

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 01/02/85 -- Vol. 3, No. 25

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
01/09	LZ: THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
01/09	HO: Book Swap
01/29	LZ: Video meeting: THE FLY (part 1)
01/30	LZ: Video meeting: THE FLY (part 2)
01/30	HO: COURTSHIP RITE by Donald Kingsbury
02/20	LZ: SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt
03/13	HO: DOWNBELOW STATION by C. J. Cherryh

LZ Chair is Mark Leeper, LZ 3E-215 (576-2571). HO Chair is John Jetzt, FJ 1F-108 (577-5316). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, HO 1B-437A (834-4723).

1. Well, aren't you all glad that those blasted holidays are out of the way and we all can get back to work? No? Well, you can't win 'em all. In any case, with the holidays out of the way we can now schedule science fiction events without worrying that people will not be around. Now doesn't that make coming back worthwhile? All right, so it doesn't. What do you expect me to say? I know that there isn't a whole lot I can say in print right here to cheer you up. You think I don't know that you would rather be out skiing or something rather than sitting around work reading the notice. Look, if there was anything I could say to make things better, I would. If you really hate your job so much, maybe you should be in a different line of work. Sheesh!

2. Our next film festival at the Leeper home (Thursday, January 10, 1985, at 7:30 pm, [If you need directions ask Evelyn or me.]) will be two unusual approaches to the vampire film by directors respected in the film community.

Continental Vampire films:
NOSFERATU (1922) dir. by F. W. Murnau
LEONOR (1978) dir. by Juan Bunuel

The first is considered a great classic film not just by horror film fans, but by most cinema critics. The film stars Max Schreck and is the first film version of DRACULA. For many years this was a hard film to see because it was tied up in litigation due to

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 114A HO 1B-437A *

infringement on Bram Stoker's copyright. Many people think this is the best version ever made. (Personally, I think they are pretentious snobs, and I prefer the BBC version PBS ran, but they are entitled to their opinion.) This is a moody and in many ways very effective film.

One of the oddest vampire films ever made was LEONOR, starring Liv Ullman. It is a multi-levelled story involving a Medieval noble (or ignoble) who takes a new, young wife when his own beloved wife is killed in an accident. Then he gets a chance to get his first wife back... I am told by someone whose opinion I respect that the recreation of Medieval Spain is very accurate.

3. On January 9 the Lincroft people will be discussing Charles G. Finney's THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO. This is fast reading, but it is a great book. It is perhaps one of the most enjoyable fantasies ever written (at least I think so). The book is funny, sarcastic, and magical all at once. It is really well written. Pick up a copy at the science fiction library and come to the discussion. That's January 9 in 3A-206.

4. At the same time the Holmdel people will be having a book swap. These used to be quite popular, but we haven't had one in a long time. Bring books, magazines, money, etc. to trade for books, magazines, money, etc. However, don't expect a lot of people to be trading money for money. There just isn't a lot of profit in it. Unless I miss my guess it will be in Holmdel in 2N-523. [Right. --ec1]

Mark Leeper

LZ 3E-215 x2571

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Mercury Capsules - January 2, 1985

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wilpsc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

• 2010: film, written, produced, and directed by Peter Hyams, based on the novel by Arthur C. Clarke; 1984.

A pleasant surprise. A bit confused about gravity, but on the whole excellent. This is one of the best adaptations of an SF novel to the screen, and is comparable to films such as "Andromeda Strain" for its realistic depiction of scientists. However, the movie has the flaws of the book, ie. it does not come to grips with the nature of the monoliths. The director has also inserted some heavy handed and overly topical messages concerning the importance of world peace in the nuclear age. Someone I know referred to this movie as "propaganda," and indeed it may well be, but it is propaganda for causes that are surely good: peace, brotherhood, the unity of mankind, the excitement of exploration, and the infinite possibilities of existence. Overall rating: high +2.

Dale L. Skran

⊗ Dune: film, written and directed by David Lynch, based on the novel by Frank Herbert; 1984.

Yeeech! Blagg! Ugggh! What an atrocity! By the end of the movie I was groaning. All the things that made the novel good, the culture of the Fremen, the exploration of predestination, the presentation of a leader faced with the temptations of a religious jihad, the detailed galactic politics, all have been cut out or made incomprehensible so that a certain number of stunning visual scenes and a host of stupid gimmicks may be presented. The "weirding weapon" the kills with sound. The cat torture machine. The mouse juicer. The depraved habits of the baron. The heart plugs. The "sappho juice" the mentats drink. Agggh! Gimmicks are substituted for ideas.

