

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 12/19/84 -- Vol. 3, No. 23

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.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

- 01/09 LZ: THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
01/09 HO: Book Swap
01/29 LZ: Video meeting: THE FLY (part 1)
01/30 LZ: Video meeting: THE FLY (part 2)
01/30 HO: COURTSHIP RITE by Donald Kingsbury
02/20 LZ: SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt
03/13 HO: DOWNBELOW STATION by C. J. Cherryh

LZ Chair is Mark Leeper, LZ 3E-215 (576-2571). HO Chair is John Jetzt, FJ 1F-108 (577-5316). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, HO 1B-437A (834-4723).

1. The Holmdel Branch of the Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club Library has been moved. The new location is HO 2G-427A. The head librarian has also moved his office to 2G-427A to allow the efficient carrying out of his librarian's duties. (These consist mainly of reading the books in the library to make sure they're good.) There is a small sign on the door to the old library pointing to the new room. [The foregoing written by Tim Schroeder, head librarian.]

2. Wanna see a strange movie? Friday night at 11 PM Channel 13 has scheduled the Peter Watkins film PRIVILEGE. It is done as a pseudo-documentary about a near future England in which there is a super-rock star, Steven Shorter, with a strong anti-establishment theme. The government, knowing a good thing when it sees it, takes an unusual interest in Shorter and uses his popularity in unexpected ways. Peter Watkins was the young filmmaker who, back in the 60's, made his name when the BBC asked him to do a realistic documentary about what would happen if there was a nuclear war and England was hit. He did just that. But when the BBC saw the film, THE WAR GAME, they decided that if it were shown on TV it could cause a panic. Watkins released his film to theaters instead and

won an Oscar for it. After that he continued to do science fiction pseudo-documentaries of which PRIVILEGE is the only other one really notable.

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3. There will be no film festival at the Leeper House until further notice. Don't worry about it. Further notice will come. It's just that most of the regulars will be busy over the holidays. On the 10th or the 17th of January we will probably be showing the original NOSFERATU.

4. Our book discussion on the 9th of January will be of a really strange and totally delectable book called THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO. This book has been often imitated with books like SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES and BLIND VOICES, but it has never been matched for its magical qualities. This is a FUN book about a magical (though for once not malevolent) carnival that comes to town. If you have seen THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO, the George Pal film supposedly based on the book, forget it. The connection is in name only. There are a lot of funny gags and just plain weird stretches of the story. Do read the catalog of characters at the back, too. It is well worth the time. Read it over the holidays, it's nice light holiday reading. There should be a copy in the science fiction library. If you can't get one there, see me.

Mark Leeper
LZ 3E-215 x2571
...{houxn,hogpd,hocse}!lznv!mrl

Mercury Capsules - December 19, 1984

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to wi!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

o+ _D_u_n_e: film, written and directed by David Lynch, based on the novel by Frank Herbert; 1984.

I write this review with some trepidation because I never read the book, and therefore cannot speak with the same authority as to what the book/movie was about as those who have.

I thought the movie wasn't all that bad. Looked at without reference to the book, the movie's plot generally made sense (although I didn't quite

understand why the navigators seemed to be far more powerful than the Emperor but were not even a force that Muad'dib had to reckon with). The dream sequences could have been more varied, and a less sharp line between them and the "realistic" sequences would have been more compelling. David Lynch's speciality is surrealism, and I was sorry that he tried to make this movie more mainstream.

I saw this movie with a group of people who had read the book, and from their comments, I gathered that what I d i d n' t like about the movie was also an intrinsic part of the book. The movie, at least, is an uncritical glorification of the values of militarism and the patriarchy. It presents a pseudo-historic twisting of Judeo/Christian/Muslim myths, again, unthinkingly, and ends with masses of people fanatically devoted to the triumphant warrior. After having seen him win all of this devotion by violence, we are asked to believe somehow that said warrior went onto become a force for peace. Perhaps the movie should have referred us to 1 9 8 4 for a definition of that "peace." I trust that this is not an example of how science fiction leads all other literature in breadth/depth of ideas.

By the way, if I had adolescents at home, I'd ignore the rating and keep them home, or better yet, have a discussion with them about sadism, power and stupidity. I also would want them to know something of the Muslim religion so that they didn't think this movie was the last word on the subject.

C. E. Jackson

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o+ 2 0 1 0: film, written, produced, and directed by Peter Hyams, based on the novel by Arthur C. Clarke; 1984.

Good solid science fiction film with a small letdown at the end. Does not live up to its promises of telling us substantially more about the aliens, but it is a good story following a scientific investigation. Better paced than the original.

Mark Leeper

o+ D u n e: film, written and directed by David Lynch, based on the novel by

Frank Herbert; 1984.

