

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 6/5/83 -- Vol. 1, No. 32

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all Lincroft meetings are on Wednesdays
in LZ 3A-206 (HO meetings in HO 3N-418) at noon.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
6/7 (tue)	Video meeting: WAR OF THE WORLDS pt. 1
6/8	Video meeting: WAR OF THE WORLDS pt. 2
6/29	TALES FROM THE WHITE HART by A. C. Clarke
6/29	HO: CANTICLE FOR LIEBOWITZ by Walter Miller
7/19 (tue)	Video meeting: PHASE IV pt. 1
7/20	Video meeting: PHASE IV pt. 2
8/10	HO: TALES FROM THE WHITE HART by A. C. Clarke

LZ's library and librarian Lance Larsen (576-2668) are in LZ 3C-219.
Mark Leeper (576-2571) is chairperson. HO's library and librarian
Mike Lukacs (949-4043) are in HO 4B-510. John Jetzt (834-3332) is
HO-chairperson.

1. Don't forget, WAR OF THE WORLDS is Tuesday and Wednesday of this
week.

2. One of the best sources on little known new fantasy films is the
Cannes issue of Variety. This issue is sort of a marketplace for
filmmakers trying to sell films in preparation and already made to
distributers. Most you will never hear of again, for good reason,
but there are a few genuine news items here. The following films
grace this year's issue:

2020 TEXAS GLADIATORS,
ADVENTURES OF HERCULES (s. Ferrigno),
ATOR THE FIGHTING EAGLE,
CONAN: KING OF THIEVES,
CREEPSHOW II,
DARKZONE (3-D),
DAY OF THE DEAD (d. Romero -- third in series),
THE ENCHANTED,
EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL VISITORS,

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

FANATIC,
FRANKENSTEIN (d. Romero),
THE GOLDEN VIPER,
THE HILLS HAVE EYES II,
THE HOUSE OF LONG SHADOWS (s. Cushing, Lee, Price, Carradine),
THE INVINCIBLE BARBARIAN,
THE KILLING OF SATAN,
THE LOST CITY,
MERLIN AND THE SWORD (s. Malcolm McDowell, Candice Bergen),
METALSTORM (3-D space opera),
MORTUARY,
OH HELL,
PARASITE II (3-D sequel to a super bomb),
THE PHILADELPHIA STORY,
RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (see below, w. O'Bannon, d. Tobe Hooper),
ROBBERS OF THE SACRED MOUNTAIN,
SCREAMTIME,
SHE (s. Sandahl Bergman, story H. Rider Haggard),
SPASMS,
THE STAND (w. King, d. Romero),
SWORDKILL (3-D film about 300-year-old samurai thawed from ice),
TIGER MAN (filmed entirely in Angola's jungles),
UNHINGED,
UNIVERSE ONE,
WARRIOR OF THE LOST WORLD,
WAVELENGTH (alien invasion plot),
and YOR: HUNTER FROM THE FUTURE.

Initially when I compiled this list my comment after RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD was that it was not in George Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD series. Well, it is not quite as easy as that. When George Romero and John Russo made NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD they agreed that the copyright and the name belonged to both of them. Romero jumped in first (10 years later!) to make the first sequel DAWN OF THE DEAD and announced that there would be a third film in the trilogy, DAY OF THE DEAD, which is right now in production in production. Meanwhile, Russo has decided to use his rights to the series to make his own LIVING DEAD film, RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD. Romero is doing everything he can to have the title changed so the public does not think that this film is part of his series, though it is a bona fide sequel to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, by the author of that film. It seems to follow a different future line inconsistent from Romero's future.

To further complicate things, DAWN OF THE DEAD was released in Italy as ZOMBIE where it was so popular that they made their own sequel ZOMBIE II. ZOMBIE II, a reputedly totally awful film was imported into the United States with the name ZOMBIE. Meanwhile the LIVING DEAD mythos seem to be branching out like kudzu.

The kicker is probably that Romero would probably be better off if he gave the LIVING DEAD series to Russo. Romero has, by this

point, done a lot of horror. I have seen DAWN OF THE DEAD, THE CRAZIES (a.k.a. CODE NAME: TRIXIE, a Channel 9 perennial), SEASON OF THE WITCH (a.k.a. HUNGRY WIVES), and CREEPSHOW. Not one measures up to NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. Now Romero is trying traditional horror with FRANKENSTEIN. It could very well be that Romero has no talent for film horror and that NIGHT was a product of Russo's talent. As far as I am concerned, Romero's talent lies with straight drama. Far better than any of his horror films is KNIGHTRIDERS, which was straight drama with a little fantasy mixed in. This film creates some powerful characters and dissects a fantasy-oriented subculture superbly well. It isn't the science fiction subculture, but a number of his observations are just as applicable there. Every once in a while KNIGHTRIDERS shows up on cable. Watch for it. It's worth it. I just wish he would go back and do more like it.

