

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 7/16/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 1

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

07/16 LZ: SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE by Robert Silverberg (Ethics)

08/06 LZ: TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein (Faster-Than-Light Travel)

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 3E-433 (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).

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1. July 24 the science fiction film festival will continue, but only be half-started. We will have only film that is science fiction film and one that isn't. At 7:00 PM we will show:

Two Questions of Identity:

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE, chapter 6

WHO? (1974) dir. by Jack Gold

RETURN OF MARTIN GUERRE (1982) dir. by Daniel Vigne

WHO? is a faithful adaptation of the novel by popular science fiction writer Algis Budrys. A valuable scientist was in an accident near the Berlin wall. He was picked up by the East Germans and has been in their care (?) for several months. Now he is back, but is more metal than flesh. The question is who is under all that metal? How do we know he is whom he claims to be? The film stars Elliot Gould and Trevor Howard. Joseph Bova plays whoever it was who was returned.

RETURN OF MARTIN GUERRE played in art film theaters and got uniform rave reviews. In 16th Century France, Martin Guerre ran away from his village and went to war. He returned years later to claim his inheritance. Or someone else did. This one will keep you guessing.

2. Phil De Parto of the Science Fiction Association of Bergen County sent me a book review and an announcement of two meetings of the SFABC. Unfortunately he caught me just after I went on vacation so one of the meetings has already passed. Saturday, August 9, the SFABC will focus on a multi-media presentation about

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the USSR space program. Anyone interested in details or directions should call Philip De Parto (201)933-2724 after 6:10 PM on weeknights.

3. Attached is the schedule for Space Day, which will be held this Saturday, July 19, at the New Jersey State Museum.

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

SPACE DAY 1986 SCHEDULE

Jointly sponsored by the NJL5 and the New Jersey State Museum, Trenton

Accurate as of June 29, 1986

AAAAuuuudddiiiiittttooooorrrriiiiuuuummmm:::

12:00 N_A_S_A_A_e_r_o_s_p_a_c_e_P_r_o_g_r_a_m. Lecture and demonstration of scientific principles for space exploration. "Spacemobile."

2:00 P_e_r_s_o_n_a_l_O_b_s_e_r_v_a_t_i_o_n_s_o_n_t_h_e_F_u_t_u_r_e_o_f_t_h_e_S_p_a_c_e_P_r_o_g_r_a_m.
Terry Hart, former Space Shuttle astronaut.

3:00 N_A_S_A_A_e_r_o_s_p_a_c_e_P_r_o_g_r_a_m. Repeat of 12:00 Lecture and demonstration

PPPPllllaaaannnnneeeettttaaarrriiiiuuuummmm

Limited seating, tickets are available starting at 9:00 on Space Day.

10:00 T_o_n_i_g_h_t'_s_S_k_y. For younger children, no minimum age limit

11:00 2_0_6_1: _H_a_l_l_e_y_R_e_n_d_e_z_v_o_u_s. For ages 7 and above

12:00 T_o_n_i_g_h_t'_s_S_k_y. Repeat

1:00 2_0_6_1: _H_a_l_l_e_y_R_e_n_d_e_z_v_o_u_s. Repeat

2:00 T_o_n_i_g_h_t'_s_S_k_y. Repeat

3:00 2_0_6_1: _H_a_l_l_e_y_R_e_n_d_e_z_v_o_u_s. Repeat

WWWWooooorrrkkkkssshhhooooopppssss

Limited seating. Tickets are free, and available starting at 9:00 on Space Day.

11:00 L_i_f_e_i_n_t_h_e_U_n_i_v_e_r_s_e. For ages 7 to 12, no parents allowed.

1:00 L_i_f_e_i_n_t_h_e_U_n_i_v_e_r_s_e. Repeat

3:00 L_i_f_e_i_n_t_h_e_U_n_i_v_e_r_s_e. Repeat

SSSSccccciiiiieennnnccceeee TTTThhhheeeaaaatttteeerrrr

11:00 S_p_a_c_e_S_t_a_t_i_o_n: _T_h_e_N_e_x_t_S_t_e_p. A slide show provided by McDonnell Douglas.

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12:00 Tim Benford, author of T_h_e_S_p_a_c_e_P_r_o_g_r_a_m_Q_u_i_z_a_n_d_F_a_c_t_B_o_o_k.

1:00 T_o_O_r_b_i_t- _A_l_m_o_s_t: _M_o_d_e_l_R_o_c_k_e_t_r_y_a_s_a_H_o_b_b_y. Presented by the Garden State Space Modeling Association.

