

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 4/3/80

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
Book discussions at South Plainfield are 3 weeks after dates shown.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
4/23/80	MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS by Robert Heinlein, rm 4H-205
5/14/80	MASTERS OF SOLITUDE by Kaye & Godwin, rm 4H-205
6/4/80	EYES OF THE OVERWORLD by Jack Vance
6/19/80 (thur)	Film program in auditorium
6/25/80	JEM by Frederik Pohl
7/16/80	THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS by Poul Anderson
8/6/80	PROTECTOR by Larry Niven
8/27/80	TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon Dickson
9/17/80	RAX by Michael G. Coney
10/8/80	CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ by Walter M. Miller
10/29/80	ICERIGGER by Alan Dean Foster
11/19/80	CITY by Clifford Simak

Our library is in HO 2D-634A. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Evelyn Leeper (HO 1G-318A x6334) is Club book-buyer.
Debi Bennett (HP 1B-368 x2408) is in charge of South Plainfield activities.

1. Debi Bennett is now in charge of coordinating club activities in South Plainfield. She will be organizing book discussions of the same books that the main chapter of the club discusses. The South Plainfield chapter will, however, discuss the books three weeks after their discussion in Holmdel. This will make sure that both chapters of the club are not trying to read the same library books at the same time and give both chapters three weeks to read the books. People interested in South Plainfield activities should contact Debi Bennett (HP 1B-368, x2408).

2. June 19 we will have our annual film program in the auditorium. We expect to show another Canadian adaptation of an Isaac Asimov story and a humorous short, HARDWARE WARS, which is a satire of STAR WARS.

3. Our membership numbers have fluctuated a little since last summer. A few people have joined and a few have left the club so we have remained at just about 75 members. Debi Bennett has recruited six new members from South Plainfield so we are now at an all-time high of 81 members.

4. For those not previously aware of the fact, two of the major science fiction magazines have recently been sold. GALAXY has been sold to the publishers of GALILEO and ANALOG has been sold to the publishers of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.

5. I am informed that the fourth book of the RIVERWORLD trilogy [well, Farmer still rationalizes that it is a trilogy] will be out in June, 1980 under the title MAGIC LABYRINTH.

6. Included with this notice are two reviews. One is for a film I have mentioned in these notices before, THE WICKER MAN. I suppose if I were pressed to re-choose my list of the best ten fantastic films of the 70's (which were listed in the March 17 notice), I might add WICKER MAN and remove FANTASTIC PLANET.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-502A x7093

FAR FUTURE CALLING, by Olaf Stapledon. Oswald Train, Philadelphia, 1979, 275p, Cloth, Collection, \$12.00. (No ISBN number.)

This volume will be much appreciated by the many admirers of Olaf Stapledon, and rightfully so. The contents give a broad overview of an author who has influenced countless who followed him, but who even today remains relatively unknown to the majority of science fiction readers.

While much of the science fiction of the 1930s and 1940s was the child of the adventure story and the dime novel (by way of Edgar Rice Burroughs and others), Stapledon's writings trace their ancestry to classical origins. His extensive use of similes, for example, shows the influence of Homeric verse on his writings. And while other authors dealt with solar systems (or perhaps galaxies), Stapledon ranged over the entire universe, from its beginnings to its final death. Indeed, one of the difficulties in reading some of Stapledon's works, such as Last and First Men, is that the sheer weight of ideas can overwhelm the reader.

