

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 1/15/86 -- Vol. 4, No. 26

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

01/22 MT: Book Swap (4A-402)

01/29 LZ: STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY RANGERS by Harry Harrison (Humor)

02/05 HO: THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID by Shea and Wilson

02/12 MT: ?

02/19 LZ: WORLDS by Joe Haldeman (Politics)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3G-434 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070).

1. Watsa matta, bunky? Ya say science fiction prices have gone through the roof and ya have to hock yer mother to get that reprint of an Eando Binder story so you read every book ya have over and over and ya don't need the book any more 'cause ya know them all by heart and they've laid under your bed so long that _F_l_i_g_h_t_t_o_t_h_e _M_u_s_h_r_o_o_m_P_l_a_n_e_t really has mushrooms growing out of it? Is that wot's puttin' a curdle in yer carnation, bunky?

WELL, LOOK UP. MIDDLETOWN BRANCH'S HAVING A BOOKSWAP. You can trade books, magazines, and/or money for trade books, magazines, and/or money. Maybe you can get that Eando Binder story you been pinin' for in trade for a few of those mushrooms. Just come to MT 4A-402 on Wednesday, January 22, at high noon to 12:30PM. This is the ol' philosopher sayin' "LOOK UP, WALK IN THE SUNSHINE, AND SMILE!"

2. The reason that you haven't gotten the Notice these past three weeks is that your devoted editor and his wacky sidekick (me!) have been having a relaxing vacation slogging through the Peruvian Amazon and cavorting with sea turtles in the Galapagos Islands. It's good to be back. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3G-434 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER by Tom Clancy
Berkley Books, 1985, \$4.50.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper

Suppose you want to learn about life on a whaling vessel a century ago. What is the best reference book to read? (And don't you ask yourself that all the time?) My sources tell me that the best reference work is M_o_b_y_D_i_c_k. Every once in a while a novel comes along that is so well researched it is an education to read it as well as reading an entertaining story. What must be a best-selling novel--based on the number of people I have seen reading it--as an education in submarine warfare as well. The book is Clancy's T_h_e_H_u_n_t_f_o_r_R_e_d_O_c_t_o_b_e_r.

The story deals with a great Soviet submarine commander who has had all of his roots to the USSR destroyed by failings in the Soviet system. His wife was killed by a drunken doctor's malpractice, but the doctor is the son of a high Party official so nothing can be done. She might have been saved but for the unreliability of Soviet drugs. So Marko Ramius has had it with the USSR and decides to use his command of the Soviet submarine R_e_d_O_c_t_o_b_e_r to get revenge. With a complete plan he turns his submarine west, north of Scandinavia, and toward the Western Hemisphere.

T_h_e_H_u_n_t_f_o_r_R_e_d_O_c_t_o_b_e_r combines a good, though not great, thriller with a good, though not great, education on modern naval warfare. I read the book on vacation all the time wishing I had my copy of T_h_e_U.S.W_a_r_M_a_c_h_i_n_e by Ray Bonds to add even more detail and illustration, but Clancy writes with complete credibility about matters of defense I would not have dreamed were public knowledge. One never gets the feeling that Clancy's technical detail is anything but flawless.

One does get the feeling, however, that T_h_e_H_u_n_t_f_o_r_R_e_d_O_c_t_o_b_e_r,

like the film T_h_e_f_i_n_a_l_c_o_u_n_t_d_o_w_n, is as much an ad for the U. S. Armed Forces as it is a piece of dramatic narrative. One almost feels sorry for the Soviets in this book as they are so thoroughly out-gunned and out-thought by the Americans that one wonders why they bother opposing the John-Wayne-like Americans at all. We see none of the incompetence of the aborted Iranian hostage rescue. Americans are killed by mechanical failures, but not nearly so spectacularly as the Soviets are. (Hey, in this book when the Soviets have a mechanical failure, they do it up right. I rarely go back to read a scene a second time. But this one scene is far and away the most enthralling in the book. If you don't want to read the whole book, have someone who has read it point out this scene.)

T_h_e_H_u_n_t_f_o_r_R_e_d_O_c_t_o_b_e_r is a good story and an enjoyable book to read. What makes it as popular as it is is a little tough to understand. It is just a very readable text on naval warfare wrapped in a moderately good story. Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

ENEMY MINE

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Film adaptation of Barry Longyear's story slams home its message of racial tolerance. The matte and model work are more imaginative but less well-executed than is expected these days.

Last Christmas season brought two major science fiction films to grab the holiday market. Neither D_u_n_e nor 2_0_1_0 did very well at the boxoffice, so this year we get only one. E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e is an adaptation of the Hugo-winning novella by Barry Longyear. The story is a cross between the plots of two Sixties films, H_e_l_l_i_n_t_h_e_P_a_c_i_f_i_c and R_o_b_i_n_s_o_n_C_r_u_s_o_e_o_n_M_a_r_s. A human and an enemy alien are stranded together on a planet and must overcome their instinctive mutual hatred if they are to survive. There is more plot to the story than that, but that is the core of what E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e is all about. The film talks down to its audience at a slight incline when presenting its message of tolerance for those different than ourselves.

E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e was directed by Wolfgang Peterson, who previously

directed D_a_s_B_o_o_t, one of the best films ever made about submarine warfare, and T_h_e_N_e_v_e_r_e_n_d_i_n_g_S_t_o_r_y, which rose above the mismatched patchwork of ideas and images it had only because some of the ideas were really interesting. E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e goes to the other extreme from T_h_e_N_e_v_e_r_e_n_d_i_n_g_S_t_o_r_y. E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e is a little too pat, a little too simplistic. Peterson took over the reins from the film's first director, Richard Loncraine. (Why Fox threw out Loncraine and nine million dollars of his work is unclear. People in production report that Loncraine's version of the story was as good as Peterson's.) Peterson had the alien make-up done over--a number of times, in fact. The resulting make-up does not quite look believable, particularly a tail that looks borrowed from a stuffed animal.

Dennis Quaid of T_h_e_R_i_g_h_t_S_t_u_f_f, D_r_e_a_m_s_c_a_p_e, and B_r_e_a_k_i_n_g_A_w_a_y stars as the human and Lou Gossett, Jr. (A_n_O_f_f_i_c_e_r_a_n_d_a_G_e_n_t_l_e_m_a_n, S_a_d_a_t) is quite good as the alien. Also on hand is Brion James, continuing a career of belligerent parts like the replicant Leon in B_l_a_d_e_r_u_n_n_e_r and the head redneck in the "Mummy Daddy" episode of A_m_a_z_i_n_g_S_t_o_r_i_e_s.

