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Subject: Re: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-s  
Posted by [Anonymous](#) on Tue, 12 Mar 1985 13:59:00 GMT  
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Originally posted by: steve&#64;siemens.UUCP

Article-I.D.: siemens.24700007  
Posted: Tue Mar 12 08:59:00 1985  
Date-Received: Wed, 13-Mar-85 01:14:36 EST  
References:  
Lines: 13  
Nf-ID: #R:ahuta:-49100:siemens:24700007:000:339  
Nf-From: siemens!steve Mar 12 08:59:00 1985

Well, you sure told me!

I remember that when I saw Quatermass (see, only one R) and the Pit,  
I thought it was yet another scientist-makes-wild-conclusions movie,  
and Mark's spoiler actually supported that memory.

I stand corrected.

-Steve Clark

ps. I still loathe those odious movies, but I have to remove this one  
from that category.

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Subject: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-spoiler)  
Posted by [leeper](#) on Mon, 23 Sep 2013 22:22:16 GMT  
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Message-ID:  
Date: Fri, 22-Feb-85 11:37:58 EST  
Article-I.D.: ahuta.491  
Posted: Fri Feb 22 11:37:58 1985  
Date-Received: Tue, 26-Feb-85 06:33:07 EST  
Organization: AT&T Information Systems Labs, Holmdel NJ  
Lines: 71  
Xref: watmath net.movies:5775 net.sf-lovers:6377

Somebody on the net asked me to give a synopsis of this film, which I  
have called the best science fiction film I have ever seen. Some of

the parts of the film are a bit crypt, but are clearer in the play which was shown at Seacon and is available in paperback. Here goes:

FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (Brit. QUATERMASS AND THE PIT)  
Hammer films 1968, Dir. by Roy Ward Baker. Scr by Nigel Kneale based on his tv-play "Quatermass and the Pit." Cast: Andrew Kier (Bernard Quatermass), James Donald (Dr. Matthew Roney), Barbara Shelley (Barbara Judd).

London Transit is digging a subway tunnel at Hobbs End. They find fossils of man's early ancestors. Dr. Matthew Roney is called in to investigate the fossils and in the process finds a large craft buried in the ground near the five million year old fossils. Thinking that what was found might be a German V-weapon, they call in Col. Breen, a former expert on enemy missiles and now in the process of taking over Quatermass's rocket group. Quatermass, driven by curiosity, goes with Breen to the site of the excavations and realizes that if the fossils are 5 million years old, so is the craft. Hobbs end has been known from time immemorial, it turns out, for weird supernatural events, particularly when the earth has been disturbed.

The army, with much trouble, is able to bore a hole into the inner chamber found in the craft, and inside they find insect-like inhabitants. Quatermass theorizes that they are from Mars and that they had altered the apes whose fossils were found into evolving toward intelligent humans. A driller hired by the army to open the craft is removing his equipment when he seems possessed by some force. He runs mindlessly through the streets causing telekinetic destruction and takes refuge in a churchyard. Quatermass is called in by the vicar and hears the driller babbling about seeing scenes of another world. His description seems to be of a race purge of mutants. Quatermass theorizes that the telekinetic powers and the hatred of anyone different were invested in us by the aliens and were always with us more or less dormant. The craft has the power to reawaken them in us.

Quatermass together with Roney rig up a device to record his mental images and Quatermass tries to repeat the drillers actions so the ship will have the same effect on him. Instead the craft takes over Roney's assistant and Quatermass records her mental images. The minister of defense, angered by Quatermass earlier telling the press that the craft might have been of alien design, calls Quatermass in on the carpet. He shows them the pictures he has recorded from the assistant's mind of a mutant hunt. They are unconvinced, believing Breen's explanation that the craft is German. The minister opens the craft site to the press.

The night that the press is running a tv show from the craft site, a man setting up lighting in the craft slips and somehow reactivates the

craft fully. The vast majority of London is taken over to become mindless telekinetics bent on wiping out anything that might be a variation in the human genetic strain. Quatermass himself become part of the hunt. Roney is among the very few who are immune to the mental control exerted by the capsule. Seeing Quatermass in the crowd he pulls him out and with a great deal of effort, gets Quatermass's mind working again. The capsule which has now turned London into effectively a alien colony. Exerting this effort it is turning its own mass into energy. The broadcast energy forms a column with the capsule changes into the satan-like shape of a alien. Roney realizes that the nature of the energy column is electrical. He reasons that the legends of the Devil's enemy being iron had a basis in fact. These alien images that used to be interpreted as ghosts and demons are electrical and people holding iron swords grounded them out.

