

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 5/29/80

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

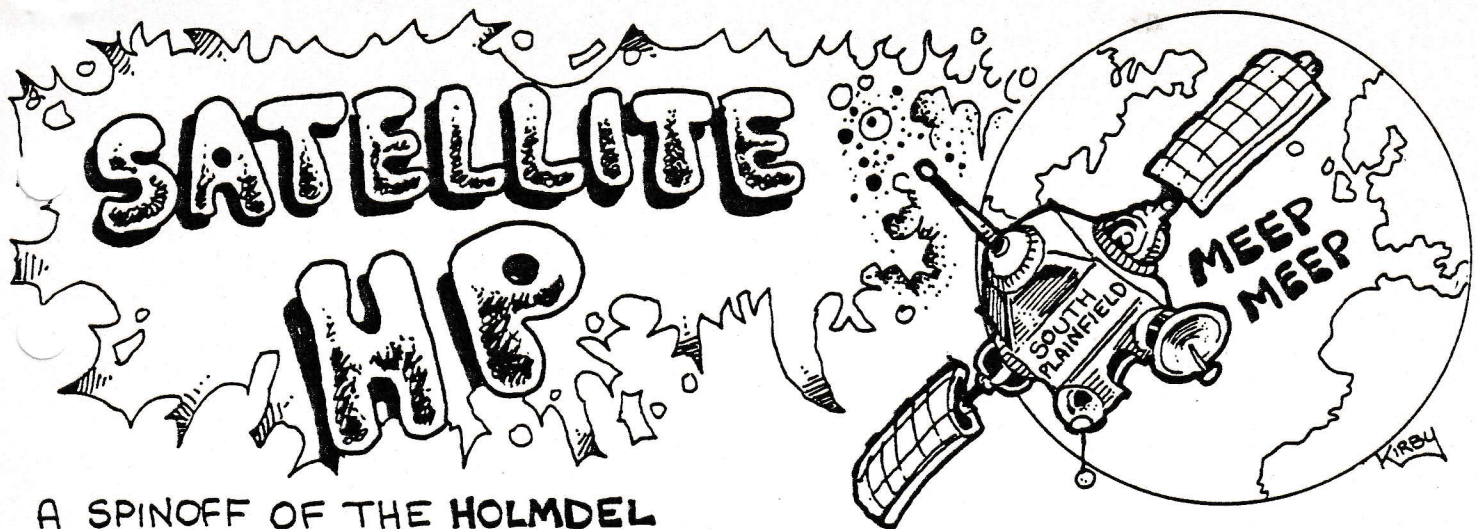
<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
6/4/80	EYES OF THE OVERWORLD by Jack Vance, rm 4H-205 [MASTERS OF SOLITUDE by Kaye & Godwin, at HP]
6/19/80 (thur)	Film program in auditorium
6/25/80	JEM by Frederik Pohl, rm 4H-205
7/16/80	THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS by Poul Anderson, rm 4H-205

Our library is in HO 2D-634A. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Evelyn Leeper (HO 1E-321 x6334) is Club book-buyer.
Debi Bennett (HP 1B-368 x2408) is in charge of South Plainfield activities.

1. As usual, a reminder of our upcoming discussion.
2. In case anyone is interested, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK grossed \$10 million in its first week, averaging \$77,000 per theater. THE SHINING grossed \$1 million its first week, averaging \$100,000 per theater. (It is currently playing in only ten theaters in the New York and Los Angeles area; national release is set for June 13.) By way of comparison, STAR TREK grossed \$17 million its first week, averaging \$20,000 per theater. An article in the New York Times leads one to believe that the version of THE SHINING which played the first couple of days is not the final version; apparently a scene in the film then has since been cut.
3. The last volume of Philip Jose Farmer's "Riverworld" series, THE MAGIC LABYRINTH, is finally available in hardcover for \$11.95. In a preface, Farmer claims that this wraps up all the loose ends of the series. (This information courtesy of G.F. MacLachlan.)
4. Attached to this notice you will find various and sundry reviews, counter-reviews, and other miscellany.
5. The above was written by our over-ambitious secretary-treasurer again. I have to watch her every minute!
6. Ben Bova and Harlan Ellison have won a \$337,000 settlement from ABC-TV for similarities between the FUTURE COP tv-series and the authors' story "Brillo." I never thought I would see the day when I would be sorry to see ABC-TV lose a lawsuit brought against them by science fiction authors. I would rather hope at this point that every science fiction author who has used the idea of a robot

