

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 3/27/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 37

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

 D A T E T O P I C

04/01 LZ: Book Swap

04/08 MT: Would Shakespeare think PORTNOY'S COMPLAINT was science fiction? or, contemporary fiction as historical SF

04/22 LZ: MURMURS OF EARTH by Carl Sagan SF-related Non-Fiction

05/06 MT: THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Margaret Atwood Mainstream SF

05/13 LZ: TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by Phillip Jose Farmer Reincarnation

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563

LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106

MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619

HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866

LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 1C-117 576-2068

MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868

Jill-of-all-trades: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070

All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. Mea culpa. I tried to find a good book for the Lincroft contingent to discuss for their 4/1 meeting, but with no success. Our staunch Librarian, Lance Larsen, informs me CHICKEN PLUCKERS OF GOR is not out yet, and the TOWER COMMISSION REPORT is not quite science fiction. Sorry, folks. I guess there's not enough time to find another book, so on that date we'll have a bookswap instead. This is an opportunity to buy/sell/trade new and used books and other material. Bring in those paperbacks that have been collecting dust; those hardcovers you can bear to part with, even records or commemorative buttons. There will be ongoing discussions about books, movies, and so forth, so your intellect, as well as your wallet, can be stimulated! [-rob mitchell]

2. The two films we have chosen for our next Leeperhouse film festival are in some way complementary. On Thursday, April 2, at 7 PM the Leepers will be showing:

You Never Know How Far a Navy Career Can Take You
ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL (chapter next)
THE FINAL COUNTDOWN (1980) dir. by Don Taylor
THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT (1984) dir. by Stewart Raffill

- 2 -

FINAL COUNTDOWN stars Kirk Douglas as the commander of a modern aircraft carrier that sails right through a time warp and finds itself in the right place at the right time to participate in the defense of Pearl Harbor.

The visit is returned in PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT in which two WWII Navy men take part in a scientific experiment and suddenly find themselves in 1984.

3. At various times in history the ruling classes in various countries have been suffused by members of secret organizations. In the 1700s the Hell Fire Club had a surprising amount of power in England. It was even reputed that Benjamin Franklin as well as many members of the nobility and perhaps even the royal house were members. The Freemasons have been alleged to be such a group. The Illuminati, who may or may not exist, are another. However, I never would have thought that a modern organization like New Jersey AT&T would have been infiltrated and suffused by such a semi-secret organization. I have had hints of it for years. Some of my best friends have from time to time been involved. I think the time has come for an expose'.

I do not know how far the conspiracy has gone but realize that wherever you go in New Jersey AT&T you are never more than a few feet away from a square dancer. Now I realize that there are parts of the country, say Arizona, where there would be nothing unusual about finding a square dancer or two hanging around. But this isn't Arizona. And I am not talking about just one or two. I tell you AT&T is veritably infested with them. And they don't wear fringed suede jackets, voluminous calico skirts, garish leather boots, little metal stars, or cowboy hats to work, so they pass for being normal. Don't be alarmed, but your officemate may actually be one. (In fact up until about a month ago, my officemate was a admitted square dancer. She is no longer my officemate, I can tell

you.) I don't want to make you paranoid, but they suffuse AT&T like gristle through a piece of meat. If this square dance underground is allowed to go unchecked, who knows how far it will go? This could be the vanguard of an International Square Dance Conspiracy!

Be on the lookout for telltale signs in your co-workers: an affected Western accent, cowboy-ish clothing (especially with fringe or leather boots that look like fugitives from the WILD BILL HICKOCK TV show), a decal or tatoo of two sinister interlocked squares or profiles of square dancers. If you see any of these signs, keep track of who the apparent square dancers are for future reference but (and this is important) do not attempt to approach them with your suspicions. That will only tip them off to who you are and that they are being watched. It may also ruin an official investigation and drive the square dancers under cover.

