

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 8/7/80

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
8/27/80	DORSAI! by Gordon Dickson, rm 4H-205 [PROTECTOR by Larry Niven, at HP]
9/10/80	Book Exchange, rm 4H-205
9/17/80	RAX [alias HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE] by Michael G. Coney, rm 4H-205
10/8/80	CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ by Walter M. Miller, rm 4H-205

Our library is in HO 2C-401. Rich Ditch (x3432) is librarian.
Debi Bennett (HP 1B-368 x2408) is in charge of South Plainfield
activities. Evelyn Leeper (HO 1E-321 x6334) is Club book-buyer.

1. An order will go out to Witter's F&SF Book Company on Friday, August 15 for a number of items for the club. Members who wish to get in on the large purchase discount that the club will get should get their orders to Evelyn Leeper (HO 1E-321, x6334) by Wednesday, August 13. Payment in full should be made to Evelyn at the time you order with her. The discount will be pro-rated and your rebate will be given to you with your books. We will probably have an order large enough to qualify for the 20% discount, less postage. If you want to look over Witter's catalog, see Evelyn. [Notes for new members: 1) neither the club nor any of its members makes any profit from your order. 2) F&SF Book Company is a large distributor of science fiction-related materials that works out of a large warehouse in Staten Island. Occasionally the club gets permission to visit the warehouse on a Saturday morning to browse and pool purchases. \$10 purchases get a 10% discount, \$25 purchases get a 20% discount, \$100 purchases get a 25% discount. People interested in a trip to Witter's should let me know, maybe we can set one up for sometime this month.]

2. As you can see from the schedule, we will soon have a book exchange for people wanting to buy/sell/trade used science fiction books, magazines, etc.

3. We have about 10 pages of reviews and such submitted, so we better get a notice out, before it gets too thick. [New member note: we will publish just about anything science fiction-related that anyone submits to the notice. Just get it to me in a form that is on 8 1/2 by 11, easily photocopyable paper. Sorry, we cannot accept anything that is slanderous, libelous, derogatory

toward Colin Wilson, or is otherwise in bad taste.]

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-502A x7093

Partial NIVEN Bibliography-
Known Space Time Line

by R. L. Ditch

This material is based upon the information contained in "Tales of Known Space: The Universe of Larry Niven". I have extracted the entries from the time line of Known Space, in order, and have added the collection(s) in which the short stories have appeared. In the chronology, novels are shown by all upper case, alternate titles are shown in parentheses, and collections are shown by a number following the letter C. These numbers correspond to the order under "Collections". Since "Tales of Known Space" was published in 1975, some updating of this material has been necessary. The novels after "Mote in God's Eye", plus the collection "Convergent Series" have been added.

I have not included any of the stories from "Convergent Series" in this list. Further, the short stories "One Face" and "Bordered in Black", which appear in both C2 and C8, may be Known Space items: C6 lists them as such, but does not show them on the time line. Read them and decide for yourself.

A final caution: since the stories were written in a different order than their internal chronology, the writing quality may vary if read in the order indicated.

A. Collections

1. Neutron Star
2. The Shape of Space
3. All the Myriad Ways
4. The Flight of the Horse
5. A Hole in Space
6. Tales of Known Space
7. The Long Arm of Gil Hamilton
8. Convergent Series

B. Novels

1. World of Ptavvs
2. A Gift from Earth
3. Ringworld
4. The Flying Sorcerers (with David Gerrold)
5. Protector
6. The Mote in God's Eye (with Jerry Pournelle)
7. Inferno (with Jerry Pournelle)
8. A World Out of Time
9. Lucifer's Hammer (with Jerry Pournelle)
10. The Magic Goes Away
11. Ringworld Engineers
12. The Patchwork Girl

- C. "Known Space" stories, in internal chronological order, with book appearances.

The Coldest Place	C6
Becalmed in Hell	C3/C6
Wait it Out	C3/C6
Eye of the Octopus	C6
How the Heros Die	C2/C6
The Jigsaw Man	C3
WORLD OF PTAVVS	
At the Bottom of a Hole	C2/C6
Intent to Deceive (The Deceivers)	C6
Death by Ecstasy (The Organleggers)	C2/C7
The Defenseless dead	C7
ARM	C7
THE PATCHWORK GIRL	
PROTECTOR-first half	
Cloak of Anarchy	C6
PROTECTOR-second half	
The Warriors	C2/C6
A GIFT FROM EARTH	
The Ethics of Madness	C1
Neutron Star	C1
A Relic of Empire	C1
At the Core	C1
Flatlander	C1
The Handicapped	C1
Grendel	C1
The Borderland of Sol	C6
The Soft Weapon	C1
There is a Tide	C5/C6
RINGWORLD	
RINGWORLD ENGINEERS	
Safe at Any Speed	C2/C6

THE ISLAND

A review by Mark R. Leeper

The ad campaign for THE ISLAND uses the catchline "Just when you thought it was safe to go fishing...", an allusion to the "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water..." catchline used for JAWS 2. I have to be frank with you. I might almost be convinced that it is not safe to go into the water because there might be sharks in the water. I might be just that gullible. But, it is highly unlikely that if I wanted to go fishing, I would be frightened off by the threat that there might be a 374-year-old undiscovered colony of pirates preying on fishing yachts. That's just a bit too weird for me, thank you.

