

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 7/10/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 2

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>
07/17	LZ: THIS IMMORTAL by Roger Zelazny (Immortality)
07/24	HO: DAMIANO by R. A. MacAvoy
08/07	LZ: A CASE OF CONSCIENCE by James Blish (Religion)
08/14	HO: THE FLIGHT OF THE DRAGONFLY by Robert Forward (11AM)
08/28	LZ: DINOSAUR BEACH by Keith Laumer (Time Travel)
09/04	HO: CODE OF THE LIFE-MAKER by James G. Hogan (2N-529)
09/11	MT: Organizational Meeting (tentative)
09/18	LZ: THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES by Ray Bradbury (Near Future History)
09/24	HO: ? (*Tuesday*)
10/09	LZ: THE SHEEP LOOK UP by John Brunner (Catastrophes)

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-500A (834-4723).

1. No, the review of LIFEFORCE/SPACE VAMPIRES last week was \*not\* by Colin Wilson (as the heading might have led you to believe), but by our own Dale Skran, who is so modest he didn't even put his name on his work. Now his secret is out!

2. On Wednesday, July 17th, the world-renowned LINCROFT-Holmdel SF Club will sponsor yet another epic excursion into science fiction. This time, we will be discussing Roger Zelazny's THIS IMMORTAL, as well as the theme of immortality in general. Everyone is welcome, and if the Holmlies wish us to read the book to them, we'd be glad to. [-rob, a.k.a. jrtr]

Mark Leeper  
HO 1E-412 834-2657  
...mtgzz!leeper

\*\*\*\*\*Presorted\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Leeper, Evelyn C. \*  
\* 114A HO 1B-500A \*  
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PALE RIDER  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

As anyone who has followed Hollywood's trends knows, the last seven years have produced very few Westerns. The closest we have had were Comes a Horseman and Electric Horseman (both really set too recently to be considered Westerns in the classic sense) and Man from Snowy River (with the right feel but set in Australia). This year two Westerns have arrived with strong word-of-mouth: Pale Rider and Silverado. Clint Eastwood's Pale Rider arrived first.

On the face of it Pale Rider is a simple, likable story. There are two groups of gold miners, one nasty but very successful, one nice but poor. The nasties, led by the aptly named LaHood (Richard Dysart) are doing everything they can to roust the good miners out of the possibly lucrative Carbon Valley. LaHood owns almost all the good land in the area and is blasting it to death with hydraulic mining. The good miners, led by Hull (Michael Moriarty) use slower and less profitable methods and patience. LaHood has been ordering raids to kill off Hull's group's animals and to beat up the Carbon Valley miners. Then a young girl's prayer while burying her recently slain dog apparently brings divine intervention in the form of a mild-mannered preacher (Eastwood) who just happens to be unbeatable with a gun, a pair of fists, a shovel, or a hickory stick. The rest is predictable, a sort of cross between Shane and High Plains Drifter.

Like Eastwood's last Western, The Outlaw Josey Wales, great care is taken to make the scenery look authentic. Filmed in half-light, most of the scenes look authentic enough to be taken right out of historical photos. But while the scenes are 1850's, the story seems 1980's. The good miners are on the point of giving up, but refuse to use any mining methods that would damage the environment. Laudable, but it does seem the attitude is anachronistic. The script also resorts to laughable contrivances at times to tell its story. Eastwood at one point survives an ambush in a restaurant only because his attackers pull an incredibly stupid blunder. In another scene, a group of six or seven thugs with sticks are defeated by Eastwood because they attack one at a time instead of all together. And one wonders if success has not gone to Eastwood's head when his films start showing his character as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

But in spite of its predictability--the story of Pale Rider could almost have been an episode of The Lone Ranger--the film has a mythic quality that makes it more than a little watchable. The cool California mountains aren't a bad place to spend a hot summer's evening. Give it +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.



RED SONJA  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Three years ago Dino De Laurentiis produced the first of his Robert E. Howard films, Conan the Barbarian, directed by John Milius. It was a film of blood and steel. It had a literate script, a great villain, and a really superior musical score. Apparently, De Laurentiis wanted a lighter touch and last year's Conan the Destroyer was directed by Richard Fleischer. A number of people seem to prefer the second film, though to my mind it was a step down, a +2 rather than the +3 I gave the first film (on a -4 to +4 scale). Now the third film is out--Red Sonja. It is set in Conan's world of Hyberborea and supposedly also based on Howard's writings. Robert E. Howard fans tell me that Red Sonja is a minor character in Howard and her story is, I believe, set in the Fifteenth Century, a far cry from the barbarian age in which the film was set. By all accounts, the film is based more on the similarly misplaced character appearing in a comic book.

Well, by comparison to either of the Conan films, Red Sonja is a giant step down. Apparently only a few scenes of what was probably the first half hour of the film were filmed. We are told in a few sentences that when Sonja (Brigitte Nielsen) repulsed the lesbian advances of the evil queen Gedren (Sandahl Bergman), the queen had most of Sonja's family killed. As the story opens, the queen is in the process of killing Sonja's sister, who is one of the priestesses who guard a glowing green sphere that gives ultimate power (people who saw Heavy Metal will immediately think of it as the Loc Nar). Gedren gets the sphere and through mis-use will destroy the world with it unless Sonja can get it back. (It's the old theory from James Bond films: if your hero is trying to save the world, the story has got to be a lot more exciting than if he is just trying to get an enemy decoder, right?) Just to help the film along, Arnold Schwarzenegger is along, not as Conan, but as Kalidor, a poor slob who keeps arriving in the nick of time to save Sonja and wins only ingratitude from her.

