

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 2/4/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 30

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

- 02/18 LZ: RINGWORLD ENGINEERS by Larry Niven World Creation
02/18 MT: Book Swap
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. Cable has just run A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, PART II. Let's face it, that film didn't need a sequel--it needed a script. I guess you know a film wasn't worth seeing if someone wants to make a sequel to it. The good films never get sequels. Isn't there some young filmmaker out there willing to tackle THE RETURN OF A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS? You never hear a trailer saying, "This time he's r_e_a_l_l_y in trouble. How will the jury vote this time? See TWELVE ANGRY MEN, PART II." How long do we have to wait for THE BRUNCH: MY DINNER WITH ANDRE?

2. The April issue of OMNI is going to have an article on electronic bulletin boards, including some mention of SF-LOVERS (a.k.a. rec.arts.sf-lovers, a.k.a. net.sf-lovers on Usenet). (For those who don't want to buy OMNI, I suspect many public libraries get it.) [-ecl]

3. The Jill-of-all-trades (that's me!) would be eternally grateful

if someone from Holmdel (or Freehold? I know Lincroft doesn't have them) could get one of those gray nameplate holders that go on one's mailbox and send it to her (MT 1F-329) via inter-office mail. Here in the boonies of Middletown they assume you tape your name to the box, and I have no place to put the "Science Fiction Club"

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nameplate. Thanks in advance. [-ecl]

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

Best Films of 1986 (revised) (in alphabetical order)
Chosen by Mark R. Leeper

A_G_r_e_a_t_W_a_l_l
L_a_b_y_r_i_n_t_h
L_i_t_t_l_e_S_h_o_p_o_f_H_o_r_r_o_r_s
M_o_n_a_L_i_s_a
M_y_B_e_a_u_t_i_f_u_l_L_a_u_n_d_e_r_e_t_t_e
P_l_a_t_o_o_n
A_R_o_o_m_w_i_t_h_a_V_i_e_w
R_u_t_h_l_e_s_s_P_e_o_p_l_e
S_t_a_n_d_b_y_M_e
S_t_a_r_T_r_e_k_I_V

(C_o_l_o_r_o_f_M_o_n_e_y was displaced.)

PLATOON

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Very good, very realistic depiction of a typical soldier's tour of duty in "the Nam." Not as intelligent or as moving as T_h_e_K_i_l_l_i_n_g_F_i_e_l_d_s but a standout production in a year of cotton-candy films.

I saw P_l_a_t_o_o_n late. By the time I saw it, a number of film critics had already judged it to be the best film of 1986. I am not even sure I disagree strongly with that judgement, but perhaps only because it did not have much competition in the serious film category. There is no denying that P_l_a_t_o_o_n is a good film, but I would claim it is not as good as T_h_e_K_i_l_l_i_n_g_F_i_e_l_d_s. Why not? I guess because it shows the war from the viewpoint of a dog soldier. To a GI, the war was battle scenes generally ruled by chaos, it was boredom, and it was drinking beer and smoking pot with the guys. That is what much of this film is and it probably is what the war was like from the American dog soldier's point of view, but that may be just because the dog soldier didn't get enough of a chance to get a global view of the war.

Charlie Sheen plays Taylor, the newest man in his platoon. He carouses a little when he gets the chance, he gets involved in chaotic fights, and the rest of the time he does boring jobs. Most of what we find out of what Taylor thinks of the war we get from Taylor's letters to his grandmother, read to us in voice-over. Against this repetitive backdrop we see Taylor get involved in a battle within the platoon over the brutality some members of the platoon used against the people of a small Vietnamese village. There is not much story to this conflict and how it is resolved, but that and the recurring scenes of battle, boredom, pot, and beer are really all there are to this film. Not that the simplicity of the plot is a bad thing necessarily. We have not really had as realistic a film that has put the viewer in the place of the ordinary dog soldier in war before, but P_l_a_t_o_o_n fails to be a truly exceptional film. It is good +2 entertainment (on the -4 to +4 scale), and that is saying quite a bit. If P_l_a_t_o_o_n were an unknown film, this review would have a much more positive tone.

The film could well be the best film of a bad year; it just does not really say as much as it could. It is not even really so new an experience. Just about everything we see happening in this film we have seen before; it is just that this film has a lot of different impressions of war packed into one film at a time when there is a little more freedom and special effects know-how for showing the violence of war on film.

