

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 1/21/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 28

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

- 01/28 LZ: 1984 by George Orwell {A Retrospective}
02/04 MT: CONTACT by Carl Sagan (Rm. 4A-217) First Contact
02/18 LZ: RINGWORLD ENGINEERS by Larry Niven World Creation
03/11 LZ: THE DREAMING JEWELS by Ted Sturgeon Children (and Child-raising)
04/01 LZ: THE BOOK OF THE NEW MOON tetralogy Artsy-fartsy SF
 by Jean Wolf
04/22 LZ: MURMURS OF EARTH by Carl Sagan SF-related Non-Fiction
05/13 LZ: TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by Reincarnation
 Phillip Jose Farmer

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 1C-117 576-2068
MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868
Jill-of-all-trades: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070
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1. Few novels have had as dramatic an impact on American popular political thought as 1984, by George Orwell. Published in 1948, for decades the book evoked images of brutality and conscienceless government control. Although Orwell intended the book to be a warning, not prophecy, many people feared the year 1984 would be as horrid as the book suggested. When the year came and went, some folks breathed a collective sigh of relief, while others cautioned that the society in the novel was not cancelled, only delayed.

On Wednesday, January 28, the Lincroft chapter will be discussing 1984 -- how much of it is SF, how far we are from Big Brother and Newspeak, and how the book influenced other mainstream or SF authors. Everyone is welcome (we traditionally have attendees from Holmdel and Lincroft), even if you've not read the book. [-jrrt]

2. Our next Leeperhouse festival will continue the Alfred Hitchcock

theme, with two more films he directed. On Thursday, January 29, at 7 PM, we will show:

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Hitchcock Experiments:

Adventures of Captain Marvel, chapter 3

ROPE (1948), dir. by Alfred Hitchcock

PSYCHO (1959), dir. by Alfred Hitchcock

ROPE was one of a group of five of his films that Hitchcock had taken out of circulation to enhance their value. It was his first Technicolor film, but it was also an odd experiment. In order to try and capture the immediacy of a play, it was shot in 10-minute takes--the longest takes then possible. An hour of screentime corresponds to an hour in the lives of the characters. Sets were designed to roll on silent wheels so they could move out of the way of the camera. When Hitchcock saw his first Technicolor film, he didn't like the unrealistic color of the sunset that showed up on five different reels. Rather than being able to reshoot those scenes as he would have in a normally edited film and edit them in, he had to reshoot 50 minutes of the film!

The script for PSYCHO was so unconventional that he could not get funding to make the film at his then usual studio, Paramount. Instead, it was made at the production studios of ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, his television show, for a budget of only three times that of an episode of that show. Today PSYCHO is the first film that comes to most peoples' minds when they think of Hitchcock. Come for a quiet evening at the Bates Motel.

3. There is disturbing news from one of AT&T's latest hot spots, the pond outside Lincroft. Apparently, the rumor that has been buzzing around the halls of Lincroft is that the geese have returned in force to the pond. The geese have, in the past, been kept away from the pond by the introduction of styrofoam swans to the pond. Company officials have been trying to keep a lid on things, saying that a few geese seen floating in the pond do not constitute a full-scale return, but others wonder. Company

officials still maintain that the proper rulers of the pond are the styrofoam swans and that polls taken among various groups of ducks on the pond show that the situation is still stable and that the swans still have the confidence of the population of the pond as a whole. Critics of those polls have asked just which ducks were asked and how they were chosen.

In the meantime, spokespersons for the styrofoam swans say the swans are still in control and that the company should not be taken in by false reports and be coerced into believing the existence of the apparent styrofoam swan credibility gap. Nevertheless, unnamed sources are telling me that if it weren't for company funds bouying up the failing swans, it would be them and not the geese who would have to migrate. Company officials deny this, saying "the swans [company officials never refer to them as "styrofoam"] are on the verge of becoming self-sufficient and of bringing stability and order to the pond." Company officials also say that once the geese

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are allowed to return to Lincroft, there would be no stopping them from returning to Holmdel and that other AT&T locations would surely follow.

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

NO MERCY
====>A film review by Jo Paltin<====

This movie is so poor it hardly deserves my time, but I'd like to save others from wasting theirs. Not even Richard Gere (okay, so I am biased!) could save this miserable plot, and Kim Basinger might have

been a mechanized toy for all her contributions.

The plot revolves around a Chicago cop's (Gere) quest for revenge for the brutal killing of his partner. While drifting around New Orleans and the Louisiana bayou seeking his prey, he also manages to fall in love with the killer's woman (Basinger), who mysteriously caused all the slaughter to begin with.