Roney sees a large crane by the capsule site, and his assistant being carried by the crowd. He sends Quatermass to grab the assistant and also to get him out of the way. He climbs the crane and swings it into the column of energy, electricuting himself but grounding out the column. The instant the column is grounded, the alien mental control ends and things start returning to normal.

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Subject: Re: Five Million Years to Earth  
Posted by [Anonymous](#) on Mon, 23 Sep 2013 22:31:27 GMT  
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Originally posted by: &#64RUTGERS.ARPA:Slocum.CSCDA&#64HI-MULTICS.ARPA

Message-ID:  
Date: Wed, 27-Feb-85 12:42:16 EST  
Article-I.D.: topaz.811  
Posted: Wed Feb 27 12:42:16 1985  
Date-Received: Fri, 1-Mar-85 06:03:12 EST  
Sender: daemon@topaz.ARPA  
Organization: Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N.J.  
Lines: 11

From: Slocum@HI-MULTICS.ARPA

I have seen 'FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH' a couple times on TV, but I would hardly classify it as one of the best SF movies I've seen. It doesn't really hold a candle to many films mentioned previously. I thought it was more like a Horror film, a genre for which I don't really care. (Boy, sometimes it's hard not to end a

sentence with a preposition). Yes, it had some interesting ideas, but hardly enough to justify 'Best SF Flick'.

Brett Slocum (Slocum@HI-MULTICS)

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Subject: Re: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-s  
Posted by [Anonymous](#) on Tue, 24 Sep 2013 18:33:25 GMT  
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Originally posted by: steve&#64;siemens.UUCP

Message-ID:  
Date: Fri, 1-Mar-85 12:45:00 EST  
Article-I.D.: siemens.24700005  
Posted: Fri Mar 1 12:45:00 1985  
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References:  
Lines: 13  
Nf-ID: #R:ahuta:-49100:siemens:24700005:000:807  
Nf-From: siemens!steve Mar 1 12:45:00 1985

Five Million Years to Earth is a HORRIBLE film!! It's one of those schlock things where the scientist sees something inexplicable, dreams up a ridiculous (i.e. almost totally unsupported by evidence) explanation for it, and this explanation is taken as fact for the rest of the movie. Movies like this spread more wrong ideas about science than creationism! (well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little...) If it were about the occult it would be a pseudo-science fiction film. Perhaps it should be called an anti-science fiction film? In fact, the more I think about this, the more I like the connection with creationism. The 'science' in a movie like this is very much like the 'science' in creationism -- based on nonunderstanding of what science is really about, based on jumping to conclusions, etc.

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Subject: Re: Five Million Years to Earth  
Posted by [leeper](#) on Tue, 24 Sep 2013 18:33:28 GMT  
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Message-ID:

Date: Sat, 2-Mar-85 11:31:46 EST

Article-I.D.: ahutb.510

Posted: Sat Mar 2 11:31:46 1985

Date-Received: Sun, 3-Mar-85 07:29:49 EST

References:

Organization: AT&T Information Systems Labs, Holmdel NJ

Lines: 27

#### REFERENCES:

>I have seen 'FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH' a couple times on  
>TV, but I would hardly classify it as one of the best SF  
>movies I've seen. It doesn't really hold a candle to many  
>films mentioned previously.

Obviously these are matters of taste. I like a science fiction film with a strong idea. Something that takes some thinking about. I can think of no other science fiction film that I find so thought provoking. I will also add that I know a lot of people who rate this film at least in their top five.

>I thought it was more like a Horror film, a genre for which I  
>don't really care.

Odd, I see very little horror element in the film. Less than in ANDROMEDA STRAIN.

>Yes, it had some interesting ideas, but hardly enough to  
>justify 'Best SF Flick'.

What are your criteria for "best" then?

Mark Leeper

...ihnp4!ahutb!leeper

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Subject: Re: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-s

Posted by [leeper](#) on Tue, 24 Sep 2013 18:33:31 GMT

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Message-ID:

Date: Sun, 3-Mar-85 23:27:09 EST

Article-I.D.: ahutb.515

Posted: Sun Mar 3 23:27:09 1985  
Date-Received: Tue, 5-Mar-85 02:45:52 EST  
References: ,  
Organization: AT&T Information Systems Labs, Holmdel NJ  
Lines: 80

REFERENCES: ,

>Five Million Years to Earth is a HORRIBLE film!! It's one  
>of those schlock things where the scientist sees something  
>inexplicable, dreams up a ridiculous (i.e. almost totally  
>unsupported by evidence) explanation for it, and this  
>explanation is taken as fact for the rest of the movie.  
>Movies like this spread more wrong ideas about science than  
>creationism! (well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little...) If  
>it were about the occult it would be a pseudo-science  
>fiction film. Perhaps it should be called an anti-science  
>fiction film? In fact, the more I think about this, the  
>more I like the connection with creationism. The 'science'  
>in a movie like this is very much like the 'science' in  
>creationism -- based on nonunderstanding of what science is  
>really about, based on jumping to conclusions, etc.

