

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 7/30/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 3

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

08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

08/27 LZ: 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY by Arthur C. Clarke (Evolution)

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 3E-433 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). MT Librarian is Bruce Szablak, MT 4C-418 (957-5868). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Our last Leeperhouse film fest was a little late, since we were out of town when we normally would have had a film evening. Our next will then be at a two-week interval rather than a three-week one. This double feature is built around the fact that the next evening, 20th Century Fox will be premiering its remake of THE FLY, directed by David Cronenberg. So, on August 7, 7 PM at my place we will be showing

Altered Humans

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE (chapter 7)

THE FLY (1958) dir. by Kurt Neumann

SWAMP THING (1982) dir. by Wes Craven

SWAMP THING is a tongue-in-cheek adaptation of the super-hero comic book of the same name. A scientist working on a super plant-food ends up part vegetable himself. This film was surprisingly popular with the critics, mostly because it does not take itself too seriously. It is just good fun.

I am afraid that I cannot be particularly objective about THE FLY. I was eight years old when I saw the film and have it has been a favorite ever since. I see it as classical tragedy, the story of

the man who had everything I would ever want and lost it. What can I say objectively about the film? Well, it has a very good screenplay by James Clavell who later wrote novels like KING RAT, SHOGUN, and TAI-PAN. In spite of a scientifically ridiculous premise, this is an engrossing science fiction horror film and one

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of the most popular science fiction films of the 50's. It's lush look belies its relatively low budget. Fox made it but expected it to be only a minor summer film and instead found it was one of their biggest money makers of the year and an enduring classic. It had two much inferior sequels and has now been remade.

2. For those people who refused to come to the Leeperhouse festival and see the film THE RETURN OF MARTIN GUERRE because they wanted to see the prequel MARTIN GUERRE, I am sorry I could not find the film anywhere. I am told, however, that I may be able to find on video MARTIN GUERRE RIDES AGAIN or GODZILLA VS. MARTIN GUERRE. I will look for it while I am out trying to get a copy of FURTHER SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER.

3. Lincroft's next discussion is about faster-than-light travel. Unfortunately, the mail that I will send out tomorrow reminding the powers that be there that I need a blurb will *not* be faster than light, so there is no blurb today. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

Mercury Capsules - July 30, 1986

"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 pa!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft, {pegasus,mtgzz,ihnp4}!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at 113A LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

I'm sorry if any of you have missed this column; work for AT&T has kept me busy, as has a little freelance writing. One of these fine days, I want to write capsule reviews of the Hugo nominees. I'm running behind. . . .

+o _P_s_y_c_h_o _I_I_I: movie, 1986.

This is a reasonable horror film that seems to want to be treated as a mystery. As a mystery, the story is muddled with clues inconsistent with the solution. The film culminates in revelations seemingly having nothing to do with what was going on and are certainly not pointed to by anything that has happened before. If you turn off the problem-solving part of your brain, the film is a deftly directed exercise in macabre. The director, of course, is none other than the film's star, Anthony Perkins, and he shows himself to have reasonable talent for directing a character he should, by now, know well. But with a better plot he could have used that talent to better advantage. Give it a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Mark R Leeper

+o T_h_e_G_r_e_a_t_M_o_u_s_e_D_e_t_e_c_t_i_v_e: movie, 1986.

Basil of Baker Street, the Sherlock Holmes of rodents, is beloved of the children who read his books (foremost of whom is my wife). In a story that I am told bears no relation to any of the books, Basil and a mouse Dr. Watson must protect a mouse Queen Victoria from a nasty plot by a rat Moriarty. The Disney animated features that you remember most fondly probably have powerful images of evil--the Satanic form in F_a_n_t_a_s_i_a, the dragon-queen in S_l_e_e_p_i_n_g_B_e_a_u_t_y, etc. That is what is missing here. All that is left is a pleasant children's story told without much art. On the -4 to +4 scale give it a 0.

Mark R Leeper

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+o T_o_p_G_u_n: movie, 1986.

