

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 4/17/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 40

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

04/22 LZ: MURMURS OF EARTH by Carl Sagan SF-related Non-Fiction

05/06 MT: THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Mainstream SF

Margaret Atwood

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 3L-312 576-2068

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. Welcome to the Cheap, Gaudy Cinema edition of the science fiction notice. This issue is dedicated to bad filmmaking (not turkey films, mind you, but bad filmmakers).

2. Our next Leeperhouse film festival will be dedicated to the works of Roger Corman. Corman was an expert at making money with exploitation films. At 7:00 PM Thursday, April 23 we will be showing:

Roger Corman

HOLLYWOOD'S WILD ANGEL

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (1960) dir. by Roger Corman

HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD (1976) dir. by Joe Dante and Alan Arkush

HOLLYWOOD'S WILD ANGEL is a short documentary studying the work of the great filmmaker Roger Corman, a man who can read a new screenplay, see it as the film will look, and know exactly where to make the notation "Breast nudity here?" He is a man who can take \$10,000 and put on the screen a full length film that looks like it cost at least \$15,000.

Corman's greatest triumph was undoubtedly LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, shot in two days, on a bet. Yet the film has been an enduring classic which spawned an off-Broadway musical and then a film adaptation. This is the original film, a cult classic. And that

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should demonstrate what is wrong with cults.

Two young men came to Corman wanting to make a film. Corman knew they didn't have the experience, but let them make their film anyway. "They had to get experience somewhere," he figured. The film would probably end up unreleased, but perhaps they had a future. It turned out that this satire of Corman's own filmmaking techniques, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD was releasable and is actually pretty funny.

Warning: There is some totally gratuitous nudity in HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD. Probably at Mr. Corman's request.

3. There has been a discussion of Sensurround on the USENET. I don't know how many of you remember the process. It consisted of putting some really heavy-duty woofer speakers in the theater and pumping some really low loud sound through them. You heard a rumble and could feel a thumping in your chest. What was discovered was that most films don't have a lot of need for giving the audience a rumbling and a thumping in the chest. Oddly enough as a miracle process its value was somewhat limited. People like Neil Simon were just not inspired to write rumbling and thump-in-the-chest scenes into their films, for example. The lamentable lack of application for the process, together with a number of exhibitors getting sued because Sensurround had a unfortunate tendency to shake loose ceiling plaster which then had no place to go but down, tended to put the Kabosh on this miracle of modern technology. Only a few films used it, including EARTHQUAKE, MIDWAY and ROLLERCOASTER.

After maybe four or five films using it, it joined the other miracles of the cinema whose time has not yet come: inventions like Michael Todd's Smell-o-vision for the film SCENT OF MYSTERY. Then there was Hypno-vista, which consisted of giving the audience a

boring five-minute lecture on hypnotism and then supposedly hypnotizing the the entire audience to feel all the thrills of HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM. (They neglected to bring the audience out of the trance at the end of the film, however, so I guess all of us who went to see this film are still walking around in a trance. I guess that explains a lot.) Then there were a number of inventions by that great experimental scientist and filmmaker William Castle. Castle invented many devices to make more realistic the experience of seeing his cheap horror films. It was he who put joy buzzers in the theater seats for THE TINGLER to inspire audience participation long before anyone had ever heard of ROCKY HORROR (again Neil Simon was unable to make much use the effect); for HOUSE ON THE HAUNTED HILL he put a glowing plastic skeleton on an invisible wire sent it flying over the heads of the audience (Does that give you any ideas, Mr. Simon?), then for 13 GHOSTS there was a variation on the concept of 3D in which if you look through one piece of cellophane you could see the ghosts on

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the screen and if you look through the other you almost couldn't. (We got the technology, Neil. Just you write the scenes.)

Nobody has ever been able to figure out why a silly idea like Dolby Stereo catches audiences' fancy and remains around and a nifty idea like joy buzzers in audience seats ends up on the ash heap of modern science.

4. Well, I have nothing to add on cheap and gaudy films, but certainly one of the upcoming speakers at NJSFS (the New Jersey Science Fiction Society) writes books after Mr. Corman's heart. I am speaking of Sharon Green, who has been called the "female John Norman" and will be speaking at the August meeting of NJSFS. Their full schedule is as follows:

April 18 Algis Budrys
May 16 Susan Schwarz
June 20 Tom Kidd
July 18 Annual Picnic (that's an event, not a name!)
August 15 Sharon Green
September 19 Alexei Kondratiev
October 17 Concoction 7, a one-day convention
All meetings (except the picnic and convention) are at 7:30 PM

in the basement of the Belleville Masonic Temple. Directions available on request. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzz!leeper

Anthropology on Film - Spring '87 Review
John Licwinko

Each spring, Dr. Malcolm Arth of the American Museum of Natural History presents an evening series entitled "Anthropology on Film". Dr. Arth presents some of the best of the latest documentary films. The film viewings are accompanied by discussions between the audience, Dr. Arth and the films' directors or other knowledgeable persons. Below are some of my feelings about the films seen this year.

P_i_t_j_i_r_i/_T_h_e_S_n_a_k_e_T_h_a_t_W_i_l_l_N_o_t_S_i_n_k
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: K_a_r_e_n_H_u_g_h_e_s.

Along with the I_t_a_l_i_a_n_s film, below, this film comes off as an anthropological-type study, even though the director is not an anthropologist. It revolves around an eighty-five-year-old Australian folk hero, and her experiences with supernatural happenings in the 20's and 30's while acting as a nurse in the Outback. The film includes interviews with the woman, film clips from the 30's, her return to the village where some of the experiences occurred, and her journey together with the Bush People to the lost city.

