

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 3/24/83 -- Vol. 1, No. 27

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

(Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays
in LZ 3A-206 at noon.)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
4/6	RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA by Arthur C. Clarke
4/6	HO: To be announced in HO 3N-418
4/27	Video meeting
5/18	CANTICLE FOR LIEBOWITZ by Walter Miller
6/8	Video meeting
6/29	TALES FROM THE WHITE HART by A. C. Clarke

LZ's library is in LZ 3C-219. Lance Larsen is librarian. Evelyn Leeper (576-2378) is club book buyer. Mark Leeper (576-2571) is chairperson. The HO library is in HO 4B-510. Mike Lukacs (949-4043) is librarian. John Jetzt (834-3332) is HO-chairperson.

1. Our next book discussion will be of RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA by Arthur C. Clarke (also known as INVASION OF THE TRISKOPHILES). This is a Hugo-award-winning novel and bears almost no relation to the film NINE HOURS TO RAMA.

2. A diamond is the world's hardest substance, but nobody gives away diamonds. While they last, you can get yourself a poster for the new horror-fantasy film SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. A stack of these posters will be placed in my office room 3E-215. While the supply lasts you can get one of these jim dandy little posters, great for decorating the kitchen, bathroom, basement, or any other room in which you want to scare the cockroaches. What is it worth to you? But wait. Don't answer yet. There's more. The same poster has a picture of Ray Bradbury showing the ravages of a life of Bradbury-esque dissipation. Just one flash of it to your kids and they will be glad to eat their beets and clean up their rooms. But even that is not all. If you come by my office while I am in and free, you will also get a generous dollop of world-famous Leeper conversation. You'd expect to pay ten cents or more for the poster alone and the Leeper conversation is not for sale in stores

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* LZ 1D-216 *

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at any price, but for a limited time only, while the supply lasts
you get both, for the phenomenal low price of \$0.00. Sorry, only
one to a customer.

Mark Leeper
LZ 3E-215 x2571

The Trailer to SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

An article by Mark R. Leeper

Shortly after STAR WARS came out, George Lucas claimed in an interview in AMERICAN FILM that when he made his masterpiece he was trying to "go the Disney route," i.e., to make a popular family film. Instead he started a new fantasy film cycle that has profoundly affected the film industry. On reading the article, I imagined a Disney executive asking himself, if Lucas was going the Disney route, why wasn't Disney doing the same? The simple truth was that while Disney's studio hadn't turned out a real science fiction film since 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, they had been for many years the American studio that seemed to concentrate most on fantasy film. If they could shake their sugary taste, they could probably do a fantasy (or S.F.) film classic. There is no reason they couldn't do a film of the caliber of STAR WARS.

It wasn't too much later that Disney announced that it was going to try to do just that. They were going to drop their taboo against non-G-rated films and make a PG S.F. film. THE BLACK HOLE was to be a film with a major special effects budget. When the film was finally released it was a major let-down. Special effects it had, but it was a wretched piece of science fiction. STAR WARS was no great intellectual work but the science fiction in THE BLACK HOLE was truly execrable. Well, so much for high-quality films from Disney.

Disney then did two co-productions with Paramount. The first was POPEYE, which I had no interest in seeing and the critics bore me out. When it showed up on cable I forced myself to watch it and discovered it to be worse than I'd expected. The next co-production with Paramount was to be the two studios' efforts to make a sword-and-sorcery-style film. DRAGONSLAYER has received a fair amount of both positive and negative comment. It is apparently not a film to everyone's taste. For the record, I consider it to be the best fantasy film since STAR WARS and the most literate piece of film fantasy in a good deal longer. This opinion has made me a pariah among some of my best friends, but I stand by it. I contend that it is certainly the best film Disney Studios has ever been connected with (and that includes FORBIDDEN PLANET, to which Disney made uncredited contributions). So am I satisfied that I was right that Disney is capable of really good fantasy films in the 80's? I was until I found out Disney's contribution was to provide production money. I had no doubt that even Roger Corman might be capable of financing a good film. Making a good film is something entirely different.

Now, I heard some very good things about TRON before it came out. Word-of-mouth was even good on the film. I saw it with high expectations but when it was over I found it impossible to be enthusiastic about this cold, dark film. The computer effects were nice enough, but the plot and the characters were forgettable. Once again I decided that Disney's creative fantasy days were gone.

