

Holmdel Science Fiction Discussion Group
Club Notice - 2/23/82 -- Vol. 4, No. 27

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(Unless otherwise stated, all Holmdel meetings are on Wednesdays at noon. Currently we are meeting in HO 4A-606.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
3/2,3/82 Tu,W	Video Meetings, ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE pt.1,2, HO 4A-606
3/4/82 Th	Video Meetings, ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE pt.3, HO 4A-506
3/17/82	EARTH ABIDES by George R. Stewart
4/7/82	RIDDLEMASTER OF HED by Patricia McKillip
4/28/82	MAN IN THE MAZE by Robert Silverberg

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-313 x6033) is Club book-buyer. Alan M. Gopin (HO 1D-407 x2089) is the game chairperson. This notice publishes anything (not slanderous or libelous) submitted by club members. Members, feel free to submit.

1. What is this ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE that is coming up at the next video meeting and why is it worth three hours to show it? Why did Alan Gopin cancel a Traveller meeting so that we could have a chance to show the third part? Why show something that nobody has ever heard of?

In fact, very few people have seen ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE. It is a British produced mini-series that a few local PBS stations picked up and showed. Most people who see it are quite impressed. After Alan Gopin saw my videotape, he started pushing to get it shown at a video meeting, and I agree, that it should be seen.

What is it all about? The incomparable Kenneth More stars as the author of a popular but banal soap opera about those sad last days of World War II. You remember the ones: when the Nazis invaded England and crushed the spirit of the British people. More wants to put a sympathetic Jewish character into the story but the BBC is afraid of censorship by the German overlords. Besides, if there are any Jews left alive in Europe, they are hardly in a position to appreciate More's gesture.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE is a subtle and very well-made alternate history story and is worth seeing. Attached to this notice is a review by F&SF's film critic, Baird Searles.

Mark Leeper
HO 2B-515 x7093

PREVIEWS OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

a report by Mark R. Leeper

It is becoming a custom for film producers to show their wares at science fiction conventions to gauge reactions. I believe that it was probably started at the 1976 World Science Fiction convention when George Lucas showed off a number of storyboards and costumes from the upcoming STAR WARS to a little more than apathetic audience. Still, most world conventions now have some sort of presentation of upcoming films to more and more interested fans. The larger regional conventions also are used as sounding boards or simply as sympathetic ears for promotions. Four films that will be released this year were previewed at Boskone this year. Here, in the order of their presentation at the convention, are my impressions.

TWICE UPON A TIME

This might well be the least promising film ever to be made by Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects company formed by George Lucas. The film is a fantasy, done entirely in cut-out animation, in a style common in Eastern European animation. The story deals with three lands, one which is where sweet dreams come from, one where nightmares come from, and one which is the normal world we know. Marshall Efron stars as the villain whose normal job is to produce nightmares in his film studio to be delivered to us poor mortals but he has a scheme for giant nightmare bombs to spread super nightmares. The film has no script, only a plot outline that will be filled in by the voices, many of whom are improvisational comedians. There are promises of a lot of good humor, and some did seem amusing, but overall this film seemed a little sugary and unpromising. Don't expect much from this one unless there is a lot more good humor added.

POLTERGEIST

Steven Spielberg's next film looks like it will follow the well-trodden ground of EXORCIST rip-offs. In spite of a lot of reasonably interesting slides, the producers were very tight-lipped about the film. The implication is that a young family in a modern home dig up a vengeful ghost while digging a swimming pool. The ghost, operating as poltergeists do through people, uses the family's five-year-old daughter as a focal point. It looks like there will be a lot spent on special effects, mostly of bad weather. (Anybody out there ever hear of a poltergeist causing even rain, much less tornados? I thought most

reports of poltergeists come from Europe where there are no tornados.) There were a lot of shots of people up to their waists in mud thrashing about. Don't expect too much from this one.

DARK CRYSTAL

This one is a jaw-dropper. Visually, this film will be stunning. It is produced by Gary Kurtz (producer of STAR WARS). The idea was to do in live action a fantasy visually based on the fantastic, distorted, fairy tale art of Brian Froud. Anyone familiar with Froud's art will probably immediately reject the notion that it is possible. It is being done in conjunction with Jim Henson's Muppets, just as Yoda was for EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. This is the most ambitious thing that Henson has ever tried. The film will use puppets extensively, but it will more often use human contortionist/acrobats to create a distorted yet still living effect. Much too much of the plot was told and I have made every effort to forget it so that the film will be fresh in my mind when I see it, but it seems to me an overly simplistic plot. I still expect this to be a major and memorable motion picture. This one may be released this summer, but more likely it will be held until Christmas when it will have less competition. It's hard to believe that even in summer there will be anything in DARK CRYSTAL's class.

