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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 01/05/90 -- Vol. 8, No. 27

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.  
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158. MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

\_ D \_ A \_ T \_ E          \_ T \_ O \_ P \_ I \_ C

- 01/24 LZ: "The Borribles" Trilogy by Michael de Larrabeiti (Urban Fantasy)
- 02/14 LZ: Science Fiction and Romance (see below)
- 03/07 LZ: THRICE UPON A TIME by James Hogan (Affecting the Past)

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\_ M \_ E \_ E \_ T \_ I \_ N \_ G \_ S / \_ C \_ O \_ N \_ V \_ E \_ N \_ T \_ I \_ O \_ N \_ S / \_ E \_ T \_ C .

- 01/13 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: Victoria Poyser  
(book cover artist)  
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)
- 01/20 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: James Morrow  
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt  
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrft  
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzx!leeper  
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3D-225A 949-5866 homxb!tps  
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 lzfme!lfl  
MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
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1. Well, after a pause for our vacation and the holidays the Science Fiction Club film festival is restarting. The next fest (at 7PM on Thursday, January 11) is going to be a novelty for the science fiction club--the films will be \_ s \_ c \_ i \_ e \_ n \_ c \_ e \_ f \_ i \_ c \_ t \_ i \_ o \_ n ! We got two goodies from the magic island of Britain:

British SF Thrillers

UNEARTHLY STRANGER (1963) dir. by John Kirsh  
DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS (1981) dir. by Ken Hannam

U\_n\_e\_a\_r\_t\_h\_l\_y\_S\_t\_r\_a\_n\_g\_e\_r is a little-known thriller I saw on the bottom half of a double feature. In college I listed it as my second favorite science fiction film. For years I hoped it would show up

THE MT VOID

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on television so I could get it on tape. A top secret research establishment is working on space exploration through a form of mental projection. Somebody is killing off key members of the team through apparently impossible means. John Neville (The Adventuress of Baron Munchausen) and Jean Marsh (Upstairs, Downstairs) star.

Day of the Triffids is based on the novel by John Wyndham, but do not confuse it with the poor 1961 film adaptation. This is a BBC production close enough to the novel that you can follow along page by page. This could be one of the best dramatic adaptations of a science fiction novel ever done.

2. From my mailbox:

- >
- > Mark,
- > Speaking of films released only on video, did you get a chance to see
- > "The Wizard of Speed and Time" while your were at World Con? Have
- > you heard anything about its wider release or even if it
- > will come out on video?
- >

WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME will be coming out on video February 1 from SGE Home Video. There is a campaign sending mail to fannish groups asking them to request their video dealers order it. If people want more information let me know.

I have not seen the film and generally am not a big fan of Jittlov after the first viewing. However, a lot of people seem interested in this film, so I post this for general interest.

3. And Kimiye Tipton had this to say in response to Evelyn Leeper's

article on Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga" stories:

I have to comment on your thought-provoking review of the Kirinyaga stories. I agree that the stories leave much to the reader's interpretation. I had the chance to hear Resnick read "For I Have Touched the Sky" at our Orlando con in May, and I mentioned to him that he had done a fascinating job of describing Koriba's reasoning. Mike replied, "He's a fanatic, and all fanatics are dangerous." From this I'm guessing that Koriba does not = Resnick. I plan to read "Bwana" this weekend to see if it affects me the same way it did you.

Perhaps Resnick is falling too far on the side of making Koriba plausible, and is making his ideas too convincing? We should tell him if so, since I believe the author's intentions are to show the destruction that fanaticism can bring. [-kt]

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzx!leeper

The degree of non-conformity present--and tolerated--in a society might be looked upon as a symptom of its state of health.

-- Ben Shahn

THE WORLD BEYOND THE HILL by Alexei and Cory Panshin  
Tarcher, 1990, ISBN 0-87477-436-S, \$29.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1989 Evelyn C. Leeper

This study of science fiction from its origins through its "Golden Age" is not just another standard reference work. It does not consist of sections on each of the major authors, listing their works and publication dates. What the Panshins have done instead is to examine the trends and works of science fiction in the context of the social events and philosophies of the time. The swing from science as devil to science as savior and back again is reflected, they say, in the science fiction being written through the years. And they help to dispel some of the myth of John W. Campbell as monolithic creator and leader of the Golden Age. Some of this is already known. For example, that Campbell's insistence that in any human/non-human encounter human

supremacy must be demonstrated and Asimov's reluctance to support such racist ideas led to Asimov's all-human universe is fairly common knowledge. But the Panshins present their information in a strictly chronological order rather than by author as is common in other works, and this global rather than individual perspective sets this work apart.

This is not to say that I always agree with the Panshins's conclusions or opinions. That this book is published by Tarcher is no surprise--Tarcher is trying to build a line of "New Age" science fiction books: science fiction books that emphasize the metaphysical and transcendent instead of blueprints and spaceships. (I would question throwing Olaf Stapledon into the "New Age" category, though.) Since the main focus of T\_h\_e\_W\_o\_r\_l\_d\_B\_e\_y\_o\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_H\_i\_l\_l is the metaphysical nature of science fiction, or at least those aspects of science fiction that are based in transcending this world, this makes it a perfect book for the series. It does mean, however, that the Panshins give less space to those works or science fiction that do not, in their opinion, form part of this search for "the world beyond."

