contest based on a **Word Ways** idea: anagram a movie title to form a concise review of the film (for example, "oh. OK" for Hook, "I, trash" for Ishtar. or "non-cinema" for Encino Man). More than 700 readers submitted several thousand entries for the prize, \$1000 worth of puzzles and books from the Bits & Pieces catalogue; it was awarded to James Sempsrott of Raleigh NC who suggested "not worth a fire engine" for The Towering Inferno.

Many meritorious entries were submitted; this is the first of a sequence of articles sampling readers' ingenuity (one, David Lee of Detroit, even found that Evil Dead anagrammed his name). I have used the 1994 edition of Leonard Maltin's Movie & Video Guide (over 19000 entries) to ascertain the correct titles (or even the existence!) of the movies cited; readers were sometimes uncertain whether or not to precede titles with A or THE. One had to be on the lookout for those who used a little reverse engineering to create plausible titles out of dynamite reviews: "two thumbs up" created Who But Stamp? and "bad movie", Moby Dave (a cousin of Moby Dick?). The most poignant near-miss was Oh, God! which, had it been titled O, God! would have yielded the concise "good". I liked the review in which the final E of It's a Wonderful Life was rotated 90 degrees to form an M, making the last word "film".

In the following, entries have been restricted to about 30 letters: longer titles (and there were some of 50 or more) are in general too easy to generate plausible reviews from. No more than four or five examples are given for any single movie, although there were sometimes as many as 30 different entries. An asterisk indicates honorable mention or runner-up T-shirt award by Games. Author credit is given only if two or fewer submitted the review. Occasionally, reviews have been repunctuated (or even the words rearranged) to make them more understandable.

ABOUT LAST NIGHT laugh not at it - B.S. [K Robinson]
 ABOVE THE LAW we, a "blah" vote [M Scanlan]
 THE ABSENT MINDED PROFESSOR "Fred's part shined" teens boom [J Davis]
 THE ADDAMS FAMILY a film my dad hates*[R Kreh] my, a sad film - death [C Bright] a tamed shady film [R Taylor] a flimsy mad death [G Berg]
 THE ADVENTURES OF FORD FAIRLANE never offer this dud to a real fan [J Brown]
 THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY heady cast? then stay gone [G Lenker]
 AIR AMERICA a crime "aria" [R Flora]
 AIRPLANE in! a pearl! [S Liss] real pain; Lear pain