ENJOY JAPAN by Walt Sheldon
Tuttle Books, \$4.95, 1961.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

There are a number of guides to Japanese culture for the outsider. One of the most readable, E_n_j_o_y_J_a_p_a_n by Walt Sheldon, showed up at a local B. Dalton recently. Mr. Sheldon apparently went to Japan in 1951 working for the Far East Network. While there he did a series of radio

broadcasts introducing Westerners to the local art and culture. In 1961 he wrote E_n_j_o_y_J_a_p_a_n based, presumably, on those radio broadcasts. The book is made up of twenty short articles, each of which could easily have been a radio broadcast.

The major fault of E_n_j_o_y_J_a_p_a_n should be obvious. It is a portrait of Japanese culture that is now over a quarter of a century old. Certainly some aspects of the culture have changed in that time, but it is generally pretty clear what is likely to be out-of-date and what is not. Do not expect his estimate of prices in Japan to have any relation to present-day prices. Sheldon was writing about a post-war Japan with an economy in a very different condition than it is today. On the other hand, descriptions of the gods of Japan or the duties of a geisha, or for that matter, most of the contents of the book, are fairly stable.

The major advantage of the book is the author's candor. When Sheldon talks about respectable businessmen who use his garden as a urinal he is showing a side of Japan that must rarely be seen in travel books. Sheldon loves Japan, warts and all, and tells you about the warts when they are relevant.

Sheldon divides his articles into people, places, and things. "People" includes his introductions to 1) the geisha, 2) the religion, 3) seven lucky gods, 4) the emperor, 5) the samurai, 6) the tale of the 47 ronin, 7) the salaryman, and 8) pets in Japan. It is interesting that in 1961 the greatest Western curiosity was focused on the geisha. I strongly suspect that today more people would ask about the samurai, but then I say that as a film fan. The chapters on places include 9) resorts, 10) the Japanese inn, 11) Mt. Fuji, 12) Tokyo, and 13) festivals. These chapters are obviously aimed at tourists, though even as a tourist it was for me the least interesting section. The final section is devoted to things: 14) Japanese food, 15) pearls, 16) Japanese sports, 17) theater arts, 18) kimonos and flower arranging, 19) the language, and 20) the Japanese character.

Sheldon's introduction to Japan covers a lot of diverse material for a book under 200 pages. The coverage of each topic is light, but covers the fundamentals.

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE
A Movie Review by Dale L. Skran Jr.

or
What I Learned About Terrorism at the Movies

Some time ago I saw D_e_a_t_h_W_i_s_h_I_I_I, and reported on all the juicy tidbits I learned concerning big-city crime. W_a_n_t_e_d, with its ad featuring Rutger Hauer gazing lovingly over a wall full of guns, seemed to fill the bill for another educational experience. To my surprise, the movie wasn't that bad, and was somewhat better than the other entry in the Rambo Sweepstakes this week, N_o_M_e_r_c_y.

Here's what I learned:

1. Rutger Hauer is great as a ruthless, intelligent, deadly force of nature. Both in this role as Randall, an ex-CIA agent turned bounty hunter, and as Batty in B_l_a_d_e_R_u_n_n_e_r, he seems perfect as the ultimate ubermensch.
2. W_a_n_t_e_d skillfully appeals to many audiences:
 - Randall's old CIA associate is a honest black middle aged man, used by his white superiors to set up Randall.
 - Randall's girlfriend is an airline flight attendant studying for her Ph.D. in anthropology.
 - Randall's best friend is a yuppie cop with a sense of humor.
3. The cops and the CIA are just efficient enough to betray their own people, not efficient enough to get terrorists.
4. Government organizations cannot be trusted (e.g. the CIA). They are almost as bad as the terrorists.
5. Arabs are the new slime. The head slime, Malik, tortures CIA agents, kills his own girlfriend, and plots to turn LA into Bophal. Just so you know who they are, they go into battle wearing desert gear and army fatigues.
6. The audience hates Arabs. They really seemed enthusiastic when one fell off a truck and rolled under Hauer's car. They also seemed really enthusiastic at the final scene, but I won't go into that.
7. Unlike in D_e_a_t_h_W_i_s_h_I_I_I, where friends were only targets, here they are portrayed either as innocent bystanders (the girl) or sacrificed pawns (the cop).
8. Ruthlessness is fine. Hauer makes Dirty Harry look pretty wimpish in some screens, but given the enormity of the evil being planned

by the Arabs (killing 50,000 people with toxic compounds), it's clear that the audience sympathizes with Hauer rather than being revolted by him. A lot of ruthlessness can be conveyed with off-screen blood, and this movie does just that.

