

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 4/9/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 38

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

_ D _ A _ T _ E _ T _ O _ P _ I _ C

- 04/23 LZ: ORION SHALL RISE by Poul Anderson (Societal Reconstruction)
04/30 HO: ?
05/14 LZ: THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE by Clifford Simak (Biological Constructs)
05/21 HO: ?
06/04 LZ: THIS PERFECT DAY by Ira Levin ("Utopias")
06/11 HO: ?
06/25 LZ: STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Humans as underdogs)
07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)
08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070).

1. Last notice I mentioned something about Moonwalk, the craze that is sweeping Middletown. I have been asked to describe the rules and history of the game in more detail for people who are not Middies. The game is to go out on the road and explore Middletown just jumping from one pothole in the road to another. You try to see how far you can get without having to step off the road or onto a healthy piece of pavement. It tests your creativity, your broad-jumping ability and your stamina. Moonwalk pits all these talents against the people who repair the roads in Middletown. The result is usually a slaughter. It also tests your ability to jump over oncoming cars. Like any great sport, Moonwalk has its greats. The best of all time was the immortal Westbrook "Satchel" Campbell. Satchel didn't even work for AT&T. He worked for the Middletown post office, which some poor sports claim gave him an unfair advantage in that he really knew the potholes of Middletown. One day delivering mail he saw a couple of Middie engineers playing the game, picked it up, mastered it, and for a while was leading midnight Moonwalk rallies. Midnight was the best time, he claimed,

because you had to do less jumping out of the way of on-coming cars. There were still more detractors who claimed that midnight Moonwalk was a whole different game and didn't count. But nobody who knew Satchel could have ever thought that he would take unfair advantage. Some of his midnight rallies he would even hire drivers

- 2 -

to come along and try to run him down, just to prove he had what it took to be just as great a daytime Moonwalker as he was at night. That was just the kind of guy he was. Satchel was one of the greatest sportsmen I have ever met.

You may have read in the paper about how Satchel Campbell was killed in January. It is rumored he had just performed a perfect Moonwalk Flounder. If so he would have been the first person in history to do so. (A perfect Moonwalk Flounder consists of jumping potholes all the way to Dino's Fishery across Route 35, still judged by some to be an impossible feat.) It is claimed that he performed his Flounder and was headed back BY A DIFFERENT ROUTE (the idea that he had discovered even one possible route was astounding, two is beyond belief) when he got bewildered and neglected to jump out of the way of U-Haul from Delaware. He has already been sorely missed. Satchel's mailsack has been retired and now can be found in the Moonwalk Hall of Fame which is in a filing cabinet in the 2E4 aisle. There has been bitter debate as to whether Satchel Campbell really had found a perfect Flounder or if he just stepped out for a plate of clams. Middletown players have been looking seriously for his Flounder and it is as yet undecided if his Flounder really existed or not. No doubt Satchel's Flounder will join the ranks of The Lost Dutchman Mine and the Maltese Falcon.

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

EON
Written by Greg Bear
Reviewed by Dale Skran

Hard science fiction is alive and well in the form of Greg Bear, and more. Mr. Bear is one of our newest and best writers, one of what Norman Spinrad calls the Neuoromantics--folks like William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, and, yes, Greg Bear. They all write Hard SF (the science includes all the sciences, not just physics) but they exceed Niven, Heinlein, Asimov, Clark, and others in that they represent the final fusion of New Wave stylists with SF. All can write rings around feeble old Asimov, or even somewhat better writers like Poul Anderson. They exceed LeGuin not by being better writers, but by carrying less political garbage around with them--any points they have to make are gently put, not put forward blatantly in the LeGuin/Heinlein tradition.

E o n, along with Sterling's S c h i s m a t r i x, is sure to be a contender for the Hugo this year. As a technician of the novel, Bear exceeds Brin. He handles multiple characters, diverse civilizations, and a vast span of time as deftly as the flying Wallendas walking tightropes. E o n contains among others things, a disheartening vision of our nuclear doom, a fascinating glimpse of ultimate technology, and a gritty,

realistic story with characters you care about right down to the final page.

Right now I am unsure which one of these excellent novels I'll put at the top spot on my Hugo ballot. Bear has written the better Novel, but with so many characters, they do seem a bit thin compared to Sterling's *Abelhard Lindsay*. In particular, Bear has trouble integrating his character's sex lives into the story in a way that contributes to what is going on. What we get is a man who has been mainly celibate getting horny as the adventure of his lifetime unfolds. While this may be realistic, it contributes to some scenes that have behind them a superficial and even dangerous view of sex (it makes you "human"). Right now Sterling gets the top slot, in part because I believe he has created the more fully imagined universe, but I may change my mind. Bear has the largest possible future ahead of him as a writer. I am deeply impressed at his skill in handling the novel.

EYES OF FIRE: Things that Go (Natty) Bumpo in the Night A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: An unusual horror film set in pre-Revolutionary back-woods America. After a shaky start, this horror film has some unexpected thrills as settlers move into a valley cursed by Indians whose spirits live inside trees. Not always coherent, but often surprising.

Somebody once described war as being sheer boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror. That's not a bad description for E_y_e_s_o_f_F_i_r_e, a rather unconventional horror film. To begin with, it is set in the forests of pre-Revolutionary America. It has been a good long time since I have seen a_n_y film with that historical setting. A genuine horror film set in "Last of the Mohican" country is a real oddity.

