

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 6/18/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 48

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

\_D\_A\_T\_E

\_T\_O\_P\_I\_C

06/25 LZ: STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Humans as underdogs)

07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)

08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3E-433 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866).

LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668).

Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070).

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1. Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's...Underdog!  
Yes, on Wednesday, June 25, the Tin Lizzies will be discussing humans as underdogs in the intergalactic scheme of things. Their main discussion book will be STAR GUARD, which has been described to me as a "generic Norton juvenile." Other stories along this theme are William Tenn's classic OF MEN AND MONSTERS and Thomas Disch's less-than-classic "Mankind Under the Leash." To quote the original Ace double blurb for STAR GUARD:

Kana Karr was a young swordsman, a wielder of a medieval weapon in a super-scientific galaxy of limitless destruction. For as an Earthman, he was nothing more than a hired mercenary sent to kill or be killed at the command of the oppressive Central Control.

On a seemingly routine police action to the planet Fronn, Kana learned of a plot that threatened to overturn the balance of power held by the galactic authority. The liberation of Earth might hinge on the outcome of this plot!

Against a vengeful combination of ultra-atomic

enemies, and savage humanoids, Kana battled--his single sword against the onslaught of a merciless foe!

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(Wow, that's science fiction! If someone from Lincroft had sent me a blurb in time, he or she could have said something more informative. -ecl)

2. This notice is brought to you by the infamous Jill-of-all-trades, because the MT Chair is in fact an empty chair (oooh, a pun!) while Mark is one of those "dedicated management employees working 12 to 14 hours a day 7 days a week" to keep your phones buzzing away.

3. Those of you looking for recommendations for what to vote for for Hugo awards, consider LAN'S LANTERN recommended for Best Fanzine. It's published by George Laskowski in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and just because Mark and I write a lot of stuff for it doesn't mean it's automatically great. It helps though, doesn't it? :-)

Evelyn C. Leeper  
MT 1F-329 957-2070  
...mtgzy!ecl

INVADERS FROM MARS  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

(This review was dictated over long-distance phone lines into a tape recorder and transcribed by me. I take all blame for any incoherencies. Mark gets all credit for dedication to the Club. -Evelyn C. Leeper)

Capsule review: Remake of a classic kid's SF/horror film fixes the special effects of the original and adds some really nifty aliens, but does little else for the story. See it only if you are a pre-teen.

I was 26 when I was the original I\_n\_v\_a\_d\_e\_r\_s\_f\_r\_o\_m\_M\_a\_r\_s. That effectively qualifies as missing it. For a long time I had heard how effective this SF/horror story was, but always from people who had seen it before age 10. By the time I saw it, I was too old to be drawn into the story and too much of it had been plundered by other films. I did like the almost Expressionistic sets, but I was turned off by bad costumes and the fact that it seemed a very juvenile affair.

So I was hoping that the remake would capture for me some of the feel I had missed in the original. Unfortunately, the remake is faithful enough that it too gave me the feeling that I would have liked the film as a kid, but seeing it as an adult I was really missing the punch. Much of the film is not worth seeing if you have seen the original. It is the same piece of kiddie paranoia: "I have seen something really weird and nobody will believe me the way they would if I was an adult." (Of course, that's a fallacy; anyone who tells a crackpot story is considered a crackpot.)

There are two major differences between the original and the remake. In the original, when someone was taken over by the aliens they lost the ability to act. They gave all their lines in a catatonic deadpan. In the remake, people act as if they are stoned and are desperately trying to hide it. The other major difference is that the aliens in the first film were basically just men in funny suits, commanded by an unconvincing head in a bottle. In the remake, the aliens are the high point of the film. Of C\_l\_o\_s\_e\_E\_n\_c\_o\_u\_n\_t\_e\_r\_s\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_T\_h\_i\_r\_d\_K\_i\_n\_d, T\_h\_e\_E\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e\_S\_t\_r\_i\_k\_e\_s\_B\_a\_c\_k, R\_e\_t\_u\_r\_n\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_J\_e\_d\_i, and the remake of I\_n\_v\_a\_d\_e\_r\_s\_f\_r\_o\_m\_M\_a\_r\_s, guess which film has the most creative concepts for their aliens? A really nice job was done on the design of the aliens and of the underground city.