Dune is the greatest waste of actors and brilliant special effects yet conceived. When the characters start referring to the Kwisach Hadderrach as a "super being" you know it is going to be bad. At the end I doubt the audience has any concept of who or what Paul is supposed to be. A rain god? A sandworm cowboy? A super-duper man?

If you've read the book, and have a strong stomach, see the movie. If you are uninitiated, get initiated somewhere else. There are wonderful special effects, especially of the guild members, the sandworms, and some of the city locations. The scenes taken directly from the book without alteration, especially in the first half of the movie, are excellent. But alas, all else is nonsense. As others have pointed out, the director knows zip about presenting battles on the screen, and obviously does not understand the military technology used in the Dune milieu. The end result is "Gunsmoke" with sandworms used for horses. The dreams of myriad alternative futures have been reduced to water dripping in a tank while Paul sees hands rush by and mutters "Dune. Desert Planet. Dune. Desert Planet." Overall rating: 0. I vacillate. Sometimes I think, +1 because of the good effects. And then I hear the water dripping. Dripping. Dripping.

Dale L. Skran

⊗ The Man Who Wasn't There: film, directed by Bruce Malmuth, 1983.

This film has the distinction of being the only 3-D film of 1983 that did not look like a cheap imitation of Road Warrior. It is a flyweight invisible man story starring Steve Gutenberg (who was the fifth lead in Diner). This film would have had to include a treatise on nuclear proliferation to elevate it to the level of "fluff." At the height of network TV's attempts to create comic-book heroes back around 1976, this film would have been too weak and silly for network TV, and that's pretty silly when you consider what made it to TV in that period. It has a plot aimed at a seven-year-old mind, and nudity to make sure that it is appropriate to no audiences. Don't bother.

Mark R. Leeper

THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME by John Brunner
Del Rey, 1983 (paperback 1984), \$3.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This book has been compared to such works as Stapledon's Last and First Men, in its description of the sweep of history on a planet beset by massive, frequent climatic changes. I would liken it more to something like Michener's Hawaii or The Source, because it covers, not the entire course of the species' history, but just the part from the earliest scientific glimmerings to the age of interplanetary and even interstellar travel.

Brunner has concentrated on science as the central theme of this book--or rather, the scientist, constantly battling public opinion based on ignorance and superstition. While his parallels to current-day earth are at times a little heavy-handed (cults that believe in spiritual communication with beings on other worlds, and the rationality of the "clean environmentalists" versus the short-sightedness of the "full speed ahead manufacturers"), he does give us a sense of a species constantly at war with a much more hostile environment than our own. Meteor storms, ice ages, and radiation poisoning work against them at every turn, yet with the help of science/technology, they survive each crisis to rise to greater heights. If some of Brunner's earlier works seemed a bit on the pessimistic side (in particular, The Sheep Look Up, a morbidly fascinating tale of technological disaster), he has recovered from that depression and is now gloriously optimistic.

The species (never actually named) is like us in many ways, but unlike us in others (the revelation of some of the major differences is best left to the context of the book). They are never fully described--we know they have mantles, and they have pressurized tubules which keep them erect, but we never get a complete picture. This is because the book is told from their point of view, and no one writes a complete biological description of a human being in a novel told from a human point of view. Their society, or rather, societies are similar, yet subtly different. We feel close to them, but we never forget their alienness.

There are seven sections, covering the history from early feudal states to interstellar travel. In each, we see scientists as the main characters. Oh, they may not think of themselves as such, but they are nonetheless. From the earliest sea-farer who sees a chance to gain a profit by trading the knowledge of one area for that of another, to the biologists who solve the sterility that may be the species' biggest challenge, to the scientists who build the spaceships, the characters are interested in knowledge. While most people are still believing in astrology, the scientists are mapping the stars, noting their changes, plotting the orbits of the planets--not to predict the future, but to better understand the universe and their place in it.

The quibbles I have with the book are minor. Brunner cheats on his naming of alien creatures et al. There are entirely too many "sharqs" and "mollusqs" floating around (accidental pun there!). In fact, his solution for coming up with an alien term often seems to involve merely changing one letter of the English term to a 'q'. And his planetary system is entirely too close to our own: Sunbride is a thinly disguised Venus and Swiftyouth is an even more obvious Mars, with its seasonal changes that scientists in later chapters attribute to melting polar caps. There are the two gas giants, Steadyman and Stolidchurl. Even the events mirror our own--we see an incident where two characters who have discovered/invented lenses and the telescope hold a telescope up to Steadyman (I believe) and see satellites circling it which could not be seen with the naked eye.

