

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 2/27/85 -- Vol. 3, No. 34

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>
03/13	HO: DOWNBELOW STATION by C. J. Cherryh
03/13	LZ: DRAGON'S EGG by Robert Forward
04/03	HO: Book Swap (HO 2N-529)
04/03	LZ: HELLICONIA SPRING by Brian Aldiss
04/24	HO: CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
04/24	LZ: MISSION OF GRAVITY by Hal Clement
05/15	LZ: DOOR INTO FIRE by Diane Duane
06/05	LZ: TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon R. Dickson

HO Chair is Mark Leeper, HO 1E-412 (834-2657). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). 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. Our next evening film festival will be March 14.
2. Those of you who have tried watching Dr. Who in the past and may not have liked the style might want to try it again. It is on Saturday night, Channel 50 (and its clones on NJ public TV), at 9:00. They have gone back to an earlier season in which they apparently had a very different style. Jon Pertwee plays the Doctor and instead of galloping all over the galaxy to places where people wear funny clothing, it takes place in its present and on Earth, in Britain. This means that the stories are less fantasy and more traditional science fiction. Now some people like the weird locales of the later episodes. I personally prefer the atmosphere of the earlier episodes. Those of you who were real fans of the Peter Davidson Doctor will be happy to know that he gave his all in his final episode and had one of the four saddest deaths in all science fiction. (The other three are, of course, Spock and the two Rodans).
3. Somebody on the UNIX net asked me to give a synopsis of FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, which I have called the best science fiction film I have ever seen. Some of the parts of the film are a bit cryptic, but are clearer in the play which was shown at Seacon and is available in paperback. For the benefit of the people who came to the recent film festival but who were not around to see the third film, I will reprint the plot here. Here goes:

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

FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (Brit. QUATERMASS AND THE PIT) Hammer films 1968, Dir. by Roy Ward Baker. Scr by Nigel Kneale based on his TV-play "Quatermass and the Pit." Cast: Andrew Kier (Bernard Quatermass), James Donald (Dr. Matthew Roney), Barbara Shelley (Barbara Judd).

London Transit is digging a subway tunnel at Hobbs End. They find fossils of man's early ancestors. Dr. Matthew Roney is called in to investigate the fossils and in the process finds a large craft buried in the ground near the five million year old fossils. Thinking that what was found might be a German V-weapon, they call in Col. Breen, a former expert on enemy missiles and now in the process of taking over Quatermass's rocket group. Quatermass, driven by curiosity, goes with Breen to the site of the excavations and realizes that if the fossils are 5 million years old, so is the craft. Hobbs end has been known from time immemorial, it turns out, for weird supernatural events, particularly when the earth has been disturbed.

The army, with much trouble, is able to bore a hole into the inner chamber found in the craft, and inside they find insect-like inhabitants. Quatermass theorizes that they are from Mars and that they had altered the apes whose fossils were found into evolving toward intelligent humans. A driller hired by the army to open the craft is removing his equipment when he seems possessed by some force. He runs mindlessly through the streets causing telekinetic destruction and takes refuge in a churchyard. Quatermass is called in by the vicar and hears the driller babbling about seeing scenes of another world. His description seems to be of a race purge of mutants. Quatermass theorizes that the telekinetic powers and the hatred of anyone different were invested in us by the aliens and were always with us more or less dormant. The craft has the power to reawaken them in us.

Quatermass together with Roney rig up a device to record his mental images and Quatermass tries to repeat the drillers actions so the ship will have the same effect on him. Instead the craft takes over Roney's assistant and Quatermass records her mental images. The minister of defense, angered by Quatermass earlier telling the press that the craft might have been of alien design, calls Quatermass in on the carpet. He shows them the pictures he has recorded from the assistant's mind of a mutant hunt. They are unconvinced, believing Breen's explanation that the craft is German. The minister opens the craft site to the press.

The night that the press is running a TV show from the craft site, a man setting up lighting in the craft slips and somehow reactivates the craft fully. The vast majority of London is taken over to become mindless telekinetics bent on wiping out anything that might be a variation in the human genetic strain. Quatermass himself become part of the hunt. Roney is among the very few who

are immune to the mental control exerted by the capsule. Seeing Quatermass in the crowd he pulls him out and with a great deal of effort, gets Quatermass's mind working again. The capsule which has now turned London into effectively a alien colony. Exerting this effort it is turning its own mass into energy. The broadcast energy forms a column with the capsule changes into the Satan-like shape of a alien. Roney realizes that the nature of the energy column is electrical. He reasons that the legends of the Devil's enemy being iron had a basis in fact. These alien images that used to be interpreted as ghosts and demons are electrical and people holding iron swords grounded them out.

Roney sees a large crane by the capsule site, and his assistant being carried by the crowd. He sends Quatermass to grab the assistant and also to get him out of the way. He climbs the crane and swings it into the column of energy, electrocuting himself but grounding out the column. The instant the column is grounded, the alien mental control ends and things start returning to normal.

Mark Leeper
HO 1E-412 834-2657
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THE KILLING FIELDS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

I am not really very impressed by the film industry's representation of the Vietnam War. I simply do not feel they are very accurate. Deer Hunter was nice and believable as long as it stuck to the good old U.S. But I really do not trust the impressions of Southeast Asia that the film conveyed. Apocalypse Now seemed even less credible, with gung-ho commanders taking beaches for surfing. I do not believe the Deer Hunter or Apocalypse Now Vietnam, but I can easily believe The Killing Field's version of Cambodia.