The biggest disappointment is that Tobe Hooper, who made the first half of T\_a\_x\_e\_s\_C\_h\_a\_i\_n\_s\_a\_w\_M\_a\_s\_s\_a\_c\_r\_e so believable, cannot create a single empathetic character here. The nightmarish feel is present only when the aliens are on the screen. A co-operation of Tobe Hooper directing, John Dykstra doing special effects, and Dan O'Bannon and Don Jacobi doing the screenplay should have resulted in a much better film. Rate this one a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale. See it for the aliens if for anything at all.

WOLF OF SHADOWS by Whitley Strieber  
Sierra Club/Knopf, 1985, \$9.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This is, unlikely as it sounds, a juvenile about nuclear winter. And it's told from the point of view of a wolf who is leading his pack from Minnesota down to Arkansas after a nuclear war. A woman (who

happened to have done research on wolves the year before and so gained Wolf of Shadows' trust) flees from the city with her two daughters just after the bombs are dropped. One daughter dies from radiation burns almost immediately, but the woman and the other daughter follow, and eventually join the wolf pack.

Strieber has co-authored (with James Kunetka) another nuclear exchange novel, W\_a\_r\_D\_a\_y. In that one, only three cities were bombed, not enough to cause a nuclear winter. Apparently this novel grew out of a question he was asked by a reader of W\_a\_r\_D\_a\_y: "What about the animals?" So the telling of the novel from Wolf of Shadows' point of view makes some sort of sense. Unfortunately, the result seems to be a novel that is unrelentingly depressing. While it is true that there is little to be cheerful about in a nuclear winter, the telling of the story from the wolf's point of view means that we never find out anything about why the war started, how big it was, what happened to everyone else. Yes, it's true that the average survivor wouldn't know e\_v\_e\_r\_y\_t\_h\_i\_n\_g, but they would have some idea of what was going on.

Perhaps I expect too much of this book. It is, after all, aimed at a younger audience. But I also think it provides too fatalistic a view--the point-of-view character cannot do anything to influence the course of events that is destroying his world. None of his species can. For the reader to identify with the point-of-view character is to get the feeling that the reader can't either--not just can't as a child, but can't ever. But people obviously c\_a\_n have an effect--people are all that can have an effect. W\_o\_l\_f\_o\_f\_S\_h\_a\_d\_o\_w\_s doesn't deal with that.

THE OTHER TIME by Mack Reynolds and Dean Ing  
Baen, 1984, \$2.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

[Some spoilers]

Don Fielding, archaeologist, somehow steps backward in time to the era of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Naturally, he meets up with Cortez and then with Montezuma. He spends a lot of time considering the paradoxes involved: can he change history? what happens to his world if he does? Unfortunately, not much is resolved along those lines.

Reynolds apparently wrote the first draft of this before he died; Ing finished it. One of them put in a lot of "local color"--how the Aztecs lived and worked, their customs and rituals, and so forth. The science fiction content, other than the premise itself, is rather thin. We never find out how Fielding went back in time, or what his interference will do to the present (i.e., the Twentieth Century). Basically what we have here is an historical adventure novel.

I'm sure I read a very similar novel over the last year or so. That one was an alternate history in which the Spanish arrive a few years later, when a non-nonsense king has replaced Montezuma. The new king promptly wipes out the Spanish and goes on to extend his empire into Texas and northward. Unfortunately, I can't remember the name of the novel. Like that one, T\_h\_e\_O\_t\_h\_e\_r\_T\_i\_m\_e isn't great, but it's fun to read. to the Spanish conquest.

MASTER OF SPACE AND TIME by Rudy Rucker  
Baen, 1985, \$2.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

In some ways this book is not unlike Philip K. Dick's E\_y\_e\_i\_n\_t\_h\_e \_S\_k\_y. That is, it is the story of what happens when someone can control reality. (I suppose it's also reminiscent of Ursula K. LeGuin's L\_a\_t\_h\_e \_o\_f\_H\_e\_a\_v\_e\_n in that regard.) Rucker, a mathematician by profession, uses quantum physics to explain how Harry Gerber can become the "master of space and time," molding reality to suit his fancy. (Let's face it, if you lived in New Brunswick, New Jersey, like Harry Gerber does, you'd want to change reality too!) For very complicated reasons, Gerber can only effect three changes (the three wishes of old).

The book is interesting enough while you're reading it, but I found it quite forgettable as soon as I finished it. I've read a lot of great reviews of Rucker's work, so maybe this is one of his weaker works.

