

Conceived, published and put about for the 1st mailing of OMPA by Fred L. Smith, 613 Great Western Road, Glasgow, W.2.

Greetings, fellow members! I don't know who you are yet, of course, but I daresay a lot of you will be the familiar old hacks last seen sepping up bheer at the Con, so I feel I practically know you already. This is really rather like writing a letter to twenty five people at once (at least I hope it's twenty five), isn't it? Except that it has a title. No apologies are being made to Hal Clement, Jerry Sohl or Costigan for the use of this title, incidentally, but actually it is a subtle ploy to get my name bruited about. Everyone will have to refer to this as Fred Smith's Needle, you see, to distinguish it from the others. Thus fame becomes mine with the minimum of effort. Also more work for the punsters. To dispose of the obvious and not to make it easy for you, you'll be able to say that I give you the Needle or you get the Noodle from me. I can't think of any more.

DEPT. OF MOVIE REVIEWS

Nothing could be better for filling up space than a couple of film reviews. I recently saw three films that should be of more than passing interest to stfans, although they aren't fantasy, just fantastic.

The Naked Jungle This one has been going the rounds for a while now. It's produced by George Pal, directed by Byren Haskin and based on Carl Stephenson's famous short story "Leiningen versus the Ants," which, as you probably know, was reprinted in one of the sf anthologies. Unfortunately the film does not live up to this premise. To pad out the story to a suitable length, a great deal of love interest has been added. So much so, in fact, that it becomes almost the main theme; Leiningen's fabulous battle with the ant army being merely the climax which winds up a rather dull story. The most effective point about this film is the way the threat is kept a mystery most of the way through, only slowly revealed to the audience. One of the best scenes is when a party sets out to investigate some reports and vague rumours which have been circulating. They are camping out in the jungle when Eleanor Parker (who is along for the one track minded) wakes up suddenly with a sense of alarm at something. Turns out it isn't an extra in a gorilla suit, so she goes out of her tent. She finds Leiningen (Charlton Heston) and a couple of others also up and starts to ask them what's happening. They tell her to listen. Complete silence! It's pretty eerie, especially since we don't know yet (unless we've read the story) what's causing it. The suspense is let down later on, though, when the ants finally arrive at the plantation. Although there are four square miles of them, they seem far less horrifying in the film than they did in the original story, mainly because

their carnivorous aspects are played down by the elimination of all the gruesome scenes. If you've read it, you'll certainly remember the vivid bit when a deer staggers down to the plantation covered in ants, with its eyes eaten out. Leiningen shoots it and in a few minutes, there are nothing but bare bones left! In the film, the ants seem about as dangerous as a plague of locusts and are far too easily beaten. It's not a very bad picture, but you'll find yourself waiting for something to start happening most of the way through it, if you go.

The Sea Around Us This is based on Rachel L. Carson's famous book on marine biology, which I haven't read yet. The film is a one hour technicolour documentary about life in and near the sea and it's fascinating. Apart from some fairly obvious stuff like a fight between a shark and an octopus and the hunting of a whale, there are some fabulously beautiful shots of microscopic unicellular animals and plants, as well as more complicated small creatures. I can't begin to describe them, they are so varied (even within the same species!) except to say that they are more fantastic than anything even Cartier has dreamed up. The picture is worth seeing for this alone.

The Living Desert How the photographers ever managed to secure these shots, even with telescopic lenses, is a mystery. You probably know that this is Walt Disney's full length Academy Award winner about the North American Desert and the life forms which inhabit it. When you see films like this and "The Sea Around Us", you can't help wondering whether life could take any weirder shapes on other planets. No trufan should miss this one.

DEPT. OF APOLOGIA FOR FILLING UP FANZINE WITH FILM REVIEWS

Well, I seem to have rambled on at great length about these. The fact is I saw them just recently, had to tell someone about them and this was handy. But don't worry, chaps. It won't happen again. Whatever I put in the next NEEDLE, it won't be film reviews.

DEPT. OF NOSTALGIA, ETC.

Two months after the Convention, I find myself still recalling odd incidents and peepul. The con is ended but the malady lingers on, as the tunesmith had it. He should've kept it. Ever since that conglomeration, several ideas have been churning around in my fertile brain. One of these was to hold a dinner-dance-cum-what have you in Glasgow around Christmas or New Year, sponsored by the Newlanders, but open to anyone else who can make it. A Minicon, in fact. Plans haven't jelled yet, but a further bulletin will be issued in the coming issue of HAEMOGOBLIN. If any of you can attend, you'll be very welcome.

DEPT. OF WINDUP

Sorry this has been so brief, but I expect to see you at great length in the next mailing and with more interesting material, I hope. Till then, fare thee well.