

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 11/13/80

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
11/19/80	CITY by Clifford Simak, rm 4H-205 [ICERIGGER by Alan Dean Foster, HP]
12/10/81	EARTH BOOK OF STORMGATE by Poul Anderson, 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. We have a discussion coming up of CITY by Clifford Simak. The meeting will be on Wednesday, November 19. South Plainfielders will be discussing ICERIGGER by Alan Dean Foster. This notice is going out so that we can recommend an alternate universe science fiction story being done in three parts on Channel 13. The program is AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE and will be run on three consecutive Friday nights. The story takes place in modern-day Britain after Germany won World War II.

2. The time has once again come to elect officers for the club. The first step of the process is to find people who are willing to take on the offices. There are four positions to fill:

Chairperson
Vice-Chairperson/Librarian
Secretary/Treasurer
Club book-buyer

The first three positions are mutually exclusive. Rich Ditch has decided that he no longer has the room to be librarian. Hence we rather desperately need to replace him. He is willing to continue as vice-chairperson if we divide up the office. However, since there is no current responsibility connected with being the vice-chairperson other than also being librarian, it will be left up to the volunteer whether the office is divided or not.

Anyone who would like to put his/her name in nomination for any of the positions should inform me (on HO x7093) or Evelyn (on HO x6334) sometime before Friday, November 21. I will be at the Molly Pitcher all next week (11/17 - 11/21) so please contact Evelyn during that week.

Anyone wanting to contact Rich to find out more about what is involved being librarian can contact him at HO x3432. The librarian should probably be from either Holmdel or South Plainfield since those are the sites of the current discussions.

3. The library now has started to receive ANALOG, the science fiction magazine, and CINEFANTASTIQUE, a glossy magazine of critical comment and news dealing with science fiction, horror, and fantasy films.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-515 x7093

SED CLUB BUDGET 1981

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	1980 BUDGET	EXPENSES 9-30-80	ACTIVE PARTIC.	1981 ACTIVITY REQUESTS	1981 PROPOSED BUDGET	+ INCREASE - DECREASE	PRIZES	OTHER
RATIONAL IND. PHILOSOPHY Merrimack Valley Whippary	43.00 50.00	---	11 18	89.00 125.00	50.00 50.00	- 39.00 - 75.00	---	50.00 50.00
RECORDER Holmdel	50.00	---	29	350.00	50.00	-300.00	---	50.00
RIFLE ANJA	45.00	30.00	20	45.00	45.00	---	---	45.00
ROCK COLLECTING LAFIDARY & SILVERSMITHING Whippary	200.00	25.30	30	211.00	200.00	- 11.00	---	200.00
RUNNING Denver Holmdel	100.00 200.00	87.75 39.50	36 390	200.00 255.00	125.00 230.00	- 75.00 - 25.00	25.00 30.00	100.00 200.00
Indian Hill	103.00	---	50	108.00	108.00	---	---	108.00
Murray Hill	20.00	20.00	102	77.00	77.00	---	36.00	41.00
Piscataway	100.00	---	18	165.00	100.00	- 65.00	30.00	70.00
RUSSIAN Holmdel	105.00	124.40	20	145.00	115.00	- 30.00	---	115.00
SAILING Denver Murray Hill	115.00 128.00	---	15 80	175.00 130.00	115.00 130.00	- 60.00 ---	---	115.00 130.00
SATELLITE Allentown	100.00	10.00	22	210.00	100.00	-110.00	---	100.00
SCIENCE FICTION Holmdel	125.00	108.41	40 3.50	250.00	140.00	-110.00	---	140.00
SCUBA Indian Hill	45.00	10.95	14	60.00	60.00	---	---	60.00
SKI Denver Holmdel-IP, WB Indian Hill Murray Hill Piscataway Whippary	50.00 200.00 200.00 296.00 75.00 175.00	---	92 386 120 300 100 172	150.00 350.00 635.00 406.00 125.00 215.00	100.00 230.00 230.00 350.00 100.00 200.00	- 50.00 -120.00 -1405.00 - 56.00 - 25.00 - 15.00	---	100.00 230.00 100.00 300.00 100.00 200.00
SKIN DIVING Holmdel	200.00	157.55	25	415.00	200.00	-215.00	---	200.00
SLIM & TRIM Murray Hill	25.00	17.97	40	25.00	25.00	---	---	25.00

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COSTS LIMIT SCI-FI; HORROR PIX UNABATED

Cull Technicals For Oscar

Hollywood, Oct. 28.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences reports it has narrowed the list of potential technical Oscar winners down to 18 "achievements" which will get a final look Dec. 10 to determine which will be recommended to the Board of Governors for an award.

Methods and devices and companies submitting them are:

Super-Vision, the Super-V Corp.; Louma Crane by Samcine, Samuel Film Service; Samcine Inclining Prism, Samuel; PT-35JR 35mm sound projector, Universal Projector Co.; 24 Frame video system, The Burbank Studios.

Pellet capsule, spear, arrow and knife guns, Special Effects Unlimited; pitching lens, Continental Camera Systems; beam splitter optical composite printer, Industrial Light and Magic; Empire camera system, ILM&M; Cool Light lighting system, Cool Light Co.

HFC total immersion printer, Hollywood Film Co.; film processor model of "Hologon Scanner," Consolidated Film Industries; Cine-tron computerized animation and optical effects control system, Cine-tron Computer Systems.

Modular continuous contact film printer, Bell & Howell Co.; VKF projector sprockets, LaVezzi Machine Works; total immersion wet-printing, Carter Equipment Co.; high speed continuous film processor with micro demand drive, Filmline Corp.; and the follow focus system, Elicon.

Anyone with claims to prior invention or devices similar to those under consideration must advise the Academy before Nov. 3.

A CHECKLIST OF GENRE PRODUCT

By LAWRENCE COHN

The year 1981 looms as the time of decision for the big-budget science fiction film. The amassing of over \$112,000,000 in domestic rentals by "The Empire Strikes Back," third on all-time list to "Star Wars" and "Jaws," establishes the profit potential of science fiction, but the high production costs involved have kept U.S. majors from giving the go-ahead to their believed numerous development projects in the genre.

