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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society Club Notice - 12/09/94 -- Vol. 13, No. 24

## **MEETINGS UPCOMING:**

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Middletown 1R-400C Wednesdays at noon.

## DATE TOPIC

12/07/94 Discussion: This Season's SF Movies

01/04/95 Book: Bruce Sterling's CRYSTAL EXPRESS and GLOBALHEAD

01/25/95 Book: Donald E. McQuinn's WARRIOR02/15/95 Book: Franz Kafka's METAMORPHOSIS03/08/95 Book: a Stanislaw Lem book to be determined

#### Outside events:

The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

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1. Well, the Leeperhouse Film Festival has been dormant for a while, but I understand that there are many people out there who have never seen THE COMPANY OF WOLVES. Not that they should have, but there are lots of people who have seen Neil Jordan's INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE. That moody, Freudian, supernatural tale is really a spiritual cousin of Jordan's 1984 film THE COMPANY OF

WOLVES, a rarely seen film. Based on a story by Angela Carter, itself loosely based on the story "Little Red Riding Hood" retold with sophistication for adults. This is a very original film starring Angela Lansbury, Steven Rea, and David Warner. So on Thursday, December 15th, at 7:30 PM we will be showing THE COMPANY

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OF WOLVES, directed by Neil Jordan. (If you need directions, send me e-mail or give me a call.) [-mrl]

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2. Can some kind British member (or British-knowledgeable member) explain to me (ecl@mtgpfs1.att.com) the difference between an Aformat paperback and a B-format paperback? Thanks. [-ecl]

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3. BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS by Nancy Kress (Tor, ISBN 0-312-85749-7, 1994, 316pp, \$22.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Last year Nancy Kress expanded her Hugo-award-winning novella "Beggars in Spain" to a novel. Now she's written a sequel, and while some may say this is too much of a good thing, on the whole BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS works.

At the beginning of the 22nd Century, there are three groups of people in the world: the Sleepless, the genetically enhanced ("donkeys"), and the rest ("Livers"). And Kress follows three characters, one from each of the groups, to tell her story, which is a story of the widening distance between the haves and the have-nots. And lest you think this merely a problem of some maybe future, Kress makes sure you see it in current terms as well: "... the United States had always seemed to me like some powerful innocent beast, lushly beautiful, with the cranial capacity of a narrow-headed deer. Look how it stretches its sleek muscles in the sunlight. Looks how it bounds high. Look how it runs gracefully straight into the path of the oncoming train."

Not surprisingly, Kress's future has its own set of oncoming trains that people are running straight into. The donkeys stay in power by paying taxes back to the livers, in the form of goods and services. And of course, this system is not stable, and we see the inevitable break-down unfold, as well as attempts by the Sleepless to introduce new scientific marvels, which may save mankind--or destroy it.

If Kress's sociology is right on target, her biology is less convincing--at least to me. Kress makes her characters confront the consequences of their actions, but while I found the basic idea of the central scientific development believable, how it used is less believable, and results in an ending that is on the one hand not completely convincing and on the other not a final ending. I would not be surprised to see another book next year (BEGGARS WOULD RIDE, maybe?).

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BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS is not a perfect novel, and the ending is somewhat disappointing, but overall I would still recommend it. [-ecl]

4. OF TANGIBLE GHOSTS by L. E. Modesitt, Jr. (Tor, ISBN 0-312-85720-9, 1994, 381pp, \$22.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper:

In WINGS OF DESIRE, the Peter Falk character comments on the fact that every story seems to involve a murder mystery. Well, that's not quite true, but adding a murder mystery to another type of story may attract twice the audience of either one alone, and hence is appealing to writers of popular fiction. And sometimes an alternate history can be combined with a murder mystery to good effect (witness Len Deighton's SS-GB). But sometimes it can't, and this is an example of that.

The problem isn't that the alternate history is insufficient--it does have some problems, but none that couldn't be forgiven if the story carried it along. The problem is rather that there is too

much in this book: an alternate history, ghosts, a murder, a fascination with food, etc. In this universe, the Dutch rather than the English maintained control of eastern North America until its independence as Columbia, and the other major powers include France, Spain, and Chung Kuo (China). The reason for these changes is supposedly because ghosts exist, and so mass murders and battles were avoided because of the problems of mass hauntings which followed. The problem as I see it is that this would have changed history so far back that Holland, France, Spain, and Chung Kuo might never have existed. (Ancient conquerors would certainly not have killed all the male inhabitants of cities they conquered ad then occupied the city.) But Modesitt does a bit of hand-waving to claim the effect was not really noticed until the Age of Exploration.

