

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club  
Club Notice - 8/6/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 4

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.

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08/27  LZ: 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY by Arthur C. Clarke (Evolution)

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). MT Librarian is Bruce Szablak, MT 4C-418 (957-5868). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Fox screwed me up. Our film festival will still show THE FLY on 8/7, but the release of the remake will be delayed till 8/15. Maybe there will be a sneak preview on 8/8.

2. I have been watching as an odd sort of a fad seems to be gripping this country. That fad is hazard warnings... warnings expressed in warning signs. Well, of course, for years there have been yellow diamond signs on the road warning of things like this is a "rock hazard: if you honk your horn just here, a giant boulder will come out of the hills and smash your car flat." You also for years have seen diamond signs on tanker trucks, sort of a "contents hazard: if you hit this tanker it will rupture and pour on you noxious industrial wastes that will eat right through your car and part of you and will give off a smell that people will complain about three states away." I recently saw a tanker truck with a caution sign that said "inedible." I am serious about that. I think that it may be that things are worse than people are telling us. Are there really hordes coming and attacking tanker trucks for food or what? I really did see that and I haven't figured it out. In any case, recently somebody figured if trucks could put of hazard warnings, cars could too. It started with "Baby on board", i.e. "guilt hazard: if you hit this car you may never forgive yourself. The guilt may haunt you the rest of your days." Then we got the "Child on board". You wouldn't want to

hurt a child, would you? You better be ready to hit the brakes when I cut you off. If that gets you in an accident, well, you only got adults in your car. Then someone out there had the sparkling wit to think of "Mother-in-law in trunk." You wouldn't be so cruel as to hit a car with someone's poor mother in the

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trunk, would you? These days you see all kinds of things on those signs. Bumper stickers are out, caution signs are in. I saw one that said "Irish driver." Now the question I had was, what kind of a hazard is that? Are they implying that Irish drivers are particularly dangerous or what?

3. The schedule for meetings of NJSFS (New Jersey Science Fiction Association) for the rest of the year is as follows:  
(All meetings are at 7:30 P.M.)

August 16th - Jael - A science Fiction Artist with several book covers to her credit, will give a talk and slide show.

September 20th - Brian Wilkes - author of "The Space Travel Trivia Book"

October 18th - Noon - Concoction - NJSFS one-day mini-convention.  
Guest of Honor - Mark Rogers, Science Fiction and Fantasy artist, and creator of "Samurai Cat" will give a talk.

"Samurai Cat" is going to be made into an animated film.

November 15th - Fred Philips will give a talk on the Society for Creative Anachronism and other areas of fandom.

The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets at the Belleville Masonic Temple, 126 Joralemon St., Belleville, NJ. Directions are as follows: Take Exit 16W of the New Jersey Turnpike. Go west on Route 3 to NJ 21 South. Get off at Main Street in Belleville. Turn left, drive to Joralemon (first light). Turn right, cross RR tracks and Washington Ave. Temple is just past the corner to the right.

For more information, write: The New Jersey Science Fiction Society, P.O. Box 65, Paramus, NJ 07653.

Mark Leeper

### Miscellaneous Film Reviews

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#### HOWARD THE DUCK A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Pleasant re-arrangement of elements you have enjoyed in other films. This adaptation of the comic book is watchable, even good at times, but is a real disappointment for a film from Lucasfilm.

One of the most popular comic books is Marvel Comics's H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k. Howard is a sort of adult version of Donald Duck who smokes cigars and waddles his way through a society much more like ours than anything Disney would have dared put in his comic books. Disney, in fact, sued over the similarities and the court-sanctioned compromise said that Howard had to wear pants to make him look less than Donald. Now Lucasfilm, which specializes in bringing the impossible to the screen, has done a live-action film based on the comic book.

Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic special effects company developed a kitbag of standard special effects in the "Star Wars" films and some of the other films. They seem to use these standard effects like an alphabet to spell out any number of different sorts of stories. Howard is done with cable-controlled facial expressions: effect number such-and-such from R\_e\_t\_u\_r\_n\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_J\_e\_d\_i. A monster here is done with "go-motion" animation: effect number so-and-so from T\_h\_e\_E\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e\_S\_t\_r\_i\_k\_e\_s\_B\_a\_c\_k. They introduce a new special effect to the alphabet of effects about as often as they start using a new letter of the English alphabet in their shooting scripts.