3:00 D_r_e_a_m_s_t_o_R_e_a_l_i_t_y: _A_n_I_n_t_r_o_d_u_c_t_i_o_n_t_o_S_p_a_c_e_D_e_v_e_l_o_p_m_e_n_t. A slide show presented by the North Jersey L5.

VVVViiiiidddeeeeo RRRRooooo mmmmm((((ssshhhheeeedddduuuullllleee mmmmaaayyyy
cccchhhhaaaannnggggeee))))

- 9:00 The Great Space Race: Payload in the Sky.
- 10:00 L5 Space Magazine
- 10:30 The Report of the National Commission on Space
- 11:00 The Great Space Race: The Earth Below.
- 12:00 The Great Space Race: The Next Civilization.
- 1:00 Spacewomen
- 2:00 The Report of the National Commission on Space
- 2:30 L5 Space Magazine.
- 3:00 The Greatest Adventure - 25 years in space.
- 4:00
- 4:30 The Report of the National Commission on Space Video room
shuts down.

CCCCooooonnnntttiiiiinnnnuuuuooooouuuussss::::

- +o NASA Exhibits: Space Shuttle, Space Station, Space Shuttle Pictorial, This is NASA, and Food for Space Shuttle Astronauts. (This exhibit will be at the museum from July 19th until August 17th, 1986.)
- +o A display of space colony blueprints provided by the Space Studies Institute, Princeton, NJ.
- +o Booth sponsored by the Garden State Space Modeling Association, including a model rocketry display.
- +o Booth sponsored by the North Jersey L5 Society, co-sponsor of Space Day

Admission to the Museum is free. The Museum is located at 205 W. State St, Trenton, NJ. For further information, contact either the State Museum at 609-292-6333 (it is open Tuesday thru Saturday 9:00 AM to 4:45 PM, Sunday 1:00 PM thru 5:00 PM).
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_N_O_T_E_S _F_R_O_M_T_H_E_N_E_T

Subject: SPACE: A DIMINISHING FRONTIER

Path: mtuxo!houxm!whuxl!whuxlm!akgua!gatech!lll-lcc!lll-crg!caip!daemon

Date: Tue, 24-Jun-86 21:23:37 EST

****PEOPLE OF THE NET LAND****

Are you aware that this country, with all its technological and scientific advances in the world, is considering to give up exploring the last great frontiers - space.

Ever since the tragic shuttle disaster of January 28 1986, where we lost seven brave explorers - astronauts - , this country is starting to believe that we , mankind, don't belong in space. Granted, there are individuals who believe that we should mean it is just very dangerous out there... send our machines...

If this country decides to take this position on space and space exploration, then the lives of the seven astronaut have been wasted futilely and the training and expenses, both personal and financial have been for naught. Forty years of space research and exploration snuffed out with the lives of the seven

We should tell our elected officials that we want to continue to explore space with men and machines. The human spirit is a curious one. If the first men had been as timid as the people want us to be, we would still be living in caves, eating cold verdebeast.

You are probably wondering why this subject is brought up in this net bulletin board. We, each and every one of us, who read this bulletin board have a secret desire to be the Gandalf, Retief, Manual de La Paz, Lord Kalvan, Alois Hammer, Donal from our genre because the characters projects our spirit of curiosity and adventure. Prior to the advent of our genre, tale-spinners would talk of Gilgamesh, Leif Erikson, Eric the Red, Columbus, Romulus and Remus, Hercules, Jason, Arthur, Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp, Hiawatha, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Genghis Kahn, Kublai Khan, Marco Polo, and other characters of folklore and history too many to mention. People mention but for either knowledge, power, or adventure... or maybe everything. We are the generation that will determine the future tale-spinners now. Our collective curiosity represents to me the thirst for adventure, power, knowledge. Even though we can not do what Manny, Milo, Alois, Cletus, Corwin, Frodo, etc can do , although they are fictional, they represent our dream of (pardon the phrase) `vision quest`

Right now, this country is at the cross roads of space exploration for the United States. The faction that wants us to be cautious and timid

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and not take chances are going to hurt us in the long run, but they are the dreamers that should try. Well enough rattling my saber, let's hear some comment from the rest of you people..... besides... I think I have heard enough of nitpicking JRRTolkien as to who|etc...

John Hardesty - A man with his eyes on tomorrow

Subject: The_God_Game by Andrew M. Greeley (mild spoiler)
Path: mtuxo!houxm!mhuxt!mhuxr!ulysses!allegra!princeton!caip!daemon
Date: Tue, 24-Jun-86 12:53:24 EST

A couple of weeks ago, I took Andrew Greeley's new book, The_God_Game_, out of the library expecting it to be like his other books (Mea Culpa, I sometimes read mainstream best seller trash.) and I was surprised to find it including some SF and Fantasy themes. The story is about an Irish Catholic priest (the narrator) who is trying out an interactive computer adventure game with graphics (sort of King's_Quest_squared) on his Compaq 286 when his setup is hit by lightning and he is suddenly observing and interacting with a parallel world where the characters in the game are living people and he can influence events through his computer and the game, giving him God-like powers in that world. The story follows him playing out the game and includes some "Psychic Slopover" between the universes.