Modesitt also suffers from the same weakness that many alternate history authors have: a desire to show what happened to just about everyone who was famous in our world. So we get Ambassador Schikelgruber, and "aging movie stars like Anne Frances Davis [who] could never forget her one great love, an obscure football announcer named Dutch."

The murder mystery is tied up with all sorts of political intrigue which requires the reader to keep the various internal and external politics of this universe. But for some reason, Modesitt spends an inordinate amount of time talking about food. (I opened the book fifteen times at random; seven of these times there was some mention of specific foods being consumed.)

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There are some good ideas here, but this particular mixture just doesn't work. Even the alternate history aspect can't redeem this novel, alas. [-ecl]

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5. END OF AN ERA by Robert J. Sawyer (Ace, ISBN 0-441-00114-9, 1994, 222pp, \$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Sawyer did a lot of research on dinosaurs for his "Far-Seer" series, and apparently decided that it would be a pity not to make maximum use of it. So he's written a time-travel novel in which the protagonists travel back to the late Cretaceous to find out what really killed off the dinosaurs. The fact that it just happens that the wife of one of the two time travelers left him for the other one, who used to be the first one's best friend, indicates that the plotting is not what one might call minimalist. And what they find when they go back is even less likely. I know science fiction requires a willing suspension of disbelief, but there's also a rule of allowing only one divergence from reality. Unfortunately, this piles several together. It's true that what Sawyer postulates does explain what killed the dinosaurs (and some other stuff besides), but it's so convoluted an explanation that it's not at all satisfying. [-ecl]

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6. THE SECRET OCEANS by Betty Ballantine (Bantam, ISBN 0-553-09660-5, 1994, about 160pp, \$29.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Given the success of DINOTOPIA, what could be more natural than trying to do another book with the same format to reach the same market? But there are a couple of problems with THE SECRET OCEANS: the artists they have commissioned are no James Gurneys, and people are just not as interested in sea dwellers as they are in dinosaurs.

I say that the artists are no James Gurneys, but another problem is that there are twelve artist instead of just one. DINOTOPIA was a single coherent vision. THE SECRET OCEANS alternately pictures the undersea world as luminous, cartoonish, impressionistic, muddled, and so on. It's possible that each artist's paintings form a coherent view, but while there is a list of which pages were done by which artists, \*there are no page numbers\*!

There is also a story, but I couldn't get past the oh-so-cliche beginning: a research team comprising a female ex-Soviet submarine commander, a Scottish-Japanese chief engineer, a very ecologically-minded scientist, a fourteen-year-old boy who's a musical genius and speaks eight languages, a fifteen-year-old girl who's an electronics whiz and helped develop the computer of the submarine they will be exploring in, and a science reporter prepare to leave in a new undersea exploration vessel named the "Turtle." I don't know if this is too 50s, too Hollywood, or both, but it's too something for me.

Now maybe I'm expecting more of this than I should. It appears to be written for a "young adult" level, so it could be that the formula writing is part of the package, but I can't really recommend this book. [-ecl]

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7. FEDERAL HILL (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: A circle of five friends is destroyed by the selfishness of one of their number. Author/producer/director Michael Corrente takes stories from his youth and creates a loose drama reminiscent of MEAN STREETS. The plot is familiar, but Corrente's direction keeps the film fresh. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)

Michael Corrente is a young filmmaker who has financed, written, and directed his own film. Both the director's story and the film's story have a ring of familiarity. Corrente's history is a parallel of Barry Levison's. Each chose as a first film to tell the story of his small ring of friends, but somewhat fictionalized. Each made a good film on a very low budget. And though Levison had a much better feel for memorable characters in his DINER than Corrente does with FEDERAL HILL, each made an impressive first film. One thing we can conclude is that Levison grew up in a better neighborhood. Much of what Corrente tells of his friends has a sting reminiscent of GOODFELLAS and MEAN STREETS.