ALADDIN 'n' la-di-da [JL Eddy] Ali dan-d [PE Palmer]
 AL CAPONE a-one (clap!) [J Smith]
 ALFIE 'e fail [B Morton]
 ALIENS is lean [N Zimmer]
 ALIVE vile (A)
 ALL ABOUT EVE able to value [B Morton, B Ringer]
 ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN ah, loved tale, song. go! [C Sarantakos]
 ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT fan quote: not newest thriller [F Thompson]
 AMADEUS amused (A)
 AMERICAN GRAFFITI I'm fair (giant farce) [G Ede]
 ANATOMY OF A MURDER drama of many to rue [S Lindsey]
 THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN a damn snorer - hated it!*[F Thompson]
 ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES wild (stars Cagney, thief) [GH Wienecke]
 ANIMAL CRACKERS real manic racks [R Flora]
 ANNIE inane; a "nine"; a "Nein" [T Cocchi]
 ANNIE HALL ha! Allen in [D Larson, B Barsody] hi! an Allen
 ANOTHER FORTY-EIGHT HOURS ha! go to the first one! hurry! [C Hill]
 APOCALYPSE NOW Coppola awes N.Y.; say - new Coppola!
 ARACHNOPHOBIA hah! a panic boor! [D Sandler]
 AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS unhesitatingly adored...how dry! [C
 Wiederhoeft]
 ATOMIC CAFE a comic fate! [J Dudman]
 ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES freak title! a total shock to me [T Mentock]
 BABY DOLL ably bold [K Wickremasinghe]
 BABY BOOM boy, a bomb!*[D Adams]
 BACK TO THE FUTURE PART TWO fact: OK to rate (but threw up) [S Silverberg]
 THE BAD NEWS BEARS IN BREAKING TRAINING beginning as weak, then drab
 (it is barren) [C Higham]
 BARBARELLA bar "bare-all" [G Anderson]
 BASIC INSTINCT sin acts in it (B,C) [R Prevade]
 BATMAN RETURNS un-smart banter [CW Crause] Mr Bat nets a run [C Bright]
 BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED bon! talent! credit is due! [BJ Miller] let
 cute android in! best! [F Gamble] best! no dirt! can delight U [BJ Miller]
 BEACH BLANKET BINGO eck! babble! a nothing! [J Colbert & V Wilcox]
 BEAUTY AND THE BEAST aha! best yet, bud - a "ten" [MJ Hazard] a hand!
 best yet, U bet (A) [L Reier] a hand! best yet! beaut! [C Beanesderfer]
 BEDTIME FOR BONZO I'd bomb (zero, of ten) [B Nowacki]
 BEETHOVEN he be no vet!
 BEING THERE begin ether [P Angiolillo]
 BEYOND THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE odd; this one **never** deep, buoyant [S Gartner]
 BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE dolce? no - bleak, bland [L Picarella]
 THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS no sex heist, but still worth a tee-
 hee [J Vanderbeg] see sex-hut show titillate, then bore [MJ Hazard]
 THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES bath! see it for yourselves [G Wienecke] so
 they believe four stars [J Sempstrott]
 BILL AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY young dudes still jabber on*[K Robertson]
 brag? sub-dull is enjoyed? not! [C Bruner]
 BINGO big "no"
 BLACK BEAUTY tacky bauble [M Callum]
 THE BLACK STALLION halt! lock in stable! [G Lenker]
 BLADE RUNNER near-blunder [D West] "un-reel" brand [J Severson]
 BLAME IT ON RIO a no-limit bore [R Schieber] Mailer bio - not! [P Lewis]
 BLIND DATE bland diet [ML Welch, M Marusinski] bad 'til end [anon]
 BODY AND SOUL nobody lauds [F Thompson]

THE BODYGUARD earthy - dub "dog" [MJ Hazard] art, eh? dud! go by [B
 Guilfoyle] bad guy red-hot; yeh? doubt! drag! [ML Holt]
 BODY HEAT ay, hot bed [S Starsinic, S McCune]
 BODY OF EVIDENCE deceive nobody (F) [C Silver]
 BOLERO ol' bore [D Bran]
 BONNIE AND CLYDE end nicely? no, bad [J Moss]
 BOOMERANG go? bore, man [J Hungerford, GA Gibson]
 BORIS AND NATASHA I abandon as trash [G Aguilera]
 BORN IN EAST L.A. stale an' borin' [anon]
 BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA somber, stark - a la crud! [PE Palmer] real rot!
 "B" drama sucks [G Lenker] black drama sure rots [M Mammel]
 BRANDED dern bad [J Howard]
 BREATHLESS sheer blast!*[T Donley]
 THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI the re-review: darn big hit! OK! [M Erdman]
 BRIGADOON a boring "do" [K Wickremasinghe] o, I'd grab on [R Pivarnik]
 BROADCAST NEWS score wasn't bad*[ML Welch] bad-news actors
 BROADWAY DANNY ROSE drab yarn (Woody sane) [D Everly]
 THE BROOD do bother! [S Murkin]
 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER bare limp stuff? yeah - very [N Martin]
 BULL DURHAM rah? dull, bum! [E Brown]
 BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID cute 'n' dashing bandits chased -
 ducky! [T Allman]
 THE BUTCHER'S WIFE hit, but few cheers [N Kelly]
 BWANA DEVIL a bland view [A Lee]
 CABARET bare act [S Welsh]
 CANDYMAN canny, mad [T Donley]
 CAPTAIN CAUTION a pain...cut action [S Murkin]
 CAPE FEAR ape farce [M O'Reilly] a perfec' A! [J Savin]
 THE CAR a retch! [D Orlovski]
 CAR WASH aw...crash! [P Pouchet]
 CHARADE rah! aced! [L Stoffel]
 CHARIOTS OF FIRE I offer Oscar hit; Irish foot farce [M Callum]
 CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD oh, Lord - deaf girl scenes*[anon] cheers! sold
 on deaf girl [B Nowacki]
 THE CHINA SYNDROME hi-tech; many snored [M Boltizar]
 CHINATOWN no watchin' [J Bell]
 A CHORUS LINE lo, a nice rush [M Poire]
 CITIZEN KANE necktie Nazi
 CITY HEAT ye hit act [I Velez]
 CITY SLICKERS it clicks - yes'r [G Filzer]
 CLASS ACTION a classic? not! [J Smith]
 CLEOPATRA a clear top [CS Hall] et crapola [S Mirsky, R Oakes] palace rot
 A CLOCKWORK ORANGE a long wacko rocker [L Early]
 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND see flick, then sound tri-chord tone
 [D Ruge-Huston]
 COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER rah! cinema's true gold [MJ Hazard]
 THE COLOR OF MONEY coy - fool other men [P Wiemiller]
 COMING TO AMERICA I am no great comic [R Flora, F Tivin]
 CONAN THE BARBARIAN bar the no-brain! a can! [C Thornton]
 THE CONVERSATION the no-act version [R Taylor]
 CRIMES OF THE HEART see it for the charm*[CW Krause]
 CRITICAL CONDITION no licit nod (a critic) [R Taylor]
 CROCODILE DUNDEE crude - indeed, loco [P Pouchet]