9. The director is having a bit of fun at Rambo's expense. Not only does he avoid the de rigueur screen where the hero (heroine) dons a ludicrous number of guns and gadgets, but the Arabs actually blow up a theater showing Rambo!
10. It's less than clear why Malik is out to get LA (other than to keep the budget for the movie low), but real-life Malik's are not exactly long on rationality either.
11. The "in" weapon is a laser-aimed automatic shotgun. Actually seems like a pretty good idea.
12. This movie is like V_i_c_e_S_q_u_a_d in that at the end of the movie the audience hates the villain so much they're overjoyed when he gets offed in a particularly ruthless and brutal manner.

Overall, an average movie (0 on the Leeper scale) with some pretty good action scenes. The good lines:

He's a lot more concerned over his death than you are.
Black CIA agent to agent who set up Randall.

F**k the bonus.
Randall

_N_O_T_E_S_ _F_R_O_M_ T_H_E_ N_E_T

Subject: The Summer Tree

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cuae2!clyde!watmath!watnot!watdcsu!mschuck

Date: 29 Jan 87 22:05:33 GMT

Has the book The Summer Tree by Guy Gavriel Kay been heard of out there? It is a Tolkein-esque fantasy which (in my opinion anyway) is one of the best fantasies ever written.

The book is volume 1 of a 3 volume set called The Fionavar Tapestry, book 3 of which came out this month. The only question I have is whether anyone but me has heard of it? It was on the required reading for a course on Fantasy writing here at the University of Waterloo but beyond here and Toronto it seems unknown. (Actually, I'm sure that this is due largely to the fact that volume 1 was published by McLelland and Stewart and they didn't know how to market it since it wasn't Canadiana)

In any case, this set is excellent and I highly recommend it to anyone.

Mary Margaret Schuck

Subject: Book: IN ADVANCE OF THE LANDING

Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!daemon

Date: 30 Jan 87 23:49:59 GMT

I thought this book, which I just got from the St. Louis Public Library, might be of interest to both the SF-L and SPACE readership.

IN ADVANCE OF THE LANDING: Folk Concepts of Outer Space, by Douglas Curran (Abbeville Press, New York, 1985, ISBN 0-89659-523-4, paperback, [price obscured by library sticker], large format [9" X 10"])

This is a pictorial and verbal look through the UFOlogists, saucerians, New Age and suchlike underground of North America. It includes a large number of interesting pictures of architectural spacecraft (houses and stores built to resemble flying saucers, rocket ships mounted on gas stations, etc.) and some interviews with and descriptions of people who claim to have been contacted by, travelled with, or be psychically attuned with aliens from outer space. My personal favorite is John Shepherd of Bellaire, Mich., who has turned his grandparents' small cottage into a lab filled with racks of electronic equipment designed to detect and contact UFOs: "Grandpa Lamb used to grumble at the growing incursion of paraphernalia into the living room. Eventually, he and Mrs. Lamb were left with only a small settee scrunched into a corner between whole walls taken up with John's consoles and oscilloscopes. Grandpa

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Lamb died two years ago. Now John and his grandmother make a good team. Together they built an addition on the house to allow space for John's burgeoning equipment and put a rocking chair in the living room for Mrs. Lamb." There's a nice picture of John amongst his gear; now THAT's my idea of high-class interior decoration! :-)

Anyway, if you've ever wondered about the people who build flying saucers in their basements under the direction of mysterious voices, or those who claim to be the reincarnation of galactic emperors from the Orion Nebula, or who just think it is a neat thing to have a forty-foot sheet-metal rocket as a front-lawn decoration, this is a good introduction to the field. Did you know, for example, that the official community Bicentennial project of Lake City, Pennsylvania, was to build a UFO Landing Port, equipped with radio homing beacons and a fibreglass decoy saucer? Or that St. Paul, Alberta, built the world's first UFO landing pad, the territory underneath it being declared to be

"international" and open to all visitors "from Earth or otherwise"?

Will Martin

Subject: Cybernetic Samurai by Victor Milan

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cuae2!clyde!rutgers!sri-spam!sri-unix!hplabs!hp-sdd!ucsdhub!sdcsvox!sdcc6!loral!ian

Date: 30 Jan 87 06:35:14 GMT

Cybernetic Samurai, by Victor Milan. Ace Science Fiction paper back,
\$3.50

The human brain is the culmination of million of years of evolution. What if we could build a computer system and its associated software so that it evolved, just as simple nervous systems evolved into the human brain? Where evolution took millions of years, evolution inside of a computer might only take days. In Victor Milan's book Cybernetic Samurai, this is how Dr. Elizabeth O'Neill creates the first artificially aware entity. O'Neill names this entity Tokugawa, after the shogun who unified Japan at the beginning of the seventeenth century (1606) century.

