

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 6/19/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 49

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

06/24 LZ: MAROONED IN REALTIME by Vernor Vinge (Time Travel)

07/08 MT: FOOTFALL by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

07/15 LZ: TITAN by John Varley (Megalomania) (in 1B-205)

08/05 LZ: The BERSERKER books by Fred Saberhagen (A/I)

08/26 LZ: ?

09/16 LZ: THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (Future Histories)

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

All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. LAN'S LANTERN has once again been nominated for the Hugo for best fanzine this year. (It won the Hugo last year.) One of the features of LAN'S LANTERN is reprints of material printed in this notice. Evelyn and I are proud to have a part in the excellence of LAN'S LANTERN as a fanzine.

2. Our attendance figures for the THIS IMMORTAL discussion were trying to crawl under a duck. Wassamatta? Nobody read out there any more? Sheesh. We got one curiosity seeker who saw our listing in "Holmdel This Week." If it wasn't for him the meeting would have been just Evelyn and me. I can discuss science fiction with Evelyn anytime without arranging for a room. (But if I thought her opinions were worth anything I wouldn't go to the trouble of setting up meetings.) (Just kidding, dear! Don't throw the rest of the dishes at me or we won't have anything to eat off of).

3. A correction to a past review, thanks to those who pointed it out:

PRICK UP YOUR EARS: I had the names of the two main actors crossed. Oldman played Orton and Molina played Halliwell. What happened here was that I wrote the review in transit without sources. My memory failed me.

- 2 -

Thanks to those who took the time to set me straight. Apologies to those who lost bets by believing me. And to those who won bets using me as a reference, you owe me half.

4. This week's issue includes a list of the Hugo nominees. Those who plan on voting (i.e., you're a member of the World Science Fiction Convention this year) should start reading now, since if you wait for your ballot from England, who knows how long it will take? As usual, the Club will purchase all Hugo-nominated novels that are in paperback. [-ecl]

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

HUGO NOMINATIONS FOR 1987

BEST NOVEL:

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD, Orson Scott Card
COUNT ZERO, William Gibson
BLACK GENESIS, L. Ron Hubbard
THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS, Bob Shaw
MAROONED IN REALTIME, Vernor Vinge

BEST NOVELLA:

"Eifelheim," Michael Bishop, ANALOG 11/86
"Escape from Katmandu," Kim Stanley Robinson, IASFM 9/86
"Gilgamesh in the Outback," Robert Silverberg, IASFM 7/86,
REBELS IN HELL
"R&R," Lucius Shepard, IASFM 4/86
"Spice Pogrom," Connie Willis, IASFM 10/86

BEST NOVELETTE:

"Thor Meets Captain America," David Brin, F&SF 7/86
"Hatrack River," Orson Scott Card, IASFM 8/86
"The Winter Market," William Gibson, INTERZONE Spring 1986
Stardate 3/86, BURNING CHROME
"The Barbarian Princess," Vernor Vinge, ANALOG 9/86
"Permafrost," Roger Zelazny, OMNI 4/86

BEST SHORT STORY:

"Robot Dreams," Isaac Asimov, IASFM 12/15/86, Robot Dreams
"Tangents," Greg Bear, OMNI 1/86
"Still Life," David S. Garnett, F&SF 3/86
"Rat," James Patrick Kelly, F&SF 6/86
"The Boy Who Plaited Manes," Nancy Springer, F&SF 10/86

BEST NON-FICTION:

TRILLION YEAR SPREE, Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove
SCIENCE FICTION IN PRINT: 1985, Charles N. Brown and
William G. Contento
THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS, Frank Miller, Klaus Jensen,
and Lynn Varley
INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC: THE ART OF SPECIAL EFFECTS,
Thomas G. Smith
ONLY APPARENTLY REAL: THE WORLDS OF PHILIP K. DICK,
Paul Williams

BEST SEMI-PROZINE:

FANTASY REVIEW
INTERZONE
LOCUS
SF CHRONICLE
SF REVIEW

BEST EDITOR:

Terry Carr
Gardner Dozois
Edward L. Ferman
David Hartwell
Stanley Schmidt

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION:

ALIENS
THE FLY
LABYRINTH
LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
STAR TREK 4: THE VOYAGE HOME

BEST PRO ARTIST:

Jim Burns
Frank Kelly Freas
Tom Kidd
Don Maitz
J. K. Potter
Barclay Shaw

BEST FANZINE:

ANSIBLE
FILE 770
LAN'S LANTERN
TEXAS SF INQUIRER
TRAPDOOR

BEST FAN WRITER:

Mike Glycer
Patrick Nielsen Hayden
Arthur Hlavaty
Dave Langford
Simon Ounsley
D. West
Owen Whitlock

BEST FAN ARTIST:

Brad Foster
Steve Fox
Stu Schiffman
Taral
Arthur "Atom" Thomson

JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD:

Lois McMaster Bujold
Karen Joy Fowler
Leo Frankowski
Katherine Eliska Kimbriel
Rebecca [Brown] Ore
Robert [Touzalin] Reed

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Broadband supernatural comedy has insight, slapstick, violence, horror, special effects, sophisticated comedy, profanity, a monster, vomit scenes, Jack Nicholson, Michelle Pfeiffer, Susan Sarandon, and Cher. For fans of six or seven of the above only.

John Updike is a prize-winning writer of serious literature about people finding their identities and that sort of thing. His masterwork was his trilogy of novels R_a_b_b_i_t_R_u_n, R_a_b_b_i_t_R_e_d_u_x, and R_a_b_b_i_t_I_s_R_i_c_h. There was something of a stir when he wrote T_h_e_W_i_t_c_h_e_s_o_f_E_a_s_t_w_i_c_k about three women in a provincial Connecticut village who have a brush with a warlock. People thought he was too good a writer to fall back on the fantasy market. My guess is that it was a calculated financial move. I have no figures but I'd be surprised if it was not his most profitable book.

Now T_h_e_W_i_t_c_h_e_s_o_f_E_a_s_t_w_i_c_k has been adapted into a film by George Miller--you know, the man who directed the "Mad Max" films. Add a musical score by John Williams, a cast like Jack Nicholson, Cher, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Susan Sarandon, and makeup by Rob Bottin (T_h_e_H_o_w_l_i_n_g) and you've got one heck of a motley crew contributing to a movie. With a crew like this you might expect a film that is something of a hodge-podge. That's pretty good expecting on your part. This film is an incredible hodge-podge, in fact. The film can't decide if it is light fantasy, horror, soul-searching literature, comedy, Peyton Place, or what. I would use a cliché like "This film throws in everything but the kitchen sink," but it wouldn't be quite true. Instead I'll say this film throws in n_e_a_r_l_y everything including the kitchen sink. Warlock Jack Nicholson--I forget his character's name--breezes into a provincial Connecticut town after he is wished to do so by three unattached women (played by Pfeiffer, Sarandon, and Cher). He takes up residence in an old house where witches were once burned (Pretty hard to find. Actually only one person in North America was ever sentenced to be burned for witchcraft. He escaped. Salem has a very small witch-hunt compared to what used to go on in Europe and all the Salem witches who were executed were hanged, drowned, or otherwise executed in some manner other than hanging.) The three women have simultaneous affairs with Nicholson and all seem to be taking it amicably. Then things start to sour.

Nicholson glides through his part, sometimes impishly childlike, often ranting and bellowing like Ralph Kramden. The three women are believable in their parts and perhaps more realistic than most women in witchcraft films, but don't look for them at Oscar time. The film has some powerful scenes of evil--some seem inspired by S_o_m_e_t_h_i_n_g_W_i_c_k_e_d

_T_h_i_s_W_a_y_C_o_m_e_s--but as good an actor as Nicholson is, he never rises to the malevolence of Jonathan Pryce in _S_o_m_e_t_h_i_n_g_W_i_c_k_e_d_T_h_i_s_W_a_y_C_o_m_e_s.