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

_N_O_T_E_S _F_R_O_M _T_H_E _N_E_T

Subject: _With a Single Spell_ by Lawrence Watt-Evans
Summary: Amazing what one can do canny application of a single incantation.
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!gatech!mcnc!rti-sel!dg_rtp!throopw
Date: 14 Mar 87 19:29:25 GMT

This book is the story of an apprentice wizard, who's master dies before instructing him in more than the rudiments of his profession. In fact, he has learned a single spell. Most of the book deals with his search for a way to make a living at his profession despite his sketchy education, and towards the end, how he deals with a windfall legacy with some catches. A light read with nothing profound happening. It compares well with the earlier book with the same setting, _The Misenchanted Sword_.

--

"I'm Tobas of Telven. I stole your boat."
"But that was five years ago!"

"I know, I know. I'm sorry it took so long, but I've been busy.
You wouldn't believe some of the delays."

--- From With a Single Spell

--

Wayne Throop <the-known-world>!mncn!rti-sel!dg_rtp!throopw

Subject: Tuf Voyaging by G.R.R. Martin

Summary: Anybody who hates kids and dogs (but loves cats) can't be all bad.

Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!gatech!mncn!rti-sel!dg_rtp!throopw

Date: 14 Mar 87 19:26:46 GMT

This book is a collection of stories about a man who acquires a mobile space-based biowarfare laboratory, and what he does with it. It has a strong ZPG subtext, and gets somewhat preachy at times, but is a good read nevertheless. It is hard to put my finger on just why I like this book so much. I suspect it is because in some ways the protagonist, Haviland Tuf, is a sort of Lt. Columbo analog. Columbo comes across as a fuzzy minded slob, but under this appearance he has a quick mind and a keen eye. Haviland Tuf comes across as an effete incompetent, but when the going gets tough, Tuf gets going. (You didn't imagine for a moment I'd skip that pun, did you?) In essence, what caught my interest was the continual question of "what does Tuf have up his sleeve THIS time?" And Martin provides interesting answers every time.

I recommend the book highly.

--

- 2 -

"You've got a thousand-year-old EEC seedship there, still functional, which you just happend to find one day, and you're the only person on board and the ship is yours?"

"Correct." said Haviland Tuf.

She grinned. "And I'm the Empress of the Crab Nebula."

Tuf's face remained expressionless. "I fear I have been connected to the wrong person then. I wished to speak to the Portmaster of S'uthlam."

--

Wayne Throop <the-known-world>!mncn!rti-sel!dg_rtp!throopw

Subject: 1986: the year in review

Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!lll-lcc!ames!oliveb!sun!plaid!chuq

Date: 16 Mar 87 03:46:03 GMT

Publishers Weekly just came out with its 1986 year in review, and I thought I'd summarize the point that might be interesting to you folks out there.

In 1986, a total of 42,793 different titles were published, down from 50,070 in 1985. Fiction accounted for 4,877 titles, down from 5,106. Fiction was not broken down by category, unfortunately.

Hardcover prices for volumes under \$81 (to keep very high priced books from skewing) were basically stable. Overall, prices went from \$26.57 in 1985 to \$26.61. In fiction, pricing went from \$15.24 to \$15.82. Mass Market paperback pricing went from \$3.63 to \$3.87, with fiction going from \$3.24 to \$3.49. Trade paperbacks went up significantly: from \$13.98 to \$14.65, but fiction trade paperbacks took a nosedive, from \$13.66 to \$8.50.

Total # of volumes (new, reprint, etc..) was also flat to slightly down. For hardback, it went from 30,104 to 25,561, and in fiction from 1,799 volumes in 1985 to 1,766 volumes in 1986. mass market volume went from 3,807 to 3,632, with fiction dropping from 2,524 to 2,365. Trade paperback went volumes plummeted from 15,075 in 1985 to 12,513 in 1986, while fiction volumes dropped from 726 to 700.

What's this all mean? In general, there are slightly fewer titles being published, in good part because of the continuing trend towards a few megapublishers, but also because it is simply impossible to publish 43,000 different titles in a given year and have any chance of most of them succeeding. Publishing continues to be an insane business, where you spend 18 months getting a product to market, and then ignore it because you're so busy with the other 37 products you're working on you have no time for it. sigh.

