

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 10/22/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 15

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

- 10/29 LZ: MALLWORLD by Somtow Sucharitkul (Commerce)
- 10/29 MT: Film: METROPOLIS (part 1) (MT 4A-229)
- 10/30 MT: Film: METROPOLIS (part 2) (MT 4A-229) (==Thursday!==)
- 11/12 MT: THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles Finney (The Weird Circus)
- 11/19 LZ: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula K. LeGuin (Sexual Identity)
- 12/02 MT: Film: to be announced (==Tuesday!==)
- 12/03 MT: Film: to be announced
- 12/10 LZ: NEUROMANCER by William Gibson (Consciousness)
- 12/17 MT: ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card (War in Space)

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 1C-117 (576-2068). MT Librarian is Bruce Szablak, MT 4C-418 (957-5868). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. As you can see, meetings have started up in Middletown. We will be meeting every other week. At least initially we will alternate film meetings with book discussion meetings. Or next meeting will be a showing of one of the great classics of the science fiction film. We will be showing the restored version of Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS. We will be showing the version with the (drat!) rock music score. (Sorry it is the best quality version we could find.) This is Lang's nightmarish view of the city of the future--inspired, believe it or not, by the New York City skyline. Metropolis is a mammoth city with towering skyscrapers and deep, deep subterranean depths where the workers' city is. And in these depths is the scientist/sorcerer Rotwang who is developing through robotics and alchemy perfect simulations of humans. This is a film of magnificent scope done with full-sized sets that are incredible. We will show METROPOLIS over two days, Wednesday and Thursday, next week. (Note that the room is next door to our usual room.)

2. Somtow Sucharitkul strikes me as being the John Varley of the 80's--a competent stylist with exciting, unpredictable ideas. The next Lincroft discussion book, MALLWORLD, is a superb example. It's a series of connected short stories with two intertwined

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themes. Read on one level, the book deals with the economics of MALLWORLD--a moonlet-sized orbiting mall with tens of thousands of shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Stories revolve around owners, employees, "shoppers," and even the underground gangs of penniless punks. Plot lines are not black-and-white (such as in the classic THE SPACE MERCHANTS); moral ambiguity runs through the stories.

The second theme is that of human persistence, perhaps even human perversity. In the MALLWORLD universe, a very powerful alien race has found Earth. Recognizing that humanity is still barbarically uncivilized, this race puts the entire solar system in a "side dimension"--a pocket of existence divorced from the rest of the universe--so we can mature (or self-destruct) without danger to the rest of interstellar society. This may not sound too bad (after all, we have the whole solar system), but Somtow does a convincing job of detailing how people are affected by this haughtiness and its major result: no stars can be seen. Space beyond the solar system is empty, and black. The absence of stars, the yearning and frustration this absence produces in people, and the varying attitudes of the aliens about these human emotions, are the second theme of this excellent book.

Come by and discuss these or other ideas at the next Lincroft SF Club meeting, on Wednesday, October 29th. Even if you've not read the book, your presence will be welcome. We'll probably start talking about what books to discuss in future meetings; if you attend you'll have a chance to rant and rave about what you like (or hate!) to read. [-jrrt]

3. The Lincroft SF Library has moved and changed phone numbers. The Lincroft Librarian thought he could hide out by not informing us of this change, but we have our spies and found him out. The new information is listed above. [-ecl]

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

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is a love story coupled with a story of a courageous and unconventional teacher of the deaf. In 1986 it is causing a sensation, though twenty years ago it would have had stiffer competition.

I would guess there must be thirty films made about blind people for every film made about people who are deaf. The reasons are at least in part technical since films convey more of their stories with sound than with visual images. That makes it much more difficult to have deaf characters than blind ones. Films do not want to take the extra time to have people talking to the deaf. So there are lots of films with blind characters. Blind people are even often heroes and detectives, and in Japan there is even a series of films about a blind samurai. The films that come to mind about the deaf are J_o_h_n_n_y_B_e_l_i_n_d_a, T_h_e_M_i_r_a_c_l_e_W_o_r_k_e_r, and the too-rarely-seen T_h_e_H_e_a_r_t_I_s_a_L_o_n_e_l_y_H_u_n_t_e_r. This year Michael Medoff's stage play C_h_i_l_d_r_e_n_o_f_a_L_e_s_s_e_r_G_o_d has been filmed.