All in all, not bad. I have read better treatments of parallel worlds, and of the temptations of power, but he puts them together nicely. Because of Greeley's past works, the book is not classified as SF, but I suspect it would have been if it had been a first novel.

I would give it about 2 stars. I wouldn't buy the hardcover, but if you see it in the library or want to wait for the paperback, it is worth a look.

Harold Wyzansky (wyzansky@nadc.arpa)

Subject: Labyrinth

Path: allegra!princeton!caip!lll-crg!styx!nike!ucbcad!ucbvax!ucsfcgl!pixar!good

Date: Mon, 23-Jun-86 22:28:11 EST

Jim Henson learned some lessons from "Dark Crystal". The most important was that you need humans in the film if a large audience is going to relate. With "Labyrinth" he shows that the lessons were all well-learned. The heroine and the villain are both well cast, especially David Bowie as the Gnome King. The creatures are every one up to the high standards we have come to expect from Henson. You just never know what might turn out to be alive.

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The story is a basic quest sort of story, which means that adults who are familiar with quests already know that she will somehow achieve her goal after a final confrontation with the evil King. But the story is for children, and the children in us. The appeal is broadened by the presence of Bowie, both on screen and in the music. Further, the film is visually rich. I detect the influence of one George Lucas in the complexity of many scenes. The detail ranges from the ugly to the comical. Watch for the two quart milk bottles at the doors to the castle.

Another influence to appreciate is that of the script by Terry "Python" Jones. The Pythonesque touches include wry dialogue from talking doorknockers, and the fact that the bigger and more menacing a thing seems to be, the smaller the force behind it. The tone of "Labyrinth" is lighter than "Dark Crystal", and nothing in it should frighten the kiddies. It really can be described as a "family film" because there should be sufficient appeal to the ages 2 through 40 or so. It represents an impressive amount of work and handily yields five bucks worth of fun.

--Craig

Subject: notes: Big Trouble in Little China

Path: ihnp4!seismo!nbires!hao!hplabs!sdcrcf!ism780c!ism780!steven
Date: Thu, 3-Jul-86 13:25:00 EST

Jack Burton (Kurt Russell) and Wang Chi (Dennis Dun) must go underground to a magical spirit world under San Francisco's Chinatown to rescue Wang's fiancée Miao Lin (former Penthouse centerfold Suzee Pai) from the clutches of the evil Lo Pan (James Hong). Oh...

One of the neat things about this picture is that there's this scene in the beginning of the film where Miao Lin is kidnapped from San Francisco International Airport. Well, the part where they drag her through the parking garage and all the car chase stuff? That was filmed in the parking garage of the building where I am right now, in Santa Monica, California.

Other than that, "Big Trouble in Little China" hasn't got a lot to recommend over such stiff summertime competition. John Carpenter never really finds a way to make this work. His scenes play nicely, but don't pull together into an emotionally involving story. It's somewhat amusing; certainly it's a watchable piece of action fluff, but the filmmakers seem to feel that every aspect of the wild and weird world that Jack enters needs explaining. Really now, it doesn't -- that kind of stuff (spirits and monsters and where the bad guy came from, etc.) has to be accepted pretty much on face value or you got no movie. For example, Jack and buddies take a potion before they go into final battle, to "explain" how they can do battle against magical guys. Hey,

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we've seen 'em battle magical guys for an hour and a half already -- why bother to explain it?? I've already bought it!

W.D. Richter's script has too much clutter; it's cluttered with some great throwaway lines and clever situations, but it's also got needlessly complicated exposition and some hero-spoofing that goes a little too far at the wrong moments. American movie going audiences like their heroes essentially to be heroes, I'm afraid, not to be parodies. Russell's swaggering Jack Burton is pretty funny, and pretty likable, though. Dun has the straight man role; his real moments come when his feet and fists fly. Veteran character actor James Hong is very good as the villain. Some great kung fu fighting. As for Kim Catrall, "Say Goodnight, Gracie."

Two stars out of four.

Subject: notes on Psycho III
Path: ihnp4!ucbvax!hplabs!sdcrcdf!ism780c!ism780!steven
Date: Mon, 7-Jul-86 21:08:00 EST

Maybe I'm just getting to be an old softie, but I was kinda hoping that Norman Bates would reform or something...