In the end this is what prevents The Crucible of Time from being another Last and First Men--Stapledon didn't attempt to create alien names, but he did give us a sense of strangeness throughout his work--though the race was human, it evolved into something we couldn't quite understand. Brunner, in his attempt to emphasize the strangeness of his species, overdoes it on the terminology and it shows. Yet this is a minor irritation. Stapledon, it must be admitted, concentrated more on the species than on individuals; Brunner shows us individuals and how they interact with their time in history. The Crucible of Time as a whole is a well-written, well-thought-out story, full of interesting characters, exciting events, and a justification of science that is just what we need in these days of anti-technological Luddites.

Comments While Reading Philip Wylie's THE END OF THE DREAM
DAW, 1972, \$?.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

If I am reading a really good science fiction story, I am willing to suspend my disbelief and go where the author wants to take me. Almost all science fiction requires some suspension of disbelief and it comes as a real surprise when you find a story that doesn't. One book that really doesn't is Philip Wylie's The End of the Dream. What prompted me to read the book was a feeling of deja vu following hearing about a firestorm in Mexico City and a massive chemical disaster in India soon after. I'd read about the first quarter of The End of the Dream in 1972 and all of a sudden the news sounded like chapters out of the book.

So I am re-reading The End of the Dream, a novel about the end of the world through environmental disasters. My first reaction is that people who claim that Orwell was right "on target" with 1984 should read this novel to find out what "on target" really means. It is eerie how close some sections of this book reflect events that have occurred since it was written. Wylie describes a toxic chemical firestorm in New York City. Not quite accurate enough to make it history, but pretty close to a number of events that have happened. There have been toxic fires near New York and, of course, the Mexico City firestorm. Wylie describes how addicted we are to material goods, so while environmentalism has waves of popularity, they die down and we go back to poisoning the environment. That's a direct hit. He has descriptions of industry paying for

"ubiquitous displays of the American future as purged of pollution... [The displays] did not say or much reveal how the 'glory of natural America' would be recovered, or who would do it, where the money would come from or what sacrifices and hardships would accrue to any such attempt. It merely displayed the faits accomplis, everywhere, clear air, clean rivers, and deserts made green, with the endlessly hammered slogan, 'America can! America will!'"

I suppose there was a little of that even before this novel was written, but I remember seeing just what Wylie was describing on Detroit TV five or six years after he described it.

Wylie writes with an incredible authenticity and a feel for public psychology. The above was from the last chapter I read. Wylie starts the current chapter I am reading talking about the destruction of a certain part of the potato crop and how the public only understands it in terms of a shortage of potato chips. Even as I am writing this, it is occurring to me that the way I and most other people I know look at the citrus cancre is "what is it going to do to the price of orange juice?"

I seem to remember some book being sold with the tag line "Read it while it is still science fiction!" For The End of the Dream, I can't help but feel I'm too late.

Postscript: The above was written when I was about a third the way through the book. I stand by my assessment, though as the story extends further into the future, some of what it describes becomes a little more far-fetched. No more far-fetched than any number of good SF novels, but still a little less likely than the first part. I particularly liked the way Wylie closed the novel. It was one of the best pieces of science ficiton I have read in quite a while. It is still in print from DAW, I think. Go for it.

The Hornblower Series by C. S. Forester
A review of a series of books by Mark R. Leeper

Back in grad school one day I was sitting in an Advanced Probability course watching a less than inspiring professor prove an inequality, neither side of which made any sense to me. In such times my mind wanders, and this time it somehow wandered to a film I had seen on TV some five years earlier. The film was Captain Horatio Hornblower with Gregory Peck. At that time almost all my fiction reading was devoted to science fiction, but it occurred to me that there might be a certain appeal to reading about British navel warfare about the time of the Napoleonic Wars. Such, I guess, is the power of cinema. When the lecture was over (as I remember, it was about 37 hours later), I rushed over to the library and picked up my first Hornblower novel, Beat to Quarters.

Rather unexpectedly, I found a lot of what I like in good science fiction in the Hornblower series. It takes place against a background that makes one hungry to know more. C. S. Forester apparently knew a good deal about maritime history, and there is a real spell-binding quality about his attention to detail. Some of the things that were commonplace in the 17th century we would consider appalling. For example, rather than just saying that Hornblower ate a meal or even just describing the meal, he explains how Hornblower taps the biscuits on the table to rid them of maggots, though others seem to like the biscuits with the maggots still in them. Still, Forester's descriptions form a consistent reality and leave the reader with more to think about than most similarly light reading.