A preacher who has spent some time in a backwoods community has soured his welcome by fooling around with one of the local women. He is saved from hanging by the daughter of a witch whom he has taken in and who appears to have some of her mother's talent. The preacher, his paramour, her children, the witch's daughter, and assorted hangers-on set off to find a better place. Instead, they discover a hidden valley cursed by Shawnee Indians whose souls live in trees that at times take on human faces. As our intrepid band are establishing a settlement they start facing dangers that old Dan'l Boone never imagined. Bloody corpses read out of the ground, swamp creatures grab the unwary, children get sucked into trees, Indian bands in various degrees of undress appear from nowhere, attack, and disappear.

This is clearly not a glossy, professionally finished film. But, as films like N_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_L_i_v_i_n_g_D_e_a_d, C_a_r_n_i_v_a_l_o_f_S_o_u_l_s, or L_e_m_o_r_a have demonstrated in the past, horror is one genre in which a film can overcome rock-bottom budgets and even high-school acting to still be effective. I liked P_o_l_t_e_r_g_e_i_s_t but, frankly, this film is often just as effective and the whole film probably cost no more than one or two scenes of the Spielberg film.

In spite of its slow start, give E_y_e_s_o_f_F_i_r_e a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

KOJIRO and RED LION
Two film reviews by Mark R. Leeper

I recently reviewed T_h_e_S_a_g_a_o_f_t_h_e_V_a_g_a_b_o_n_d_s(S_e_n_g_o_k_u_G_u_n_t_o_d_e_n), a Japanese samurai that was one of a series released to video by Action Video. My local store had four in this series and since then I have rented two more of these.

K_o_j_i_r_o(S_a_s_a_k_i_K_o_j_i_r_o, 1967, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki) is a long (152 minutes) film about a young swordsman who sacrifices all his relationships to his great ambition to be the best swordsman in Nippon. Time and again his friends and family are set against each other as a result of his ambition. For two and a half hours the film builds to his final confrontation with the man who is his only possible equal with a sword..

R_e_d_L_i_o_n(A_k_a_g_e, 1969, directed by Kinachi Okamoto) has Toshiro Mifune playing (the inadvertently aptly-named) Gonzo. Gonzo is a soldier sent on a mission to his own home town. Gonzo's big concern is that he get to wear a red lion--a flowing red headdress that looks like a lion's mane and is a mark of rank in the army.

As with T_h_e_S_a_g_a_o_f_t_h_e_V_a_g_a_b_o_n_d_s, these films are a good cut in quality below Kurosawa's samurai films. These are entertainment films of about the same quality and for the corresponding market of a good Western film in this country. They are being packaged as if they were martial arts films which, in a sense, I guess they are. But they are probably a little short on action for most martial arts fans. A typical fight will have two swordsmen holding up their swords and walking around each other, each cautiously sizing up his opponent. Then there will be one quick attack in which you cannot really see what is happening. After two seconds of action they will back off from each other and stare at each other for about 10 seconds. Then one will fall over dead. Bruce Lee fans would be bored, no doubt, but these films are much better as historical dramas than your average martial arts film.

Action Video's releases do have some problems. Their subtitles are done in a light blue which makes them all too often fade into the background. The combination of that, the general sparsity of subtitles, and the often enigmatic translations make the stories incomprehensible for stretches during the film. For K_o_j_i_r_o the print looked like it had been through a vegematic. Still, for samurai films a little inconvenience is worth going through. Rate each film a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

OUT OF AFRICA
Film commentary by Mark R. Leeper

A great deal of fuss has been made over O_u_t_o_f_A_f_r_i_c_a. I missed seeing it during its initial release. Somehow I expected it to be little more than a long melodramatic love story set against a backdrop of African scenery. When it was nominate for the Oscar for Best Picture, my expectation about the film changed. I expected it to be a well-made, long melodramatic love story set against a backdrop of African scenery. When it won, I could not imagine it deserved to beat out T_h_e_C_o_l_o_r_P_u_r_p_l_e, but I decided that I did want to see it to decide first-hand. Well, I've seen it and with minor variations it was exactly what I expected. I guess I believe it was one of the top five films of 1985, at least of the films I've seen. It is that because in every aspect the film is decent or even good. The photography of Africa is the best aspect, though not particularly novel.

The worst aspect is that we have another story of good Europeans and bad Europeans in the far parts of the world. "Bad" Europeans are callous and vicious to the native population; "good" Europeans are intent on lifting up the native population to European standards at education, medicine, and religion. No Europeans care to save the local culture or show it any respect. At no point does Streep's character show any concern for, or even acknowledgement of, the culture she is helping to destroy. It is as hard to build up sympathy for a woman with the pomposity to "help her little brown brothers" by bringing missionaries to Africa as it is to build up sympathy for her ivory- and safari-hunting lover (who has the audacity to lament the loss of the Africa that he is participating in destroying). Frankly I find the political message of O_u_t_o_f_A_f_r_i_c_a a far more subtle and insidious than that of T_h_e_C_o_l_o_r_P_u_r_p_l_e. These objections aside, this is a well-made, if somewhat melodramatic, love story made on a big budget and I suppose for the mainstream viewer it is one of the best films of the year. Give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

