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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 7/31/87 -- Vol. 6, No. 5

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.  
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

    D    A    T    E                    T    O    P    I    C

- 08/05 LZ: The BERSERKER books by Fred Saberhagen (A/I)
- 08/19 MT: Berkserkers, Dorsai, and Retief (Military SF)
- 08/26 LZ: COUNT ZERO by William Gibson (Hugo Nominees)
- 09/16 LZ: THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (Future Histories)
- 09/23 MT: The Vampire in SF (Lee, Matheson, Saberhagen, Sturgeon, Wilson)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 mtuxo!jetzt  
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt  
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619 mtgzz!leeper  
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866 homxb!tps  
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-6142 lzfme!lfl  
MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868 mtgzz!bds  
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
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1. They're discussing the "Berserker" series in Lincroft on Wednesday, August 5.
  
2. There are two good books on film that are handy quick references. One is by Leonard Maltin; one is by Steven Scheuer. Each rates films on a scale of one to four stars. MY ratings don't correlate perfectly with theirs, but we are close. I am not certain, but I think our next film festival will be our first 16-star film festival. Both films get the highest possible rating from both critics. On August 6 at 7 PM (\*SHARP!\*), in honor of the fourth anniversary of the Leeper Film Festival, we will show:

Peter O'Toole Henry II Films  
BECKET (1964) dir. by Peter Glenville  
THE LION IN WINTER (1968) dir. by Anthony Harvey

B\_e\_c\_k\_e\_t is the retelling of Henry's relationship with Thomas a Becket (Richard Burton), once a close friend, whom he installed as the Archbishop of Canterbury, an action he later grew to regret.

T\_h\_e\_L\_i\_o\_n\_i\_n\_W\_i\_n\_t\_e\_r by James Goldman, based on Goldman's own play,

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tells the story of the fierce battles between Henry and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine (played by Katharine Hepburn), with the fate of England in the balance. Superbly scripted, acted, and scored, many people I know consider this one of their favorite films. Also starring are Anthony Hopkins, Nigel Terry (who played Arthur in E\_x\_c\_a\_l\_i\_b\_u\_r), and Timothy Dalton (who plays the new James Bond in T\_h\_e\_L\_i\_v\_i\_n\_g\_D\_a\_y\_l\_i\_g\_h\_t\_s).

Please be ON TIME. This is four hours and 43 minutes of great cinema.

3. Some people have taken me to task because they claim I have been kidding Evelyn in the last couples of issues. Let me be serious for a moment and say that deep down I know in my heart of hearts that everything I write is the truth. Evelyn is exactly as I portray her in the Notice and I also note that the people who know Evelyn well are n\_o\_t the people who claim I am misrepresenting her. Being married to her is a totally unique experience. I never had one like it before I met her. Actually, our marriage has been mutually enriching (sounds like I am describing a loaf of bread, doesn't it?). I take her places like China and Peru, I take her to see lost cities in the Yucatan or on the Urubamba. She takes me to health food stores.

I don't know how much thought you have given to these places. Most people walk right by a health food store without ever realizing that there is a whole unexplored world of weirdness just a few steps away. They think health food stores are all things like Celestial Seasonings teas and so forth. Little do you know.

One of the things that keeps our economy strong is the principle that when you enter a food store you get hungry. When you get hungry you get more food and America's economy gets a little shot in the arm. Ever walk into a health food store? You get about as

hungry as you get walking down the medicine aisles of a drugstore. While grocery stores seem to be dedicated to the joy of eating, health food stores work more on fear than on joy: fear that you might eat the wrong thing or fear that you might get sick if you aren't already. Morbid places, health food stores.

Take a look at a box of tea, for example. In a grocery, you will see on the Lipton box the old sea captain--at least that's what I have always thought he was--holding up a lip-smacking good tea. You will even find some Celestial Seasonings teas. That is a company that walks the narrow line between the grocery mentality and the health food store mentality. They have a tea called "Cranberry Cove" with a pleasant seaside scene of cranberry pickers. But with a slight touch of the sinister you will also see "Sleepytime" herb tea with a pleasant picture of a sleepy teddybear. Why is it sinister? Well, tea has caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant. This tea has been doctored to have no caffeine in

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it. Herbs are used instead of tea leaves. This is really a tea-less tea, but it is for your own good that it is tea-less. Right. And people who believe that can go to a health food store and see the array of teas there. No sham of pretty pictures on the box. You find things like "PMS Tea," good for pre-menstrual syndrome. Thank God they didn't illustrate the box. There is no explanation on the box of what it does if a man drinks it. That is left up to the buyer's imagination. I didn't even want to touch the box.

