

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 10/16/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 16

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>
10/16	HO: THRICE UPON A TIME by James G. Hogan (11:00AM)
10/23	MT: Audio Meeting: Mercury Theater DRACULA (MT 3K-502)
10/30	LZ: THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE by Niven & Pournelle (First Contact)
11/20	LZ: JIREL OF JOIRY by C. L. Moore (Female Protagonists)
12/11	LZ: BRING THE JUBILEE by Ward Moore (Alternate Histories)
01/08	LZ: PHOENIX WITHOUT ASHES by Edward Bryant (Generation Ships)
01/29	LZ: STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY RANGERS by Harry Harrison (Humor)
02/19	LZ: WORLDS by Joe Haldeman (Politics)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-4844). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1A-121 (957-4357) (temp).

1. In the weeks to come you may be seeing on TV many of the films of Orson Welles. This is because Welles has just very recently died. We had planned even before his death to make our first regular meeting at Middletown an audio meeting in which we would hear the Mercury Theater production of DRACULA. This was the first broadcast of the Mercury Theater, a few months before they did their famous production of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. Our presentation of this production has nothing to do with the death of Welles unless he found out we were going to play it and it killed him before his time.

In any case, I would rate Welles's production as being the second-best adaptation of the novel. Only the BBC/PBS production is better. The amount of the original story that Welles fit into an hour is really very impressive. It shows his genius for the radio drama better than the much more commonly heard WAR OF THE WORLDS.

2. The next evening double feature will be observations of human society as seen by an outsider. On Thursday, October 24, starting at 7:00PM, we will show

Two Strangers in a Strange Land:

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH (1976), directed by Nicholas Roeg

THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET (1984), directed by John Sayles

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 127A MT 1A-121 *

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH is an odd experimental film starring rock star David Bowie as Thomas Jerome Newton, an alien sent to Earth on a mission to save his planet. He is instead corrupted by human vices. An odd thing to notice about the film is how many different kinds of music are in the film.

THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET is a film by John Sayles (RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN, LIANA). The film shows black society as seen by a black alien. Not quite up to the cleverness of the title, it is still a perceptive and artistic film.

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

SILVER BULLET
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A generally well-made horror film that does not quite satisfy the way some of its recent competition--notably Fright Night--does. Plastic effects and a werewolf that would have been pretty scary in 1980.

Dino Di Laurentiis-produced films have had a bad name since King Kong. Dune and Red Sonja have not helped that reputation. A few of his films have been well-done in spite of the much-feared name. Conan the Barbarian was a good film and certainly Ragtime was. And I think that Stephen King has no reason to complain about either The Dead Zone or Firestarter, two very nicely mounted productions of King novels. Di Laurentiis has returned to his formerly profitable fields, producing Silver Bullet, an adaptation of King's recent book Cycle of the Werewolf.

Silver Bullet is at once the worst of Di Laurentiis's three King films and a better adaptation than King deserved. One reason that it was better is that King wrote the script himself and was able to add enough to make a story worthy of a film. The book was a paperback costing nearly \$9, yet the story was too short to make a film by itself. It is little more than twelve vignettes that form a story of a werewolf who attacks once a month for a year. As a sort of an odd reversal, the film gives King a chance to flesh out some characters who were not very well developed in the book.

Silver Bullet deals with a series of werewolf attacks in a small town. The main character is a boy in a wheelchair--not the most likely werewolf-hunter, but that is part of what makes the story. Unfortunately, King's fleshing out of his story added some nonsense for the younger crowd also. One piece is a special wheel-chair crossed with a motorcycle so that it can outrace a car. It is a rather childish idea that Spielberg would love, but which saps the film of some needed credibility.

The Amazing Transforming Werewolf is the creation of Carlo Rambaldi. The effects were inspired (to say the least) by Rob Bottin's werewolves in The Howling. The effects seem a little more plastic than Bottin's and the resulting creature is not nearly as formidable. The werewolf from The Howling still wins hands down as the one I judge most likely to be picking pieces of me out of its teeth after it catches me in a dark alley. The werewolf in Silver Bullet is formidable, but not really in the same class.

As a werewolf film, Silver Bullet is only slightly sub-formidable. It tells its story with some likable characters, but it is no classic. It's a "see once and throw away" film. Rate it +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. My recommendation: see the film; don't buy the book.

THE RED MAGICIAN by Lisa Goldstein
Pocket, 1982, \$2.25.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

A while back I reviewed a number of stories concerning golems. They were, in fact, every book I could get my hands on concerning the creature of folklore. Following the publication of that article I got comments saying that golems showed up in comic books (which are effectively unavailable to me) and in Lisa Goldstein's The Red Magician. Now that was embarrassing because I owned the book and once it was mentioned I remembered seeing a golem on the cover. The Red Magician joined 33 other books on my "must read" shelf (some of which have been there over two years). My shame at having missed this one for my article pushed it up toward the front of the queue. And, well, here we are.