Ralph, Nicky, Frank, Joey, and Bobby (played respectively by Nicholas Turturro, Anthony DeSando, Michael Raynor, Robert Tutano, and Jason Andrews) are friends who grew up together in Federal Hill, the heavily Italian-American section of Providence, Rhode Island. Each of the friends is connected with crime in one way or another. Ralph robs houses; Nicky deals cocaine; Bobby is a loser who deals in counterfeit money and owes the big boys \$30,000. Joey is nearly straight. He did time after doing a job with buddies who left him holding the bag. Now he has a wife and his worst crime is violating parole by gambling with his buddies. Frank is the only one of the guys who is straight and who tries to keep the others out of trouble. He can afford to be straight—his father is a local boss in the syndicate. When Nicky meets a cute, rich Brown student (Libby Langdon, wife of Michael Corrente) he has visions of

marrying her. But getting in the way is Ralph, a loose cannon who is getting into bigger crime. He wants to pull his housemate and best friend Nicky in with him, but he is willing to settle for dragging in Bobby.

The plot of FEDERAL HILL works just a little too predictably and melodramatically. Following the well-worn conventions of films like THE GODFATHER, the plot gets more and more taut as the story proceeds until it seems inevitable that there will be violence. The formula is followed down even to the cooking scene where we learn how to make some terrific Italian dish (in this case a tempting Aglio e Olio with Parmesan cheese).

Whether this film will be a star-maker the way DINER was is still in question. Certainly none of the actors in the film has the same sort of screen presence of the characters of DINER. Nicholas Turturro, who gives the film what modest acting flash it has, has gone on to television work. Libby Langdon is attractive as Wendy, but she simply fails to do much with her character beyond what was on the printed page of the script. Probably what sets this film apart from others in its class is the mood effect created by black-and-white photography.

As a first film this low-budget, semi-autobiographical crime film is polished and has some interesting moves that make the familiar aspects seem a little fresher. The true test for Corrente will be the second film. This one gets a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Perhaps the second film should be THE MAKING OF FEDERAL HILL. Corrente has a number of interesting stories to tell about how the film was made. One of the better ones involves his refusal to use a union crew in order to save money. Apparently the local union wanted to hire an enforcer to break Corrente's legs to teach him a lesson. "I can't do that," the enforcer said, "Michael Corrente is my little brother." "Oh. Okay," the union rep said. "Gee, what a small, funny world this is!" [-mrl]

# 8. VANYA ON 42ND STREET (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: A group of actors get together in an old theater and perform Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya" in modern dress. This is an odd way to present a good play. Chekhov does better with a more traditional performance of his work, and the revisions do little for the drama of the play. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4)

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This is a play within a play, though there is little in the outer play to do much but to explain why the classic Russian play is being done in modern dress and with virtually no set design. A group of actors get together in an old theater to perform Anton Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya" for a tiny audience. The film starts with a few external shots of the streets around the theater, perhaps to get some motion and action into the otherwise static film. Once the play begins, it is performed on one set which it leaves only for a minute or so at intermission. Even that would not matter as much for some playwrights, but Chekhov wrote for a different culture, and audiences used to fast-paced action plays by the likes of William Shakespeare may find the style here a bit off-putting. Chekhov is wont to have actors get their turn in the conversation at speaking and not give up the floor for a good five minutes. The dialogue for this version was written by David Mamet. Mamet himself is used to giving characters short and choppy dialogue, as he did in OLEANNA, and letting the actors speak for so long may have been a bit of a strain on him.

In the inner play Serybryakov (George Gaynes) is an incompetent and talentless academic, successful without ever really understanding his own supposed field of expertise. His entire household sacrificed to support him in his career, doing all the little low-profile clerical tasks so that he could spend his time teaching and writing about art that he did not really understand. Now he has retired and spends his days in writing about nothing at all and rudely demanding obeisance and care from his household. His beautiful second wife Yelena (Julianne Moore) and Sonya his homely

daughter from his first marriage (Brooke Smith) tend to his whims. Also tending is Vanya (Wallace Shawn), the cynical and embittered brother of the professor's first wife. Yelena is lovelessly loyal to Serybryakov but is aware of the wistful, unrequited love of her by both Vanya and Dr. Astrov (Larry Pine), the physician who comes to the estate to treat the old professor. In the meantime, Sonya has fallen for Dr. Astrov. With faster pacing these tangled loves might have led to melodrama. Instead it is preparation for entanglement to come.

