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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 Club Notice - 11/03/89 -- Vol. 8, No. 18

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

11/22 LZ: THE ABYSS by Orson Scott Card (Underwater SF)

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11/11 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
 (phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

11/11 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: Esther Friesner
 (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!jrjrt
 - MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzx!leeper
 - HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3D-212 949-5866 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. It is time once again for me to bring you an update on what I
 get in the mail. Why should I write about what I get in the mail?
 I guess I don't really know. It's just there. More to the point,
 why do you want to read it?

In any case, the search goes on for obedient servants. Rumor has
 it that mail all the time used to be signed "Your obedient
 servant...." Now I always wanted to have just a whole bunch of
 obedient servants. First of all, they are fun to laugh at, as
 anyone who has ever read _ D _ o _ n _ Q _ u _ i _ x _ o _ t _ e will tell you. Ask someone

who has read it in the original and they will tell you, "Si, es verdad." Also, some obedient servants have touching lives such as you see on Upstairs, Downstairs. So, anyway, I scan each first-

class piece of mail I get hoping that someone will leave that little clue in the signature that they are my obedient servant. I guess it sort of works like a lottery where there are not too many

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obedient servants to go around and only the occasional person gets a piece of mail signed that way.

Well, the search goes on and this time of year what I find myself getting are gift catalogs. I guess there are some people out there who find the gifts they are going to give in a catalog. I like to see what I am giving and when the catalog comes from 2000 miles away there is no way I can be sure what will actually be delivered. For all I know, this company is just a bunch of people who got together to pool all the stupid gifts they have gotten, re-wrap them, and sell them for a huge profit so they can go out and get soused.

That brings me to the first type of catalog. I got one this year that had a choice of three Christmas ornaments, a red and green Christmas pen, and the other 132 gifts were all liquor in some form or another. This is the true spirit of Christmas of course: get your friends drunk with something with a different smell and taste than what they have used to kill brain cells before. Ho! Ho! Ho! After all, we always hear about how in Dickens's time the tradition was to toast Christmas with ... THE RUM PUNCH. Then they would go back to the important business of beating children and signing letters "Your obedient servant."

The second type of catalog is the cutesy Christmas catalog. It has things such as Swiss chalet and little angel tree ornaments. Every one of these gifts is guaranteed to be sweet enough to gag a sugar plum fairy. And the edible gifts are even sweeter. Is there anyone out there who really eats fruitcake? Or is the idea that you should just mortise the thing into your house, using it like a brick, so you can always remember this holiday? I mean, they look like a brick and they are heavy like a brick.

Well, all this talk of food brings me to the third kind of gift catalog, "produce." Now, one of these catalogs comes complete with a sort of home-grown American myth. There were two grown men--let's call them Jim and Bob because I forgot their names--who lived in a magical lands in the United States somewhere where beautiful fruit grew all year round and where there were no insects, hence no insecticide. Jim and Bob, if you look at their pictures on the catalogs, look like two pieces of fruit themselves, all rosy and round and juicy. And one day Jim said to Bob, "You know, Bob, it's wonderful living here in Umpa-Lumpa Land where the fruit is all rosy and round and juicy all year round." "Yes, Jim, I think I'll grab a piece of fruit right now." "Ow! That's me you're grabbing, Bob." "Ha, ha! You kidder, you! Ha! Ha! Ha!" "But you know, Jim, I kind of feel sorry for people who live in places such as Schenectady and Akron who can't have fresh fruit all rosy and round and juicy and with no insect spots and no insecticide all year round." "Well, I'll tell you, Jim--" "I'm Bob." "Well, I'll tell you Bob, I think we can do something about it. Let's pack our

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fresh fruit, all rosy and round and juicy, into individually wrapped pieces and let people give it as Christmas gifts to their good friends." "Gee, that's a great idea, Jim, and I bet we'll make a peck of money." So people started giving fruit for Christmas and everybody lived happily ever after. I can't imagine who actually gives fruit for Christmas. I mean, isn't that pathetic? "Merry Christmas, have a pear."

A variant on these is the catalog that offers steaks. The cover of the catalog shows a big, buxom, brawny cowgirl grinning and holding up a box with generous pieces of muscle recently cut out of a dead steer. Of course, I don't know how fresh these pieces of muscle will be when they get to Schenectady and Akron. If you want to play it on the safe side, go down to your local A&P, get two pounds of ground chuck, gift-wrap it, and for fun, put on a card that says, "Do not open until Christmas." For a variant, try it with a halibut.