The self-doubting--often self-punishing--Hornblower grows from book to book. He is something of a fool about his personal life, which he messes up with a loveless marriage and a slavish effort to chase status, not because he wants it, but because it is expected of him. At home he is an uncomfortable and ungainly stranger; at sea, he transforms into an incomparable leader of men and a brilliant tactician. At sea or on land he has the same fears and doubts, which he covers as well as he can with a self-assured front. But his nautical skills always stand him in better stead at sea than his social skills do on land.

Forester wrote three consecutive novels Beat to Quarters (The Happy Return), Ship of the Line, and Flying Colors in 1937 and 1938. The first, involving a megalomaniacal South American dictator, is the most immediately enjoyable Hornblower novel. The film, incidentally, is based on the three novels, though mostly on the first. He then waited until 1945 to continue the exploits with Commodore Hornblower, followed by Lord Hornblower the next year. He then wrote a number of short stories about Hornblower's very early career (the best of which concerns a shipment of rice) collected in Mr. Midshipman Hornblower. He followed that with the direct sequels Lieutenant Hornblower and Hornblower and the Atropos in 1952 and 1953. Then, in 1958, he jumped to events after Lord Hornblower with Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies. Forester's last novel about Hornblower was Hornblower and the

Hotspur, written in 1962. Forester died while preparing Hornblower During the Crisis in 1967. As it stands, it contains two stories and part of a third from various points in Hornblower's career. There are also Young Hornblower, Captain Horatio Hornblower, and The Indomitable Hornblower--each a collection of three Hornblower novels--and Hornblower's Triumph--excerpted incidents from two Hornblower novels.

Of some note to Hornblower readers are two books: The Hornblower Companion contains charts of Hornblower's battles and personal notes by Forester. C. Northcote Parkinson, best known for humorous essays like "Parkinson's Law," wrote a complete biography of the character called The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower. Also it should be noted that a number of well-known fictional characters have been based on Hornblower, including A. Bertram Chandler's Commander Grimes and Gene Roddenberry's Captain James Kirk.

Internal Chronological Listing of Hornblower Stories

MR. MIDSHIPMAN HORNBLOWER

"Hornblower and the Widow McCool" (*)

LIEUTENANT HORNBLOWER

HORNBLOWER AND THE HOTSPUR

"Hornblower During the Crisis" (*)

HORNBLOWER AND THE ATROPOS

BEAT TO QUARTERS

SHIP OF THE LINE

FLYING COLOURS

COMMODORE HORNBLOWER

LORD HORNBLOWER

"The Point and the Edge" (+)

ADMIRAL HORNBLOWER IN THE WEST INDIES

"The Last Encounter" (*)

(*) Contained in HORNBLOWER DURING THE CRISIS

(+) Outlined in THE HORNBLOWER COMPANION

THE ANUBIS GATES by Tim Powers
Ace, 1983, \$295.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This book got a lot of rave reviews, so I was really looking forward to something special in it. Maybe I was expecting too much. Oh, it's an okay book, but not up to its raves.

The premise (as best I can explain it) is that Brendan Doyle, a professor whose specialty is a little-known early Nineteenth Century poet named William Ashbless, gets involved in a time-travel scheme. Unbeknownst to him, however, an ancient Egyptian sorcerer is also trying to use the "time gates" and Doyle soon finds himself stranded in 1810, with the evil sorcerer hot on his trail. Also involved is a werewolf who can transfer from one body to another and various other supernatural characters. The purpose of the werewolf at times seems to be to confuse the reader--several characters change bodies with him, so it's almost impossible to figure out who's who. This isn't helped by the fact that some of the characters also spend time masquerading as other people, or by the fact that the sorcerer is creating kas--exact clones--of the main characters. Not only can you not tell the players without a scorecard, you can't even tell them with a scorecard!

As you might guess, trying to keep all this sorted out detracts from some of the pleasure in reading the book. There are a couple of other twists thrown in, but some of what the author seems to expect to surprise the reader can be predicted well before. (The blurb on the back of the book doesn't help.) Powers does do a good job of conveying a sense of horror in Romany's (or is it Romanelli's) underground laboratories and many of the individual incidents are well-constructed and exciting. It's just trying to put them together into a coherent story that doesn't work so well.

This isn't the sort of book you can skim through half-asleep before bedtime. It should probably be read all in one sitting. (To be fair, I should point out that I read it over a period of two weeks, so perhaps that was part of the problem.) If you're willing to put in the effort, there is a lot to like here, but you've really got to dig to find it.