Wallace Shawn, like Woody Allen, has one of those faces that is hard to take seriously. To some extent that acts as a hindrance to him in this film, but less so than in many other dramatic roles. But it is part of the character Vanya's dilemma that he is not considered and taken seriously. Vanya is really something of a non-entity in his own household and putting a man with a comical face in the role cuts a little from the drama but also adds additional meaning to the story. Julianne Moore, who plays Yelena looks like Jane Curtin and sounds like Diane Keaton. The former does not hurt all that much, but her performance reminds one too much of Keaton in LOVE AND DEATH, which makes a burlesque of just the sort of drama that Chekhov wrote.

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Somehow the technical credits show surprising unevenness. Declan Quinn's camera work is more irritation than art. He frames scenes badly, at times slicing off part of an actor's face. Other times all the action will be on one side of the frame while the rest of the frame seems wasted. During some speeches the camera seems distractingly unsteady as if it is being hand-held. All of this may have been intentional, but if so the reason was not apparent. Continuity is poorly maintained. At one point a character plays solitaire and when seen from different angles there are different cards on the table. Again there filmmaker may be saying that it is what is being spoken that is important and not details like care for continuity. It could be a stylistic touch like e.e.cummings writing in lower case, but iF sO iT dID nOT cONVEY aNY sPECIAL mEANING. For that matter, if this is supposed to be a stage play with no technical embellishments we are seeing, we need some explanation as to why we can hear Yelena's thoughts without her

lips moving.

There is little in this film that one could not get from seeing a more traditional performance of the Chekhov play. What is good the film owes to Chekhov. Because the play is good, the film gets a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. But a more traditional performance with the same actors would have gotten a higher rating.

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9. Montreal Film Festival (film reviews and commentary by Mark R. Leeper) (part 2 of 5):

Our third day we again got to the theater early. This time we met while waiting a very kindred spirit. He is into exotic cuisine, philosophy, know mathematics, and of course he likes cinema. Herb Louis was his name (or perhaps Lewis) and he is the former head of a philosophy department at a Canadian university. He made some restaurant recommendations that we will probably use. I made a reference to Evariste Galois and he knew a fair amount about him.

## MISS AMERIGUA

The town is Amerigua, perhaps in Paraguay. Maybe eighteen years ago when it was little more than a few dirt farms, Colonel Banderas murdered a discontented activist farmer in front of the eyes of the farmer's family under the pretext that the farmer was a Communist. Everisto, the farmer's young son, responded by attacking the Colonel, then fleeing the country. There have been many changes since then. Now the country, while every bit as corrupt, pays lip service to the ideals of democracy. Still, the entire village lives in the shadow of Colonel Banderas, now an important national figure. Rather than justa few farms Amerigua looks like a town. It has a town hall; it has a radio station.

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This is a big day in Amerigua. There will be a big beauty pageant in the evening where the village will choose the most beautiful woman in the village. Colonel Banderas has decided in the name of democracy that just the right woman should win and will tell the

judges whom they must choose, once he finally makes up his mind if it should be his daughter, his son's fiance, or his mistress. Important people will be coming to Amerigua, some on the morning train, and a Japanese diplomat will be coming to town to be one of the judges. The concert will be sponsored by several international companies who trade in this country.

But for a short prologue, the entire film takes place in one day as we get to meet the village. First we meet Innocencio, a nerdish young radio reporter never seen without huge large earphones and a huge microphone. We see the preparations for the big day, and petty political squabbles over what should be the color of the welcoming carpet. The various contestants waking up for the big day. Front- runner for the competition is Maria (who looks very much like Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) engaged to the Colonel's son and due to be married the same day as she vies for the title of Miss Amerigua. Carmen, the Colonel's daughter is willful and spoiled. Rosa, Everisto's sister who does not get along with her mother, is now the Colonel's mistress willing to do all she needs to in order to get out of Amerigua. Then there is Reencarnacion, the gay hairdresser with a penchant for Tarot and the supernatural.

There is something about a beauty pageant that reveals greed, hypocrisy, superficiality, and vanity. Something about women vying to be chosen as the most beautiful just seems a natural target for satire. Much of this film is reminiscent of Michael Ritchie's underrated SMILE. But this film mixes into the cocktail heavy doses of politics and even some fantasy. This film is written in the style of magical realism in which minor fantasy elements get mixed into the plot. Minor touches include a harp that refuses to be played and a bust that makes comments on what it sees.