Of late we have seen fantasy novels set in a number of historical cultures. It is a pleasant change from having them all set in Celtic Britain, Medieval Europe, or some never-never land. Classical China, for example, was used in Hughart's Bridge of Birds. Australian Aboriginal mythology is the basis of Patricia Wrightson's trilogy The Ice Is Coming, The Dark Bright Water, and The Journey Behind the Wind. Goldstein sets her story in the Jewish villages of Eastern Europe, just before, during, and after the Holocaust. The story is of a mystical rabbi who really can work miracles and of a traveling magician who has foreseen the future and arrives with warnings of what is to come. A conflict begins between the two that will go on for years. We see the story from the viewpoint of Kicsi, a young girl infatuated with Voros, the magician.

The Red Magician is too short and simple to be considered an adult fantasy, but it is more sophisticated than most juveniles. Goldstein has a feel for Jewish folklore and life in the Eastern European Jewish communities. The Red Magician is a fantasy that will be quickly forgotten. It will probably be read mostly by Jewish fantasy readers. (I think that Bridge of Birds will be read by a much higher proportion of non-Chinese.) It is a simple but well-written story that should not disappoint most of its readers. Rate it +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. Oh, and as for a golem, there is one but it is only a minor plot element.

COMMANDO

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Childish but enjoyable action adventure. Commando is heavy on violence and light on credibility.

Last year's the Terminator proved that there is big boxoffice to see Arnold Schwarzenegger as an implacable juggernaut, killing any and everything in his path. In that film he was a flesh-covered robot and he killed literally dozens of people in the course of the film. In Commando he is human, and a hero, so he kills what must be more than 150 people. He in fact single-handedly kills an entire army, one or two at a time, without ever sustaining more than minor injuries.

John Matrix (no relation to Martin Gardner's Dr. Matrix) is an ex-commando whose destructive skills lie somewhere between Rambo's and Godzilla's. He has retired before the start of the film and is living in the hills hugging his daughter and carrying around trees. Unfortunately, some nasties kidnap the daughter and take all the fun out of tree-carrying. It seems they want Matrix to assassinate a South American president. Matrix swears that when the task is complete he will kill the nasties. He skips the assassination and goes immediately into the killing phase.

The basic story of Commando is not really too bad. Admittedly there were fewer details to get wrong, but while The Terminator had several obviously erroneous touches, Commando had fewer to get wrong. There are two major problems that The Terminator did not have. Matrix picks up a wise-cracking confederate along the way (Rae Dawn Chong from Quest for Fire), but their wise-cracking always seems forced and unbelievable. But the real unbelievability comes in the way the fights are choreographed. Some of the stunts require split-second timing and a lot of coincidence for one man to do what Matrix does, particularly in one scene involving an elevator. No matter how many soldiers come at Matrix with machine guns blazing, our man is never hit. Nobody can ever sneak up on him, even is he is involved defending himself from attackers from other directions. One spray of his never-empty machine gun will kill every one of his two dozen attackers, yet not one will manage to wound Matrix. Matrix is just too super a hero and the script is too obviously aimed at a junior high audience. But for fun (albeit mindless) action, it isn't bad. Rate it 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

COUNTRY

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is a very authentic view of the problems of an Iowa farm family. It is believable in ways that even good films like Places in the Heart don't touch. This is the best film I have seen in a good long time.

Let's face it. My main interest is fantasy film. I like films of James Bond saving the world, of interplanetary warfare, stories with monsters. I don't remember being as caught up in a film as I was in this film about an Iowa farm family and their financial problems. Country was one of three similar films that came out at the same time. I haven't seen The River, but I really enjoyed Places in the Heart. That film had characters who were people the way they ought to be. They were deep down noble and dogged and behaved as if they stepped out of a Faulkner novel. Country is different. Somebody didn't get these characters out of novels. Somebody saw these characters over the back fence. I, admittedly, have not lived that much around country people (though I have lived in the Midwest), but these people are as authentic as any people I remember ever seeing in a film. When they show courage it is the kind of courage people really show. And they have very human weaknesses also. When the characters have problems they come in eight at a time, just like mine do.

Jessica Lange is Jewell Ivy. About ten years ago, Lange got a multi-picture contract for appearing in King Kong. She played the role with a talent almost on the Tanya Roberts level. I could not imagine what other director would ever want her again. Ten years later, I cannot imagine what other actress could have been as believable as an Iowa farm wife. Her mannerisms are real, she looks like a farm wife--for me she was near perfect in the role. And as far as I know, it was her first time in a role of this type. Sam Shepard at least has experience playing a farmer. He played a similar role in Resurrection. His authenticity almost matches Lange's. Wilford Brimley is almost always good as an actor and in this film he rates a distinct third place.

What more can I say? When I watched this film I really worried about the Ivy family. I felt like I had the same financial problems. Everywhere I look in this film it is authentic. I was really impressed by this film. I give it a strong +3 on the -4 to +4 scale. Disney Studios has never made a more adult and intelligent film. I missed this one in the theater, but I am glad I finally saw it on cable.