Mark Leeper

There is opposition to every innovation in the history
of man, with the possible exception of the sword.
--Benjamin Dana

Cable in November
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper
Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

_ T_ h_ i_ n_ g_ s_ C_ h_ a_ n_ g_ e (1988) (Cinemax)

There is not a whole lot to recommend from cable this month,
unfortunately. There is some replay of films I have recommended in the
past: _ H_ e_ l_ l_ 's_ A_ n_ g_ e_ l_ s (1930), _ D_ r_ a_ c_ u_ l_ a_ 's
_ D_ a_ u_ g_ h_ t_ e_ r, _ S_ o_ n_ o_ f_ D_ r_ a_ c_ u_ l_ a, _ L_ a_ d_ y_ i_ n
_ W_ h_ i_ t_ e, and _ O_ u_ t_ l_ a_ w_ J_ o_ s_ e_ y_ W_ a_ l_ e_ s. There are films
most people know to be
decent: _ T_ h_ e_ G_ o_ l_ d_ e_ n_ V_ o_ y_ a_ g_ e_ o_ f_ S_ i_ n_ b_ a_ d,
_ T_ h_ e_ G_ u_ n_ s_ o_ f_ N_ a_ v_ a_ r_ o_ n_ e, _ K_ r_ a_ m_ e_ r_ v_ s.
_ K_ r_ a_ m_ e_ r, and _ P_ l_ a_ c_ e_ s_ i_ n_ t_ h_ e_ H_ e_ a_ r_ t.

That leaves only one film really to recommend that may not be as
well-known. David Mamet's _ T_ h_ i_ n_ g_ s_ C_ h_ a_ n_ g_ e is a gentle and likable comedy
with a rich assortment of characters. Don Ameche is a poor cobbler who
reluctantly agrees to confess to a gangland murder he did not commit. A
ne'er-do-well thug (Joseph Mantegna) is given the task of coaching the
elderly man but decides instead to give him one last fling at a Lake
Tahoe resort. The Runyanesque story is well worth watching.

THE BEAR
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: A simple and pure and wonderful

little film about a short period in the life of a young bear. It is too short at 90 minutes, particularly because it feels much shorter. Rating: low +3.

Some films are just simple enough and pure enough that they look effortless. They seem as if they put themselves together with nearly everything clicking. One such film is T_h_e_B_e_a_r--even the title is simple and pure. The film covers about a month or so in the life of a young bear. The film's greatest fault is that it is too short--about 90 minutes--and covering so short a span in the bear's life is simply not satisfying enough. The filmmakers could easily make this the beginning of a series about the same bear and not have it wear thin after ten chapters. The bear--or more accurately the two bears--in this film are characters that audiences will really want to know more about.

T_h_e_B_e_a_r has a minimum of dialogue and no narration. This helps avoid having the film be as cutesy or sugary as some Disney wildlife documentaries, but it means the story is told more slowly than if a narrator were telling you plot. When the bear is sad, you pick it up from body language and inference rather than being told, and the emotion is felt by the viewer far deeper this way. At the same time, much of the emotion gets understated. When the bear loses her mother it is probably more traumatic than the film can convey.

The story, set in the Canadian wilderness, is of a young bear whose mother is accidentally killed. After staying with the body hoping it will move again, the bear finds that she--I think it was a she--must find food for herself. She finds and seeks the protection of a large bear who, as it happens, is being hunted by a group of men. The film could easily have made the men soulless beasts, particularly since the film is both implicitly and explicitly an argument against hunting. To the film's credit, both man and animal are to some degree sympathetic.

The photography of the Canadian wilderness and of the bears in it is constantly enthralling. Faults of the film? A couple of the animals look more like props on fishing lines, specifically a butterfly and a frog. The film tries to put you inside the mind of the bear, seeing dreams and at one point a hallucination. Just what a bear would see in these different states of consciousness we will probably never know and the film's interpretation is speculative at best. The bear's voice was dubbed after shooting and seems often to be unrealistically expressive, though I do not have sufficient knowledge of bears to decide if that is really true.

Jean-Jacques Annaud, who previously did Q_u_e_s_t_f_o_r_F_i_r_e, is to be commended for making one of the most original as well as one of the five best films of the year. My rating is a low +3 on the -4 to +4 scale. If Annaud promises to make a sequel a year to T_h_e_B_e_a_r, just telling us as well what the bear is up to that year, I promise to buy a film ticket to each one. If he spends the rest of his life telling the story of this one bear, it will be well-spent.