And here's one for Ripley's "Believe It or Not"--Schwarzenegger is probably the best actor in the film. Sandahl Bergman, who was so good in the first film, seems to have recently graduated from the Tanya Roberts school of acting. Brigitte Nielsen does a little better by the title role, but not much. Both women seem to have visited Conan the Cosmetician and have come away with large supplies of Hyperborean mascara and lipstick, amazingly like the 20th Century equivalents.

The script is exceptionally unimaginative, with few of the fantasy elements of its predecessors. What is in the script is never explained. At one point, a mechanical robot-monster shows up totally without explanation as to where the technology to build it came from. The music is just barely adequate, perhaps due to having been contributed by Ennio Morricone instead of Basil Poledouris, who did the Conan films. The

fight scenes, much better orchestrated in the earlier films, are laughable and even less convincing than the acting.

Perhaps with the first half-hour returned and with better acting, Red Sonja might have been acceptable, but what got to the screen is short and a mess. Rate it -1.

Colin Wilson, SPACE VAMPIRES, and LIFEFORCE  
A review by Mark R. Leeper

The release of the film Lifeforce, based on the novel Space Vampires by Colin Wilson, has sparked some discussion of Wilson's science fiction. Wilson's novels, like the film Lifeforce, are for rather specialized tastes and are generally quite unpopular. They do, however, have some avid fans. While I am not one, I did enjoy his novels and my defense of his writing has, on occasion, given rise to scorn among local science fiction fans. Our local science fiction society once voted his Mind Parasites the second worst of about fifty discussion books. Yet I still consider it to be at times one of the most interesting science fiction books I remember reading, due in large part to having the most unusual alien menace.

So who is Colin Wilson? He is usually considered to be a philosopher; I think he wrote a book called The Outsider on the meaning of being a social pariah. The book apparently achieved some popularity. Then one day he noticed that H. P. Lovecraft had written a story called "The Outsider." He read it and did not like it. August Derleth, a friend of Wilson's as well as a big Lovecraft fan, suggested that Wilson try to write something better. So Wilson wrote his first science fiction novel with the rather lurid title The Mind Parasites. In it he said that human philosophy tended to be optimistic up to a point, then it turned more pessimistic. You started getting degenerate philosophies like that of the Marquis de Sade. It was his claim that we had been attacked by some alien force that fed off of negative human emotion like depression and sadism. He includes the most amazing descriptions of battles with the aliens taking place, literally, but not figuratively, in his mind. The aliens would attack and he would start feeling rather dismal. Then suddenly he would hit them with a blast of pure optimism, and they would scatter!

The premise of the story also says that we have involved to the point where we really are telepathic and telekinetic, but the parasites sap off the energy we need to use these faculties. In spite of the trashy title, I found the story had several interesting ideas to chew on. The ideas were the virtue of the story far more than the story line, but I find many people who really detest the book for reasons I never understood. I have heard people who recommend books with far weaker story lines complain that the story line of this book is weak. The best I can tell is that there is just something indefinable in the book that rubs people the wrong way.

Wilson's second science fiction novel is The Philosopher's Stone. In many ways it is much like the first novel, though it moves considerably more slowly. The concept is that by special treatments involving the insertion of a special electrical conductor, the brain can be made far more efficient. Among other things, it allows the user to mentally time-travel, and in one sequence a character places himself in Shakespeare's England, only to have many of his cherished beliefs



shattered. There is again some alien menace, as I remember, but it is a theme that is not well dealt with. I can remember liking this the best of the three science fiction novels that Wilson has written, but it has been nine years or so since I read it so my memory is weak.

The worst of the three is Space Vampires. Inspired by the story "Asylum" by A. E. Van Vogt, it concerns an alien life-form brought to Earth. The creatures, who seem to be able to jump from body to body, suck up life force from people they come in contact with. The premise of the book, unlike that of the film, is that the aliens are not really unique. We--all of us--are life force vampires. That's why fresh vegetables taste better to us than stale ones; they retain life force which we consume. Sex is (among other things) a life force transaction. Good sex will involve the trading of life force and each side will end up with more. In sadistic sex, one partner gets more life force by depleting the other.

That is one odd thing about Space Vampires: it has sex, but it is the least gratuitous sex of any novel I can think of. The explanations of energy exchanges are all-important. We all understand what is going on when there is sex in a Harold Robbins novel, but in this book there is more going on as part and parcel of the sex act.

But the monsters of Space Vampires go beyond the human sort of vampirism. They accumulate life force but, like a leaky tire, cannot hold on to it and very soon need more. The film, incidentally, could have used this explanation very nicely since it would explain why the victims seem to collect life force but they need more so soon. On the other hand, in many ways the film is better than its source. The contagion of the vampirism in the film makes the menace much more serious. The effect of the invasion in the book would be to increase by two or three the number of sex maniacs in the world. In the film we are dealing with possible world destruction. On top of that, there is considerably more plot to the film than there was in the book. The book has the plot of the first half hour of the film and an incident or two that was in the film later. And then the book has two sequences not in the film. One is a visit to a Swedish expert on vampirism and one is a discussion with the Prime Minister. That and some discussion is about all there is to the book. There is actually a lot more that happens in the film. While the screenplay could have used more explanations, in many ways it was an improvement on the book.

But of course, the strong suit of the book is its ideas. Wilson uses his life force premise to explain much about traditional vampires. I, for one, enjoy the Darker Than You Think or Five Million Years to Earth sort of story where the supernatural turns out to be scientific phenomena that have been wrongly interpreted. The problem is that Wilson does not seem to know much science. He starts including all sorts of already discredited ideas (like Kirlian photography) as accepted scientific fact. That unfortunately discredits much of his thinking.

Still, while this is the least enjoyable of the three Wilson novels, it was an enjoyable read, particularly after having seen the film.