Instead, low-budget horror features continue unabated, with the next trend shaping up to be "Sword and Sorcery" fantasy films, a minimum of six of which are to be released next year.

The noteworthy turning point in sci-fi film production may come if producers fulfill the plans enunciated during the past year to involve noted sci-fi authors in forthcoming projects. No less than 15 "announced" films bear the imprint of name authors in the genre, as either screenwriters or source novelists.

'2001' As Beginning

When Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" for MGM first demonstrated the viability of the epic sci-fi film in 1968, Arthur C. Clarke was directly involved in the project. However, of the major budgets allocated in the first "boomlet" in 1975 to MGM's "Logan's Run" and Columbia's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" last-named two represented investments in films removed from the mainstream of this kind of writing. Subsequent hits including WB's "Superman" and Fox's "Alien" and "The Empire Strikes Back" further widened the gulf between literary and cinematic science fiction.

The vast growth in science fiction publishing during the last decade (in part fueled by the films' success and spinoff novels such as "Alien") and the advent of "science fiction, science fact" popular periodicals such as Omni and Discover suggest that a presold market

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IRWIN ALLEN WITH COLUMBIA; BOTH PIX AND VIDEO PLOTS

Hollywood, Oct. 28.

Producer-director Irwin Allen has signed an exclusive motion picture and television deal with Columbia. Allen is due to move onto the Col lot at Burbank this week. He's preparing a number of big screen ventures, as well as tv projects, the latter including tv films and series. He has already signed Mike Connors, who was in "Mannix" for eight years, to star in a new series, a high adventure show in the law-and-order genre.

Allen declared that he isn't free to discuss details because of ongoing negotiations, but he currently is involved in talks for properties for the big screen. Foremost in terms of values is subject matter for pix, and stars run that a close second, the vet producer observed.

Of his new affiliation with Col, he remarked "they set no limits, I'm delighted with their general attitude."

'Lack Of Product' Complaint Is Heard At Mifed; Buyers Selective

Milan, Oct. 28.

American sellers of films to the foreign market are, like most salesmen, perennial cheerleaders who engage in exaggeration to bolster their product and their own efforts. It's inevitable — whether at the Cannes or the Mifed market places — to hear the usual superlatives about their sales accomplishments.

This year's Mifed market was no exception. There was a sprinkling of "we did better than last year" or "this was our best year ever," but to professional observers it seemed that this year's comments were laced with euphemisms and the usual industry clichés that, translated into gut language, meant "we did lousy."

There were too many "we held our own" answers or "considering what we had we did very well" or "this was our second best year in Mifed history."

Buyers, of course, said they were "more selective" and complained about the "shortage of product" and the demands for the high guarantees. Unusual, too, were the blunt downbeat comments of a number of execs of Los Angeles-based foreign sales firms. One, who for obvious reasons asked not to be identified, said it was the worst Mifed he's experienced. The L.A. companies, with the greatest supply of indie product, found buyer resistance for the so-called middle range pictures, but those with top or bottom of the barrel pix apparently did "okay" but not "great."

To the film buyers, shortage means the lack of product that will attract filmgoers, not the quantity of pix available. Many, as noted elsewhere in Variety, expressed disgust with the proliferation of "blood and guts films" and the outpouring of "entertainment," a coinage of New York-based Walter Manley.

There was no one outstanding picture that caused buzzing in the hallways. A number of firms, to be sure, did okay. As one buyer noted, "we need films to fill out our schedules and we bought the best of the new crop."

Past Due

Some of the smaller operators, including the one-man firms, had no complaints. Although sales were modest, they were sufficient to provide adequate commissions for expenses and provided opportunities to clear up "old problems" with foreign and to collect past due accounts.

Many sales agents were particularly impressed by the demand for product by the homevideo entrepreneurs in Europe. Kodiak Films' Wolf Schmidt, for example, was excited by the elaborate homevideo product brochures issued in Germany.

Oldie Action

Surprising, too, was the action for oldies. A number of firms with rights to reissues found new markets. "The picture is new if you haven't seen it," commented Doug Bunker, ABC Pictures International director of world sales, who reported action on old David O. Selznick pix.

Except for a few minor flaps, the ninth Indian Summer session under (Continued on page 24)

'Disorganization' 1st-Year Curse, But Seville Fest Holds Promise

By PETER BESAS

Seville, Oct. 28.

The first edition of the Seville Film Festival Oct. 20-26 was a qualified success. If the organizers learn from this year's mistakes, event could in future years become a first rate international meet.

This Andalusian festival had vigorous support and sympathetic backing from virtually all film sectors in Spain. Spanish press covered event as generously as the San Sebastian earlier this year. Upper-case scribes were less critical of certain snafus than was the local Seville press, which often attacked organizational aspects of the event.

Most observers, realizing it was the festival's infancy, took an indulgent view of the shortcomings. It was clear most wanted festival to succeed. Public attendance was brisk. Yank companies and Madrid distributors made available plenty of product and advertised in the fest program.

Fest topper Francisco Millan and aide Eduardo Benitez managed to lure a goodly number of big names down for the event. Among these were U.S. directors Otto Preminger and Paul Mazursky, a retro of whose pix as well as their latest items "The Human Factor," and "Willie and Phil," respectively, unspooled.

Also present was director Tony Bill for projection of "My Bodyguard." Also actress Sylvia Kristel, Italo director Luigi Comencini and such Spanish players as Amalia Gade and Jose Sacristan.

New government film topper Matias Valles was also at the opening to give official support.

Program for the non-prize competitive event was a mixed bag of the new and old, ranging from John Huston's "Beat The Devil" (never released in Spain) to the latest Yank product ready for its Spanish premiere.