_T_h_e_W_i_t_c_h_e_s_o_f_E_a_s_t_w_i_c_k has its moments but they do not add up to one whole movie of any kind. It has something for everyone but it will have enough of anything only for real fans. Rate it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

P.S. To save having everyone send me Nicholson's character's name, yes, I do remember it, but it's an inside joke.

PREDATOR

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Arnold Schwarzenegger meets an alien with a cloaking device while on a commando mission in Central America. Action films are pretty common, but the concept of the cloaking device coupled with decent special effects are a boon.

When I was growing up and into comics, one kind of comic I was n_o_t interested in was war comics. I never read one, though I was occasionally curious about the ones that mixed war stories with a science fictional element. Typically, some group of commandos would find an island they were taking was infested with dinosaurs. If I were to read a war comic, that would be the one I'd want to read. Well, the science fiction war story has made it to the screen with P_r_e_d_a_t_o_r.

To Major Dutch Schaefer (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger), it's just another job. Schaefer makes his living by leading a crack commando unit in the jungle. It isn't the safest way to make a living, but it usually has a predictable level of danger and few really unexpected hazards. Schaefer usually knows pretty much what to expect and what to be prepared for. This time, however, Schaefer has flubbed it badly. Schaefer and his men are not prepared for the hazards they are facing and they are paying the price in lives. It isn't really their fault, of

course. It's just that sometimes you face s_o_m_e_t_h_i_n_g_y_o_u_h_a_v_e_n't_s_e_e_n_b_e_f_o_r_e. This time they are being picked off by an alien creature and because the alien can fade into the jungle like a chameleon, they are not even seeing the something this time.

Twentieth Century Fox, who cleaned up with two science fiction horror films last summer (A_l_i_e_n_s and T_h_e_F_l_y), have as their summer science fiction film this year a sort of R_a_m_b_o meets A_l_i_e_n_s. You probably already know who Schwarzenegger is. The title role is played by the 7'2" tall Kevin Peter Hall, the Peter Mayhew of the 80s. Hall is quoted as saying of his alien's fighting style: "An alien warrior wouldn't come from outer space doing old Bruce Lee routines. I wanted something a little different from the standard karate. Medieval combat seemed appropriate." Right! Well, I'm not really sure you can tell the difference.

What does set this film apart from pure throwaway action films is an interesting approach in the chameleon or, more accurately, "cloaking" effect. In the first scenes when you see it, you really are not sure what you have seen or how the effect was created. When you can get a better look at the effect, it is relatively clear how it was achieved, but it is still a good idea. The plot implications of a nearly invisible creature stalking the commandos are well-handled. Without the

Predator

June 15, 1987

Page 2

cloaking concept this would be a fairly low-grade action film. As it stands, P_r_e_d_a_t_o_r is an enjoyable action film, reasonably well-thought-out. I saw only one real inconsistency (I don't think it will give away much to say that sometimes the alien can see human eyes and sometimes it can't). Because the invisibility theme is well-handled, I give P_r_e_d_a_t_o_r a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

PROJECT X
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Very (very) familiar story about an Air Force experiment using chimpanzees and a young soldier who becomes attached to them. This film is more enjoyable than one would expect it to be. Nothing great, but well worth seeing.