Tokugawais brought into existence in a post world war III world, where the major western powers have nuked each other into decay. Japan also suffered from the war and is now a nation where powerful companies vie for control like the feudal lords in the original Tokugawa's Japan. Over all the companies, like a shogun ruling over the daimyo, is MITI, the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

The research undertaken by Dr. O'Neill that leads to the creation of Tokugawais sponsored by Yoshimitsu Akaji, the founder of Yoshimitsu TeleCommunications or YTC. Yoshimitsu is a maverick Japanese businessman who built his company on "fifth generation" computer systems. Yoshimitsu sees the development of an artificial entity as the

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edge he needs to survive against the hostile MITI, which resents his maveric behavior.

Self aware computers are not new in science fiction, but Milan handles

it unusually well. He paints a vivid picture of a "cyber punk" vision of feudal Japan. While the book has flaws, Milan seriously considers the implications of an artificial computer based being and the ramifications of its powers (and absolute power in general). As to the flaws in the book, they cannot be discussed without giving away too much of the plot, so you will have to read the book and find them for yourself.

Subject: Moon Goddess
Path: uw-beaver!cornell!rochester!pt.cs.cmu.edu!andrew.cmu.edu!postman#
Date: 31 Jan 87 00:31:04 GMT

"The Moon Goddess and the Sun", by Donald Kingsbury is set in the near future. Despite the impression the title may give, it is strongly reminiscent of Mitchner's "Space", expect that it is a fictionalized account of the next phase of the space race instead of the last one.

A major focus of the book is the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) (and, largely by implication, space-based defense systems). The author goes to considerable, and largely successful, effort to analyze MAD and its alternatives without compromising his storytelling.

Disappointingly, at the very last he changes the problem. Rather than produce (or even posit) a tentative solution to the problem of coexisting -- and existing -- with today's Soviet Union, he retreats to that tired old standby: we can simplify the problem by reforming the Russians.

In fairness, this is not pulled out of the blue. Much of the book, in many ways its best part, is devoted (again, without compromising his story) to an attempt to understand and explain how the Russians got to be the way they are

In some ways, Kingsbury's predictions are grim indeed. Imagine a future in which it is necessary for some middle-aged man to explain, in an aside, who Hari Seldon was.

Dani Zweig

Subject: Capsule Reveiw of From Beyond (no real spoilers)
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!rutgers!sri-spam!robert
Date: 26 Jan 87 21:55:34 GMT

From the folks who brought you Herbert West: Re Animator comes
From Beyond
starring
Jeffrey Coombs
Barbara Crampton
etc..

3 1/2 on the Leeper Scale

H.P. Lovecraft fans will recognise the movie title as that of a story written in the 1920's. The plot of the story, and the movie, involves the creation and testing of a device called "The Resonator", which allows us to see the denizens of a parallel plane, and vice versa. This is caused by high frequency stimulation, or resonance, of the pineal gland. The movie, like Re Animator before it, does an excellent job of transitioning from the 1920's to the 1980's.

From Beyond starts two starts from Re Animator, Jeffrey Coombs who played Herbert West, and Barbara Crampton who played the female lead. Both show their versatility by portraying entirely different characters in From Beyond. In fact, I had to confirm the fact that Barbara Crampton was indeed in both movies; her physical appearance and characterizations are that different.

Re Animator was voted "Among the best movies of 1985" by the Village Voice. From Beyond seems to be slightly smaller scale than Re Animator, but is still more than indicative of the style of the director (whose name escapes me). From Beyond is rated R as opposed to the "unrated" (X) of Re Animator, but still has a few scenes which could test ones viewing resolve. Connoisseurs will not be disappointed.

In From Beyond sight gags and dark humor are present (one example is the address of the house in the film, "666 Benevolent St". The same claustrophobic feeling in Re Animator is present in From Beyond, and for me that is a plus. I keep comparing the two films intentionally; if you liked Re Animator then you should like From Beyond. If you are just looking for a scary, slimey, and fantastical movie then you should like it. If you are a devotee of the bizarre, of Lovecraft, or horror in general then you won't be disappointed. On repeat viewings the initial tension is gone, but you can still enjoy watching people in the theater jump, and keep a tally of people who leave before the movie is over. When I saw Re Animator two couples left after a couple of intense scenes, but in From Beyond only one couple did.

The director is truly a master craftsman of the bizarre, and is to film

what Clive Barker is to horror literature.

Bob says, "Check it Out Twice"

Robert Allen