

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 11/5/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 17

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

- 11/12 MT: THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles Finney (The Weird Circus)
11/19 LZ: Book Swap
12/02 MT: Film: to be announced (==Tuesday!==)
12/03 MT: Film: to be announced
12/10 LZ: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula K. LeGuin (Sexual Identity)
12/17 MT: ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card (War in Space)
01/7/87 LZ: NEUROMANCER by William Gibson (Consciousness)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 1E-525 (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 1C-117 (576-2068). 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. The first book discussion at Middletown will be of one of the great American fantasy stories, THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles Finney. This story is short but unforgettable. It has been imitated many times since it was written -- books like SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES and BLIND VOICES -- but I think you will find that the weird quality of its writing is still unique. Get it at your local library or at the Middletown Science Fiction library. Then come and tell us what you think about it on Wednesday, November 12, noon, in 4A-235. Oh, and when you read it, don't forget the catalogue at the back. Good stuff.

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

RED DRAGON by Thomas Harris / MANHUNTER

Putnam, 1981, \$13.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

Over the summer I reviewed M_a_n_h_u_n_t_e_r, Michael Mann's film adaptation of the Thomas Harris novel R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n. At that time I said that I thought what probably came from the novel I liked a lot, but Mann's baroque use of color and his camera angles gave an air of pretentiousness to the film that I disliked. At the time R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n had sat on my shelf since shortly after it was published, but I had never read it. Well, I finally have gotten around to reading the book and I would say it turned out to be just as I expected. R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n is a gripping book that I consumed in a reading frenzy uncharacteristic of me. I basically gave it all my spare time from the moment I read the first word until I finished it. The last time I did that (coincidentally) was for F. Paul Wilson's T_h_e_K_e_e_p and if I thought Michael Mann's screen adaptation of R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n fell short of its source, his version of T_h_e_K_e_e_p did so far more.

I will say this for M_a_n_h_u_n_t_e_r: the film was more than acceptably faithful to the novel. There was some material cut out for the film, but that was mostly cliched anyway. Just about all the interesting ideas of the book made it to the film. So what I have positive to say about the book applies to the film as well. This book creates a sense of awe and wonder about the brilliant, twisted minds of its psychopaths. We see how they do what they do, we see why, and grudgingly we have to give a little respect for what we see. R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n makes psychopaths as perversely fascinating as D_r_a_c_u_l_a made vampires. We are somehow almost as impressed as we are revolted by the minds of these killers.

R_e_d_D_r_a_g_o_n comes as close to being an edge-of-your-seat novel as just about anything I remember reading. It is at once believable and

better horror than just about anything by Stephen King. It's in paperback now. Give it a try.

The Survival Game
A (true) tale by G. B. Garst

I survived The Survival Game. parking lots, even when they are
Three times to be precise. I also not empty. What my passenger did
died three times. Once by an not observe was the 108,000
abdomen shot, once by a finger previous miles that the rabbit had
shot, and once by a spectacular dragged me over. "Don't step on
forehead shot (ouch!). These the floorboard" was my succinct
deaths were avenged by two sure reply.
kills and at least three other
possibles. The entire week had been one
of rain, and this day was no

If you haven't heard about exception. Presumably we would
The Survival Game by this point in get very wet on our adventure in
time, there is little hope that the woods. Little did we know of
you will be reading this review. the fates ahead. Screaming up the
On the slight chance that this Parkway we discussed my
review has been pilfered from the passenger's previous experience in
trash in the vague hope of finding the woods, and we discussed the

something more useful, I will say aberrant psychology of a few of that the Game involves running the fanatics. The truly nutso around in the woods playing the types come in full battle regalia, game of capture-the-flag. The minus most of the offensive interesting variation from the weapons, my passenger observed. juvenile game is that physically Only later did I admit my recent (!) adult people play, and that purchase of headgear and full they use guns that shoot paint camouflage jump suit. It was balls rather than BBs. Several somewhere during this exchange games are played during the course that I described the advantages of of a day. a front wheel drive car such as

the rabbit, especially in a nasty

It would only be fair to note rainstorm such as what we were at this time that what follows experiencing. Also close to this will be a recommendation and an exchange did fate intervene. open solicitation to join in the

fun. I will get there through a As I pulled into the leftmost retelling of BEE GEE's big lane on Route 17 to pass a adventure, which starts at 7am in floundering car I noticed the two the Metropark train station obvious tracks of water laying in parking lot. the middle of my new lane. These

could be trouble, so I drove on

"Gee, when you said a green the side of the lane. This worked rabbit, you really meant g_r_e_e_n!", until I came up nearly alongside opened my unsuspecting passenger of the floundering car. My choice for the trip up into NY state. was to wait, go into the middle Yes, indeed my car is g_r_e_e_n and it with the water, or go onto the serves the purpose of a strikingly left side next to the concrete apparent apparition in most barrier. I went into the middle.

