

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 12/26/84 -- Vol. 3, No. 24

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. There is more news about these toys that are something mundane, like a shoehorn, that unfold into robots. Apparently they were designed by Japanese toymakers, but when they were brought to this country, there was a whole fantasy mythos built up around them. It seems some American toy company has produced a TV show about convertible robots and has placed them into some sort of silly story. In the story, I guess, the Earth is under attack by evil robots who don't change into anything! Earth also has allies, for some reason that is not yet clear. Somehow whenever we get in a bind there are interstellar policemen who show up to protect us with lenses on their wrists or green lanterns or intergalactic police boxes. In this case, the cops on the beat are good robots that transform into things like jeeps and shoehorns. Maybe someone out there can tell me if there are jeeps on the policemen's home planet or if they were especially built for Earth. The idea is that if a robot can transform, it can travel around as secretly as Clark Kent. A robot running down the street might attract the attention of the nasty aliens. I know it would attract my attention. But if it transforms into a jeep, it can look just like any other car running around without a driver. Nobody notices a car running around without a driver. At least I never have.

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

HIGH SPIRITS by Robertson Davies  
Penguin, 1982, \$5.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This book won the Award for Best Anthology/Collection at this year's World Fantasy Convention in Ottawa, and I had heard good things about Robertson Davies from other sources, so I decided to give it a try. I'm glad I did.

The book consists of eighteen stories and an introduction in which Davies explains how these stories came about. The stories are short, told in the first person, and presented (as all first-person stories are) as being true. Since they are not internally consistent (Davies meets the ghost of William Lyon Mackenzie King twice, and the second time he says he hadn't seen the ghost before), I think we may presume that they are, indeed, fiction, and not some A\_m\_i\_t\_y\_v\_i\_l\_l\_e\_H\_o\_r\_r\_o\_r-like attempt to deceive the reader.

Davies has an easy writing style, and the stories are quite short. They would be ideal for reading aloud; in fact, that is how they were first presented. They are not, for the most part, "scary" stories (though one or two have their chilling moments). They are light-hearted looks at ghosts, be they the ghosts of the "insulted saints" (those ex-saints who were "unsainted" by Pope Paul the Sixth), or the ghost of the "Poor Relation," whose ancient castle had been transported to Canada and remodeled into a modern home. They are C\_a\_n\_a\_d\_i\_a\_n stories, with an emphasis on Canadian history, culture, and ghosts. The humor is under-stated ("Though I am not a whole-hearted believer in astrology as such, I was brought up a Presbyterian, and thus I am inclined to believe bad news from virtually any source.") And sandwiched in between the ghostly goings-on and the humor are some interesting ideas.

This book doesn't jump up and grab you by the throat, yelling "Read

me!", but it gently coaxes you along until you're hooked. Good reading!

## STARMAN

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Rumor has it that Columbia Pictures turned down an opportunity to produce E. T. because they were producing S\_t\_a\_r\_m\_a\_n. Rumor also has it that word is going around Hollywood that S\_t\_a\_r\_m\_a\_n is a really good film. See, some rumors you can believe, some you can't.

For those who have not heard the plot by now, the Voyager space probe lands on an alien planet around another star and an alien comes to Earth in answer to its invitation. Never mind that the other star--which we are told is visible from Earth--must be just outside Pluto's orbit for Voyager to have arrived there already. That would be a technical detail and this film doesn't worry too much about them. The alien, who is incorporeal, clones a copy of Karen Allen's dead husband. The alien, now played by Jeff bridges, coerces Allen to drive him from Wisconsin to his pickup point in Arizona. As the alien becomes corporeal, so do the seven wishes he brought with him. They turn into marbles that he can call on to get him out of scrapes.

The plot of the film will seem very familiar; in fact, it borrows

heavily from Close Encounters of the Third Kind and E. T. Karen Allen's acting is sufficient. She is neither an asset nor a liability to this film.

Then there is Jeff Bridges. It is his performance alone--no one else, not the script, not the special effects--that saves this film from being a dog. Ever try to drive a strange car? You find very often you can do it but you are just a bit clumsy at it. This is exactly how Bridges plays his role as an alien trying to work this new and unfamiliar body. In one scene of Allof Me, Steve Martin is a man imitating a women imitating a man. With far less physical comedy experience, Bridges spends an entire film as a man imitating an alien imitating a man, and Bridges does a better job than Martin. And at the same time he conveys the same sort of wonder that Malcolm McDowell had in Time after Time.

The special effects are by Industrial Light and Magic, but they are only a small part of the film. They portray the alien spacecraft as a mirrored sphere. Impressive looking, but the lower-budget Wave length had the same image as well as a number of the plot elements earlier.