A_n_O_f_f_i_c_e_r_a_n_d_a_G_e_n_t_l_e_m_a_n was the story of what one young man was willing to go through because he wanted to fly jets. The main characters in T_o_p_G_u_n already do fly jets. They are in a school for the top one percent of Navy pilots. Once again we have the melodrama of candidates trying to make the grade in Navy school. A_n_O_f_f_i_c_e_r_a_n_d_a_G_e_n_t_l_e_m_a_n was riveting because the characters were struggling to make something of themselves. In T_o_p_G_u_n the characters have already made it to the top 1%. Their struggle is to improve a bit and perhaps win the

trophy for being #1. Their lives on the ground make pretty poor entertainment. The producers have seen to it that the aerial photography and its special effects counterfeit were the best anywhere. The actual stars of the film are the planes and, indirectly, their real-life pilots. The story on the ground just fills in the spaces between times when the planes are on camera. For the story I'd give the film a 0 but as a spectacle with the photography it gets a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Mark R Leeper

+o T_o_p_G_u_n: movie, 1986.

It starts out just like T_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_S_t_u_f_f. It's dawn. The smoke is rolling over the runway. There's a plane silhouetted against the sky. And it's all downhill from there. Bo-o-o-r-r-r-ring!

Evelyn C Leeper

+o A_b_o_u_t_L_a_s_t_N_i_g_h_t: movie, 1986.

A_b_o_u_t_L_a_s_t_N_i_g_h_t is about two hours of melodrama about a couple who can just about get it together. They start out mad about each other and just end up mad. It is also about his best friend and about hers, each of whom is unhappy about the couple getting together. At the end of two hours we know more about the friends than about the couple. On the -4 to +4 scale, A_b_o_u_t_L_a_s_t_N_i_g_h_t rates about a flat 0.

Mark R Leeper

+o A_b_o_u_t_L_a_s_t_N_i_g_h_t: movie, 1986.

The story of people and relationships and the problems they have. If the people weren't such jerks, they wouldn't have such problems.

Evelyn C Leeper

THE FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Adults should enjoy this Disney-Norwegian co-production as much as the kids in the audience. It is a pleasant boy-and-his-saucer film with an acceptably high level of science fiction value.

While Disney Films adult film of the summer, R_u_t_h_l_e_s_s_P_e_o_p_l_e, is playing to sell-out audiences, they are releasing their children's film, T_h_e_F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_N_a_v_i_g_a_t_o_r, a film that old Walt would have loved to make while he was alive--uh, with some minor cleaning up of dialogue. The film has the sense of wonder he had with T_w_e_n_t_y_T_h_o_u_s_a_n_d_L_e_a_g_u_e_s_U_n_d_e_r_t_h_e_S_e_a and failed to recapture in later soft science fiction attempts.

On July 4, 1978, David hears a noise in the woods. Investigating, he falls into a ravine, picks himself up, and returns home to find perfect strangers living in his house. It seems it is now 1986 and while he hasn't changed, the world around him certainly has. A nasty government agency--unrealistically called NASA--wants to know where a little boy can go for eight years without aging. The boy is taken to a facility for interrogation and study. This happens to be the same facility to which an odd van-sized floating object has recently been taken.

T_h_e_F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_N_a_v_i_g_a_t_o_r is no B_l_a_d_e_r_u_n_n_e_r; it's a children's film. But it is a good children's film. It doesn't talk down to children, it doesn't have a cloying moral, it doesn't misrepresent technology. Like with S_p_a_c_e_C_a_m_p, NASA does have cute robots. But F_l_i_g_h_t's R.A.L.F. is quite within the range of current technology. It does little more than deliver mail. I am less happy with the film's making the space agency the heavy, but then so did E. T. and S_t_a_r_m_a_n. For a children's film, T_h_e_F_l_i_g_h_t_o_f_t_h_e_N_a_v_i_g_a_t_o_r did a reasonable job of entertaining the adults in the audience. Give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

HARLEQUIN/DARK FORCES
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Robert Powell turns in another enjoyable performance as a magician and a healer--perhaps a transformed bird--who charms his way into a politician's household. Apparently inspired by the story of Rasputin, this Australian fantasy is worth seeing.