Pricing is stable, except in the trade paperback world, which (except for fiction) tends to be a little less price competitive. Publishing is in a consolidation phase, and will probably continue this way until the

current takeover rage slows down.

Just to make sure everyone understands the terminology, a hardcover is the cloth bound books, a mass market is the standard sized book you buy at the supermarket or in the bookstore racks. Trade Paperbacks are everything paper or cardstock bound that is larger than the normal paperback -- most computer books, for instance, fall in this category.

The only really fascinating figures are the fiction trade paperback area. There seems to be a continuing resistance from the consumer towards buying the larger (and pricier) trade paperbacks for fiction. Number of titles is down significantly, but more importantly, average cost is down by over 1/3. This means that publishers have still not convinced people that buying the more expensive books is worth it -- as an experiment to get people unwilling to pay hardback prices to buy a better product, this looks to have failed miserably. I don't really think the publishers have found way to differentiate a trade paperback fiction book from a mass market paperback in a way to justify the price difference. Personally, with very few exceptions, I doubt they will be able to, either.

How did Science Fiction and Fantasy do this year? Let's take a look at the 1986 bestsellers.

In hardcover, the only book to make the 1986 top 15 for Publishers Weekly was "It" by Stephen King. It sold 1,206,266 copies in 1986. Not a good year for category blockbusters in hardcover. Foundation and Earth by Asimov placed 18th with 170,000 copies, Mordant's Need: The Mirror of Her Dreams by Donaldson was 23 (140,000), The Songs of Distant Earth was 25th (135,000), and Fortune of Fear #5 by Hubbard placed 30 with 111,638. Other titles with sales greater than 100,000 included: Magic Kingdom for sale: Sold! by Terry Brooks, and three of the other four Hubbard books: #2, #3, and #4.

Parenthetically, Ernest Hemmingway's book, Garden of Eden, was sandwiched between Donaldson's and Clarke's books at 137,000 copies. For some reason, this bothers me, but I don't know why...

In the trade paperback world, there were three books that sold more than 200,000 copies. They were the three Dragonlance volumes from TSR: War of the Twins (391,000), Time of the Twins (364,000) and Test of the Twins (354,000), all by Weis and Hickman. TSR also scored with Grayhawk adventures #2, Artifact of Evil by Gary Gygax (150,000). Writer's of the Future Volume II (Bridge) sold 82,000, Mists of Avalon by Bradley sold 80,000, and Wishsong of Shannara by Brooks sold 55,000.

In the Mass Market section, there was Stephen King (Thinner, 3,136,000; Skeleton Crew, 2,834,000; Talisman (with Peter Straub), 2,690,000; and The Bachman Books, 2,000,000 [which ALSO sold 50,000 in trade paperback]) and there was the rest of the category: Jean Auel re-issued Clan of the Cave Bear and sold 4,945,000 and also sold 2,970,000 of The

- 4 -

Mammoth Hunters. The only two other category books to top 1,000,000 sales were Contact by Carl (yes, I really did write it) Sagan at 1,298,000 copies, and Strangers, by Dean Koontz at 1,100,000.

What's all this say? If you want a block buster hit, change your name. Or write horror. Or both. It also points out that there is a growing market for what is being called Mass Market hardcovers -- people are breaking down their resistance to paying the higher price for the hardcover books.

Chuq Von Rospach chuq@sun.COM [I don't read flames]

Subject: Book Reaction - Lear's Daughters
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!lll-lcc!mordor!sri-spam!rutgers!daemon
Date: 16 Mar 87 18:46:58 GMT

The Wave and the Flame
Part 1 of Lear's Daughters
&
Reign of Fire
Part 2 of Lear's Daughters
both by M. Bradley Kellogg
with William B. Rossow
Signet both published 1986

As I am not an analytical reader, I don't do book reviews, but I can react. I enjoyed these two books. [keep in mind I like the fantasy end of sf most (maccaffrey,kurtz,bradley,clayton,cherryh,mcintyre,mckillip etc) but still like some science fiction].