This volume contains five short stories, a radio play (never produced), a speech given by Stapledon to the British Interplanetary Society, and two articles about Stapledon written by Sam Moskowitz. One is a biography of Stapledon which gives the reader a deeper understanding of Stapledon, both as an author and as a philosopher, than did Moskowitz's earlier article in Explorers of the Infinite. The other article deals with Stapledon's trip to the United States in 1949 to attend the ill-fated Cultural and Scientific Conference for Peace. (It is a measure of the respect accorded Stapledon that he was one of only five Britons invited to attend.) While much of the article does not deal with Stapledon directly, it contains useful background information for those who wish to place Stapledon's philosophy in an historical context. The speech is Stapledon's own summing up of his attitudes towards progress in general, and the exploration of space in particular. (A brief summary of an ensuing discussion between Stapledon and Arthur C. Clarke is included following the speech.) The play is based on (a very small segment of) Last and First Men, and unfortunately fails to communicate the scope of that work. Three of the stories could almost be considered as introductions to Stapledon's longer works: In "A Modern Magician" Stapledon explores the concept of a man (or indeed, any being) with vastly greater powers than others of his species, much as he does in Sirius or Odd John. "A World of Sound" and "The Man Who Became a Tree" examines the possibility of other forms of consciousness in much the same way that portions of Last and First Men and Star Maker do. "East Is West", while more a sermon on global conflicts than a true alternate universe story, still shows much of Stapledon's style -- his use of dreams and trances to provide a bridge to the world he wishes to describe, whether distant in time or space, or even point of view. "Arms Out of Hand", originally published in 1946, seems to have been the inspiration of one of the better "Star Trek" episodes. (Although

the cover painting shows a complete disregard for aerodynamics, the interior illustrations by Fabian are quite satisfactory.) A necessary addition for any serious collection of science fiction.

(Publisher's address is P.O.Box 1891, Philadelphia, PA.)

Evelyn C. Leeper

THE WICKER MAN

A Film Review by Mark R. Leeper

Rarely does a film establish a reputation of being a "living legend". One film that has established such a reputation is THE WICKER MAN. This film was made in Britain in 1973 from a screenplay by Anthony Shaffer and directed by Robin Hardy. Shaffer had already established a name for writing thrillers for his authorship of SLEUTH and FRENZY. THE WICKER MAN was released in England and hailed as an instant classic. The history of the attempts to release THE WICKER MAN in the United States, however, is a comedy of frustrations involving law suits, piracy, broken contracts, and misunderstandings. After several years of legal entanglements, the film was at one point released. But after a limited distribution in California, the legal hassles started again and the film was pulled from distribution. CINEFANTASTIQUE, the leading journal on fantastic films, devoted an entire issue to this one film, claiming, among other things, that the film was worth driving a hundred miles to see. THE WICKER MAN has now received a New York City release. Whether this is part of a bona fide release or just a hiatus in legal battles remains to be seen.

Is this film worth the fuss that has been made over it during the seven year wait? No. Not surprisingly, when the forbidden fruit is finally viewed, it is something of a letdown. THE WICKER MAN is simply not the best horror film ever made and is not worth a hundred-mile drive. As is in no way surprising, the film does not live up to its buildup. It is, however, a thumping good horror thriller and is thoroughly enjoyable. The plot concerns a police constable who comes to a Scottish island to investigate the disappearance of a young girl. He is given a very cold welcome from the islanders and is not long in finding out why. The entire island has forsaken modern religions for an ancient pagan fertility religion. The thrust of the film comes from the constable's discovery of, and reactions to, the paganism, and his efforts to avoid being ensnared by the pagans while unravelling the mystery of the lost girl.

It is hard to believe that the people who love this film do so because of the plot. Frankly, the concept of the film is one that is fairly familiar in horror films. What makes this a memorable film is the style with which it is executed. The plot is kept simple and the photography is poetic. The pagan songs (which are an integral part of the film) seem believable enough and, along with the details of the pagan religion, certainly seem to be authentic. While the music is important to THE WICKER MAN, occasionally it does get out of hand. The songs sound like they have been recorded in a sound studio rather than like they are being sung by the characters of the film. At these times the film takes on the aspect of a musical, cutting in a minor way against the credibility of the film.

A word of warning to those easily shocked: there is a great deal of nudity and a fair amount of sexual content in this film. Not too surprisingly, sex was an integral part of ancient fertility religions and this film strives for authenticity. Sex is never used gratuitously, and it is always represented maturely and with style. But it is part of the story and is unavoidable.

In summation, this is definitely one of the better films of its genre, but do not drive a hundred miles to see it. This film deserves a strong recommendation, but within limits. It may be worth a fifty-mile drive, but not a hundred.