

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 7/4/84 -- Vol. 3, No. 1

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays
in LZ 3A-206 (HO meetings temporarily suspended) at noon.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

07/11 STARTIDE RISING by David Brin
07/31 Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 1
08/01 Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 2
08/02 Video meeting: AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE, pt. 3
08/22 TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON by R. A. MacAvoy
10/03 CIRCUS WORLD by Barry Longyear
11/14 THE TOMBS OF ATUAN by Ursula K. LeGuin
01/02 THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
02/13 SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.
Mark Leeper (576-2571, LZ 3E-215) and Evelyn Leeper (576-2378, LZ
1D-216) are co-chairpeople. HO's library and librarian Tim Schroeder
(949-5866) are in HO 2G-432. John Jetzt (577-5316) is HO-chairperson.

1. Our next discussion book is one of the main contenders for this
year's Hugo award. It is David Brin's STARTIDE RISING. The plot
deals with a number of different extra-terrestrial species looking
for the secret aboard a crashed spacecraft. The background to the
story is a titanic space battle. The novel is set in Brin's
universe which accents the concept of some races raising others to
sentience. The same universe was featured in Brin's SUNDIVER.
That discussion will be on July 11 at noon in Lincroft.

2. Two weeks ago I reviewed the cable production of FRANKENSTEIN.
At that time I referred to the ONLY film rendition of the Mary
Shelley novel that was faithful to the source. I said it is a film
titled VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN but is also known as TERROR OF
FRANKENSTEIN. I also said that it shows up from time to time on
Channel 9, WOR-TV. It is scheduled to be shown again on Saturday,
July 7, at 3pm. The film stars Per Oscarsson, Leon Vitali, and
Thelma, The Wonder Pony. Caveat #1: The film is a little dull.
Shelley didn't pace like Ian Fleming. That's one of the reasons
that nobody else did an accurate film version of the novel. Caveat
#2: WOR often preempts for baseball in the summertime. Pray for

rain.

3. Rumor squelching time. Ronald Reagan has denied that he is once again getting involved with the film industry on a film about a country that is friendly to the U.S. during WWII but gets nasty

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when fed too much of Europe after 1945. The film was supposed to be called KREMLINS. Richard Nixon is working on a script for a film called POSTBUSTERS, but it too is likely never to see the light of day. The Navy Department first promised funding to CONAN THE DESTROYER, then withdrew it when it found out that it was not about WWII Pacific Navy operations.

Mark Leeper
LZ 3E-215 x2571
...{houxn,hogpd,hocse}!lznv!mrl

Mercury Capsules - July 4, 1984

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wi!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

Yes, boys and girls, it's Hugo time again. I reviewed "Cascade Point" and "Speech Sounds" earlier in the year; both were pretty good, at least second place in their respective categories (novella and short story). Check the past few issues of the Notice for other nominee reviews.

o+ "Hardfought": novella, Greg Bear; appeared in the February issue of A_s_i_m_o_v'_s. Nebula winner, Hugo nominee.

The editor's note said something about how this wasn't a story to skim

before going to sleep. Well, I did read it in bed, but I don't think I missed anything. This story says some interesting, believable, frightening things about an ancient conflict between two races (human and another).

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Hurricane Claude": novella, Hilbert Schenck; appeared in the April issue of F&S_F. Hugo nominee.

I couldn't believe F&S_F published this one. It's a high tech story about a small weather-modification company, about to go under if it can't prove itself. Claude is their last chance, the last hurricane of the season. It's a biggie; it could wipe out lots of Cape Cod if it's not stopped.

What's so un-F&S_Fish about this story is the firm anchor in Clicheland. The effeminate-but-tough homosexuals, the butch wife and her weak husband, the elderly executive and the young, pretty PR woman, the damn-the-torpedoes, I-don't-care-if-I'm-left-holding-the-bag founder, the silly, irrational judge, the vicious press corps . . . Arrrrrrgh! Quick, someone get me Ben Bova's T_h_e_W_e_a_t_h_e_r_m_a_k_e_r_s; I need something to wash my eyes out with!

Paul S R Chisholm

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o+ "In the Face of My Enemy": novella, Joseph H Delany; appeared in the April issue of A_n_a_l_o_g. Hugo nominee.

When I was going over the list of novellas, I couldn't remember what this story was about. Yes, you may take that as a sign that it wasn't that good.