Titles included "The Blues Brothers," "Xanadu," "The Exterminator," "Fedora," "The Sea Wolves," "The Stuntman," "Middle Age Crazy," "Phobia," "Wise Blood," "The Rose."

Also, Canada's "Circle Of Two," Britain's "Birth of the Beatles," plus miscellany of new and old films

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'Turn' Bows In 636

Opening three-day boxoffice tally for Claudia Weill's "It's My Turn" was a burly \$2,232,290 from 636 playdates, per Columbia Pictures domestic distribution prexy Robert L. Friedman.

Pic, toplining Jill Clayburgh, Michael Douglas and Charles Grodin, opened Friday (24), posting its biggest bucks in the N.Y. metro area with \$126,510 in six sites.

Ashley Boone With CBS Films' 'Roads'

New Orleans, Oct. 28.

Former 20th Fox marketing head Ashley Boone has been retained by CBS Films to supervise the marketing and distribution of CBS Films' first theatrical feature, "Back Roads," to be released by Warner Bros.

Deal, inked with Boone's ABJ Enterprises, is open ended, and subject to extension if CBS is happy with the results on "Back Roads," Martin Ritt feature co-starring Sally Field and Tommy Lee Jones.

CBS Films has five more features ticketed for production the coming year, 20 to 25 in active development.

Boone performs the same specialty as v.p. of The Ladd Co., and supervises marketing and distribution for Lucasfilms.

He is not coy about his assigned overnight authority on "Back Roads," and on other features on which he has been engaged for similar services.

"I think," Boone said during a stopover at the National Assn. of Theatre Owners convention here, "that the people who finance films should have the right to determine what must be done, what is right for each film."

His domain under the mandate, he declared, includes "every situation, every campaign, every playdate and publicity."

Boone's evaluation of his contribution to the business a film does: "I like to believe it can make a difference of 20 to 30%."

'Demented Revenge'

(Continued from page 3)

can do real harm."

American producer Bill Rebane, maker of terror-suspensers admits to being "drawn into" the making of bloodier versions to please the marketplace. "They've gone to such extremes," he says, "the art of the classic horror picture has gone." For his upcoming pic, "Spasm," Rebane felt it necessary to add gratuitously gory footage to compete with the cheaply made, no-star vehicles which are being snapped up here.

Pacific International exec Art Jacobs claims to be frankly disgusted with the so-called artistic license being used by shock-horror filmmakers. "That's as much a misuse of film as yelling fire in a crowded cinema is a misuse of free speech," he insists.

Commenting on the French's noted love of horror pix, Paris-based sales exec Jeannine Seawell says it's important not to confuse sophisticated suspense or terror films with the glut of dismemberment derbies. The French recognize quality in the genre, not buckets of blood, she remarks.

British film importers Neil Agran and Stanley Long of Alpha Films are into the horror market and attest to the disageability of their task in looking at hour after hour of the stuff. "We buy what sells," says Long, "and it is a sad reflection on the public taste."

But the film trade, not noted for its sensitivity, has begun to accept

demented revenge for violence as an art form. One horror film director was being spoken of in Mifed corridors as being "great" because of a "terrific" scene where a decapitation was made to look "real, not fake" with full animation of the face and eyes as the head came off.

A mental defective gone ape with a scythe, apparently cued the big numbers being made in Rome momentarily by "The Comeback," one of the two best selling features in Osprey Films inventory. The other, "The Legacy," was also a horror item — it has grossed \$6,000,000 in the U.S.

"That sort of thing indicates that, like sex, horror will always be with us," says Films Around The World chief Irvin Shapiro, who believes that screen gore is a healthy outlet for natural aggression.

One U.S. survey indicates that the audience for horror films is predominantly male and aged 15-25 years. "They can get rid of their aggression for \$5," Shapiro theorizes.

It would seem true that current boxoffice performance of gore in most countries is sustaining the trend with some Mifed participants predicting "star" horror as the next stage.

But many delegates in Milan believe that the big sales success enjoyed here by Brandon Chase's Group 1 pic "Alligator" may re-spark the animal horror cycle with bigger, wierder creatures — not people — creating the carnage.

Sci-Fi, Horror Pix

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may exist for "literary" SF films.

Charlie Brown, publisher of Locus magazine, reports that 1,300 science fiction and fantasy titles are currently published annually, compared to under 80 in 1970. He estimates national readership at about 2,000,000.

Brown told Variety that the stumbling block regarding adaptations is the need to simplify admittedly complex novels into two hour features.

De Laurentis' 'Dune'

Leading the pack of development projects is Dino De Laurentis' "Dune," from the novel by Frank Herbert.

Its start will probably be delayed due to the producer's current involvement in large scale films such as "Ragtime" and "Conan the Barbarian," as well as director Ridley Scott's current unavailability. Scott is preparing "Blade Runner" for Filmways, taken from the popular Thomas Disch novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"

Tough Challenges

The only sci-fi novel to outsell "Dune" is Robert Heinlein's "Stranger in a Strange Land." Pic project of same was in the works for director Richard Rush at Columbia in the early 1970s, but feature rights to the property have since fallen into limbo. Another tough nut to crack has been Jack Finney's bestseller "Time and Again," once a Universal project for Robert Wise and/or Robert Redford, but since dormant.

Isaac Asimov, the most prolific author in the field, has two works in preproduction: Julie Corman's version of "Nightfall" for New World Pictures and Irvin Kershner's "I, Robot," which will utilize a script by Harlan Ellison. Multi-award-winning Ellison has also penned an original script for De Laurentis entitled "Seven Warriors, Seven Planets," presumably a ways off on

his production schedule.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s first novel "Player Piano" is skedded as a vehicle for Alan Arkin as writer-director-star. Planned by Arkin for over seven years, project has recently received financial backing from producer Ed Pressman. Pressman is also backing an Oliver Stone script of Alfred Bester's sci-fi classic "The Demolished Man."