But not just the effects are old-hat in H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k; many of the standard elements are present. There are car chases with police cars wrecked; there is a music video; the final reel has a breathless pace; the heroes of the film are college-aged; there are super-special effects, all tried and true. Other touches derive from films as recent as G\_h\_o\_s\_t\_b\_u\_s\_t\_e\_r\_s, a film that H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k struggles to imitate.

The story is about an alien from a world just like ours except the inhabitants evolved from ducks. An experiment catapults one of the ducks instantly (sorry, Einstein!) to Earth. The first and best half of the film is about Howard's attempts to survive in our world. At the halfway point, or thereabouts, the plot takes a sharp turn downwards as Howard and a friendly young rock singer (Lea Thompson of B\_a\_c\_k\_t\_o\_t\_h\_e\_F\_u\_t\_u\_r\_e) must save the world from a threat any Saturday morning cartoon show would have been proud to have thought of.

To be fair to H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k, it is always nice to see the standard Industrial Light & Magic effects again. The scenes in space

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are beautiful. Howard is an enjoyable effect with marvelous cable-controlled facial expressions, even if he cannot show expression and walk in the same scene. An animated monster is of an interesting design.

If everything in H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k was something you'd never seen before--like if you haven't seen a film since 1975--I could unconditionally recommend this film. Because it is such a safe collection of bankable, sure-shot, unoriginal elements, give H\_o\_w\_a\_r\_d\_t\_h\_e\_D\_u\_c\_k a flat 0 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDERETTE  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A serious plot rife with unexpected twists combines with some nice comic touches to make this film about a Pakistani family a memorable one. This film portrays some Pakistanis as having faults, hence it is the center of controversy, but it probably gives a realistic picture of what one extended family in London's Pakistani community might be like.

One of the most controversial films of 1986 is an apparently minor film that in this country is playing almost exclusively in art houses. M\_y\_B\_e\_a\_u\_t\_i\_f\_u\_l\_L\_a\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r\_e\_t\_t\_e was made for England's Channel 4. Pakistanis are picketing the theaters that show the film, claiming that it portrays an unfair portrait of their countrymen. What is it they do not like about the film?

Well, M\_y\_B\_e\_a\_u\_t\_i\_f\_u\_l\_L\_a\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r\_e\_t\_t\_e is a comedy/drama about a young Pakistani who is caring for his ailing father and who goes to work for his uncle, Saeed Jaffrey. The uncle, the family patriarch, has the boy washing cars, but then asks him to manage a run-down launderette. The boy instead offers to rent the launderette and run it for his own profit. From there the plot gets pretty complicated. If it doesn't sound like an A\_i\_r\_p\_l\_a\_n\_e!-style comedy, you are right. This is actually a fairly serious film with a wide variety of comic touches salted in. The film at once entertains and gives some insight into the structure and politics of Pakistani families and into the problems they face.

I cannot say for sure if it was done intentionally, but the photography seems often to use three planes of action. Something will be happening in the foreground, midground, and background of a scene. The director orchestrates the three planes so your attention will be on one plane of action and you will realize a piece of humor or a plot complication is simultaneously being introduced on one of the other two planes.

There are few familiar faces in the film. Saeed Jaffrey is best known for the role of Billy Fish in T\_h\_e\_M\_a\_n\_W\_h\_o\_W\_o\_u\_l\_d\_B\_e\_K\_i\_n\_g. Another actor is familiar for having played Nehru in G\_a\_n\_d\_h\_i. Beyond those two the cast is unfamiliar but good.

So why the controversy over this film? I think it is not because it misrepresents Pakistanis but because they are not represented as angelic. After a long time of mainstream American cinema using blacks only as buffoons, there was a period in which they could only appear in films as being nearly perfect. These were films like A\_P\_a\_t\_c\_h\_o\_f\_B\_l\_u\_e and L\_i\_l\_l\_i\_e\_s\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_F\_i\_e\_l\_d. Even now it is unusual for filmmakers to show a realistic spectrum of blacks: some good, some bad. M\_y\_B\_e\_a\_u\_t\_i\_f\_u\_l\_L\_a\_u\_n\_d\_e\_r\_e\_t\_t\_e is the first major film to show much of the Pakistani community. Some Pakistanis appear in a favorable light, some in a much less favorable light. I think as long as the viewer realizes that the people in this film do not represent traits of a whole nationality of people any more than the characters in R\_u\_t\_h\_l\_e\_s\_s\_P\_e\_o\_p\_l\_e or P\_s\_y\_c\_h\_o\_I\_I\_I do, the film will promote rather than destroy understanding of Pakistani immigrants. Rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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Response to Skran's Counterpoint on A\_l\_i\_e\_n\_s  
A piece of film petulance and hairsplitting by Mark R. Leeper

The following is a counter-counterpoint to Dale's counterpoint of my A\_l\_i\_e\_n\_s review. I would like to respond to a few of Dale's comments. He will then be given 10 minutes of rebuttal time and.... Well, anyway.