THE ODYSSEY FILE by Arthur C. Clarke & Peter Hyams
Del Rey, 1984, \$395.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Just as it is impossible to think of 2010 without being reminded of 2001, so it is impossible to review The Odyssey File without referring to Jerome Agel's The Making of Kubrick's 2001. Agel's book (published in 1970 by Signet and, for all I know, out of print now, though renewed interest may bring it back) had 367 pages (including a 96-page photo insert), lots of diagrams, reviews from the media (both good and bad), and even an excerpt from the Mad magazine parody of 2001. It cost \$1.50. Clarke and Hyam's book is 148 pages (including a 16 page color photo insert) of large type, no diagrams, and no reviews--but you do get an appendix of how to use MITE on the Kaypro computer. In fact, a lot of what you get is little more than an ad for (or to be charitable, let's say a paean to) the Kaypro. Interspersed with Hyams's and Clarke's comments on the film are such gems as "I'm way ahead of you on Son of Hal: that's one reason I'm instantly WordStarring and printing out our immortal prose."

Now it's true that The Odyssey File does not pretend to be what The Making of 2001 was. The Odyssey File is described on its cover as "the unique computer correspondence between the men who made it happen" and that's what it is. The problem is that reading someone else's unedited mail files is b-o-r-i-n-g. There is a lot of space wasted on trivialities (like Clarke telling Hyams that a TV show that he was in will be on Channel 4 in the UK). There are a lot of cryptic comments (referring to page and line numbers of the script). There are some interesting items, but the reader/viewer who plunks down \$3.95 expecting an in-depth look at the making of 2010 is going to be very disappointed.

The Fantasy Films of William Sylvester
A retrospective by Mark R. Leeper

In my review of 2010 I mentioned my regrets that the film cast Roy Scheider in the role that William Sylvester created in the first film. I was sorry to read in one of the reader responses that Sylvester had died a few years ago. However, in The Odyssey File by Clarke and Hyams, I read that Sylvester gave Hyams a call, probably just in case Hyams wanted Sylvester to come out of retirement for the film. I am rather pleased to hear that Sylvester is still with us. It's not that he is anything like a superstar--few fans of fantastic film even recognize his name. Most published sources on actors don't even list his name. There are very incomplete listings for him in Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion (Seventh Edition) and in The New York Times Directory of the Film, and nobody else seems to know he exists. Still, this mild-mannered actor, likable in the same way that Henry Fonda was, starred in a surprising number of unusual fantasy films in the Fifties and Sixties.

Sylvester is an American who has done almost all of his acting in British films. I think that the British film industry philosophy in this period was that if a film starred an American actor, it would have better potential for an American boxoffice. You see a number of British films that starred actors like Forrest Tucker, Dean Jagger, and Brian Donlevy for that reason. I think the idea may have back-fired, because I don't think most people realized that Sylvester was an American. (The same seems to be true of Mel Gibson.) Let me list the Sylvester films I remember.

The Unholy Four/A Stranger Came Home (1953): This was not really a fantasy film per se, but an interesting mystery directed by Terence Fisher for a then-young Hammer Films. Fisher and Hammer would later that decade team up to make a number of very successful gothic horror thrillers, many of which starred Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. The Unholy Four concerned an amnesiac, thought dead for years, returning to find out which of his partners tried to murder him. This isn't Sylvester's best film but it's worth seeing.

Gorgo (1959): After Godzilla did very well for the Japanese, the British King Brothers decided to see if a decent dinosaur-in-a-modern-city film using man-in-dinosaur-suit effects would do the same for them. The only English-language director who had done dinosaur-in-city films since the silent Lost World was Eugene Lourie (Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, Giant Behemoth). He was hired for Gorgo. The film starred Sylvester and Bill Travers (of Born Free) as the two partners who capture a dinosaur and bring it to London. As close as this sub-genre comes to having an intelligent entry, this is it. And the fun of the film is undeniable. Nice musical score by unknown Angelo Lavagnino, too.

Devil Doll (1963): Since the anthology film Dead of Night did an effective story about the strange relationship between a ventriloquist and

his dummy, this sort of story has almost become a sub-genre of its own. Alfred Hitchcock Presents did at least one story on the theme; The Twilight Zone did at least two. The most recent film was Magic with Anthony Hopkins. Usually the relationship turns out to be just psychosis on the part of the ventriloquist, then the film leaves us unsure that that is all it is. A rare exception that handles the theme in an unusual way is Devil Doll. William Sylvester plays a reporter investigating the hate-filled relationship between The Great Vorelli (a hypnotist/ventriloquist) and his dummy, Hugo. It seems that Hugo not only talks by himself, he also walks by himself and occasionally tries to kill Vorelli. Bryant Halliday is creepy as Vorelli, but the sight of little Hugo uneasily lumbering around on his own, knife in hand, is a real chiller.