The special effects of E_n_e_m_y_M_i_n_e are fun rather than believable. Much of the landscape is provided by unconvincing matte paintings. Curiously enough, these were done by Industrial Light and Magic, who usually have much higher standards. The spacecraft models were created by the Bavaria Studios model unit. They look like something off the cover of a Sixties science fiction book. When one crash-lands on a planet it is obviously model work, but it fun to watch much like a similar landing was fun to watch at the climax of W_h_e_n_W_o_r_l_d_s_C_o_l_l_i_d_e.

adaptation of the prize-winning story it was based on is what lets it down. Give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. The film is just a bit simplistic in its Yuletide plea for peace off earth and good will toward aliens.

ANTARCTICA

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: This is an animal film that adults should enjoy as much as, or more than, children. It also has some significant points to make about the relationship between man and dogs. Well above average.

If you think that any film about animals is made for ages five to thirteen, you can stop reading right here. I find that many Americans have had their minds poisoned against animal films by seeing too many Walt Disney TV shows with names like "Walter the Way-Out Walrus." Disney somehow convinced the public that animal films as well as cartoons are really for a juvenile audience, and while animated films have shown a few sparse signs of recovery, the animal film has not. People seem to assume there is something sugary and puerile about films like R_i_n_g_o_f_B_r_i_g_h_t_W_a_t_e_r and N_e_v_e_r_C_r_y_W_o_l_f. Maybe the G-rating frightens people off. The Japanese film A_n_t_a_r_c_t_i_c_a is fine for a ten-year-old, though a seven-year-old might find it a little frightening. But it does not talk down to its audience the way "Walter the Way-Out Walrus" does, and it is aimed equally at an adult.

A_n_t_a_r_c_t_i_c_a is a sometimes bitter film about actual events, though obviously some of it was fictionalized where the facts were clearly unavailable. In 1957 a Japanese expedition to Antarctica brought with them about 20 sled dogs. Due to bad luck and worse planning, the dogs were left chained up as one party left and another was to come. The dog's wait should have been an hour or so but due to weather conditions the second expedition was canceled. There was no way to return for the dogs. Dogs who had just recently saved the lives of three men in the first expedition were left chained and waiting for men who would never come. After long waiting some of the dogs died on the chain. Some took their waning strength and broke the chains that held them or slipped out of tight collars to earn their freedom and begin a merciless battle for survival in a world with almost no food. The plot follows two lines. One is the adventures of the dogs trying to survive; the other follows conscience-stricken members of the expedition as they return to Japan and find they cannot live out the lives they were used to.

The production values of A_n_t_a_r_c_t_i_c_a are mostly very good. The photography of the Antarctic ice fields is done with real sensitivity. This film, however, could not be made in the United States due to objections by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A disclaimer at the end says that the dogs were treated with kindness, but I doubt that it could say the same for a sea lion attacked by the pack of dogs. The dubbing adequate, though at times not really convincing. Overall, though, the dubbing does not matter. The film's strong points are the nature photography and the story of the dogs. There it does very nicely. Give the film a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

A Partial listing of Alternate History Stories

+ Recommended
- Avoid!

Aldiss, Brian W.	"Danger: Religion!"
Aldiss, Brian W.	Eighty-Minute Hour
Aldiss, Brian W.	Frankenstein Unbound
-Aldiss, Brian W.	Malacia Tapestry
Allen, Louis	"If I Had Been H. Tojo in 1941"
+Amis, Kingsley	Alteration
Anderson, Poul	Guardians of Time
+Anderson, Poul	High Crusade
Anderson, Poul	Midsummer Tempest
Armstrong, Anthony	When The Bells Rang
+Asimov, Isaac	End of Eternity
Bailey, Hillary	"Fall of Frenchy Steiner"
Bainbridge, Beryl	Young Adolf
Basil, Otto	Twilight Man
Bier, Jesse	"Father and Son"
+Bradbury, Ray	"Sound of Thunder"
Brownlow, Kevin	How It Happened Here
Brunner, John	Infinitive of Go
Brunner, John	Quicksand
+Brunner, John	Times Without Number
Chesney, George	"Battle of Dorking"
Clark, Roland	Bomb That Failed
Clarke, Comer	England under Hitler
Cook, Glen	Matter of Time
Coppel, Alfred	Burning Mountain
Corvo, Baron	Hubert's Arthur
Cox, Richard	Operation Sealion
Daniels, David R.	"Branches of Time"
+De Camp, L. Sprague	Lest Darkness Fall
De Camp, L. Sprague	Wheels of If
Dean, William	"Passage in Italics"
Dent, Guy	Emperor of If
Dick, Philip K.	"Jon's World"
+Dick, Philip K.	Man in the High Castle
Downing, David	Moscow Option
Dunn, Walter S.	Second Front Now: 1943
Effinger, Geo Alec	"Target: Berlin!"
Eklund, Gordon	"Red Skins"
Farmer, Philip Jose	Gate of Time (Two Hawks from Earth)
Farmer, Philip Jose	"Sail On, Sail On"
-Finch, Sheila	Infinity's Web
+Ford, John	Dragon Waiting
Forester, C. S.	"If Hitler Had Invaded England"
Fried, Robert C.	"What If Hitler Got the Bomb?"
Garrett, Randall	Too Many Magicians
Hackett, General Sir John	Third World War
Harrison, Harry	Rebel in Time
+Harrison, Harry	Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!
Hawkin, Martin	When Adolf Came
Heinlein, Robert A.	Job: A Comedy of Justice
Hersey, John	White Lotus

Hogan, James P. Proteus Operation
Hoyle, Fred October the First Is Too Late

Page 2

Hull, E. M. "Flight That Failed"
Johnson, Robert B. Times-Square Samurai
Kantor, Mac Kinlay If the South Had Won Civil War
Kelley, William Melvin Different Drummer
Kimche, Jon Unfought Battle
Kornbluth, C.M. "Two Dooms"
Kurland, Michael Whenabouts of Burr
Kurtz, Katherine Lammas Night
Laumer, Keith Assignment in Nowhere
Laumer, Keith Other Side of Time
Laumer, Keith Worlds of the Imperium
Lawrence, Edmund It May Happen Yet
Le Guin, Ursula K. Lathe of Heaven
Leiber, Fritz "Catch that Zeppelin"
Leiber, Fritz Destiny Times Three
Leinster, Murray "Sidewise in Time"
Lewis, Oscar Last Years
Linaweaver, Brad "Moon of Ice"
Longmate, Norman If Britain Had Fallen
Lupoff, Richard Circumpolar
+Mackie, Philip Englishman's Castle
Macksey, Kenneth Invasion: The German Invasion of England, July 1940
Melchior, Ib Haigerloch Project
Meredith, Richard C. At the Narrow Passage
Meredith, Richard C. No Brother, No Friend
Meredith, Richard C. Vestiges of Time
Merwin, Sam House of Many Worlds
+Mitchell, Kirk Procurator
Moorcock, Michael Behold the Man
Moorcock, Michael Land Leviathan
Moorcock, Michael Steel Tsar
Moorcock, Michael Warlord of the Air
Moore, Ward Bring the Jubilee
Moore, Ward "A Class with Dr. Chang"
-Mullally, Frederic Hitler Has Won
Murphy, Walter F. "What If Peter Had Been Pope During World War II"
Nesbitt, Mark If the South Had Won Gettysburg
Nolan, William F. "Worlds of Monty Wilson"
-Norden, Eric Ultimate Solution
Orgill, Michael "Many Rubicons"
Overgard, William Divide
Piper, H. Beam "He Walked Around the Horses"