The story is simple enough. William Hurt comes to teach at a

school for the deaf with some unconventional techniques. While there he falls in love with an attractive deaf woman (played by Marlee Matlin) who works as the school janitor. The film is mostly about his successes at the school and his failures in dealing with Matlin. His relationship with her is rocky due to his misunderstanding of her and her deaf pride. And there is a theme that sets this film apart from some of the others. Matlin is proud to be deaf and would like her children to be deaf also. The journey from stigma to pride is a difficult one (ask Jesse Jackson). Half of this film could have been devoted to it, but unfortunately it wasn't. Instead, the film is more like T_o_S_i_r_w_i_t_h_L_o_v_e with elements of P_y_g_m_a_l_i_o_n. Not that that is bad--the film is interesting and enjoyable--but it fell short of its potential. Also, much of the same story could have been told if Matlin had been black instead of deaf.

C_h_i_l_d_r_e_n_o_f_a_L_e_s_s_e_r_G_o_d is a serious film, and it is nice to have one these days. But it is no more substantial a film than a T_o_S_i_r_w_i_t_h_L_o_v_e or a R_e_q_u_i_e_m_f_o_r_a_H_e_a_v_y_w_e_i_g_h_t. Its insights about the deaf are better than its predecessors' but the film has more romance than insight. The film industry is in a sorry state when films of only this quality get so much attention because they are such rarities. And the film industry is in a sorry state when a film trying to make a statement must throw in otherwise unnecessary nudity to avoid getting a PG rating and hence being considered children's fare. Frankly, I want to know more about deaf people, not naked ones. This could have been a powerful and great film that nobody would have gone to see rather than a mediocre film with its heart in the right place.

This film has sufficient quality to get a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale, but it would have had to dare to say a lot more, to be angrier perhaps, to get a higher rating than that.

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_N_O_T_E_S_ _F_R_O_M_ T_H_E_ N_E_T

Subject: The Postman
Path: ihnp4!qantel!lll-lcc!lll-crg!seismo!think!husc6!rutgers!caip!daemon
Date: Mon, 13-Oct-86 13:10:10 EST

It is finally out in paperback. I found it on Saturday and read it at one sitting. In my opinion, it is one of the best SF novels of the year.

The story is the familiar post-nuclear-war one: things fall apart, and slowly get put back together. However, there are several new twists to the old plot, and the way things begin to get put back together is both plausible and thought-provoking.

There are technical flaws. As with some of Brin's other works, the plot sometimes begins to unravel; there are digressions that lead nowhere, incidents that just happen, without seeming purpose, and so on. But the book's virtues are such that the story comes through, and with great impact.

Subject: Jinian Star-Eye
Path: houxm!ihnp4!qantel!lll-lcc!lll-crg!seismo!rutgers!caip!daemon
Date: Tue, 30-Sep-86 01:02:31 EST

I actually found that one a bit of a disappointment. It seemed like Tepper had discovered that all her books didn't fit together as well as she intended and was squeezing and straining to make them all fit. For example, we learn early on (in the Peter set) that the ship came from Earth because of the Monster, Didir, who could read mines. It's been a while since I read the books, but it seems to me that Didir confirms this later, and that her mind-reading ability came long before Lom got involved. Later on, in Jinian, all this changes around, and it just felt to me that the justifications were somewhat flimsy.

Subject: notes on Crocodile Dundee
Path: ucbox!hplabs!sdcrcf!ism780c!ism780!steven
Date: Mon, 13-Oct-86 18:53:00 EST

Linda Kozlowski is HOT. What a woman. What a whole woman. And not some skinny Daryl Hannah type you'd find disappointing in real life, either. Linda is one voluptuous sensation, especially as packaged by costume designer Norma Moriceau ("The Road Warrior").

Oh, what about the movie?? Well, Linda plays Sue Charlton, a reporter for New York Newsday, who wants to write about Mick "Crocodile" Dundee (Paul "G'day" Hogan), an expert poacher/outdoorsman from the Australian outback whose amiable ingenuousness she finds positively fetching. After trekking with him through the Aussie wilderness, she invites him back to New York, where the tables are turned.