This continuation assumes you've seen plenty of Alfred Hitchcock movies as well as Richard Franklin's sequel "Psycho II." Maureen Coyle (Diana Scarwid) is a novice who has some kind of falling out with the church (check that "Vertigo" beginning). Duke (Jeff Fahey, still hasn't shaved since "Silverado") picks her up on the lonesome highway and wouldn't ya know it, both of 'em end up in Fairvale, CA. Revelations about the true nature of Mother at the end of II still have Norman in a tizzy, and when he sees Diana looking awfully pretty and an awful lot like Janet Leigh's Marion Crane, well, the poor guy just doesn't quite know how to handle himself.

Should he:

- A) Make sure the bathrooms are all stocked with tissue.
- B) Repair the ice machine.
- C) Hack her to death with a kitchen knife.

Most of the Foley work was done without correcting for location acoustics, so the sound is very flat and one-dimensional -- a lot like listening to a movie over the speaker at a drive-in. In fact, that's what most of this movie feels like: a grade B drive-in movie. Point is, it's a pretty entertaining movie of its kind. Perkins is just right as Norman, radiating insecurity that generates both sympathy and a creepy feeling down the spine. It has the requisite "Psycho" elements down: morbid humor, overblown symbolism, mild titillation and blood. Roberta Maxwell even has a scene where she spews out an incomprehensible plot wrap up at the end, just as Simon Oakland did in the original.

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It's the kind of movie that Hitchcock set out to improve on when he

filmed his original; it's also a testament to Hitch's genius that his effort still transcends them all.

Two stars out of four.

Bye the bye, I can remember huge chunks of the credits if the persons involved have done previously memorable work. It's not too difficult for a movie buff to recognize and remember Bruce Surtees's name (most Clint Eastwood movies, "Beverly Hills Cop", dad was famous cinematographer -- Robert Surtees). Carter Burwell, on the other hand, could have done the music for "Blood Simple" or maybe I'm just hallucinating. Otherwise, I copy them from various magazines or the newspaper ad when I make out the review.

Subject: REVIEW: ...About Last Night (i.e. "Sexual Perversity in Chicago")
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 12:42:26 EST

From the Play "Sexual Perversity in Chicago"

Ever see a film last year called Key Exchange? God-awful film about yuppies in love who try to decide whether they should get married or whether they love each other or whether they should try a new restaurant on Fridays? I hope not, for your sake, but it did do one thing: it started a new series of "adult" romances, where two urban-professional-types start seeing one another for casual sex, and then slowly advance to something more along the lines of love. This type of film follows them as they wrestle with themselves and whether they should give up some of their independence for a relationship, and then just how far should that relationship go (and how far has it gone in the first place). Guess you'd call it a "relationship" movie... Anyway, Key Exchange was about a 2 on a scale of 1 to 10; ...About Last Night is about a 7 or an 8 when it deals with the same subject. Rob Lowe is a handsome easy-going guy who works in a job he hates and is generally running around with his good debauched buddy Jim Belushi when he meets this girl who he goes to bed with and they start up a regular routine and then they decide to move in with one another and... and you get the picture.

I think it's done with a reasonable fidelity (though there cannot be many drunks as talented as Belushi's character in Chicago -- nay, in the world), and the twists and turns of Lowe and ?'s (I can't remember the actress's name, sorry) relationship are well done and not telegraphed -- I didn't know how this was going to end, and I liked the ending quite a bit (I agreed with it, too, which helps). The best thing about it is that the dialogue is excellent and often very funny. I liked the two main characters, though you wonder about his mental competence (this IS

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Rob Lowe, after all). Also, the actress who plays the girlfriend's best friend is extremely good -- she plays her archtype character so well that I could swear that I know her. And finally, the four mandatory MTV music sequences are done so that the scenes on the screen actually advance the film during three of the four clips.

I could be glib ("You mean you haven't been?") and say that this is the best picture I've ever seen Rob Lowe in (nyuck, nyuck), but it would be unfair to the film. About a \$3.00 picture, or \$3.75 if you're with a date.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: Mona Lisa
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 13:00:54 EST

MONA LISA (Great Britian, 1986) American Premiere

DIRECTOR: Neil Jordan

PRODUCER: Steven Wolley, Patrick Cassavetti

SCREENWRITERS: Neil Jordan, David Leland

CINEMATOGRAPHY: Roger Pratt

MUSIC: Michael Kamen

CAST: Bob Hoskins, Cathy Tyson, Michael Caine, Robbie Coltrane

One of the reasons I attend a good number of films at each year's Seattle Film Festival is that I have yet to attend one and not find a film which, to me, is a great film. This year is no exception, and Mona Lisa is the film. It contains a great script, a superb lead performance and several excellent supporting performances, excellent cinematography and a fine soundtrack. It is an entertain combination of film noir, mystery, and one wonderful character study.