THE ISLAND is Peter Benchley's third film about the dangers of the ocean. His first film, JAWS, was one of the top moneymakers of all time. One reason for this was that it told a credible story of the horrors of the sea. The story was told with a hard-bitten realism that made it seem almost possible. Apparently, JAWS was such a success that Benchley now feels that he can go it without worrying about credibility. In fact, THE ISLAND is just about the silliest major film that I have seen in quite a while, with the possible - and I say possible- exception of AIRPLANE!. The idea is the sort of thing that used to be the mainstay of Saturday afternoon serials, and it was hard to swallow even then: that a band of buccaneers, descended from the 17th Century pirates, are still alive on a small island in the Bermuda Triangle. Every day or so they plunder a fishing boat to earn their daily bread. It is unclear just how such a small group of pirates is able to keep from being completely decimated in a profession in which one or two or their numbers are lost each week.

Into their clutches falls a reporter, played as believably as possible under the circumstances by Michael Caine, and his son, in the area to discover why the boats disappear. The early parts of the film are obviously an attempt to cash in on the style of JAWS. We get some flash-cut scenes of people being mysteriously killed shuffled in with scenes of the everyday relationship of Michael Caine and his already rather weird son. The boy will get weirder as the film progresses. These father-son scenes offer ample proof that director Michael Ritchie is no Steven Spielberg, and the film gets off to a dragging start. Once Caine is captured by the modern-day buccaneers, all excitement is left behind. We are shown some amusing character portraits of the pirates and their violent society, but horror clearly takes a back seat to violence and even boredom. Caine's persistent efforts to escape give the film the feel of PAPILLON on TREASURE ISLAND. The film only picks up interest when for some unfathomable reason, Caine is allowed to accompany the buccaneers as they capture and sack a cocaine-carrying schooner.

THE ISLAND is obviously being packaged as horror film. In

spite of a few shock scenes, this is clearly a misrepresentation of the mood of the film. It is more a rather absurd adventure-fantasy with a laughably absurd premise. Benchley may not have the talent to make this story work, but one must admit that he has courage for even trying.

DRESSED TO KILL

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Brian DePalma is a talented director who for a while had an unbroken string of impressive films to his name. Films to his credit include PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE, CARRIE, and two very acceptable imitations of Alfred Hitchcock thrillers, SISTERS and OBSESSION. After CARRIE, he made a disappointing horror suspense film, THE FURY. He followed it with a low budget comedy, HOME MOVIES, which had only a limited release. DRESSED TO KILL is DePalma's third film in which he imitates Hitchcock's style. Unfortunately, he has lost some of the knack for Hitchcockian suspense he showed in OBSESSION. It may not be entirely DePalma's fault. OBSESSION took much of its mood from a score by Bernard Herrmann, who also scored some of Hitchcock's best films. Herrmann's death has left DePalma without much of the Master's atmosphere. DRESSED TO KILL has a few interesting stylistic experiments, but it is all too obvious that he is reshooting scenes from Hitchcock and from his own previous work.

The plot has enough twists that any attempt to explain it would ruin some of the surprises of the film. But suffice it to say that the film involves a psychiatrist, played by Michael Caine, who becomes involved in the murder of one of his patients. Early in the film the center of attention shifts from the victim (Angie Dickenson) to a prostitute who witnessed the murder and who may be charged with the crime. The prostitute is played by Nancy Allen who was effective as the villain in CARRIE, subsequently married DePalma, and in this film has all the stage presence of a herring. Ms. Dickenson tries to look sexy but ends up looking like she is too old for her part. In spite of a twisting plot, the resolution of the film is fairly predictable from early in the film.

DePalma does do some stylistic experiments that keep the film from becoming a total disappointment. Early in the film there is a ten or fifteen minute stretch in which the plot is advanced completely visually, without use of any dialogue at all. This turns out to be an excellent tension builder, but not enough to raise the film above mediocrity in the end. Later in the film, when it matters most, DePalma falls back on borrowing from his own earlier work and from Hitchcock. If DRESSED TO KILL were the work of an unknown new director, it would definitely show promise. It is, however, something of a disappointment to see DePalma drop from being an accomplished filmmaker to one who is only promising.

