

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 10/23/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 17

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>
10/30	LZ: THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE by Niven & Pournelle (First Contact)
11/06	HO: ?
11/13	MT: ?
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 (957-2288).

1. "First impressions are lasting impressions," they say. The Lincroft chapter will be discussing this cliché, as well as making insightful comments, when we examine the theme of First Contact. No, we're not taking about one's initial experiences with Bauch & Lomb lenses, but humankind's initial contact with other intelligent races. THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE by Niven and Pournelle is the main book to be discussed. Other recommended books on the same theme are LeGuin's THE WORD FOR THE WORLD IS FOREST, Russell's MEN, MARTIANS, AND MACHINES, and Varley's TITAN series. [-jrtr]

2. As some of you may know it is Evelyn who makes up the Holmdel This Week notice for the club and does a fine job of it... usually. I would like to stand up for her but in all honesty, I cannot stand by and let her tell people that DRACULA was the Halloween offering of Orson Welles Mercury Theater one year. The Mercury Theater was on only one year and there Halloween offering that year was INVASION FROM MARS based on WAR OF THE WORLDS. That is one reason it was only on one season. In any case, this broadcast was in August some time, if memory serves, and was the first of the Mercury Theater broadcasts.

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

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

Three Short Film Reviews
by Mark R. Leeper

CREATOR: This is a not very good film for about eight different reasons. A scientist is trying to bring his dead wife back by cloning. Nobody mentions that it will give him only an identical twin who will be more than fifty years his junior. May-December love stories are one thing, January-December, something else. There is not enough story there, so a sort of Love Story is grafted on, but it too doesn't seem to understand the rules of science and in a way that gives dangerous misinformation to the viewer. (I hope that last sentence will be meaningful only if you have seen the film.) The comedy is contrived, especially the football game and the last scene, neither of which would work the way they do in the real world. With a seeming realism, it once again says that leading theoretical researchers are basically mad scientists. Rate it a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE JAGGED EDGE: This film had just about everything it needed except a good script. The film must have wanted to be another Body Heat, but from the moment one side starts to win in the trial, the rest of the film is all too predictable. People familiar with mystery films will recognize that the basic story has been done before in another famous mystery film. There is some suspense thrown in, but not enough to make it worthwhile. With the exception of one TV critic, everyone I know who saw it guessed the ending. Rate it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

THE COMPANY OF WOLVES: This is a fantasy set in a dream that has a moody dream-like quality. The film is full of Freudian imagery and fairy tales. There are several different werewolf tales woven into this lush film. It is not a great film, but it is definitely an unusual film and worth seeing. Rate it +1 on the -4 o +4 scale.

Mercury Capsules - October 23, 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 pa!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft, {pegasus,mtgzz,ihnp4}!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at 113A LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

Well, I'm working on my first review (First and Last Men) for the special Stapleton issue of the newsletter. That's one. Anyone else gonna have one this year?

⊗ "Alamo Jobe": teleplay, first broadcast on Amazing Stories, Sunday, the 20th of October, 1985.

Amazing Stories has caused some discussions at the Leeper and Chisholm households. Evelyn, who time-shifts shows to her convenience, has threatened to stop even that if the season's third show wasn't better. And my better half insists that if you miss the first half-hour of Murder, She Wrote, you may as well skip the rest. (It'd led me to briefly consider getting - shudder - a VCR. I got over it quickly.)

Well, I bet Evelyn has one less event to program her VCRs for. Certainly Sherry and I will go back to watching Jessica Fletcher find whodunit . . . until someone can really write an amazing story.

I can't tell you *anything* about "Alamo Jobe" without giving the whole thing away. There's just so little to it. Spielberg doesn't know the difference between a story, an incident, and a clever idea. In this case, the idea (Spielberg's) is how a boy at the fall of the Alamo suddenly stumbles into modern San Antonio. The incident is a kid wearing weird clothes, carrying an old rifle, and riding a horse through San Antonio. The story must be on some other channel.

My nine-year-old liked it, though.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊗ Amazing Stories: anthology series, godfathered by Steven Spielberg, 1985-1987.

When we discovered Amazing Stories and Murder, She Wrote were both on at eight on Sundays, we thought we might need a VCR. Now, we're not sure we need a TV.

Sherry Klus

⊕ "Little Boy Lost": teleplay, first broadcast on Twilight Zone, Friday, the 18th of October, 1985.

A young photographer, who must choose between career and family, comes across a haunting little boy. Kind of poignant, but I didn't like it. "Little Boy Lost" was also, in my opinion, very sexist.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊕ "Wish Bank": teleplay, first broadcast on Twilight Zone, Friday, the 18th of October, 1985.