I cannot imagine what someone who has not read the book will make of all this. Also I don't care for a number of the variations from the book. Still it contains a surprisingly large portion of the book's plot. Visually the film is often stunning. Against all expectations, the sand worms were superbly realized on the screen. I was quite favorable on the film, but I cannot recommend it because that is a very subjective choice. Maud'dib help anyone who goes into the theater not knowing the story already.

Mark Leeper

o+ _2_0_1_0: film, written, produced, and directed by Peter Hyams, based on the novel by Arthur C. Clarke; 1984.

I only gave it a four, because I didn't understand it. I'm going to read the book.

Jason Klus

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DUNE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

In reviewing D_u_n_e, I cannot help but feel a certain sense of d_e_j_a_v_u. Just about a year ago another film came out that made almost all the same mistakes and had almost all the same strengths. That film was T_h_e_K_e_e_p, based on the novel by F. Paul Wilson. Both were films that I enjoyed greatly, but neither can I recommend. There are a number of reasons why I feel that neither film can be recommended. Each story is told in a moody, stylized, almost mystical fashion that make the films almost impossible to follow without being familiar with the story before one enters the theater. Not that that always helps because each varies somewhat from the plot of its respective source, but without having read the novel, the viewer would be left in a twisting maze of bewildering events. Neither film tells the story of its novel very well, but each film is visually stunning and serves as a beautiful set of illustrations for the book. It is unfortunate that these two films were made about the same time, since each film could have been a valuable object lesson to the director of the other had the timing been different. T_h_e_K_e_e_p hit the boxoffice with a resounding thud and it looks like D_u_n_e will do the same.

It has been eleven years since I read D_u_n_e by Frank Herbert. That is probably just about the optimal gap between reading the book and seeing the movie. It means that I remember the basic plot and some of the language of the planet Arrakis, but that a lot of the plot subtleties have long since been forgotten. The film vaguely follows the plot and in fact has surprisingly fidelity to the long and complex basic plot, but it simplifies it a little too much and at important junctures, changes the plot just a bit too much. The way the long-awaited Dino De Laurentiis production is able to get so much of the plot of the novel into D_u_n_e is to simply tell the long story at a very fast clip. Whatever you can say negative about David Lynch's direction and a lot of the silly things added to the script, he was able to cram all the real essentials of the long novel into the film, and there are not many screenwriters who could have. The price is that it is much harder to digest an important scene before moving on to the next important scene, making it even harder for someone who has not read the book to follow what is going on.

Where Lynch really falls down is that he completely misses what makes a film a compelling experience. Herbert's characters had little human interest, but the book was fascinating because it detailed the background of the story so well. Herbert's background work of designing the culture, ecology, and history of Arrakis gave the book a real feel of authenticity. It is almost like reading a historical novel with an encyclopedia close at hand verifying the accuracy of the story. There is no way a film can give the same feel of authenticity, so it would have to make the characters more interesting. Lynch fails to do that entirely. The characters are flat and uninvolving. The strongest emotion that Lynch makes us feel is revulsion for the Harkonnens. The main characters are dull and lifeless, completely

uninvolving. That means that D_u_n_e will fail to capture the targeted S_t_a_r W_a_r_s audience for the same reasons that S_p_a_c_e: 1_9_9_9 failed to capture the S_t_a_r T_r_e_k audience. All the stylized mise-en-scene and the moody images only serve to separate us from involvement in the story. We are left with very enigmatic main character and a very dry film (in more ways than one) that simply seems a sort of Lawrence of Arrakis.

Visually, D_u_n_e is a mass of contradictions. It has more than its share of jaw-dropping spectacles, yet some of its simplest effects are done on the cheap and really look bad. We see pictures of a moon of Arrakis superimposed on a sea of stars, and we see stars right through the moon as if the scene were a cheap double exposure. We see a human in the mouth of a sandworm and the special effects people used two different film stocks to film the worm and the man, so that the result is totally unconvincing. On a forty-million-dollar film one can expect more competence than that. What nobody expected were Carlo Rambaldi's sandworms. Rambaldi was the man who did such a horrible job of making a mechanical King Kong that a human stand-in was needed for all but about four seconds of the remake of K_i_n_g K_o_n_g. E_v_e_n_a_f_t_e_r_h_e_d_i_d_E. T., itself a reasonable effect, nobody thought he could do Herbert's sandworms justice. Rambaldi has redeemed himself in spades. The sandworms have to stand as one of the most awesome yet believable special effects anyone has ever put on the screen. From the first flash we see of a sandworm -- looking somewhat like a scene from M_o_b_y D_i_c_k diving from wave to wave -- to the final massive attack with many of the worms, they are accurate to John Schoenherr's famous illustrations.