Colin Wilson's British sci-fi horror novel "The Space Vampires" is a Cannon Films project to mark the helming debut of special effects expert Zoran Perisic (awardwinner for "Superman"). Cannon is also prepping "Star Riders" to star Klaus Kinski, with vet author A.E. Van Vogt to pen the original script.

Roger Zelazny's mystical novel "Lord of Light" is being adapted by the author for producer Barry Ira Geller, but the publicized budget of \$50,000,000 sounds dubious. Writer David Gerrold, who scripted some of the best-loved "Star Trek" television episodes is writing "Star Hunt" for indie Grayson Productions.

U's 'The Thing'

John Carpenter's new version of "The Thing" is currently being budgeted by Universal, and script reportedly harks back to the classic John W. Campbell Jr. short story. Indie helmer Stephanie Rothman has optioned "Man in the High Castle" by well-known sci-fi scribe Philip K. Dick.

In Britain, leading indie producer Don Boyd is hoping to shoot "The Drowned World," from a novel by the dean of "new wave" British sci-fi writers J.G. Ballard.

Including the above projects, all of the U.S. majors except Paramount have major sci-fi pix in preparation. The failure of Par's "Star Trek" feature to justify its \$40,000,000 cost has understandably cooled Paramount's plans for

a series of such films, but the studio is committed to George Lucas's new fantasy adventure series, commencing with "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

Of the majors, Warner Bros. has the largest commitment to science fiction. Completed are Richard Lester's "Superman II," Ken Russell's "Altered States" and Peter Hyams's "Outland," the last-named for Ladd Co. All are big budget entries for 1981 release. Upcoming, Warner Bros. has planned "Superman III," Rob Reiner's low budget "Two Guys from Space," David Giler's "The Glow," Jean-Pierre Zwart's "Alpha" and Irvin Kershner's "I, Robot."

Twentieth Century-Fox has George Lucas's "Revenge of the Jedi" for a 1981 start, as well as Richard Roth's production of "Sum VII."

Universal has the huge budgeted "Flash Gordon" as its 1980 Christmas release, with other sci-fi in readiness: robot comedy "Heartbeeps," halted by the actors' strike, Carl Foreman's "The Weather War," John Carpenter's "The Thing," and John Landis's remake of "Creature from the Black Lagoon" and "Dune."

Columbia may yet do a sequel to "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," has another Steven Spielberg production "Night Skies" as a UFO-er for director Ron Cobb, as well as a sequel "Fantastic Voyage 2" from David Gerber.

United Artists will release "Caveman," and three MGM projects: Wim Wenders' "Trap Door," Douglas Trumbull's "Millennium" and "The Amazing Cosmic Connection."

With dozens of well-known literary properties awaiting adaptation, the 1981 and 1982 boxoffice results of these first matings of written and filmed science fiction should determine the fate of such productions through the 80s.

'Pvt. Benjamin'

(Continued from page 3)

period after the summer pic peter out and distributors gear up for the big Christmas holiday push.

With the late start of the television season, "Benjamin" did have a distinct advantage over past comparable periods, but has still doubled biz by much of the current competition. Pic held up particularly well in the crucial third week-end when films that appear to be hits early on show their first signs of real weakness.

WB distrib topper Terry Semel notes that "Benjamin" will easily surpass the \$20,000,000 b.o. mark at the end of three weeks, beating comparable figure of \$18,168,711 last year for company's similar release of Orion's "19." That film has thus far delivered \$36,000,000 in domestic rentals, a figure Semel anticipates "Benjamin" nearing. It now has \$13,000,000 in rentals.

Tracing weekend totals, film delivered \$4,739,000 its first weekend at 763 outlets and increased 4% to \$4,935,000 at 797 areas its second round. (Competing for attention with the World Series.) Third weekend totals at 880 outlets bettered opening round by 1%.

WB has thus far spent \$5,000,000 pushing the film, including two weeks of intense television and print buys. There was no tv support in the third round, substantiating power of good word of mouth.

"Benjamin" is skedded to add a wave of smaller theatres in a pre-Thanksgiving break. Pic stars and was exec produced by Goldie Hawn, whose last film, "Foul Play," was a major b.o. smash for Paramount.

10th Paris Sci-Fi Nearly Booked; Live Magic And Rock Acts Added

By LENNY BORGER

Paris, Oct. 28.

The 10th edition of the Paris International Film Festival of Science Fiction and the Fantastic will cast its shadow Nov. 13-20, as usual at the baroque Grand Rex cinema in Paris' 2nd arrondissement.

The fest will be comprised of three sections: an official competition, a retrospective program and an information section.

Already set to unreel are the following titles:

GREAT BRITAIN

"Godsend," Gabriel Beaumont
"Monster Club," Roy Ward Baker
"Hawk," Terry Marcel

ITALY

"Savage Apocalypse," Antonio Margheriti
"Paura" (Zombie 2), Lucio Fulci
"The Rider," Ugo Tognazzi
"Contamination," Luigi Cozzi
"Macabre," Lamberto Bava
"Murder Obsession," Riccardo Freda

AUSTRALIA

"Harlequin," Simon Vincer
"Thirst," Rod Hardy

CANADA

"L'Inferel," Denis Heroux
Among the other titles awaiting official confirmation is John Huston's latest pic, "Phobia."

Retrospectives will include homages to horror directors Mario Bava and Terence Fisher and to actor Vincent Price. There will also be a special program of Amicus productions like "City of the Dead," "Vault of Horror," "And Now the Screaming Starts" and "Scream and Scream Again."

The information section will include festival premieres of:

"The Attic" (U.S.)
"The Coming" (U.S.), Bert I. Gordon
"Scared to Death" (U.S.), Bill Malone
"Fate to Black" (U.S.)

Live Magic & Rock

Fest director Alain Schlokkoff said that the event's 10th anniversary would be feted by weekend live-stage shows, including a magic act and a rock band, both employing Grand Guignolesque special effects.