Piper, H. Beam	"Last Enemy"
Piper, H. Beam	Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen
Piper, H. Beam	Paratime
Piper, H. Beam	"Police Operation"
Piper, H. Beam	Time Crime
Poyer, Joe	Tunnel War
Roberts, Keith	"Weihnachabend"
+Roberts, Keith	Pavane
Russett, Bruce M.	No Clear and Present Danger
Sarban	Sound of His Horn
Saunders, Jake	"Back to the Stone Age"
Shaw, Bob	"What Time Do You Call This?"
Sheckley, Robert	"Deaths of Ben Baxter"
Shirer, William	"If Hitler Had Won World War II"

Page 3

Silverberg, Robert	"Trips"
Silverberg, Robert	Gate of Worlds
+Silverberg, Robert	Up the Line
Smith, L. Neil	Gallatin Divergence
+Sobel, Robert	For Want of a Nail
Spinrad, Norman	Iron Dream
Squire, Sir John	Collings If It Had Happened Otherwise
Stapp, Robert	More Perfect Union
Stevens, Francis	Heads of Cerberus
+Sucharitkul, Somtow	Aquiliad
Taine, John	Time Stream
Tuchman, Barbara	"If Mao Had Come to Washington"
Van Rjndt, Phillipe	Trial of Adolf Hitler
-Waldrop, Howard	"Ike at the Mike"
+Waldrop, Howard	Them Bones
Weinbaum, Stanley G.	"Circle of Zero"
Weinbaum, Stanley G.	"Worlds of If"
Westheimer, David	Lighter than a Feather
White, Ted	Sideslip
Williamson, Jack	Legion of Time
Wolfe, Gene	"How I Lost the Second World War..."
Wyndham, John	"Random Quest"
Yulsman, Jerry	Elleander Morning
Zebrowski, George	"Cliometricon"

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NOMINATE MARK R. LEEPER FOR HUGO FOR BEST FAN WRITER

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

Subject: Brokedown Palace by Steven Brust
Path: mtuxo!houxm!vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!uw-june!ewan
Date: Mon, 16-Dec-85 19:25:27 EST

Brust's latest book is now out. Put out by.....the same people that put out the rest of his books. \$2.95. About the same size as his previous books.

Opinion: If you liked his previous books, you will like this one. This comment is based on the fact that I liked both his previous ones and this one.

Rating: I don't believe in ratings but for those that do I guess I would give it 4 on a scale -4 to 4. This means I enjoyed it and will definately read it a number of times (as opposed to I enjoyed it and probably won't read it again except when I'm bored, or, I didn't enjoy it that much but will probably read it again 'cos it helps to pass the time....)

Recommendation: READ IT! One thing that is obvious is a lot of time and thought went in to this and makes the book very enjoyable.

A comment on the cover (or maybe the first inside page) goes something like "I didn't know where he was taking me but I enjoyed going". This sums up the way I felt. Most of the questions you would like answered are answered by the end of the book although there are certainly some that are *not* answered. The impression I got was that this is a slice out of the history and everything you need to know is given but not much more. Maybe this is just me, I'll have to read it again. However this impression is not displeasing.

"I don't understand"

"Never mind" :-)

Plot Summary (Potential slight spoiler but how can you give a plot summary without a spoiler? Most of this can be got from the cover)

Tells the story of a palace that's fallen down literally around the ears of the inhabitants (no surprizes here :-)

In particular, it focuses on the youngest of 4 sons. His eldest brother, who is now King (due to the Palace), is alittle unhappy with the state of the Palace and when the youngest (I've forgotten his name and don't have the book) comments on said state, he is beaten and forced to flee. This actions will eventually lead to the youngest son destroying the old Palace to make way for the new. In fact, it seems that the youngest son never really has any free will in doing this, even though he makes the decision to do so...

More Serious Spoilers about the Universe in which this Story is based.

It seems to be the same as in Jhereg and Yendi as jheregs are mentioned numerous times but only as predators circling in the distance.

Devera makes a couple of minor appearances *in person*. This suggests that maybe it's after the time of Jhereg and Yendi except....well read the book. We are given no more clues as to what shes about. Nor does her appearance seem that important to the story. I guess Steve will tell us in good time.

Ewan

Subject: Gordon Dickson's Childe Cycle
Path: mtuxo!houxm!vax135!cornell!lasspvax!norman
Date: Wed, 18-Dec-85 18:29:20 EST

Here is a brief summary of what I know about the Childe cycle. My sources of information are some introductory material from a Doubleday triple (Three to Dorsai!) and the 1979 Childe Cycle Status Report, which I have seen elsewhere called 'out of date', though I don't know why.

The original plan of the Cycle was twelve books; six SF, three historical, and three contemporary. Right now five of the SF books have been published, and depending on who you ask, either one or two more or planned. In order (chronological order of Dickson's universe), they are:

- Necromancer
- Tactics of Mistake
- Dorsai!
- Soldier, Ask Not
- The Final Encyclopedia
- Chantry Guild (planned????)
- Childe (planned)

After finishing Childe (and also Chantry Guild?), Dickson plans to go back and do the three histrocial novels, first one about a fictional late Moyer Age/Early Renaissance warrior, Hawkwood, then one about Milton, and then one about I forget who.

After that come the contemporary novels. I remember one is to be about a military man about the time of WWII and the last about a woman in the 1980s. Dickson claimed (in 1979) that after The Final Encyclopedia was published he expected to publish a Childe Cycle novel about every other

year. I don't know whether he still plans that.

The Cycle as whole concerns itself with the evolution of humanity as a kind of a racial organism, and in particular with the influence of pivotal individuals on that history. Dickson's three archetypes are the

- 3 -

Man of War, the Man of Faith, and the Man of Philosophy. I personally have found most of the series very nicely done but then I enjoy things that are as much about civilizations as about individual people. I also like supermen stories, which much of the Cycle is.

Someone coming to this for the first time might want to start with Tactics of Mistake, which talks about the origins of the Dorsai people, who play an important role in the Cycle, and who also supply the most important single character, Donal Graeme, whose influence is very nearly pervasive.

Norman Ramsey

Subject: Magician: Apprentice by Raymond E. Feist
Path: ihnp4!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!pesnta!amd!amdcad!lll-crg!qantel!ptsfa!ptsfb!djl
Date: Tue, 17-Dec-85 22:02:47 EST

If you liked Tolkien you will like this series. If you like stories of ordinary people forced to fight against great evil, you will like this series.