In D_u_n_e we see and hear echoes of previous films. All too often, De Laurentiis seems to assume that the essence of science fiction is overly ornate and usually oddly structured sets. Many of the sets from D_u_n_e could have come from B_a_r_b_a_r_e_l_l_a or F_l_a_s_h_G_o_r_d_o_n. These sets sit there as background, but add little to the feel of the film. There are a host of actors from previous De Laurentiis films. We have Max von Sydow from F_l_a_s_h G_o_r_d_o_n and C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n. Kenneth McMillan and Brad Dourif are familiar from R_a_g_t_i_m_e. And, of course, there is a rock score. De Laurentiis likes rock scores for fantasy films. F_l_a_s_h_G_o_r_d_o_n had its effect much damaged by its score. (Dino wanted to have a rock score for C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n, but John Milius insisted on giving the score to Basil Poledouris, or at least so Poledouris claimed in an interview. It was the right choice. Poledouris's score is just about the best thing about C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n).

But even with all the flaws, this film had more than enough to keep me pleased with what I was seeing. With this odd mix of virtues and problems, I find that this is a film that I like, but I cannot recommend. See it at your own risk. You might like it, you might hate it. It will be a while before you can forget it. For the record, I liked it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. But I am of such a mixed mind about this film, it could easily have been a -2. It just depends on how much someone weights the bad elements and how much they weight the good.

_ 2 _ 0 _ 1 _ 0:
film, written, produced, and directed by Peter Hyams
based on the novel by Arthur C. Clarke

-
a review by
Paul S. R. Chisholm

A +2 out of [-4..+4]. Let me tell you why.

Technical flaws: First of all, I can't believe they kept _ L _ e _ o _ n _ o _ v rotating during maneuver. As someone said on the net, it's tough to turn a top. When the first two astronauts got back aboard _ D _ i _ s _ c _ o _ v _ e _ r _ y, they shouldn't have been able to stand head-up/feet-down in the carousel. The aerobraking was too short and excessively fiery, without a lot of concern for acceleration. The scene with the pens, made infamous by outtakes shown at L.A.Con II, turned out to be set in a one G field??! The computer technology hasn't been updated, from 1967, 1984, or 2001. (Dale Skran pointed out Hyams was in a dilemma: he had to show sophisticated computer systems, to a sophisticated, computer literate audience, that looked like the ones in a 1967 movie. Yes, it's tough. But they didn't have to use Atari 800s to generate the computer displays!) HAL in particular seemed less like a computer and more like a man-in-a-box than he did in _ 2 _ 0 _ 0 _ 1. And Lucifer wouldn't be in the same place in the sky, relative to the sun, as the months went by.

Dramatic flaws: The Soviets were dreadfully undercharacterized. The Americans, in comparison, acted hideously arrogant and self-confident; if I had them on my ship, I'd rig up a brig. The influence of US/USSR political

relationships on the mission was okay, but lead to some really childish morality lessons.

The book was about a scientific mission to investigate something totally beyond our scientific knowledge. It was quiet, subdued, and relaxed -- until the end, which was thus much more dramatic. (The Tsien incident near the beginning served to contrast the quiet middle; being led to expect more, the calmness subdued the reader even more.) The novel 2010 was all about Clarke's third law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

The movie was 2001 meets StarWars. What was lost was the ambiguity, the richness, the subtlety, the sense of wonder.

It was okay, but no more.

Dune:
film, written and directed by David Lynch
based on the novel by Frank Herbert

-
a review by
Paul S. R. Chisholm

Seldom have I been so exhausted, and so exhilarated, at the end of the movie. Oddly, the ending that was the weakest part.

The beginning was good, very faithful to the book. The Harkonnen's were unbelievably grody and gross: which is to say, I couldn't (and don't) believe they could waste all that effort being yuchh, and still be powerful. We hear occasional thoughts as voice over; well, that's faithful to the book, but I think it was lazy writing (and directing).

You'll believe a sand worm can eat a factory.

Lynch added a magic weapon that House Atreides had invented (but not yet fielded), that was given to the Fremens to allow their victory. Eh. Lynch does n o t understand the difference between hand-to-hand combat, infantry, and artillery.

The movie was too rushed at the end. The climax of the book, and the heart, is the long, involved scene in the Emperor's thrown room. There was some build up for this, but a lot simply wasn't used. A lot more build up was missing, in particular, Paul's knife fight with Jamis, and Feyd's knife fight in the arena. Without these, their knife fight at the end doesn't make much sense. Paul's threat to the navigators isn't explicitly there, either. Most destructive was the final shot, o u_ t_ s_ i_ d_ e the throne room.

Overall, the feel was very good. The beginning and middle carried me through the botched ending. I think its a better (and much more difficult) adaptation than 2_ 0_ 1_ 0. Compared to Banshi's rendering of L_ o_ r_ d_ o_ f_ t_ h_ e
 R_ i_ n_ g_ s,
this is a masterpiece. Alas, it looks like two hours and fifteen minutes just isn't enough for D_ u_ n_ e (*sigh*).