policeman will now sue Ellison and Bova for stealing their idea (e.g. Harry Bates for "Return of the Master"). I rather expect that every film and tv producer with a science fiction project in mind will now have to think twice about continuing for fear that every science fiction author who has used a similar idea will sue them for copyright infringement. There is already talk that Leinster may sue Fox for some superficial similarities between the story "Discord in Scarlet" and the film ALIEN. And Fox is already suing Universal for similarities between STAR WARS and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-502A x7093



A SPINOFF OF THE HOLMDEL
SCIENCE FICTION CLUB.

HP Happenings

Eight people attended the first HP Satellite Discussion meeting of Heinlein's The Moon is a Harsh Mistress on May 14. Discussion was lively; most people had read the book and/or knew something about Heinlein and his work. The consensus seemed to be thumbs up for a good story but thumbs down (or sideways) because of "flat" characters and no surprises.

The observation was made that HP is not obligated to follow the HO reading list. If you want to read something else, bring a suggestion to the next meeting and we'll see if we can schedule it. (Note: This is not meant in any way to be a criticism of HO's choice of books nor was this revolution inspired by the Heinlein novel.)

There is a film scheduled for June 19. Interested HP'ers could take a field trip to HO to see the film and other points of interest (i.e. the picturesque pits, the car corrals, the offices growing in the gardens . . .). Of course, we would expect the HO club to join us for lunch.

We will discuss The Masters of Solitude by Godwin and Kaye on June 4 in HP 1B-361. See you then!

R. bi

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Let's get one thing out of the way immediately: Yes, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is as good as STAR WARS. If you find this hard to believe (I know I did), go see the film. But go early; the lines are already an hour or two long.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK has everything STAR WARS had and then some. There is action, adventure, philosophy, romance -- you name it, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK has it. The story begins with Luke, Han, the Princess, C-3PO, and R2-D2 in a rebel base on the ice planet of Hoth. The Empire has discovered this base, and our main characters are forced to flee. Luke travels to a planet in the Dagobah system, where he studies under an ancient Jedi named Yoda (one of the best additions to the "Star Wars" saga). Meanwhile, Han and the Princess seek assistance from Lando Calrissian, an old gambling buddy of Han's.

Naturally, the film is full of special effects, including a fair amount of stop-motion animation equal to some of Ray Harryhausen's best, and some incredibly good spaceflight sequences. In fact, the film is technically superior to STAR WARS, although not the "great leap forward" from STAR WARS as that film was from its predecessors. The music is at its best when it is re-using the themes from STAR WARS, although the addition of an Imperial theme is welcome. The characters are much more three-dimensional, and we learn more about them than we did in the earlier film. We also learn more about the Jedi and about the Force. At times the film becomes a parody of the first, but it is all in the spirit of good-natured fun and does not seriously detract from the story. The only serious problem is the lack of a "punch" ending. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK obviously serves as a transition between STAR WARS and the third film of the series (shooting title THE REVENGE OF THE JEDI), and as such, leaves a few plot lines dangling. If nothing else, this will insure a large audience for the third film (though that wouldn't seem to be a problem!).

If you liked STAR WARS, you'll love the THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. If you didn't like STAR WARS, you may still enjoy this film, since many of the defects of the first film were corrected in the second. In short, don't miss this one.

Evelyn C. Leeper

ALL THAT JAZZ
a film review by Mark R. Leeper

ALL THAT JAZZ may not always be one of the best films of the year, but it is consistently one of the most unpredictable and unusual mass audience films to be made in several years. The film is Bob Fosse's portrait of a stage and screen director who is almost a carbon copy of Fosse himself. Roy Scheider plays Joe Gideon, a man with a perfection complex. Gideon drives himself and those around him with impossible demands as he slowly kills himself to keep up the pace of his life. Though it takes a long stretch of the film to establish what is actually going on, the film is a sort of stream of consciousness as Gideon thinks about his life from a hospital bed. Gideon drifts between memories and fantasies that become more and more macabre as the film progresses. Gideon's thoughts of death take the form of bizarre stage productions in which the three women who have meant the most to him in his life sing and dance as they voice his thoughts. Death visits him as a lovely girl in a white dress (Jessica Lange), who appears to him as a vision of purity and perfection.