This book is apparently the first of a tetralogy set in a feudal world where magic works. The hero, Pug, is an orphan being raised in the castle of the local lord. As the book opens the time is approaching when Pug, and other boys his age, must be apprenticed to a craftsman for training in the occupation chosen for them. As is obvious from the title, Pug is chosen by the lord's magician. As in any Tolkienesque (is that a word ?) fantasy, there are dwarves, elves and dragons. But this is a book that stands on its own. I did not get the same feeling of a direct ripoff of Tolkien that I got from the Shannara trilogy. As in "The Lord of the Rings" the story does get confusing at times with several different substories occurring at once. There is one major

difference between this book and TLoR, the enemy here is not painted in an unrelieved black as Sauron is. I hope that the society of invaders, who bear a strong resemblance to Samurai, is explored further in the following books.

In case it wasn't obvious from the first paragraph, I strongly recommend this book for anyone who likes heroic fantasy.

Dave Lampe @ Pacific Bell

Subject: ROBOTS AND EMPIRE by Isaac Asimov (slight spoiler)
Path: ihnp4!seismo!hao!noao!terak!mot!anasazi!duane
Date: Tue, 17-Dec-85 16:58:53 EST

The inside jacket reads:

- 4 -

[First paragraph skipped -- mainly hype]

"Two hundred years have passed since THE ROBOTS OF DAWN and Elijah Baley, the beloved hero of the Earthpeople, is dead. The future of the Universe is at a crossroads. Though the forces of the sinister Spacers are weakened, Dr. Kelden Amadiro has never forgotten -- or forgiven -- his humiliating defeat at the hands of Elijah. Now, with vengeance burning in his heart, he is more determined than ever to bring about the total annihilation of the planet Earth.

But Amadiro has not counted on the equally determined Lady Gladia. Devoted to Elijah Baley, the Auroran beauty has taken up the legacy of her fallen lover, vowing to stop the Spacers at any cost. With her two robot companions, Daneel and Giskard, she prepares to set into motion a daring and dangerous plan...a plan whose success -- or failure -- will forever seal the fate of Earth and all who live there."

[Last paragraph skipped -- also hype]

I'm not sure that the person who wrote the above summary really read the book. First, Gladia is a Solarian, not an Auroran. Second, the people of

Earth don't hold Baley in particular reverence: the Settlers do. And Gladia doesn't...well, this is only supposed to be a mild spoiler, so I won't say more.

I may be in a minority, but I didn't care for THE ROBOTS OF DAWN. I found it to be very boring. It's the first SF book by Asimov that I didn't like. From reading the above description, I had trepidations about starting ROBOTS AND EMPIRE. I'm happy to report that my fears were unfounded.

The action takes place in the pre-Foundation era. Baley's hope that some people from Earth would settle new worlds has been achieved. The main characters are Gladia, Daneel, Giskard, Amadiro, and two newcomers, one a coworker with Amadiro, the other a Settler and descendant of Elijah Baley. Daneel and Giskard really have the center stage, though.

I found the book to have two very interesting ideas about the Laws of Robotics, but I won't give away what they are. In general, things moved quickly; in fact, there were a few places in which I couldn't force myself to put the book down until I found out what happened next.

I give this book 3.5 stars (very, very good).

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak|anasazi!duane or ...!noao!mot!anasazi!duane

Subject: TIES OF BLOOD & SILVER by Joel Rosenberg (mild spoiler)
Path: ihnp4!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane

- 5 -

Date: Tue, 17-Dec-85 10:23:07 EST

The jacket reads:

"The city--or the alien Elwere-- city of rainbows, where the fortunes of the planet Oroga are concentrated in the grasping hands of the privileged few. To David, stolen from Elwere as a baby and raised as a thief of the Lower City, it is a dream of paradise, a treasure trove to which he must find the key, no matter what the cost...

And Eschteef--a schrift of the jewel-and-precious-metals schtann, twice the size of a human, more than twice as strong, with frightfully glowing eyes and rows of needle-sharp teeth. It, too, has a dream, a dream of which David has suddenly become the crucial focus. And once a shrift has chosen, nothing can change its path.

Elwere or the alien--two different roads to the future, leading to either wealth and power--or death..."

As usual, the jacket description is inaccurate. David doesn't dream of living in Elwere, nor does he search for the "key" to fitting into that society. He's more driven by events than in control of them.

The book is mainly action and adventure. It takes place on an alien world in a society that includes alien races. There's no emphasis on new technology, but some time is spent talking about the kind of society which has developed.

I had read Rosenberg's "Guardians of the Flame" series with much pleasure. This book comes as a disappointment. Just when things start getting interesting, the plot takes an abrupt turn and new characters appear. As a result, all of the characters are rather shallow, and I could never get engrossed in the story. There are some good ideas here, but they aren't adequately developed.

I give the book 2.5 stars; it's good for a quick read, but it's not very satisfying.

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak|anasazi!duane or ...!noao!mot!anasazi!duane

Subject: "Night of Power" by Spider Robinson (Berkley 1985)
Path: mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!allegra!rayssd!jps
Date: Tue, 24-Dec-85 12:33:49 EST

I've just finished reading Spider Robinsons latest "Night of Power". "Oh how the mighty have fallen". A recent posting to the net told how Mr. Robinson was selling stories, autographs, and MacIntosh to keep his wifes dance company alive. This book looks like a rush job to get some

quick cash.

The story is about a interracial Canadian couple that come to NYC in the late '90's to give the aging black dancer (sound familiar) wife a last chance to perform in the big time. The brilliant designer (entrepreneur engineer) and genius daughter by previous marriage tag along. While there, an intricately contrived race riot starts. The people that have started the riot intend to hold Manhattan hostage until the U.S. cedes a black homeland. The family is caught in the middle, of the whole thing and their love and loyalties are tested.

Technically, I thought the book was very good. Spider, writes some excellent scenes. The detail in certain points makes for some good reading. Unfortunately, his themes are getting stale. "Night of Power" has to many elements of "Star Dancer" and "Mindkiller" to be really interesting overall. Maybe somebody who reads less of the author will find it better. In addition, the story rushes to a lame conclusion. After chapters on American urban decay, and racism, the author (or editor) realizes he's on top of the 300 page paperback limit, and then wraps it up. The detail that marks the earlier chapters is wasted, as the main characters soliloquize, and third person narration tries to fill in the gaps. Its really to bad, that a book that started off so well, turns turns into just another "pulp" novel.

Subject: Tanith Lee - Days of Grass
Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!ut-sally!topaz!caip!unirot!grr
Date: Tue, 24-Dec-85 01:36:10 EST

I just read 'Days of Grass' by Tanith Lee, and was fairly impressed. The plot is pretty thin, but she makes it all very real somehow.

