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1. Note that the Lincroft meetings are now being held in a different room. This may solve the eviction problems we've been having on occasion. The first of these meetings will be the semi-regular *bookswap*. If you plan on attending, please be sure your

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release is on file with us--falling books can be dangerous! If you have an asterisk after your name on the label on the first page, we have not yet received a release form from you. [-ecl]

2. Our next Leeperhouse film festival will, however, be held at the same location as always, the not-so-luxurious Roxie Leeper. This one will be devoted to two films by the great German director of the silent era, Fritz Lang. On Thursday, the seventh hour after noon on the seventh day or the seventh month, we will be showing:

Fritz Lang

FRAU IM MOND (1928) dir. by Fritz Lang

METROPOLIS (1925) dir. by Fritz Lang (with music by Georgio Moroder)

FRAU IM MOND (THE WOMAN IN THE MOON) was the first film to look seriously at space travel. Lang got some help from technical advisors Hermann Obreth and Willy Ley to make sure the technical aspects of rocket flight were accurate. For the film, to increase dramatic effect Lang invented the idea of counting down to zero before a rocket firing. The German government burned the film during the Second World War because it had too much accurate information about rocket flight.

It has been a common verdict on METROPOLIS that it is a towering piece of cinema visually, but that the story is flawed. The year of its release Luis Bunuel called it "a very good film and a very bad film glued together at the stomach." Lang claimed never to have liked the film, saying it had a weak ending. Nevertheless, when it was released in Germany--over 60 years ago--nothing like it had ever been seen before. By the time it opened at the Rialto in New York, two months later, word-of-mouth had spread so fast that a reported 10,000 people turned up to see its at its United States premiere.

Films have been inspired by songs and by paintings; METROPOLIS was inspired by a skyline. By 1924, Lang had made a number of successful films including *Die Sündenflur*, *Die Mäbuse*, *Die Gasmasken*, and the popular *Siegfried* and *Krimhild's Revenge*. Invited to visit studios in the United States, he took a trans-Atlantic cruise and upon entering New York harbor was struck by a skyline more awesome than any he had ever seen in Europe. Inspired by this sight Lang and his wife (Thea Von Harbou) began writing notes that Von Harbou forged first into a novel and then into a screenplay which Lang filmed.

METROPOLIS is a spectacle such as has been rarely seen before or since. Over 36,000 people were brought in to appear in the film. Many of the sets were built full-sized, though state-of-the-art model work was also employed. The production used so much electricity that for blocks around the studio residents' lights dimmed whenever Lang was shooting. The final film was 17 reels--

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about three hours--long, though later re-edited many times. About an hour of the footage may well be lost forever.

We are showing the version with the Giorgio Moroder soundtrack. A few comments about this are in order: Silent films were never intended to be silent; there was just no way of putting the sound with the film. Instead, each theater had an organist to create the mood for a film and really good organist could add a lot to the enjoyment of a film. Classic silent films are these days, however, rarely seen with good musical accompaniment. When I heard that METROPOLIS was going to be re-released with a rock music, I was less than pleased, because it seemed that rock music was all wrong for a 1920's film. In fact, Giorgio Moroder's orchestration is better than I expected. The music could easily overpower most silent films but METROPOLIS is probably the great culmination of the German Expressionist period, and expressionism exaggerates acting, and often sets, to create strange emotions. Some of the better known rock stars contribute music that really does seem inappropriate, but Moroder--who scored the recent *Cat People*--has a

good feel for film mood and tone.

3. The Lincroft branch of the Science Fiction Club library has acquired THE FORGE OF GOD by Greg Bear and SEVENTH SON by Orson Scott Card (both are Hugo nominees). [-ecl]

4. Correction to Hugo nominees: It is "Encounter at Farpoint" of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION that was nominated, not STAR TREK: THE VOYAGE HOME. (The preliminary list I got said "Star Trek 93: The Journey Back," which made *no* sense!) [-ecl]

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LAST AND FIRST MEN by Olaf Stapledon
Tarcher, 1988 (1930c), ISBN 0-87477-471-3, \$10.95.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper
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With the application of fractal geometry to computer graphics it is now possible to recreate on a screen the exact texture of the surface of a mountain. The same geometry can allow you to create a mountain that never existed but which has the texture and feel of a mountain that really did exist. This is not a new concept.. The "future history" is a type of science fiction in which a writer, hopefully well-versed in real history, creates a future that has the texture and feel that make it believable, the same texture of history past.

The father of the future history is Olaf Stapledon. In 1930 he wrote L_a_s_t_a_n_d_F_i_r_s_t_M_e_n, which is probably the most complete and detailed future history, a mammoth 325-page (in the Penguin edition) work of straight history. Unlike other authors such as Wells and Heinlein, he did not write a set of stories, each giving you one point of the future and letting you fill in the gaps; he wrote in the style of a history book. Stapledon starts in his present and covers history with exponentially increasing speed. In the end he has covered the next five trillion years of humanity's future.

Unhampered by the need for character development or very much of having to create individual characters at all Stapledon--whom Arthur C. Clarke has called "the most educated man I have ever met"--is given free rein to apply the principles of history with a vigorous sprinkling of science fiction ideas. Rather than having characters, Stapledon often uses an entire civilization as if it were a single character; later it becomes entire species of future man in the same way, as each step the camera pulls back to show another exponential magnitude of time.

As Stapledon picks up speed, his style changes and becomes more entertaining. Gregory Benford, in his preface to the new edition recommends that new readers and especially new American readers skip the first six chapters. I did not, but found it might well have been good advice. The first six chapters are ponderously written. They are too much grounded in the 1930s and in Stapledon's own anti-American prejudices. Beginning with Chapter Seven his whole attitude toward the book--I hesitate to call it a novel--changed and he started using less stodgy prose and more started to enjoy himself.

By the very nature of the book it is difficult to say what it is all about because it does not stay about anything for more than a few pages without going on to be about something else. What is a new and

earth-shaking idea on one page is an old and outmoded idea ten pages later. A future race of man labors hard to create a perfect version of

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itself. Not many pages later, the perfect version is all that is left and the first race is forgotten. In Stapledon's future, everything the reader has deeply believed in is soon dismissed as what an earlier version of man thought for a while. But fear not, whatever the current version believes will soon be forgotten also in the onward rush through time. Stapledon foresees genetic engineering, but in a few pages it becomes a decadent form of entertainment in which odd, deformed creatures are created for amusement.

more _ L _ a _ s _ t _ a _ n _ d _ F _ i _ r _ s _ t _ M _ e _ n works by giving the reader progressively

dumbfounding scales of time and human development. When Stapledon wrote it, he knew of Wells's "scientific romances" but not what science fiction was, though science fiction was developing independently of him.

influencing Yet _ L _ a _ s _ t _ a _ n _ d _ F _ i _ r _ s _ t _ M _ e _ n remains a unique book in the field, many current writers but rarely even imitated and never equaled.