Got that out of your system? Good! I do hope you are feeling better.

I agree that what goes on in this film is not like what real scientists do. But why is that? Roney and Quatermass approach their observations and draw the most likely conclusions. This is very much what scientists do or should do. The reason what they do is in character very different than what your run-of-the-mill scientist is that they are encountering a very different chain of evidence than probably occurs in the real world. You expect that, this is science fiction. And as far as science fiction goes, the chain of evidence is not all that improbable, given the premise. Kneale has only one assumption in the 1960 TV play on which the film was based. That is basically the same premise of 2001. The premise is that the reason apes evolved into humans was through alien intervention. (The difference with 2001 was in how the idea was handled. Clarke took the idea and said "It's going to happen again." Kneale took the premise and said "How are we different than we would be had we evolved ourselves? What evidence might still be around in the ground and in the human mind that we had been intentionally altered?")

Given the evidence I cannot think of any time in the film when Quatermass or Roney jump to a wild conclusion when there is another that is simpler AND more convincing. Faced with the evidence that the only five million year old skeletons found intact were inside a constructed craft there are not a whole lot of simple conclusions to

draw. That fact alone is inconsistent with our current understanding of the origins of intelligence. I know the script quite well and I never found a conclusion they drew to seem wild to me. Perhaps you can give an example or too where the reasoning of the characters is wild IN THE LIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE PRESENTED.

You do well to compare the premise of this film with creationism. This is a science fiction film whose premise concerns the origin of the species human. Creationism and evolution do also. This film simply plays with a third origin theory. That is what good science fiction does, play with theories. In that way it is like creationism. Where it differs is that it admits to being fiction. It tells the viewer to play with the idea in his/her own mind for the sake of playing with the idea. It does not tell the viewer to believe the idea. I am sure that Nigel Kneale would have nothing but dismay if some cult were to be formed believing the origin theory in FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH.

I am a little dismayed by your use of the phrase "If [the film] were about the occult..." Among other things this film certainly is about the occult. It is about a good deal more than that, but one of the things this film concerns is the occult. The occult occurrences are (in the context of the film) exaggerated explanations of phenomena caused by the alien ships in their functioning to control the descendants of the altered apes. It is actually a clever idea since there appears to be a lot of reported occurrences of occult phenomena over the ages to tie it in with Kneale's premise. That doesn't mean that Kneale really believes in occult phenomena but it nicely unifies two apparently disassociated fields and makes the idea that much more engaging.

Oh, and as to whether scientist really do what Quatermass and Roney do, on top of what I have previously said, let me ask you to perform a little experiment for me. Go to the yellow pages, find a private investigator, call him and ask him how similar his work is to what goes on in "Hound of the Baskervilles." Or do you consider this to be another HORRIBLE work of fiction?

Mark Leeper  
...ihnp4!ahutb!leeper

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Subject: Re: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-s  
Posted by [Anonymous](#) on Tue, 24 Sep 2013 18:36:36 GMT  
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Originally posted by: steve&#64;siemens.UUCP

Message-ID:  
Date: Fri, 8-Mar-85 09:59:00 EST  
Article-I.D.: siemens.24700006  
Posted: Fri Mar 8 09:59:00 1985  
Date-Received: Sun, 10-Mar-85 06:34:03 EST  
References:  
Lines: 80  
Nf-ID: #R:ahuta:-49100:siemens:24700006:000:4318  
Nf-From: siemens!steve Mar 8 09:59:00 1985

I recently made a rather unintelligible flaming response to Mark Leeper's note about his favorite sf film "Five Million Years to Earth". This note is an attempt to clarify and defend that flame.

I saw "Five Million Years to Earth" quite some time ago, and I don't remember it too well. I remember mostly the hoaky and/or silly special effects like the giant devil-insect ghost at the end and the melting aliens and a few others. I also remember thinking the movie was pretty dumb. So I had to rely mainly on Mark Leeper's spoiler to jog my memory.

Mark's spoiler:

"The army, with much trouble, is able to bore a hole into the inner chamber found in the craft, and inside they find insect-like inhabitants. Quartermass theorizes that they are from Mars and that they had altered the apes whose fossils were found into evolving toward intelligent humans."

