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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 12/01/89 -- Vol. 8, No. 22

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.

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12/13 LZ: "Well World" series by Jack Chalker (The Universe as a
Mathemathical Process)

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12/09 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: Susan Bertan
Braviak & Joseph Braviak, movie dealers
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

12/16 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: John Gregory Betancourt
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

12/17 Gaylaxians (Sunday) (phone 201-672-3044 for details)

- HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt
 - LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
 - 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. When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one
people to stand up and defend their rights, I think they should do
so. I am hereby giving my notice that I am fed up, as no doubt
most of you who are reading my words are, and I think drastic
measures are required to remedy a situation that has become totally
intolerable. I am hereby founding two terrorist organizations
which share common goals, a common respect for each other, and one

member each--namely me--to combat a common menace. Hereby let it be stated that I am forming the FLUF and the SLUF. FLUF is the Fantasy-Lovers United Front; SLUF is the Science-Fiction-Lovers United Front. (Okay, so who would be able to pronounce SFLUF? Allow me some poetic license. Why united? I needed a vowel and at least currently, with one member in each, I would say we have to be

THE MT VOID

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united. Or maybe not.)

What brought all this on? Well, believe it or not, it was opera. What does opera have to do with fantasy? I hear you ask in that funny voice you sometimes use. (You know the one I mean.) Well, lots of operas are fantasy. At least if they are allowed to be. The best known is Wagner's tetralogy "The Ring of the Nibelungs." These are four giant fantasy operas; at least they are if people let them be. I mean, they are supposed to be chuck full of warring gods, angry giants, young love, flashing swords, callow heroes, dwarves, mystic lands in the sky, dark underground dungeons, even dragons right on stage, all done to music that shook the rafters even back when it was the composer who created the effect, not electronic distortion.

But the turkeys who produce the play are unwilling to let it be fantasy. When it was first performed the actors wore fur and the sets represented the proper fantasy setting. But that was too much fantasy. The sets were reduced to just abstract platforms. Then the clothing became just as abstract. When it got shown on national television here (well, PBS) it was done in 19th Century dress and instead of underground forges of the dwarves we got dusty 18th Century factories. It's like setting L _ o _ r _ d _ o _ f _ t _ h _ e _ R _ i _ n _ g _ s in the streets off Newark--worse!

Now the National Arts Center or some such are putting the operas on in Washington D.C. Are they doing it right? Well, the underground kingdom isn't a factory anymore. It's a [expletive-deleted] subway tunnel. If I wanted to go to a subway tunnel, I could do that in New York.

Well, this is one time too many. This time they will feel FLUF's wrath. We--assuming there is a "we" by then--are going down to

Washington and the night before the premiere rip down all their clever modern sets and replace them with rock caverns and sky castles. All power to the people! Right on!

2. There will be no film festival until further notice--probably not until after the first of the year. [-ecl]

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

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.

-- H. G. Wells

SWORD OF DOOM

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Black samurai film noir about a psychotic swordsman and several other reprehensible people. They all meet a bad end; so does this film, which ends ambiguously and with several unresolved subjects. Rating: +1.

Kihachi Okamoto's 1966 S w o r d o f D o o m is aptly named. The film is about swords and about doom and about more doom. This is a relentlessly downbeat samurai film noir exercise. It is well photographed--stunningly in some scenes--but I found myself wishing it would end sooner so I would not have to watch these people nay more. At the center of the story is an essentially mentally deranged swordsman who kills for sport and to perfect his style and for just about any other reason that comes to mind. He learned the technique from his father who invented it, taught it to his son, and then repented of all the damage

it had done. Tsukue is to have a style match with Utsugi but, though his technique is superior, he agrees not to kill Utsugi. However, when Utsugi's wife Hana comes to Tsukue to beg for her husband's life, Tsukue again agrees but only if she will have sex with him. She reluctantly agrees. Her husband finds out about the arrangement and divorces his wife. In spite of giving his word twice, Tsukue finds himself compelled by bloodlust to kill Utsugi anyway. Tsukue take his opponent's ex-wife whom he maintains in a constant state of fear, even after she bears him a son. The film also concerns a beautiful young woman sold by her mother to a nobleman who uses her sadistically as a sex toy. When she is rescued by her uncle, the mother sells her into concubinage. The major characters are mostly either vicious or weak.

Tatsuya Nakadai plays the evil Tsukue as a man possessed by inner devils. Outwardly passive-looking, even when fighting, he is a man deep within himself and yet always at war with the world. He reminds one of psychotic performances by Robert Mitchum and Richard Widmark. The script claims he kills by an evil technique and that an evil mind is mirrored in an evil sword. There are powerful visual images to show the anger in Tsukue in spite of his passive face. In one scene he is in a dusty room with one beam of light from the sun. He is practicing strokes where the tip of his blade stops within the beam. The swirling dust makes the sword look as if it is smoking.

I have never failed to enjoy any samurai film, but S_w_o_r_d_o_f_D_o_o_m comes as close as any with its bitter and downbeat tone. Rate it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. (Two additional notes: Toshiro Mifune plays Shimada, the teacher of a fighting school who has a mutual fear of Tsukue. Director Okamoto went on to direct A_k_a_g_e (a.k.a., R_e_d_L_i_o_n) in 1969 and Z_a_t_o_i_c_h_i_M_e_e_t_s_Y_o_j_i_m_b_o in 1970.)

THE ABYSS

A film review by Estes Slade, III

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You know me. I'm one of those kind of folks who never complain about anything. Well, about two months ago I went to Shrewsbury Cinema to see a new film called THE ABYSS. Now I didn't really know what an

ABYSS was, and really didn't care. But I had this friend who really wanted to talk, but had not a soul (brother?) to talk to. I would have suggested your book if I had know about it.

Anyway, there we were surrounded by sticky, snotty-nosed, noisy adults disguised as children, all eyes fixed on the action up front. For over 90% of the film I was on the edge of my seat (mostly because one of those "adults" sitting in back of me spilled ice down my back). But the last 15 minutes or so was a piece of ___T!!!!!! I was so mad, as I left the theater I asked the management to give me back my money. When the usher said "I'm sorry, sir, but you did stay for the whole film!" Then I responded "Well, can I have my money back for the last fifteen minutes?" He gave me a nickel, which was just about what it was worth!

As I walked out toward my car I told everyone waiting in line for the next show to don't throw away their money on THE ABYSS. The theater probably made record profits that day.