

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 9/11/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 11

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>
09/18	LZ: THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES by Ray Bradbury (Near Future History)
09/24	HO: JHEREG by Stephen Brust (*Tuesday*) (12:30PM)
10/02	MT: CONTINENT OF LIES by James Morrow & Org. Mtg. (MT 3P-401)
10/09	LZ: THE SHEEP LOOK UP by John Brunner (Catastrophes)
10/16	HO: THRICE UPON A TIME by James G. Hogan (11:00AM)

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. In lieu of the regular "Make Fun of the Holmlies" meeting, on Wednesday, September 18, the Lincroft chapter will be discussing Ray Bradbury's THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES. The book is a series of short stories built on one another, revolving around Man's settlement of Mars, and subsequent treatment of the natives. Along the way, Bradbury deals with nuclear war, well-meaning censorship, and the dangers of having one's wishes fulfilled. The theme of "Near Future History" is sufficiently vague that anything you wish to discuss will fit right in; after all, nobody pays much attention to these themes anyway...

2. The 1985 Hugo winners are (posted to the Net by Chuq Von Rospach):

Best Novel: NEUROMANCER, by William Gibson
Best Novella: "Press Enter," by John Varley
Best Novelette: "Bloodchild," by Octavia Butler
Best Short Story: "Crystal Spheres," by David Brin
Best Non-Fiction: WONDER'S CHILD, by Jack Williamson
Best Artist: Mike Whelan
Best Editor: Terry Carr
Best Dramatic Presentation: 2010
Best Semi-pro 'zine: LOCUS
Best Fanzine: File 770
Best Fan Writer: Dave Langford
Best Fan Artist: Alexis Gilliland
John Campbell Award: Lucius Shepard

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 114A HO 1B-500A *

3. A '%' in front of your name means you have not re-registered; a '+' means you have re-registered but haven't sent in your payroll account number. Our budget will be based on the number of payroll account numbers we send in on September 30 (it sounds like a refund offer, doesn't it?), so please try to remember to send yours in. [-ec1]

Mark Leeper
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...mtgzz!leeper

THE TRIPODS
A television review by Mark R. Leeper

It is England some 100 years in the future, but it might be 100 years in the past for the level of technology. Things seem frozen in time and the only thing around that seems beyond the 19th Century are the alien tripods, maybe forty or fifty feet high, towering over the landscape. As each person in the village becomes an adult, a strange metallic framework is embedded into the top of his or her head that makes him or her a happy and docile worker.

Nothing really original here. The series is based on the books The White Mountains, The City of Gold and Lead, and The Pool of Fire by John Christopher. The trilogy will be told in 25 half-hour episodes. Based on an insufficient sample, I would say the acting is good and the special effects adequate. I have a used copy of The White Mountains and the previous owner pencilled in "Boy Scout stuff" on the first page. He was probably right, but the same could be said of the Star Was novel. That was not too bad as a film. The series seems worth watching. Watch for it on PBS stations.

THE CODE OF THE LIFEMAKER by James P. Hogan

Del Rey, ?, \$2.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is generally a good science fiction novel that does some interesting things to make a fantasy tale hard science fiction. Unfortunately, the trappings of this novel are much more enjoyable than the actual fantasy story itself. It is exquisite frosting on a rather bland cake.

Generally, if fantasy and science fiction are combined in a story, I would call the net result fantasy. You cannot put ghosts or werewolves into a science fiction story and have science fiction when you are done. I do make the exception that if you can give a reasonable scientific explanation for the fantasy elements it will make them science fiction. The Code of the Lifemaker is apparently James P. Hogan's effort to write a Warlock in Spite of Himself-style fantasy and make it science fiction. Like Warlock, it is about humans coming to a medieval society gone bad and fixing it up--Star Trek's prime directive be damned.

Hogan's set-up for creating a new race at the medieval stage is to describe how the robotics equivalent of genetics and evolution could come about unintentionally. It's not the easiest way to create an alien race in a story, but it is the novel's finest hour. It is really intriguing reading and, frankly, the kind of idea I read science fiction for and all too rarely actually find.

Also interesting is the main character. By profession he is a mass-media-psychic and charlatan of the Uri Geller variety. In the early parts of the novel you see how Zambendorf is able to hoodwink audiences in creative ways. That also makes for intriguing reading but what is even more intriguing is the question: if we discovered intelligent robotic aliens in our solar system, why would anyone want to use devious means to get a Uri Geller to the first contact? Particularly if those people are convinced that the psychic is a fraud. When you do find out, it does make sense, but that puzzle certainly kept me anxious.