 N_ O_ T_ E_ S_ F_ R_ O_ M_ T_ H_ E_ N_ E_ T

Subject: Re: Robots of Dawn
Path: ihnp4!clyde!bonnie!masscomp!carlton
Date: Wed, 12-Dec-84 09:55:30 EST

Several years ago, Issac Asimov postulated a future society. Earth was very crowded, with people people living underground, in conditions that would give a sardine claustrophobia. Earthers tended to be afraid of robots, because they would take jobs away from humans. The Outer Systems were underpopulated, and the few people living there embraced robots, using them for everything.

Asimov set out to write three detective novels in this mythos. The first would be set on Earth, and would show its problems. Thus, The Caves of Steel. The second would be set on a world with a severe shortage of people, and too many robots. This world was Solaris; the book, The Naked Sun.

At this time in his career, Asimov found writing "pop" science books to be much easier, and much more lucrative, so he never wrote the third book in the trilogy. This book would show a "balanced" society, where humans and robots got along in what we would consider a normal fashion. This world was Aurora, and there were hints in the other two books about its culture.

Since "Star Wars", SF has attracted Big Bucks, and Del Ray Books offered Asimov Mucho \$ to finish his trilogy, and write another "Foundation" Novel.

Carl Hommel

Subject: re: collector's editions
Path: ihnp4!decwrl!dec-rhea!dec-akov68!boyajian
Date: Sun, 16-Dec-84 22:12:37 EST

From: stolaf!robertsl (Laurence Roberts)
... What's your opinion of Wolfe and Disch (among others) publishing unaffordable collectors editions that you'd be afraid to read for fear of damaging them, even if you could afford them... I'm not even talking about \$18 hardbacks (although those are bad enough). I'm complaining about \$100 books, and somewhat about Disch's booklets like Ringtime for Toothpaste Press... Opinions?

Well, given that I'm one of those people that collects specialty press and limited edition books, it behooves me to put in my two cents worth.

First off, there aren't many of these limited editions that don't also come out in trade editions, either hardcover or paperback. They are collectable for basically two reasons: (1) they are a limited run item, which makes them rarer than the trade edition, and are usually much better made; and (2) they are usually, though unfortunately not always, the first editions of the books.

Secondly, I don't understand why you're complaining --- you don't have to buy them. With a few exceptions, the trade editions are issued within a few months after the limited edition. And as I mentioned above, some small presses, though they intend otherwise, don't manage to get their limited editions out before the trade edition. In at least one case, Gene Wolfe's *THE CASTLE OF THE OTTER*, the book had an SF Book Club edition.

There are likely as many different reasons why the authors have these editions published as there are authors. When Stephen King's *THE DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER* was published by Don Grant, it was announced that there would be no trade edition of the book ever. Why? Well, for one, King didn't think that it was commercial. It's a rather convoluted fantasy, and he didn't think that his regular audience of horror fans would go for it. Secondly, King's roots were in fandom (his first published story appeared in a comics fanzine published by DC Comics writer Marv Wolfman), and he wanted to "do something that the fans could have that the mainstream audience could not". Oddly enough, when the list of books by King that appeared in *PET SEMATARY* included *THE DARK TOWER*, King, his agent, and his regular publishers were deluged with letters asking how they could get ahold of a copy. This prompted King and Don Grant to do a second edition.

Like almost anything else, these collector's editions are like anything else --- they exist because there is a market for them, there is an audience that enjoys buying and owning them, and, yes, even reading them. You may find that there are some books published only in these expensive limited editions that you want to have but can't afford, but you can't always get what you want. That's just the way life is. If you want it bad enough, you'll pay for it.

From: ames!barry (Kenn Barry)

I *have* seen cases where there has been an unconscionably long delay between the publishing of the collector's edition, and later publishing of the trade edition. This seems to be an effort to boost sales of the expensive version by withholding the affordable copies, and I consider it a low practice.

Ah, but is it really done in order to *boost* sales of the expensive edition, or to prevent *loss* of sales for the expensive edition. I know,

this sounds like another "half-empty or half-full?" argument, but it really isn't. It's been demonstrated by at least one publisher (Phantasia Press) that if their edition gets delayed past the release date of the trade edition, or the trade edition gets shipped earlier than it's supposed to (which has happened on a few occasions), that it affects sales of the limited edition. The loss is mostly from that sector of the market that buys

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the limited editions solely because they are first editions --- if the limited edition isn't a first, then it is of no interest to these collectors.