I am not sure if there really is any tea in this tea; you have to read the label carefully to find out if they actually put in the main advertised ingredient or not. A can of chili had no chili either. It was a soybean product. Oh, these are people who worship at the altar of the soybean and the lentil. They have barrels of fifteen kinds of dried lentils to buy by the pound. I didn't even know there was more than one kind of lentil.

They have breakfast cereals without any flavor. One had pictures of M a y a n p y r a m i d s because it claimed to have "amaranth--the secret of the Aztecs!" It didn't do the Aztecs much good. It got to be a secret apparently because a few dozen Spaniards came from the sea with high-cholesterol dried meat, wormy biscuits, liver-killing

drink, and cannons. Whole bunches of Aztecs who apparently knew about amaranth never got a chance to tell anyone. There's a lesson there someplace, but I'm not going to point it out.

Anyway, on your way out of the store, there's a freezer case. What do you think is in it? In keeping with the rest of the store I expected soybean-milk ice cream. Nope. Haagen Daz! At last a health food that I can live with. Maybe they did learn a secret from the Spaniards after all.

4. Once agin we have lots of goodies: loads of book reviews and our own version of "Point/Counter-Point" starring Dale Skran as Shana Alexander and Mark Leeper as James Kilpatrick (or is it the other way around?). Or maybe Dale is Gene Siskel and Mark is Roger Ebert. Well, whoever they are, they're comin' at ya from the MT VOID! [-ecl]

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

GOD GAME by Andrew M. Greeley  
Tor, 1987 (1986c), ISBN 0-812-58336-1, \$4.50.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Evelyn C. Leeper

Like Atwood's H\_a\_n\_d\_m\_a\_i\_d'\_s\_T\_a\_l\_e and Appel's T\_i\_m\_e\_a\_f\_t\_e\_r\_T\_i\_m\_e,\_G\_o\_d  
G\_a\_m\_e  
is another science fiction novel written by a "mainstream" author. In

this case, the author is a mystery author who is also a priest, and my understanding is that his previous novels have been set in the Church. In this novel, his main character is a priest, so he retains that connection with his past. But this is not a mystery; it is entirely science fiction, and in some ways, a fantasy.

The "God Game" of the title is a role-playing game called "Duke and Duchess" that the narrator's friend Nathan has designed and given to the narrator to play-test. While he is testing it, a bolt of lightning hits his satellite dish. It apparently doesn't damage either the television or the computer attached to it (no, this isn't the fantasy aspect, though anyone who's had a similar occurrence happen knows this is e\_x\_t\_r\_e\_m\_e\_l\_y unlikely), but suddenly the animated blips on the screen turn into a "real" movie. The game is still running, but differently than before, and the narrator begins to realize that something has gone wrong. He gradually comes to understand that the lightning has opened a portal into another universe--there's some scientific hand-waving to explain this--and that he is God in that universe.

This novel has been likened to F\_r\_a\_n\_k\_e\_n\_s\_t\_e\_i\_n, but that is inaccurate. The narrator has not created anyone; he has inherited all his characters. He spends most of the novel trying to reconcile his position as the supreme being of that universe with his beliefs as a priest in God. The writing is straightforward. Greeley does not rely on style to tell his story. He relies on plot. In this case, he relies on two plots: the main plot of the narrator who finds that he is God, and the internal plot of the events in the other universe, a fantasy kingdom with dukes, duchesses, witches, sprites, and all the concomitant trappings. The inter-weaving of the two keeps the book moving along. This means that the philosophical monologues of the narrator, which you would think might slow the book down, are kept to a shorter length than if Greeley had only one plot to deal with. The resolution is perhaps not entirely satisfactory, but that may be the point.