Devils of Darkness (1965): This is a rarely seen--but as I remember rather decent--little horror film. It is about an American (Sylvester of course) on vacation in Brittany who runs afoul of a devil cult headed by a resurrected vampire. It has been a while since I saw it, but I remember I liked it.

Beast of Morocco/Hand of Night (1966): Perhaps Sylvester's career was slumping a little when he agreed to star in a second film about vampire cults. This was, believe it or not, a British-Moroccan co-production. Where Devils of Darkness was simple and crisp, this film is moody and dream-like. An American archaeologist in Morocco falls in love with a woman who turns out to be part of a cult of vampires.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968): Heywood Floyd is, of course, Sylvester's best-known part. Ironically, it is also his most stilted and unemotional role. Under the direction of a master like Stanley Kubrick, his usual affable, friendly manner is gone and he seems at best a cold fish who at times verges on being catatonic. Unfortunately, this is the role he will probably be remembered for.

I have no information on what Sylvester did the next eight years. Apparently at some point he returned to the U.S. In 1976 he did a short stint as a regular on a TV series called Gemini Man. The plot concerned a secret agent with the power to turn invisible. Sylvester played a Leonard Driscoll, the head of INTERSECT, a government think-tank who employed the title character. The series also did a now-you-see-it now-you-don't act and was off the air five weeks after it started. Filmgoer's Companion also claims he appeared in the 1978 Heaven Can Wait, but I don't remember seeing him (I think I would have) and his presence there has not been confirmed by any other source.

So this all adds up to William Sylvester being a moderately good actor who appeared in an above-average set of fantasy films. And once again I say I am sorry he was not cast in the role of Heywood Floyd in 2010.

THE GATES OF HELL (also known as CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD)

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

There was a time when Italian horror films were notorious for teasing titles but little delivery. Titles like Scream of the Demon Lover would promise supernatural horror, but the films themselves would have nothing stranger than a psychotic killer. The country's horror filmmakers traded off of a few interesting supernatural films, notably Black Sunday and Black Sabbath (directed by Mario Bava), but dealt mostly in murder stories with flat wooden performances. (For my part, I know, I never could get very involved with any characters whose lips don't move in time with what they are saying.)

This reticence actually to put the supernatural in films and the somewhat less lamentable reticence to show visual horror was swept aside when Dawn of the Dead was released in Italy under the title Zombie and did phenomenally well at the boxoffice. Suddenly the formula was to throw delicacy to the winds and make some all-out ghoulish films. At the center of this phenomenon is Lucio Fulci, who made Zombie II to rip off Dawn of the Dead/Zombie, though it has nothing to do with the Romero film. (To further complicate matters, Zombie II was released in this country as Zombie.) Fulci's motto seems to be "You're never more than three minutes or four from stomach-churning gore."

December's cable offerings include a film called The Gates of Hell, which on investigation turns out to be a re-titling of City of the Living Dead, released in this country in 1981. This is Fulci's second-best-known film (at least it's the only Fulci gore-fest other than Zombie II I'd heard of).

My first comment is that if you dislike gore, stay away. In fact, don't even read this paragraph. I neither like nor dislike gore; I consider it just another special effect. If it did bother me, I would have found this film unwatchable. The Gates of Hell really tries to outdo Dawn of the Dead for nauseating effects and manages quite nicely, thank you. Fulci fills the film with worms devouring corpses, women vomiting up organs, electric drills boring through people's heads, tops of people's heads being ripped away, and other wonders of the magic of cinema.

The story, which won't be awarded any prizes for coherence or logic, involves the gates of Hell being opened in some symbolic sense because a priest hanged himself in the town of Dunwich (no, the one name is as far as the film goes into Lovecraft territory). Dunwich is built on the ruins of the real Salem, Massachusetts (that will come as a surprise to the current residents of Salem), where they burned witches (that will come as a surprise to historians). A New York woman has a vision of the evil that has been released, dies from the shock, is buried, and comes back to life in the coffin. (No way--that's one reason we embalm corpses.) In one of the film's few nice--and almost subtle--horror sequences her screams are heard

by a reported who very nearly kills her trying to open her partially buried coffin with a handy pickaxe. The two of them go off in search of the town the woman saw in her vision.