It opens with George (Hoskins), a small-time gangster's lackey, being released from prison after doing seven years and taking the rap for his former boss Mortwell (Michael Caine). After being barred from visiting his daughter by his ex-wife, he goes to find Mortwell, only to discover that, as his old friend Robbie (Robbie Coltrane) says, "things have changed with Mortwell". Mortwell has become deeply involved in upper-class prostitution, and while he will not see George, he gives the word

to re-instate him as a "driver" -- a man driving and escorting a high-class hooker between customers. His escortee is Simone (Cathy Tyson), and their initial hostile reaction to one another grows into a grudging respect and then an affectionate friendship. Simone enlists George's aid in finding a friend of hers, a street prostitute who has disappeared. Meanwhile, Mortwell has surfaced and asks George to come and visit; he has questions about Simone....

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I don't want to go into the plot any more than this; suffice it to say that George's search for Simone's friend, his position between Simone and Mortwell, and his growing realization of what is going on makes for one of the best film noir films in years. This script moves the film into the first class, but Hoskin's performance as George is a marvel. He plays George perfectly, making one of the most decent and truly courageous characters to come across in years really work. He reacts to the horror of life on the streets and in the skin joints in a way that carries us along with him; and his actions, formed out of both love and pity, are those sadly lacking in the pin-head heroes of most summer films. Hoskins shows amazing range in George, from humor and affection for his Robbie, Simone and his daughter, to excruciatingly emotional pain and anger. Cathy Tyson's Simone is also fully three-dimensional, and portrays both a world-weary air of manipulation and a hidden tenderness with believability. The cinematography by Roger Pratt is perfect; he makes even the most expensive hotel look seedy and corrupt.

A \$5 film; see it at full price and maybe even higher.

We were lucky enough to get Bob Hoskins and director-screenwriter Neil Jordan to talk about Mona Lisa after the film. Hoskins had just won Best Actor at Cannes for his role as George, and I was looking for some interesting questions. Unfortunately, the Seattle Stupid Question Syndrome seemed to raise its ugly head that evening (as it so often does when the guests are particularly well-known), and people who seemed to want to talk for their own sakes asked questions that sounded like they came from People Magazine reporters ("Did you like working with Michael Caine?" My God, what's he going to say? "No, I hated it; Michael's a scumbag. Grrr..."). I remember one question in particular that asked

if the film would be released in America with sub-titles, due to the Cockney accents. Hoskins responded that he felt we should listen to the film un-dubbed, as the British had to put up with Al Pacino and Robert DeNiro with no translation. Still, a very interesting evening. The film is being distributed by Island Alive, about the best independent distributor in America, so you should all be able to see it soon.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: Short Takes (reviews) from the SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty

Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 13:03:55 EST

THE GLENN MILLER STORY (1954, USA)

While this is a fairly standard 50s byopic, it has been re-colored and re-released with a full 4-track Dolby soundtrack, and boy, howdy, it sounds good (I liked the picture so much, I bought the soundtrack).

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Frankly, though, if you have a choice between the film and the soundtrack... buy the soundtrack.

CAMORRA (Italy, 1986) American Premiere

You know, I understand that Seven Beauties was a heck of a good movie, but if this is any example of what Lina Wertmuller is up to these days, one wonders what happened to bring her to it. Admittedly, this is a dubbed version brought out by Cannon (those funders of the quarterly Chuck Norris Drive to Drive Furenners From Our Shores), but even the worst dubbing can't explain the outlandish plot and bizarre actions of the cast of characters. It appears that someone is killing pushers in Naples and sticking a heroin-filled syringe into the corpse's nu- err, testicles (ahh... the pause that refreshes). A local hooker (Angela Molina) is suspected by local police and Mafia to have seen the face of the killer. Molina plays the kind of character you wish would get strangled early on -- she's just too stupid to live, but somehow, thanks to bead-rattling or something, she goes on. She has an on-again, off-again romance with gangster Harvey Keitel (where the time between 'off

and 'on' are one or two seconds), and her other boyfriend, Toto, is killed by two gangsters while she is slapping her son and yelling at him for taking drugs. Yes, a blue-ribbon twit. As it turns out, the mothers of Naples are killing the pushers because the drugs are killing their children; the leader of the gang, a nightclub singer (apparently the bright one who thought of the 30cc body-marker), confesses all to Molina, Keitel and her husband, only to discover her husband has been the front man for Keitel all this time, even though their own kid ODeD. They weep together in a passionate embrace, after which she blows him away. This was one of those films that are so bad they're funny.