What bothers me, is that when I first read 'The Birthgrave' it showed this same art of making a rather strange internal 'alternate reality' stike home, although it falls apart at the end. I've been kind of dissapointed by most of her work since.

Does anybody have any feelings on she's playing games below her potential, or was I just overly impressed by 'The Birthgrave'?

George Robbins uucp: ...!ihnp4!tapa!grr

Subject: UNLESS SHE BURN by Francine Mezo (mild spoiler)
Path: ihnp4!seismo!hao!noao!terak!anasazi!duane
Date: Tue, 24-Dec-85 19:52:23 EST

The jacket reads:

"Spacewarp--the collapse of time and space--plunges Fleet Captain Areia Darenga's ship to a hostile planet where she becomes an outcast, living alone in the harsh and desolate reaches of the Yarbeen. There she is rescued by M'landan, a handsome alien priest, over seven feet tall, who awakens in her a disturbing passion and mystical visions of a new and tempting world.

Punished and cast out from his kingdom, M'landan and his beautiful High Priestess live in seclusion. But still they will risk everything for a forbidden love, a love that will cost M'landan his future--but save his people from certain extinction."

This book is the second of a trilogy, the first being THE FALL OF WORLDS and the last being NO EARTHLY SHORE. If I hadn't read the first of the series and given it four stars, I doubt that I would have purchased the second based on the jacket summary--it just doesn't sound like my type of book.

The quoted summary is fair enough, though rather sensational. The first sentence, in fact, gives the reader more information about what went on before than is found in the book; if you start reading this book without having read the first, you'll probably find things somewhat confusing.

This particular book doesn't spend much time on technology and science, but emphasizes the characters and the alien society, and it reminds me somewhat of DUNE--an outworlder starting to play a major part in an alien land, mystical occurrences, passions, violence. The major character is very believable, and one of the author's strong points is the ability to create situations in which the reader shares Darenga's anger and frustration and excitement. The plot is fairly interesting, but I suspect that it is primarily a bridge between the first and third books (a necessary bridge, I hasten to add, because it explains M'landan society and religion).

I give this one 3.5 stars (very, very good), and I look forward to reading book 3.

Duane Morse ...!noao!terak|anasazi!duane or ...!noao!mot!anasazi!duane

Subject: notes on Clue

Path: mhuxr!ulysses!gamma!epsilon!zeta!sabre!petrus!bellcore!decvax!ism70!steven

Date: Mon, 16-Dec-85 11:45:00 EST

Stupid, but fun.

Six people are being blackmailed by Mr. Boddy. They all arrive at the incredibly gothic Hill House in the middle of a driving rainstorm and are assigned aliases by The Butler: Mr. Green, Colonel Mustard, Mrs. Peacock, Professor Plum, Miss Scarlet and

- 8 -

Mrs. White. Suddenly, someone gets killed. Whodunnit??? Where???
And with what???

It made a great board game, but could it make a worthwhile movie? Well, sort of. A super cast of character actors and actresses has a field day in this combined whodunnit and murder mystery spoof. Writer/director Jonathan Lynn tries for a mixture of slapstick humor and wordplay that comes off more often than not (though his direction is a little rough around the edges). The beginning is kind of slow and labored, but it does pick up in the middle and gets enough momentum going towards the final reels to make the merely amusing funny and the funny hilarious. Everyone seems to enjoy themselves and hit their marks with the proper silly spirit.

As for the mystery, well, who knows? There was so much going on that I didn't have the time to sort out the solution and figure out whether or not it made sense. "Clue" is in release with three endings; I saw ending A. (Jonathan Lynn reportedly wrote nine endings and filmed five of them. The ubiquitous novelization has four different endings.) It would seem to me that endings B and C would have to be considerably different than A. I liked the movie enough that I may just see it again to find out.

Two and a half stars out of four.

Subject: a very witty review of Alice In Wonderland Part 1

Path: mtgzz!mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!mhuxn!mhuxm!sftig!sfmin!jeffj

Date: Thu, 12-Dec-85 09:40:50 EST

Let me introduce myself. I am Alistair Cookie, a self proclaimed Carrolian (one who is rather knowledgeable on things from or pertaining to the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a.k.a. Lewis Carroll).

Ready or not, here is MY REVIEW AND COMMENTARY on the CBS movie Alice In Wonderland, Part 1 (broadcasted on Monday Dec 9, 1985 from 8 to 10 PM).

Let's start with the beginning. Already, we have a departure from the book. The book has Alice next to her sister who was reading a book but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?" When she falls down the rabbit hole, she fell past cupboards and bookshelves and talks to herself about a great many things. Alice is quickly established as a smart, brave little girl who can cope with all that was happening, in fact she rather enjoyed it.

The movie starts her helping her mother [her parents NEVER appeared in the book nor were mentioned]. She is worried about being 'grown up' and what others will think of her. Her later comments on the Wonderlanders'

- 9 -

behavior doesn't include herself, and she comes across as harsh and bitter. The household scene does things that were never in the book, and I don't understand why it was added. Alice's comment to her sister was is passing, barely enough to establish the depth of the character. Disney kept the falling sequence in the animated film, so these writers should've recognized the importance and kept that scene.

Alice comes to the table with the key. The book specifies that this is a glass table, not a wood one. And furthermore, "tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label with the words DRINK ME beautifully printed on it in large [friendly?] letters", not the bottle the movie featured. The writers even ignored the illustrations of the book! The so-called special effects were cheap. The shrinking/growing sequences were okay for 20 years ago, but a modern production should do better. The only prop for her in the tiny size was the leg of the table, so she never moved. And they left out the wonderful taste it had "a sort of mixed

flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast", and Alice remarks how she's shutting up like a telescope not the movie's plain old ordinary "I'm shrinking". None of Alice's curiosity and amazement was displayed.

* mild flame * This seems like an overprotective parent wrote the script. The theme of growing up/being grown up appears in the movie dialog a lot. The book had no such thing. Alice's changing sizes was not sickening like the movie shows. The movie Alice might as well have swallowed poison by her reaction holding her tummy and going 'oooooh'.

After the pool of tears, the movie didn't explain how the birds dried off. In the book, they first read very dry literature. This having failed, they run in a circle in a Caucus-race "where everybody has won, and all must have prizes" where the Dodo presents Alice with the thimble she just gave him. This political satire was omitted from the movie.

Before you accuse me of holding the movie strictly to the book, let me first say that I am pointing out how the attitudes and themes presented are so different that the changes were completely out of line. Second, here's a change they made that was beneficial. The song for the Mouse's Tail bore no resemblance to the one in the book, but was better since it was easier to understand, and answered the question of why the mouse disliked dogs and cats. The poem in the book Alice's Adventures In Wonderland explains only the dislike for cats, but not dogs. The poem in the manuscript spoke of both cats and dogs, and on second thought, may have gone well to music [but then what would the songwriters do?].