THE THING

Science fiction horror is a staple of films, but it is not as common in written science fiction. There are only a few really well-known pieces of written science fiction horror. The best known piece is a superbly written story entitled "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell (occasionally appearing under the pseudonym Don A. Stuart). "Who Goes There?" functions as a science fiction, horror, or detective story and is good on all counts. In 1951 Howard Hawks produced a film based on ideas in the first third of "Who Goes There?". Nobody is really sure what the title of the film was, but it was either THE THING or THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD. Everybody agrees that THE THING was a pivotal science fiction film and it has become respected and loved over the years. Still, sf fans always said that the full original idea would have made a much better horror film. John Carpenter (of DARK STAR, HALLOWEEN, THE FOG fame) is remaking THE THING and expanding the story to the whole concept of "Who Goes There?".

The production representative claims that there will be little variation from the original story but would only give

the plot of the first ten minutes of the film. [Probably a good thing -- he gave too much of the plot of DARK CRYSTAL]. There is a major variation from the story in that along with an American colony in the Antarctic, there is also a Norwegian colony that has already been decimated by the alien. That may smooth out the narrative, but variations are a bad precedent. Kurt Russell stars, but don't hold that against the film. Russell proved he could handle adult parts in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. This one could be a winner also.

side civilization below me I landed. It was the Central Park Jungle and within fifteen minutes they'd stripped my machine, taken most of my money and banachitz and my tool kit.

Didn't much bother me. I had realized I really wasn't suited for Inside life. I just want to be Outside for a while....

"There are millions of those Steele Wyoming guardbots on the market now," said Meltdown out of his largest mouth. "Think of the royalties that must be piling up for you."

Norkin shrugged. "Let NRA keep them."

Popsicle Pete licked animal fat off his metal forefinger.

"They must have taken over that prototype of yours after you cleared out, Otto."

"Suppose they did," he said. "Contract gave them that right."

"But it was unreliable," said Meltdown. "Prone to do sudden and unexpected violence."

"I'll give that to NRA, they really seem to have worked out the kinks in Steele Wyoming before they started mass marketing him," said Norkin. "Far as I know...."

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Fantasy & Science Fiction

Films

BAIRD SEARLES



AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE

Long time readers will know that I only head the column with the title of whatever I'm reviewing when it's something pretty special. *An Englishman's Castle* is a three-part teleplay produced in England, and it is, indeed, something special.

The alternate world story appears often enough to be recognized as a subgenre of science fiction, but it is still infrequent, probably because it requires a strong knowledge of history as well as everything else needed for turning out good s/f. Curiously enough, I've run across three examples in the last month, two literary, one on TV.

The novels are both good in their way: Phyllis Eisenstein's *Shadow of Earth* is about an alternate time in which the Spanish Armada won, and Richard Meredith's *At the Narrow Passage*, one in which the British Empire dominates (among others, it's an across-the-time-streams concept).

But *An Englishman's Castle* had them both beat in intelligence and subtlety. I bring this up not to put down the two books, but as worthy of note simply because it happens so seldom that the science fiction screen comes out ahead of the science fiction printed word — especially in intelligence and subtlety.

An Englishman's Castle takes place

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in the 1970s in Britain, in a world where Germany has won World War II. This, of course, has been done before, in Philip Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Sarban's *The Sound of His Horn*, among others. On this Earth, in this particular England, life seems prosperous in a Europe dominated by Germany; there are no Storm Troopers goose-stepping around the streets, no swastikas or pictures of Hitler. The BBC still exists, turning out programs that are shown all over Europe. In fact, one ongoing series having to do with the British resistance to the invasion of England in 1940 is an enormous hit. A sort of prime time soap opera, it's called *An Englishman's Castle*, and is written and directed by one Peter Ingram.

Ingram is politically very correct. Having fought valiantly in the English/German conflict, he laid down his arms at the "armistice" and has gone with the government ever since. He has a dull wife, two sons in their early 20s, and a young mistress who is also an actress on his show.

However, a series of events is unleashed by Ingram's desire to introduce a character named Rosenthal into the series as a tribute to a long dead comrade in the war. His boss at the network, brilliantly portrayed as a classic slinky corporation type, keeps saying things like "It's your decision, of course," but is obviously going to have no Jews in the script. Ingram is obdurate and comes home that night to find his youngest son being taken by

the secret police as a member of the violent, revolutionary underground.

Ingram contacts his superior and, in a bargain not stated as a bargain, agrees to change the new character's name to something harmlessly Anglo-Saxon if his son is released. Bitterly disillusioned, he is ripe for recruitment by his mistress for the real underground, much more subtle and widespread than the violent fringe that tosses bombs, who are tolerated and even promoted by the German-dominated government because they alienate the average citizen.

This is only the bare bones of a plot that works wonderfully on the thriller level, and which climaxes (I can give this much away, I think) with the necessity for Ingram to work into his script the words which will be the signal for all of England to rise against the current puppet government.

Despite the nifty plotting, though, it's the intelligence that has gone into the background and production that makes *An Englishman's Castle* so fine.

As an example, the costumes and sets all have a dowdy, slightly dated look, close to that of the 1940s. Obviously in this time line, there would have been no '60s cultural revolution, no "swinging England," no Beatles. Rooms and people would look different.