There used to be these two billboards next to each other on Ventura Boulevard. The Coke billboard had Max Headroom on it. The other, for Foster's Lager, showed Hogan hoisting a brew. I turned to my friend after seeing this and said, "This is what passes for celebrity in America nowadays." I've since decided it's not quite as bad as all that. Hogan's likeability is certainly the main motor that propels "Crocodile Dundee". He and his deadpan quips are surrounded by a travelogue of beautiful scenery and some moderately funny jokes. Occasionally the movie makers feel they have to tell a story, which gets in the way of this jaunt, but you can't have everything.

Two and a half stars out of four (the movie). Four stars out of four (Linda Kozlowski).

Subject: notes on Peggy Sue Got Married
Path: ucbox!hplabs!sdcrcf!ism780c!ism780!steven
Date: Mon, 13-Oct-86 18:54:00 EST

Francis Coppola's reputation has, I think, caused a good movie to be crowned King Of The World by some critics. Well, it's not that great, but simply because it's not an artistic masterpiece along the lines of "The Godfather" also shouldn't obscure some of the virtues of "Peggy Sue Got Married".

Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) faints while at her 20th year high school reunion and wakes up back in time as a teenager. Armed with her years of experience, grown-up perspective, and knowledge that her marriage with husband-to-be Charlie (Nicolas Cage) will go sour, she fights to change her destiny.

The fun part of this kind of film is that you get to go back to the past

and tell off the jerks the way you always wanted to, or ask out the guy you were afraid to, or express the love for your relatives that you felt stupid about exclaiming. Coppola handles most of this beautifully, getting performances of impressive sincerity from Turner and, more surprisingly, his cousin Nicolas Cage. Cage pulls off a blonde clean-cut type characterization quite creditably (sort of like having Robert DeNiro do a Robert Redford impersonation).

But the screenplay pays much less attention to some important matters like advancing a clear story line, or persuading the audience that what is happening to Peggy Sue is real rather than a vivid dream, which

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vitiates the tension of her decisions to a large degree. The film also has a very weak conclusion in which events act upon Peggy Sue, instead of having her make a critical decision that she can pursue in a clear manner. Remember the end of Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life," where Jimmy Stewart shouts to Clarence the Angel "I want to live!!"?? The equivalent is missing from "Peggy Sue Got Married."

As usual for a Francis Coppola film, the look created by Jordan Cronenweth and Dean Tavoularis is uniformly stunning. Also liked the fact that favorite of mine Marshall Crenshaw croons some tunes in the picture.

Three stars out of four.

Subject: 1/2 Price Review -- Peggy Sue Got Married AND Deadly Friend
Path: bellcore!clyde!caip!rutgers!nike!lucbcad!zen!dorothy.Berkeley.EDU!c50p-az
Date: Wed, 15-Oct-86 05:23:42 EST

INTRODUCTION:

This is the first in what will be an occasional series of reviews. I will review two films (that are somehow linked), using two articles.

The first article will tell a couple of details of the film, and then say who I think would like the film and who wouldn't. The second article will discuss the film for those who have seen it already or

don't plan on seeing it.

Please note: I am not a movie *critic*, merely a *reviewer*. I'm not into criticizing movies overmuch, I just want to tell people if I think they'd like a certain movie, and give some general reactions to it.

I appreciate comments on my reviews, but if your comments do not actually relate to the movies themselves, please use private mail.

BRIEF REVIEWS:

Peggy Sue Got Married:

If, after reading the five previous reviews/comments, you are undecided as to whether to see this movie or not:

The movie is well-directed and well-acted. It has many humorous moments, while the overall tone is emotional and nostalgic. Kathleen Turner gives us a warm and believable performance, and Nicholas Cage is both mature and three-dimensional, despite his inexperience compared to Turner.

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In my opinion, if you liked the following movies, you will like Peggy Sue Got Married (but if you disliked most of them, you will probably dislike Peggy Sue also). The movies on the list below are not at all similar in terms of subject matter, but they have the same overall emotional content, and are sort of the same "type" of movie.