Personalities expected to attend the festival include: Terry Marcel, Paul Naschy, Ugo Tognazzi (local and director of "The Riders") Riccardo Freda, Lamberto Bava, Calvin Floyd (director of an Irish-Swedish coproduction "The Inn of the Flying Dragon"), Roy Ward Baker, Luigi Cozzi, Lucio Fulci and Peter Cushing. Actress Jamie Lee Curtis may also be a guest.

Jurors

Actress Elizabeth Huppert (sister of Isabelle) will head a jury composed of Jean-Pierre Richard, tv helmer; Terence Dicks, scripter for the British "Dr. Who" series; and Jean Namur, film critic for Radio Television Luxembourg. Also invited to sit on jury are director Claude Chabrol (who last year directed two episodes of a "Fantomas" series for French tv) and horror tv helmers, Igor and Grichka Bogdanoff, and Brazilian filmmaker Carlos Diegues.

Loews 53d Payout

Loews Corp. has declared the firm's regular quarterly dividend of 30¢ per share of common stock, payable Dec. 1 to shareholders of record as of Nov. 12.

This represents the 53d consecutive quarterly dividend payout for the company.

Nordic Forum Nov. 5

Hollywood, Oct. 28.

Hollywood-based Women in Film is joining Filmex in sponsoring a Nov. 5 forum here in a verbal and visual tune-up for the forthcoming Scandinavian Film Festival Nov. 7-18.

Symposium participants will include Harriet Andersson, Swedish actress who has appeared in numerous Ingmar Bergman pictures; Swedish film director Gunnar Lindblom, Norwegian film director Vibeke Loekkeberg; Finnish writer-producer-director Jorn Donner, and Danish filmmaker Annett Wolf, who will moderate.

Swedish Presence

(Continued from page 4)

home. The Institute is financed by a 10% "fee" (read tax) imposed on gross b.o. receipts at all Swedish theatres giving a minimum of six performances per week. In 1979, Bellis reports, 380 theatres out of a total 1,200 paid slightly less than \$10,000,000 to the Institute.

About 65% of that total was funneled by the Institute in film awards (10%), to reduce losses during previous fiscal year of all Swedish films (15%), to finance production guarantees (30%), and to fund the Institute's own pics, often in conjunction with private producers (10%).

Remaining 35% of the total goes largely for administration and promotional and drumbeating activities abroad — such as the Institute's presence at the Chi Fest this year.

To hold down such hoopla costs, the Institute is collaborating with other Nordic countries to push Scandinavian pics as a package at festivals and "film weeks" in other contexts. The Institute has set up an affiliate company in Paris to handle sales and promo activities, and plans to open similar outfits in New York, Canada and Germany. The Paris outfit also runs an art house there (Studio des Ursulines) specializing in Swedish pics.

Scandinavian pics in this year's Chi Fest lineup include Bergman's "Faro Document 1979"; Karsten Wedel's "I Am Maria" (Sweden); Bille August's "In My Life" (Denmark); Morten Arnfred's "Johnny Larsen" (Denmark); Agost Gudmundsson's "Land and Sons" (Iceland); Riitta Nelimarkka's "Seven Brothers" (Finland); Vibeke Lokkeberg's "The Revelation" (Norway); Lasse Glom's "Stop It" (Norway); Stefan Jarl's "A Respectable Life" (Finland); Vilgot Sjöman's "Linus" (Sweden); and Markku Lehmuskallio's "The Raven's Dance" (Finland).

Sherkow Joins Par

Dan Sherkow has joined Paramount Pictures as director of east coast feature production, having ankled his niche as production exec in Time-Life Film's motion picture division.

Sherkow, who'll be responsible for Par's development of feature projects in New York, reports to senior production v.p. Jeffrey Katzenberg. He originally joined T.L. as director of acquisitions, after a stint as a production exec with NBC.

Dan Bronson has joined Filmways Pictures as associate story editor.

ANTINOMY, by Spider Robinson. Dell, New York, 1980, 312p, Paper, Collection, \$2.25. ISBN 0-440-10235-9.

This collection of 11 stories, along with introductions, comments, and even a couple of songs, provides an excellent introduction to one of the better writers of the last five years. Like John Varley, Robinson likes to take a technological development (cryogenics, truth drug, or whatever) and use it in several different stories, from several different angles. Except in the one instance when it is obvious that two different stories really started as the same story (since the beginnings are identical), this works out well.

It's difficult to define Robinson's style. Anyone who has read his book review columns (in GALAXY, then in DESTINIES, now in ANALOG) has some idea of his writing style. Perhaps the best single word would be "casual." Robinson writes in a very informal, off-hand manner which may not be to everyone's liking. This assortment of stories covers his range fairly well, and the interspersed items help to give you a more complete picture of Robinson than his stories alone could do. The book as a whole is enjoyable--nothing earth-shaking, but solid entertainment.

Evelyn C. Leeper

The Eyes of the Overworld
by Jack Vance

A review by R. Ditch

I originally recommended The Eyes of the Overworld as a discussion book because I believe it to be well written and enjoyable to read. I had every intention to be present for its discussion, but an unexpected business trip precluded this. I was sorry that I could not participate and see which parts of this fine book most impressed others. I was surprised to find the reaction to Vance's story far different from what I expected. I was further offended by Mark Leeper's allegation in the club notice of 9/24/80 that I had designated a book I knew "to be a turkey with no intention of showing up to defend it." Perhaps Mark can explain why I own three different paperback editions and one limited edition hardcover of this book if I "know it to be a turkey?" I will try to explain why I find The Eyes of the Overworld to be such an enjoyable book, and at the same time address some of the criticisms of the book that club members have set forth at subsequent meetings.

First, fantasy and science fiction overlap to a great extent and cover a large range of story types. I usually don't try to define a particular book's position on the F-SF spectrum, and read a variety of books spanning the range. I find that almost all the books that fall under the F-SF label have large gaps in their verisimilitude, with even Larry Niven admitting to "fudging" it a bit in his hard science fiction works. Ask yourself if you really believe in Faster Than Light travel, or even if mankind will colonize other worlds in the foreseeable future. But even with these unlikely conditions, I find hard SF to be quite enjoyable.