The last time I watched John Badham's film W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s (at least I hope it was the last time!), I counted what I thought were technical errors in the film. I came up with an average of one every 120 seconds. When I read that the scripters of W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s had produced a new film, P_r_o_j_e_c_t_X, my excitement knew very strict bounds. In fact, I was not excited at all. When I heard that in this film Matthew Broderick was causing trouble at an Air Force base on which experimentation was being done on intelligent chimpanzees, I said to myself, "I even know that story. I have seen it done as a play on PBS and read it at least twice." It had to be almost the same story as Paul Zindel's "Let Me Hear You Whisper." That play dealt with a cleaning-woman at a soul-less research institute. Scientists are trying to teach a dolphin to speak, but it will talk only to the cleaning-woman and then only when nobody else is around. Our cleaning-woman is incensed at the lack of co-operation on the dolphin's part until she learns what defense uses the scientists will make of the dolphin if it does learn to talk. After that, her goal is to help the dolphin escape.

So I avoided seeing P_r_o_j_e_c_t_X until it came down to \$1.25. Then I decided it was worth that just to see a remake of the Zindel play. My reaction: if Paul Zindel were Harlan Ellison, he would now be the major stockholder of Twentieth Century Fox. P_r_o_j_e_c_t_X was not the close remake I was expecting, but the two stories are awfully parallel. But in spite of that, I have to admit I really did like P_r_o_j_e_c_t_X and consider it a far better and far more believable film than W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s.

The film follows one chimp, Virgil, from being trapped in the wild through being taught sign language by Teri (played by Helen Hunt) until Teri's grant is canceled, to being taken to an Air Force base for experimentation purposes. There, a ne'er-do-well Air Force brat, Jimmy (played by Broderick) is given the job of caring for the chimpanzee subjects and discovers that Virgil can talk sign language. Then the relationship between the two grows and the story follows predictable routes.

P_r_o_j_e_c_t_X could have gone wrong in a dozen different ways, but it doesn't. The chimps are not entirely believable--a little too human--but are likable without being cutesey. The film manages to give them distinct personalities, no small feat. While the science of W_a_r_G_a_m_e_s

seemed ridiculous, _ P _ r _ o _ j _ e _ c _ t _ X is considerably more credible. the experiment being performed might not have been performed in exactly the way it is portrayed, but I suspect that similar experiments actually have been done, and perhaps as early as the 50s. What is hardest to believe about the experiment is that the Air Force would not already have all the data they need along the lines of the results of _ P _ r _ o _ j _ e _ c _ t _ X.

Director Jonathan Kaplan will be familiar to people who saw the documentary "Roger Corman: Hollywood's Wild Angel." In a humorous interview, Kaplan tells how Corman gave him his first feature film to direct (_ N _ i _ g _ h _ t _ C _ a _ l _ l _ N _ u _ r _ s _ e _ s) and his second (_ T _ h _ e _ S _ t _ u _ d _ e _ n _ t _ T _ e _ a _ c _ h _ e _ r _ s).

Kaplan slowly worked his way up with _ W _ h _ i _ t _ e _ L _ i _ n _ e _ F _ e _ v _ e _ r. His most recent

films, such as _ O _ v _ e _ r _ t _ h _ e _ E _ d _ g _ e and _ H _ e _ a _ r _ t _ L _ i _ k _ e _ a _ W _ h _ e _ e _ l, have gained much

better acceptance. He was chosen to direct her because of his ability to "do spectacular action sequences on a low budget," according to producer Walter Parkes.

Though insufficiently original in plot, _ P _ r _ o _ j _ e _ c _ t _ X tells a fairly good story well, gets a good acting jobs out of a bunch of apes, and is surprisingly affecting. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE BELIEVERS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Ugly, unpleasant urban horror film about a voodoo-like religion in New York City. There is nothing original or creative and little enjoyable in the film. If John Schlesinger can make films like M_i_d_n_i_g_h_t C_o_w_b_o_y, that's really what he should be doing.