\_N\_O\_T\_E\_S\_F\_R\_O\_M\_T\_H\_E\_N\_E\_T

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Subject: THE SEVEN TOWERS by Patricia C. Wrede (mild spoiler)

Path: harvard!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane

Date: Mon, 2-Jun-86 11:37:23 EST

The jacket reads:

"Eltiron, Prince of Sevairn: caught in the web of his father's intrigues.

Crystalorn, Princess of Barinash: promised in marriage to a prince she's never seen.

Ranlyn, the desert rider: forced to choose between friendship and honor.

Jermain, the outlaw: exiled from court for the crime of telling the truth.

Vandaris, the soldier: who left the life of luxury to wield a sword and lead an army.

Carachel, the Wizard-King: who does not understand the awesome

power he commands.

and Amberglas, the sorceress: who may not be quite as fuddleheaded as she seems...

Seven players in a game of deadly magic. Seven Kingdoms at the edge of destruction. Seven Towers holding a dark and dreadful secret."

This is a fantasy book; the part of the world in which the story takes place consists of moderate-sized kingdoms with renaissance-like technologies, though only a few of the seven kingdoms play a direct role in this book. In some kingdoms, magic is common, though few people actually have the talent to practice it.

The principal characters are very accurately described by the jacket, though Ranlyn doesn't directly appear until rather late in the book. One of the author's strong points is the ability to portray a number of interesting people without confusing the reader as to who is who.

I enjoyed the book for a number of reasons. First, the dialogue is frequently fun to read, especially when Amberglas takes part. Second, I couldn't predict what would happen. Third, some of the characters weren't clear cut, and it seems to me more realistic when the characters aren't just black or white. Finally, there was a theme throughout, built

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a little bit at a time, and the climax put all the pieces together in a nice fashion.

I give the book 3.0 stars out of 4.0 (pretty good).

Duane Morse ...!noao! {mot|terak} !anasazi!duane

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Subject: CUCKOO'S EGG by C. J. Cherryh (mild spoiler)  
Path: decvax!decwrl!pyramid!pesnta!hplabs!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane  
Date: Fri, 6-Jun-86 08:55:16 EST

The jacket reads, in part:

"His name was known throughout the world: Duun, hero, whose scarred face and body represented a dire threat narrowly averted; Duun, hatani, one of those superbly trained individuals revered by all the shonunin as mystic, warrior, guardian and judge. Out of respect and tradition they would refuse him nothing. But in this case, even the few longtime acquaintances who might have been considered friends -- if hatani permitted themselves to form friendships -- would have preferred to grant almost any other request. Still, they gave him the infant to raise as he wished, and he took the child far away from civilization to Sheon, where he had spent his own childhood.

Duun called the boy Thorn, forcing himself to overcome his natural repugnance for the tiny creature's strange, hairless body -- like something freshly skinned; the alien ears and hands and eyes that brought back so many disturbing, painful memories.

...

Thorn grew strong under Duun's careful guidance. At first his education was as basic as any child's. He would run after Duun on short baby legs until, exhausted, he could run no farther.... As years passed the training intensified. The boy learned of weapons and the suffering they could inflict; he learned to hunt, when the alternative was to go hungry; he learned mathematics; and he learned to endure, because Duun would not let him give up. Above all, he learned to be always alert and wary...never to trust anything or anyone. Not even Duun himself."

The story takes place on an alien world, and Thorn is the only human. One learns bits and pieces of the culture as the story progresses, but the emphasis is on the relationship between Thorn and Duun. What little technology is revealed doesn't seem to be all that different from our own.

Duun's character seems to be drawn from Eastern Zenn warrior philosophers, which is interesting, though not exciting. Since there is

not a great deal of dialogue between Thorn and Duun, Thorn's thoughts are very often put in parentheses, something which got to grate on my nerves.

There's not much action. The characters are mildly interesting, but I never developed much sympathy for either. The world is mildly interesting, but not a lot was revealed about it. I always felt like an outsider, and the climax took too long to reach and didn't pack the umph it should have.

I give this book 2.5 stars out of 4.0 (it's fair, but I'll definitely trade it in).