THE CRYING GAME gay, rich gem - "ten" [M Gruber] gamey retching [F Barletta]
 DAMAGE egad, Ma! [L Kralka, J Dudman]
 DANCES WITH WOLVES loved! wished new acts! [R Prevade] cowhand's west - vile! [M Callum] wild show - even cast [M Swol]
 DAYS OF THUNDER add "fun story", eh? [B Guilfoyle]
 DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES of winners...so add a "yes" [R Dayton]
 DEAD POETS SOCIETY o, sad, stoic - yet deep [D Gerber, C Silver] it's too deep - decays [C Cush]
 DEAD RINGERS deranged, sir! [A Knight]
 DEATH BECOMES HER come! dash! be there! [SF Douglas] hams to be cheered [R Prouser]
 DEATH WISH TWO wow! hated this [PD Berry]
 DEEP COVER cop veered [N Kelly]
 DEEP THROAT red-hot tape
 DEFENDING YOUR LIFE funny dirge, I do feel [C Cush]
 DELIVERANCE an evil creed [CB McIntire]
 DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS three-reel muddiness [M Callum]
 DETECTIVE STORY secretive, dotty [M Callum]
 THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES shelve - man's disjointed [M Callum]
 DIAL M FOR MURDER lurid dream form [D Longenecker, B Levenson] rumor: dread film [J Dudman]
 DICE RULES rude slice [S Dunn]
 DICK TRACY tricky cad
 DIE HARD D, I heard [M Lesnard]
 DINER in red! [MA Mullen]
 DINNER AT EIGHT great hit in end [S Goldman] dine right? a "ten" [G Collins]
 DIRTY DANCING candid, trying [M O'Reilly, R Prevade] din city! grand! [EK Dickey]
 THE DIRTY DOZEN I try, then dozed [B Davis]
 THE DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN delight! the end is amusing! 'Ten!' [S Haddock] laughs - Eddie's netting them in [N Martin] Eddie M is laughing! TNT! he's 'ten!' [RW Ames] stunning theme; Eddie has guilt [D Mayer]
 DOCTOR DOOLITTLE odd rot, cool title [M O'Reilly]
 DOG DAY AFTERNOON one good daft yarn*[J McClellan] any good noted? arf! [K Robertson] and good for a...nyet! [E Walker]
 DON'T TELL MOM THE BABYSITTER'S DEAD a demented story that still bombed [G Berg] bottom! badly handled! seen titters [J Young]
 THE DOORS shot! redo! [R Pivarnik]
 DRACULA a la crud
 DRAGNET rated N.G. [B Ringer] net drag [C Bright]
 DRUGSTORE COWBOY got wordy, obscure [M Callum]
 DUMBO o, dumb!
 DUTCH thud! (C) [B Van Heerden]
 EARTH GIRLS ARE EASY i.e., real greasy trash [K Talon] this year's real rage! [D Longenecker]
 EDWARD SCISSORHANDS shears? swords? candid! [J Hawkins]
 THE EGG AND I engaged hit [L Stryker]
 ELDORADO real dodo [J Dudman, E Walker]
 ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK it's a marvel her dress fit OK!*[M Burgess]
 THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK mere Kirk? best space hit! [W Tidmore]
 EMPIRE OF THE SUN fun? it's mere hope! [J Severson]
 ERENDIRA near-dire [K Wickrekmasinghe]