Luis Vera's MISS AMERIGUA is a good satiric comedy, at times quite funny, that deserves release in the US. It needs a better job of English subtitling, but with that it could do very nicely on the art house circuit in the US. I would rate it a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.

The Desjardins Center is a shopping mall that also is a sort of center of the film festival's activities. An open area in the center is given over to displays of film posters of films in the festival, film art, and press conferences. The film art look as lot like the media art one sees in the art shows of science fiction conventions. We saw a conference with Michael Austin and Mark Abraham talking about their film PRINCESS CARABOO. The area was really full, but that was because the second press conference scheduled was some American comedian and actor named Steve Martin.

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Uh, lest you be confused I hasten to point out that is the actor's name and it has nothing to do with the character Steve Martin, who was played by Raymond Burr in the film classic GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS. Apparently this comedian picked the same name for recognition value. The story for PRINCESS CARABOO is apparently true, though some of the press questioned if things could have happened like shown in the early 19th century.

The next film is one that I do not expect to be of quite so higha quality as the ones I have seen to this point. I have a special interest in fantasy films so I am curious to see anything new in that field. The catalog said a some intriguing things about TOM THUMB, but how good can it be on that subject?

## THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB

The film BRAINSTORM had as one of the details of its plot that there existed a tape such that if the person merely saw the tape it could result in permanent psychosis. Until I saw THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB I doubted that such a thing could exist. This is a very grim and dark fairy tale reminiscent of ERASERHEAD done with the animation of NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. The film is mostly done in model animation with some pixilated live-action and though the film is only 61 minutes, it has the feel of a nightmare that goes on a lot longer.

The story takes place in a grimy fly-ridden future. A mistake in an artificial insemination factory leaves fly organs in a bottle of sperm. The result is that a laborer and his wife give birth to child only six inches high. They name him Tom. Their joy is only short-lived as two faceless Kafka-esque government agents break into the laborers' flat and steal the child, taking him to a scientific lab where sadistic experiments are performed on him. Tom escapes down a waste drain with the help of some bizarre skeleton creature he befriends at the lab. In the outside world he finds a race of small people almost his scale. They wage constant war against the humans--or "giants" as they call them--who, oblivious to their existence, come tramping through their neighborhoods causing terrible destruction.

This film is mostly the creation of Dave Borthwick who directed, wrote, and edited the film. Together with Frank Passingham he also animated the film and did the photography with animation techniques very reminiscent of Czech films. Here he creates a bleak and grimy world of huge fascistic government agencies, troglodyte wage-slave laborer citizens, and a secret society of tiny people. His little

people live in constant terror of the oblivious humans. In short, this is a very good job of creating a very good film that is darn discomforting to watch and that can be recommended to only a razornarrow audience. THE SECRET ADVENTURES was my kind of film and I could only barely stand the images I was seeing. See this one if

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you dare but don't bring your mother or your kids. While I say that, I cannot imagine where this film will find a distribution even in video stores. It is too short to play as a feature film, too downbeat to show to children, and too animated to get an adult audience. This is a challenging film but not totally without its rewards. I rate it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

To fill out the time with a somewhat lighter film from the same producers, Richard Hutchinson and his Bolexbrothers Ltd. have included the nine-minute piece, "The Biz," which uses live-action people with animated masks covering their faces. This animated film is about a cocktail party to honor Ed, whose new film was just screened to rave reviews. We see that various people who talk to Ed at the party. The masks help to show us what Ed is thinking and help to characterize the other guests. It also seems made for the BBC and would be a good film to have included in one of Expanded Entertainment's International Tournees of Animation.

That was better than I expected it to be. I suppose the fact that the films are pre-screened and have to be selected will mean that it is more likely that the films will be good. Certainly I am averaging higher ratings for films that I see here than I would for films I see at home. I have yet to see a film I have not liked. Of course I have to break that streak tonight since I will be going to a film I gave up on after fifteen minutes the last time I tried it. I will be going to the free showing of WOODSTOCK. Concert films are definitely not my thing. Certainly rock concerts film are not. But before that I will be seeing one of the most highly-recommended films showing here this year.