Human beings, following the advice of a probe indicating mineral wealth and hot dry climate, (almost crash) land on a planet, finding themselves in the midst of what looks like an ice age. There are many strange meteorologic events/changes that stump them and their computer.

There are humanoids on the planet who have developed an existence that allows survival of the awesome weather changes. The locals believe all weather is part of a battle between two goddesses. The humans, prefer

believing it is weather, but find it inexplicable by any of their models.

There is quite a bit of attention paid to the personalities of the humans and the locals, and their internal motives. There is a seesaw effect of pushing the reader to thinking the natives might be right, and later that the humans might be right. There are humans who learn to love the natives for what they are, and humans bent on exploitation of mineral wealth, and other humans between the extremes.

- 5 -

I like the two books. There is no indication anywhere that there are sequels and the ending could be sufficient as is, but doesn't preclude a third book.

Angie Hogencamp

Subject: Crystal Empire
Path: ihnp4!alberta!mnetor!seismo!rochester!pt.cs.cmu.edu!sei.cmu.edu!firth
Date: 16 Mar 87 21:37:48 GMT

The Crystal Empire, by L Neil Smith
**** mild spoilers ****

So, the Islamic Caliph in Rome decides to send his daughter Ayesha to marry the King of the mysterious Crystal Empire on the west coast of the New World, in the hope of getting an ally against the Mughal hoards...

... and we are in the midst of another alternative history novel. The premise is that a very virulent form of the Black Death removed Christian Europe from the world stage by depopulation. The rest follows.

I found this a readable piece of speculation; fairly lightweight mostly. A big plus point is that the plot and narrative move along quite well, and there are enough historical jokes to keep one amused.

Two minus points (as ever, in my opinion). First, the novel (at 450 pages) is too short. That's because it tries to describe four quite different societies, and build up several major characters, all the while keeping the action going. At times, things become very terse. Secondly, the ending is terrible - like something out of the 40's when our handful of intrepid heroes defeat the bad guys in a cataclysm of stupifying unlikelihood.

Wait for the paperback.

Subject: MISSION EARTH
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!lll-lcc!rutgers!daemon
Date: 20 Mar 87 16:52:55 GMT

AN ALIEN AFFAIR, Volume 4 of MISSION EARTH by L. Ron Hubbard

I got this book as a holiday party favor, and so this is the first volume of the series that I have read. It will also be the last. I've seen this "dekalogy" described as having "high humor, fast-paced drama, and social satire." I found it unfunny and aimless. I seem to remember having seen these books on some kind of "top sellers" list. I can

- 6 -

understand getting stuck with the first one, but who's still buying them after six? My copy will be donated to the city library.

Dennis Cotel Naval Ocean Systems Center, San Diego, CA 92152

Subject: HUMAN ERROR
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!lll-lcc!rutgers!daemon
Date: 20 Mar 87 17:25:07 GMT

HUMAN ERROR by Paul Preuss

This book might fit into the recent SFL compilation of stories with sentient computer themes. It concerns a Bay Area "Protein Valley" computer company under pressure to design a successful follow-on to

their biological-based PC. The approach of the two super-designers is to go with a genetically-engineered protein capable of self-replicating and learning. However, the story soon takes an unexpected direction. I enjoyed it.

Dennis Cattel Naval Ocean Systems Center, San Diego, CA 92152

Subject: Heart of the Comet: Brin & Benford
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!lll-lcc!rutgers!daemon
Date: 20 Mar 87 22:28:32 GMT

Anyone into "hard" sf who hasn't picked this up yet, DO SO NOW!! I am about 2/3 of the way thru, and totally fascinated! The story is about a group of around 400 people who go out to Halley's Comet on its 22nd century swing by with the intention of settling there and doing research into (among other things) altering its course. The idea is this is the groundwork on diverting other comets into more desirable orbits for harvesting or possibly using them to help terraform Mars, etc. They have cold sleep and some rather interesting ways of making the insides of the comet liveable during the 70-odd year period they intend to be on the comet (about one full orbit). Plus a good start into artificial intelligence, some neat machines, genetic engineering, and other fun things. That's all I'll tell you except:

This ties in to the discussion on what happens if you go into space without your suit....There is a scene where there is a need for an individual to do just that. He uses ear plugs and goggles, and has a small bottle of air. Wearing just a coverall. They figure he has a maximum of 3 minutes before problems of loss of O2 and nitrogen bubbling in the blood make it impossible for him to see, let alone think, with concomitant loss of purpose/motor control.