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Two things happened at once. opponents who chose offense. First, I felt both front front Offense consists of running into tires begin to float. This was the woods until you hear t_h_e_m not a real problem as long as I running at you, squatting down and desired to continue in the current hoping they run into your range. direction of travel. The second If you are clever, bold, thing that occurred at the same courageous, or blind stupid crazy, time was that a large geyser of eventually you prevail and move water shot up from the back seat onto their flag area. Then, if floorboard and proceeded to shower you are unsuccessfully suicidal,

my unsuspecting passenger and the flag is in your hands and you myself. This was much more are r_u_n_n_i_n_g back to your own flag troubling because it provided a area to win the game.

reason to steer the car in some other direction, which I was In my case, I naturally unable to do! After soaking the decided to be offensive. I ceiling of the car and its two scurried in the somewhat vague occupants, the geyser died away, direction of r_u_n_n_i_n_g flag, ducked steering returned, and we behind some bramble, with continued nearly uneventfully to trepidation watched t_h_e_m arrive, our destination. The gaping hole take position, and promptly got that appeared in the passenger shot. Unlike the reports on 60 floorboard didn't really bother us minutes or 20/20, it was not even too much. That marked the last of felt. It was more of a sound than the rain for the day, and primed an impact. Oh well, three minutes our reaction senses! into the game and I was out,

without firing a shot. Into the

Upon arrival, grateful for dead zone and wait for the others our lives, we discovered an armed to come trickling back. One (and legged) camp of insurgents in showed a bullseye between the full camouflage. Unfortunately, goggles! n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r none of them were from our group. remove the goggles in the woods!

After about an hour or so we had collected our band of ragtag The second game was more misfits together and were interesting. A bunch of us led receiving instructions on safety off in a leapfrog style and met up goggles (n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r with the enemy. It was quite a remove them in the woods, and they thrill to watch the enemy advance mean n_e_v_e_r!), the guns (n_e_v_e_r on your flank, obviously unaware n_e_v_e_r_n_e_v_e_r unholster them outside of your own presence, and be taken of the woods), the fields, the completely by surprise! And of rules, etc. Soon we were buying course the quiet satisfaction of extra ammo (about 15 cents a shot) revenge must not be forgotten, as and on our way to the field of my carefully executed shot combat.

threaded through the brambles and made its mark. Before the

Individually one plays either conflict was completely resolved defense or offense. Defense however, the opponents captured consists of scurrying into our flag and won the game. fortifications that surround your flag and shooting the hapless

Another game, other fine whistles blew, marking the final moments. After listening to shots victory of the day! whistle into the leaves, an opportunity rose and was seized; a quick stealthy move using trees as cover led me to jump out and "kill" someone not four feet away! Of course my derring-do led me to recklessly forge ahead and I was rewarded by a shot to my forehead. This one was felt, not heard, and will result in the use of my headgear on next outing!

The Survival game has action and adventure, it has excitement, a small amount of danger, and engenders a tremendous sense of teamwork and camaraderie. In the kill zone the opponents meet and swap kill stories. My hapless tree victim congratulated me, I congratulated the forehead shot initiator. I recommend it to anyone who enjoys camping in the

The final game of the day deserves a fuller description. Basically our team had been beaten more often than not. The master strategists huddled and devised a new plan: everyone on defense! The opponents would be slaughtered initially, and towards the end of the time period a great mass of warriors would rise and charge the field for the flag. Two guerrilla teams would be sent out, however, to draw fire and be chased back to the flag area. I was on one of the teams.

And as for the rabid rabbit, it probably won't make the trip again. An elder o_r_a_n_g_e (and I mean o_r_a_n_g_e!) VW-Porsche will replace it. And the next game is on for Nov 8!

We snuck out along a circuitous path towards the flag. Sounds from the woods caused us to lie low, but we were not discovered. Incredibly our team of four made it to the opponents flag area! We were heard, and our group leader Rob was hit. Angyne was next to make a move -- she heard the hiss of the defender's CO2 cartridge leak away and charged the flag. She was illegally tackled but rose and sprinted away. Through my fogged goggles I saw three people running my way and in a flurry of action the flag was handed to Mary of our team and she disappeared down the trail. An opponent almost shot her in the back, but missed! A few long minutes later the

DEADLY FRIEND
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Boring, dull, unoriginal, technically stupid, irritating, Wes Craven's latest is a film that cannot even steal from other films without throwing in dumb ideas.

Let's say you have some money and you would like to invest it in the making of a film. What genre offers the biggest payoff per dollar invested? I'll give you a hint. You need two "actors" of different sexes and you need a mattress. The second most profitable genre is the horror film. If you can't convince two actors to take off their clothes or can't find a mattress you do a cheap film. Wes Craven became a director through the cheap film route. In 1972 he did T_h_e_L_a_s_t_H_o_u_s_e_o_n_t_h_e_L_e_f_t, reputedly not very good. His second film five years later, T_h_e_H_i_l_l_s_H_a_v_e_E_y_e_s, was not very good either, though Craven started to have fans with this film about a normal family fighting off cannibals in the desert. Later he regressed a little with D_e_a_d_l_y_B_l_e_s_s_i_n_g, then made his tour-de-force, S_w_a_m_p_T_h_i_n_g. T_h_e_H_i_l_l_s_H_a_v_e_E_y_e_s I was a safe bet for him. Then there were two N_i_g_h_t_m_a_r_e_o_n_E_l_m S_t_r_e_e_t films and a third is on its way. His latest is D_e_a_d_l_y_F_r_i_e_n_d. He should have made T_h_e_H_i_l_l_s_H_a_v_e_E_y_e_s I I I.