This is Jeff Bridges's film. He saves it from foundering on the rocks and by salvage law it is his film. With his help, this is a zero film (on a -4 to +4 scale). Without his contribution, it might not have done so well.

## THE COTTON CLUB

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Francis Ford Coppola's career has had its ups and downs. The biggest ups were the two God father films; the biggest down is probably the more recent tone experiment One from the Heart. Coppola films come with big price tags and some win big at the boxoffice, but more recently they have been losing big. Coppola needs a box office winner so he is returning to a

subject that has worked for him in the past. He has made another lavish gangster film.

T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_t\_t\_o\_n\_C\_l\_u\_b takes place in the late Twenties and early Thirties when gangsters and celebrities would slum in Harlem. The number one slumming spot was the Cotton Club, a posh night spot where blacks entertained, where legends like Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington were born, but where the audience was white only. T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_t\_t\_o\_n\_C\_l\_u\_b is the story of two pairs of brothers, the Irish Dwyers and the black Williamses. The Dwyers get involved with the psychopathic hood Dutch Schultz (played by James Remar) and the pugnacious Owney Madden (Bob Hoskins), owner of the Cotton Club, racketeer, and self-appointed peacemaker among the bootleggers.

T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_t\_t\_o\_n\_C\_l\_u\_b is structured much like R\_a\_g\_t\_i\_m\_e with many intertwined stories being developed at the same time. As much as this film has a main character, it is Dixie Dwyer (Richard Gere), a cornet player who saves Dutch Schultz's life and, with his brother, is sucked into the world of bootleggers and numbers runners. The story also follows Sandman Williams (Gregory Hines), who is chasing stardom and one Lila Rose Oliver (Lonette McKee). Lila Rose wants to make it as a star too, but her skin is light enough that she wants to make it as a white star. The story for T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_t\_t\_o\_n\_C\_l\_u\_b is by William Kennedy, Coppola, and Mario Puzo. What makes the film most watchable is the same sort of racketeer politics that Coppola and Puzo put into the G\_o\_d\_f\_a\_t\_h\_e\_r films. The "who is doing what to whom and why" and the backdrop of the Twenties fascinates the viewer and make 127 minutes go by quickly.

Though Gere plays the main character of a memorable film, his will not be the most memorable part of the film. Somehow his character is never developed to the point that we really care much about him. And the authenticity of his story is destroyed by some miscalculated scenes at the end that could have been from a Thirties musical. Curiously, the film's most memorable scene is between Madden and his lumbering bodyguard Frenchie (Fred Gwynne). These minor characters--and a third, Sol Weinstein (Julien Beck)--do more to make the film with far less screen time than any of the major characters. The musical numbers also make the film work and give a Twenties feel to the story, but by the end of the film we have seen just two or three two many of them.

So did returning to gangsters and period pieces pay off for Coppola? T\_h\_e\_C\_o\_t\_t\_o\_n\_C\_l\_u\_b is flawed, but it joins T\_h\_e\_N\_a\_t\_u\_r\_a\_l and A\_m\_a\_d\_e\_u\_s as one of the best of the year. Watch for it at Oscar time.

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\_ \_ N \_ O \_ T \_ E \_ S \_ F \_ R \_ O \_ M \_ T \_ H \_ E \_ N \_ E \_ T

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Subject: Re: re: collector's editions

Path: houxm!mhuxr!ulysses!allegra!bellcore!decvax!ucbvax!ucbcad!kalash

Date: Mon, 17-Dec-84 13:32:32 EST

I'm complaining about \$100 books, and somewhat about Disch's booklets

like \_Ringtime\_ for Toothpaste Press... Opinions?

There have been (to my knowledge) two limited books that cost more than \$100, and both are Stephen King books. Most limiteds are in the range of 40 -> 50.

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.

This is rarely (if at all) done. The people who make the limiteds and the people who make the trades usually are different publishers. The trade press usually just schedules the book, and the limited press scurries about trying to get to press and out the door in time.

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.

King's normal publisher (Viking) doesn't want more than one King book out any any year, they like his books to be "events", and they don't want the books conflicting with one another.

Joe Kalash

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Subject: Spider Robinson  
Path: ihnp4!ucla-cs!jeanne  
Date: Thu, 20-Dec-84 13:20:16 EST

This is going to be a rapturous rave for Robinson's work. I've loved it for several years, but that was mostly based on the Callahan Crosstime Saloon stories--I have a weakness for puns and Spider has some really "vile" ones in his stories. However, in the last couple of months I have read a couple of his more serious works and have been unbelievably impressed. The man writes beautifully.