It also depends on what you may consider an "unconscionable" delay. Three months? Six months? A year? The latest Stephen King limited edition, THE EYES OF THE DRAGON was just issued (I got mine the other day), and it won't be available in a trade edition for 3 years. Why so long a delay, I don't know. It can't be to boost sales of the limited --- there were only a thousand copies done, and no one could seriously believe that they wouldn't sell out the print run even if a trade edition was issued simultaneously. Maybe like THE DARK TOWER, he wanted to give the dedicated fans a treat that would be unavailable to the general public for a good while. Or it could be that he's writing things so far ahead of his publishing schedule, that a trade edition just can't be done for three years.

Of course, the *really* frustrating thing is when there appears the really obscure item such as Stephen King's THE PLANT, an excerpt from a novel in progress that was published as a small chapbook and sent to friends of King as a Christmas present. It's things like this that give the collectors so many headaches.

--- jayembee (Jerry Boyajian, DEC, Maynard, MA)

Subject: Michael Bishop's WHO MADE STEVIE CRYE?
Path: ihnp4!seismo!cmcl2!philabs!pwa-b!utah-gr!donn
Date: Wed, 12-Dec-84 08:54:19 EST

Michael Bishop is not known for being a horror writer, but he has managed to produce (according to the blurb) "a bloodcurdling novel of satanism, illicit lust and supernatural horror" called WHO MADE STEVIE CRYE? (Arkham House,

1984; 309 pp.). Some blurbs leave more unsaid than others, and while this blurb is accurate in what it says, it is so incomplete and misleading as to be virtually useless in telling you why you should read this book. And you should read this book -- I think it's definitely the best novel Bishop has produced to date.

Stevenson Crye is a woman in her thirties whose husband has died and left her to support their two children. Stevie earns a meager living by free-lancing articles for newspapers and magazines in the area around her home town in Georgia. One day her fancy daisy-wheel electric typewriter breaks down; when she learns that it will cost \$52 to replace the cable on her ribbon carrier, plus \$23 for a service call if she won't make the 80 mile round trip to the service center, she screams in fury and frustration. A friend suggests a tiny shop in a nearby town that will fix it for \$10.67, so she decides to give it a try (bad news, as any horror fan can tell you). The young man who "fixes" her typewriter bears a remarkable resemblance to John Hinckley... When Stevie brings the typewriter home, she discovers that it is possessed: it will type out things that no one ever typed into it.

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Its taste in subject matter runs to gruesome nightmares, nightmares that Stevie begins to experience in her sleep and then even when she's awake... Has her typewriter been taken over by the ghost of her husband Ted? Are demons from hell trying to destroy her mind? Has the psychopathic typewriter repairman installed an RS-232 interface?

"Stop!" she commanded the machine.

The Exceleriter paused briefly, paragraphed, and rattled off another two lines of type. Then it stopped.

That the runaway Exceleriter had obeyed her impulsive command Stevie found amazing. Why should it listen to her? If it chose to obey, it did so primarily to demonstrate the paradox that IT was in control. Its halting on her rattled say-so only served to heighten her feelings of inadequacy and victimization. ...

Shivering, Stevie approached her desk. She removed the taped pages from the typewriter to see what it had written. ...

This chapter -- if you could call it a chapter -- ended rather

abruptly. Its final words were:

"Stop!" she commanded the machine.

"The Exceleriter paused briefly, paragraphed, and rattled off another two lines of type. Then it stopped."

If you guessed that this book is somewhat less than serious about partaking of the horror genre, you're quite right. (Actually when I finished STEVIE I was laughing so hard my lungs hurt.) Bishop's writing has more in common with Gene Wolfe and Philip Dick than with Stephen King, and the book abounds in nice touches. The characters are well drawn and consistent, especially Stevie, a woman totally out of sympathy with the stereotypically tearful and danger-prone virgins who populate more ordinary horror novels.

This Arkham edition is illustrated by J K Potter with large numbers of wonderfully revolting 'photographs', and has an amusing jacket by Glennray Tutor; not a bad deal for \$15.95. I remember with fondness a short story called 'Built Up Logically' (which I believe had a companion piece called (naturally) 'Built Down Logically'; I've lost my copies, can anyone tell me where to find these stories?) -- if you liked that story, you'll really like WHO MADE STEVIE CRYE?.

I know, I know, look it up in the Library of Babel,

Donn Seeley University of Utah CS Dept donn@utah-cs.arpa
40 46' 6"N 111 50' 34"W (801) 581-5668 decvax!utah-cs!donn

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Subject: DUNE Review--Don't Miss It, But... (LONG, slight spoiler)

Path: houxm!vax135!timeinc!dwight

Date: Sat, 15-Dec-84 18:17:26 EST

I went to see DUNE last night with my wife, Sandra, and a friend she works with, Don. We're all in the same field, computers in publishing; Don has a remarkable capacity for trivia, and as we waited to go into the theater in the opening-night line, he stumped us constantly with various trivial facts about the DUNE books ("How did Gurney Halleck get his scar?" "From what

feature in the Arrakis sky did the name M'uad D'ib come from?").
Incidentally, while we were standing in line, some people from the theater came around to pass out a commemorative book of credits for the film and a remarkably helpful glossary of terms from the screenplay (like FREMKIT, THUMPER, GOM JABBAR, etc.).