D_e_a_d_l_y_F_r_i_e_n_d is a 1980's remake of F_r_a_n_k_e_n_s_t_e_i_n_C_r_e_a_t_e_d_W_o_m_a_n. But Craven needed a teen-aged hero so the film has a teen-age prodigy filling in for Dr. Frankenstein. This prodigy has tinkered together a robot that is 100 years ahead of current artificial intelligence and cute to boot. But robotics are only part of our young Frankenstein's powers. He is also a master brain surgeon with technical knowledge in advance of any other living brain surgeon. When his robot is killed and then his girl friend is also, he transplants a chip from the robot into the girl's brain and creates a killer with the soul of his robot. On top of that, she is super-strong like the robot was. It is unclear why

the corpse would have great strength. But then most robots the size of the one in the film are extremely weak and must do things slowly as a trade-off. Why putting the robot's chip in the girl's dead brain would create a super-strong zombie is never explained. Why a corpse seeing with human eyes would see in rectangular pixels is not explained either. Come to think of it, there isn't much that is explained.

 D e a d l y F r i e n d is an insufferably stupid horror film that steals from F r a n k e n s t e i n C r e a t e d W o m a n and even from itself via repetition.

Rate this one a low -1 or a high -2 on the -4 to +4 scale. It has to win the W a r G a m e s award for densest population of stupid ideas.

Discussion of Different Versions of Metropolis Film commentary by Mark R. Leeper

Members who saw METROPOLIS at our showing last week might find this discussion from Usenet of interest:

Mark R. Leeper: The so-called restoration of METROPOLIS with a rock score is less complete than other versions around and, while a rock score for METROPOLIS is not the total failure that was expected, it fails to be particularly good accompaniment.

Mike Gray: Just have two cents to contribute, and a question: I loved the Metropolis rock score, bought the film, and have shown it to many friends, who love it also.

Mark R. Leeper: This is actually an old discussion which we on the net had both over the films LADYHAWKE and 1984. There are certain films that the historical context makes a rock score seem inappropriate. It is my opinion that a rock score gives the film a sort of mod-ish feel pop-art

feel that was certainly not intended. Admittedly, it could have been a lot worse, but it really didn't match my (pre-) conceptions of the feel of the film.

Mike Gray: I own another old copy of Metropolis, and have seen a couple of others in theaters, and the restored version has more scenes than any of them. What scenes do the other versions you mention contain that the restored one doesn't?

Mark R. Leeper: That is a fair question and one I am not really sure I can answer right now. The restored version is 87 minutes. I can tell you that the original was in excess of two hours when shown in Germany, yet the 1927 Variety review lists the American version at 107 minutes. I may be able to compare rock version with another available on videotape that is just short of two hours. If so I will report back. I may, of course, be fooling myself by looking at minute counts. They are far less reliable in silent films since the projector may run the film faster or slower without much noticeable distortion on the screen. Still the difference seems like it is much more than projection speed. Where I suspect the difference will come in is in the duration of certain scenes that do not advance the plot, such as showing working machinery. The scene creates a mood and Lang may have left it on the screen longer than the restorers wanted to. There are lots of

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mood establishing shots and crowd scenes like this that might well be where cuts of duration were made. In any case, I will try to get ahold of both versions and do a comparison. Now you have me curious.

[Pause for 24 hours.]

Mark R. Leeper: Here I am reporting back. I have two side-by-side VCRs and have watched as well as possible the first 10 minutes or so of the two-hour version and the 87-minute version. Each has some that the other does not. In

fact, the 87-minute version has the stadium scene that is missing from the longer version. Where I can see a difference is not the scene count, but scenes are actually edited shorter in the 87-minute version than in the other. Parts of a scene that do not change the plot are cut out of the restored version. For example, in the scene where we first see Maria, when she starts to leave, the longer version has a bellman in black walk across the floor and speak to a bellman in white, the bellman in white then says something to Maria. The so-called restored version has a shorter scene in which we do not see the bellman in black at all. Lang tended to linger over scenes much more than the restored version does. Other contributing factors to the difference in length are the fact that some title cards are changed to subtitles so that they do not stop the action. Also the projector (or whatever) runs faster in the 87-minute version so the exact same action can take less time. There are certainly scenes in the 87-minute version that do not show up in the longer version. One is the stadium scene at the beginning. But the restored version is not what it claimed to be, namely the union of all versions available. Alterations were made, probably to make the film more enjoyable to modern audiences. A purist would not call the restoration a restoration at all. It is a new re-editing (probably to fit to the rock music and certainly to play better on a modern audience).