This film did not grab me as many others in the series did. I found it jumped around too much, and, being made in Australia, I felt it presumed some knowledge of the woman and of Australia that I did not have.

For those interested, I would say her supernatural experiences are somewhat akin to those presented by Carlos Casteneda in his Don Juan series, and also similar to the kinds of things Shirley Maclaine's movie version of "Out on a Limb" posed.

S_o_m_e_B_a_b_i_e_s_D_i_e
1_9_8_5. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: M_a_r_t_y_n_L_a_n_g_d_o_n_D_o_w_n.

For those interested in the subject of death and dying, you will want to see this documentary. This film deals with still-birth and neo-natal death, and the technique used by a team of professionals to help the family cope. First of all, this film is very difficult to watch. At the series, about one-quarter of the audience left before the film started, and another quarter left during the film. In addition to being so powerful, the technique that was shown was highly controversial among the series' audience. For me, the film was the best in the series. I was emotionally caught up in the families and their pain, and I felt that experiencing the film helped me grow in being able to deal with death and dying. I highly recommend this film to those who have interest in this topic. Note that this film is not an introduction to death and dying, rather it is a documentary of one technique used for one special situation, the death of new-borns.

N_o_L_o_n_g_e_r_S_i_l_e_n_t
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: L_a_u_r_e_t_t_e D_e_s_c_h_a_m_p_s.

A film about the women's rights movement in India, this documentary is sympathetic to the movement. (One idea brought out strongly by the series' host Malcolm Arth is that all documentary film has a bias, there is no such thing as neutral; the film maker shows what she wants.) Okay, given the sympathetic part, what else can be said. This film is crafted excellently, the director did her homework and knows how to make documentaries. What interested me was the discussions (by those filmed) of how women are viewed in Indian culture. In fact, I experienced some culture shock, culminated by discussions of the practice of bride-burning.

I would recommend this film for Affirmative Action awareness raising (although I wonder if it might put Indians - especially men - in a defensive position). Also, if you are interested in the women's rights issue, see this one. At a minimum, I guarantee you won't be bored.

C_h_u_c_k_S_o_l_o_m_o_n: C_o_m_i_n_g_o_f A_g_e
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r_s: M_a_r_c_H_u_e_s_t_i_s_a_n_d W_e_n_d_y_D_a_l_l_a_s.

Chuck Solomon is dying of AIDS. Although this documentary again deals with death and dying, it is more about friendship, family, community, and our capacity for love. This capacity, together with the value of truth, left me feeling positive about the human condition. What we witness in the film are family and friends pulling together, setting aside differences, and turning their personal disappointments and Chuck Solomon's tragedy into a celebration of life.

It is my experience at AT&T that we have never discussed sexual preference as a discriminatory item. This film would make an excellent ice breaker into that taboo area. Why? Not because it dwells on sexual orientation, but because we can witness a gay man as a real person. On the other hand, I believe some parts of the film would seriously upset a number of people: the sexual orientation issue (and to some extent the language - remember this is a documentary) would block out the more important aspects. I wonder if AT&T is ready for this?

D_r_i_v_e-I_n_B_l_u_e_s
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: J_a_n_K_r_a_w_i_t_z.

Were you aware that drive-in movie theatres are dying out? Well the director has taken note, and has produced a light, nostalgic film about drive-ins. Do you know, for instance, where the first drive-in movie was built? New Jersey. The parts I found most interesting were the inserts of actual advertising clips from the 50's and 60's (you know, shown at the beginning to warn you not to use your headlights, at intermission to entice you to the snack bar, etc.)

W_h_e_n_Y_o_u_M_a_k_e_a_G_o_o_d_C_r_o_p: I_t_a_l_i_a_n_s_i_n_t_h_e_D_e_l_t_a
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: L_o_u_i_s_G_u_i_d_a.

A not too terribly exciting documentary, this film presents a view of the Italians who work farms in the Mississippi Delta. Yes, there is a small community of Italians who farm. Their parents and grandparents came over around 1900 and settled in as tenant farmers, and the community still thrives. Yes, they have southern accents. This film has the requisite interviews, the necessary background material, and even an introduction by Mario Cuomo.

A_n_g_e_r
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: M_a_x_i_C_o_h_e_n.

And then we saw A_n_g_e_r. The director places an ad in the Village Voice asking "are you angry?" and requesting they contact her. What results is an unforgettable sequence of people discussing their anger. It's not what was expected. It's not uplifting, it's not funny.

A number of us felt that the film had nothing to do with anger, but was about misfits (this was my initial feeling, then riding home, I decided the film was certainly about anger). A number of people felt the director had invaded the privacy of those filmed (even though they had done this voluntarily). A number of people felt it had no artistic merit what-so-ever.

For sure, this film is not slick, not pretty, and not people yelling (with a few exceptions, most notably a couple right out of a Woody Allen movie who would not be believable if this were fiction). The director shows this at her home at parties for friends. If you want to give an unforgettable party, you should too.

B_l_u_e_S_n_a_k_e
1_9_8_6. D_i_r_e_c_t_o_r: N_i_v_F_i_t_c_h_m_a_n

The Canadian Ballet Company rehearses a new production, and then the premiere performance is captured on film. This film falls short in attempting to document rehearsals. For example, for the rehearsals that were filmed, the dancers wore make-up and were, naturally, on performance. As noted during the discussion following the film, this is

not really how rehearsals go; rehearsals are more characterized by sweat, artistic differences, swearing, long hours; none of this was captured or felt. The premiere performance was certainly entertaining to watch, although it had some slow moments (I start to doze off). If you like splashy productions (or you're a balletomane), I'd recommend this one when it hits public TV. As a documentary, it falls well short; but as entertainment, it's okay.