Mark's comment to me:

"Given the evidence I cannot think of any time in the film when Quartermass or Roney jump to a wild conclusion when there is another that is simpler AND more convincing."

So anytime an extraterrestrial craft that is 5 million years old is found, the simplest, most convincing explanation is that the aliens are from Mars and they altered apes into evolving toward intelligent humans. A much more complex and unconvincing explanation is that we don't know where they came from and their reason for being on Earth probably had nothing to do with the apes.

GGGGIIIIIVVVVVVEEEEE MMMMEEEE AAAA BBBRRRREEEEEAAAKKKK!!!!!!

My swiss cheese memory and Mark's spoiler offer no evidence for Quartermass to believe the aliens were from Mars, and no evidence that they had anything to do with the apes except being on Earth at the same time. Perhaps there was something in the movie or in the play to justify these conclusions, but I don't remember and Mark didn't mention it. Afterwards, evidence appears to support these wild conclusions, and this is the heart of what I was sputtering



and flaming about: crappy "sf" movies often have a scientist make a wild conclusion and later provide evidence to support it. (I ineloquently phrased this as "...and this explanation is taken for fact for the rest of the movie.").

There is another example. Mark's spoiler:

"Quartermass ... hears the driller babbling about seeing scenes from another world. His description seems to be of a race purge of mutants. Quartermass theorizes that the telekinetic powers and the hatred of anyone different were invested in us by the aliens and were always with us more or less dormant. The craft has the power to reawaken them in us."

There is no evidence that the telekinetic powers were always with us more or less dormant. There is no evidence that hatred of anyone different was invested in us by the aliens; it may be a trait that we and the aliens share, to different degrees. In fact, I kind of remember even the part about the "description seems to be of a race purge of mutants" to have been something like (I admit to exaggeration):

Driller: Thousands of weird aliens being driven out! They're being killed!

All sorts of havoc and destruction!

Quartermass: Was it some sort of racial purge of mutants? Tell me!

Driller: Babble babble yes!

I think you probably get the idea of what I am flaming at. Scientist makes wild, unfounded conclusion which is later supported by evidence not available at the time the conclusion is made. Please forgive me if I am wrong about this movie, and I simply don't remember supporting evidence. I'm pretty sure I would remember, though.

By the way, this business about mutants brings up another pet peeve of mine, that science fiction authors and readers generally know very little about biology and seldom understand mutation or evolution. Systematically killing off all abnormal individuals would be an anti-survival trait if you accept the theory of evolution. (Small quibble in this movie; someday I'll flame on about this one when a better (worse) example comes up.)

In conclusion, I maintain that unless I remember totally wrong, the "science" put forth in this film is worse than useless. However, if I could get that out of my mind, I think I might agree with Mark that the film presents a number of very interesting ideas worth thinking about.

ihnp4!princeton!siemens!steve

Subject: Re: FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (super-spoiler)  
Posted by [leeper](#) on Tue, 24 Sep 2013 18:36:37 GMT  
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Message-ID:

Date: Sun, 10-Mar-85 09:25:04 EST

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Posted: Sun Mar 10 09:25:04 1985

Date-Received: Mon, 11-Mar-85 23:46:02 EST

References: ,

Organization: AT&T Information Systems Labs, Holmdel NJ

Lines: 163

REFERENCES: ,

>I saw "Five Million Years to Earth" quite some time ago, and  
>I don't remember it too well. I remember mostly the hoaky  
>and/or silly special effects like the giant devil-insect  
>ghost at the end and the melting aliens and a few others.

"In matters of taste... etc." I didn't think the effects were too bad.  
I am not fond of the memory video-tape sequence. I did like the energy  
column at the end, which you don't like." In any case, I like the film  
for its ideas, not its effects.

>  
>Mark's spoiler: "The army, with much trouble, is able to  
>bore a hole into the inner chamber found in the craft, and  
>inside they find insect-like inhabitants. Quartermass

I did not call him "Quartermass." The name is "Quatermass" with one  
"r". Of course it is easy to look at something and not really see  
what's there.

>theorizes that they are from Mars and that they had altered  
>the apes whose fossils were found into evolving toward  
>intelligent humans."

>  
>Mark's comment to me: "Given the evidence I cannot think of  
>any time in the film when Quartermass or Roney jump to a  
>wild conclusion when there is another that is simpler AND  
>more convincing."

>  
>So anytime an extraterrestrial craft that is 5 million years  
>old is found, the simplest, most convincing explanation is  
>that the aliens are from Mars

The physical characteristics of the aliens implied a lower gravity and

a thinner atmosphere than Earth's. Mars was a logical guess and the only location within our solar system that matched the physical characteristics of the aliens. I think that is pretty good evidence and is no more far-fetched than logical conclusions drawn in many scientific investigations.