Drive-In Academy Award Nomination for Sterling Dialogue: Right after the female vigilante squad's leader has blown away hubby, there is silence broken by Harvey Keitel saying "Wow! You gals are nuts!" He then flees up the stairs of a local tower, with Molina in tow (and still winking on and off: "I love you! I hate you! I love you!...") and a few of the women still in pursuit. It ends with the women shooters and Molina all put on trial in an oversize birdcage, while the camera plays up on each of them as if they were Joan of Arc and Mother Theresa, all rolled into one. Blah. Even bad dubbing can't excuse this film.

THE LIGHTSHIP (USA, 1985)

I was really looking forward to this. Two men who I consider to be the two greatest actors in film today, Robert Duvall and Klaus Maria Brandauer. The action takes place on a lightship of the US coast, where a German-born captain (Brandauer) has his command wrested from him by a group of gangsters led by a sadistic mastermind (Duvall) who talks *just* like William F. Buckley Jr. (frankly, I have a theory that the character is supposed to be related to Professor Moriarty, but that'll have to wait until some other time). A game of wills is played between the two, as Brandauer attempts to keep his crew under control without anyone (including his wayward son) getting killed, and Duvall tries to

keep control why sating his mouse-playing urges. The acting is quite good, but the plot just doesn't move quickly enough to interest me, and the sound on the film was atrocious (we learned afterwards from the producer that it was all shot on a lightship off of Norway -- apparently it was not a "happy set"). Originally, Brandauer had been cast as the gangster and Duvall as the captain, but Duvall wanted to play the heavy for once. He is quite good, but Brandauer seems stunted in the role of

the captain; his best roles (the great performance in Mephisto and his villain in Never Say Never Again) have been flamboyant opportunities to go crazy.

THE FLIGHT OF THE SPRUCE GOOSE (USA, 1986) World Premiere

I liked this film, in the long run, though it tells an extremely muddled and often confusing story about a rather simple coal miner who meets a model and becomes romantically infatuated with her. He discovers how unhappy she is between adomineering stage mother and a pimp of an agent, and in a rather stupid move, he kidnaps her to take her to Hollywood so that she can make her big break. Halfway through she tells him she hates him; he lets her go, and she decides she'd rather be with him. It has a rather star-crossed lovers ending which I haven't seen in years, and is rather novel; but still, it has a lot to answer for. I could make a reasonable argument that it seems promote the idea that women like to be kidnaped -- I don't believe the film was saying that, but it could be interpreted that way. However, films are made for audiences which can differentiate between fantasy and reality, and not for mental defectives; if you tried to build a film that couldn't trigger any looney, you'd have film leader.

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE (Great Britain, 1985)

If anyone can figure out what this film is about, please tell me. At first I thought it was examining the lives of a Pakistani family in London; then I thought it was the relationship between two young men, one of them Pakistani; then I lost track completely. Oh, they call this a comedy, too (it was, like Shadey, highly touted). Good luck...

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: Sweet Liberty
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 12:14:54 EST

SWEET LIBERTY (U.S.A., 1986)

DIRECTOR: Alan Alda
PRODUCER: Martin Bregman
SCREENWRITER: Alan Alda
CINEMATOGRAPHY: Frank Tidy

MUSIC: Bruce Broughton

CAST: Alan Alda, Michael Caine, Michelle Pfeiffer, Bob Hoskins, Lillian Gish, Lise Hiboldt, Saul Rubinek, Lois Chiles

Generally, a major-league film festival opens with a heavyweight film which will impress viewers not only with its content but with the fact that it is opening at the festival. The Seattle Film Festival has generally followed this example with The Stunt Man and Twice In a Lifetime, among others, so I had to wonder what possessed them to open with Sweet Liberty on the day before it opened in "theaters everywhere". Alan Alda was there that evening (I'll get to that), so I imagine that was one inducement; but this film is pretty lightweight in all respects, and really something of a letdown.

The story deals with a history professor (Alan Alda) whose historical novel is being made into a movie, which is being shot in his home town. He is being assaulted on two fronts: one, in his arguments with the director (Saul Rubinek) to preserve some shred of his novel in the film version (aided and abetted by a hack screenwriter (Bob Hoskins)), and two, in his advances towards the actress portraying the heroine of his novels (Michelle Pfeiffer), who is trying to immerse herself in the character, much to Alda's delight. He is also having troubles with his senile mother (Lillian Gish) and the lead actor of the film, to varying degrees. And that's about it. The film covers the making of the film in an episodic manner which makes it look like a "what I did on my summer vacation" report; some parts are funny, some simply boring, but there's so little effort made to tie the whole thing together that it ends leaving little trace in one's memory other than Bruce Broughton's catchy theme music and a few jokes.