I am normally the type who tears through books as fast as I can because there is just so much to read and so little time to read it all. When I notice the writing (as opposed to the story itself) on the first read through a book, there has to be something very special about it. I've never



read descriptive passages in anything to compare with those in Spider's works; I've actually stopped to savor the descriptions and my reactions to them--it takes something special to stop my headlong flight through my reading.

I finished reading "Mindkiller" last night. Needless to say, I recommend it extremely highly. It has two parallel plots (alternating chapters), both of which involve people you care about, in situations that challenge their minds, emotions, and lives. Some of the things that happen can be anticipated (or at least speculated about as possible), but there are some real surprises. (Chapter 2 appeared in Omni as a story called "God Is An Iron.)

The other book I read (a couple of months ago) was a collection of Spider's short stories, called "Melancholy Elephants" (the title story won the Hugo Award for short story in 1983). Unfortunately, the book is only available in Canada at the moment. If you live there, get the book as quickly as possible. If you are here in the States, you either have to wait until the book comes out late in 1985 here, or get hold of friends or relatives in Canada and get them to send it to you. The book is worth the trouble to find it. The depth of human feeling in the stories is

I met Spider and his wife, Jeanne, at Worldcon, and fell instantly in love with both of them. For those of you who are caught up on Spider's work, here's the word on what he has coming up. There is going to be a third Callahan book (in March) (hooray!). He is also finishing up his new novel (working title is "Time Pressure). He read the first chapter at the convention and it is an awesome beginning.

So, for those of you who have yet to discover Spider Robinson, find his books wherever you can. It will be well worth the effort.

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Subject: Re: Spider Robinson - counter review  
Path: houxm!mhuxr!ihnp4!cbosgd!clyde!watmath!looking!brad  
Date: Sun, 23-Dec-84 00:00:00 EST

I can't say I agree with the review of Spider Robinson. After reading Mindkiller, my impression was, "this guy writes just like Heinlein - only not as well."

R.A.H. is Robinson's personal hero. Robinson even thinks the Number of the Beast was a great book. It's no wonder he copies the style exactly. But if you want that style, read the master himself, at least in his older stores.

I have also met Robinson at a Con, and didn't find him that impressive. Just my opinion, of course.

Brad Templeton, Looking Glass Software Ltd. - Waterloo, Ontario 519/884-7473

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Subject: Re: Spider - counter, counter review  
Path: houxm!mhuxr!ihnp4!nsc!chuqui  
Date: Tue, 25-Dec-84 01:34:41 EST

Hmm... This may be an infinitely recursive discussion, but I need to disagree with the disagreement about Spider. Spider IS a lot like RAH-- he takes chances, he pushes himself into uncertain territory, he works very hard to make his characters people (many of his stories really aren't SF, but are well enough done that nobody really notices or cares) and sometimes he falls on his face. So does RAH. Spider has Callahans, Stardance, and parts of Mindkiller (especially "God in an Iron", which is the second chapter and was originally in Omni). RAH has his juveniles, Time Enough for Love, and stories such as "The Man Who Dealt in Elephants". Both also have works that fall on their face, mainly because neither is willing to deal in "safe" stories. I think both fall into a class of writers that simply don't have middle ground. You either love their work, or you hate their work. Ellison is in there, so is Vonnegut. They aren't perfect writers, but they are good writers, and when they are on, they are REALLY on. It isn't really fair to take a good work of one (such as TEFL) and compare it to an average work from the other--the outcome is biased. Actually, I don't like to compare authors at all, I prefer to compare a work with the authors potential.

chuq

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Subject: Re: Time between movies and sequels  
Path: ihnp4!decvax!ittvax!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcrcf!trwrb!trwspp!spp2!urban  
Date: Tue, 18-Dec-84 15:04:33 EST

In article <6613@brl-tgr.ARPA> ron@brl-tgr.ARPA (Ron Natalie <ron>) writes:

Return to OZ is not a Sequel to the "The Wizard of OZ" that has Judy Garland in it. Return to OZ distinguishes itself in that it tries to be an accurate reproduction of the story in Baum's book, rather than a made over for Hollywood musical like its predecessor. The technology necessary to make a lot of what happens (like making the characters

actually look like the illustrations in the book) is fairly recent stuff.

I've read a draft of the script for Return to Oz; how close it is to what eventually hits the screen is anyone's guess. However, it is clear that the film is an amalgam of the second and third Oz books ("Marvelous Land of Oz" and "Ozma of Oz"), with some clear changes that are based primarily on the MGM musical. For example, Dorothy's Ruby Slippers figure heavily into the plot; in the original book, they're Silver Shoes (MGM thought that ruby slippers would be better in Technicolor), but their function in the new story derives from a different artifact from the books, the Nome King's

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Magic Belt. There are a couple of other oblique references to the MGM film, especially in the Kansas scenes.