Contrary to Mark's claim, A\_l\_i\_e\_n\_s is not "more of the same." More of the same would involve another mining ship finding the planet again and having its crew getting eaten by the Alien.

Why leave it at that? Why not say that "more of the same" would mean having another ship called the Nostromo with an identical crew reading the identical script? No, you are right, they could have made a film even more similar to A\_l\_i\_e\_n, but they also could have made a film more in the character of A\_n\_d\_r\_o\_m\_e\_d\_a\_S\_t\_r\_a\_i\_n. There are many approaches they could have taken. They ended up with an alien presence hidden who knows where and jumping out at people. This all builds to a final confrontation between Ripley on her own trying to figure how to defeat with her wits an alien that is by far her physical superior. Just about anything else I could say would be in the realm of spoilers but while the film was not identical, in a lot of ways the film was "too much 'more of the same'".

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A\_l\_i\_e\_n\_s is the finest military science fiction ever put on film.

I don't know whether that is true or not, but even if so it is being compared to a not-very-good lot.

It is n\_o\_t, I repeat n\_o\_t, a "haunted house in space" story.

Who are you quoting here? I might defend the statement, but my review never called it a "haunted house in space" story. In fact there is the haunted house aspect of things jumping out from around corners.

The Marines bring to bear ... plasma rifles

That's interesting. I didn't see any plasma rifles and 20th Century Fox's publicity on the film says specifically that the weapons used would be closely related to current weapons so that the audience would see weapons they could identify with. The publicity describes the weapons, and while there is something called a "pulse gun" (it is a combination tommy-gun and shotgun and it shoots bullets) there is nothing described that even resembles a plasma rifle.

Contrary to what Mark claims, the aliens in the first movie are not much tougher than the ones in the second.

It is a comment repeated by others who have seen the film. One person commented to me that they were disappointed when the first alien died as easily as it did.

In the first film, the alien faced a civilian crew armed with electric cattle prods and industrial blow-torches. In the second film, the aliens face dozens of battle-hardened soldiers armed with plasma rifles...

Nope.

Is it any surprise that the aliens sometimes come out a bit the worse for wear in the second film?

Yes, there was a difference in fire-power. But it was surprising and disappointing that they didn't fare at least a little better against the

fire-power in the second film, considering how impervious they were in the first.

Summary: Strong +2. Watch it! Not as much gore as you may be expecting, but relentless suspense and action.

I gave it a weak +2. We seem to be pretty much in agreement about overall quality.

## LABYRINTH

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: L\_a\_b\_y\_r\_i\_n\_t\_h is one of the finest and most imaginative pure fantasy films ever made. The story is told with wit, imagination, and a technical expertise that would have been impossible just a few short years ago. Take out the songs by David Bowie and you'd have a really fine film.

I missed L\_a\_b\_y\_r\_i\_n\_t\_h on its release in my area. I had to travel about 100 miles round-trip to see it while I could still see it on a wide screen. I wouldn't do that again. No sirree! Not a mile over 85. Maybe 90. Edit out the David Bowie songs and I'd call this about the best that can be done in 1986 to put on screen a pure fantasy (as opposed to science fiction or horror). While the plot is a bit derivative of both A\_l\_i\_c\_e\_i\_n\_W\_o\_n\_d\_e\_r\_l\_a\_n\_d and T\_h\_e\_W\_i\_z\_a\_r\_d\_o\_f\_O\_z, the characters are fresh and the set design is endlessly creative.

It is historical fact that early performances of Goethe's F\_a\_u\_s\_t terrorized who thought that the actors' speeches calling up Mephistopheles might be overheard by the real Mephistopheles, who might really respond. That is sort of what happens in L\_a\_b\_y\_r\_i\_n\_t\_h. Sarah (played by Jennifer Connelly), who is a lot more fond of fairy tales than of her squalling baby brother, calls upon goblins to steal the baby.

Unfortunately, goblins are real and only too willing to oblige. Now she has just 13 hours in the goblin world to rescue her brother. But to do that she must get to the castle of the Goblin King and it is protected by a huge labyrinth. The way through the labyrinth is filled with dangers, weird creatures, mechanical monsters, logic problems, and smelly bogs.

