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Mini Reviews, Part 12 (film reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Three science fiction films or series:

MONOLITH (2024): There are mysterious bricks that just appear. They have strange inscriptions inside them. The people who get them feel strangely affected by them. However, although the ending tries to be enigmatic, it seems fairly clear early on what caused these bricks to appear to whom they do, even if the mechanism and the explanation for the monolith are never explained. We see the monolith only once, apparently to justify the title (and poster), since "Monolith" has more box-office appeal than "Black Brick".

Released theatrically 16 February 2024.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt18298588/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/monolith\\_2023](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/monolith_2023)

THE MOON (DEO MUN) (2023): THE MOON is a South Korean science fiction film heavily influenced by APOLLO 13, THE MARTIAN, and films of the actual Apollo 11 landing. Oh, and a slight reference to STAR TREK V. There's an astronaut stranded in space, the goal is to get him home safely, and he has to overcome a series of dangers. Okay, it's a meteor storm, not a sandstorm, but the idea is the same.

Released theatrically 18 August 2023.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27688034/reference>

What others are saying: [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_moon\\_2023](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_moon_2023)

SEVERANCE (2022): SEVERANCE has an interesting science fiction idea, but I probably would not have watched it had they not filmed parts of it at Bell Labs Holmdel (now known as BellWorks). The first episode has scenes in the atrium, a scene at the base of the stairs from the center of the atrium down to the first floor, a couple of shots of the exterior (especially the parking lots), and even one of the water tower shaped like a Martian war machine--oh, sorry, I mean a transistor.

But the premise is why most people watch it. The idea sort of comes out of L. Bob Rife's complaint in SNOW CRASH that people work on all sort of proprietary things at work, and then take them all home in the head every night. "Severance" is a procedure that splits a person brain/memories into two parts: one that is dominant in the work environment, and one that is dominant outside of work. And not just dominant, but exclusive: at work, someone severed cannot remember anything of their outside life, and outside, they cannot remember anything of their work life.

If it worked perfectly it would be bad enough, but there are apparently some glitches that cause unexpected problems. I suppose this gives the writers more to fill the series out with, but they strike me as unnecessary complications, especially when there are more interesting ideas that get short shrift. For example, once a person is "severed", apparently the personality outside of work is considered the "real" person in the sense that they make all the decisions, including whether the personality inside of work can quit their job. So effectively they have created a slave, who shares their body, but not their consciousness. (There was a somewhat similar idea in David Brin's KILN PEOPLE, although there is was a separate body.) There are also echoes of THE SUBSTANCE, although there it is more like one person inhabiting two bodies. At any rate, this aspect is touched upon, but never explored. Instead there is more time spent on the main character's dead wife and a mystery surrounding her.

Released streaming 18 February 2022; also now available on DVD.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11280740/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/severance>

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I am listening to a history of the Plantagenets and the War of the Roses and so decided to re-watch THE HOLLOW CROWN. RICHARD II is excellent, and one has a good idea of the characters even without being as familiar with them as a 16th century English audience would have been. But HENRY VI, PART 1, is a puzzlement. Prince Hal is a carouser who condones theft, ridicules those who cannot return the insult, and is in general a wastrel. It's no wonder his father loses patience with him. Falstaff is the same, only worse. Hotspur is totally obnoxious, constantly insulting people for no reason. None of them seem to have any redeeming characteristics.

And far too much of the play is devoted to the "antics" of Falstaff and his companions (including Prince Hal as one of them). I'm sure it was popular with the audience in the pit, but to me, it just is the pits.

HENRY IV, PART 2 is somewhat better, since there is less (well, it seemed like less) of Falstaff's antics, and Henry V does redeem himself at the end, at least in my opinion. I'm sure some would think he should have remained loyal to his scumbag friends and given them all positions at court. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Books are like imprisoned souls till someone takes  
 them down from a shelf and frees them.  
 --Samuel Butler

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