Prolog: some chaotic aliens make a human immortal. Story: a young woman from the Galactic EPA comes for final inspection of a planet. The nasty mine owners are keeping a secret from her. This involves a totally

unrelated race of aliens (or two?), who are doing something on the planet. The girl does, by and large, nothing; the immortal (how convenient that he's around) has to save the day. Eh.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Seeking": novella, David Palmer; appeared in the February issue of A_n_a_l_o_g. Hugo nominee.

This is a sequel to "Emergence", Palmer's Hugo nominated first story. A (very smart) ten year old girl survived a nuclear/biological world war, alone, in a bomb shelter. She copes with her losses, then discovers that others (at least one) are alive in the world. Her grief, and her exploration of the clean, still-functioning, dead world, made a gripping tale.

"Seeking" reads like a mediocre second chapter in a novel. She's looking for survivors, and not finding them. In fact, not much happens at all. Sometimes Palmer's writing skill overcomes the lack of action, as in the scene on the bridge; sometimes, and after a while, the story drags. I was beginning to fall asleep during the scene with the Trans Am (the interior monolog went on and on), and the ending was way too talky to be believable.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Black Air": novelette, Kim Stanley Robinson; appeared in the March issue of F&S_F. Hugo nominee.

If you were a kid with the Spanish Armada, when they went up against the British and lost, life wouldn't have been much fun. Gee, I would have guessed that. Well written, but not fantasy, not science fiction, and not good enough for a Hugo.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Blood Music": novelette, Greg Bear; appeared in the February issue of A_s_i_m_o_v'_s. Nebula award winner, Hugo nominee.

An interesting tale of forced evolution, but unbelievable, cliched, and predictable.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "The Monkey Treatment": novelette, Gardner Dozois; appeared in the July issue of F&S_F. Hugo nominee.

A funny horror story about weight loss. Recommended.
Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Slow Birds": novelette, Ian Watson; appeared in the June issue of F&S_F. Hugo nominee.

Would you believe a mid-Holocaust story? I won't give away even as much as the editor's blurb; read it.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "The Geometry of Narrative": short story, Hilbert Schenck; appeared in the August issue of A_n_a_l_o_g. Hugo nominee.

Let's face it; unless you're going to concentrate on living, productive writers, it's hard too come up with anything truly new to say about Literature (as in the English Department of most universities.) This story (?) is a tour de farce of literary analysis, and especially interesting if you're a math fan (like one or two Leepers who shall remain anonymous). Good fun, but not really a story, in a year with several good short SF stories. Recommended to read, but not for the Hugo.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Servant of the People": short story, Frederik Pohl; appeared in the February issue of A_n_a_l_o_g. Hugo nominee.

Another dumb robot story.

Paul S R Chisholm

o+ "Wong's Lost and Found Emporium": short story, William F Wu; appeared in the April issue of A_m_a_z_i_n_g. Hugo nominee.

Evelyn send me mail, saying, "We got the A_m_a_z_i_n_g with the other story in it; don't send in your ballot yet." I'm glad I didn't.

There are very few writers who can do a good new twist on the Magic Shoppe story. The last to give a respectable showing was Harlan Ellison. The temptation is to explain it all; you're likely to at least damage the mystery, and make the idea less fascinating.

William F Wu, in what I think is his first published story, has created a masterful piece of work here. He gives less explanation than Mary Poppins ("I never explain anything"); but by concentrating on the c_h_a_r_a_c_t_e_r_s, and adding some brand new ideas, he makes the "Shoppe" come alive. Highly recommended; strong competition for Octavia Butler's "Speech Sounds".

Paul S R Chisholm

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CONAN HEAVY and CONAN LITE: A comparison of two Conan films
by Mark R. Leeper

"Don't laugh, but you know, I actually enjoyed C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n. I heard it about six times from six different people. Usually it is from people who know fantasy but who also know this film took a real lambasting by the critics for some very predictable reasons. C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n was a violent film. That is because Robert E. Howard's character Conan is a violent man. His weapon is a two-handed sword. On Saturday morning cartoons, I am told, there is a barbarian character with a sword that shoots stunning rays. That's because children are not supposed to know that the sword was really a violent weapon. Also, the scriptwriter must be someone really sick. What kind of a person would make up lines like the best thing in life is defeating your enemy and hearing the lamentation of his women? Well, sorry, guys: that quote was actually taken from Genghis Khan who also had a sword that didn't shoot stunning rays.