Greeley has achieved such success with this that his next (and most recent) novel is even more definitely science fiction. I am curious to see if he continues using his religious background to give us novels of the sort that C. S. Lewis and James Blish used to write.

[Note: There is \_n\_o "The" in the title.]

A Whole Big Batch of Skran Mini-Reviews  
By Dale L. Skran Jr.  
Copyright 1987  
Purpose: To Warn the Unwary, Reward the Good

THE VAMPIRE LESTAT by Ann Rice

A top-flight vampire novel--more SF than fantasy. One of the best books about immortals I've ever read. Highly recommended. Wonderful language. Even better than her earlier I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_v\_i\_e\_w\_w\_i\_t\_h\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e.

SOUL RIDER: Books I, II, III, IV, & V by Jack Chalker

I can't believe I read the whole series. It really wasn't that interesting. Chalker has certain themes, especially body switching and personal transformation that he can't let go of, and which he does to death. Average writing, but alas, I kept on reading. Distinctly Chalkeresque combination of SF and Fantasy--magic by the rules.

WILD CARDS I and WILD CARDS II (ACES HIGH) edited by George R. R. Martin.

Good stories by some of the best SF writers of today: Martin, Shiner, Waldrop, Walter Jon Williams, and Zelazny. The history of an alternate Earth where a "wild card virus" creates super-heros, super-villains, and endless misery. First book is better than the second, but both are fun and well written. Recommended.

AGENTS OF INSIGHT by Steven Klaper

My new author experiment gone bad. Although the blurb sounded promising (post-war world with telepathic spies), the reality had Bonds with "jet-shoes." Gag. Awwark. I couldn't finish it.

THE MISPLACED LEGION by Harry Turtledove

I expected more from Turtledove, the author of a number of interesting alternate world stories that have been appearing in F&S\_F [and A\_n\_a\_l\_o\_g]. What he gives us is yet another "Romans go someplace weird and fight something the Romans never really fought" stories. Turtledove is very uncomfortable with magic and uses it little in this ponderous, slow-moving, and over-long tale.

RANKS OF BRONZE by David Drake

Another "let's take some Romans and have them fight something Romans never really fought" story. Here aliens kidnap (space-nap?) a legion for their own purposes. More dull than not, and mainly of interest to military SF fans. Poul Anderson did it first, and best, in T\_h\_e\_H\_i\_g\_h\_C\_r\_u\_s\_a\_d\_e.

## CIRCUIT by Melinda Snodgrass

Another new author experiment gone awry. A judge is sent by Earth to the 15th Circuit--the Space Colonies--where he is supposed to break them to Earth's will. Of course, he switches sides, and good wins out. I found Ms. Snodgrass's future world hard to believe politically or economically, although her space colonies are at least technically feasible. Many cuts below Haldaman's "Worlds" series and several cuts below T\_h\_e\_I\_s\_l\_a\_n\_d W\_o\_r\_l\_d\_s.

## TECKLA by Steven Brust

A fun romp with Vlad Taltos, assassin, and Jhereg, featuring Brust's smooth flowing prose and a consistently worked out magical world.

## THE HERCULES TEXT by Jack McDevitt

I just read Evelyn's review of this book, and am convinced we read something altogether different. I found the characterization in T\_h\_e\_H\_e\_r\_c\_u\_l\_e\_s\_T\_e\_x\_t to be crude and mechanical, as well as perpetuating the stereotype of the engineer or technocrat out of touch with human feeling. As one example, I found it impossible to believe that the main character would ever have married his ex-wife in the first place. The entire first part of the book which focuses on their relationship grated on my nerves.

Finally, the ending is inconclusive and unbelievable. It seems impossible that the aliens would simply dump all their knowledge on us willy-nilly. Surely it would occur to them that so much so fast would destroy us. Altogether, you are better off reading Sagan's C\_o\_n\_t\_a\_c\_t.

## THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin

An excellent novel. I nominate it for the 1988 Hugo. It's out in paperback so you can rush out and read it now. Brin has, if anything, improved on S\_t\_a\_r\_t\_i\_d\_e\_R\_i\_s\_i\_n\_g. I am continually impressed with his versatility and scope, as well as his command of language and character, human and alien.