There hasn't been a horror film like T_h_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r_s in a while. After R_o_s_e_m_a_r_y'_s_B_a_b_y, and especially after T_h_e_E_x_o_r_c_i_s_t, there were several horror films in modern--particularly urban--settings. To make a film seem more believable and immediate, it was set in a contemporary city setting. T_h_e_S_e_n_t_i_n_e_l worked that way; so did T_h_e_W_o_l_f_e_n. There was even a weekly "urban horror" TV series, K_o_l_c_h_a_k:T_h_e_N_i_g_h_t_s_t_a_l_k_e_r. Then along came Stephen King, who usually uses small towns for his settings. Consciously or not, film producers followed suit. Setting is, of course, only one of many factors in what makes a horror film, but it does a lot to set the tone, and T_h_e_B_e_l_i_e_v_e_r_s somehow feels like a throwback to the N_i_g_h_t_s_t_a_l_k_e_r series sort of horror story with definite echoes of R_o_s_e_m_a_r_y'_s_B_a_b_y and B_u_r_n_W_i_t_c_h B_u_r_n.

An African-based religion, Santeria, is creeping into New York City. Santeria is voodoo-like and calls for blood sacrifices of

chickens and other small animals. It may also call for human sacrifice. There have been bodies of young boys found who appear to have been sacrificed in a brutal manner. When a policeman is suspected of taking part in Santerian ceremonies, Martin Sheen, a police psychologist, is called in. Sheen becomes involved in the investigation of the murders.

T h e B e l i e v e r s does something quite difficult. In spite of a muddled and confusing plot, it is predictable. Just about every surprise in the film telegraphs itself well in advance. There is almost nothing original or inventive in the entire film. Most of the horror impact of the film comes from scenes of mutilated animals. There is one effective makeup effect which produces as much nausea as fear in the audience.

Director John Schlesinger had previously done films like B i l l y L i a r, D a r l i n g, F a r f r o m t h e M a d d i n g C r o w d, M i d n i g h t C o w b o y, D a y o f t h e L o c u s t, and M a r a t h o n M a n. These are not schlock films! Schlesinger can make very good films. M a r a t h o n M a n shows that he can do very good suspense films. However, my advice to him would be that less talented directors than him can do a better job with horror; few can make a M i d n i g h t C o w b o y or even a M a r a t h o n M a n. He should make films but stay away from horror. Rate T h e B e l i e v e r s a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

TAMPOPO

A film review by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: High-calorie comedy about one restaurant's quest for the perfect noodle soup. Enjoyable comedy from Japan includes several comedy sketches unrelated to the main story, but which help to buoy it up.

Are you into food? I mean, are you r_ e_ a_ l_ l_ y into food? And when you get the food, is it important that everything about the food be just perfect? And, just by the way, are you really into Japanese food? If so, you will probably enjoy T_ a_ m_ p_ o_ p_ o, a new film from Toho Studios. Toho is known best in this country for having invented Godzilla and many of his tall friends. They also made the best of the samurai films. They now bring the plot of a samurai film and the subtlety of a Godzilla film to a comedy about the adoration of food.

Two truck drivers stop at a noodle shop somewhere in the outskirts of Tokyo. Even though the ramen is mediocre, one of the truck drivers finds himself in a fight defending Tampopo, the chef. He is knocked unconscious by five ruffians and when he awakes the next morning, Tampopo has an odd request: she wants our truck driver to become her master and teach her to make perfect ramen noodle soup. Thus Tampopo begins the arduous and occasionally dangerous journey toward perfection in even so apparently minor a task as noodle-making. In this task details that seem minor to gaijin--foreigners like you and me--become very important. The plot from that point forward advances much like a samurai film. If thick noodles seem to make for a thin plot, they do. About half the movie is filled with tangential comedy routines that have little or nothing to do with the plot. Some are funny; some seem a little pointless to us impatient gaijin; almost all are on the subject of food.

One may question if the world really needed a comedy dedicated to gourmet cooking--particularly one that shows in detail the proper way to kill and drain the blood from a turtle. But T_ a_ m_ p_ o_ p_ o is a diverting hour or so. It is a pleasant (mostly) and forgettable film guaranteed to increase the business of local Japanese restaurants. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. Don't see it on an empty stomach.