(By the way, in the book, M'uad D'ib is a constellation in the Arakeen sky, "the one who points the way"--a constellation of a mouse of the desert, his tail pointing to the north; in the film, M'uad D'ib is an imaginary face in the second of Arrakis' two moons. Disappointing--never any reference to "pointing the way.")

You've gotta see this movie, but...

First, the negative, and then I'll tell of some of the positive aspects of the film.

The film has an incredible quantity of self-importance, as did the books, but it wasn't nearly so oppressive in print as it was on the screen. One previous article here mentioned that the film was humorless for the most part, and that's very true. Comic relief would have been very welcome, and could easily have been worked into the screenplay. Just about the funniest part, disappointingly, took place during a brief development of the character of Piter De Vries played by Brad Dourif, the Mentat in the Harkonnen's employ, during his recitation of a Mentat mnemonic concentration-enhancement drill while in transit on an overhead monorail-type vehicle (resembling the 7th Ave. IRT in NYC) in the Harkonnen complex on Giedi Prime. Watch for it; but that's about all you'll see if you're looking for fun.

This adaptation was also interesting in its choice of which violent scenes to use and which to avoid, along with the relative accuracy of the violence and gore, compared with that depicted in the book. It's interesting, too, to note throughout the film how much more emphasis was placed on gore and bloody detail instead of upon the relative sensuality/romanticism/loveplay that I recall from my first reading of the book where it described the love between Chani and Paul.

Of a piece with these two points is the way women are depicted compared with the way I seem to recall them having been depicted (or WANT to recall their

depiction) by Herbert in the first book: they're mostly spineless idiots, incapable of any truly forceful or decisive activity in the film, whereas in the book, most women were portrayed as very different from men (culturally, politically, psychically, etc.) but as relative equals.

Certainly there are limits to what can be done in a film that runs a little over two hours compared with the several million words in the first book, but the liberties were in some case unnecessary and demeaning.

Talk about unnecessary violence... in the film, all of those in the employ of the Harkonnens were equipped with "heart plugs" (?) that could be pulled in case of disobedience to leak out their life's blood quickly and grossly. These things were surgically installed in their chest and were frequently focussed upon in the film. They were gross and terrible, which was probably the desired effect. But let's face it: the Harkonnens were bad, bad, bad; but not THIS bad.

Some examples:

Kenneth McMillan as Baron Vladimir Harkonnen (who acted his part well, incidentally) isn't just grossly overweight and a sick pedophile with only a small remaining kernel of the old Honor of the Great Houses; he's seriously physically and mentally diseased without ANY regard for human life, to whom "honor" appears to be a concept he hasn't just forgotten, but apparently never knew. In his introductory scene (which is quite long), we see a young beautiful male captive enter the Baron's room, carrying flowers, with a look of terror in his eyes, accompanied by guards. The Baron finishes his conversation with Beast Rabban and Feyd-Rautha, and approaches (actually, kind of floats over to) the young man, who is dressed in transparent garments. The Baron passes beneath what appears to be a shower of motor oil (which he clearly enjoys), and then confronts the youth and violently embraces him. He then grabs the boy's heart plug release valve and opens it, revelling in the violent arterial bleeding which ensues, and sexually revelling in the rapid, terrible death of this young man and the spray of his blood. Yeccccch. (Feyd and the Beast look on this scene in rapturous voyeurism, incidentally.) This scene is SO GROSS that it's almost campy--I half-expected the Baron to turn to the corpse and ask, "Was it good for you, too?" and light a cigarette.

Both of the bedroom scenes I can remember in the film are disappointments.

In the first, which must last AT LEAST six seconds, featuring Francesca Annis as Jessica and Jurgen Prochnow as Duke Leto, she, crying, turns to him and says, "I'll miss Caladan SO MUCH!" Uh-huh. End of scene!

In the second, featuring Brooke Shields' almost-twin Sean Young as Chani and Kyle MacLachlan as Paul, Chani is half sitting up in bed and is attempting to comfort Paul following one of his prescient dreams, but, but, but she's wearing a halter top (which appears to be part of her stillsuit's undergarments)! Um, somehow I just can't picture Paul and Chani sharing a bed with any clothes on. This is just plain bad interpretation and bad direction... it would be very possible, without getting into the old tits & ass game, to still show this scene with a little more romanticism, and little more raw--or even refined--sensuality. Yes, they're an attractive

couple together, but they're too cute. Too much like "teen romance" instead of the mature love story subplot it could have been.