## MAROONED IN REALTIME by Vernor Vinge

I've liked Vinge for a long time--every since I read his first novel, G\_r\_i\_m\_m'\_s\_W\_o\_r\_l\_d (now out and re-titled Tanja Grimm's World). I loved his story "True Names," and was modestly pleased with The Peace War. With his latest novel, M\_a\_r\_o\_o\_n\_e\_d\_i\_n\_R\_e\_a\_l\_t\_i\_m\_e, he has reached a new height of technical quality and imagination. M\_a\_r\_o\_o\_n\_e\_d\_i\_n\_R\_e\_a\_l\_t\_i\_m\_e has been nominated for the Hugo this year, and I voted it first. Vinge has created simply one of the most original, far-seeing, human, double SF mysteries around. The jacket by Tom Kidd is almost worth the price of the book, which is widely available in paperback. Vinge has been

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overlooked for a long time. Let's give him his due. Vinge is not the writer that Gibson or Shiner is, but he has a breathtaking vision and an increasing ability to convey that vision with a high-quality story and memorable characters. I just hope he writes Della Lu's life story soon. Very highly recommended.

### THE PEACE WAR by Vernor Vinge

The predecessor to M\_a\_r\_o\_o\_n\_e\_d\_i\_n\_R\_e\_a\_l\_t\_i\_m\_e, T\_h\_e\_P\_e\_a\_c\_e\_W\_a\_r is not as well written or constructed, but still tells a story. Not a great novel, and perhaps of the most interest to Vinge completists who want to know more of the background to M\_a\_r\_o\_o\_n\_e\_d\_i\_n\_R\_e\_a\_l\_t\_i\_m\_e.

### MATADORA by Steve Perry

Slight but readable martial arts SF set in a distant future that would be a lot more believable set in the next few hundred years. Perry can write clean prose, but his story ideas are hackneyed.

### THE MIKO by Eric Van Lustbader

No, I didn't read every word of this lengthy sequel to T\_h\_e\_N\_i\_n\_j\_a, but it was an airport and the plane was late. I got to about page 300 and then lost the book. It is a tribute to Lustbader that I felt



compelled to buy another copy and finish the story. I attribute this odd action to that fact that Lustbader has improved technically since the earlier novel, and to the fact that "the Miko" is a much more interesting character than his ninja hero. All in all, just a pot-boiler, with ninja mumbo-jumbo thrown in.

#### EXIT EARTH by Martin Caidin

This could have been a good novel if Caidin had gotten his act together about when it happened. Part of it seems to happen in the last years of the 20th Century or the early part of the 21st Century. Another part seems to be set in 2040 or 2050. Finally, it suffers from the fact that it is fundamentally unbelievable that the voyagers could return to a verdant Earth in such a short time. Still, I read it all the way to the end, and it does have some very effective scenes ("He stepped out") and some good ideas. Recommended only for end-of-the-world fans.

#### THE MESSIAH STONE by Martin Caidin

A poorly-written action novel about the quest for a magical stone that gave Hitler his powers of persuasion. Suffers from Caidin's inability to see women as anything but racks for carrying large breasts around. Has some interesting scenes and ideas, including a good working out of the limitations of such a magical device.

#### A COMING OF AGE by Timothy Zahn

A welcome break from Zahn's past mediocre military action stories, this young-adult-style novel explores a world where children have psi powers but lose them as adults! Although he has an original premise coupled to a fair story, Zahn falls short of a really good novel, mainly since he seems to be writing for a young audience.

#### GOD STALK by P. C. Hodgell

Forgettable fantasy. Another new author experiment.

## BURNING CHROME by William Gibson

This story collection contains Gibson's corpus of work to date. For a collection of the first short stories written by a new author, this has a very high average quality. I especially liked "The Gernsback Continuum," "Red Star, Winter Orbit," and the title piece, "Burning Chrome." Another story in this collection, "The Winter Market," was nominated for the Hugo in 1987. Recommended.

## THE KUNDALINI EQUATION by Steven Barnes

An overweight intellectual happens on the Kundalini equation, an ancient secret for harnessing the reptilian brain and transforming a modern human into a super-strong killing machine. Sounds terrible, but I did finish the story, which was more readable than Caidin's typical action ka-ka.