There are parts that work: the director's Guidelines for Filmmaking (Rebellion, Nudity, Explosions: the three things which teen audiences love) is sent up at the end in a very funny scene, and Michael Caine's crazed rampages are pretty well done, too. Lillian Gish, though, is locked into the Cute Rambunctious Senior Citizen Syndrome; and Bob Hoskins gives his first mediocre performance in years (the script gives him nothing to work with). Alda plays Alda; the man is such a one-note actor that we will forever feel that we are watching Hawkeye Pierce in yet another role. His trauma about living with another professor (Lise Hiboldt) seems suited for the early 70s, not the 80s, and he moves along the plot, giving one-liner after one-liner.

Final Score: A \$1 movie, \$2 if you don't have anything better to do (and you should).

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One wonders if Alan Alda ever turns off, just like one wonders if Robin Williams ever turns off. They both seem so welded to their particular

acts that it seems they are the roles they play. Alda got up in front of the World-Famous Egyptian Theatre stage, and after five minutes of

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talking I thought that maybe the projectionist had made a mistake and left the movie on. I wish I could tell you that I learned a lot about what goes on behind the scenes of a film after his question-and-answer session, but either Alda didn't have much to say about the process, or the audience wasn't all that curious about how the film was made after seeing it.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: Malcolm
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 12:17:10 EST

MALCOLM (Australia, 1986)

DIRECTOR: Nadia Tass

PRODUCERS: Nadia Tass, David Parker

SCREENWRITER/CINEMATOGRAPHER: David Parker

MUSIC: The Penguin Cafe Orchestra

CAST: Colin Friels, John Hargreaves, Lindy Davies, Chris Haywood

MALCOLM introduces us to Malcolm, who initially generates, more than anything else, a sense of pity. Malcolm is one of those people you see on the streets and on the busses of any major city; he may be retarded, or he may have mental problems, you're not sure. He seems simple; he's afraid to look in other peoples' eyes, and crosses the street to avoid meeting people; he doesn't seem to understand how to support himself very well. He lives in a house owned by his mother, who we later discover kept him inside and away from other people almost all his life, until she died. Malcolm seems, on first glance, to be one of those people who are the misfits of the modern world, whose existence will not be an easy one because of their inability to comprehend the complex demands of society and government.

But we soon learn that what Malcolm lacks in social skills, he makes up

for in his ingenious ability to build gadgets. Malcolm prefers to do anything by remote control rather than personally, and this has resulted in a house riddled with model railroad tracks (used to convey mail from the mailbox to the kitchen) and a remote-control radio car which makes the daily run to the market for a bottle of milk. However, his suspension from the local transit company (due to a pet project with a trolley) leads to hard times, and Malcolm must take in a border for the money. This results in his introduction to Frank and Judith, a stupid-yet-decent ex-con and his intelligent, good-humored girlfriend. They move in, and soon discover Malcolm's unusual talents; Malcolm, in turn, begins to enjoy their company and become interested in Frank's work, i.e. "heists". And Malcolm has some rather interesting ideas about this old-fashioned craft...

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This is basically one of those "loveable crooks" movies ala Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Hot Rock and Restless Natives. While it isn't as good as any of these three, it's still quite a lot of fun to watch, especially with the amazing gadgets Malcolm comes up with, and Colin Friels involving performance as the title character. It is a tribute to Friels and the writers that Malcolm ends up making Frank, the working-class criminal, appear handicapped in comparison. It has it's slow points, and the last two minutes of the film should probably be excised (they may be -- this is not supposed to be released for general viewing until later this year), but the humorous tone is kept up throughout the majority of the film. The final robbery sequence is great, and they use a gimmick that, while perhaps not practical in a REAL holdup, has amazing applications in industrial spying. I mean, who *really* pays attention to those little ashcans...

A good \$3.50 film.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: A Great Wall
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 12:20:13 EST

(The Great Wall is) A GREAT WALL (USA/China, 1986)

DIRECTOR: Peter Wang

PRODUCER: Shirley Sun

SCREENWRITERS: Peter Wang, Shirley Sun

CINEMATOGRAPHY: Peter Stein, Robert Primes

MUSIC: David Liang, Ge Ganru

CAST: Peter Wang, Sharon Iwai, Kelin Han Yee, Li Quinqin

In the last two years I've seen two of Peter Wang's films, and both of them have been excellent. Before A Great Wall, I saw (at last year's festival) Ah Ying, a beautiful film about a young Hong Kong girl's decision to go into acting. While A Great Wall is more of a comedy and study of different cultures than the intense character study Ah Ying, it shows Wang's unique touch of taking a character from a very different culture and making the audience respond to them.