The real mystery in the movie is "What does Basinger's character possess that compells this killer to follow her after she runs away and similarly attracts the seasoned cop?" A facetious answer would be "her looks," but that hardly qualifies as a motivator for this film, certainly not in the '80s.

The movie attempts to present a world much different from our own (in New Orleans, of all places), where feudal values still survive -- hence the 'lord owns maiden' theme -- but it fails to set the stage properly. For example, Basinger walks/runs away repeatedly without being seriously intercepted -- hardly what one expects from a sequestered maiden held by her lord against her will.

If anyone has seen the movie, what did you think? If you haven't yet, don't bother. I rate it a -1 on the -4/+4 scale.

BEDROOM WINDOW

(mild spoiler)

====>A film review by Jo Paltin<====

This movie is a murder mystery of the 'innocent bystander' genre. The characterizations are effective and the plot moves at an excellent, suspenseful pace almost all the way to the end. I liked it.

Steve Guttenberg plays a construction company executive who is having an affair with his boss' wife, Isabelle Huppert. (Sorry, the characters' names escape me at the moment.) While together in his apartment, she witnesses an assault from his bedroom window, but is reluctant to report it to the police for fear of exposing the affair to her husband. So, Guttenberg reports the assault himself, getting all the details of the crime from her.

As you might suspect, his deception is discovered and interpreted by the authorities as guilt for the assault and other worse crimes. Now Guttenberg is under suspicion himself and must clear his name -- and the action begins.

Guttenberg does an excellent job of playing the 'average joe' eager to be a hero and impress his dramatically glamorous mistress. Also, he reacts plausibly to the various plot twists, without turning into Indiana Jones or Superman. Huppert is convincing as the seductive, glamorous, and willful mistress. Elizabeth McGovern, who plays the assaulted victim, has a bit more trouble rounding out her character. The final plot twist is somewhat inexplicable, even given victims' supposedly strong motivation for revenge.

The most likable element of the movie was the realistic, yet suspenseful atmosphere, and Guttenberg's believable reactions to the mess he has gotten himself into. A few peripheral, but nicely done scenes also add to the tension. See it.

I rate 'Bedroom Window' a +1 on the -4/+4 scale.

_N_O_T_E_S_ _F_R_O_M_ T_H_E_ N_E_T

Subject: The Two Faces of Tomorrow, by James P. Hogan
Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cuae2!gatech!mcnc!seismo!rutgers!daemon
Date: 12 Jan 87 16:46:45 GMT

I just finished this. I know it may be old news (its copyright date is 1979) but it upset me so much that I had to write about it.

James Hogan's novel The Two Faces of Tomorrow is 390 pages long. By page 16 he has revealed a plot twist which establishes the basic premise for the rest of the book: half-smart computers can devise novel ways to obey commands, but they may turn out to be flawed by oversights. Or, if you like, a little knowledge can be dangerous. The problem is that this had become obvious by page 8, so I had to spend 8 pages just waiting for him to drop the other shoe.

Worse yet, it was also clear that the entire premise of the novel was that they had been able to build a world-wide computer system which controlled transportation, communication, construction, etc., yet it wasn't smart enough to recognize humans and understand their frailties. Apparently, if you gave the system a command like "remove this rock formation" and forgot to say "and avoid killing any of the people near it", then the system just might decide to use a bomb rather than a bulldozer. Somehow these supposedly brilliant designers hadn't even heard of Asimov's first law of robotics, or its equivalent in that universe. Nor, once they decided they needed it, could they figure out how to build a system which obeyed it.

By page 108 Hogan has revealed the specific nature of the conflict which is to arise from this premise: an intelligent computer system is to be attacked to see if its responses are hostile and if men can overcome it despite that hostility, and, if so, how. Unfortunately, the what (in general), the why, and the how (almost precisely), can all be deduced when page 62 has been reached, so the remaining 328 pages have to stand on other merits than cleverness (let alone intelligence) of plot.

That leaves characters, prose & conceptualizations as sources of entertainment. But the characters are straight from the cookie cutter, the prose is flat, and the conceptualizations are either mundane or half-witted. Tie all of that up with a real "idiot plot" and the result is the worst novel I have read in many years.

By way of example, consider the following. In the lab they have the prototype for the system. It isn't very smart, but it's learning. To help it along, and to understand its motives for certain acts, they converse with it, either by terminal or voice. Then they build the big system and the trouble starts. Not once, through the rest of the story,

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does anyone converse with the system. Near the end we even get 2 of the original designers of the thing standing in front of a terminal, wondering how to get its attention, how to communicate with it. They ended up waving their hands in front of a TV camera and pointing to drawings, hoping that the system would catch on!

