

Don't miss Tel Aviv UTOPIA SF Film Fest 13-20 Sept: <http://www.utopiafest.org.il/fest2014/>

חדשות האגודה – ספטמבר 2014 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

פרס עינת

פרס לכתבה ישראלית מקורית, בז'אנר הספרות הספקולטיבית: הגישו סיפור קצר, העוסק בנושא "סודות".
לפרטים נוספים היכנסו [לאתר הפרס](#) או עשו לייק [לעמוד הפרס בפייסבוק](#).

פרס גפן

נפתחה ההצבעה בשלב הסופי של פרס גפן לשנת 2014! חברי אגודה יכולים להצביע כבר עכשיו [בטופס המקוון](#)!
הציבור הרחב יוכל להצביע [בפסטיבל "אייקון 2014"](#), ב-12-14 באוקטובר.

לוח האירועים של האגודה

כל האירועים מופיעים ב**לוח האירועים שלנו**, המקבץ שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד.
לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף [לרשימת התפוצה](#) או [לדף האגודה](#).

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il> [בפייסבוק](#).

No More "Nanu-Nanu":

Robin Williams (1951-2014) – In Memorium



Robin Williams was a great actor and a wonderful human being – so funny, and so talented (See his voice abilities:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6u5wVGngD_c).

In the world of Science Fiction, he will probably be best remembered for his wacky but memorable portrayal of an Alien being visiting our planet in the SF comedy TV series "*Mork and Mindy*". The series ran for an impressive four seasons from 1978-1982, with a total of 91 episodes!

In the series, Williams played "Mork" a visitor from "Ork" (somewhere in outer space) who saw something unique and wonderful in just about everything around him. Things that we just take for granted as being mundane and ordinary was like a shining beacon to this strange human-looking, but not human acting Orkian. And he was funny and a whirlwind full of tremendous energy. That is the Robin Williams I and others will remember, as well as his many memorable parts in numerous other movies and shows.

Coincidentally, a few days before the tragic death of Robin Williams, I was thinking about one of his Orkian stunts – drinking through his fingers. When he sees that Mindy is surprised, he asks how Humans drink – she tells him from the mouth. His response: “How do you talk and drink at the same time?” We are introduced to this seemingly miraculous ability, already in the Pilot episode (See that first episode, at minute 08:30, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6aePsEBWuE> – Highly recommended!).

I was thinking at the time – and it doesn’t matter if you are a believer or not – that one of the miracles of the human body is that we DON’T drink/eat and talk simultaneously. Instead, we are offered no choice but to make a pause in our otherwise busy life, to take a breather: some refreshment, some rest, and then continue with whatever we need to do – even if it’s only to re-energize with a good book, or watch a favorite TV program.

Maybe a lesson we can learn from Robin Williams and his “Mork” personality, is that time is precious and although Orkians need to regenerate their ‘batteries’ only once in 2000 years (according to one episode) – we Humans have to learn to appreciate each and every moment, and take the time to rest, eat, drink, and be happy.

May Robin Williams rest in well-deserved peace.

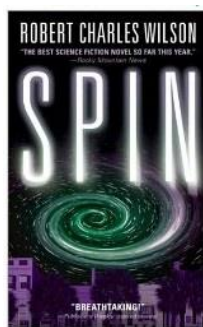
[– Leybl Botwinik]

On a happier note: Welcome back Aharon

(Take it one step at a time... Also, see his Quote of the Month at the end)

Book Review by Aharon Sheer

Spin by Robert Charles Wilson (2005), 447 pages



This is a fabulous science fiction novel, bubbling over with SF ideas, and interesting and attractive characters. The narrator is Tyler, the son of a wealthy family’s housekeeper. Tyler becomes a friend of the family’s daughter, Diane, and of the brilliant son of the family, Jason. The three become inseparable friends throughout their school years.

The story begins when the stars disappear. I found it difficult to finish because there was always something new happening. *Spin* received the Hugo award for Best Novel in 2006. The book

is highly recommended if you have lots of time available.

From the assistant editor (LB):

- 1) The book is available for free download as a PDF file at: <https://worldtracker.org/media/library/English%20Literature/W/Wilson,%20Robert%20Charles/Robert%20Charles%20Wilson%20-%20Spin.pdf>

also as both PDF and ePub book from: <http://www.125books.com/search-bk?s=0&kw=Spin%20%20%20Robert%20Charles%20Wilson%20epub%20file&ser=y>

- 2) When I opened the PDF, I found the following at the end of the book, in the Acknowledgments section:

“Readers interested in current scientific thought about the evolution and future of the

solar system might want to
check out *The Life and Death
of Planet Earth* by Peter D.
Ward and Donald Brownlee
or *Our Cosmic Origins* by

Armand Delsemme for
information not refracted
through the lens of science
fiction.”