The film opens to introducing us to several teen-agers and their families in Peking; the teen-agers are preparing for the tests which will determine whether they can continue onto further studies (and thus a higher-paying position in Chinese society). Meanwhile, a software engineer in San Francisco (Wang) quitting his job due to a long-promised promotion being denied him. He decides to finally take the long-talked-about but never realized trip back to Peking, where he grew up as a boy. He takes his wife and college-aged son with him, and the focus of the rest of the movie is the meeting of the two long-separated sects

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of the family (one of the teen-agers' mother is the sister of the engineer), and the effect on both their lives.

There is not a great deal of drama in this film; the emphasis is on character humor, where the differences between American and Chinese culture are explored with gentle humor. I found myself laughing through almost the entire movie, but not derisively; Wang tends to have you laugh with his characters instead of at them, as he does not stereotype anyone in this film. The closest he comes to satire is the climatic ping-pong challenge, which seems to be somewhat of a take-off on Rocky IV. He prefers to generate humor by making the people you meet on the screen familiar to you; the laughter is gentle because you've been in some of these situations yourself. In the end, the film leaves

you with no great climatic moment or any message, just a good feeling inside that lasts quite a while. Which, of course, is one of the best definitions (and the final requirement) of a good comedy.

Oh, it also has the first well-done portrayal of a software engineer on film. This alone should make it a film that every American is required to watch. At least once a year. (Wang's confrontation with a Chinese computer is a classic).

A \$4 (full-price) movie.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

Subject: SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL: Desert Bloom
Path: ihnp4!seismo!rochester!bullwinkle!uw-beaver!fluke!moriarty
Date: Mon, 16-Jun-86 12:31:46 EST

DESERT BLOOM (USA, 1986) American Premiere

DIRECTOR: Eugene Corr

PRODUCER: Michael Hausman

SCREENWRITER: Eugene Corr

CINEMATOGRAPHY: Reynaldo Villalobos

MUSIC: Brad Fiedel

CAST: Annabeth Gish, Jon Voight, JoBeth Williams, Ellen Barkin, Allen Garfield

Desert Bloom is one of those slice-of-life pictures that follows a family living in Las Vegas during 1950. It is during the Korean War, the height of the Cold War paranoia, and the Atomic Bomb is still less of a threat than a novelty. It follows Rose Chismore (Annabeth Gish), a bright 13-year old whose stepfather Jack (John Voight) has moved from town to town for the last few years due to his drinking, his nightmares from WWII and his crippled leg. He has a new job at a filling station, and is trying to kick his drinking problem with little success. His wife (Williams) is supporting them with her work at the AEC, and at the

same time is trying to hold her family together with a combination of

ignoring Jack's problem and passing down well-worn cliches to Rose and her two sisters. Finally, Rose's Aunt Starr (Barkin) arrives to stay with them while her divorce is finalized, and the stage is set for the months that precede Christmas of 1950. The plot centers on Rose's relations with her stepfather: her careful steps around his wounded pride, and her taking the brunt of his drunken anger. It also tries to tie in the fear surrounding the nuclear tests during this period, but this is more of a period garnishment to relieve some of the tension examined in the family relationship.

The main characters' performances are good. Jon Voight has to be complimented simply on the roles he takes; many "leading men" would not touch such an unpopular character with a ten-foot agent. Voight, however, takes such potentially juicy roles, and then never seems to give it less than 100% of his full ability. He makes Jack tortured and understandable without making him overly sympathetic, and he doesn't try to simplify a complex disease like alcoholism with slurred words and a whimpered "I can't help myself". Annabeth Gish is also good as Rose, playing her emotions naturally and sympathetically, without ever appearing to be artificially sweet. Allen Garfield does his normal fine work as a sympathetic neighbor and friend of Rose's. However, the rest of the cast is less than adequate, and the script has a tendency to become unstable when not dealing with the Rose/Jack conflict. Rose and her high school friends often talk in a way that is very out of place for that age group -- they sometimes sound like a cross between "Leave it to Beaver" and John Steinbeck. And there is little support from elsewhere in the cast. JoBeth Williams takes her suburban Mommy image from Poltergeist and cranks it to a bizarre parody of the 50's TV matriarch. It grinds with the other, more down-to-earth performances, and especially disengraves toward the end. Ellen Barkin proves that, by gosh, she looks great and that jail scene in Buckaroo Banzai wasn't a fluke; but otherwise, I kept feeling she was expecting Marlan Brando to burst in yelling "Stella!" at any moment.

Not a halfway-satisfying movie, but a nod to Voight and Gish; it might be worth \$2 on a slow night.

Moriarty, aka Jeff Meyer