When Paul and Jessica were fleeing from the sneak attack by the Harkonnens, and Jessica is facing the fact of her Duke's death, and Paul is realizing the extent of his growing awareness, she's almost a totally crippled, helpless, emotional wreck. This is a long distance from the strong-willed, clear-thinking, but grieving woman portrayed by Herbert. She sits weeping in the desert for what seems to be hours and hours. (And the stilltent was greatly missed, too.)

Alia, who is brilliantly played by Alicia Roanne Witt (and someone who did her overdubbing in an almost perfect technical tour-de-force), is shown pretty accurately in bringing about the demise of the Baron during the Fremen attack across the Shield Wall; but later, when she was said to have departed the headquarters to help slay the wounded enemy (thereby earning her title, "St. Alia of the Knife"), all we see is about three seconds of her kind of doing a rain dance with the knife outside the building among the wounded. The whole point of Alia was that even at two or three years old, she was a Reverend Mother with little or no mercy, and a full-fledged Fremen; to act properly, she should have been looking after the Water of the Wounded. But they pulled this punch altogether.

Then there's the whole question of SPIT. In the book, we begin to realize how important water is, and how different the Fremen customs are from those the Atrides are used to, when Stilgar spits on the conference table in front of the Duke, where it's a gesture of great respect (a symbolic wasting of one's own water) and admiration. In the film, instead of using that scene (which was totally skipped), we see the Baron Vladimir spitting on Jessica's face as she's bound and gagged, about to meet her supposed death. So instead of spitting being a symbol of respect and differing customs, it's used here as an act of violence against a trussed woman.

The effects are technically disappointing, especially the worm riding, which is almost as silly as the effects from "Plan Nine from Outer Space." But the artistic depiction of the worms is done with great accuracy to the drawings we might all remember from the Dune Calendars and the "Illustrated Dune."

The Fremen weaponry ideas the filmmakers chose were just plain stupid. They are some kind of Voice amplifiers, and they're too boring even to explain. The ornithopters are badly done and not accurate at all. (Gee, as a student

pilot, I was really kind of looking forward to the 'thopters, too. Forget it.)

Two scenes from the book that stood out in my mind as having great cinematic potential were not even included in the film.

The first, which takes place just after the Atriedes arrive on Arrakis, is the famous dinner party scene, in which there's a great intriguing interplay between the guests, and in which the dialogue could have been some of the best ever filmed. Could have ranked in memory with the Cantina scene from "Star Wars." Totally skipped.

The second, which takes place the evening after the dinner party, would have had doubtful and disturbed Duncan Idaho returning to the House after a

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bout of drinking Spice Beer and confronting an outraged Jessica which his factually groundless suspicions of her coming betrayal. This would have been a great opportunity for Duncan, played by a really rafish Richard Jordan. Totally skipped.

Prochnow's Duke was an exception to the mostly great casting and a disappointment. I was expecting a deeper-voice, physically larger man with more PRESENCE. He had great, gentle eyes, and did a great job, but he just wasn't the right guy for the part. His voice was too high-pitched, too gentle, too soft.

Everett McGill as Stilgar wasn't nearly as fascinating a character as he could have been. The direction left no time for the development of the Fremen leader's psyche, his motivation, his ethics.

The Mentats were only sort of passable. So much more could have been done with this discipline. Freddie Jones as Thufir Hawat was too emotional for the human calculator.

And now on with the positive comments.

MacLachlan, although he's a pretty preppy (as mentioned by another article writer), is appropriately regal and does a fine job as Paul Atrides. This guy was a casting coup de grace... he really fits in with the way he was portrayed by Herbert.

As I mentioned, Brad Dourif as Piter De Vries was pretty good as Piter De Vries, the totally twisted Mentat. It's not his fault he didn't get a chance to develop his character more and was seriously crippled by bad direction.

Francesca Annis as Jessica was appropriately beautiful, with a spectacularly pretty face (especially that nose, for some reason). She did a truly good performance; too bad the screenwriters made her part so damned wimpy. Annis and Prochnow made a believable royal couple--they looked RIGHT together. Again, it would have been spectacular instead of just good if only they'd had the chance.

Sting as Feyd Rautha got an incredible welcome when he first appeared on screen, at least in the theater where I saw it. He was an almost perfect interpretation of the character, and his performance was excellent.

The costumery was excellent as well--those Bene Gesserit robes, headdresses, and dresses are going to stand out in my mind for a long time to come, and some of the best cinematography in the entire film included shots of the Bene Gesserit women simply WALKING, with their costumes flowing about them. Very correct.