So Hogan creates an interesting character and an intriguing mystery surrounding the character. And his background description for how the robot race came into existence is first-class science fiction writing. Unfortunately they all go together to make a sort of second-rate fantasy story reminiscent of some of the cute plot tricks pulled in certain third season Star Trek episodes. I'd give this novel a +2 (on the -4 to +4 scale), but much more for the first 200 pages than for the last.

TEEN WOLF
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is the third worst film I have seen released to a theater this summer. It does even less with the premise than I Was a Teenage Werewolf. The story doesn't make sense, the makeup is poor, the script is riddled with cliches. This one is a real howler.

It has been 28 years since Michael Landon starred in I Was a teenage Werewolf. Even at the time it was pretty mediocre fare. It would be pretty surprising if in these days of more and better fantasy films if a filmmaker couldn't improve on the theme with an updating of the concept.

SURPRISE!

Teen Wolf strongly tempted me to walk out. This is a weak, stupid, and banal comedy. It is much less a remake of I Was a Teenage Werewolf than it is a second sequel to The Shaggy Dog. Michael J. Fox was quite enjoyable in Back to the Future. But Fox as "The Wolf" is a dog. Once he gets the power to transform at will and it makes him the superstar of his school, he becomes insufferably conceited and dull as a character. Rather than examine how somebody would cope with this odd fact about himself, the filmmakers think what the audience wants to see is a guy in a hair-suit break-dancing and doing handstands on the top of a speeding van.

And how does the world react to the discovery that there are real werewolves? Well, the kids in the local high school think it's real nifty and the rest of the world seems totally oblivious to the first werewolf ever to reveal himself to the public at large. And such fresh and original questions the script asks. He has the choice of getting the girl next door who has loved him since he was small or the shallow sexpot he has been drooling over. Can you guess which one he picks? His basketball team was a loser until he started using his lycanthropic powers to make them win. Can they get along without his powers and defeat a nasty opposing team? Can you guess whether they can or not?

The werewolf makeup is something else again. Visually there were no clues as to why anyone associates the transformed boy with wolves at all. He looks more like Ben Gunn from Treasure Island than anything even vaguely lupine. The makeup is also reminiscent of the (rejected) early sketches for the apes in the production of Planet of the Apes.

Teen Wolf joins The Heavenly Kid and Weird Science as the worst of this summer's major fare. All three get -2 on the -4 to +4 scale and, by the thinnest of margins, this is the best of the three.

OUTLAW JOSIE WALES
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is not just another Clint Eastwood shoot-em-up. Eastwood proves himself to be an accomplished director with a real eye for character. This one also has a very good story. The scenes of the post-Civil-War Midwest look like they could be photos of the period. Worth renting.

Walking out of Pale Rider, Evelyn commented that she really would like to see some more Clint Eastwood westerns. Over the years I'd seen most of the major ones, liking some, disliking others. I remembered liking Outlaw Josie Wales when I saw it on cable, but was unable to interest Evelyn in seeing it at the time. When we saw Pale Rider my only memory was that Josie Wales had a very realistic feel to it and told a pretty good story. It seemed like a good choice to rent. About eight people have seen it on my recommendation since then. They have unanimously rated it high and I have sort of decided that it is probably my favorite western.

The story is not all that original. Before the Civil War, the Missouri Red Legs killed off Wales's family. Wales joins a Southern troop led by Fletcher (played by John Vernon, who also plays the mayor in at least some of the "Dirty Harry" films) to fight the Northerners, only to have the troop killed off by an alliance of Vernon, the Red Legs, and Northerners. Wales is accused of the killing and must flee for his life. On his way he sees a lot of country and meets a fascinating collection of characters. These characters are very well drawn and it is really they that make the movie work--they and a script that limns out their personalities with a minimal number of brush strokes. The same approach--showing off a cross-section of the weird characters of society by following a wronged man bucking the system, was used in another film I recommend, Fools' Parade.

I guess what is surprising about Outlaw Josie Wales is how well it is directed by Eastwood. I have usually considered him an actor with little more breadth than John Wayne had. Neither actor was as limited as the majority of their films show, but neither actor went much beyond a single screen persona in most of his films. Even in this film, Eastwood shows little personality, giving far more to Chief Dan George's laconic character or even to Vernon. Yet the uniform quality of the direction and the rich texture of the film indicate a directing talent that goes considerably beyond the acting talent.

Perhaps the biggest fault of the film is that, while visually it seems right, the point of view of the script is that of a century after the film takes place. The Indians are all likable and reasonable. Wales is a man totally without any racial prejudice and very little

sexual prejudice.

If you haven't seen Outlaw Josie Wales, well, that's what video rental stores are for. With the possible exception of Bronco Billy, Outlaw Josie Wales is the best film Eastwood has directed and probably the best he has been in.