One way to judge a story is by how little wasted time (or few wasted words) it has. The ten-minute Twilight Zone stories measure up well on this yardstick. This one had a good idea, and reasonably good execution. (It would have been stronger if the lead character was portrayed as a little more careful. She **was** shrewd, which helped a lot.) The ending was both familiar and inconsistent, but not too much of a letdown.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊕ "Nightcrawlers": teleplay, first broadcast on Twilight Zone, Friday, the 18th of October, 1985.

A suspense story, with a powerful fantasy element. I won't spoil it for you. The idea was great, the execution a trifle flawed by too much action and special effects. Scary. Fair stuff.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊕ The Robots of Dawn: novel, Isaac Asimov, 1983.

When I saw this on the library shelves, I was considering buying its sequel, Robots and Empire; I thought this one might help decide me one way or the other.

I'm glad I saved my money.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊕ Far from Home: collection of short stories by Walter Tevis.

SF fans will most likely remember Tevis for The Man Who Fell to Earth, or possibly Mockingbird. Movie fans will remember The Hustler, based on Tevis's earlier (mainstream) novel. His stories were painted from a palette of greys, mostly dark, with an occasional flash of light or bright color.

Far from Home is a collection of stories, set near and far away, all with SF or fantastic elements. This isn't a book for a single

sitting, not so much because its depressing, but because there's so little variety between the tales. And the older, harder SF stories are uniformly predictable.

Tevis passed away recently; there will be no more of his dark prose, dammit. He was never very prolific, and this may be all the short fiction that could be brought together. It has become a eulogy for a writer far more powerful than this collection suggests.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

• Masters of Space and Time and The Meaning of Life: novels, Rudy Rucker, 1984 and 1985.

Masters of Space and Time concerns two scientists who manage to futz with the laws of the Universe, and their comic adventures as they lose and save the world. Fun, with some interesting bits on the nature of reality.

The Meaning of Life is about a young man during the early sixties, and his pursuit of booze, good times, pranks, the Meaning of Life, and getting laid. This starts out as a mainstream novel, but the SF elements (some cliched, some cute) become more pronounced as the novel progresses. It turns out the main character has some very pressing reasons to investigate the Meaning of Life.

In both books, Rucker's prose is invisible, which is usually the best thing one can say about a writer's style. There are some nifty ideas, too. Rucker does some philosophizing about reality, what it means to change it, and what it means for it to change, and what it means to be stuck with it. Two fairly good light reads.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

RE-ANIMATOR
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A sort of a cross between the Frankenstein and zombie genres, Re-Animator is horror done for laughs. It definitely works better as comedy than as horror.

Less than 24 hours after admiring how well Martin Scorsese's After Hours combines comedy and horror at the expense of neither, I saw Re-Animator, a film which also combines comedy and horror, though much less successfully. The publicity said that the film was based on Lovecraft's story "Herbert West, Re-Animator." I guess I don't know Lovecraft very well, because the title rings no bells with me.

In any case, West is a medical student who studied under one of the great medical mad scientists of Europe, a Dr. Gruber, who had strange ideas about how to bring the dead back to life. After Gruber's two untimely deaths, his assistant West has returned to the U.S. to be a pain to the faculty at Miskatonic Medical School in Arkham, Massachusetts. It isn't long before West is using his drug--which looks like Mellow Yellow soda except that it glows in the dark--to turn corpses into zombies that bang their heads against walls and drool something that looks like cream of wheat flavored with Lavoris. Chief among the zombies is a professor who hated West, is killed and re-animated. ("Is he dead?" asks a student. "Not any more," West assures him.) The head and the body have become separated but the head still controls the body through telepathy. The whole film comes to your standard bar-room brawl scene except that it takes place in a morgue and most of the brawlers are dead and some are missing inconsequential body parts like heads.

There is, as you might imagine, a fair amount of gore in this film, including some graphic shots of an autopsy. Nothing looks particularly real, but if just the thought of what you are supposed to be seeing bothers you, you may want to keep your distance. There is a rather interesting musical theme used under the credits and oftentimes in the film itself. The theme, by Richard Band, is just barely different enough from the title music of Psycho to avoid a lawsuit...or perhaps not quite.

As for an overall rating, some of the comedy is worth seeing but as a horror film, this is pretty much a washout. The comedy saps any suspense the film might have. I'd give Re-Animator a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale. If it had tried real horror rather than just gore to make itself frightening, it could have done better.

AFTER HOURS
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A really good script makes this film funny and frightening at the same time. Packed into one night in New York City's SoHo is a lifetime of weirdos, adventure, and horror. See it and you'll laugh, but you will also never set foot in New York after dark. Good film!