This film is the result of a co-operation between Lucasfilm and the Jim Henson Muppet people. S t a r W a r s producer Gary Kurtz tried a similar project earlier with D a r k C r y s t a l. It was a moderately good fantasy but was a bit puerile for adults and a bit slow and obscure for children.

L a b y r i n t h has enough for people of all ages but the addition of songs by David Bowie was the biggest mistake the producers made. The songs slow the film and do little to broaden the character or express any emotion. Bowie does convey the seductive evil that the Goblin King needs but when he opens his mouth to sing the story and the film's interest are put on hold.

L a b y r i n t h may well be the best children's fantasy film ever made. Certainly no other film comes to mind that can match it at its own game.

In the pure fantasy category, it's really only bested by K i n g K o n g and D r a g o n s l a y e r. That's pretty good company. I had a really good time with it and have to rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

## A GREAT WALL

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A very fine, very human story of an American computer executive's visit to a China he left 30 years before. The film has comedy, it has drama, and it leaves the audience with a warm feeling. If you see only one film this summer, this should be it.

Let me start out by saying that I cannot be entirely unbiased about a film about China. My interest in science fiction led me into an interest in societies with radically different cultural assumptions. That led me into an interest in Asia, especially Japan. However, when

the opportunity presented itself I visited China, rather than Japan, because it was unclear how long the door might stay open. It was the right decision for the wrong reason. It was three years ago and just before the push toward modernization. It may have been the last opportunity to see China where only tourists wore skirts or had an interest in fashion. It was a China where Westerners were still very much a novelty. Watching from a distance (unfortunately) we can tell things are very different now, at least on the surface. So even if A G r e a t W a l I had a poor story, I would have enjoyed it. Instead, I think, in spite of the apparent simplicity of the plot, the story had a deeper message about the dangers as well as the rewards of adopting another culture.

Leo Fang is an executive in a California computer company. He is intelligent, affable, and in line for promotion to head of the personal computer division. For years he has felt a responsibility to go back and visit his family in Beijing and to have his college-age son learn Chinese, not managing to do either. When he is passed over for the deserved promotion, he quits his job and takes his family for a month-long visit to his sister's family in Beijing.

The film centers around seven people: the American Fangs, the Chinese Fangs, and Liu (a boy courting Leo's niece Lili). The story could easily have overdone any of its elements: the strangeness that each culture sees in the other, the scars left on Leo and his sister by the Cultural Revolution (which apparently contributed to the death of their father), the drama of Lili and Liu's high-pressure preparation for the one-in-a-hundred shot that the college entrance exams offered. Of all the elements only a ping-pong championship between Leo's son Peter and Liu seems melodramatic. When the film is over, some of the characters are better off and some worse off for the visit, but the audience has witnessed a very human drama and learned something about modern Chinese culture at the same time.

A G r e a t W a l I is a great film, the best I have seen in quite a while. Do see it if you get a chance. Rate it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

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

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Subject: Dayworld by Philip Jose Farmer  
Path: bellcore!decvax!decwrl!pyramid!hplabs!tektronix!orca!shark!roseal  
Date: Mon, 28-Jul-86 20:13:30 EST  
Reply-To: roseal@shark.UUCP (Rose Alford)

I have just finished the new book by Farmer called Dayworld. I did not like it as much as Riverworld, but I thought it was enjoyable.

The story is set in the far future (Woody Allen is an ancient philosopher) in the "New ERA". The problem is the world can not support the entire population, so they only let you live one day of each week. The other 6 days you are "stoned", a sought of hibernation.

The main character Jeff Caird is what is known as a "daybreaker", he lives every day of the week, illegally of course. People's lives are pretty much regulated. It is not as bad as 1984, and people are free to pursue happiness, but they have to return to their cylinders at the end of their allotted day to be restoned.

Jeff Caird has a strong personality, the trouble is he is one of 7. Each day of the week there is a different personality and lifestyle. It gets very interesting, because each personality is independent of one another, it is a self imposed schizophrenia or multiple personality.

The book's ending also hints that a sequel is probably coming.

I recommend the book for good science fiction reading.

Rose Alford

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Subject: Steve Perry's Matador Trilogy  
Path: mtuxo!mtune!akguc!akgua!gatech!lll-lcc!pyramid!hplabs!hp-pcd!everett  
Date: Mon, 28-Jul-86 19:08:00 EST

Just finished the second of the the Matador trilogy by Steve Perry. The books are:

The Man Who Never Missed  
Matadora  
The Machiavelli Interface

The third book was just published (July 86 in softcover). These aren't "classics", but they're certainly good enough to be recommended.