ALL THAT JAZZ is decidedly self-indulgent. It comes off often as Fosse's attempt to write an obituary for himself -- to tell the world what faults he had and how in spite of it, what a great guy he was. When Fosse gives his cinematic equivalent a propensity for bedding a endless supply of beautiful women (not unlike when Woody Allen does the same thing in MANHATTAN) he is engaging in tiresome bragging that should be reserved for the locker room.

The first part of the film lays the groundwork for for what is to come, introducing us to the character. The film has some creative sequences in this phase, one of which is Fosse's transformation of a silly dance routine into a highly erotic performance, but overall this part of the film is not particularly unusual or inventive. It is in the second half that ALL THAT JAZZ really takes off. Gideon's hallucinations, perhaps partially the effect of medication on his already inventive mind, stage for him musical comedy production numbers with dancing girls in costumes patterned on vein and artery charts, lavish sets with stylized hearses and operating tables, and a wonderland of other weird images. The audience finds itself caught between shock and delight.

Much of ALL THAT JAZZ can not be described in a review. The film is a tour-de-force that much be seen to be appreciated. This is a film that will not be to everybody's taste. Many will think that the second half is tasteless, or that the first half is dull. Still, most people will find part of the film that they like, part that they do not like, and some will even find that much of the film is offensive. The fact remains that this is a creative film and well worth viewing.

ALL THAT JAZZ

ALL THAT JAZZ is, first of all, a musical. Like many old-time musicals, it has sacrificed some plot and story to fit in all the songs and dance. And, as was true of the older musicals, the audience probably won't mind.

That is not to say that ALL THAT JAZZ is totally lacking in plot. The film is the semi-autobiographical story of director Bob Fosse (his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding), and gives us a (somewhat brutal) portrait of what is required to succeed in show business. Roy Scheider does an excellent job of portraying Joe Gideon, director and choreographer. Gideon is driven by the need for perfection and we see him unable to let up, smoking, drinking, pill-popping, and womanizing, all while attempting to choreograph and direct a Broadway play and finish directing a movie (much as Fosse worked on "Chicago" and LENNY). Not surprisingly, Gideon suffers a heart attack, and much of the film is told in the form of his fantasies as he lies in the hospital. Leland Palmer, as Gideon's ex-wife, and Erzsebet Foldi, as his daughter, give excellent performances, as does Ann Reinking as his current girlfriend. Ben Vereen has a relatively small part as a somewhat showy "personality" constantly involved in benefit performances.

But it is for the musical numbers that most people will go to see the film, and they are spectacular. From the beginning sequence (auditions for Gideon's play), to his remarkable transformation of an idiotic tune into an erotic show-stopper, to the final sequences of Gideon's fantasies, they are perfect. The dancers are a delight to behold, showing the beauty of the dance without hiding the work involved. The sets are beautifully designed, ranging from the austerity of the practice hall to the futuristic opulence of the final set. The costumes are beautifully executed, and in general, the film is a visual Disneyland. Throughout the film, Fosse intercuts scenes of Gideon talking with the Angel of Death (played by Jessica Lange) in a backstage sort of setting that adds to the unreality of the picture.

ALL THAT JAZZ is not a film to everyone's tastes. The combination of flashbacks, intercutting, and fantasies may make the film difficult to follow. But if you are willing to sit back and immerse yourself in the film, rather than attempt to view it in a linear fashion, you will find that it does become a complete story at the end, and was most enjoyable to watch on the way there.