- 7 -

Don't know how they figured all this out...suspect they may have some of the information on leaky spacesuit testing mentioned earlier??

For those who haven't, its in paperback...get it and enjoy!!

Sheri

Subject: Bill, the Galactic Hero

Path: ihnp4!inuxc!pur-ee!j.cc.purdue.edu!h.cc.purdue.edu!pur-phy!dub

Date: 22 Mar 87 19:44:42 GMT

(Incredibly minor spoilers ahead, so don't worry too much.)

I just finished reading BILL, THE GALATIC HERO by Harry Harrison. I originally picked up the book on a recommendation from this network that it was like the father to Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

I can now say that it is indeed somewhat related to HhGttG. It has the same silly, idiotic humor that worked quite well in HhGttG but the mood of BILL is oh so very different.

HhGttG's silliness was a nice silliness. Bizzaire stuff happened and it was funny, but the outcome was ok (even if the Earth DOES get blown up). Our bunch of heroes always came through. HhGttG is a wonderful piece of fluff.

While reading BILL, I was waiting for the silly train of events that would probably land him as eventually becoming the Emperor. Boy, was I ever wrong. We watch as Bill slowly loses his human characteristics on his road to becoming the ideal trooper in the war against the Chingers. Bill's final (in the book) confrontation with a Chinger left me feeling very bad since it foreshadows that the Chingers will ultimately loose the war, but I ended up liking their society (from what little we see of it) more than human society.

I'm not much of a literature expert but I'd say that Bill, the Galactic Hero is a satire on war. And it works shockingly well. The last chapter is the "nail in the coffin" and at "the end" I was stunned and quite a bit disgusted at Mr. Harrison for what he did to his character. It inspired me to write this article to tell people that this book may use the tools of HhGttG but the direction BILL goes is very, very different.

I'd also say that this is Harrison's best novel.

Dwight Bartholomew

Subject: Nightmare On Elm Street III -- Some comments
Path: mtuxo!mtune!codas!burl!clyde!cbatt!ukma!slg
Date: 12 Mar 87 16:34:16 GMT

I really enjoyed the first of these three movies -- you never knew what was real and what was not, and you never knew what was going to happen. The idea of making the violence that happened in the dreams actually become real -- i.e. you get burned in a dream, the burn stays around in real life -- was the most compelling part of the film.

But in part two, everything got screwed. Freddie came out into the real world and thus negated the interesting parts of the story. It turned into a simple slasher film with no real interesting parts. In fact, I didn't manage to stay awake through the second time I saw it. Boring.

But Wes Craven didn't have anything to do with the second film. He did with the third. I can imagine a situation in which the studio execs came to Wes after the first film and said 'We've got a hit here. Make another one.' and Wes said no. So they got someone else to write and direct the film. Wes saw what atrocities they had committed to his ideas, and when they asked for a third film he wanted to regain some of the ideas from the first, so he agreed.

From what I can tell, the third film is a true sequel to Nightmare I. The ideas contained in the first film are continued, the actress playing the lead returns. We have an explanation of why Freddie is doing what he does. But most importantly, it all happens in dreams, with the affects of the dreams holding over to real life. None of this Freddie comes out of a body to kill people crap.

The third film nicely ties up the loose ends of the first film. Even, to some extent, explaining the ending. It's not as good, but it beats all heck out of part II. In fact, if someone had not seen any of the three, I wouldn't bother to suggest that they see part II. See one and three, and you've seen the real story.

