

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 11/6/85 -- Vol. 4, No. 19

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.

DATE

TOPIC

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).

1. On Tuesday, November 12, (note the unusual day of Tuesday) we will have our first video meeting at Middletown. We will see a documentary on the career of Hollywood's master of special effects from the 50's right up to STAR WARS. The man's name is Ray Harryhausen. He was the apprentice of Willis O'Brien who did the original LOST WORLD and KING KONG. Harryhausen was responsible for the effects of films like BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, FIRST MEN IN THE MOON, VALLEY OF GWANGI, GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD, SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER, and CLASH OF THE TITANS. He is the finest craftsman in the world for stop-motion photography. The film we are showing has some of Harryhausen's best work.

At least for the time being we have access to a VCR at Middletown so we can have video meetings. I cannot promise how long that will go on. History at other locations seems to indicate that VCRs cannot be well enough guarded and get stolen all too often. In the past that has killed video meetings at both Lincroft and Holmdel. I hope the VCRs at Middletown will be chained down.

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

\*\*\*\*\*Presorted\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Leeper, Evelyn C. \*  
\* 127A MT 1A-121 \*  
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ONCE BITTEN  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: One more weak fantasy-teenage-sex-comedy. Its humor is weak, its logic is weaker, and its respect for vampire lore is non-existent. Once Bitten is one long unimaginative cheap shot.

Once Bitten is an empty, dull, stupid comedy that is bankrupt of new ideas. It is formula filmmaking, combining the all too familiar elements of teenage sex, rock music with "video" written all over it, low humor in bad taste, and fantasy elements (mishandled) as the excuse for all this. It should be thrown in the same bin with Weird Science and Teen Wolf and too many others.

Lauren Hutton--who is a little old for the part--is a sexy vampire who needs to have the blood of a virgin boy three times before Halloween. Shall we stop here and list some things wrong with this premise? There is a lot of vampire folklore to choose from and a lot of different kinds of vampires. This "legend" has nothing to do with any of them. There is nothing in the legends that I have ever heard of about anything three times and there certainly is nothing about Halloween. Halloween is associated with Celtic lands and the vampire legends are not. Walpurgis Night may have almost worked in the film--it would have shown some minimal knowledge of the origin of most vampire legends--but Halloween is extremely unlikely to be part of any vampire folklore. The film implies that its invented vampire folklore is the commonly accepted folklore.

But our sexy vampire is running into problems: there are no more teenage virgin boys she can find. (Nod, nod, wink, wink, little kiddies.) It does not take a whole lot of intelligence to come up with ways to find teenage virgins, but it is a smutty joke to say there are none left. So the writer made it a premise on which the plot turns. With the help of her swishy homosexual daylight assistant--Cleavon Little--she goes in search of the last virgin in the area. In the Thirties and Forties the comic relief in film was often provided by a black who was expected to shuffle his feet and act stupid. These days the swishy homosexual seems to be taking the black's place. The homosexuality for humor is just one cheap shot in the barrage this film lays down.

Jim Carrey is a teenager who has been unable to have sex with his girlfriend so, of course, he is the last virgin around and the target for Hutton's advances. That is the first two scenes and the only surprises that remain in the film is where the film takes liberties with logic. This film is a cut better than Weird Science, but it gets the same -2 on the -4 to +4 scale.



THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Freddie Francis's retelling of the story of the Burke and Hare murders is a 1960's horror film that somehow got made in the 1980's. It is a good film but nothing very exceptional.

One of Britain's most respected directors of photography is Freddie Francis. He did the photography for films like Room at the Top, The Innocents (a superb job), Night Must Fall, and The French Lieutenant's Woman. Not quite so distinguished is his career as a film director, predominantly directing horror films such as Evil of Frankenstein, Dr. Terror's House of Horrors, The Skull, Dracula Has Risen from the Grave, Trog, Tales from the Crypt, and Asylum. His dream through his horror film days was to make a film from Dylan Thomas's screenplay called "The Doctor and the Devils." During his work with horror film companies Hammer, Amicus, and Tyburn he was unable to sell the idea. Years later he did sell the idea to Mel Brooks, who previously had produced Elephant Man, a film which verged on Gothic horror. That is why Francis is once again directing horror.