Duane Morse ...!noao! {mot|terak} !anasazi!duane

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Subject: THE SPELLSTONE OF SHALTUS by Linda E. Bushyager (mild spoiler)

Path: akgua!gatech!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane

Date: Mon, 9-Jun-86 10:32:10 EST

The jacket reads:

"In the days of the Great War between the Eastern Kingdoms and S'Shegan, the evil wizard Shaltus had been brutally punished for an unspeakable crime. Now he had returned, seeking vengeance from the void of hell. The black soul of Shaltus lived again!

Battling for survival, cast out by her own people, the sorceress Leah had to marshal the forces of might and magic. For she alone could banish the barbarous evil that had invaded the castle of the S'Carltons and had sworn not to rest until the house of S'Carlton had been annihilated."

The teaser is not especially illuminating, and it is not particularly accurate. Leah is indeed a sorceress, but not by profession -- she was born with the talent, along with all of her siblings. Nor is she the only one who can destroy the wraith.

The story is quite a bit more involved than the jacket summary would have you believe. Leah comes from two cultures and is accepted by neither. Both sides play roles in the story, and among both sides there are those who aid Leah, and those who oppose her. The most concrete aid comes from a wandering sorcerer, Rowen; in fact, it is Rowen who assumes leadership in the battle against the wraith.

I recommend this book if you're looking for an exciting, fast read. It's a good adventure: interesting, multi-faceted characters, a fast pace, a coherent theme, many small climaxes and one big one at the end, where it should be. I give the book 3.0 stars out of 4 (i.e., it's pretty good).

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Duane Morse ...!noao!{mot|terak}!anasazi!duane

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Subject: Count Zero, a mini-review

Path: allegra!princeton!caip!seismo!mcvax!ukc!stc!pete

Date: Thu, 12-Jun-86 11:32:59 EST

I loved Burning Chrome, I liked Neuromancer. Why then do I feel disappointed by Count Zero?

Well, let's look at the plus features first. William Gibson has his story-telling act more together this time. Neuromancer has a messy plot line; it reads like many stories welded together. In Count Zero the three main characters, Turner the merc, Marly the disgraced art dealer and Count Zero the beginner cyberpunk, each have their own stories which converge neatly at the end. There's plenty of atmosphere of the Blade Runner type, quite a lot of violence, very little sex and lots of trademarks. I read it straight through.

In fact, just a slicker version of what we've seen already.

I'm afraid that Gibson, from promising beginnings as a sort of Bester-Delany-Varley (plus his own ideas), is going to start turning out pot-boilers. Count Zero contains what I regard as the kiss of death in a novel - obvious script potential. You can see a Hollywood man going over the book, with its filmic intercuts between characters and plot lines, and thinking he's got a hot property here. It annoys me the same way that a key-change in a song does.

What price volume #20 in the fabulous Sprawl saga - Slaves of Cyberspace? Or a Titan-Wizard-Demon style trilogy?

I hope this doesn't happen. I hope that Gibson realises that he's mined this particular seam out and writes something new. But I shall approach the next novel with some scepticism.

Peter Kendell <pete@stc.co.uk>

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Subject: Jake Speed

Path: allegra!princeton!caip!lll-crg!seismo!vrdxhq!rlgvax!jsf

Date: Thu, 5-Jun-86 10:03:36 EST

Did you love Raiders of the Lost Ark? Did you thrill at Romancing the Stone? Did you think their sequels had lost their magic? Are you tired of Sly and Arnie cranking out shoot'em up junk? Do you think Rambo should have spent more time in 1st. grade and less time in the weight room? Do you like your heros brave, and your villians cardboard?

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Then Jake Speed is the movie for you.

I saw Night of the Comet on video tape recently. I had avoided it during it's theater run because it didn't look very promising. I was plesently surprised by the movie. It wasn't great, but it was much better then I had thought it could have been. So when the same people put out Jake Speed I figured I had better check it out. I was not disappointed.

The plot goes like this. A young blonde is kidnapped by white slavers in Paris, and hauled off to Africa. The blonde's sister hooks up with Jake and his side kick Dez to resuce her. Simple enough right? Not really because Jake is actually the hero of a line of pulp adventure novels. It seems that the Destroyer, the Executioner, Jake Speed, and all the rest of them are real people who make their living by having an impossible adventure and then writing it up in a pulp novel.

Like Night of the Comet, Jake Speed is a well balanced adventure film/ parody of an adventure film, and it manages to walk the line between real adventure and all out spoof very well. I haven't had more fun at a movie like this in a long time. It has a lot of the magic Jewel of the Nile and IJATTOD were missing.