There were other idiocies of a similar nature, but this is the one that made me crazy. And I think I've made my point, which is that this is a bad novel, based on a half-witted premise, and with a plot to match.

Please believe me when I tell you that it was only after finishing the book, and long after these opinions had formed, that I read that Hogan is an employee of DEC. The opinions expressed here are purely my own, and were developed independently of any consideration of the relationship between my employer and his.

Richard.

Subject: REVIEW: Little Shop of Horrors
Path: rutgers!sri-unix!hplabs!decwrl!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: 11 Jan 87 19:39:09 GMT

Well, I don't know about you, but I've been fairly dissapointed with the holiday fare delivered this year in the theaters -- it's gotten to the point that I'm reading the ads for the repatory theaters first, before checking out "what's new". I enjoyed Star Trek IV a good deal, but other films -- THE GOLDEN CHILD in particular -- have been either mediocre or just plain bad.

There is hope, though. Saw LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS the other night, and have to put that close to ST IV in appreciation. There are a score of reasons why this film works -- let me run through them, and if any look appealing, you can pack the kids into the closet and go see it. First, it's the first comedy-musical since ROCKY HORROR to actually entertain throughout; true, there haven't been too many other attempts (the sequel to RH, and Pia Zadora's INVASION OF THE ROCK ALIENS), but I think that LS actually is funnier than ROCKY HORROR. One of the main reasons I enjoyed RH was that it had a certain amount of bizarre, socially

different humor to a 16-year-old high school student -- I mean, going to see a film that had yuks about transvestites and all SORTS of sexual encounters seemed pretty darn adult back then. Later, you get to like RH for it's lyrics, but the initial encounter is probably more for watching your parents' expression when you tell them the plot summary (actually, mine probably would have gone to see it, but they didn't want to have to stay up 'till midnight). LITTLE SHOP relies much more on the comic performances of its cast and the lyrics of the songs -- which are absolutely hilarious ("He sure looks like plant food to me!"). Rick Moranis does his nerd routine to a solid core; Ellen Greene is the New York girl with the low-cut dresses and an ability to squeak in the most

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hilarious ways; and Vincent Gardenia plays Vincent Gardenia. However, this has to be the first movie where there are a bunch of Saturday Night Live alumni making cameo appearances which almost all work. Steve Martin could be nominated for a Best Supporting actor position for his sadistic dentist routine (I want to get the soundtrack album just for his "You'll be a dentist!" song). Bill Murray and Christopher Guest steal the show while their on -- Murray is especially good as the one patient Martin can't get squirming. John Candy and Jim Belushi are, as Joe-Bob says, mostly "gratuitous", but they don't hurt anything. The three girls playing the Greek Chorus are a very nice touch. And finally, Frank Oz has given the whole thing a wonderfully artificial tone, from the settings and backdrops down to his masterpiece, Audrey II, the flesh-eating plant with the filthy mouth.

Oh, heck, I'm running on -- go see this film, you'll have a good time. If you're in Seattle, go see it at the Harvard Exit -- they're also showing PRECIOUS IMAGES, a 10-minute collection of very short cuts from classic films, put together in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Director's Guild. This had the audience oohing and ahing throughout its running time -- it's the finest cornucopia selection of films I've seen since the AFI's very long Bicentennial collection. If I could find where to buy a copy of PRECIOUS IMAGES, I would -- it's that much fun for film buffs. It seems to be showing at many of the smaller "art" theatres around the country -- keep an eye out for it being shown with a feature film you'll want to see.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: REVIEW: The Morning After

Path: rutgers!sri-unix!hplabs!decwrl!decvax!tektronix!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty

Date: 12 Jan 87 02:10:05 GMT

I suppose you've either read a review of THE MORNING AFTER, or you've seen previews and gotten the general gist of the film. It's a romantic suspense movie, with Jane Fonda as an alcoholic actress on the run for a crime she didn't commit, and Jeff Bridges as an ex-cop and maybe a killer (like JAGGED EDGE). The direction is by Sidney Lumet, who should know how to do a suspense by now; the general feeling I got was that he does indeed know, but tends to forget in spots. There are long sequences where I thought the suspenseful soundtrack music was being played way too loudly, until I realized that without it, the film itself lacked suspense (the scene with Jeff Bridges leaving Fonda's apartment particularly comes to mind).