C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n also got shot down for being overly intellectual. Instead of keeping up a S_t_a_r_W_a_r_s pace, Conan stops to ponder questions like "the Riddle of Steel." Then there are those bothersome quotes from people like Nietzsche

Actually, I don't care if you laugh but I still enjoying seeing C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n on videotape. The violence doesn't bother me because it is part of the character. If Schwarzenegger isn't a great actor, he certainly is up to the demands of his role. James Earl Jones is not only up to the

demands of his role as Thulsa Doom, he turns Doom into just about the most hypnotic screen villain that I can think of. The only villain that comes close is Darth Vader and Vader falls short because he had only Jones's voice, not his facial expression. Then there is Max Von Sydow as Osric. To my taste he overpowers his role just a bit, but he is also quite good. Schwarzenegger has a forceful appearance that usually makes him the center of attention on the screen. Both of these other two men, by sheer weight of acting talent and forceful speaking, make Conan seem insignificant. That, after all, is the Riddle of Steel.

The entire film of C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n is filled with a surprisingly effective feel of fire and steel and fatalism rare in film. This is underscored in the first part of the film by effective camerawork, particularly in the scenes of Conan's village, the steam-snorting horses, and the icy forest, all powerfully recorded on film. C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n was directed by John Milius, who also did A_p_o_c_a_l_y_p_s_e_N_o_w. In fact, the last third of the two films are surprisingly similar. Both concern reluctant assassins nearly seduced by their intended victims and both have very similar styles.

And then there is Basil Poledouris's score for C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n. As I sit writing this review I am listening to the record. Maybe for the fortieth time I am listening to the record. I don't play even S_t_a_r_W_a_r_s

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that often. The record has about fifty minutes of music and it never reuses a theme. If you are familiar with film scores, you will know how rare it is that a composer writes fifty minutes of unrepeating themes. Most scores have three or four new themes and then keep recombining them. Poledouris's score is fifty minutes of creativity with beautiful orchestral music. Some of the new themes are powerful, some delicate, some lyrical. The musical score is probably my favorite of all time. If you collect film scores and see it but you can't imagine a good film score about a man who bashes heads, get it anyway. There is a heck of a lot more to C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n than meets the eye. And if you did like C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n, you might like C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_D_e_s_t_r_o_y_e_r. C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_D_e_s_t_r_o_y_e_r is a different approach to the Conan character. It

might better have been called C_o_n_a_n_L_i_t_e. The approach to the character is considerably lighter. This is primarily due to the replacement of John Milius as director with Richard Fleischer, known for 2_0_0_0_0_L_e_a_g_u_e_s
U_n_d_e_r
_t_h_e_S_e_a_F_a_n_t_a_s_t_i_c_V_o_y_a_g_e_,and
S_o_y_l_e_n_t_G_r_e_e_n. The style of the new film is less violent and macho, more like that of a Sinbad film. Lost is the primal atmosphere the first film projected so effectively. In his own world, the character is more famous, but in ours he is less credible. The contrast is almost like the difference between James Bond in D_r_N_o and Bond in O_c_t_o_p_u_s_s_y. Fleischer's idea of atmospheric photography is a tinted sky and a tinted ground with men riding dusty horses rather than the very natural-looking scenes of Conan's village at the beginning of the first film. It works, but not as effectively or convincingly.

Conan's mission in this film is to accompany a young woman on a quest for a magical horn. Unknown to Conan (but known to the audience), the quest is an evil one and the true plan calls for Conan to be murdered and the young woman sacrificed. Conan has as a sidekick Akiro, the wizard from the first film. Akiro's powers seem somewhat modified in this film. The first time, it was clear he had some magical knowledge, but not very much. In this film, his powers are inconsistent. He has considerable levitation power, but does not use it early in the film to save his life. Another sidekick is a thief who is Malak, a buffoon along only for unneeded comic relief. The Conan of the books and the first film would never have tolerated him. Another purpose for him seems to be explaining the plot to the children the new PG rating allows in. For example, Akiro says the entrance to a fortress is in a pool and Malak chimes in, "You mean, under the water?" Also, it seems Conan's propensity for hitting horses and camels will be a running gag in the series.