## HARDWIRED by Walter Jon Williams

H\_a\_r\_d\_w\_i\_r\_e\_d is a direct N\_e\_u\_r\_o\_m\_a\_n\_c\_e\_r imitation in the cyber-punk tradition. For all that, it's a readable hard-SF story that stands on its own, and surprised me with its plot twists. Only the female assassin comes through as a real character, but the book's worth reading. Recommended for fans of cyber-punk and hard SF.

THE FLY  
Screenplay by Charles Edward Pogue and Walon Green  
Produced by Brooksfilm  
A screenplay review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1987 Mark R. Leeper

The Fly has been considered one of the great science fiction horror films for many years. Perhaps millions of children have frightened younger brothers and sisters with falsetto cries of "Help me! Please! Help me!" It was a natural for a remake and in 1984 Brooksfilm bought a screen adaptation by Charles Edward Pogue (who also scripted Psycho and Walon green. David Cronenberg was given the screenplay to film; he kept some, rewrote a lot more, and filmed the result. On a visit to a cinema shop in Manhattan I discovered that copies of the Pogue-Green screenplay were available. As a fan of the original film with screenplay by James Clavell (who went on to script films like Twilight, Love and the Satan Bug and then to write novels like Shotgun and Titan), and to a lesser extent as a fan of the remake with screenplay credited to Pogue and Cronenberg, the temptation was too great to pass up.

Geoffrey Powell is a research scientist just below Nobel Prize caliber. he works for a high-tech research and development company--Loften Industries, headquartered in new York City. Lofton, however, has grown tired of waiting for Geoffrey's researches into "particle transmission" to bear some sort of useful fruit. He is ready to replace Geoffrey if the young researcher does not produce. Geoff is able to transmit objects, sometimes successfully ("like Statue, as a friend observes), but often not so successfully. He usually transmits souvenir Statues of Liberty. A poor touch here is that one appears to be successfully transmitted until Geoff's wife Katie notices the wording has been reversed. If the wording were reversed, the whole statue should have been noticeably reversed. Under pressure from Lofton, Geoff transmits himself, but the audience knows that a fly transmitted at the same time has disappeared.

Now the story is similar to Cronenberg's film. Geoff at first seems much improved by the transmission, finding himself a much faster jogger and able to lift greater weights. He starts transforming soon, growing new hair on his body, losing his fingernails. He does not, however, climb the walls (at least literally) the way Cronenberg has him do. But then neither does he philosophize about his condition either and we can credit Cronenberg for the strange thought processes that were the high points of the film.

There is no discussion of how a matter transmitter turned in a gene splicer--a rather absurd concept from the film. Instead, the two organisms were fused into one and we are told, "A fly is a very primitive form of life. That's why it's so successful. Its cells are

stronger, they are able to multiply more rapidly than [Geoff's] own...in mutation the more primitive structure is always the victor."

(Spoiler--in case you ever find the script)

In the end and out of control, Geoff murders a neighbor and his villainous boss using vomit drops full of burning enzymes (much as in the film). An attempt at suicide in his matter transmitter turns him into a six-foot fly, and finally he is killed by a laser gone wild. Apparently Pogue thinks that a laser will flail around like a fire-hose if not bolted down. The final scene has his wife Katie giving birth to a giant maggot only to realize it was a momentary hallucination--or was it?

If you can turn a blind eye to some of the scientific blunders, Pogue's script is often more credible than is Cronenberg's rewrite. The funding for Brundle research never made any sense in the film and Pogue has a much better feel for how research gets done in the R&D community--and under what kind of pressures it is done. Neither script will win any prizes for scientific accuracy. Neither script is clearly better. Overall I would say that the Cronenberg script, while less believable, is the better for having shown us a little more of the mental processes of a creature part man and part fly. I would still contend that of the three stories, the original film was the best and at the same time the most accurate to George Langlaan's story.

## ROBOCOP

A Counter-review by Dale Skran, Jr.

Copyright 1987 by Dale Skran, Jr.