At the other end of the range lie the fantasy stories. They are characterized by conditions of improbability or impossibility that even the most naive person (perhaps excluding those who believe in astrology, witchcraft, or politics) would admit to be unbelievable. At this extreme of the F-SF spectrum I place The Eyes of the Overworld. Fantasy allows the author great freedom in what is written. There is no longer any need to tie the story to current knowledge or events. The author tends not to extrapolate from today's newspaper, and doesn't embarrass the reader by referring to good old twentieth century earth all the time. I also find that fantasy stories are more timeless than SF; since the writer can be divorced from the current world, the fiction does not age at all like SF. We don't encounter "astrogators" on starships performing their intricate calculations on "slip sticks" as we do in Heinlein's books, for example. I doubt if I will ever tire of reading The Lord of the Rings, partly because of this ageless quality.

Secondly, The Eyes of the Overworld was first published as a series of short stories. This accounts for the somewhat episodic nature of each chapter when read as a book. I find that this does not detract from the work as a whole, however, since each chapter fits together so well with those before and after. It seems that Vance did not require revisions or connecting material in forming this book as so many other authors do.

Thirdly, the matter of language. Vance is known for his baroque style. It is one of the chief reasons for reading his works. There is an incredible precision in his choice of words that makes reading a Vance story a pleasure. However, I realize that many people prefer a more base approach, and they are welcome to their Alan Fosters. After all, there must be some people who buy Kiss albums when Beethoven symphonies are available.

Vance's choice of words goes far to create an atmosphere of the exotic, which is appropriate for fantasy. Further, his characters all employ a form of speech that renders the lowest of issues in terms of cosmic import, another of the pleasures for Vance's readers.

Fourthly, it has been suggested that The Eyes of the Overworld is not good because of the coincidences that occur that are essential to the plot. I must first point out that EVERYTHING in EVERY book is present at the authors' convenience. Most authors use this to advance the plot or illustrate an aspect of a participant's character, and the reader never wonders why the plot has taken the particular twist that it has. It only becomes bothersome when the author cheats the reader by giving the story characters a cheap way out of some predicament. Vance uses coincidence to bring out Cugel's character very effectively.

This brings us to Cugel the Clever, one of my favorite characters in fiction. Evelyn Leeper complains that he really isn't clever, but more of an incompetent fool. But that is one of the major pleasures of the book. Cugel is clever in his own eyes, and at many times the reader would agree, but even Cugel's victims recognize him for what he is. Every person holds a mental image of Self that differs radically from an outsider's view.

As a principle character, Cugel is not the typical hero of the James Bond mold; he is more of a Maxwell Smart. His closest fictional kin are James Garner's "Maverick", Stuart Margolin's "Angel Martin" (from The Rockford Files), Peter Seller's "Inspector Clouseau", and George Scott's "Flin Flam Man". (Evelyn Leeper claims that they are unfamiliar with many of these characters that she says come from "Junk TV"; it seems they spend too much time watching "junk movies" and videotaping the Presidential debates.) Cugel is unquestioningly a self seeking rogue, and therefore a refreshing change in SF.

In fact, all the characters in The Eyes of the Overworld, as in much of Vance's fiction, are motivated by greed. Since there seem to be no law enforcement agencies, this self seeking attitude may follow naturally from being forced to rely upon one's own resources. Vance's characters take on a quality of believability as a result of their motivations when they attempt to take advantage of every situation, regardless of the cost to others. Their actions, and their dialog to justify these actions, form the basis of the humor that permeates Vance's novels.

As stated before, the occurrences of "coincidence" in this story are used by Vance not to extricate Cugel from impossible situations, but rather to allow Cugel to show his character and thereby involve himself even deeper in nasty problems. In the episode entitled "Cil", Cugel comes upon Slaye, who is sifting the sand of the beach trying to recover an amulet lost by an ancestor four generations previously. Since the loss, each generation of Slaye has searched the sands for this powerful device that would restore the Slaye family to power. As Cugel and Slaye talk, Cugel kicks idly at the sand and dislodges the amulet. Cugel immediately claims possession, to the woe of Slaye, who feels it is his rightful property. But not only does Cugel refuse to give the object to Slaye, whose entire life and that of his ancestors have been devoted to the search for it, Cugel has the gall to ask Slaye how to employ its powers. Cugel then sets off to see what advantage he can obtain from possession of the amulet, only to get himself into more trouble.

Am I offended by Vance's use of this highly improbable coincidence? Certainly not. I don't expect such things in the real world, just as I don't expect magic to work, or humanity to survive when the sun grows dim. Vance's objective was to entertain me, and this he has done superbly.

The real humor in The Eyes of the Overworld stems from Cugel's tendency to "burn his bridges behind him". At the end of each episode Cugel has managed to cheat someone, steal from them, or cause them to be murdered. We can all imagine what his prospects would be were he to return to any of the places he has visited. Vance even amuses us when Cugel seeks advice from a professional geographer in Erze Damath as to his best route back to Almerly. After considerable deliberation, the sage gives Cugel lengthy directions that would take him back the way he has just come. Obviously Cugel could never pass through those lands again. But it is not until the final chapter that the significance of this is made clear, and the reader is treated to the final joke.

In conclusion, I find Vance's The Eyes of the Overworld to be an enjoyable, refreshing fantasy with one of fiction's most memorable characters. Cugel is a product of his times, and would be truly Cugel the Clever if he could only control his greed. Vance's "Dying Earth" setting is a fascinating place, and its inhabitants are a delight to encounter. Vance's ability through

his use of language to create mood, paint pictures, and inflate what appear to be clear cut events to cosmic dilemmas is fantastic. This book will always remain a classic.

Rich Ditch's review of "Eyes of the Overworld"
a response by Mark R. Leeper

Let me say at the outset that I am delighted that we are getting a little bit of controversy into the notice. I had sort of hoped from the beginning that the discussion group notice would actually have some discussion, not just a set of monologues. I think Rich's review was specifically calculated to elicit a response and to get an argument into print so that it could be enjoyed by more than just the meeting attendees.