Perhaps the biggest script problem, by comparison with the first film, is that the villainy is divided up among too many people, none of whom are particularly powerful or forceful in themselves. All the evils in the first film were rays emanating from one incredible, evil messiah, Thulsa Doom, played by a man who really has the charismatic power to play a messiah convincingly. In the books, the evil wizard Thoth-Amon is as powerful and evil as Thulsa Doom, but the script just treats overcoming him as just another one of the labors Conan must perform. Several small villains are effective; one big villain played by James Earl Jones is more so.

Poledouris once again does the score, which unfortunately borrows heavily from his score for the first film, but also adds a number of new themes. Once again, Conan is called on to fight a monster. Carlo Rambaldi, who constructed a marvelous giant snake for the first film, built a less impressive Dagoth for this film, but it still was effective enough to have members of the audience shouting.

_ C _ o _ n _ a _ n _ t _ h _ e _ D _ e _ s _ t _ r _ o _ y _ e _ r stands on its own as an impressive fantasy film,

one of the best since the last one. On the -4 to +4 scale, I'd give it a respectable +2, just one point below its predecessor. And with its new PG rating, maybe fewer people will have to say, "Don't laugh, but I actually enjoyed _ C _ o _ n _ a _ n _ t _ h _ e _ D _ e _ s _ t _ r _ o _ y _ e _ r."

Flaws in WARGAMES
A list by Mark R. Leeper

(This is for informational purposes only; don't call me up to argue about item n.)

1. A thump of the soldier's shouldn't reset the alarm
2. WOPR is a stupid-looking machine with a stupid name
3. WOPR wasn't designed to replace humans
4. Symbiosis is not why nitrogen nodules stick to plant roots
5. The kid has an absurd array of computer equipment
6. The modem is too noisy
7. The terminal is running at at least 2400 baud over phone lines
8. Trying to call every number in four exchanges is infeasible timewise
9. No system gives you help BEFORE login
10. No system gives you information before you've logged in
11. You can't use a backdoor to get around data encryption
12. NORAD would monitor the false login attempts
13. After logging in, he wouldn't get data that fast
14. Computers cannot converse in English
15. The boy couldn't build such a voice box
16. The computer would not ask about checkers instead
17. Powering down the terminal wouldn't kill the screens at NORAD
18. WOPR wouldn't have been able to trace the call
19. WOPR wouldn't have an ACU
20. After disconnecting the line, the terminal wouldn't keep running the game
21. They don't give tours of the war room among the consoles
22. WOPR wouldn't have an open line in Sunnyvale

23. WOPR wouldn't still be in use after 11 years
24. They couldn't have connected the boy to reservations made in the girl's name
25. The kid wouldn't be left alone with a computer terminal at NORAD
26. The NORAD administrator wouldn't have a voice box in his office
27. WOPR wouldn't have a will of its own
28. WOPR wouldn't have access to personnel files
29. The boy wouldn't be left alone a second time
30. The boy wouldn't know the inside of the circuitry
31. The lock would not operate by sound alone
32. The boy wouldn't just happen to also be a superior athlete
33. The air vents would not be unsecured at NORAD
34. The expert would have no trouble opening the door
35. The phone mouthpiece on a pay phone is not removable
36. Pay telephones cannot be bypassed with a conductor
37. WOPR would not be making the boy's moves for him in the game
38. They are F-15's instead of F-16's
39. The computer scientist would not be trying to teach a computer futility
40. Intelligence would not just be telling about bombers projecting radar images
41. They wouldn't be able to run the jeep through a sealed gate
42. They wouldn't be allowed to just run through the front door at DEFCON
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43. Falken can't assume that the enemy won't attack
44. WOPR would not wipe out the password file as a means of security
45. One level entry, echoed password doesn't seem to be in effect anymore
46. It would be impossible to predict exactly when launch codes will be guessed
47. WOPR lets them run games without a login
48. WOPR wouldn't know it had four correct digits
49. Tictactoe is a poor way to demonstrate the principle to the computer
50. Computers do not explode when they overload
51. WOPR would not start playing out scenarios at launch time
52. WOPR would have figured out long ago that it couldn't win
53. Winning would not be well-defined and binary
54. WOPR wouldn't say "the only way to win is not to play"
55. WOPR doesn't use natural strategy
56. The boy has antiquated equipment

PILGERMANN by Russell Hoban
Washington Square Press, 1984 ((c) 1983), \$5.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Russell Hoban is best known in science fiction circles for R_i_d_d_l_e_y
W_a_l_k_e_r, his innovative post-holocaust novel (published in 1980), which
Anthony Burgess listed as one of the ninety-nine "outstanding achievements
of fiction in the English language since World War II" (see the L_i_n_c_r_o_f_t-
H_o_l_m_d_e_l_S_c_i_e_n_c_e_F_i_c_t_i_o_n_C_l_u_b
N_o_t_i_c_e of 2/15/84 for details). Written in
first person dialect, R_i_d_d_l_e_yW_a_l_k_e_r was widely acclaimed both inside and
outside the science fiction field. Now, three years later, Hoban has
published his next novel, P_i_l_g_e_r_m_a_n_n.