Some of the story emendations are a little strange if you grew up on the Oz books (as I did). For example, the characters of Mombi and Princess Langwidere are fused into one, and it's Dorothy who brings the Gump to life. Imagine Dorothy, Tik-Tok, Billina, and Jack Pumpkinhead fleeing from the Emerald City in the Gump, and you begin to get the idea. If you haven't read the books, of course, none of this should bother you.

Rather more disturbing is that the draft that I read seems to imply that Disney is going to attempt to continue the "it was only a dream/hallucination" approach of the 1939 film, though somewhat more ambiguously. I'm unable to determine if this element was retained in the final film.

On the other hand, the publicity on the film at the Worldcon convinces me that the film is going to be visually fabulous. You'll believe a Gump's head can talk. We'll just have to wait and see whether or not the elements can all come together and make "Return to Oz" a complete delight, or a stultifying disaster.

Mike

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Subject: "dune"

Path: ihnp4!ucla-cs!reiher

Date: Wed, 19-Dec-84 00:34:38 EST

I am finding out the hard way just how difficult it is to work at 300 baud with a dumb terminal which only has 40 columns. Please forgive a certain lack of polish.

"Dune" simultaneously plays to David Lynch's weaknesses and strengths. Both are plainly evident from his previous films, and even from his background, but "Dune" displays them as never before. Lynch was an artist before he took up film, and visuals have always been his greatest strength, as anyone who saw "Eraserhead" can attest. Viewers of that film can also vouch for Lynch's ability to establish moods. In "The Elephant Man", Lynch was able to fit these talents within a Hollywood framework without major compromise. No one, including me, noticed that he had one fatal weakness, a weakness not likely to show up in films like "Eraserhead" or "The Elephant Man". David Lynch is not a storyteller. His gifts are almost purely visual, and even within the sphere of the visual they do not partake of the narrative impulse. Before "Dune", one might have thought that Lynch simply wasn't very interested in story, but that he might have been able to handle it when necessary. "Dune" illustrates that this is not the case.

"Dune" was an impossible assignment to begin with. Frank Herbert's novel is over five hundred pages long, crammed with plot, characters, and atmosphere.

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There are some splendid visual opportunities, but there is just too much stuff to fit into a conventional Hollywood movie, and the expense required to bring off the story precluded anything but a major hollywood film. In fact, the visual possibilities seemed to be what drew filmmakers to "Dune". Several of those who previously made serious efforts to get a film made included Jadorewsky (almost certainly misspelled in the absence of my film reference books; he directed "El Topo") and Ridley Scott. Not surprisingly, none of those involved were especially strong as storytellers; they were all visualists.

"Dune" defeats Lynch utterly at the story level. Lynch's screenplay visits all of the major incidents in the first half of the book, and most of those in the second, but the overall feeling is like nothing so much as one of those "ten day, twelve countries" tours of Europe. It all flies by too fast, losing all nuances in the process. Lynch includes the major plot elements, but leaves out all that made "Dune" a fascinating book: the

ecology of the planet, the historical background of the empire, the culture of the Fremmen (natives of the planet Dune, for the uninitiated out there), motivations of the characters, and the philosophical point of the whole thing. Some elements which Lynch chose to add to the story run from irrelevant to harmful, and are at best a waste of time. Welcome to the Reader's Digest condensed version of "Dune".

I will leave out the usual plot summary, as the plot of "dune" is extremely complicated. Anything I said would either spoil or confuse the newcomers, and would bore those familiar with the novel. Suffice it to say that there are many twists and turns which David Lynch tries to navigate with almost every hoary story device known to filmmakers, including narration, voice overs of people thinking (a particularly annoying device in this film which Lynch beats into the ground), obvious expository dialog, and that science fiction chestnut, the book that tells you all about your brand new planet. These devices are very poorly integrated.

Along with a byzantine plot comes a large and varied cast of characters. Lynch has unwisely chosen to include almost all of them in the film version, even if it means giving them only one or two meaningless scenes and then dropping them. He seems to believe, rather naively, that if he puts well known actors in these roles, we will understand that they are important characters, even though they have nothing to do in the film.

In fact, the cast as a whole has so little to do in this film that it is almost meaningless to speak of the quality of their performances. No one has the time or scenes to distinguish themselves, except for newcomer Kyle MacLachlan (definitely misspelled, probably only an approximation of his last name). He, alas, is not up to the opportunity, and is little more than handsome in the role of Paul. Jürgen Prochnow has some impact as Duke Leto and Sting and Kenneth McMillan are ok as the principle villains. All of the other actors are so much set decoration.