When Alice was too big for the rabbit's house, she tried to grab the rabbit, "but she heard a little shriek and a fall, and a crash of broken glass, from which she concluded that it was just possible it had fallen into a cucumber frame...". The picture shows this. The movie didn't, but had the rabbit fall into a bush. This could've been a funny scene with a good prat fall. Why was the opportunity thrown away?

- 10 -

The movie encounter with the caterpillar was okay, except for the obligatory "...I think I grew up a little...", and the hookah produced very little smoke. [I guess the writers didn't want to encourage smoking or not growing up.] The Father William song and dance was ok.

They omitted Alice's eating the mushroom and the consequences of her changing size too rapidly, leaving how she unshrunk unanswered. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and say it was filmed and later edited out.

The fish-footman and frog-footman were appropriately silly. Martha Rae was a perfect match for the duchess who was originally modeled after a fourteenth century duchess called "Maultasch" meaning "pocket mouth". The cheshire cat was noticeably missing from the kitchen "grinning ear to ear", as it was one of the two creatures NOT sneezing. But then it probably would've been crowded.

There is an amazingly appropriate commercial break as Alice carried off the baby afraid that "they'll be sure to kill it". The baby was crying like a human baby. *WRONG*. "the little thing grunted in reply (it had left off sneezing by this time)" the book states, to which Alice replies "Don't grunt. That's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself". I felt that the movie made an implication of child beating, especially with the commercial break to think about what just happened (conveniently before it changed into a pig). It should've been toned down by FOLLOWING THE BOOK in tone and attitude, or at least have the baby change into a pig before the commercial break. The baby's cries were totally uncalled for. Charles Dodgeson's dislike for little boys is well established, and that displeasure was well expressed by being unsympathetic to an ugly little boy who turns into a pig. Even Alice herself (in the book) says "If it had grown up it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think". [ok - the book makes some references to growing up, but not in any serious light]

The close-up shots of the baby/pig are from an angle that makes it obvious that Alice is not holding the pig/baby. Was a stand-in used? I figure that if *I* can catch this (never being a film major), then the special effects/camera angles are very wrong.

In the book, Alice meets the Chesire Cat in a tree and has the following conversation:

Alice: "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

Cat: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to"

Alice: "I don't much care where-"

Cat: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go"

Alice: "-so long as I get somewhere"

Cat: "Oh, you're sure to do that if you only walk long enough"

Alice felt that this could not be denied.

The movie destroyed this rapport between Alice and the cat. The cat was portrayed as a sad character, telling Alice "There's no way home", "no time for friends", "no time for playing" [why's the cat talking about

time? That's the Mad Hatter's hangup!] "you are naive". What a nasty cat! And more BS about going home and growing up!

In the book, Alice left the cat puzzled. "Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin," thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!". [The Annotated Alice has an interesting note how that phrase is not a bad description of pure mathematics]. The movie had Alice leaving in a huff, saying "maybe I'll find somebody to help me", "he's so mean". [sounds just like Dorothy of The Wizard of Oz]. The movie turned the meeting from delightful to disappointing, and I felt it was beating on a stuffy adults vs. fun-loving-but-caring-and-loving kids theme. Feh. The cat exited without any charm.

The mad tea party missed some important details: 1)All the other movies I have seen of the mad tea party follow the book's pictures and feature nice furniture. Alice sits in a big stuffed chair, and for good reason. The Annotated Alice points out that the Mad Hatter is based on a furniture dealer near Oxford, so the items of furniture are prominent in this episode. This movie has all plain chairs. [I think that the best Mad tea party sequence was the one in the movie "Dreamchild". Jim Hensen does it justice, and the camera angles are great, making the table seem to grow! Was it absolutely faithful to the book? No! It was appropriately modified to show Mrs. Alice Hargreaves' confusion and merge with her current surroundings. It appropriately had a dreamy aire to it. Many times, Alice was changed from a little girl (as in the book) to her current self (an old gray lady)] 2)The Mad Hatter's hat still has the pricetag "In This Style 10/6". This movie had the tag "10/6", which one would not recognize as the price. It was not put in perspective. 3)In the book, the seating arrangement was as such: clockwise: Alice, March Hare, Dormouse, Mad Hatter. In the movie, the Hatter and the Hare were reversed. 4) When the Hatter wants a clean cup, they all move one over. To quote the book

"He [the Hatter] moved on as he spoke, and the Dormouse followed him: the March Hare moved into the Dormouse's place, and Alice rather unwillingly took the place of the March Hare. The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change; and Alice was a good deal worse off than before, as the March Hare had just upset the milk-jug into his plate."

In the movie, the Hatter didn't get a clean cup since he moved into the Dormouse's seat [okay, maybe the Dormouse didn't use its cup], and Alice didn't move over. She stayed at the head of the table [perhaps to feel a little 'grown up' since such a privilege is usually reserved for grownups? okay, maybe I'm overreacting here], but there was an empty chair between Alice and the Hatter. Pray, what was the reason for that?

5) When offered wine, the book Alice notices there isn't any and thinks it rude to offer non-existent wine. This movie Alice says "I'm much too young" [that darn theme again!].

- 12 -

On the brighter side, the Hatter's watch being exactly correct twice a day is another Carroll joke. To quote the Annotated Alice

"One is reminded also of an earlier piece by Carroll in which he proves that a stopped clock is more accurate than one that loses a minute a day. The first clock is exactly right twice every 24 hours, whereas the other clock is exactly right only once in two years. 'You might go on to ask', Carroll adds, 'How am I to know when eight o'clock does come? My clock will not tell me. Be patient: you know that when eight o'clock comes your clock is right; very good; then your rule is this: keep your eyes fixed on the clock and the very moment it is right it will be eight o'clock'".

In the book, the Hatter's watch tells the day, not the time, but in either case, the hour has stopped at tea-time, thus the perpetual tea party. The movie's song for the Hatter Just Laugh is fine, it is keeping with the character. I gave a sigh of relief when Alice left with NO comments about being childish although in this case it was warranted.

From here to the end of part 1, the movie's sequences bear little resemblance to the book. Instead of proceeding directly to the croquet grounds, she is suddenly in the forest of no-names [which comes near the middle of Through The Looking-glass, the next book!] [the concept of the forest of no names was ignored in the movie. Perhaps the writers couldn't understand the jokes? Or won't admit to a discontinuity?]. In the book, Alice meets a Fawn and asks it its name. Neither can remember, since this is the forest of no names. In the movie, Alice sings to the Fawn how everyone is mad. [Ugh! More of the child vs. grown up theme]

I think that the red queen was not furious enough. Another note from the book:

"I pictured to myself the Queen of Hearts", Carroll wrote in his article "Alice on the Stage", "as a sort of embodiment of

ungovernable passion - a blind and aimless Fury." Her constant orders for beheadings are shocking to those modern critics of children's literature who feel that juvenile fiction should be free of all violence and especially violence with Freudian undertones. Even the Oz books of L. Frank Baum, so singularly free of the horrors to be found in Grimm and Andersen, contain many scenes of decapitation. As far as I know, there have been no empirical studies of how children react to such scenes and what harm if any is done to their psyche. My guess is that the normal child finds it all very amusing and is not damaged in the least, but that books like Alice's Adventures In Wonderland and The Wizard Of Oz should not be allowed to circulate indiscriminately among adults who are undergoing analysis".