>and they altered apes into evolving toward intelligent humans.

This is really the result of more complex evidence. The apes found at the site fit into the recognized flow of evolution except that their braincases were unaccountably much larger than their immediate predecessors on the evolutionary tree. The connection of the apes to the craft was explained in my previous mailing. The best protected of them were the ones inside the craft, hence they were contemporaries. The coincidence of the braincases and the alien visitation at the same time leads one to believe the two were connected. As I remember one of the scientists is uneasy about this connection. In either the film or the play, probably both, Roney refers to coincidence as a breeder of false theories. It is a good line. There is further evidence, more abstract and later on, in that the latent telekinetic capabilities of current humans seems to be tied into the alien craft in some unclear manner. There seems to be more going on in the initial contact than just a passing noticing of each other.

>A much more complex and  
>unconvincing explanation is that we don't know where they  
>came from and their reason for being on Earth probably had  
>nothing to do with the apes.

Based on the above, yes. "We don't know where they came from" is not an explanation of anything. It is an obvious step to try to work out where they could have come from, and the best evidence points to Mars.

>  
>GGGGIIIIIVVVVVVEEEEE MMMMEEEE AAAA BBBRRRREEEEEAAAKKKK!!!!!!  
>  
>My swiss cheese memory and Mark's spoiler offer no evidence  
>for Quartermass to believe the aliens were from Mars, and no  
>evidence that they had anything to do with the apes except  
>being on Earth at the same time.

I hope the above is helpful.

>Perhaps there was  
>something in the movie or in the play to justify these  
>conclusions, but I don't remember and Mark didn't mention  
>it. Afterwards, evidence appears to support these wild  
>conclusions,

At the time Mars is guessed they already have the braincase evidence and the physical structure of the aliens. They do not mention the conclusion that the aliens altered the humans until after the telekinetic evidence also shows up. Nigel Kneale is a craftsman and sweats the details. If you went to Seacon you saw in what high regard British fans hold him (for very good reason, in my opinion).

- >and this is the heart of what I was sputtering
- >and flaming about: crappy "sf" movies often have a
- >scientist make a wild conclusion and later provide evidence
- >to support it. (I ineloquently phrased this as "...and this
- >explanation is taken for fact

More taken as an operational theory. An when Quatermass tells anyone about it, he qualifies everything he says with "If I'm right...".

- >for the rest of the movie.").
- >
- >There is another example. Mark's spoiler: "Quatermass ...
- >hears the driller babbling about seeing scenes from another
- >world. His description seems to be of a race purge of
- >mutants. Quatermass theorizes that the telekinetic powers
- >and the hatred of anyone different were invested in us by
- >the aliens and were always with us more or less dormant.
- >The craft has the power to reawaken them in us."
- >
- >There is no evidence that the telekinetic powers were always
- >with us more or less dormant.

Except that there have been reported cases of it for many years. Why do you think we already have a word for it? This film takes the claims of telekinetic power and treats them as scientific observations.

- >There is no evidence that
- >hatred of anyone different was invested in us by the aliens;
- >it may be a trait that we and the aliens share, to different
- >degrees.

I probably agree with you here, since there could be an instinctive basis for it, but since it shows up in both races, Quatermass concludes that it is more than coincidence.

- >In fact, I kind of remember even the part about
- >the "description seems to be of a race purge of mutants" to
- >have been something like (I admit to exaggeration):
- >

>Driller: Thousands of weird aliens being driven out!  
>They're being killed!  
> All sorts of havoc and destruction! Quartermass:  
>Was it some sort of racial purge of mutants? Tell me!  
>Driller: Babble babble yes!

No, I don't think he asked Sladden, the driller, to draw any conclusions. Sladden just describes what he sees.

>  
>I think you probably get the idea of what I am flaming at.  
>Scientist makes wild, unfounded conclusion which is later  
>supported by evidence not available at the time the  
>conclusion is made.

And I agree with the idea of your flame, but I think this was not a film it really applied to. I can think of no other science fiction film in which I think this complex a conclusion is so well reasoned.

>In conclusion, I maintain that unless I remember totally  
>wrong, the "science" put forth in this film is worse than  
>useless.

I think where the film presents science, it is reasonable. Where it presents scientific method it is good. But for the most part it presents speculation and for that I consider the best science fiction film I remember ever seeing. The conclusions it draws are a good distance from our understanding of how things are, but the chain of evidence makes the film plausible.

Mark Leeper  
...ihnp4!ahutb!leeper