

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 10/30/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 18

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>
11/06	HO: JEM by Frederik Pohl
11/12 (Tues)	MT: "Aliens, Dragons, and Monsters" (3K-502)
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) (temp).

1. The Holmdel meetings continue, undaunted by the (prodigious) loss of the Leepers. The next discussion will be one of the book JEM by ex-local writer Freddie Pohl. Freddie has been writing stories for a good long time and has been known to come off with a good one every now and again. JEM is considered one of the goodies. As always, there are copies in the Holmdel Science Fiction Library, if you do not have a copy of your own. [Actually, the copies are there whether you have a copy of your own or not. -ec1]

2. I was listening to a record of music from science fiction films. They played the title song from the epic science fiction film GREEN SLIME (yes, there was a Japanese-American co-production called GREEN SLIME). The lyrics contain the lines:

Man has looked out to space in wonder  
For thousands of years,  
Sometimes thinking that life could be somewhere  
And now...now it's here!

"What a pity," I thought, "if after all that searching we found life and it made you sick just to look at it." But that got me thinking about how likely it was that if we found life in the universe it would likely be something that would turn our collective stomachs. There are, after all, not many life-forms on this planet that if you saw one scaled up to about six feet tall or 180 pounds would not make you at least a little queasy. I heard

\*\*\*\*\*Presorted\*\*\*\*\*  
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\* 127A MT 1A-121 \*  
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someplace that most of the animal bio-mass of the world is beetles. We should certainly be used to what a beetle looks like. Let's face it--Gregor Samsa didn't have any groupies. Mick Jagger has groupies, but even that is pushing human tolerance.

Not that there isn't a good reason to instinctively be disgusted by relatively alien life-forms. That's nature's way of saying "Do not touch!" It is similar to the instinctive fear some people have of spiders and snakes. Somewhere in our past there were some pre-humans who hated spiders and snakes, and some who thought they were pretty and grabbed for them. The former group were our ancestors; the latter ended as Caveman McNuggets for jackals or buzzards or something. Life-forms fall into three classes: friends, food, and foes. That's the safest way for a pre-human to live. Friends better be close friends.

So most life-forms we find disgusting, but the converse is even more true. Only a small part of the matter on Earth is connected with life-forms, yet everything disgusting is. I don't mean virtually everything, I mean everything. Think about it. What your cat left on the floor, the disposable diaper you kicked in the grocery parking lot, what you stepped in on the sidewalk: they are all icky because of their connection to living matter. There's nothing disgusting about rocks on the moon. People can say space is barren and cold but it isn't disgusting. When you find green slime, then it will be disgusting.

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

## MISHIMA

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Stylistically, Mishima is a very good film that is challenging on many levels. It is intellectually stimulating; at the same time, it is entertaining. Its great downfall is in its failure to allow the viewer to see more than just a superficial view of Mishima's philosophy.

On November 25, 1970, Yukio Mishima took a general in the Japanese army hostage, made a speech to the soldiers on the general's military base, and then committed ritual suicide. Even Mishima's greatest detractors have to admit the man's accomplishments were impressive. He was a novelist, a philosopher, and a man who had built his own army. It was as if Lyndon LaRouche, John Updike, Eric Hoffer, and John Wayne were combined in one man. Paul Schrader has brought to the screen a portrait of the man in Mishima.

The film takes the form of a series of reminiscences of Mishima on the day of his death. We see a little of Mishima's life and the influences that forged his philosophy that Japan should be restored to its military greatness through the code of Bushido. Mishima works out his personal problems and builds his philosophy through his novel writing. Three of his novels are presented as stylized plays inter-edited with scenes from Mishima's past and scenes of the day of his suicide. The three elements are easily distinguished, however, since the scenes in his memory are in black and white, and the scenes from the novels are done in so stylized a manner that there is no confusing them with the scenes of reality.

In each of the novels we see Mishima's philosophy work itself out as characters are honor-bound to carry out strange or even insane-seeming courses of action--even as Mishima himself felt compelled toward the actions of the day he died. Schrader and Mishima himself, however, make the same mistake in assuming that because Mishima could win followers, his philosophy is easily conveyed and self-evident. To the film's audience, as well as the audience who listened to Mishima's final speech, little more is conveyed than the macho and nostalgic philosophy that things were better in Japan's great feudal past and that Japan must be returned to her former glory with all men living by the warrior virtues of the past. This has to be a very superficial treatment of the philosophy and the treatment makes Mishima seem a romantic but tragic fool.

Mishima is a strikingly beautiful film. The stories within the main story use color vibrantly and the set design for these plays is ingenious. Philip Glass's score for the film is really the first piece of his music I have heard that was not driving me crazy after three minutes. I suppose the music is just less minimalist than his usual fare. I give Mishima a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale, but it would have been more if I really felt that I understood the character better when I left the theater than when I came in.



THE SUSHI HANDBOOK by Kenji Kumusai  
Heian International, 1983, \$?.  
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

The Sushi Handbook is much like a piece of sushi itself. It is small--about 90 pages--it is carefully put together with attention to detail, and it is often surprising to an American. The reader comes away with a better feel for the simplicity and requirement for perfection in that simplicity that is an entirely different approach to making food than we have in this country.

If we had that philosophy, every time you went to McDonald's you would be served your hamburger at the table. It would come with the top bun off. You would spend the first minutes admiring the top bun. It would be a network of golden-brown points on a white background. There would be no points darker than golden-brown. The catsup and mustard would be on the patty in perfectly circular patterns. The pickle would have the cucumber peel removed by hand. It too would be symmetrically placed dead center on the patty. The patty itself would be hand-formed but would be of absolutely uniform thickness to within a quarter-inch of the edge. The edge would be rounded in a curve that is pleasing to the eye. Placing the top bun on the burger, you would note that it was a perfectly rounded dome without a sign of a bend or crease and certainly no cracks in the crust. The fries would lie next to the hamburger, each cut from the potato to an identical length. There would be potato skin at each end so that the eater would know that they were not just hacked to the proper length, but were that length in the original potato. They would be a uniform color and straight as arrows. There would be exactly eight of them; more would be garish. They would be stacked in a four-wide, two-high matrix. The price of the platter would be \$17.95.

A Westerner tends to feel that the Japanese are into simple art. They like bamboo paintings that are done with a few sparse brush-strokes. It is easy for a Westerner to confuse the Japanese philosophy with a love of simplicity. In fact, they seem to have a love of complexity in even simple things. Differences in sushi that the Westerner is oblivious to could make a great deal of difference to a tsu--a real sushi expert. Supposedly one characteristic of a perfect piece of sushi--the impossible dream--is that all the rice grains line up parallel to each other. The argument that it all gets mixed up in your stomach anyway is clearly an American argument and would not impress a tsu.

The Sushi Handbook gives the reader a quick introduction to some very, very picayune details to look for as well as some not so picayune. It gives the reader a way to impress your friends and the waitress and the vocabulary to describe sushi using the Japanese terms. It is the most complete source I have seen on the subject.