5. A movie review by Lynn Sereda:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

The recent re-make of Invasion of the Body Snatchers proved to be a frightening and thought provoking film, carefully balancing intense special effects against a background of the vague everydayness and alienation of modern urban life. This interweaving of the dramatic and the subtle, the "impossible" with the existing is rare in Hollywood Science Fiction which seems to rely on hyped-up electronic effects, the hero cult, and of course expensive advertising which results in boring $3.50 scare commodities.

The new Body Snatchers expands on the original, which was probably one of the better films of the 1950's Sci-fi genre, and this greater complexity of theme parallels the ever-increasing mass of fears, contradictions, etc. we are forced to live in.

The film begins, once again with alien "seeds" carried to Earth in a rain storm, which in turn results in gardens of alien plants. The fruit of these plants is a metaphor for the fruits the "blooming" of Western Civilization may be bearing: giant pods containing beings, human in appearance but devoid of emotion. The beings in the pods are otherwise exact duplicates of the already living. The snatching occurs when the living fall asleep and the pods burst open with their duplicates, which originally appear in infantile form, but rapidly grow to adult size. The real people wither away and eventually vanish as their vital energy is sucked away by the duplicate creatures.

The invasion thus begins quietly, but a few people experience intuitive feelings that their friends, relatives, and lovers are not the same people. At this point Leonard Nimoy enters the scene as the psychiatrist that a few of these "delusional, paranoic" people have been sent to see in an effort to quell their "unreasonable fears" (i.e. invalidate their feelings).

Nimoy plays a very hip, bourgeois, Californian "Humanist"-type shrink. The ambiguities of such a character (combining the social control aspects of therapy with the pseudo-empathy and understanding of the "human potential movement") fits well in a film where confusion inevitably leads to chaotic distrust.

Nimoy exudes warmth to these justifiably terrified people- shrinky manipulative vibes. At a cocktail party he holds one woman's hands and gently convinces her the "problem" is in her not being a good enough wife. When more and more people are brought to him, he suggests that there must be an epidemic of delusional hysteria going around, the result of too much freedom and mobility, etc. Nimoy "touchie-feelies" around with all of these frightened individuals without listening to a thing they're saying.

I kept wondering whether Nimoy was a Body Snatcher himself or just another oppressive shrink toying around with peoples perceptions. This question is resolved when the four people who realize the dangers of what's happening are captured by Nimoy and given shots of a drug (Thorazine??) that will put them to sleep so they can awaken to be part of a world of zombies. So, the shrink turns out to be the ringleader of this movement to rob people of their freedom to feel, something we ex-mental patients know a lot about.

Nimoy himself is appropriately put in a freezer when his victims overcome the drug and begin to fight back. Fear and tension mount as the four wend their way through a San Francisco full of zombies, trying to ward off the police and government figures who naturally are entwined in the conspiracy against humanity, and trying to fight off sleep. Unfortunately their fight is haphazard and disorganized, politically speaking. (One wonders why the film left out the Network Against Psychiatric Assault office as possible refuge). The culminating five minutes though take all the loose bits of fear, confusion, and alienation and give us back a horrifying picture of reality, frightening because one can relate to it as reality, and where that "reality" may soon be taking us.

HOUSING, anyone?

One of the most urgent needs of ex-patients is for housing free of the exploitation one finds in boarding homes and "half-way" houses. Our goal at the Alliance is to develop a system of resident-controlled housing for ex-patients--that is, entire houses owned by ALMP or cooperatives of ex-patients and run without a profit motive. We are beginning to make inquiries and contacts regarding such a project, which would of course require much more funding than we can even think about counting on at this time. Meanwhile we would like to be of as much assistance as possible to ex-patients who are looking for hassle-free living situations.

If you are an ex-patient (or a soon-to-be ex-patient) and would like to find other ex-patients with whom to share rent in a psychiatry-less house or apartment, call us any weekday from 12-4 at 563-3828. We'll let you know what's happening housing-wise. Similarly, if you have an apartment, etc., that would provide an ex-inmate with a real alternative to the boarding home setup, please let us know. Psychiatric ghettos must be eliminated NOW!