One of those faces that I tend to look for in films is that of Robert Powell. It isn't that I think he is a great actor, though in a fairly wide range of roles he has been good in each role. But I cannot remember ever seeing him in a film that I have not liked. (I missed T_o_m_m_y, luckily. He played Tommy's father and that is one film I might not have liked.) Powell's name on a film generally implies the film is worth seeing. His films include the odd horror fantasy T_h_e_A_s_p_h_y_x and T_h_e_A_s_y_l_u_m, he played the composer in Ken Russell's M_a_h_l_e_r, he was the hero of an enjoyable version of T_h_e_3_9_S_t_e_p_s, and he starred in an odd little fantasy called T_h_e_S_u_r_v_i_v_o_r. Hence I was intrigued when my video store came up with D_a_r_k_F_o_r_c_e_s starring Powell. A little minor detective work using Halliwell and Maltin indicated that D_a_r_k_F_o_r_c_e_s was a re-naming of a 1979 Australian film called H_a_r_l_e_q_u_i_n.

An up-and-coming politician (played by David Hemmings) has a son who is dying of leukemia. As the boy is nearing death and his doctor is giving up all hope, a man turns up outside the boy's window, steps inside, and cures the boy--apparently. This strange man is a magician and a healer. he charms his way into the politician's household and seems to hold Hemmings's wife spellbound. Sometimes he seems genuine, sometimes a charlatan. Broderick Crawford, who runs a corrupt political machine and who is grooming Hemmings, does not like the influence the strange man is exerting on Hemmings's household. And thereby hangs the tale.

H_a_r_l_e_q_u_i_n//D_a_r_k_F_o_r_c_e_s is nobody's idea of a blockbuster film. It is a minor fantasy that seems vaguely based on the story of Rasputin. Like most Australian films that get to the United States, it is very competently made and is certainly worth renting if it shows up at your

local video store. Give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

ALIENS

A film review by Dale L. Skran Jr.

This review is intended mainly as a counterpoint to Mark Leeper's review. A_l_i_e_n_s is definitely THE SF film of the year, but not just because it has no discernible competition at this point. Contrary to Mark's claim, A_l_i_e_n_s is not "more of the same." More of the same would involve another mining ship finding the planet again and having its crew getting eaten by the Alien. What happens is for once the logical outgrowth of the first film. While it is true that the sequel adds only a little to our knowledge of the creature, it fills in the gaps about the future society, at least sufficiently so that we can understand that "The Company" is acting outside the law in trying to bring back the alien, while at the same time presenting an absolutely wonderful group of "Colonial Marines."

A_l_i_e_n_s is the finest military science fiction ever put on film. It is NOT, I repeat NOT, a "haunted house in space" story. As the preview says, "This time it's war!" and a beautifully, carefully envisioned one at that. We see old standby SF weapons finally realized visually with a level of realism beyond anything previously. The Marines bring to bear the ultimate helicopter, the 20th generation Sherman tank, plasma rifles, smart guns, and a computer-controlled battlefield, coupled with old-fashioned guts, muscles, shotguns, and courage. Against the aliens it doesn't matter squat.

Contrary to what Mark claims, the aliens in the first movie are not much tougher than the ones in the second. In the first film, the alien faced

a civilian crew armed with electric cattle prods and industrial blow-torches. In the second film, the aliens face dozens of battle-hardened soldiers armed with plasma rifles and armor-piercing recoilless guns. Is it any surprise that the aliens sometimes come out a bit the worse for wear in the second film? After all, they are only flesh and blood--just very tough flesh and acid blood. Mark claims that the aliens in the second film can be killed by flame-throwers, but not in the first film. I cannot recall any scene in either movie where an alien is killed with _ j_ u_ s_ t a flame-thrower. We might also consider that there is a big difference between an industrial blow-torch used as a flame thrower and a military flame-thrower that fires jellied gasoline or napalm or whatever.

_ A_ l_ i_ e_ n_ s continues where _ A_ l_ i_ e_ n left off in defining for our time strong action-oriented female characters. While Ripley is somewhat fleshed out as a character, one of the female marines demonstrates that raw courage is not an exclusively male trait. At the same time the sole survivor of the colonists on the planet, a little girl, provides a refreshing counterpoint to the stereotyped hysterical female survivor of disaster character.

There are a couple of technical quibbles with the film, such as 1) how did the atmosphere get breathable after only ten years of terraforming,

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and 2) doesn't it seem unlikely that a fusion reactor would blow when cooling apparatus is destroyed? The answer to both questions is that we really don't understand enough about the technology involved to answer definitively at this point, so we shouldn't let it ruin our enjoyment of a well-thought-out action film.