Somewhere In Time, Moscow On the Hudson, St. Elmo's Fire, Witness, A Lover Between Two Worlds, Eddie and the Cruisers, Comfort and Joy, among many others.

SUMMARY:

The entire thing is sort of like "Back to the Future" crossed with "St. Elmo's Fire" -- but none of these movies (or those in the list above, for that matter) accurately define the true mixture of playfulness, nostalgia, and heavy emotions that Peggy Sue Got Married possesses.

A very good film: Worth \$6.50, three stars out of four, or +2.5 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Deadly Friend:

Wes Craven, director of A Nightmare On Elm Street [Part One], directs this movie about a boy who invents a robot, moves to a new neighborhood, and then proceeds to become involved in some very horrible situations.

This is a very mixed movie, both very good and very bad. The first half is interminable and sickly-sweet; it is also immature, scientifically unbelievable, and, in short, not very fun to watch. Except for one brief glimpse of a nightmare, one wonders after the first hour what possibly caused this movie to receive its "R" rating.

Then, after a series of events which I could not possibly be tempted into telling you about, Wes Craven turns the tables on this movie. It becomes very tense, and quite scary, not to mention violent. I think the joke is on the audience. Wes makes us sit through something we aren't expecting, that, quite seriously, bores us silly. This dullness in the first half makes the second half that much more intense.

The acting, incidentally, is not bad, and is in some points particularly haunting. The production values are fine, and horror effects are flawless. Credibility is another question, but with a little effort you can ignore the reality problems. Wes Craven's direction is nothing to write home about, but competent.

In my opinion, if you liked the following movies, you will like Deadly Friend, (but if you disliked most of them, you will probably dislike Deadly Friend also). The movies on the list below are not too similar in terms of subject matter, but are of the same "type" of movie.

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First half: Real Genius, E.T., any of a number of "Boy and his Robot" type (popularized by the Walt Disney TV series), and more especially, Short Circuit.

Second half: Heavily resonates with A Nightmare on Elm Street, and also Xtro, Evil Dead, and Creepshow. Reminded me heavily of Reanimator.

SUMMARY:

Short Circuit crossed with Reanimator. A strange film if you like having your emotions manipulated, can sit through an hour of setup, and like horror movies. I think it's worth the wait, when it's all said and done. If you liked A Nightmare on Elm Street, definitely give it a shot.

If you like horror movies: A not-bad film: Worth \$4.50, two-and-a-half stars out of four, or +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

If you dislike horror movies: A terrible film: Worth \$0.50, half a star out of four, or -3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

[e. stephen]

Subject: 1/2 Price Reviews: Part Two -- SPOILERS

Path: bellcore!clyde!caip!rutgers!nike!ucbcad!zen!dorothy.Berkeley.EDU!c50p-az

Date: Wed, 15-Oct-86 06:00:07 EST

If you have seen Peggy Sue Got Married and Deadly Friend, or if you don't plan on seeing these movies, or if you don't mind HEAVY SPOILERS, or if you've seen one and don't want to see the other one, then it's safe to read this article.

But, if you ARE planning on seeing Peggy Sue Got Married and/or Deadly Friend, and you don't like HEAVY SPOILERS, then hit 'n' now.

I saw both of these movies on Saturday, Deadly Friend first.

Deadly Friend comments:

I was expecting something more like A Nightmare On Elm Street from Wes, a movie that's high on my "Top Ten Horror Movies" list (although I didn't think the sequel was nearly as good) -- but during the first hour of Deadly Friend, I was really disappointed. I came pretty close to walking out, as did about five people in the uncrowded theatre. But, I'm glad I stayed. I was impressed with the tenseness of the second half, which I feel live up to A Nightmare On Elm Street.

What I didn't like was the people coming in in the middle bringing their kids. A seven year old walked in with her parents at the most graphic

portion of the movie (the Evil Old Lady's head getting blown off) -- and she just sat there, her eyes wide, trembling. I'm sure she'll have nightmares for weeks.