The Killing Fields is about a Cambodian journalist, Dith Pran (Haing Ngor) who was forced to stay in Cambodia when the Americans and Pran's family fled the country in 1976. The story begins in 1973 and traces Pran's relationship with three New York Times reporters, the reporters' attempts to take Pran out in 1976, and especially Pran's life in a Cambodia run by the Khmer Rouge. The viewer sees the chaos that the Southeast Asia war brought to Cambodia and the chaos that the Khmer Rouge brought when the war was over. The conclusions are not that the U.S. was justified in trying to destroy the Khmer Rouge, nor that the Khmer Rouge were right to try and control Cambodia. Instead, we simply see that Cambodia is one of the very best places in the world to not be. There is little doubt on seeing Missing, Z, The Last Plane Out, or even The Year of Living Dangerously who the "bad guys" are in the political situations they portray. The Killing Fields does not tell you that either side of the war was right. If anything, it tells you that both sides were wrong and shows you credibly and realistically how bad things are in Cambodia.

This film creates a number of startling visual images without ever appearing to do so intentionally. In Missing there was a scene of a beautiful white horse being chased by a jeep and in the context of the film, the symbolic meaning of the scene was obvious. It was a nice touch, but it felt ever-so-slightly forced. In The Killing Fields, director Roland Joffe manages to have a number of symbolic images without ever forcing them. One scene involves the Americans being attacked while sitting on a stockpile of Coca-Cola; another shows dead pigs being carried around in the back seats of taxi cabs. There are a lot of gore effects in The Killing Fields, but only because the film does not portray a sanitized, John-Wayne style war. The images are there to distress, not to horrify, the viewer, and the camera records them rather than wallowing in them.

Just a personal note--a couple of questions I had after seeing the film. At one point, Sydney Schanberg, the American reporter who ineffectively tries to get Pran out of Cambodia, is watching footage of the Cambodian incursion and listening to Turandot. That opera has breath-takingly beautiful music, but I have always considered the story and musical style to exemplify Western culture misunderstanding Eastern culture. That may just be my personal ax to grind, however, and I am somewhat curious why

that particular opera was chosen. Second, I suspect that Ngor had more screen time as Dith Pran than Sam Waterston had as Schanberg and the film is really Pran's story. Why then is Waterston nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor and Ngor only for Best Supporting Actor? In any case, The Killing Fields noses out Amadeus as my choice for Best Picture of 1984.

Decadent ConFusion
A Belated Convention Report
Timothy P. Schroeder

Since I moved to New Jersey, I've traveled back to Michigan every January for ConFusion. (Actually I go back to see friends, and the convention lumps them all together in one hotel room.) This is about a month after the convention, and I've finally gotten around to writing this and unpacking my suitcase. It shouldn't matter--it's not like anyone is going to read this and rush right out to ConFusion (I hope).

I arrived at the Plymouth Hilton late Friday afternoon and spent most of the evening greeting friends and defending my staked claim on a choice portion of floor space in our densely populated hotel room. Friday at 9pm a few of us went down to the game room and started a game of Wizards which kept us occupied until 7:30 or so. I lost.

Saturday I slept through a whole bunch of panels including "Writing the 3-D Alien" with Alan Dean Foster (the pro guest of honor) and "Perverting the Second Stanza", a filksinging panel with Julia Ecklar (the fan guest of honor). I did drag myself down to two panels. (I do this at all conventions; for some reason I feel since I paid my membership I have to deprive myself of sleep to sit in on some panels.) Don't ever expect a panel lead by Lloyd Biggle to be vibrant and interesting. He lead the one on how well science fiction has predicted the future. Dean McLaughlin, the only interesting person on the panel, claimed it hasn't, and no one felt like arguing with him. I also listened to Ann Zeddies, Char Berrey, Kathleen Conat, and some silent types discuss the "cutsification" of unicorns, dragons, etc. No reasons were really proposed here--just lots of icky examples.

I did go to the Masquerade Ball Saturday night. ConFusion actually holds something resembling a ball, rather than a costume show (which I would have skipped). There's music, dancing (for the adventurous), and plainclothes judges watching for the best costumes at the ball. The emphasis was supposed to be on the theme (Decadent ConFusion), but there didn't seem to be any more (or less) decadence than at any other convention.

After the ball came the filksinging. This is one of the main reasons I frequent conventions. What can I say about filksinging? I got the words to a science fiction authors song (like Tom Lehrer's elements song). I left the filksing at some ridiculous time Sunday.

Sunday I hit the hucksters room (mostly buttons and books) and the art show. The art show was small (it's a small con, after all). There was one display by an artist using pipe cleaners. This stuff looked really good. From more than a foot or so, you couldn't tell it was pipe cleaners, and the artist was actually good.

Somewhere in here I saw "Dr. Strangelove", "The Neverending Story", and a bit of "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century".

Sunday afternoon I surrendered \$14.50 for my share of our hotel room and paid one last visit to the con suite for a breakfast of free Coke and \$.50 hot dogs (funny, that's what I'd been eating all weekend). Luckily I had Debbie to share the drive back to New Jersey.