And in the writing, there are thrown-away lines such as the one to the effect that the country's economy is sound as a bell. A bitter touch indeed,

considering the comparative economies of England and West Germany today.

I would like to name everyone associated with this extraordinary production, but will have to suffice with that finest and steadiest of British actors, Kenneth More, as Ingram, Isla Blair as the mistress and Kathleen Byron as the wife. It was written by Philip Mackie and directed by Paul Clappessoni.

If, by the way, you don't recall *An Englishman's Castle* showing up on your screen, don't despair. It was shown in my area as part of the PBS commemoration of the beginning of WW II. More often than not a program that appears on one section of PBS will appear on the others eventually. A letter to your local station wouldn't hurt.

Current — (urp) — season department ... Month before last we established that Dracula was more or less alive and well in a recent movie. Would that we could say the same for poor, put-upon Frankenstein's monster, who was "up dated" in a new series called *Struck By Lightning*. It is absolutely awful and I can but thank God Mary Shelley is long dead.

A thought for the month ... why is it that Britain turns out original masterpieces such as *An Englishman's Castle* and America does almost nothing but tired dogs (sorry, canine friends) like *Struck By Lightning*? And don't give me the "we only see their best" excuse. I only see our best (except for some of the horrors I have to review) and our best is nowhere near their best.

NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS

Because of a fire that completely destroyed the plant that handles F&SF's subscription mailings, subscriber copies of the November and December issues were mailed late and, in some cases, improperly. We should be back on our usual schedule with the January issue. Meanwhile, we apologize for this less than perfect service and thank you for your patience. We have tried to handle each complaint on an individual basis, however if you have any questions about your subscription, please write to me, and I will follow up.

Edward L. Ferman
Publisher

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Plot spoiler, be warned

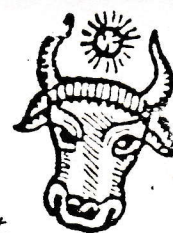
Plot spoiler

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Fantasy & Science Fiction



THE DRACULA SOCIETY
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THE QUINCEY P. MORRIS CHAPTER



THE DRACULA SOCIETY, founded in 1973, is for lovers of the lore and literature of the Vampire and his kindred. It is named after the world's most famous supernatural novel. But it is devoted to all the classic themes of Gothic fiction and stands for a more mature and informed approach to this enormously influential yet often underrated field. Whilst encouraging serious investigation of the background of Eastern European legends and beliefs and their impact over a century-and-a-half upon the literature of the West, it lays equal stress upon the sheer enjoyment of things Gothic, from the Victorian novel to the vintage horror-film.

ITS AIMS are to promote the study and appreciation of: The life and work of Bram Stoker and recognition of his immortal contribution to the literature of the Uncanny in his creation of DRACULA;; of the Vampire, the Werewolf and the Monster in 19th century fiction and beyond (the themes of Mary Shelley, Poe, Stevenson, Lovecraft, et. al.); of stage and film adaptations of DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN and their many derivatives; of their sources of inspiration in the myths of Eastern Europe and other lands; and of links between fictional and historical persons and places.

PLEASE NOTE: The objects and activities of the Society are social and cultural and do not include occult ceremonies or psychical research.

THE SOCIETY has formed a Dracula/Gothic Archive to preserve material associated with these various themes, and issues a quarterly Newsletter besides occasional publications. Meetings (which include lectures, film-evenings and social events) are held five or six times a year, while groups have been formed in some parts of the country to sponsor activities at a local level. An important part of its annual program is organized travel...trips in Britain and tours overseas to places and countries with Gothic associations...specially planned and available only to members. The Society has organized tours of Transylvania for Dracula enthusiasts which follow the action of the novel mile by mile.

NO LONGER IS IT NECESSARY TO WAIT UNTIL YOU REACH LONDON TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GROUP TRAVEL RATES!!

The QUINCEY P. MORRIS chapter of the Dracula Society now offers members the opportunity to share Dracularean interests on a local level. This chapter hosts group tours direct from NY, Phila., & NJ to those enchanting countries where legends began. It participates in fantasy conventions, lectures, seminars and film festivals in the United States. The QPM chapter pursues its vampiric delights at reduced group rates (once only available from London). Membership is available in the first and only American chapter of the Dracula Society...named for the first and only American in Stoker's DRACULA, ...who, after all, is the true hero on that fateful sundown at the Borgo Pass.

The QUINCEY P. MORRIS chapter of the Dracula Society offers members a quarterly newsletter of eclectic character, an eloquent reading list attuned to both classic and contemporary palates, an annual gala Bram Stoker commemorative banquet, and several social/cultural events during the membership year. An archives of Dracula/Gothic memorabilia is being collected and members are invited to utilize its contents as well as contribute to it and all activities which further the aims of the chapter.

To join the QUINCEY P. MORRIS chapter of the Dracula Society, send your check or money order for \$15.00, payable to the QPM chapter of the D.S., and mail to: Charlotte L. Simsen, P.O. Box 381, Ocean Gate, New Jersey, 08740. Membership card will be sent by return mail.