The Guild Navigators, left mostly to the readers' imagination by Herbert, were something out of a VERY strange but vividly appropriate dream. (They

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were said to have the "ability to fold space when deep within a spice trance," when we all know that this is a technical accomplishment rather than a psychic one, and that the Navigators really use the spice trance to see the way rather than to perform the ~"motion without motion" (a quote from the film) itself. But I'm getting picky, I guess.) Their physical shape, only dimly perceived through the spice gasses, was sort of the way I had imagined them. (Curious, though, that the speech organ of the Navigator should so closely resemble a deformed but articulating human pudenda.) The rolling coffin-like monstrosity in which the Navigator arrived in the court of the Emperor was really well-done, and that scene is quite memorable.

The Princess Irulan (Virginia Madsen), who appropriately introduces the story we're about to see, is played well, and she's a very attractive actress, but except for the opening, we only see her kind of standing around among the Emperor's court. (Yet another example of the disappointing

background roles given to the women in the film.)

In summary, don't miss this film. It's more than just worth seeing.

But be prepared for some disappointments, and understand that they're mostly due to the limitations of the medium and the compression of the already extremely dense writing by Herbert. DUNE, the first book, had at least three good major feature-length motion pictures in it alone (perhaps most appropriately broken up along the way the three books-within-the-first-book are divided). This single film attempts to compress that entire long novel into a single motion picture, and in so doing many important details get lost.

--Dwight Ernest KA2CNN Usenet:...vax135!timeinc!dwight

Subject: Dune review (spoiler)

Path: houxm!ihnp4!inuxc!pur-ee!CS-Mordred!Pucc-H:pur-phy!dub

Date: Sun, 16-Dec-84 15:12:28 EST

My reactions after having seen Dune are very mixed. First of all, I should mention that I've read the book twice and enjoyed it greatly. From all of the terrible pre-reviews I'd seen about Dune I went into the theater not expecting too much.

The movie started out rather well I thought.

<Enter face of Emperor's daughter fading in and out of existence>

The political situation is laid out for the viewer to comprehend and all of the important parties involved are introduced. The plot seemed to be following the book like a shadow. We get to see all of the facets of Paul's development and his devotion to his father, the Duke, comes through quite

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well. I really liked their shields.

After they arrive on Arrakis the film still looks pretty good. The scene

where the Duke goes out to inspect the spice mining was very well done and also the scene with the "seeker" in Paul's bedroom went off very well. Sure there were minor things I didn't like; the Navigators looked like a cross between Jabba and Leto II, the Baron was a bit skinny and seemed less "dark" (if ya know what I mean). But the settings looked fairly good. Many little things I didn't like I can trace back to my comparing the film to the book; in other words, things that might displease a Dune fan, but not the avg. movie goer.

The trouble really starts for this film when the Baron attacks the Duke. The battle scenes looked very poor; alot of people just running around with an occasional explosion. Not at all realistic in my opinion. My next-to-biggest disappointment was that the "fierce" Fremen didn't strike me as being all that deadly. The entire Fremen culture is not developed for the viewer to the point where we really understand them. (The stillsuits are explained very well in the film but where are the face masks and they are always forgetting to exhale through their mouthpieces.) We hear Paul tell his mother to walk non-rythmically but in the next scene they go marching across the desert. Even the Fremen are guilty of this. One good point was that even though the thumpers looked rather perverse (in and out and in and out) Paul's first worm ride looked really neat! (neat - a ancient term meaning megafun)

The biggest failure of the movie in its post-"Baron invades Arraki" part is to portray Paul as the "superior being" (sorry, can't remember how to spell the H.....). The movie goer is given no idea of just what the heck the spice has done to Paul conscienceness. The images that the film uses to try to convey this facet of Paul are totally obscure. Paul's obsessively constant remarks about Dune's smaller moon are never explained.

The ending.... maybe I have got complete amnesia, but I don't remember Paul making it rain at the end of Dune. Making it rain would only kill off the worms and sandtrout. Also, there is a narrative saying that after Paul's victory over the Emperor at the Shield Wall there was at last peace in the universe. Like hell! Paul brought a jihad and that sure weren't peaceful! The ending to this movie may have been ok for a movie goer, but for this Dune fan it left a lot to be desired. I'm a Sting fan so I liked his fight at the end with Paul. In fact, the way Gunry Hallek wanted to do all sorts of nasty things to Fyern(sp)(Sting), I was mentally rooting for Sting to win. But anyways, I've seen advertisements for Dune that gave Sting top billing! That last scene is the only scene he has any importance in.

To summarize: First half was ok, second half lousy. Liked the worms, though. Net result, there are tons of characters in Dune (the book). Dune (the movie) introduces them all one way for another, but most of them never get developed one bit. The result is a somewhat confusing movie. This production should have been an eight hour mini-series. There is just too much in Dune (the book) to put into a 140 minute film.

Hope this review was readable, sorry if it wasn't.

Dwight Bartholomew

