

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 4/1/81

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(Unless otherwise stated, all Holmdel meetings are on Wednesdays at noon in room 4H-405.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
4/5/81 (Sun)	Film: THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD, Leeper home, 2pm
4/6/81 (Mon)	Record: HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO GALAXY, first hour
4/7/81 (Tues)	Record: HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO GALAXY, conclusion
4/8/81	WHO GOES THERE? and film THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD by Don A. Stuart (John W. Campbell) (JOURNEY by Marta Randall at HP)
4/29/81	LONG ARM OF GIL HAMILTON by Larry Niven
5/10/81 (Sun)	Videotape showing FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, Leeper home, 2pm
5/20/81	QUATERMASS AND THE PIT and film FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH by Nigel Kneale

Our library is in HO 4B-510. Mike Lukacs (x4043) 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. Last call for those people who want to see THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD on Sunday afternoon. This is the film version of our next story for discussion, "Who Goes There?", which we will be discussing next Wednesday (April 8).

Again let me remind you that we will be playing the record HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY on Monday and Tuesday of next week (April 6 and 7) in the usual time and place. This is worth hearing, if you have not done so already.

2. There is a new science fiction bookstore opening in New York City on April 18. Forbidden Planet is the not very original name of the place. It is located at the corner of 12th St. and 4th Avenue, directly across the street from the Strand bookstore. Signs in the windows indicate that it will contain a wide range of SF-related goodies including videotapes and probably (though I hope not) comic books.

3. Included in this notice is the first chapter of Doug Kirby's epic fantasy novel TARNSMAN OF SOUTH PLAINFIELD, based on the Dungeons and Dragons game being played at South Plainfield noontimes to avoid going stir crazy for lack of anything to do.

P.S. Also be reminded of the HO "Who Goes There?" and HP JOURNEY meetings, in case I am not around to publish. (And if not, I want the police to know Doug Kirby and Evelyn Leeper are prime suspects)

4. I have been asked by our secretary-treasurer to inform the club that she has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the Holmdel Oatmeal Club. Since the mention in the last notice of the THOC, she has been beleaguered by people who assumed, apparently just from the type of person she is, that she has some sort of pivotal role in THOC. In fact, I have it on good authority that she is really just a closet oatmeal freak and does not admit in public that she ever uses the stuff. [Of course if Wackenhut ever raids her desk, they will find that those innocent looking white packets are full of Quaker Instant]. In actual fact, I think the rumors about her connection with THOC are highly a distorted version of the fact that she is instead in the process of founding the Holmdel Sunflower Seed Club.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-515 x7093

THE HOWLING

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

The more things change, the more they stay the same. This is particularly true of the horror film. With a wealth of interesting ideas to choose from, filmmakers keep telling the same stories over and over, and re-using the same standard plots. ALIEN, ALTERED STATES, MIDNIGHT OFFERINGS, FEAR NO EVIL, THE AWAKENING--the list of films with re-treaded plots goes on and on. A film may have excellent special effects, a well-written script and superb camera work and spoil it all because the basic plot is hackneyed and lacks surprises. That is precisely the fate of THE HOWLING, a werewolf film with a lot going for it, but a basic plot so old that it has whiskers longer than those of its monsters. This may be the first time this particular plot has been done with werewolves, but it has already been done dozens of times with vampires, witches, satanists, etc. And that doesn't count the non-horror versions like BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK. On the off chance the plot will catch you unaware, to which I attribute a low order of probability, reveal what the "surprise" plot twist of the film is. If you see THE HOWLING, you probably will see through the plot an hour before the surprise comes, but at least I won't have told you.

Well, that's it. That is the sum total of what I have to say that is negative about THE HOWLING. Now for the positive side. Visually this may well be the best werewolf film ever made (if that is much of a distinction). In previous werewolf films, the transformations were done by dissolves, showing the werewolf's face, stopping the camera, adding to the make-up, and then filming a few more seconds. The claim is made that in THE HOWLING the entire transformation is done on camera. That's probably true, but it still cannot be done in one take. Instead, using masks with something like inflatable balloons inside, it is possible to have steps of the transformation occur on screen. One mask takes the werewolf transformation from stage A to stage B, then another mask with different mechanisms is used for filming the transformation from stage B to stage C. In fact, I think the growing of the wolf's muzzle is not filmed from a mask at all, but from a mechanical model. The effect is a technical marvel, though I could quibble that making the face pulsate, inflating and deflating, makes the effect more obvious than a slow continuous inflation would.

But how is the make-up once the transformation is complete? Impressive. Traditionally, screen visualizations of werewolves have left something to be desired. Technically, a werewolf in animal form should look like a wolf, or enough like a wolf to be

mistaken for one. Very rarely, however, have filmmakers tried to make werewolves actually look like wolves. [There have, however, been a few cases, notably THE BEAST MUST DIE, in which wolves have been used to represent the fully transformed werewolf.] Instead the film conception of werewolf has looked more like an intermediate stage of a man turning into a wolf.

Until THE HOWLING, my choice for the best werewolf make-up was that worn by Henry Hull in the 1935 WEREWOLF OF LONDON. In that film the werewolf was really very little transformed from the human, but instead looked very effectively demonic. The dialog then explained the difference saying that the werewolf was neither the man or the beast but a satanic combination of the worst of each. However, from the first time Lon Chaney, Jr., played the WOLFMAN, six years later, almost all cinematic werewolves have looked very much like Chaney did, though some have longer hair on the face. The reason for this is that a simple mask is all that is really needed for that particular visualization of the werewolf. Oliver Reed's make-up in CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF (1961) was a slight departure and a little more intricate, but still far from satisfying as a visualization of a lycanthrope.