P_i_l_g_e_r_m_a_n_n is also told in the first person, but not in dialect, which
makes it somewhat easier to read than R_i_d_d_l_e_yW_a_l_k_e_r. Still, Hoban uses
some stream-of-consciousness techniques which require the reader's full
attention. Pilgermann is an Eleventh Century Jew who, on the way home from
cuckolding the tax-collector, is castrated by a mob of Christians (but his
life is saved by the same--unsuspecting?--tax-collector), has a vision of
Christ (who tells him that God is no longer involved with mankind and that
he--Christ--has replaced him), and goes on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

While on his pilgrimage, Pilgermann considers his past, his present,
and his future. What is more important, he considers the past history,
present state, and future possibilities of the human race. It's a dark

vision--of man forced by his nature to fall:

"God MADE us such that we would eat of that fruit, God would have been ashamed of us if we hadn't done it. God would never have bothered to make a man and a woman to live out their days dreaming in a garden."
(p.31)

then realizing his preference for sin over saintliness:

"Time after time had violent men sharpened the cross into a sword and made their silken vestments into banners; time after time had they spat out the wafer and the wine and shouted for real blood and real bodies."
(p. 98).

Pilgermann, from his vantage point outside of time and space, hovers over everyone and everything, seeing all that has happened and all that has not, the accomplished and the unaccomplished thought. Unlike a work fixed in a specific time or place (even an imaginary one), P_i_l_g_e_r_m_a_n_n is able to show us the cycles in life--the short and the long. It is to a large extent about cycles and patterns, repeating to infinity:

"We are, for example, clever enough to know that a year is a measure of passage, not permanence; we call the seasons spring, summer, autumn, and winter, knowing that they are continually passing one into the other. We are not surprised at this but when we give to seasons of another sort the names Rome, Byzantium, Islam, or Mongol Empire we are astonished to see that each one refuses to remain what it is." (p. 116)

The pattern of tiles that Pilgermann draws in the square in Antioch is merely the physical representation of the non-physical patterns that

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surround us. Just as everyone sees their own pattern in the tiles, called by their own name, so does everyone see a different pattern to the universe, to life.

P_i_l_g_e_r_m_a_n_n is a serious work, but it is not without humor. On one page, Pilgermann can ponder the plight of the Jews throughout history; on the next, he is boarding a ship and saying:

"I paid him fifty ducats and abandoned all hope. That is, I thought that I had abandoned all hope until I went below decks and smelled the smell there; then I found that there was more yet hope to abandon." (p. 103)

Pilgermann sees life darkly, it is true, but he looks at what he sees and tries to make some sense of it instead of turning his back on it. For this, at least, he should be heard.

LAST DAY OF CREATION by Wolfgang Jeschke
(translated by Gertrud Mander)
St. Martins Press, 1982, \$12.95.

The United States government, realizing that time travel is possible (more on this later), decides to solve the energy crisis caused by the Arabs withholding oil by sending a team five-and-a-half million years back into the past to build a pipeline to divert the oil from the Middle East to the North Sea, where it will be pumped back into the present. When they get there, they discover they are not the only ones with designs on the past.

There are a lot of ideas being juggled here, and I suppose Jeschke can't be blamed if he fumbles one or two occasionally. As an adventure novel--man in the prehistoric past and all--it is moderately successful, although the characters' access to all sorts of modern technology does make it less exciting than, for example, M_i_s_t_s_o_f_D_a_w_n (a juvenile novel by Chad Oliver in which an eleven-year-old boy accidentally goes back to prehistoric times with the aid of a time machine invented by a convenient relative). Part of the appeal of the "prehistoric adventure" is to see how the characters make do with the tools at hand. Also, because Jeschke is trying to do so much, the adventure gets somewhat short shrift (i.e., there isn't enough of it).