On the -4 to +4 scale give this one a strong +2, lovers of spoof and high action can take a +3.

By the way the villian not only is cardboard, he's slimy disgusting cardboard. The kind of guy you love to see get it in the end.

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Subject: SPACECAMP

Path: decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcc6!sdcc7!ln63sqx

Date: Fri, 6-Jun-86 23:50:26 EST

If good intentions alone could make a film successful, "SpaceCamp" (which opens today nationwide) would be a great film. It is obvious that all involved want to make a special film, but, sadly, "SpaceCamp" is a failure.

The ads for the film tell all: while visiting a summer session of NASA's popular Space Camp (actually located in Huntsville, Ala. but conveniently moved to Kennedy Center in Florida for the film), a group of youngsters and their leader (Kate Capshaw) are inadvertently blasted into orbit.

Much to the credit of scenarists W.W. Wicket and Casey T. Mitchell, "SpaceCamp" (which was based on a story by producer Patrick Bailey) is an entertaining and occasionally suspenseful excursion. At least, sometimes.

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There are problems inherent in the story, and they aren't always overcome. For example, what technical glitch could possibly send the kids, who are out on a field trip to sit in the crew capsule during a test firing of the main engines, into space?

The answer seems to be an unfortunate summertime rule for space films: blame the problems on a cute robot. No, this time it's not "Short Circuit's" Number 5, but a short, fat NASA 'droid named Jinx. Robots were cute when "Star Wars" was in vogue, but that plot device is beginning to get shaky at the least.

It would have been nice to have seen some imagination used here, but Wicket, Mitchell and director Harry Winer opt here, and in just a few too many other areas, for the obvious.

Fortunately, unlike the dismal, previously mentioned "Short Circuit," the filmmakers try to develop character here, and quite often they succeed. Capshaw, as Andie, a female astronaut who wants to be the first female shuttle pilot, is interesting and ingratiating. It's nice to see an adult treated in such favorable light in what is basically a teen film, and Capshaw overcomes the script's weaknesses nicely.

Lea Thompson (last seen in "Back to the Future" and soon to be seen again in "Howard the Duck") leads the pack of mostly talented youngsters as Kathryn, an analytical (and beautiful) girl who emulates Andie. Hers is an admirable and consistently charming performance.

Only Leaf Phoenix, also seen in last year's atrocious "Explorers," lets us down. The rest of the young cast, Tate Donovan in particular, are nice to watch.

Which isn't true of the special effects. We have seen views from the shuttle too many times to be taken in by the starry void presented us here. In fact, what we get here cannot compare to the real thing, something films are not often accused of. "SpaceCamp" is cursed not only with these terribly phony views, but with some awful photographic effects work, which tends to make the entire production seem undistinguished.

If anything, audiences can rest assured that "SpaceCamp" is full of reverence for space and the space program. At best, it can only serve as a reminder of the dream the Challenger crew tried so valiantly to keep alive. For that it is worth seeing.

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Subject: Invaders From Mars

Path: mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!ucbvax!ucsfcg!pixar!good

Date: Sat, 7-Jun-86 21:23:46 EST

Ah, summer. After a winter of thoughtful films, here comes the fun

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stuff. "Invaders From Mars" is matinee-with-the-kids fun. Tobe Hooper, who directed "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and "Poltergeist", has teamed up with John Dykstra on visual effects and Stan Winston (I think I got his name right) on creature design, and the whole thing is made possible by Golam and Globus, the dynamic duo of the Cannon Group.

Hooper has a sense of timing just like a funhouse spook alley. There are always things jumping out and going "BOO!". The whole story is told from the point of view of the little boy who is the hero. If things

start to seem just a little childish and hoaky... well, I don't want to spoil the ending, but do be patient. While you are waiting to see how it all comes out you can enjoy some great monsters. These include the monster we all had in common, that nemesis of youth, The Elementary School Teacher, menacingly portrayed by Louise Fletcher.

"Invaders" plays on familiar childhood fears. What is over that hill? What if mom and dad start acting very strangely one morning? Why does the teacher hate me? Modern kids, who have probably seen "Alien" ten times on video by the time they're eight years old, will eat this stuff up. The only ones who should stay home are the very young ones or those prone to getting really scared at movies. The kids I overheard at my matinee seemed to have a good time being frightened.

--Craig

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