Quote of the month – submitted by Aharon Sheer:

Atmospheric Science

Looking for Signs of Ozone Recovery Julia Fahrenkamp-Uppenbrink

How effective is the Montreal Protocol, the international treaty aimed at protecting the stratospheric ozone layer? Since the treaty was adopted in 1989, manufacturers have gradually stopped producing numerous chemicals that deplete ozone.

Scientists have predicted that ozone will recover as a result.

Coldewey-Egbers *et al.* use an extensive data set to test whether recovery can be detected yet. They conclude that in mid-latitudes, at least five more years of data are needed to unequivocally detect signs of recovery, because natural variability masks the ozone recovery. At lower latitudes, where the trend in ozone concentration is smaller, even more data will be needed.

Feedback on last month's contents

Re: The original *Night of the Living Dead* was a low-budget, black-and-white cult favorite in the 1970s, considered more graphic and more meaningful than mainstream horror movies. Compared to today's movies---or even TV shows---its gory scenes are simply quaint, but at the time they were shocking, and made many people look away.

The actors were all unknowns, and the hero was a black man, which was very unusual at the time. He states at one point that he can handle the zombies---it's the people who are the danger.

[SPOILER ALERT] He protects the others trapped in the house with him and survives the zombie attack, only to be killed at the end by redneck vigilantes, who are having the time of their lives driving around the countryside shooting everything that moves.

Yes, the whole movie can be read as an allegory. College students debated whether it was a horror movie or social commentary. I haven't seen the remake, so don't know how they compare, but when I was 18, the original certainly impressed me.

Devra Kunin

* * *

Hear ye – Hear Ye !!

Our continuing series of articles about Zombies – MORE HEARTS! MORE BRAINS!

The lighter side in Zombie movies: Romance and Humor in the World of the Undead.

... will continue next issue.

In its stead, a guest article on Gaming.

Gaming Worlds

by Ellis Simpson

I'm a (long term) fantasy and SF fan. But I am also a gamer, and those two interests alone create more than enough competition for my leisure time. I shy away from video games, and keep to the board variety.

One way of getting more 'buck for my bang' is playing boardgames with an SF or fantasy theme. (*Note: I'm concentrating on board and card games here, thus excluding role playing games. That topic deserves its own coverage.*) However, the world of gaming can be a tricky place to navigate for a novice. Since I believe that if you are a genre reader but not a game player, you may be missing out on – dare I say it – an extra dimension to your hobby.

The following will offer a brief intro to the various flavors of some of the games I have played. My hope is that if you are not already a gamer, it will encourage you to give boardgaming a try. And if you are a gamer, you can view the following as recommendations.

A) FANTASY: The cutting edge

Game of Thrones

Probably the biggest fantasy franchise of the moment, George R. R. Martin's epic series, with the added TV boost, has generated several games, two of which stand out.

A Game of Thrones: The Board Game (Second Edition)

Designed by Christian Petersen, and published by [Fantasy Flight Games](#).

This is a three to six player game of military action and diplomacy, with the Houses of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros contesting the Iron Throne. The game involves giving secret orders to your units, so you never quite know what to expect from your (so called) allies and foes. There are lots of neat touches to add flavor from the books.

Good points: It's very evocative, and has some clever mechanics. The need to combine the application of force with no little skill in negotiating, makes it a challenging and engrossing experience.

Not so good points: It's best with six players. It's not a short game. Typically four hours or more, depending on how quickly players make decisions.

Note: This is available in Hebrew. I have seen copies in Steimatzky stores.

A Game of Thrones: The Card Game

Designed by Nate French, Eric Lang, and Christian Petersen, and also published by Fantasy Flight Games.

This is a two to four player game on the expected struggle for the throne. You can expand the basic starter decks provided in this game (Starks, Lannisters, Targaryens and the Baratheons) with add on packs. Essentially this game takes the action out of the board format and distills it into challenges for power and gold, based on cards and card combinations. It's very different from the board game, however, and gives a different type of gaming experience.

Good points: It's accessible, but retains good depth of play. The different Houses have definitely distinctive features, and there's a good connection with the source books. The cards are well designed, and the whole package fits together quite well. Once you are up to speed, it plays quite fast and you can finish in around an hour, or a little bit more.