And with that, on to happier topics, such as the set decoration. Lynch has produced a visually stunning film. The sets and costumes are bizarre and

brilliant. The effects, by a team including Kit West ("Raiders of the Lost Ark"), Carlo Rambaldi (the creator of E. T.) and Albert Whitlock, matte painter extraordinaire, are first rate. Many of them are even new. What more could one ask from special effects? Well, perhaps a better integration

into the story. The only effects that can be considered a failure are the scenes of people riding sandworms. The worms themselves are fine, but it looks like the shots of people on them didn't work out, so the effects team fell back on the old trick of implying the effect rather than showing it. David Lynch has imagined a weird universe that is an awful lot of fun to look at. This would have been sufficient if he were making the Dune calendar, but it is insufficient for a film.

So the bottom line is looks 10, story 3. The film would have been better off the other way around, but that would have been nearly impossible, given the problems "Dune" presents to filmmakers. Unlike most bad science fiction movies, "Dune" is not a failure due to slavish imitation, lack of imagination, or indifference. The makers of "Dune" obviously cared, came up with something original, and failed. Too bad, but how many of you who are familiar with the book are honestly surprised? Regrettably, I can't recommend "Dune" unless you are willing to settle for visual impact alone, which few of us are.

Peter Reiher

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Subject: Dune: read the book FIRST - (nf)  
Path: houxm!ihnp4!inuxc!pur-ee!uiucdcs!uokvax!jab  
Date: Wed, 19-Dec-84 01:15:00 EST

This probably belongs in both "net.movies" and here, but I think it's probably more appropriate here.

I am the kind of person who puts off a book that everyone recommends because, well, everyone recommends it. A good example of this is that I read "Lord of the Rings" last Spring, because before then I was always surrounded by people who were such Tolkein fans that they tried to speak Elvish. Same thing for "Time Enough for Love" and "Foundation". (All fine books, ditch the fanatics somewhere and read the books.)

I promised myself that I "would read 'Dune' before seeing the movie." It wasn't because I had heard that the movie was "better/worse than the book," but that it was "different."

\*\*\*\*\* DO IT: READ 'DUNE' BEFORE SEEING THE MOVIE. \*\*\*\*\*

Why? Because, like the movie or not, you'll understand almost none of it without knowing the background of the book. Period. (The movie lacks any sense of suspense anyhow, so it's not like the book will spoil the movie. My \$4.50 was spent, in my opinion, to go see the worms.)

Jeff Bowles

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Subject: Comments on STARMAN  
Path: houxm!whuxlm!akgua!akgub!usl!jla  
Date: Thu, 27-Dec-84 00:51:44 EST

Since I have not noticed any comments on it, let me put in my vote for John Carpenter's 'Starman,' which has been showing for a week or two now. Actually I'm quite suprised that no one has yet mentioned this film...

Although I grant that he has his detractors, Carpenter continues to impress me with his films. My feeling is that he takes plots which may be rather ludicrous and does simply wonderful things with them. (E.g., 'Christine')

If I had to summarize the film in one sentence, I would call 'Starman' a romance a la Carl Sagan. As the basic plot is given in the previews, I will make only the following comments.

I saw the film with a friend who is heavily into Sci-Fi and he thought it was overdramatic, believing that our government would never go gunning after an extra-terrestrial (sp.?) visitor. Now, I agree that after the Korean airline incident it seems highly unlikely that we would so quickly shoot down a UFO. Other than that however, I think it completely plausible that the 'authorities' would try to 'capture' such a visitor.

There may have been a couple of other questionable things, but basically this film just swept me away. I thought that Jeff Bridges did a wonderful job as the visitor, and Karen Allen's performance was very strong too.

Joseph Arceneaux

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Subject: tape tracks 12/21  
Path: houxm!mhuxr!ulysses!allegra!mit-eddie!godot!harvard!seismo!nsc!chuqui  
Date: Sat, 22-Dec-84 00:08:15 EST

Not a lot to talk about-- when you aren't home, you don't watch. Oh, well, with what we have, onward:

Excalibur -- \*\*\*\*

By far the most visually splendid version of Camelot, Arthur, and Merlin. A moving and well thought out interpretation of the legend, exceptional production values, good casting, and an inspired

performance given by Merlin-- oppressive, but not superior-- Merlin knows his superiority to men, but also his limits and his foibles. The true definition of the Arthurian legends on film.

That's all for now....

chuq

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