What I enjoyed much more, and what eventually made me decide that the film was worth going to see, was the romance between Fonda and Bridges. It's easy to knock Fonda with her exercise books and her stereotypical Southern California image, but she proves here that she is still a very fine actress when she wants to be; she gains your sympathy about halfway

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through the film as she begins to wrestle with her boozing and her feelings for Bridges. I believe I can agree with Siskel and Ebert that I have never seen Bridges appear in a bad film, and while he is fairly understated here, it's an understated role as a refugee from Bakersfield with a fairly good eye for detection. You begin to care for the two of them soon into the film, and the conclusion (not the climax) is simple, understated and sweet. Also, any film that has the good sense to star Raul Julia in any role has something going for it -- he puts in his usual interesting (even sympathetic) performance.

A \$3.00 - \$3.50 movie.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: Five mini-reviews
Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!ucbvax!citrin
Date: 13 Jan 87 20:15:07 GMT

A few mini-reviews of films I've seen recently:

"El Amor Brujo" ("Love, the Magician"): Spanish filmmaker Carlos Saura and choreographer Antonio Gades would have had a hard time topping their last film, "Carmen", which I include on my top ten list. It's no disgrace to say that their latest film isn't up to that standard. Unlike the complex "Carmen", "El Amor Brujo" is a straightforward love story involving two Spanish gypsy couples. The flamenco dancing is excellent, but the story is not as absorbing as that of Carmen, with its complex interplay of artifice and reality and its play-within-a-film structure. "El Amor Brujo" is reportedly the most expensive Spanish film ever made. Three stars out of four.

"No Mercy": A completely unbelievable "romantic thriller" with Richard Gere and Kim Basinger. Chicago detective Gere goes to New Orleans to search for killer of his partner. Basinger is key to whole mess. How? Don't ask. There's no chemistry between Gere and Basinger and Gere comes off as a real jerk. Only good features: a couple of genuinely tense scenes, and Jeroen Krabbe makes an impressive bad guy. (I wish I could remember what else I've seen him in.) The film's ending is telegraphed. One and a half stars out of four.

"The Mission": A film I wanted to see when I first heard about it, but a series of bad reviews cooled my ardor somewhat. After going to see it with lowered expectations, it turned out to be surprisingly good. Film concerns two Jesuits in 18th century South America who fight the church hierarchy and Spanish and Portuguese landowners and administrations to protect missions which are places of refuge for the Indians. Jeremy Irons and Robert DeNiro are fine as the Jesuits. There has been some complaint about DeNiro's NY accent but it seems appropriate in the role. Film is beautifully photographed. There are some structural problems.

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DeNiro disappears for about 20 minutes in the middle of the film; a camera shot reminds the audience that he's still there, but the effect is jarring. There are too many set-piece debates and there is a visit to a successful mission that comes off like a Peace Corps documentary.

Most interesting philosophical issues aren't raised until the end. Robert Bolt, who also wrote the screenplay for "A Man for All Seasons", raises many of the same questions here, namely whether an honorable man may be forced to choose between two mutually exclusive but equally honorable courses. Irons and DeNiro are forced to choose different courses. Superimposed title at the end concerning the Indians' culture still being attacked and people of conscience both inside and outside the clergy fighting this was a bit heavy-handed. The parallels with modern liberation theology are quite obvious and it seems unnecessary to hit the audience over the head with this. The most disturbing question of all is never asked, however: are the Jesuits themselves just as guilty as the others of destroying the Indians' cultural heritage? Two and a half stars out of four. (Ask me another time and I might give it three stars.)

"Peggy Sue Got Married": I finally got around to seeing this, and I wonder what all the fuss was all about. Francis Coppola's last rescue job, "The Cotton Club", was far better. Now, I've got nothing against sentimental films, but I like a little bit more than sentiment in my films. Kathleen Turner and Nicholas Cage give good performances. Notion that going back in time to change one's life might be a mixed blessing is a good one, but it isn't able to carry this film. Two stars out of four.

"Platoon": The idea that this is the first good, serious film about Vietnam is a fallacy. "The Deer Hunter" and "Apocalypse Now" were both very fine films, although both very different from this one. "Platoon" gives a soldier's view of the war. The film presents one soldier's experience in a style similar to cinema verite, although much slicker. In fact, the film suffers when a structure is superimposed on this cinema verite, particularly in the conflict between the good sergeant and the bad sergeant, and later in the conflict between main character Taylor and the bad sergeant. Taylor's voice-over letters to Grandmother are pretentious; final narration about "I finally realized that the enemy we were fighting was ourselves all along" is hackneyed. Film's portrayal of battlefield death as something that can be both immediate and remote (some combatants die in close-up shots, others in more distant shots) is interesting. Photography is stunning, and well-integrated with the music. In the end, film must be judged by its effect on the viewer; it's a powerful emotional experience. Three and a half stars out of four.

Wayne Citrin

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