[so there!]

The commercials at this point were amusingly appropriate. First a Pampers commercial (babies - everyone acting like babies?), then an

- 13 -

Ivory Soap commercial with football players (grown-ups using baby products), then Welch jelly (something liked by kids and grown-ups alike). [Am I getting carried away? Nah!]

The croquet game was decent.

And now for something completely different: a scene with no meaning! Alice comes to a trapped goat and frees it telling it "go back to your mother" (she said the same thing to the Fawn), and again to the monkey. What was this all about? THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THIS IN THE BOOK! Why another goat (a trapped one at that) and a monkey? Neither said anything. Was it a timefill? They could've used the time for some original material and laughs.

The mock turtle's song nonsense was fine. No gloom or nasty overtones this time.

The trial - close but no cigar. The rabbit was supposed to blast his trumpet before the opening announcements (he didn't even HAVE a trumpet). The jury was supposed to be a mix of animals, and Bill the Lizard had a squeaky pencil (the movie had all birds and no attention drawn to them). When the movie Alice grows two miles tall, she says

"I'm growing up" [Awwwwwwwwww - come on already!] and "I didn't eat any mushroom..." which is a reference to something that didn't happen in this movie [perhaps edited out? Time limit, or fear of making drug abuse seem too attractive?]. Alice then says "let the prisoner go home to his family...it is horrible to feel homesick" [Dorothy - SHUT UP!]

Alice then kicks the guards and the chase begins! I feel this was TOTALLY UNNECESSARY and contributed NOTHING to the story. The book had the entire pack of cards jump up at her, and when she wakes up (next to her sister, remember?) it turns out that the cards falling on her are just leaves, and she retells the story to her sister who replies "It was a curious dream, dear, certainly; but now run in to your tea: it's getting late". [Aha! A contradiction! The book has Alice going to tea where the movie has her suffering to get that honor]. This is a much gentler ending. [note how the book NEVER EVEN MENTIONED THE PARENTS].

Back to the movie: Alice runs back home. Her sister is gone. "mother, father, I'm back" she cries. Everyone is on the other side of the mirror. She is sad and trapped -- quite unlike the book's Alice who NEVER felt abandoned. [okay - how'd she get in the other side of the mirror Mr. Irwin Allen?]. She reads Jabberwocky [which should have been printed backwards, requiring her to hold it to the mirror. It is a looking-glass book. Well, even the original book had only one paragraph reversed] Alice says [here it comes again] "it's a good thing I'm grown up or I'd be a little frightened" [no comment this time]. The Jabberwock appears amid cheap special effects, in an attempt to leave us in suspense. [THE JABBERWOCK NEVER PHYSICALLY APPEARS IN ANY OF CARROLL'S STORIES (although it is referred to)! The illustration is for the poem, a 'story within a story' if you will. Why oh why did they

- 14 -

bring that miserable creature into the movie?]

In the coming attractions: the Jabberwock terrorizes Alice's party [What a party pooper! It is NOT IN THE MOOD OF THE BOOK -- Alice rather enjoyed her party until she got fed up with it.]

I didn't catch who got credit/blame for the script, but the not-so-special effects were done by Joseph Unsinn. I'd say, they were a sin!

Jeff 'the REAL LIFE Chesire cat' Skot

Subject: Film ad
Path: leeper
Date: Sat, 21-Dec-85 11:39:38 EST

"My name is Tyranosaurus Rex. I eighteen feet high and fifty feet long. I big, mean animal. My teeth six inches long and sharp like knives. My jaws strong enough to crush brick. I over seven tons of angry power. I die out 65 million years ago but I back now to fight Rocky Balboa. Rocky V: the saga continues."

Mark Leeper

Subject: "Subway" - see it!
Path: bellcore!decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvax!sdcrcdf!hplabs!felix!birtch!oleg
Date: Wed, 18-Dec-85 19:57:23 EST

"Subway" has been showing in LA in selected theaters for about a month. It's a bizzare and enjoyable movie that is somewhat similar to "Diva" in approach - it's almost surreal. It also has something of "Repoman" intensity in it.

A second great movie I've seen this month (first being "Dream Child")

Oleg Kiselev.

Subject: Review of Akira Kurosawa's RAN
Path: mhuxr!ulysses!burl!clyde!watmath!utzoo!utcsri!hofbauer
Date: Wed, 25-Dec-85 22:49:38 EST

In a year memorable for movies that weren't I finally saw a film which has classic written all over it. The film is RAN, the latest and possibly last film from the great Akira Kurosawa. If it turns out to be his last film it is a worthy crowning achievement of an illustrious career.

RAN, which is Japanese for Chaos, is a retelling of King Lear set in 16th Century Japan. It is one of the most, if not the most, nihilistic films I have ever seen. Not the sort of film to see on Christmas eve, as I did.

Kurosawa has very effectively used the setting of 16th Century Japan to make some very strong statements about the worst tendencies of human kind. Indeed the exotic setting and foreign culture make the universality of the statements even stronger than if the story had been set in, say, Medieval England. Its tone can best captured by quoting one line from the film: "Man is born crying. After he has cried enough, he dies."

As a photographer I was particularly impressed by the visual style. The images are always strong, beautiful pastoral scenes juxtaposed with horrific battle scenes. The centre piece battle sequence contains some of the most powerful imagery ever put on film. The battle takes place on a barren fog shrowded field that could, quite literally, represent hell. No sound of the actual battle is heard, only a riveting musical score. It all adds up to a surreal effect which continues to haunt for days and probably weeks and months. It surpasses the helicopter attack in "Apocalypse, Now" or the Battle of Britain "ballet" in "The Battle of Britain" (1969). It's no accident that all three derive much of their power from music. Wagner for Apocalypse and a Sir William Walton score for the Battle of Britain. Perhaps all war should be fought to the accompaniment of music.

This film is a must see for all who feel that film should be more than chewing gum for the eyes. It deserves this year's Best Foreign Picture Oscar but it won't get it because it is not Japan's official entry. Politics here, because Kurosawa has been shooting off his mouth about the Japanese film industry. Interestingly enough it is a French-Japanese co-production so maybe it will become the French entry. Given the kind of year it has been it should actually win the Best Picture Oscar.