Evelyn C. Leeper

THE SHINING
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Up until the death of Alfred Hitchcock, I would have said that he was the most prestigious director alive. Now that he is gone, his title has probably passed to Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick is not so prolific a director as Hitchcock; he makes a new film about once every three years. When he makes a film he labors long and hard over it, but he usually achieves results. Among his notable films are DR. STRANGELOVE, PATHS OF GLORY, 2001, CLOCKWORK ORANGE, and BARRY LYNDON. I was rather pleased, then, when I heard that he was planning to make a film of the Stephen King horror novel THE SHINING. I was even more pleased when he confided to the press that he expected that his new film would be the horror film to end all horror films. If anyone could breathe new life into the horror genre, it would be Kubrick, who did much to resurrect and make respectable the science fiction genre with 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Instead he has churned out one more entry for the rolls of horror film mediocrity.

Kubrick has adapted a good but overly long novel into a film that is also overly long, but not nearly as good. The only similarity between this film and 2001 is that either film could have 45 minutes trimmed off without hurting the story. THE SHINING not only drags, it misrepresents and misuses the King novel. There is much in the book that would have made a fresh and innovative horror film. One wonders how Kubrick manages to make such a prosaic and traditional horror film out of the material he had.

The story deals with Jack Nicholson, an alcoholic ex-teacher, who takes a job as the winter caretaker at the Overlook Hotel. The Overlook, high in the mountains of Colorado, has a history of being THE summer vacation spot for the very famous, the very rich, and the very powerful. All the sinning that these very upper-class people have done over the years has somehow remained like an echo in the hotel to menace Nicholson, his wife, and his son, Danny. The only protection that the family has is the son's telepathic and clairvoyant powers. In the novel, the boy was the main character, but Kubrick clearly felt that audiences would have trouble identifying with the psychic tyke, so by the halfway point we find that Shelley Duvall, the wife, has emerged as the main character of the film.

Kubrick also downplays the book's emphasis on little Danny's psychic powers and the deep mordant evil of the hotel. Instead, he chooses to handle the film like so many films about psychotic killers after damsels in distress. In doing so he transformed an intriguing book into the most prosaic film that could be said to still be based on the book. He started with a good story, a nearly perfect cast for that story, and the budget to do the story as it really should have been done, but his results are little better than any of a number of low-budget films that get

seen on television's 1 AM Sunday morning circuit.

A director of Kubrick's stature deserves the benefit of the doubt. I choose to believe that Kubrick, in a misguided attempt to avoid being influenced by other directors' work in the horror field, chose to ignore all horror films that came before his. If that is true, he could easily have remained blissfully ignorant of how well-trodden the ground he was covering was.

THE SHINING

THE SHINING was certainly one of the most eagerly awaited films of this year, by Stephen King fans and Stanley Kubrick fans alike. King's novel was immensely popular, and Kubrick is renowned for his excellence. Kubrick had said that he wanted to make the definitive horror movie, and his source material gave him ample opportunity. Unfortunately, he ended up making just another psychopathic killer film (albeit a good one).

While it is probably impossible for Kubrick to make a bad film, he certainly seems to have tried with this one. King's writing style has been described as "cinematic", but Kubrick chose to eliminate many of the truly chilling scenes in the story. In addition, he removed the emphasis from Danny Torrance and his psychic/precognitive visions, and concentrated more on Danny's parents, played by Jack Nicholson (who looks psychopathic even when he's supposed to be normal) and Shelley Duvall. Scatman Crothers plays a much abbreviated role as Dick Halloran, the psychic cook who also has "the shining". ("Shining" is what Halloran calls Danny's and his psychic abilities; it is a central part of the novel, but practically ignored in the film.)

Visually, the film is beautiful to watch. The scenery and the sets are magnificent. The acting is, in general, good, although Nicholson does seem to be trying too hard throughout. Danny Lloyd, as Danny Torrance, is excellent in his screen debut, although with the changes Kubrick made he is not on camera as much as one might hope. The music, as is now standard for Kubrick, is taken from classical composers rather than written especially for the film. (One suspects that in his attempt at absolute control of his films, Kubrick is unwilling to let anyone else possibly outshine him on them.)

While it is possible that Kubrick wanted the film to differ from the novel so that viewers who had read the novel would not be able to predict the entire film, it still resulted in a very disjointed story, with most of the explanation for the goings-on lost in the transition. Had Kubrick started with a completely original screenplay, he might have achieved his goal. But the partial surgery performed on King's novel leaves the viewer dissatisfied with the adaptation (if he has read the novel), or confused by the plot (if he hasn't).

Evelyn C. Leeper