# WHAT HAPPENED WAS...

This is a film that already has rally stripes. Tom Noonan wrote, directed and starred in this film which he made for only \$300,000

and took only eleven days to shoot it. They finished editing the film just hours short of the deadline for entering it in the Sundance Film Festival. But the effort to get the film done in time was repaid. At Sundance it won the Waldo Salt screenwriting award and Grand Jury prize. Samuel Goldwyn snapped it up for an immediate profit. Noonan's face may be familiar to filmgoers for other films in which he has acted. He has played psychopathic killers in films like MANHUNTER (the earlier of the two "Hannibal Lector films") and THE LAST ACTION HERO. It is good to see him in a more normal role.

WHAT HAPPENED WAS... is basically a one-act play for two people produced as a film. But for a few scenes at the beginning, the film is all one scene taking place as it happens in front of the camera. This, however, is not to imply the film was made in a single take but it does give the film a certain immediacy. A woman has invited a co-worker to her Manhattan apartment for dinner.

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Both work in a legal office, Jackie as a secretary, Michael as a paralegal. She has been impressed by his sense of humor and is intrigued by his apparent working on some secret project of his own. She has invited him to a candlelight dinner at her apartment. The evening begins very awkwardly. Each has a talent for choosing just the wrong thing to say to the other. The date appears not to be working out at all. But on and off the wine seems to be loosening each other up. They begin trading confidences and dropping defenses. Eventually each will know more about the other than either of them really want.

Tom Noonan's Michael is controlled and systematic. Karen Sillas's Jackie lives with emotional tides that Michael has been able to suppress in himself. He is mechanical and she is disturbed. Noonan's script gives hints as to how each has gotten that way, but in the end much is left to conjecture. Both performances have impressive authenticity. My one complaint would be that film is not really the proper medium for this script. More appropriate would be the live stage. Noonan's direction intentionally makes little use of the advantages that cinema has over the live stage while it certainly could benefit from the additional intensity and immediacy that live performances would have given it. Making the

film more cinematic would probably have further sacrificed the immediacy. Noonan at least does not repeat Hitchcock's error in ROPE of trying to create immediacy by simulating a single take. In ROPE Hitchcock apparently realized the technique became a distraction and he did not repeat his error in DIAL M FOR MURDER. Occasionally Noonan misjudges the pacing of his material, but his direction was usually on-target.

In spite of the critical acclaim this film is getting, it is not nearly as original as the rumor mill would have it. It was reminiscent of other dramatic works and very similar to a play produced on PBS in the 60s called, if memory serves, "Birdbath." While falling short of my expectations for the film, I would still give it a respectable high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. You won't see much else like it in the theaters soon.

This is where a lot of people are going to discover they do not agree with my taste, if they haven't already.

Worm's-eye-view editorial: Traditional musical instruments do not put out a sound that can be heard very great distances. This is why electrical amplification was invented. It was intended to reflect with fidelity the sound that the musical instruments were making. They did that within their designed range of amplification. Go outside that range and the sound would be distorted. Often what you would get would be a loud howl much like the howls of a person in pain. Music is supposed to evoke an emotional response in the listener. But not every sound that evokes an emotional response is music. These howls which had a

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definite pitch and which did evoke emotional responses--like music did--came to be considered music. Many musicians used electronic distortion as an integral part of their music. What helped immensely with the acceptance of this sort of noise as music is that it often carried with it a political message that was popular, even if less than eloquent or more rhetorical than well-reasoned. This is not to say the message was wrong, but these were not very good arguments for their point of view. Jimi Hendrix did a version of the "Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock that was made up entirely of electronic howls. At a time when America was probably

making serious ethical mistakes Hendricks was saying less-thaneloquently, "America bad!" Atrocious noise from someone who agrees with your politics does not constitute music.

Following WHAT HAPPENED WAS... we went to see what remained of the director's cut of WOODSTOCK. This was an outdoor showing and the area was packed. We sat on a hill to the side and watched. We heard basically something with a beat and a lot of audio distortion. Joan Baez then sang about Joe Hill. I am not all that fond of her music, but it does have melody. However I did tell Evelyn that she should decide if we stay or walk out, and the next performer was another distortion artist whose beat we could feel on our backs as we went in the opposite direction. [-mrl]

[To be continued]

10. Over the first six months of this year, the average length of the MT VOID was seven pages. Over the last five months, it's been thirteen pages. We hope to get back to a reasonable length in January, but we're making no promises. [-ecl]

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History repeats itself; that's one of the things wrong with history.

--Clarence Darrow