This is also a time travel novel (and as a consequence of that, an alternate history novel of sorts also). The time travel is somewhat glossed over--"gravitational anomalies" send matter back in time to balance themselves out--but, like faster-than-light travel, is a traditional science fiction device which is known(?) to be impossible in fact, but allowed to be assumed in fiction. Jeschke does manage to avoid one of the obvious potholes on this road: because his time machine is not precise, there is a wide scattering of arrival times around the goal. Therefore, you cannot say that the Arabs, when they realized what had happened (how?--this isn't clear), would merely send t_h_e_i_r team back to arrive a few months ahead of the United States team. As it stands, various teams from various powers arrive throughout the timespan of the novel.

One of the classic time travel ideas that Jeschke uses is that time travel is realized to be possible when someone discovers some anachronistic artifacts and realizes that they could only have gotten where they were by time travel. Another (even more classic--in fact, t_h_e classic) is that travel into the past will cause changes in the present. The main character, Steve Stanley, comes from our present. When he travels back to his past he meets men and women from many now-presents, then-futures. (As someone observed, the English language is not designed for describing time travel. For the sake of this discussion, let's call them futures.) Murchinson, for example, comes from a future where the United States never got Florida from Spain and Mexico still had an empire. Harness comes from a future where the early Zionist leaders were assassinated in Russia and instead of Israel, his

future had the United Pan-Arab Republic. Now this is all well and good, except that once again, causes and effects have been grossly over-simplified for the sake of being able to talk about "nifty" alternate histories.

Murchinson knows of an author named "Mark Twain" who wrote about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, but this author was not born in Hannibal, Missouri, and was in many other ways different from Stanley's Twain. Are they the same Twain or not? (Does this question even have any meaning?) All of Jeschke's alternate futures seem very close to our own. (A lot of them speak the same English apparently.) Is he claiming that the alterations occurred because of what the time travelers did in the past, or that powers from all the various futures sent back time travelers to a point before the branching to improve their position? If the former, wouldn't the differences be much, much bigger? Where are the representatives of a future dominated by Eastern culture? Of a future which never knew Rome? If the latter, why are all the travelers going to the same time span? How do they all know that's the important era, since there is basically no forward time travel or communication in this novel. (On the other hand, how does the reader know that they _ a _ r _ e _ n' _ t going back to all different eras, and we only see this one?)

In short, Jeschke tries to cover a lot of ideas in this novel. He is not always successful, and the writing style (or maybe it's the translation) gives this a very amateurish feel, but there is something of interest here to those who enjoy the analysis of time travel and alternate histories.

_ N _ O _ T _ E _ S _ F _ R _ O _ M _ T _ H _ E _ N _ E _ T

Contributed by Rob Mitchell & Dale Skran

>From ihnp4!zehntel!tektronix!hplabs!sri-unix!Caro.PA@XEROX.ARPA
Fri Jun 22 11:53:10 1984
Subject: Re: Japanese swords and sorcery

There is a little known book that is chock full of Japanese samurai fighting, acts of great heroism and bravery, magical mysticism, sorcery, and monkish mirth. The book is called "Tales of the Heike." It is about "... the days of the Heike clan ..." and the war that they fight with their rivals, the Minamoto clan. The opening paragraph follows:

The sound of the bell of Jetavana echoes the impermanence of all things. The hue of the flowers of the teak-tree declares that they who flourish must be brought low. Yea, the proud ones are but for a moment, like an evening dream in springtime. The mighty are destroyed at the last, they are but as the dust before the wind.

The kicker is that the "Tales of the Heike," or "Heike Monogatari" was written in the thirteenth century by "historians" of that age: it is not fiction per se, but rather more like legend. The events detailed took place at about the same time that the Icelandic Saga's were being written. The translation that I have is by A.L. Sadler, and can be found in most bookstores that carry non-western history books.

Perry

>From ihnp4!zehntel!tektronix!hplabs!sri-unix!feldman%awesum.DEC@decwrl.ARPA
Mon Jun 25 13:10:05 1984
Subject: Jessica Amanda Salmonsens

I have enjoyed her books very much, but heard some strange things about her. Since I dont know if they are true, I dont want to state them here. I am an instructor in a Korean form of Kendo and like her books not just because they are entertaining and well written, but because the sword scenes are not baloney as in so much other "Sword and Sorcery".