On the subject of disagreements, two of the most respected names in science fiction film circles are at odds with each other. It seems that CINEFANTASTIQUE magazine wrote a story a few months back on RETURN OF THE JEDI that revealed some plot elements that Lucasfilm wanted to keep secret. Lucas was reportedly outraged which served to call more attention to the article. It is getting harder and harder to keep a secret, I guess. Since most people who like science fiction films seem to respect both, it would be a pity if this destroys their relationship. Well, enough gossip column stuff.

3. The following is the list of the ten top money-making films of all times, not an unusual list to find, but this time it factors in inflation to make it more realistic. The figures are millions of 1982 dollars.

1. GONE WITH THE WIND - \$341
2. STAR WARS - \$272
3. JAWS - \$213
4. THE SOUND OF MUSIC - \$209
5. E.T. - \$187
6. THE GODFATHER - \$178
7. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK - \$160
8. THE EXORCIST - \$153
9. THE STING - \$140
10. GREASE - \$131

I am perversely pleased to see that now it is GONE WITH THE WIND that has beaten STAR WARS rather than E.T. In fact if you take into account the difference in age, STAR WARS is still the most phenomenal success story. You can tell I am grasping at straws because I like STAR WARS better than GONE WITH THE WIND or E.T.

4. I was recently asked to make a list of the worst fantasy films I have ever seen. Usually I object to this sort of list since people like the Medvids tend to claim films as they have seen as "the worst films of all time." In fact I am not sure that is meaningful. I am sure there are thousands of films worse than any I have seen. Most are so bad, maybe only a dozen or so people have seen them. Many films are so bad they never get a release. All of the films that the Medvids list in their THE FIFTY WORST FILMS OF ALL TIME were good enough to get a release. Also I object to smirking at incompetence. I will share my list of bad fantasy films for you.

KEY: % Bad
 %% Bad and incompetent
 %%% A standard of ineptitude
 %%%% Creeping Terror

%% Astro-Zombies
%% Attack of the Giant Leeches
%% The Brain from Planet Arous
%% The Brain That Wouldn't Die
%% Cape Canaveral Monsters
%%% Crawling Hand
%%% Creeping Terror
 % Curse of the Swamp Creature
%% Fire Maidens from Outer Space
 % Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster
 % Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and
 Became Mixed-Up Zombies
%% Invasion of the Star Creatures
%% King Dinosaur
 % Mars Needs Women
%% Meteor Monster (Teenage Monster)
%%% Plan 9 from Outer Space
 % Robot Monster
%%% They Saved Hitler's Brain
 % Village of the Giants

5. Excuse me for waxing a little verbose. Every once in a while, the mood strikes me and I run off at the mouth (fingertips?).

Mark Leeper
LZ 3E-215 x2571

WAR GAMES

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Some films are very hard to review because they combine very good elements with very bad elements. No film that I have seen recently is this so true of as it is with WAR GAMES. Here is a film that is a really clever comedy with an enjoyable science fiction premise: a high school computer whiz has accidentally broken into the computer that controls our nuclear defense against the Soviet Union and our hero has nearly caused Armageddon without realizing it. It is a fun premise to work with if you do not start thinking about the implausibilities. WAR GAMES, however, does not distract the viewer from the implausibilities; it showers the viewer with them. Any high schooler with a little education in computers could sit down and list thirty different out-and-out errors or at least highly absurd premises of the film. This ruined the film for me more than it would for most people who have even less than my small computer background.

David is an average high school student. You know, the kind with \$15,000 worth of computer equipment in his room and who can break any security system in a matter of two minutes or so. Early in the film he is content with breaking into the school computer to change some of his F-grades to C's. It is not that long, however, before he is loosing his software to make 10,000 long distance phone calls in order to find the the phone number of a game company's computer. Instead he accidentally ends up calling a nuclear war scenario simulator that has just been hooked onto NORAD's defense network. If any of this sounds absurd, believe me, these are just starters. The character of David seems to be inspired by Tom Swift with all of Swift's ability to solve really complex technical problems in minutes. The plot, too, is on a Tom Swift level. It is fast-paced, entertaining, and bears very little thought. It is to director John Badham's credit that he kept the film a light-hearted comedy, in spite of the theme of imminent nuclear destruction. He left the film as pleasant, light comedy with sympathetic, if not believable, main characters.

WAR GAMES seems to be making two political points. One is that nuclear war is a bad thing. That is hardly a controversial point. Anyone who reads a newspaper or listens to the news hears a lot of argument about what is the best strategy to avoid nuclear war and to minimize losses in the event one occurs. A stand against nuclear war is about as controversial as one for Motherhood. The other point the film makes is that while people may be unreliable, computers are even less so. Unfortunately, this is a very dangerous point-of-view. Yes, it is very hard for a computer programmer to make his software fail-safe. But the track record of competent programmers thinking out problems

in advance is far better than that of people making snap decision under stress. At Three Mile Island the problem was not in the automatic systems but in the humans who, understandably considering the pressures, failed to follow their instructions. If WAR GAMES convinces enough people that automatic systems are less reliable than human ones, we could all be in serious trouble.