Let us cross pens. Mark and I have a number of long-running debates, including one on the value of movies like D\_r\_e\_a\_m\_s\_c\_a\_p\_e, T\_e\_r\_m\_i\_n\_a\_t\_o\_r, and R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p, and another on the adaptability of super-hero comics to film. If I may be somewhat cavalier, Mark tends to feel these films are unexceptional, while I feel they serve the special purpose of bringing standard SF ideas to a movie audience generally unfamiliar with them. On the other topic, Mark tends to argue that super-heros make poor, or at least silly films that are not good SF or anything else. As a long-time fan of the super-hero genre, especially Marvel's merry mutants, I, of course, disagree. At least, I feel the super-hero genre could be made into excellent films--if only Hollywood tried.

At long last, in R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p we may have such a film. Although flawed, it's a pretty good action picture--better than B\_l\_u\_e\_T\_h\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r or W\_a\_n\_t\_e\_d D\_e\_a\_d\_o\_r\_A\_l\_i\_v\_e. It has a nice score by the gentleman who scored Conan the Barbarian (really another successful super-hero adaptation). It has lots of good lines and funny jokes, including "My name is Murphy," "You're going to be one bad m\*\*\*er-f\*\*\*ker," and "You're fired." It is 100% better than the scientifically silly R\_u\_n\_a\_w\_a\_y (wherein Tom Selleck battles robots). Like T\_e\_r\_m\_i\_n\_a\_t\_o\_r, which along with B\_a\_c\_k\_t\_o\_t\_h\_e\_F\_u\_t\_u\_r\_e, introduced recursive time travel stories to the modern audience on a

sensible level, R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p shows us a lot of wonderful stuff we've read a hundred times, but never seen before. The plot is old stuff, but who cares? Heinlein claimed there were only three basic plots anyway: boy meets girl, the little tailor, and boy becomes man. For those who care, R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p combines elements from all three of Heinlein's basic plots.

Mercifully, the makers of R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p take their premise seriously, and spares us cackling villains and silly sidekicks. This is a clean, mean story that owes a lot to the T\_h\_e\_R\_o\_a\_d\_W\_a\_r\_r\_i\_o\_r's realistic violence and

B\_r\_a\_i\_n\_s\_t\_o\_r\_m's greedy, militarized, hi-tech corporations. Mark complains a good deal about the inconsistencies in this future world. I think he's holding to an excessively high standard. R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p is not B\_l\_a\_d\_e\_R\_u\_n\_n\_e\_r, but its future (a few Merlin phones aside) is far more completely thought out than the average SF movie. It is not up to written SF standards, but I suspect the producers wanted to make a few bucks and couldn't afford to re-do everything. It suspended my disbelief far better than 2\_0\_1\_0:O\_d\_y\_s\_s\_e\_y\_T\_w\_o which by contrast (except for the spaceships) seemed to be taking place in the next five years. The makers of R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p have at least made a serious (and sometimes not so serious) attempt to project current trends out 20-30 years.

The plot has several weakness that tend to make it easier for R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p to bring in the bad guys. In particular, at one point the main henchman makes a speech to Robocop admitting that he works for the main villain. This makes things easy for Robocop, but 1) the henchman is

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getting thrown through windows and such like, 2) it is clearly established in the film that the henchman might suppose mentioning his boss's name would save him. At another point a bad guy puts down a perfectly good armor-piercing cannon to use a crane to drop a lot of metal parts on Robocop. This is stupid, but at least the movie has the main bad guy yelling at him to "Stop messing around and shoot." Mark also complains that the ED-209 (a robot that the cyborg Robocop edges out of a job) would not be very effective as a policeman, which is amply demonstrated in the movie, but it is also made clear in the film that the corporation doesn't care if it actually works as a cop--their plan is to sell it to the Pentagon.

I have a beef that I'm surprised Mark missed. Cops are being killed right and left. The crooks are armed like they just came out of the National Guard Armory. The cops...well, the cops carry what appear to be 9mm pea-shooters with nary a shotgun or automatic rifle in sight! Maybe these are supposed to be some kind of advanced handguns, but if I were on that future Detroit police force, I'd carry an AK-47 or a Uzi!