This, I feel, is a problem of Horror Movies in general: The only real rating for a horror movie is "R". Some get "X", some get "PG" or "PG-13" -- but "X" implies pornography, so is impractical for a measure of violence, and "PG" is usually too generous if the movie is a Horror Movie in any sense of the genre. Since there are no levels of "R", some parents may bring in their very young children expecting a "Cobra" level of violence, and get a "Day of the Dead" level. This is a problem. But I blame the parents, not the rating system. How can any parent do that?

Anyway, Deadly Friend was quite moving for me. The boredom of the beginning was quite effective in making the end tense. (Can anyone think of other movies offhand in which this technique is employed?) I was disappointed in the actual ending scene, just like I was by the ending scene of A Nightmare On Elm Street -- my interpretation is that the hero has gone insane, just like the hero of A Nightmare went insane. Does anyone agree or disagree? (Did anyone out there actually see this movie at all?)

Peggy Sue Got Married comments:

I violently disagree with the recent posting on sexism in this movie. I despise sexist movies, but I don't feel Peggy Sue Got Married was.

I see the movie as an exact opposite of Back To The Future. In Back To The Future, Marty is working to undo the changes he accidentally makes. He seeks to make everything the way it was. Peggy Sue has a chance to change everything, and since she believes she's there to stay, she wants to make her life the best she can. She does not want to remarry Charlie -- "I'd have to be crazy to do that twice" -- but the sad (and to me, moving) part of this movie is that she cannot escape her past. In the glasshouse, after seeing the locket with her's and Charlie's pictures, she realizes that she hasn't changed anything -- and she gives in to the affection she feels for Charlie.

Charlie did, and still does, genuinely love Peggy Sue. Why exactly they broke up doesn't matter -- once reminded of his love, Peggy Sue realizes that she loves him too. This isn't, as the poster alluded, any kind of forgiveness of whatever sins the ex-spouse has. I don't think this movie addresses the issue of domestic tranquility. It's just a film about how we can forget the love and the depth of feeling that exists at the beginning of a relationship, and it's about how we can drift away from our relatives.

The humor in this movie comes from adult morals being put into a position where they are not proper. Peggy Sue, despite having the mind of an adult, has social status and lack of self-determination of a teenager. She doesn't realize this at first, which causes some humorous

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moments.

I don't see her as being portrayed as inferior to Charlie -- just the opposite. The two deserve each other.

And as far as this movie being sexist because Peggy Sue is the initiator of sex: I say more power to her! She proves she is just as horny as a male. Anything that portrays how males and females are free to act as they please despite their sex is not sexist in my mind.

This movie was quite moving for me. Not innovative, but still quite fine. I'm glad I saw it.

[e. stephen]

Subject: Blue Velvet -- Not a Review, Just Comments
Path: allegra!princeton!rutgers!sri-spam!sri-unix!hplabs!tektronix!reed!ellen
Date: Wed, 15-Oct-86 08:36:58 EST

I saw "Blue Velvet" tonight, and enjoyed it. I did *not* go as a fan of David Lynch; I hated "Eraserhead," thought "Dune" was passable, if shoddy, and have not seen any other work by Lynch. "Blue Velvet" has been the focus, as Jon Gingerich pointed out, of an enormous advertising blitz, and I think my expectations of the movie may have damaged my viewing of it.

Nonetheless, I did enjoy it. A strange verb, perhaps, to use in conjunction with a Lynch film, but occasionally I enjoy films that play with my mind. The initial Rossellini- MacLachlan scene was outstandingly done in that regard. I got a bit tired of the pervasive fisheye lens used by the cameraman in all outdoor shots, and the plot staggers and becomes very confused approximately two-thirds of the way

through -- I never did figure out how Rossellini shows up stark naked on MacLachlan's front porch, and after that I got a bit lost.

There is a great deal of violence, and not all of it is physical. There is a great deal of camp in the dialogue, probably meant to suggest the stupid things we all say as a matter of course, but it sometimes comes across as silly rather than satirical. I was afraid I would find the movie objectionable from a feminist point of view; I did not. I was also afraid I would be turned off by the graphic violence, but I found it so extreme that it lost its fearful quality and became yet another symbol Lynch manipulates.

Strange film. Weird film. Oddly enjoyable. +2 on a -4 to +4 scale. Oops, I said I wasn't going to review it, didn't I? Oh well...

Ellen Eades