Most horror films deal with the laws of nature suddenly breaking down. Suddenly there are vampires or werewolves. A man falls asleep on a train and wakes up in a town where people have no faces. Ghosts invade a home in suburbia. Things happen that break the laws as we expect them. You can't really do a horror story in which the horror element is "I am going to have a really bad trigonometry exam next week." That may be a frightening thought, but it falls too well into common human experience. Perhaps the most convincing kind of horror is that something very abstract like the law of averages breaks down. The reader or viewer may say, "This is too darn much coincidence," but it is tough to get a feel for how much is too much since people run into odd coincidences every day. Falling into a barrage of unpleasant coincidences can be the basis for a frightening and convincing sort of horror story since there is--much more than in a vampire story--the feel that this could happen. People will see After Hours as an often nightmarish but hilarious black comedy but it may not register that it is also very effective as a horror film.

In New York City, a word processor (Paul Hackett, played by Griffin Dunne of An American Werewolf in London), meets a good-looking girl (Marcie, played by Rosanna Arquette) in a restaurant and arranges a date with her, but for his date he has to go to an alien territory called SoHo. Now in real life there is a lot of eccentric people in SoHo and director Martin Scorsese has always had a good eye for making New York City look even more ominous than it actually is. Here he combines an extremely well inter-woven story with very funny portraits of the decidedly weird people who you very well might run into in New York City and gets a film with adventure, horror, and comedy and none at the expense of the others. It has been suggested by critics that horror and comedy are at odds with each other, that a film that is really funny cannot be really frightening. After Hours manages quite nicely.

I do not want to say much more about the plot than I have for fear of spoiling it but I will say that the story is a rich tapestry of coincidence with events and even objects tying together at the strangest and most unexpected times. Joseph Minion has written a truly amazing script that fits together like a cleverly designed Chinese puzzle. It is only the chain of coincidence and the believability of the story that do not fit well together, but that is a minor flaw. It has been

suggested that only New Yorkers will appreciate this film noir comedy and I suspect that remains to be seen. But I haven't laughed so hard at a comedy since seeing A Christmas Story two years ago (perhaps not even then). In some ways this is what Into the Night wanted to be and didn't quite make. It is also what Neil Simon's The Out-of-Towners could have been. This is a +3 comedy on the -4 to +4 scale. There are very few comedies I would rate that high. See it, particularly if you know New York City, but if not, give it a try anyway.

REMO WILLIAMS: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A reasonable variation on the James Bond formula directed by a James Bond director. Joel Grey has some fun as the Korean martial arts expert Chiun and is the best part of the film. Without him, this would be a bland spy film.

One of the many jokes of Woody Allen's Sleeper is that we Americans of today have everything backwards. Tobacco and hot fudge are the healthiest things for your body and health foods are poison. The core of Remo Williams is a Korean martial arts expert named Chiun, and what makes Chiun interesting is that Woody Allen's joke is part of his character. Everything that Americans think is good is really bad; everything we think is bad is really good. You like hamburgers? They're poison; all fast food is poison. You think an automatic is a good weapon? It is useless. And what is the paragon of American culture? The soap opera, and the more melodrama, the better.

But I am getting ahead of myself. The main character of Remo Williams (played by Fred Ward, who also played Gus Grissom in The Right Stuff) is, not too surprisingly, Remo Williams. That's not his real name. He was a policeman killed in the line of duty, or so the world thinks. Instead he was given plastic surgery to make a new man of him--literally. To finish the job of making a new man of him, he is given a mentor--the superhuman Chiun. Based on my memories of two novels of "The Destroyer" series--the series on which the film was based--Chiun has a greater presence in the film than he does in the books. In the books he is the spicing that gives the dish character, but he is used sparingly. Of course, part of the difference is that the film concentrates on Williams's training, so there is more of his teacher in the film. Chiun is played by Joel Grey, perhaps best known as the owner/entertainer in Cabaret. The make-up used to transform Grey into Chiun is somehow not entirely convincing. Some of what Chiun can do in the book--like dodge bullets--sounded good in the book but was not (and probably could not be) realistically translated to the screen. Instead, they just show him ducking out of the way, but not fast enough. Also in the cast is Wilford Brimley as the head of the top secret government organization. Brimley is a very good actor, but only playing characters who are basically Wilford Brimley under other names. Kate Mulgrew's character is a big disappointment. She starts out gutsy and intelligent, but by the film's end she proves to be a more traditional bubblehead. Charles Cioffi plays the villain, an unscrupulous defense contractor.

Remo Williams was directed by Guy Hamilton, who also directed spy adventures like Goldfinger, A Funeral in Berlin, Diamonds Are Forever, Live and Let Die, and The Man with the Golden Gun. The screenplay was

by another James Bond veteran, Christopher Wood. This new film is certainly better than the worst of the Bond series, but one suspects from the title that the producers want to start a new series, and it seems unlikely that the public will really want more than two or three films with this set of characters. Rate the film +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.