That brings me to this year's Lunacon. Disney Studios had hired ex-wrestling-magazine-editor, ex-s.f.-anthologist, and current born-again Christian Roger Elwood to come and promote Disney's upcoming film version of Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. To start off, this is not a novel I liked very much. It irritated me that Bradbury seemed to be playing more with words than with ideas. As with a lot of his writing, this seems more a cloying prose-poetry than the tightly written horror it was meant to be. Whatever was good in SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES had been done better in one of Bradbury's favorite novels, THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Jack Finney.

So born-again Elwood was promoting a Walt Disney Studios production of a Ray Bradbury story. How much sugar can you stand? I believe the current phrase is "gag me with a spoon!" So how does Elwood promote the film? He puts up two TV monitors in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel and over and over again shows the same four trailers for the film. Then for his hour-long "presentation," he brings into the main ballroom three trays of sandwiches and doughnuts, four piles of promotional tee-shirts, and starts asking the audience trivia questions about Disney films, Ray Bradbury, himself, and anything else he can think of. When someone answered correctly, he threw them a shirt or a (wrapped) sandwich. He interspersed this with leprosy jokes, obscene stories of why Harlan Ellison was fired from Disney, and just about anything else that had nothing to do with the film. His whole presentation degenerated into a rather stupid food fight. Evelyn had to remind Elwood that some of the audience might want to know when the film was scheduled to open. (It's April 29th, if you care.) I wonder if Disney Studios thinks this is the way to promote a film, or if they just paid off Elwood without finding out how he was going to promote it.

All this to this point is preface and sidelight; now to the point of this review: I am going to review the trailer to SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. (I've spent an hour writing introduction to a review of five minutes of "coming attractions".) Unless there is someone very, very good making trailers for Disney Studios this is going to be Disney Studio's shining hour. The film looks like it has caught all the sinister, mystical, dark magic of the book's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES and THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO. It looks like it might just have the feel that was sorely missed in George Pal's THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO and almost present in Hammer Films' VAMPIRE CIRCUS. I am expecting this to be a good one.

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY
a film review by Mark R. Leeper

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY is a real departure for Peter Weir. Until now his films have mostly been thrillers centered around the unknown. Films like THE PLUMBER, THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS, PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK and especially THE LAST WAVE demonstrated that the Australian director had more than a little talent as a fantasy thriller director. His last film, however, GALLIPOLI, was a minor war film that seemed to have ambitions of being PATHS OF GLORY. His latest film, THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY, is a political thriller and probably the best thing that he has ever done.

The story is set in Indonesia in 1965 when President Sukarno is struggling to hold onto his office and at the same time hold off the forces of the West and of the Communists. Australia's all-purpose actor, Mel Gibson, plays Guy Hamilton, a young correspondent for Australia's television network. He is dropped in the middle of the Indonesian crisis without contacts but with a very remarkable photographer. Billy Kwan, played by Linda Hunt, is a dwarf photographer with an incredible power to shape events. Billy is like a master puppeteer, both figuratively and literally, who can control the people around him as deftly as he manipulates Indonesian shadow puppets. He is equally at home in Javan slums or embassy parties -- anybody's embassy. It is Billy who arranges that there be an affair between Hamilton and Jill Bryant (Sigourney Weaver), an official at the British embassy. Weir's worst mistake in the film is to place too much emphasis and give too much screen time to this love story sub-plot which only distracts the viewer from the real focal points of the film: the deteriorating political situation and the enigmatic dwarf who serves as prime-mover.

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY borrows a little from the political thrillers of Costa-Gavras like MISSING and imparts the same hard-bitten reality to the political situations portrayed. But at the same time the film has a literary feel to it, as if Weir is mixing drama and docu-drama. Gibson and Weaver are competent if a little unappealing in their roles which were obviously intended to be the focus of the film, but better acting was delivered by Michael Murphy as the boorish "ugly American" correspondent of the Washington Post and New York actress Hunt is mesmerizing in the role of a Chinese-Australian male. It is sad that a woman of her talents may never find a better part than she plays in this film simply because she is a dwarf. Don't expect THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY to be around a long time. See it quickly when it plays and before it disappears to make room for another film not nearly of its caliber.