The only thing that prevents me from whole-heartedly recommending this book is the price. Yes, it's a thick book representing a lot of work, but there's something about a \$30 pricetag that makes one hesitate. But I would strongly suggest that if you can't afford this book (or even if you can), you should encourage your local library to purchase a copy.

CYBERBOOKS by Ben Bova  
Tor, 1989, ISBN 0-812-50319-8, \$4.50.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1990 Evelyn C. Leeper

Ben Bova has been involved in the publishing industry as author and editor, and his wife is a literary agent. Therefore he should have a good idea of how the publishing industry works. And many other people have said that the representation in this book is accurate. For example, I know that what makes a best seller is the publisher deciding that it will be a best seller. A book that has a print run of 250,000 and a publicity tour will be a best seller; the same book with a print run of 2500 and no publicity will flop. But if all this is true my question is, "Why would Tor publish a book about how stupid the publishing industry is?"

The story is set in 2015 (or so). A computer whiz has developed a "cyberbook"--an electronic book of the standard sort, consisting of a reader and wafers for each book. (Think of the wafers as small mini-disks.) He wants to sell it to a publisher so that books can be made and distributed incredibly cheaply, and in addition, no forests need die. (The question of what ecological damage occurs in the wafer-manufacturing process is avoided entirely.) In the process he (and the reader) learn "how the publishing industry really works."

In addition to the publishing industry, Bova attacks New York, or more specifically, Manhattan. Much of this part seems to be inspired by Tom Wolfe's B\_o\_n\_f\_i\_r\_e\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_n\_i\_t\_i\_e\_s. Wolfe, for example, describes an

outfit worn by one woman as having a hat that is so wide that it couldn't possibly stay on her head in even a slight breeze, so she can never take more than a couple of steps outside with it on. Of course, since one wouldn't dream of walking to a party, even a block away, and since a taxi would mean having to stand outside after the party while a taxi was hailed, people need to hire limousines for the evening to take them to and from parties only a block away. The fashions in Bova's Manhattan change every week rather than every month or year (well, things are speeding up these days), but just as in B\_o\_n\_f\_i\_r\_e, everyone is always working on a different look to stay in step. And everyone has to live in Manhattan for appearances' sake, but can't afford it on one salary, so e\_v\_e\_r\_y\_o\_n\_e is moonlighting.

As a comic science fiction novel, this is excellent. As a serious commentary on the publishing industry today, well, maybe the answer to my question is that the publishing industry is so stupid that they w\_o\_u\_l\_d publish a book about how stupid they are. On the other hand, maybe it's like the mud-eaters: I went to a Renaissance fair once in which there were people who were, I believe, wrestling pigs in mud. At some point, they offered to eat mud if the crowd would collectively pay \$10. After they had collected the money, they ate some mud, and then said, "You think we're stupid for eating this mud for \$10. But what about you?-- you paid \$10 to watch us!"

## FAMILY BUSINESS

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Very substandard Lumet. A powerful performance by Dustin Hoffman is not enough to save this mismatch of story elements, but does raise it to a rating of 0.

Sidney Lumet is one of the best of American directors. His record includes films such as Twelve Angry Men, Fail-Safe, Dog Day After noon,  
and Net work. It would be hard to match for intensity films such as Equus or what may be his most powerful film, The  
Pawnbroker. But somehow something went very wrong with Family Business, a crazy-quilt patchwork that falls apart at the seams.

The first and most unlikely matching is of Sean Connery, Dustin Hoffman, and Matthew Broderick as three generations of the same family. At least one review tells me the novel that the film was based on has everyone being Irish-American. If that is true, and even if not, it represents an appalling sacrifice of credibility for box-office appeal. The whole story lies under the cloud of this initial foolishness. Grandfather Jessie is Irish, his son Vito is Sicilian, and his grandson Adam is Jewish. It was left ambiguous but Jessie's mother may have been Cherokee. Jessie is a career criminal who led his son Vito into crime. Vito, however, eventually broke with his father, married a Jewish woman, ran a meat provision company that he not so secretly hated, and raised a Westinghouse scholar, Adam. Adam, however, is rebelling from his father and wants to follow his grandfather into crime, starting with the unusual robbery of a biological research facility.

While the film is marketed as having substantial comedy, nobody seems to have told director Lumet. Family Business is a crime drama without very much comedy. Even then the actors are mismatched since neither Broderick nor Connery is equipped or prepared to match the intensity of a Dustin Hoffman performance.

Somewhere Lumet seems to have lost control of the theme of the film. The film becomes a defense of crime. It is full of likable criminals who hawk stolen goods at Irish wakes. The nasty people in this film are people who deal in real estate and lawyers, and big

corporations, each of whom is made to look worse than the others. Lumet seems to be saying that Adam should go into likable crime because legal professions are all immoral.

In spite of Hoffman's performance--the only aspect that prevents this film from getting a much lower rating--I would give this film a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. \_ F \_ a \_ m \_ i \_ l \_ y \_ B \_ u \_ s \_ i \_ n \_ e \_ s \_ s is bad business.

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