In his first paragraph Rich accuses me of having "offended" him by making an allegation in the club notice that he had known the book EYES OF THE OVERWORLD to be a turkey. Rich praises Jack Vance for Vance's precise use of language, yet he still thinks that I made such an allegation. Let me be frank, in the interest of making the notice more amusing I had considered doing just that, but I decided not to. I very carefully chose my words so as to avoid making that accusation. The following is word-for-word what I said:

"In addition, it has become a point of etiquette that anyone choosing a book should at least show up to either the Holmdel or South Plainfield discussion of that book in case you happen to be the only person in the world who knows why it was a great book. Also this should prevent you from pulling an "EYES OF THE OVERWORLD" (i.e. naming a book you know to be a turkey with no intention of showing up to defend it)."

Please note that at no time did I claim that Rich had ever done what I called "pulling an 'EYES OF THE OVERWORLD'." I simply defined the action. Also, as Rich readily admits, he hardly maintains a position of neutrality on discussion books when people come to borrow them from the library. Instead he tries to prejudice readers toward his opinion of the book, an action which he claims is his right. Considering the source, I doubt that many people are swayed in their opinion by Rich, but it still is dirty politics.

From there Rich goes on to a cogent defense of fantasy. I certainly cannot fault him there. Anyone who thinks that EYES OF THE OVERWORLD was an inferior book for no other reason than that it was fantasy is dead wrong. The funny thing is, I cannot remember anyone who did fault the book for that reason. In fact, looking at the popularity poll in the last notice, fantasy seems to do fairly well in the polls. But just in case any of you out there were prejudiced against EYES OF THE OVERWORLD only because it was

fantasy, shame on you.

Perhaps a little less shame on those people who did not like EYES because it was episodic. Again, I have no recollection of anyone attacking EYES for being episodic. In fact it seems to me that the only book I can remember being attacked for this reason was ICERIGGER. And I think it was Rich who registered the complaint. Rich also points out that Vance did not require revisions or connecting material to bring the stories together into being a sort of novel. It looks like Rich is implying that this is some sort of virtue, but since he never completes the thought, it is impossible to tell. The omission may have been an nroff problem, I suppose. I know Rich had to come up and ask me how to get nroff to work for him before he could use it properly to write his review.

Now Rich turns to the question of style. I have nothing against what Rich has called Vance's "baroque" style where it is appropriate. ["Baroque" is one of those words that is applied to such a wide range of vastly different things, I am never sure exactly what someone who uses it means by it. It has come to be little more than a pretentious synonym for "unusual"]. Vance's choice of words is overly florid and inaccurate to his subject matter. He has merchants in his far future DYING EARTH world, using archaic words that I doubt most store owners today would recognize.

The implication could be that at some time in the future all the the old forgotten words will be dug up again and will become common parlance. At one of the discussions I defended such use of language, however, in that the words that the characters would use would be unfamiliar to us and so the author chooses words that are the stylistic equivalents for our time of the words that the characters would be speaking. That is really neither here nor there, actually. As I have said, I have no serious objection to the baroque style, though I recognize that it is somewhat unnatural. It is the product of deliberate composition at a typewriter rather than the sort of natural language that lessor-educated people whom Vance is depicting would commonly be likely to speak. To borrow Mr. Ditch's musical analogies, it is less like the simple natural sound of Bach played on a harpsichord and more like the artificial studio-mixed music of the BeeGees. I can appreciate both kinds of music, but I far prefer the Bach.

Next Rich gets to a fundamental difference between his idea of fiction and mine. This could be at the basis of all our disagreement about literature. Rich seems to think that everything in a book is present at the authors' convenience.

I could not disagree more. Just because an author pushes the keys when he writes a story, it does not mean that everything that is written is there at the author's convenience. Even in fantasy there are laws of logic and plausibility. An author who ignores them is a lousy writer. The best science fiction is that which changes just one or two parameters of a society and sees what effects the changes make. In *LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*, for example, Le Guin explores just what the meaning and effect of having two sexes is in our society. She does this by changing just that one parameter and logically building the resulting society. Fantasy seems less built around the laws of logic, but is it really? I think that one could hardly make a case that everything in *LORD OF THE RINGS* is purely at Tolkien's convenience. What makes the trilogy so credible is that it follows some fairly hard and fast rules of what makes Middle Earth tick. The rules are different than those of our world, but they are plausible and no less firm. I frankly can think of no wildly absurd coincidences in a thousand pages of *LORD OF THE RINGS* to match those in 160 pages of *EYES OF THE OVERWORLD*. Rich seems to argue that just because magic works in the *DYING EARTH* world, it gives the author the license to throw in any sort of silly plot twist that suits his purpose. It is in part the willingness to accept the discipline of the art form that is the mark of a craftsman author like Tolkien. Vance shows little of this quality in *EYES OF THE OVERWORLD*.

Incidentally, another example of Rich's love of precise language comes up in the parenthetical comment in the last paragraph on his second page. He says "Evelyn Leeper claims that they are unfamiliar with many of these characters that she says come from 'Junk TV'; it seems they spend too much time watching 'junk movies' and videotaping the Presidential debates." I have been unable to find any plural antecedent to the pronoun "they" other than the characters themselves. Taken in the context of the paragraph, the sentence makes no sense. But since I knew coming into the paragraph that Rich was trying to force into his review every possible criticism of Evelyn and me he could imagine, and since this is a criticism, I have to overlook his grammar and assume that "they" refers the Evelyn and me. If this is indeed the case, I am not sure what "junk movies" he is referring to. The only way that Rich knows what movies we watch is by what we review in the notice. The following are the films this year: *THE FOG*, *MAD MAX*, *SATURN 3*, *THE WICKER MAN*, *THE CHANGELING*, *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, *SIMON*, *ALL THAT JAZZ*, *THE SHINING*, *WHOLLY MOSES*, *AIRPLANE!*, *CALIGULA*, *DRESSED TO KILL*, *THE ISLAND*, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, *THE FIENDISH PLOT OF DR. FU MANCHU*, *THE FINAL COUNTDOWN*, and *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*. If Rich wants to tell me which of those are junk movies, I will

be happy to discuss is with him. There is some chance I might even agree with him. The only film on the list that I can remember him calling junk at the time is CALIGULA. As I remember he called me up to complain that he was offended to see I was discussing in the notice the historical accuracy and inaccuracy of such a film as CALIGULA. I did not take his feigned indignation seriously because it did not happen long after he had delightedly read me a distasteful passage from the book THE END PRODUCT. This book is an extended essay about excrement which Mr. Ditch owns and seems to relish.