The Gates of Hell is all too often sabotaged by the incompetence of the filmmakers. Scenes that should be frightening are instead edited in ways that make them merely confusing. Fulci's gore effects occasionally try for interesting images but often fail. In one scene, a window shatters and the fragments bury themselves in a wall. The wall then starts to bleed. Yes, if it really happened it might frighten me, but it does not make much sense in the context of the film. Fulci is just stringing together gory scenes with a minimal plot. In a film where anything can happen as long as it's gory, the viewer gives up trying to find a story in the chaos. The Gates of Hell is really only for completists (like me) or fans of the splatter sub-genre (and they are welcome to it). There is little point in seeing a film for which the greatest talent behind the camera was the makeup man.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

David Lean could well be England's most respected director. Starting in 1944, he made films like Blithe Spirit, Brief Encounter, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, Breaking the Sound Barrier, and Hobson's Choice. Then his style shifted and he began to make more spectacular films, like Bridge over the River Kwai, Lawrence of Arabia, and Dr. Zhivago. His 1970 Ryan's Daughter was something of a misfire and since then, he has been absent from filmmaking. He has returned with a faithful adaptation of E. M. Forster's A Passage to India.

This certainly seems to be a time for films about India. The last year or so has seen Gandhi, TV's The Far Pavilions and The Jewel in the Crown, and now Lean's film. (I am intentionally omitting Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, but that film takes place in the never-never land that films called "India" in the Thirties.) Filmmakers have discovered the exotic beauty of India. Also, there is a certain convenience as far as filmmaking facilities are concerned since India has the largest film industry in the world.

Not having read Forster's Passage to India, and knowing only that it was a respected classic, I was rather surprised to discover that the film is basically a story about a trial, though like many such films the story of the trial itself is less important than the background against which the trial takes place. In this case it is India in the Twenties. the film is structured (at least superficially) in the familiar pattern of showing the events leading up to a trial, showing the trial itself, and then showing the effects that the legal action had on the principal characters involved. In this case, it involves two women who have come to India--the mother and the fiance of a British magistrate. An Indian doctor who idolizes the British becomes friendly with them and arranges an expensive picnic to show them some local caves. Something mysterious happens at this picnic and the doctor is accused of attempting to rape one of the women.

Victor Banerjee is impressive as Dr. Aziz, whose love for the British betrays him and leaves him a helpless victim of their bigotry. Judy Davis is suitably enigmatic as the repressed fiance. Her performance and the camerawork at times give this film much of the same mysterious feel as Peter Weir's Picnic at Hanging Rock. Remarkably, the least convincing part comes just where we would expect the best. It is a David Lean tradition (I think) to feature Alec Guinness. A Passage to India had no suitable role for him, so they gave him an unsuitable role, that of Godbole, an Old Indian mystic. The same thing happened with Lawrence of Arabia, of course, and Guinness proved a masterful King Faisal, but there are limits to how different a part Guinness can play and still be believed. The role in Lawrence of Arabia called for considerably more acting and could somewhat exploit a slight physical resemblance between Guinness and the real King Faisal. Things did not work out as well in A Passage to India. With less opportunity to act,

Guinness had to make it to a greater extent on physical appearance. And he looked like Alec Guinness in make-up.

Of the films about (the real) India listed earlier, I have seen only Gandhi, and A Passage to India has the same major flaw as that film: They both feel like manipulative propaganda films. Don't misunderstand me. History has made its verdict that Britain mishandled its relations with India, and I think I probably agree. But I don't think I want to see many films whose point of view is that Britain's relations were solely dictated by greed, callousness, and bigotry. I feel uncomfortable when a film or a television program tries to tell me that one side of a political issue is 100% or even 95% right. In Gandhi and A Passage to India the British are bad, bad, bad, and the Indians are good, good, good. This may be accurate to the book, but Forster wrote it in 1924 for an audience that had often heard the pro-British side at a time when India was still under the British thumb. Forster did not need to present the opposing point of view to give a balanced viewpoint. Attenborough and Lean should have, but failed to. Their films make it quite clear that they do not want to risk having the viewer have any sympathies with the wrong side. This attempt to manipulate the viewer to one side of a real political issue, even a closed issue, is as good a definition for a propaganda film as there is.

A Passage to India is a good film. It is a +1 and the -4 to +4 scale. But it was a poor choice for a novel if Lean was trying for another film as great as Lawrence of Arabia. Superficially it rides the tide of public interest in India, but practically speaking, the book was great because it was written in 1924--the film would have been great in 1924--but politically and dramatically it offers little that is new in 1984.