There is another book by an author whose name I forget which has a Japanese Kendo component as well as Zen. The basic plot is that a planet is colonized only to find out too late that it is populated with a form of Brain parasite. The very clever expedition commander (and part time Zen master) forms the culture around Zen precepts. Only by keeping the mind clear thru Zen meditation can the colonists keep there minds from being overcome. Does this ring any bells??

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---Geoff

>From ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!wales@UCLA-LOCUS.ARPA
Tue Jun 26 15:50:33 1984
Subject: "Salvage and Destroy" by Edward Llewellyn

I recently read a moderately interesting SF book:

Llewellyn, Edward: Salvage and Destroy. (Daw Books, 1984, ISBN 0-87997-898-8.)

It isn't a fantastic book that you should race down to your local bookstore at top speed to get -- and then stay up all night reading -- but it's not bad either.

Without spoiling the plot, I can say that it is about an advanced spacegoing civilization (the Ults) who have been monitoring Earth for several hundred years. When it becomes evident that human civilization is developing spacefaring abilities, the Ults decide to find out as much info as they can,

then destroy their telemetry beacon before Earth finds out about it.

The main character in the book is an Ultron (an Ult leader) named Lucian, who embarks on the "salvage and destroy" mission together with a crew of humans descended from New Englanders taken by spaceship to one of the Ult planets around 1700 AD. The Ults can change their physical form within limits, so Lucian has assumed the shape of a human male for this mission. Ults are hermaphroditic, incidentally, and much of the story is devoted to Lucian's trying to comprehend and deal with human sexuality.

Lucian narrates the entire story in first person, which contributes to its readability. The ending was not quite what I had expected.

The name "Ult" lends itself easily to some terrible puns, by the way. Apparently, the title of respect for an Ultron translates as "Your Ultimate" -- leading Lucian at one point to ask his human crewmates to stop calling him that because it sounds silly in English.

Whether the Ults used Ultrix on their computers is not stated.

-- Rich <wales@UCLA-LOCUS.ARPA>

>From ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!hao!seismo!cmcl2!lanl-a!unm-cvax!unmvax!moret

Tue Jun 26 10:28:45 1984

Subject: Mervyn Peake

I highly recommend the Penguin edition--and not just for the reasons discussed by Jim Janney. Each book in the trilogy is also a substantial

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work, and it pays to have a quality paperback, that won't disintegrate from repeated readings.

To my mind, the best volume is the first (Titus Groan); it includes absolutely fantastic descriptions of the fortress (Gormenghast), with an atmosphere unequalled in fiction anywhere and some very humorous passages about education. The main characteristic is the style: the author's prose is *very* sophisticated, although sometimes a bit heavy or germanic. I found myself re-reading the same few pages several times over, just to savor

the richness of the prose.

The second volume is less polished; the style is less consistent and the atmosphere somewhat lacking. Towards the end of the second volume, the author starts on a wholesale campaign of (literally) character assassination which continues in the third volume. The third volume is definitely hasty, as would be expected given the circumstances under which it finally appeared. As to whether this is SF... There is no futuristic or historical pretense, nor is it close to fantasy; it is just good (speculative?) fiction.

Bernard M.E. Moret (505) 277-31{31,12}

>From ihnp4!inuxc!pur-ee!CS-Mordred!Pucc-H:Physics:dub Sat Jun 30 22:32:03 1984
Subject: re:Clan of Cave Bear

Subject: Movie gossip

From: Michael Rubin <RUBIN@COLUMBIA-20.ARPA>
A local movie critic claims that Daryl Hannah (sp?) (the "Splash" mermaid) is going to play Ayla the Cro-Magnon cavewoman in a forthcoming production of "Clan of the Cave Bear". Sounds a bit strange to me, since in the book Ayla ages from about five to maybe fourteen, but then again she does end up taller than all the Neanderthals. Anyhow, the book is bad enough that it might make a good movie....

Ok, I know that it was just your opinion, but your wrong. I liked "The Clan of the Cave Bear" and couldn't put it down while I was reading it. Well, the main character was almost too perfect to be true, but Jean Auel's (sp?) descriptions of the Clan's lifestyle are very interesting.

When you consider all the sage/trash that is being published these days I though "Clan..." was rather unique.

D. Bartholomew

>From ihnp4!zehntel!tektronix!hpplabs!sri-unix!SHERMAN@RU-BLUE.ARPA

Fri Jun 22 10:15:37 1984
Subject: Dune trailer

The preview to "Dune" is out in the theaters. Simply put, it looks terrific! Scenes include Harkonnen (spelling approx!) levitating about, Sting running around in his blue Calvin Klein underwear, Paul negating the homer, and the Fremens looking militant. The accent was clearly on action, and the sets look terrific. With any bit of luck, we have a fantastic film to look forward to this December!!

