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 Semsrott 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", Mobi 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 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

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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 Gulfoyle]
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]
DESIREE 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]
DID 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 laugh-
ing! TNT! he's 'ten'! [RW Ames] stunning theme; Eddie has gilt [D Mayer]
DOCTOR DOOLITTLE odd rot, cool title [M O'Reilly]
DOG DAY AFTERNOON one good daft yarn*[J McClellen] 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 Prouser]
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 Wickremsinghe]
ERNEST GOES TO JAIL jeering! 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 Erdebrock]
FAMILY PLOT a filmy plot [S Murkin] I'm flat play [A Lee]
FAR AND AWAY fad ran away [J Dudman]
FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMON'T HIGH dig it! tight form! a teen smash! [J Hawkins]
FATAL ATTRACTION taint: actor flat [J Dudman] a flat attraction [C Liberthal] 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]
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF hint: fodder fooler [JK Johnson]
FIELD OF DREAMS afforded smile [DL Brann] re: odd film ••. safe! [K Talon]
FIELD OF DREAMS see film for Dad
FIRESTARTER first rate? er... [p Marcotte]
FLASHDANCE a "C" - and shelf! [J Hinckley]
FLASH GORDON 0, for glands [K Wiederhoeft]
FLATLINERS I left (snarl!) [L Shepard] nil - falters [R Dayton, EK Dickey]
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 demerits! 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 II go! rush! it is best! [R Warner]
GHOSTBUSTERS II go on, see hit [D Vol ling]
GOODFELLAS gold? o, false! [J Savin]
GOOD MORNING VIETNAM am grinning - moved, too [B Davis]
THE GOONIES go on, see hit [D Vol ling]
THE GRADUATE uh, great date; ah, great duet
THE GREAT ESCAPE cheers! get a tape! [D Fredericks] get cheaper seat