Sean L. Gilley

Subject: "Angel Heart" Review
Path: mtuxo!homxb!houxm!ihnp4!ptsfa!dual!ucbvax!sdcsvax!sdics!clark
Date: 3 Mar 87 00:13:39 GMT

Believe what you've heard.
Harry Angel has been hired to search for the truth...

Pray he doesn't find it.

Starring: Mickey Rourke, Robert DeNiro, Lisa Bonet, Charlotte Rampling

Directed by: Alan Parker

Produced by: Alan Marshall and Elliott Kastner

- 9 -

Executive Producers: Mario Kassab and Andrew Vajna

Screenplay by: Alan Parker

From the novel: "Falling Angel" by William Hjortsberg

Director of Photography: Michael Seresin

I saw this movie at a special pre-release screening here at UCSD. Before the movie started, there was a trailer stating something to the effect that the version we were seeing was not a finished product, and that color, editing, etc (I can't remember the rest) may be adjusted. We saw the film Saturday night, the film is being released on Friday. Sidenote: can they really make major changes in that short a time?

The story is set in 1955, and involves a PI, Harry Angel (Mickey Rourke) hired by a mysterious stranger named Louis Cypher (Cyphre? Robert DeNiro) to find Johnny xxxxxxxx (I can't remember the name), who wretched on a debt he owes Mr. Cypher. The only information Angel has is that this man is supposed to be in a hospital in upstate New York, unrecovered from a traumatic wartime accident. The plot complicates as Angel tracks his man to New Orleans and encounters voodoo magic, murder, and a surprise ending. Unfortunately, only part-way into the movie I gradually recognized the story as one I had read in a magazine (undoubtedly either culled from the book or expanded into a book at a later date). While I remember feeling that the story was one of the more interesting and eerie that I had read, being privy to the solution of the mystery may have diluted the effect of some of the revelations in the movie. I did try and get an unbiased view of the effect of the pacing by talking to my viewing companion afterward, who was not aware of the story.

For this movie to work, it is important that the questions lead in a tighter and tighter spiral, the tension must mount, the pace quicken. While there can be occasional minor buildups and releases, overall there has to be a heightening sense of mystery and peril. On two of these scores the movie succeeds, and on one I believe it fails. First, the

screenplay felt tight; the clues led ominously to the next one, and each one seemed to provide more questions than it answered, right up to the slow realization of the solution. There were a couple of plot holes, but only one truly felt jarring, and, set near the end, it did not detract from the pace. In addition, the cinematography set a tone that properly framed the action. Early on, a mood of foreboding pervades the movie, and the camera succeeds in capturing a seediness in the environs with drab colors and small details. Unfortunately, the pace is uneven. Certain scenes are dragged out for no obvious reason, and several mystery cliches are needlessly added. The worst offense is the seemingly obligatory horror scene that turns out to be a dream. One other time there is a dream sequence that seems unnecessary, but this scene is not so much of a red herring. I hope that if they change the film at all, it is the use of judicious editing to tighten the film and remove or trim the slow spots. In this movie, if you have too much time to think, the film loses. I think this weakness is particularly a shame, since director Alan Parker is taking away from nice work by

- 10 -

screenwriter Alan Parker. I do not know what Alan Parker has previously done.

Mickey Rourke does a fine job of making Harry Angel an everyman's PI. Occasionally he seems to fall too far into the nervous school of acting, but his gradual realization of the real story is nicely evoked. Lisa Bonet is striking as the sexy, worldly young voodoo priestess. Robert DeNiro captures the mystery of Louis Cypher well, but Charlotte Rampling is not given enough leeway to play her part of the fortune-teller debutante girlfriend of the missing man.

There is considerable violence and gore in the movie, perhaps more than necessary. There is also some flesh and sex, but not gratuitously. I especially think the ending twist is highly imaginative. Looking back, I think that a good job was done in translating the feel of the story to the screen. Overall, I would give the movie a high 1 on the Leeper scale of -4 to +4. A better job of editing would give it a solid 2.

Clark N. Quinn