Summary: Strong +2. Watch it! Not as much gore as you may be expecting, but relentless suspense and action.

ALIENS

=====> A film review by Nick Sauer <=====

When A_l_i_e_n first appeared on the screen in 1979 it was both praised and (mostly) criticized by critics and audiences alike. I was one of the people who praised the film at the time. So when A_l_i_e_n_s was released I wasted little time in seeing it. What I found disappointed me.

Before I start the review I will warn those interested in seeing A_l_i_e_n_s that this article will spoil the film for anyone who has not seen it. There was a technical flaw that is discussed below which is part of the climax of the film. This flaw did not affect my initial viewing of the film but did come to mind afterwards. Continue reading at your own risk.

****SPOILERS**** ****SPOILERS****

The acting, settings, and visual effects were excellent. The characters quickly grew into believable human beings. Also, one rapidly gains a sense of the future environment. This was done by a careful attention for detail and, more importantly, the characters' apparent comfort with the advanced technology surrounding them.

The story, while far from being original, was enough to maintain interest. Even the slower segments were well-paced. The only complaint I have here is that the end of A_l_i_e_n_s was much similar to the end of A_l_i_e_n. I would like to have seen a more original ending.

The largest problems that I found with the movie were a technical fault and a lack of continuity on the part of the aliens. The technical fault centered around a fusion reactor. Apparently, the writers are unaware of how a fusion reactor operates. Had they been aware of this, the story would have been substantially different. As it was, the reactor overheated, resulting in a nuclear explosion because the coolant system was destroyed. I will spare you the technical details of how unlikely this scenario is. This leads directly to the complaint about a lack of continuity on the aliens' part. The creatures were intelligent enough to cut the power to the base where the humans were hiding. Surely, with the same degree of intelligence they could have prevented the reactor from overheating.

Overall, A_l_i_e_n_s was above average. It was not as effective as A_l_i_e_n. We are already familiar with the monster and there were just more of them. Any new information learned on the creature didn't really add enough to compensate for the damage it did to the mystique surrounding our earlier image of it. Although not as good as its predecessor, it was pleasant to sit through and did keep my adrenaline flowing. With all of the above considerations I would give this film a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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NOTHING IN COMMON
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Two nearly unrelated films grafted together at the halfway point. Light comedy about ad agency is pleasant, but nothing special. Serious drama in second half is where the film's heart is. The first half will draw the audience; the second is what the audience will remember.

Back in the days of live television drama, writers could use that medium to tell a serious story--say about a practical-joking ad executive and his relationship with his parents who are breaking up. The market for serious drama has dried up a bit. You can still tell a serious story about human relations if you can tell it in six minutes and shoehorn it into a "Hill Street Blues" script. You can tell such a serious story about human values in film, but your audience audience will either need a treasure map to find the theaters where it will play or wait to find it on the back shelves of a bigger video store.

Director Garry Marshall and writers Rick Podell and Michael Preminger use a different approach in N _ o _ t _ h _ i _ n _ g _ i _ n _ C _ o _ m _ m _ o _ n. They leave a one-hour script intact, but take what would be a couple of establishing scenes showing the ad executive's whimsical approach to life and expand that into an hour of screen comedy, having him played by blockbuster comedian Tom Hanks. The result is a 118-minute movie in which only one of the three main characters has much more than a minor role in the first hour. Instead, the first hour is a diverting throw-away comedy about life in an ad agency and the second half is a serious drama about a young man going through changes as he tries to support emotionally two parents, each of whom is living alone, and sort out the forces that made each of them what they are.

Tom Hanks, ironically, is under-developed as a character. The comedy hour only serves to introduce us to his character and, if anything, makes him harder to understand in the drama hour. Jackie Gleason and Eva Marie Saint fare better as his parents because they don't have comedy scenes weighing against their dramatic roles. One wonders if they even saw the entire script.

In the other half, Barry Corbin plays the same one-dimensional Texan he always plays, this time as the owner of a small airline using Hanks's ad agency. Sela Ward is very attractive as his hot-and-cold daughter who calculates the risk to her career of bedding Hanks. Hector Elizondo is wasted as the head of the ad agency and somewhere in the pile Bess Armstrong has a miniscule part as Hanks's old flame.