NOT REALLY A SPOILER PLOT SUMMARY:

The Confederation rules the galaxy (a very small part of it anyway, about 86 star systems, or something like that). The Confederation is ruthless in stamping out rebellion (on one planet, they land and blow away (with super-automatic rifles) millions and millions of unarmed people). During one of these escapades, the Hero, a soldier of the Confederation experiences a moment of 'enlightenment' during the heat of the battle, and simply walks away. He has realized that the Confederation is Evil and must fall. But, he must avoid a bloody revolution in causing its downfall, or what replaces it will be just as bad.

END OF NOT REALLY A SPOILER PLOT SUMMARY.

I admit, this isn't the most original of plots. There's lots of martial arts stuff. However, the characterizations are interesting, trying to delve into the psychology of the characters and why they do what they do. This is the saving grace of the books. At hardcover prices, I wouldn't be able to recommend them, but in paperback, a good fun read. If the Science Fiction Book Club puts them together into a single volume, a definite buy.

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Subject: Pringle's "100 Best sf Novels"  
Path: topaz!uwvax!husc6!h-sc4!gouvea  
Date: Sat, 2-Aug-86 23:27:11 EST

I've just finished reading David Pringle's "Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels" (Carrol&Graf, hardcover, \$15.95), and feel it is worth comment (and may generate some debate). The book is clearly inspired by Anthony Burgess' recent "Ninety-Nine Novels" (a much better title, that), and consists of small essays on 100 sf novels published between 1949 and 1984.

Any book of this kind will certainly be controversial, and Pringle has therefore hedged his bets carefully. His introduction includes the disclaimer that he really doesn't consider all of the novels he includes to be that good (which also becomes clear from the essays about the books in question), but that he has included them because the author is important, or popular, or a good short story writer who would be short-changed from not being included. The last point really points out a defect in the original conception of the book; an appendix on exceptional short story collections would probably have done more

justice to such authors, sparing them from having their novels discussed in terms of "this isn't really that good, but the short stories are something else", and would have allowed the inclusion of authors like Harlan Ellison, who have not written any novels.

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As to the selection itself, it is not as predictable as one might think. The only Asimov book included is "The End of Eternity" (a poor choice, I would think), and that with an essay saying (essentially) that it is not any good. Heinlein is represented by "The Puppet Masters", "The Door Into Summer", and "Have Space Suit--Will Travel" (I would omit the first two and include "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" instead). Lots of British authors are represented (perhaps predictably): John Wyndham (twice), William Golding, John Christopher, Brian Aldiss (three times), J. G. Ballard (four times), etc.

Some selections strike me as just plain strange: Mack Reynolds' "Looking Backward, From the Year 2000", for example. Pringle has evidently made an effort to represent as many kinds of sf as possible, and it sometimes is painfully evident that he doesn't like some books at all (the Asimov, Niven and Pournelle's "Oath of Fealty"). He has produced a book that is irritating at times, but fun to read and to discuss.

What sort of book would most sf readers include on such a list? I can't help but feel the list wouldn't look at all like Pringle's.

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Subject: notes on Heartburn  
Path: allegra!princeton!caip!ucla-cs!sdcrcdf!ism780c!ism780!steven  
Date: Mon, 28-Jul-86 16:15:00 EST

If nothing else, "Heartburn" provides you with an excellent piece of evidence with which to argue that most peoples' real lives are boring and unworthy of having stories told about them.

Rachel (Meryl Streep) and Mark (Jack Nicholson) are a tony East coast Establishment couple who get married, buy a home, and have a couple of babies. Then Rachel discovers that Mark is having an affair.

This production has plenty of money, two of the finest actors working playing the leads, with one of the better directors around helming it. Writer Nora Ephron had the essence of the story happen to her while she was married to journalist Carl Bernstein. She provides a few amusing lines, but is unable to communicate what happens as a story. There's endless padding and pointless forays (raising baby, going to therapy, dropping in on parties, etc.) into aspects of normal living that add up to nothing in a conventional dramatic sense. Story is all subtext and no text. Instructive comparison is with Streep's previous "Kramer vs. Kramer", where film begins immediately with the source of conflict: the wife leaving the husband. "Heartburn" finds a source for conflict after about an hour of unspooling, which leaves most viewers drowsy and/or aggravated from lack of narrative.

Streep and Nicholson are all right, but no better probably than any number of talented, charismatic performers could have done, even with such flimsy material. Streep does carry a baby well. Chic supporting

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cast is mostly wasted, as is glossy work by chic production team.

One and a half stars out of four.