Steve

P.S. The rotoscoping of the 'blue eyes' was not included in any of the preview footage.

>From ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!duntemann.wbst@XEROX.ARPA
Thu Jun 28 08:55:53 1984
Subject: Rock and Rule

RE ROCK AND RULE...

If you think that's a dumb title, consider the working title, which was DRATS! I sat in on a little schtick by Melvana (the Canadian animation shop which did Rock and Rule, Animalympics, etc.) at Iguanacon and have been watching for DRATS out of the corner of my eye ever since. Best I did was a Marvel comic book made of fuzzily-screened cells out of the movie. Looked visually skillful and unutterably stupid. On the other hand, if somebody played it at a con I'd go--if that sounds like a suggestion, well, concoms, it is.

Sigourney/Scirocco wrapup--looks like the ayes have it. So Scirocco had a broken nose--I don't recall any plot point turning on the brokenness of her nose. Or her looks generally; if a director wanted a pretty Scirocco I wouldn't kick too much. Sigourney Weaver has the look of high intelligence about her, which is a condition on which EVERYTHING turns in Titan/Wizard/Demon.

A much tougher directorial challenge would be getting a horde of topless, full-breasted Titanides past the film censors. American nipplephobia is nothing short of astounding.

--Jeff Duntemann

>From houxm!ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!VLSI@DEC-MARLBORO
Thu Jun 28 12:16:00 1984
Subject: "Ring of Power" aka "Rock and Rule"

It sounds like "Rock and Rule" is being re-released as "Ring of Power" at

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the LA Filmex. Good, I liked it a lot when I saw it in Boston a while ago. Sure it had a hokey ending, but there were some great touches in it. Eg, the aging rock superstar (named "Mock", who could they be referring to?) has a mansion that metamorphosizes into a jet-propelled zeppelin after he kidnaps the heroine. Try doing that with models, Lucasfilm! It was only showing in the smallest theaters, though, and it closed after a week. "Something Wicked This Way Comes" also closed after a week, and I also liked it. For a while there I was worried that I was poisoning all these great movies.

/jlr

>From ihnp4!zehntel!hplabs!sri-unix!RG.JMTURN%MIT-OZ@MIT-MC.ARPA
Thu Jul 5 00:56:00 1984
Subject: sf at Filmex

[Re: RING OF POWER]

This is almost certainly a re-release of "Rock and Rule", a picture which bit the big one last year, made by Nelvana, a Canadian animation house. This, by the way, is the film that convinced Nelvana to stop doing animated movies (and consequently drop the Elfquest movie...)

James M. Turner

>From ihnp4!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!tektronix!orca!brucec
Mon Jul 2 12:52:12 1984
Subject: The Day of the Triffids - ARTS TV

The ARTS cable network broadcast a dramatization of John Wyndham's "Day of the Triffids" last Saturday. My advice to those who missed it is: if it comes on again, SEE IT!

This version, unlike a Hollywood version done back in the 60's (I think), was very faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the book. It was emphatically not high-budget, special effects, movie-type sf. The emphasis

was on character and theme. The central characters were well developed and well acted (I believe that the actor in the leading role was the teacher in the BBC series "To Serve Them All My Days," which is currently being re-run on Masterpiece Theater on PBS). Although the story involves the deaths of billions of people, this is shown in the deaths of a few, making the impact much greater, because it is focused.

The basic theme of the story is survival: what it is worth, and how expensive it is to the survivors and the victims. The theme runs through this entire program, rather than being tacked on as a message at the end. It never gets preachy or dull, because the story really is suspenseful: it is never clear until the end whether anyone will survive, let alone the main

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characters.

I've always been partial to this book as just about the best end-of-world story to come out of the gloom of the 40's and 50's (well, with the exception of "Earth Abides," of course). The producers of the program have done a beautiful job of adapting the book to the screen. The production values are good, though not as good as if it had been done with a large budget. What keeps the visual aspect of the film going is the "look" of the program: a good use of light to aid the mood, and the immediacy of tape. The score is also quite good, providing a brooding dissonance for the nasty parts, and good suspense music for the creepy parts.

This is easily the best thing I've seen on TV this year.

Bruce Cohen