The Doctor and the Devils is really little more than a good horror film of the style made in Britain in the 1960's. In fact, it is a virtual remake of John Gilling's 1959 film Flesh and the Fiends, with Timothy Dalton in Peter Cushing's role and Jonathan Pryce in the part originally played by Donald Pleasence. The film tells the true story of the Burke and Hare murders that occurred in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the 1820's. Burke and Hare (here renamed Fallon and Broom) would rob graves to supply cadavers to the local medical school. When the demand outstripped the supply, they hit upon a process to convert the wretched of the streets of the city into valuable medical cadavers. The law, however, contended that the generation of cadavers was an anti-social activity, and Burke and Hare became notorious criminals.

A reasonably good script makes Fallon and Broom's crimes seem a logical progression from stealing a corpse from a grave-robber to grave-robbing to euthanasia to cold-blooded murder. It does not give in to the temptation of making them seem like boogeymen, but comprehensible characters. Nor is the doctor who apparently knowingly closes his eyes to the source of his cadavers seem all wrong either. The script allows for some discussion of the morality of grave-robbing for the knowledge to help prevent human suffering.

As might be expected of a Freddie Francis film, the photography is quite atmospheric. Unfortunately his efforts are somewhat undermined by his budget. The city sets occasionally seem claustrophobic, making it obvious the film was shot on a small indoor set rather than in a full-size city. Realistically, but a drawback nonetheless, much of the

dialogue is indistinct and hence lost on the audience, including the important last lines of the film.

It is interesting that The Doctor and the Devils is playing in art houses and being treated as if it were a film of unusual quality. Placed side by side with Flesh and the Fiends, one would be hard-pressed to choose which is really the better treatment of the story. If the film had been released in, say, 1962, it would have gone completely unnoticed. Give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE  
GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL  
Two film reviews by Mark R. Leeper

A few weeks ago I watched the film Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, John Sturges's 1957 film about the famous gunfight that pitted Wyatt Earp, his brothers, and Doc Holliday against the Clanton gang. At that time, as I will often do, I read some historical sources on the same event. In this case, what I read was Carl Sifakis's Encyclopedia of American Crime. As an adaptation, Gunfight at the O.K. Corral took certain liberties with historical fact. For one thing, a 30-second gunfight lasted a good seven or eight minutes on the screen. The scriptwriter seemed to have his facts right up to a point, then suddenly lost all interest in accuracy. Holliday did, indeed, kill Ed Bailey in a barroom fight and escaped a lynching only with the help of Big Nose Kate Elder, but in the film Elder did not turn around and accuse Holliday of a stagecoach robbery.

But one of the big faults was turning Wyatt Earp into a hero. Wyatt Earp has the distinction of being probably the only brothel owner, horse thief, and graft-taker ever to be made a hero in a children's TV show. The gunfight indeed was a grudge fight, but it was the result of Ike Clanton agreeing to capture some outlaws for Earp and give Earp the credit, then failing to deliver. The feud got worse until the Earp brothers and Holliday massacred the Clantons at the O.K. Corral. "The Fighting Pimps," as the locals called them, were eventually hounded out of Tombstone as a result of the incident. Gunfight at the O.K. Corral insisted on making the Earp side the heroes.

I saw some place a documentary in which John Ford claimed that his version of the gunfight in My Darling Clementine was accurate. I was anxious to see John Ford's film, and by coincidence, it showed up on TV the following week.

John Ford is one of the great American filmmakers. Ephraim Katz calls My Darling Clementine one of Ford's great Western masterpieces. Leonard Maltin gives it four stars and calls it "one of Ford's finest films, and an American classic." Leeper calls it "a horrible turkey of the first water."

First of all, the historical story and the title song have no connection whatsoever. To force the song into the film, they have thrown a character named Clementine in. She adds a tepid love interest. Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp keeps saying, "I shore do like that name--- Clementine." The historical story and the plot of the film have almost no connection. In the film the hostilities start when the Clantons rustle the Earp's cattle and kill Wyatt's young teenage brother James. James Earp was the eldest of the Earp brothers and he lived 45 years after the gunfight. From there the story goes really bizarre. The

Earps are once again white-washed into being pure good guys, and shy around women to boot. In the film, the population of Tombstone loves the Earps. This is not a terrible film; it is skillfully made and adequately photographed. The script really lets down the rest of the film however. I have to say that My Darling Clementine is a vastly over-rated classic. Give it a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.