ERNEST GOES TO JAIL jeerings! too stale! [D Taylor]
 ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES shape of plot sane! a perfect theme
 [NB Nordtvedt]
 EVIL UNDER THE SUN shun - idle venture! [K Wickremasinghe]
 EXPOSURE o, pure sex [G Erdelbrock]
 FAMILY PLOT a filmy plot [S Murkin] I'm flat play [A Lee]
 FAR AND AWAY fad ran away [J Dudman]
 FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH dig it! tight form! a teen smash! [J
 Hawkins]
 FATAL ATTRACTION taint: actor flat [J Dudman] a flat attraction [C
 Libershal] no - a flat-act trait [RJ Dayton]
 FATHER OF THE BRIDE oh, he fretted (I barf!) [R Oher]
 FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF dear boy? errs! lies! fluff! [LA Tolan]
 A FEW GOOD MEN new-made goof [K Wickremasinghe] mega-wooden (F) [J Dud-
 man] good! new! fame! [K McManus] we goofed, man!
 FIDDLER ON THE ROOF hint: fodder fooler [JK Johnson]
 FIELD OF DREAMS afforded smile [DL Brann] re: odd film...safe! [K Talon]
 see film for Dad
 FIRESTARTER first rate? er... [P Marcotte]
 FLASHDANCE a "C" - and shelf! [J Hinckley]
 FLASH GORDON o, for glands [K Wiederhoeft]
 FLATLINERS I left (snarl!) [L Shepard] nil - falters [R Dayton, EK Dickey]
 FORBIDDEN PLANET brain-dented flop*[M Callum]
 FOREVER YOUNG for every 'un - go! [L Kralka]
 FOUL PLAY o, playful [C Bright]
 FRANKENSTEIN frank, intense [J Bayliss]
 FREAKS fakers [L Picarella]
 FRIED GREEN TOMATOES great to see done! firm! [J O'Keefe] forget de-
 merits! A-one! [C Young] it's not for me (grade E) [GH Wienecke] great
 find; more to see? [J Romanelli]
 FRIENDLY PERSUASION end is fairly super, no? [B Morton]
 FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE I've...I'm four stars (how?) [E Walker]
 GAS-S-S-S sag-s-s-s [B Nowacki]
 GANDHI dig? nah! [B Morton]
 THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR smart shot! humdinger! [anon]
 GHOSTBUSTERS bought stress [T Incantalupo]
 GHOSTBUSTERS II go! rush! it is best! [R Warner]
 GIGI I gig [TE Long]
 THE GODFATHER great! h-hot! def! [RW Ames]
 GOD'S LITTLE ACRE gets dirt locale [M Callum]
 GONE WITH THE WIND weight, with no end [T Incantalupo] dig the new hit
 now! [J Spencer] whew! edit nothing! [GH Wienecke, K Richardson] wow!
 the hit ending!
 GOODFELLAS gold? o, false! [J Savin]
 GOOD MORNING VIETNAM am grinning - moved, too [B Davis]
 THE GOONIES go on, see hit [D Volling]
 GORILLAS IN THE MIST grin some; it's all hit [G Lenker] thrills? is it a
 gem? no [S Heavner] simians: o, get thrill [D Maloney]
 GOSTA BERLING'S SAGA G.Garbo silent's a gas [B Ringer]
 THE GRADUATE uh, great date; ah, great duet
 THE GRAPES OF WRATH worth the fare (gasp!) [DL Brann, L Shepard]
 GREASE agrees!
 THE GREAT ESCAPE cheers! get a tape! [D Fredericks] get cheaper seat