CALIGULA

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

For some tasks, it is nearly impossible to avoid dealing in pornography. It is, apparently, nearly impossible for a legislature to write an anti-pornography bill that is neither uselessly vague nor itself pornographic. Another task in which the dealing in pornography is inevitable is the writing or filming of an accurate history of the Roman Caesar, Caligula. It is also nearly impossible to get historical detail of Caligula's reign. Tacitus wrote the most complete history of the Caesars; his chapters on Caligula have been excised, probably for two reasons: because they appealed more to a purient interest than an historical interest and because Caligula did so little that was historically important. Besides being a contrast to other Caesars who couldn't help but be better, Caligula did very little of importance in Roman history. His entire reign was apparently spent in self-indulgent perversion.

Whatever the motive, and I don't feel the motive was a lust for historical accuracy, CALIGULA is one of the most accurate film depictions of some aspects of what life was probably like in Imperial Rome. One never really thinks about some of the expedient inaccuracies we usually see in historical films until we see them stripped away (in this case literally). SPARTACUS is one of the more accurate portraits of Imperial Rome. But it is full of expedients like implying that the slave quarry operators would suffer the unnecessary expense of clothing the slaves. Imperial Rome was not our culture and to accurately represent it, it is necessary to break some of our cultural taboos. CALIGULA does not apologetically break taboos to show Roman culture, it wallows and revels those differences and accents only those of pornographic value. It uses historical accuracy as an excuse for making a pornographic film. This is a tactic not too different from that used by Cecil B. DeMille who, back in the twenties, reacted to film censorship by continuing to film orgies, but set them in a biblical past and showing in the same scenes a disapproving Moses holding the Ten Commandments.

The film itself, while it can be recommended only to those of strong stomach, is a polished work of cinematic art, just as DeMille's silent epics were in their day. The camera intercuts between scenes of natural beauty and savage ugliness. Scenes of the Roman Court are done in a passable imitation of Fellini. One feels a little cheated when it is over that the producers didn't spend a little more time on the history, and less on the orgies. For most of the film Malcolm McDowell is the only face on the screen that will be familiar to American audiences. McDowell put a lot of himself into this film (figuratively, though deceptively little literally - there is always a least a layer of cloth between the camera and Caligula's sexual activity, at least when we can see McDowell's face). In many ways this role is much like

his role in CLOCKWORK ORANGE and is almost the antithesis of his tour de force role in TIME AFTER TIME. In the first third of the film Peter O'Toole and John Gielgud are on hand. Gielgud's acting is all too brief and is the best in the film. No particularly difficult acting was required for the film and all the actors went through their parts with only the required level of acting.

It is hard to give this film a final verdict of good or bad. CALIGULA is a film that requires of the viewer that it be accepted for what it is. I have to say that I enjoyed it, I would like to see it again, and if you like this sort of film, this is the sort of film you will like.

THE INCREDIBLE UMBRELLA, by Marvin Kaye, Dell, New York, 1980, 301p, Paper, Novel, \$1.95. 0-440-133390-4.

Somehow this seems to be the year for alternate-universe novels: first Heinlein's NUMBER OF THE BEAST and now this. And, like Heinlein's book, the alternate universes here are literary in origin. As was mentioned in the review of Heinlein's novel, this is merely the continuation of a long line of such novels. Obviously a field where authors such as Poul Anderson and L. Sprague De Camp do so well must appeal to others attempting to emulate their success (not that Heinlein needs to attempt to emulate anyone else!). It is, however, a field fraught with traps to catch the unwary, as authors such as John Norman and even Heinlein have discovered. Fortunately for the reader, Kaye manages to avoid most of these traps.

Where Heinlein attempted to write a science fiction novel about his literary alternate universes (not unlike trying to mix oil and water), Kaye treats his as strictly fantasy, complete with sorcerers and magic umbrellas with cabalist symbols on them. This internal "consistency" helps keep the mood up for the reader, where Heinlein's flip-flopping from science fiction to fantasy and back again becomes most disconcerting.

Another point in Kaye's favor is that he keeps his alternate universes familiar to most readers (although a detailed knowledge of Gilbert and Sullivan would be a definite asset). By sticking to well-known works (albeit predictable: Sherlock Holmes, Dracula, Charles Dickens, et al.), he avoids losing his

readership through unfamiliarity. In addition, he manages to convey the general image of a given alternate universe to readers unfamiliar with its basis without appearing pedantic.

While not a "humorous" novel (in the sense of continuous laughter), THE INCREDIBLE UMBRELLA contains its share of wit (as seems to be common in this sub-genre). Some of the humor towards the end seems a bit forced, with a couple of outrageous puns, and the ending itself is unfortunately weak and seems designed to allow a sequel if this one does well. Still, there are worse ways to spend a couple of hours, and if one thinks of this as a series of episodes rather than a novel with a beginning, a middle, and an end, the result is quite enjoyable.

Evelyn C. Leeper