Don't believe the title. The two halves of the film have at least Tom Hanks in common and the minor characters from each half do at least appear in the other. But if you are going to see _ N_ o_ t_ h_ i_ n_ g_ i_ n_ C_ o_ m_ m_ o_ n and have to arrive 50 minutes late, don't worry. The better story is just beginning. For the second half, rate this one a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Some Sherlockian Reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper

THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE: Like _ Y_ o_ u_ n_ g_ S_ h_ e_ r_ l_ o_ c_ k
_ H_ o_ l_ m_ e_ s, this film throws
out the established history of its title character to describe a new
one. _ T_ h_ e_ G_ r_ e_ a_ t_ M_ o_ u_ s_ e_ D_ e_ t_ e_ c_ t_ i_ v_ e takes place
in 1897 and describes the
meeting of Dr. David Q. Dawson and Basil of Baker Street, the Sherlock
Holmes of the mouse world. The book _ B_ a_ s_ i_ l_ o_ f_ B_ a_ k_ e_ r
_ S_ t_ r_ e_ e_ t takes place
in 1885 and Dawson is already sharing Basil's flat (not yet in Baker
Street--the beginning of the book tells of Basil's move to Baker Street
to be closer to Holmes). In spite of this, it's not a bad film. It has
some humor, some drama, some tension, some special effects--a little bit
of everything. And it's a film you can take children to without being
bored yourself. I recommend it (but then, I'm a Holmes freak.)

BASIL IN MEXICO by Eve Titus, Archway (Pocket), 1977, \$1.75: Basil solves three more mysteries, with the usual assortment of puns and translations from human interests to rodent ones (the "Mousa Lisa," for example, is a famous painting that is stolen in one of the mysteries). If you liked the first three, you'll like this one.

THE RIVALS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES edited by Hugh Greene, Penguin, 1970, \$2.95: An anthology of thirteen mystery stories from Victorian England. Something for every taste: comedy, drama, the supernatural, William Hope Hodgson's "The Horse of the Invisible," in particular, is a classic of the supernatural genre. Read this and then decide which authors you enjoyed and want to follow up on.

THE CASE OF THE SOMERVILLE SECRET by Robert Newman, Atheneum, 1981, \$3.95: A sequel to T_h_e_C_a_s_e_o_f_t_h_e_V_a_n_i_s_h_i_n_g_C_o_r_p_s_e. Again, okay as a juvenile, but the connection to Sherlock Holmes for Holmes fans is getting stretched, in spite of the fact that they is sub-titled "A Sherlock Holmes Story."

THE CASE OF THE VANISHING CORPSE by Robert Newman, Atheneum, 1980, \$3.95: A sequel to T_h_e_C_a_s_e_o_f_t_h_e_B_a_k_e_r_S_t_r_e_e_t_I_r_r_e_g_u_l_a_r. Andrew, the young boy who met Sherlock Holmes in the first novel, now solves a crime on his own. Okay as a juvenile.

WATSON'S CHOICE by Gladys Mitchell, Michael Joseph Ltd, 1955 (1985), \$12.95: Another peripheral Sherlock Holmes piece, with Sir Bohun Chantrey giving a dinner party at which his guests must come as characters from Sherlock Holmes stories. Okay as a mystery, but not Sherlockian at all. What Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce are doing on the cover is anyone's guess.

N_O_T_E_S F_R_O_M T_H_E N_E_T

Subject: ALIENS

Path: cbosgd!cbatt!clyde!caip!ll-xn!cit-vax!amdahl!rtech!daveb

Date: Sat, 19-Jul-86 08:47:31 EST

My tolerance of violent/horrific movies changed on seeing the original ALIEN. It was such a thorough, relentless and wrenching experience that I haven't really been able to stomach large amounts of "goo" since. It was truly a landmark film, promising and delivering a level of deep horror that may not be matched for some time.

The new follow-up, ALIENS, isn't anywhere near as effective, though it may turn better boxoffice. It will tolerate multiple viewings more easily. I could only sit through the first 1-1/2 times, but this won't drive many out of the theatre. It is immediately satisfying in ways the first was not. The humans get to kill some baddies when the attacks start. We have guns and flamethrowers; they are nasty and have a bad attitude. Unfortunately there's a lot more of them than the first trip round the block, as a colony of 157 got used for incubators.