Hugo Straw Poll
Conducted by Evelyn C. Leeper

(Please choose no more than five of the following possibilities--or any others I may have forgotten--and send them to me at ...{ihnp4, houxm, hocsj}!ahuta!ecl before COB January 31, 1985.

And here are the possibilities for the Hugo for Dramatic Presentation to be awarded in Australia this year:

All of Me, Amazons (TVM), Angel, Black Cat, Black Room, Blind Date, Bloodbath at the House of Death, Boardinghouse, Bog, Brother from Another Planet, Buckaroo Banzai, Buried Alive, C.H.U.D., Camminacammina, Cheech and Chong's The Corsican Brothers, Children of the Corn, Christmas Carol (TVM), Cold Room, Company of Wolves, Conan the Destroyer, Conquest, Countdown to Looking Glass (TVM), Curse of Fred Astaire, Dark Enemy, Deadline, Deathstalker, Don't Open Till Christmas, Dream One, Dreamscape, Dune, Electric Dreams, Ewok Adventure (TVM), Evil Eye, Eyes of Fire, Fairy Tale of Wanderings, Fatal Games, Ferocious, Final Terror, Firestarter, Flesh of Your Flesh, Fourth Man, Frankenstein (TVM), Frankenstein 90, Friday the 13th--The Final Chapter, Future Schlock, Ghost from Bahia, Ghostbusters, Gods Must Be Crazy, Gremlins, Greystoke: Legend of Tarzan Lord of the Apes, Helter-skelter, Hitchhiker (TV--individual episodes are eligible), House by the Cemetery, House of Long Shadows, Hunters of the Golden Cobra, Ice Pirates, Iceman, Impulse, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, Initiation, Innocent Prey, Invisible Strangler, Invitation to Hell (TVM), It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (TVM), Jungle Girl, Karkalou, Last Starfighter, Legend of the Mermaid, Madhouse, Mardi Gras Massacre, Massive Retaliation, Meatballs II, Metropolis, Midsummer Night's Dream, Muppets Take Manhattan, Mutant, Mysterious Castle in Carpathians, Mystic Warrior (TVM), Natural, Neverending Story, New Magic, Night of the Comet, Night of the Ghouls, Night Shadows, Night They Saved Christmas, Nightmare on Elm Street, 1984, O'Hara's Wife, Philadelphia Experiment, Pirate! Cult Movie, Pit, Possession, Power, Prisoners of the Lost Universe, Red Dawn, Repo Man, Return of the Time Machine, Romancing the Stone, Runaway, Samson and Delilah, Scalps, Sheena Queen of the Jungle, Silent Madness, Silent Night Deadly Night, Slapstick of Another Kind, Slayground, Smurfs and the Magic Flute, Sole Survivor, Spasms, Splash, Splatter University, Star Trek III--The Search for Spock, Starman, Streets of Fire, Supergirl, Sword of the Valiant, Swordkill, Tales from the Darkside (TV--individual episodes are eligible), Terminator, Terror in the Aisles, They're Playing with Fire, Top Secret, Trap Them and Kill Them, 2010: Odyssey Two, Uforia, V: The Final Battle (TVM), V (TV--individual episodes are eligible), Warrior and the Sorceress, Warriors of the Wasteland, Where the Green Ants Dream, Why the UFOs Steal Our Lettuce, Witches' Sabbath (Akellarre), Witches' Sabbath (Boszorkanyismombat), Zombie Island Massacre

LEEPER FILM QUIZ #1

(Send replies to ...ihnp4!lznv!mrl please. Answers will appear in two weeks.)

In what science fiction films are the following quotes?

1. "But there are no diamonds like these...anywhere."
2. "C M D F"
3. "You were a hack at Stanford and you were a hack at Bell."
4. "Blood-rust"
5. "Duran Duran"
6. "There are always a few grains of sugar left in the sack."
7. "The Devil's enemy was iron."
8. "I'm sold. Here's my two bucks."
9. "I'm making spoon-bread."
10. "Mommy! Mommy! There are men down there. And they got guns!"
11. "The man had a full house and he knew it."
12. "This I know, the spirit of man cannot be stopped."
13. "The stroke count reads two."
14. "My God! It's his ear!"
15. "They ARE picky eaters."
16. "We call him Neutron because he's so positive." [sic]
17. "Astro-chemistry"
18. "You ARE an idiot. An idiot."
19. "Shrimps are more important than duty."
20. "Open the door, you'll find the secret. To find the answer is to keep it."