THE HOWLING's rendering of a werewolf is a radical departure. While it still is a man in a suit (usually, some animation was also used), it looks considerably more lupine than did Chaney and while it is nearly as massive as a grizzly bear, the legs are clearly canine, not thick as a bear's or even as thick as a human's. The general effect of the thin legs is to make the creature look even more demonic. Its posture is satyr-like, almost like a dog walking on its hind legs. Credit for the creation and implementation of the make-up is given to John Chambers, who also created the cantina aliens for STAR WARS.

The photography is moody, but the use of fog becomes a little excessive and in other scenes the audience is not always sure what it is seeing. The script does as well as it can with the material handed to it by the novel. One nice touch is that the script does not take a whole lot of time to get going. In fact, the action apparently started in the plot well before the first scene shown and the viewer has to catch up to understand what is happening. The script is usually serious, though occasionally the director goes cutesy. For example, there are several tongue-in-cheek allusions in the film: a can of Wolf brand chili, a copy of Allen Ginsburg's "The Howl," a reference to Wolfman Jack, as well as cameos for Kenneth Tobey (of THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD), Roger Corman (director of AIP's Poe series), Dick Miller (one of Corman's favorite actors), and Forrest J. Ackerman (editor of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND). All in all, there is a fair amount to see. Now if only the film had a plot to make it all worthwhile.

March 17, 1981



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS at South Plainfield

Player Characters/their race and craft--

"Chumpy," the human cleric	"Guano," the human fighter
"Diana," the human cleric	"Iolanthe,"elf magic user/fighter
"Eowyn," the human magic-user	"Nimuae,"the elf magic-user
"Fagin," the halfling thief	"Semle,"elf magic-user fighter
"Fanderal," the elf thief	"Shalano,"elf magic-user fighter
"Garno," the halfling thief	"Tarl," the human fighter
"Gonzin," the dwarf fighter	"Zarin," the human thief
"Gospodin," the elf magic-user	

The Game so far:

A party of fifteen novice adventurers, lead by the suspiciously good-natured Father O'Clairy and two robed acolytes, have left the relative safety of the borderland fortress and entered the land of chaos.

Reaching a small hill at a bend in the road, the adventurers set up camp and busied themselves with sharpening their weapons and getting to know their new comrades. Some discussed rumors about this strange place, where evil seemed to hang in the air like... well, like air.

Several group members entered the forest to gather firewood. Unbeknownst to the rest of the party, friendly (but bloodthirsty) Tarl and twitchy (but dependable) Guano had enticed one of Father O'Clairy's acolytes into partaking of the native ale from Tarl's waist flagon. The acolyte reached his limit after two stiff ones, however, becoming stubborn and suspicious regarding the fighter's nosy questions. Tarl's bone-handled dagger brought the novice cleric out of his stupor...he went crazy. Tarl wheeled in half-surprise as the acolyte produced a hefty hand mace and intoned: "I AM A SERVANT OF CHAOS! THE COLD HANDS OF DARKNESS WILL NOW SQUASH YOUR TINY PINHEAD!" or something to that effect. Guano stepped forward and replied with a cross-swipe of his sword, drawing first blood. Tarl made quick work of the malignant bead-rattler, finishing with a stylish forward jab through his all-too-straight teeth.

"Take that, you fake man-of-the-cloth!" Tarl bellowed.

"Nice forward jab, Tarl," was Guano's appreciative comment as the acolyte was propelled back against a tree trunk, his spine snapping with a loud "CCROORRRKK!"

"Thanks for that timely cross-swipe, Guano," replied Tarl, nudging the expired servant of god's head back to its proper

position with his sword.

Judging it wisest to conceal the evidence of their little tiff with O'Clairry's assistant, the two fighters buried the corpse in a shallow gully -- taking care to appropriate any interesting trinkets, of course. Returning to camp Tarl whispered the details to Gonzin the dwarf while Guano entered from the opposite direction to create a diversion. The clever attention-getter combined his "trick fall" talents with a modified St. Vitus disco step, which most group members chose to ignore.

"The cleric is evil...the cleric is evil..."Guano muttered from the dirt to amused onlookers while Tarl and Gonzin cornered the remaining acolyte. Father O'Clairry strode towards the decoy spaz, failing to notice the swarm of opportunistic backstabbers gathering around him.

The sheer quantity of club and sword wielders forced the priest and his sidekick to capitulate, but not before he flicked out a random prayer chant. Chumpy the human cleric absorbed the full force of that evil energy ball, taking light damage to his person (and his ego). Meanwhile, on the other side of the campfire, Fagin the halfling thief had apparently lost his mind, choosing to hack at his comrades rather than the obvious targets. Gonzin beat his pathetic swipes back, sending him scurrying for cover behind (or under) the nearest rock. He soon disappeared from sight.

Rumors traveling by drum from the border keep alleged that the hapless Fagin had returned there to cause his own special brand of mischief. The round ended with the band of rowdy adventurers squabbling over captured goodies and questioning the treacherous priest. Plans were made to split into two groups to comb the nearby valley for treasure and a dragon-fight or two.