Overall, though, these are just quibbles. R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p is more realistic than many action movies, including most James Bonds and R\_e\_m\_o\_w\_i\_l\_l\_i\_a\_m\_s. The plot is not as tightly wound as that of T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_n\_v\_e\_r\_s\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n but it exceeds B\_l\_u\_e\_T\_h\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r by a wide margin. To this it must be added that R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p continues the line of "action" heroines started by A\_l\_i\_e\_n and A\_l\_i\_e\_n\_s. We see for the very first time without any special attention that sexual equality has reached the point that male and female cops share the same locker room. There is no gratuitous flesh, and the heroine is not model-pretty. However, she has a mean crescent kick.

R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p straddles the edge between a realistic super-hero comic and SF. If one guy is a cyborg or wears a powered-suit a la the comic hero "Iron Man," we tend to have a super-hero story. If everyone has a powered-suit, we have Heinlein's S\_t\_a\_r\_s\_h\_i\_p\_T\_r\_o\_o\_p\_e\_r\_s. It is clearly implied in the movie that fairly soon there are going to be other cyborg cops, marking the beginning of the transition to a still more fantastic future.

R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p also marks a new level in audience acceptance of technology and human transformation, and may well point the way toward our own "cyber-punk" future. Murphy, as Robocop, eventually overcomes his programming and recovers his sense of self. Once having done so, he accepts his new role as a cyborg-cop, realizing that his previous life is over. Although technology not under human control is dangerous ("Star Wars" lasers burn 10,000 acres in California, the amuck ED-209, etc), technology backed by human integrity is working for the betterment of all. I was amazed at how favorable the audience seemed as the movie ended.

In some non-trivial sense we are all Murphy. We went to sleep and a lot of technology insinuated itself into our lives. Now, as before,

it is up to us to use it for good or ill. Each time we wake, however, there is still more technology, and like Murphy, we know there is no going back. Who knows, Mark? If you get very very lucky, someday you may wake to see the planets forming around that star you want to visit. But if you do, you will find that, like Murphy, you have said more good-bys than it is healthy to contemplate.

Rating on the (-4) to (+4) scale: (+2). Keep in mind that Robocop is rated "R" for a reason--this is not a "kiddie" movie.

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## ROBOCOP

A film counter-counter-review by Mark R. Leeper

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I was unaware I was having these long-running debates that Dale claims that I have been having with him. We have disagreed on specific films, but I usually try to judge each film on its own merits. As a result I have not been pleased with a lot of super-hero films, but I am very fond of C\_o\_n\_a\_n\_t\_h\_e\_B\_a\_r\_b\_a\_r\_i\_a\_n and D\_r.\_S\_t\_r\_a\_n\_g\_e. I am even reasonably fond of C\_o\_n\_a\_n\_t\_h\_e\_D\_e\_s\_t\_r\_o\_y\_e\_r and much of S\_u\_p\_e\_r\_m\_a\_n. I thought Dale knew that. There are probably others, but they do not come readily to mind.

I agree with Dale that it is good that much of the story is not done tongue-in-cheek, but certainly the ads on television are, in particular the thermo-nuclear war game. Dale says simply that he is not bothered by inconsistencies in the future world. Fine. I would still claim that there are inconsistencies and the fact that I gave the film a +1 indicates that I was not too disturbed by them. I would still contend that the filmmakers were not really sure how far in the future they were setting the film and have some aspects of their future only about five years ahead and others far more.

Dale is not too much worried about plot weaknesses, so there is not much point in discussing them. His defense of why the corporation is unconcerned about the quality of the ED-209 does not quite work. It would if OCP was making the ED-209 for a traditional police force. But as we see, even with corrected software the ED-209 would be physically useless for the job it was mainly designed for--police work. And who are the main users of the ED-209? OCP themselves! They own the police force. Presumably Grumman would not have been so cavalier about the flexible busses they made if they were so obviously faulty and if they were going to be the main users of those busses.

Dale correctly assesses that R\_o\_b\_o\_c\_o\_p, which I would rate +1, is not as good as what I would call a +3 film like T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_n\_v\_e\_r\_s\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n and is better than the 0-rated B\_l\_u\_e\_T\_h\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r. I am sorry that he missed the gratuitous bare breast scene in the locker room. It was certainly there if I remember correctly.



In any case, my +1 rating and Dale's +2 are certainly not far enough apart to feud about. I still contend the plot was a little thin and familiar. And it was much too predictable.

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