As for the accusation that we videotaped the Presidential debates because we were out that night, I plead guilty. Is there something there that I missed? I get the feeling that Rich is trying to make some sort of obscure point.

The remainder of the review seems to have Rich doing what is commonly referred to in criticism as "pumping the subject." This consists of listing a number of mundane aspects of the subject being reviewed and applying superlatives liberally. As an example, a reviewer might say "At this point David Banner turns into The Incredible Hulk and his skin turns a superbly chosen shade of green. It is a testament to the makeup man's art that he so skillfully captures the perfect avocado tone." The thing is that everybody noticed that the Hulk turns green and nobody gave it all that much thought. There will, I suppose, be people out there who are really into shades of green who will think this reviewer is someone really perceptive. This technique is most often used by publicity people to hype a mediocre piece of work.

There is no real way to argue with a statement like "Vance's objective was to entertain me, and this he has done superbly." One can suspect that Rich might be guilty of pumping when he says "the reader is treated to the final joke." [Note: if you have not read EYES OF THE OVERWORLD, I am about to discuss the ending. You may want to skip to the next paragraph.] Vance's "final joke" is one of maybe five or six standard ironic endings that are rather overused in literature and film. It is cyclic ending in which all is returned to the state it was at an early point in the book and all the adventures must begin again. For its use in film I might give the examples of NIGHTMARE ALLEY and THE OMEN, but I have seen cases for it being used in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth".

Of course all of my criticism of EYES OF THE OVERWORLD comes to very little beside the question of whether or not the book is an enjoyable reading experience. If Rich enjoyed the book, it at least had the virtue of keeping Rich

occupied and happy for a period of time. I do, however, object to Rich's attitude that he has a vendetta to settle with anyone who did not enjoy the book as much as he did. Rich's "review" insulted my tastes, my wife's tastes, an earlier draft insulted Alan Gopin's tastes (before Rich thought better of taking on more enemies than he could hold off at once) and the Presidential debates. He left himself very little time or space to say anything meaningful about the book besides saying basically it was a whiz-bang. I personally find it difficult to tell whether Rich really and truly believes everybody has got to agree with him or if he secretly believes that other people are entitled to their own opinions. But I frankly do not feel his tactics do much of a service to Jack Vance or to EYES OF THE OVERWORLD.

THE AWAKENING
a film review by Mark R. Leeper

In 1922, the tomb of Tutankhamen was opened for the first time in over 328 centuries. Within a year or so about twenty of the people who participated in the opening of the tomb were dead. At the time the deaths were explained as coincidence, and since then it has been suggested that a virus uncovered with the boy-king may have been to blame, but as far as the newspapers were concerned, it was all the result of a curse that ancient Egyptian sorcerers had put on the tomb. The public imagination had been stirred up over the possibilities of Egyptian magic and expert testimony that Egyptians simply did not put curses on tombs was completely ignored. Egyptian sorcery became a staple of the horror film back in the 40s. Universal pictures made a series of movies about Kharis, a reanimated mummy who lumbered around in four films avenging himself on modern man for disturbing his tomb. The character of Kharis was semi-based on that of Im-Ho-Tep in the 1933 film THE MUMMY. After the Kharis series, the subgenre of "mummy" films had few entries until Hammer Films of Britain revived it in 1959 with another film called THE MUMMY. They made four films, culminating in 1971 with BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB which was based on a little-known novel, THE JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS, by DRACULA-author Bram Stoker. After that this subgenre of horror film slept for nine years. But now there is THE AWAKENING.

THE AWAKENING is the second film adaptation of Stoker's THE JEWEL OF THE SEVEN STARS. This time the novel has gotten the full big-budget treatment right down to having it star Charlton Heston (who should know his way around the Egyptian desert, I guess). To say that THE AWAKENING is based on the Stoker novel may be a little inaccurate, I suppose. In actual fact THE AWAKENING owes as much to THE OMEN as it does to Bram Stoker. In THE AWAKENING, Heston is an Egyptologist who uncovers the tomb of an incredibly evil Egyptian queen, Kara, at the same time that his wife gives birth to a baby girl. With the opening of the tomb, the spirit of Kara is reborn and chooses Heston's as yet unborn daughter as part of her scheme.

I suppose that if the spirit of Kara has sat in that dark tomb and waited for 3000 years plotting to return, the producers decided it was only fair to make the audience sit for 90 minutes and wait for the plot to take shape. It takes about that long for anything substantial to happen other than a succession of deaths more bloody than logical. After a lengthy prologue showing the the discovery of the

tomb and the birth of Heston's daughter, Margaret, we flash forward to the present when the mummy of Kara begins to decay and there are a series of deaths all centered around the now 18-year-old Margaret. Heston's mind must really be on the past, since the audience is so far ahead of him in figuring out what Kara's plan is and what is the reason for all the deaths.

The editing and continuity of the film are full of small errors that we might understand in a smaller budget film but which seem very out of place in what is being sold as a major horror film. THE AWAKENING appears to be a desperate attempt to start another series like THE OMEN, but I seriously doubt that this film will have anywhere near the following that would be needed. After THE AWAKENING, I suspect the "mummy" subgenre will roll over and go quietly back to sleep.