Subject: "A Chorus Line"

Path: vax135!cornell!uw-beaver!tektronix!hplabs!sdcrcdf!ucla-cs!reih

Date: Thu, 26-Dec-85 22:36:17 EST

As I see it, there are three major problems with the film version of "A Chorus Line". First, before one foot of film was exposed, before one person actually working on the movie was paid, "A Chorus Line" cost \$10 million, due to a variety of unwise deals made during past attempts to get this picture off the ground. Second, the filmmakers had no faith in the original vision of the play. Third, the wrong director was chosen. There are other minor problems with "A Chorus Line", but these three caused the greatest difficulties.

When you go into pre-production on a film having spent \$10 million, and you know that, generally speaking, a film must gross two-and-one half times its negative costs before it shows a profit, then there is likely to be little enthusiasm for spending big bucks. This film cost \$20 million, but only \$10 million of that is on screen. Sounds like a lot of money, still, but \$5 million is just about the minimum amount of money a studio can make a film for nowadays. \$10 million is an average budget. For this kind of money, you have to shoot pretty fast.

Musicals are notorious for their costs. While "A Chorus Line" doesn't require elaborate sets or costumes, the time and effort required to produce really first class dance numbers weren't possible under the film's budget. I suspect that this is part of the reason that "A Chorus Line" rarely shows us an entire dance number. They probably couldn't afford to shoot most of them right, so only the best bits and pieces show up on the screen, with cuts to the patched in story or reaction shots filling the gaps.

Which brings us to the second problem. David O. Selznick, who was probably the most successful transcriber of good books into good films, said that, when adapting a beloved work to a film, the audience would understand if you had to leave things out, but had little tolerance for things changed and less for things added. Selznick should be required reading for those lacking original ideas for screenplays. On stage, "A Chorus Line" consisted of the revelations of several dancers auditioning for a show. The scene never left the stage, the time never left the present. "A Chorus Line" was about dancers and how they became what they are, their problems, their joys. "A Chorus Line", in film form, tries to keep this focus, but also introduces an extraneous love story.

This love story was present in the musical, but was background, not foreground. In the film, we are constantly cutting to footage concerning the romance, leaving a dancer on stage in the middle of spilling his guts about his deepest fears and insecurities. Since the love story is half-hearted, it cannot replace the intensity lost by cutting from the film's real business. I constantly found myself wishing that they would get back to the dancers. Particularly harmful is the reassignment of "A Chorus Line's" big song, "What I Did For Love", from one of the dancers to one of the principles in the love subplot, completely losing the beauty of the song in the process.

Obviously, the screenwriters had no faith in the concept of focussing for two solid hours on the men and women on stage. Ironically, whenever the film does focus on them, it works. Whenever it leaves, it falls like a souffle in a kitchen next door to the jackhammer operators' convention. If the screenwriters had only had faith...

Richard Attenborough was not a good choice to direct. He's English, of course, and the concept of a Broadway chorus line is definitely not English. More importantly, though, Attenborough has a peculiar directorial talent. The more people he crams in a shot, the better he

- 17 -

does with it. In "Gandhi", in the funeral scene, he had literally hundreds of thousands of extras, and his handling of it is magnificent. But give him two actors and a love scene, and he has no interesting ideas at all. "A Chorus Line" worked by focussing on individuals, one at a time. Since Attenborough has but little idea what to do with them, particularly in a confined and not very interesting set, he rarely gets the emotional values present in a scene. Give him several dozen dancers kicking in unison, and Attenborough's not bad at all. Give him one desperate actor revealing his innermost secrets and Attenborough is boring.

This puts him at odds with Jeffrey Hornaday, the choreographer for the film. Hornaday, who choreographed "Flashdance", has a way with one dancer, but is woefully lacking in imagination when it comes to ensembles. Thus, Attenborough gives us poorly conceived shots of fine solos and dazzling shots of mediocre group work.

None of the actors stand out, as actors, and only Gregg Burge stands out as a dancer, in a new number called "Surprise! Surprise!" Michael Douglas is typically phlegmatic as Zack, the director of the show, which would have been OK if he hadn't been required to hold up half of the love story, as well. Alyson Reed does nothing worthy of note as Cassie, a part which made Donna McKechnie a star on the basis of a single number. She isn't very pretty, she can't act very well, and she isn't an exciting dancer. Though the part has been considerably expanded, it certainly won't make Reed a star. The rest of the chorus line is filled with pretty boys and pretty girls who we don't really get to know.

"A Chorus Line" is about one-third good. The best scenes are in the opening sequences, where masses of dancers are being auditioned. There are a few moments of flash elsewhere, but not enough to save the film. Those who haven't seen the stage version are likely to be more kind with the film than those who have, as its only real crime is that it isn't anywhere near as good as its source. In these days of such paucity of good material, however, that's a pretty serious offense.

Peter Reiher

Subject: Out of Africa

Path: bellcore!decvax!ittatc!dcdwest!sdcsvox!sdcrcf!jon

Date: Fri, 27-Dec-85 19:58:22 EST

Meryl Streep has always left me cold. Partly it is because I have found myself in disagreement with the films she has led, "The French Lieutenant's Woman," "Sophie's Choice," and "Plenty." In each she has played an intelligent woman, following the beat of a different drummer, whose demands evoked little sympathy. With little feeling for the characters she played it is difficult for me to judge her art, and sometimes I feel she but an exquisite talking head. For instance, I

- 18 -

found the results of her much ballyhoed intensive study of Polish for her accent in "Sophie's Choice" simply irritatingly cute.

Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised by her performance in "Out of Africa." Again she is a fiercely independent, intelligent woman, but she is also vulnerable, and in Africa, runs into people and a continent as uncompromising as herself. And she shows more passion than I have seen before, not sensual langour, or cloying coyness, but heady, vigorous courage. I even thought her Danish accent hit the peg square.

The story itself is a love triangle of sorts with the backdrop of Africa and in some ways just wanders along, a slice of a womans life that has far more to say to us than, say "The French Lieutenant's Woman." The scenery is magnificent, and while the movie should have been shortened just a tad, there is also excitement like a hunt scene which could teach Spielberg how much fun one can have with two bullets. Beyond this, I do

not want to say more about the story except that the movie works like the classics do, and that you really should see it; I suspect it will win the Oscar hands down.

I have heard second hand what I assume is Siskel's dislike, Redford's acting. While I would agree that it is occasionally wooden, I do not think it detracts too much, especially as his role is that of a hunter, a natural loner, and a romantic, a role he is eminently suitable for. Certainly both leads are overshadowed by the incandescence of Brandauer as the raffish husband who carries off the delicate task of being both caddish and sympathetic. One other point, a friend who read the book suggests the eagerness to please of some of the Africans, especially the cook, may have been translated into proud independence on screen to avoid offending modern sensibilities.