

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 5/11/79

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(All meetings are in room 3H-506 on Wednesdays at noon.)

DATE	TOPIC
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5/16/79	END OF ETERNITY by Isaac Asimov
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6/6/79	IMPERIAL EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke
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Our library is in HO 2D-634A. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Evelyn Leeper (HO 1B-527 x6334) is Club Expediter in charge of book-buying.

1. I'll bet you thought that this notice was to remind you that the science fiction club will have a meeting this Wednesday to discuss END OF ETERNITY by Isaac Asimov. Well, you are wrong! For this meeting you get no reminder. So there.

2. Nor am I going to remind you that you should bring to the meeting two titles of books that you would like the discussion group to discuss (or get them to me beforehand).

3. Included in the remainder of this notice is a small dividend in the form a review section. Ms. Evelyn Leeper is the deviser of most of the section. Hopefully you will find that her product has its usual quotient of criticality and a reasonable credibility factor.

Mark Leeper
HO 1B-512 x7093

NIGHT SHIFT, by Stephen King. Signet, New York, 1979, 326p, Paper, Collection, \$2.50. ISBN 0-451-08510-8.

Stephen King is one of the best, if not the best, writers of horror fiction today. His first novel, CARRIE, was made into the very successful film of the same name. This was followed by 'SALEM'S LOT (currently optioned for film), and THE SHINING (now being filmed by Stanley Kubrick). Now, at last, we have a collection of King's short stories. Like rich food and fine wine, these stories have to be taken in small doses to be appreciated fully. (Preferably not before bedtime -- unless you love to wake up screaming!)

King's talent seems to be to take the subconscious fears we all have of everyday items, and magnify them a hundredfold. In particular, he has taken the often unadmitted or unrealized fear we have of machinery, and used that to write "traditional" horror stories in a modern setting. He is by no means the first -- Richard Matheson did the same with "Duel". In fact, those readers familiar with Matheson's work will notice definite influences in King's writings. But not only does King choose his "boogeymen" well, he writes so that you feel the terror. When he says, "A legless rat, guided by some bastard form of sonar, lunged against him, biting. Its body was flabby, warm.", you can almost feel the rat against your own body.

There are twenty stories in this volume, running the gamut from traditional ("Graveyard Shift" and "Sometimes They Come Back") to "mechanical" ("The Mangler" and "Trucks") to science fictional ("Night Surf" and "I Am the Doorway"). Add to these

the introduction and forward (also recommended), and the reader can have three weeks of terror from a single book. Very highly recommended!

Evelyn C. Leeper

1979 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SF, by Donald A. Wollheim. DAW, New York, 1979, 268p, Paper, Anthology, \$2.25. ISBN 0-87997-459-1.

The first thing noticeable about this selection of the "year's best" (and there will be at least two more such anthologies published by rival publishers) is the predominance of "new" authors. Herbert and Le Guin are the only long-established authors present, although most of the others have been writing for at least two years. The stories themselves run the gamut from unreadable to Hugo-quality material. The worst was "Come to the Party" by Herbert and Busby; it's hard to believe that this story came from the same author who wrote DUNE. But the two gems take up the slack in this collection: "The Persistence of Vision" by John Varley, and "Dance Band on the Titanic" by Jack Chalker. To attempt to relate the plots would be useless. Suffice it to say that the former draws heavily on Utopian literature, and the latter deals with a ferry that is not what it seems to be at first glance. These two will stay with you long after the others have been forgotten. Those in the middle have various strengths and weaknesses. "Creator" is basically an old idea, but well-written enough to be worth reading. "SQ" is written in a humorous style that seemed to disappear in the Sixties, and, while appropriate to the story, gives the work a very dated sound.

The rest of the stories are enjoyable and well-written, but not much above average.

Evelyn C. Leeper

THE SECOND WAR OF THE WORLDS, by George H. Smith. DAW, New York, 1976, 174p, Paper, Novel, \$1.25. ISBN 451-UY1260-125.

Annwn is "Earth" in a parallel universe, approximately at the same cultural level, but with some major differences. It appears that on Annwn, the Celts remained the major force in Britain, resulting in a preponderance of Irish, Welsh, and Scottish characters and customs. The religion (or religions) is pagan, the hero's girlfriend is a priestess in a fertility cult, and magic (spells, curses, etc.) works. For all that, Annwn is not very different from Victorian England. There is communication between Annwn and Earth by means of the "Shimmering Gates", and travel and trade exist between the two. Shortly after the Martian invasion of Earth (as described by H.G. Wells), the Martian counterpart in this parallel universe plans to attack Annwn. This is discovered by men on Earth, notably Mr. H and Dr. W. (I leave it to your imagination who these two are.) Mr. H and Dr. W travel to Annwn to help the Annwnians (?) fight off the invasion.

The book seems to be an attempt to write in the style of L. Sprague De Camp (a la the Harold Shea adventures such as THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER), but the humor falls flat, the plot contains too many flaws, and the solutions to problems are often produced without prior groundwork for them, so that the entire work seems a slapped-together affair. Of some interest to fans of Mr. H or of H.G. Wells, the book is of little value in itself.

Evelyn C. Leeper

STARCRASH

by Mark R. Leeper

When I recently saw the film BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY, I was somewhat disappointed that it lacked the spirit of the original serial versions. A new film is out that much better captures the hokey spirit of the old FLASH GORDON or BUCK ROGERS serials. This new film, STARCRASH, combines all the virtues and faults of the old serials, as well as those of a more recent comic book adaptation, BARBARELLA.

A "comic book" is, in fact, probably the best way to describe STARCRASH. The film is just one long silly comic book story. The characters have the motivations of those in a comic book story -- very little -- and the story has the logic of a comic book story -- even less. The characters include Stella Star (Caroline Munro), a sexy smuggler pressed into service by the Emperor of the Universe (Christopher Plummer looking very embarrassed). Stella's partner is Akton (Marjoe Gortner), but what exactly he is neither we nor Stella ever find out. The villain of the piece is the evil Count Zarth Arn (the name even sounds evil), played by Joe Spinnell. As inevitable as Dolby Sound is the friendly robot, here given the Texas-accented voice of Hamilton Camp.

This Italian-American co-production was financed in the U.S. but filmed in Italy. The director and co-scripter is Italian science fiction fan Luigi Cozzi (hiding behind the Americanized name of Lewis Coates) who seems to operate with a certain brash enthusiasm to make up for his lack of experience (this is his first film). Virtually none of the special effects he uses are convincing, but Cozzi brazenly tries to imitate the space effects of STAR WARS and the animation effects of Ray Harryhausen (the cult figure who made JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS and three Sinbad films). Cozzi's STARCRASH comes off as not so much a professional film but the work of a talented and quite promising amateur. His film is extremely unsatisfying on an adult level, but with a PG rating it functions more than well enough as a children's film. In spite of Ms. Munro's scanty attire, which is often on the bikini level, the film is a relatively safe film to bring the children to. The film has no more sex than THE WIZARD OF OZ, and what violence there is is sparks and smoke and people falling over. If the kids don't notice a few rough edges, they will have a good time.