It was described by one of my companions as the "Ladies Home Rambo," since Sigourney Weaver (reprising Ridley (very well)) gets to perform a nice satisfying amount of the shooting, and once again shows the men to be twits.

The net-net is that all the bad guys and the cannon fodder get croaked, and the good guys make it. As Joe Bob would say, 3 1/2 survivors, which is about two too many. There seem to be apologies for the first film's bad attitude. There is less true paranoia, and less suspense, since it's pretty clear who is going to escape and who's not. Good production values do not really cover the duplication of ideas from the original. As ALIEN was an inspired commercial film with elements of real and true *horror*, ALIENS is a successful, Hollywood-style sequel.

SUMMARY: No breasts. Three quarts blood. 5 quarts green jello acid blood. 2 quarts white paint. 10 dead humans. 1/2 dead android. 40 dead aliens. 100's of torched eggs. One spaceship crash. One Hydrogen Fusion Power Plant Explosion. Waldo-Fu. Flamethrower-Fu. Nasty-tail-Fu. Chest Burster-Fu. Tongue-with-nasty-teeth-Fu. 800 rounds automatic fire. 10 grenades. Check it out. You know you want to...

+1 on a -4 to +4. ALIEN(the 1st) a +3.

{amdahl, sun, mtxinu, cbosgd}!rtech!daveb

Subject: notes on Aliens

Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!hplabs!sdcrcdf!ism780c!ism780!steven

Date: Mon, 21-Jul-86 14:58:00 EST

One of the best action films of the last five years, a movie that can sit comfortably on the shelf with Steven Spielberg's "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and George Miller's "The Road Warrior."

Ripley (smashing Sigourney Weaver), the only survivor of the 1979 film "Alien", is rescued and brought back to civilization. It seems that she's been in hypersleep for 57 years. In the intervening time, the Company has established a colony of 60-70 families on LV-426, the planet where the crew of the Nostromo first encountered the Alien. When contact with the colony is lost, the Company coerces Ripley into accompanying a team of Colonial Marines back to the planet to help wipe out whatever malevolence might be left...

This movie bears out the Eisner-Katzenberg theory of sequels. This theory, detailed in a Paramount Pictures company memo when the two men worked there, states that the most successful sequels replicate the original movie to as close a degree as possible. And indeed, writer/director James Cameron brings as much that is familiar from the original movie to "Aliens" as he introduces new elements. Cameron has said that he had wanted to make a "Grunts in Space" movie even before undertaking scriptwriting chores on "Aliens", and this new element meshes nicely with the idea of increasing the number of alien creatures the characters do battle with.

However, this movie does not create tension solely from the one idea of "If one alien is horrifying, more aliens are correspondingly more terrifying." There are battle scenes to be sure, but also moments of tension which have as wellsprings elements from the first "Alien."

We learn more about the life cycle of the creature and how it uses humans in a repellent manner as part of its reproductive cycle. Ripley has a reason to return to her worst nightmare and, once there, is given a motivation to stop the aliens that isn't just a matter of her own survival. First part of "Aliens" is permeated with Armed Services dialect which feels quite authentic. Cameron uses this to provide quick sketch characterizations of the Marines that, as performed, become interesting people, with definably different reactions to the same situation. Particularly notable in their roles are Jenette Goldstein as tough nut Vasquez and Bill Paxton as the audience surrogate/comic relief Private Hudson.

"Aliens" is, like most great B-pictures, a movie of great economy. Fox spent a mere \$18 million on this project and got a look worth twice the amount. Tech credits are uniformly excellent (cinematographer Adrian Biddle, by the bye, was a focus puller on "Alien"). Ray Lovejoy's editing is Oscar-worthy. Most impressive achievements are registered by "Aliens"'s two critical contributors: Sigourney Weaver and James

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Cameron. Weaver is a pillar of strength when the chips are down. Because she can handle a gun? No, because she cares about other people. Cameron tells and shows us just what we need to know to move the story forward; he has also come up with a tale that is rich enough in its setting and framework that we can infer much more. There's no extensive gore, little in the way of fancy camerawork or set design, just straight ahead movie-making. Cameron has the ability of all great action directors to use visual cues to quickly shorthand story points; it enables him to hurtle the movie at us as quickly as we can assimilate it.

I've talked too much already. Suffice to say:

Four stars out of four.

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