Not so good points: It's best with four players. Some of the decks are better if handled by an experienced player. The rules could be better. I recommend you print up the FAQ.

Lord of the Rings

How many games would you like? Unsurprisingly, what is arguably the greatest fantasy franchise of all time has

generated a huge number of games tempting readers with promises of recreating the world of Middle Earth. Inevitably, there are some turkeys; unfortunately, most of them... So, be careful out there. Here are a couple worthy of your interest.

War of the Ring (Second Edition)

Designed by Roberto Di Meglio, Marco Maggi, and Francesco Nepitello, and published by [Ares Games](#).

This is a two to four player game. One player is the Free Peoples player, and the other is the Shadow Armies player, trying either for a military victory, or to destroy the Ring. (It's best with two players.) Newcomers might see this as a form of turbo charged Risk, played out on a map of Middle Earth. It comes with a good set of miniature figurines, cards, and a big map. You need space to play this one.

Good points: It's a big, rollicking game, with plenty of action and variety. It's easy, accessible, and fun. The system of action dice and event cards combine well to create the right type of gaming atmosphere, with enough surprises to spice up play.

Not so good points: Not a short game; three hours would be good going, unless one of the players makes a really, really bad move! If you are not a fan of the books, the theme and the scenario may not work for you.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring Deck-Building Game

Designed by Ben Stoll and Patrick Sullivan, and published by [Cryptozoic Entertainment](#). This is a two to five player game. Each player assumes the role of Frodo, Gandalf, Aragon, or an ally – each with a special power – up against the Dark Lord Sauron and his forces. Each player starts with his own basic ten card deck and tries to build a good combination of cards and effects so as to develop his deck into an efficient and effective weapon that will score precious victory points.

Good points: This is a fast game with quick turns and quick progress. Although it is easy

to play, it has reasonable depth and can challenge you more than you might expect. There are other Lord of the Rings games from the same publisher that integrate with this, to add to your gaming fun.

Not so good points: Not everybody likes handling a lot of cards. Some people complain the luck element is too high. The theme could be stronger.

B) SF: Explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate

To date I have not been impressed by any of the games based on the Star Trek or Star Wars franchises. So, for this classic gaming genre, I'm going to suggest you take a look at a couple of games that strike out on their own.

Space Empires

Designed by Jim Krohn, and published by [GMT Games](#).

You build up your empire, make advances in technology, explore new (and sometimes dangerous) worlds, and aim to smash your foes into oblivion. Be fair; they are trying to do the same to you!

Good points: This is easy to play, and a very immersive gaming experience. It includes a wonderful variety of scenarios, including solitaire challenges. There's one expansion game available, and more on the way.

Not so good points: There's a fair bit of record keeping. It's not a short game. A one on one challenge will probably take at least three or four hours.

Struggle for the Galactic Empire

Designed by Joseph Miranda, and published by [Decision Games](#).

Unique among the games featured, this is designed as a solitaire game; it's you against the system. You are in charge of the Galactic Empire, making the key military, political, economic, and other decisions. Your aim is to keep the Empire stable, perhaps even expand its influence, while fighting off the forces of chaos that seek to destroy it.

Good points: Solitaire playability. Addictive, forcing you to try and do better than your last session. There's a decent variety of

challenges available, and it's easy to add your own house rules and modifications.

Not so good points: Not as graphically enticing as some other games.

Zombies

I'm including this part as a public service; I am absolutely not in to zombies, but recognizing the popularity of the genre, thought it worthwhile to mention at least one zombie game.

Zombicide

Designed by Raphael Guiton, Jean Baptiste Lullien, and Nicolas Raoult, and published by [Asmodee](#).

This game can take between one and six players, the more the better. The unusual

twist here is that it is a cooperative game; each player – taking the role of a survivor – must work with the other players, or all will lose. As the game goes on, the players get stronger, but so do the zombies. By all accounts, it's a tough, fun, challenge.

Good points: The theme is strong and addictive. There is a good selection of scenarios in the game and it is easy to do your own creations. There are expansions available, to add to your zombie fun. It's quite fast and can typically be completed in an hour or so.

Not so good points: If you don't like the theme, it's unlikely to work for you. Gameplay is not the most demanding.

C) SUMMARY

I have only given you a look at the proverbial tip of the iceberg. And you should be aware that, like SF and Fantasy fans, GAMERS can have a wide range of opinions about what are good and what are bad games. So the best advice I can give you is try before you buy. Gaming is a great social experience, often even with a 'bad' game!

If you want to look a bit more into the world of gaming, I recommend you start at Boardgame Geek - <http://www.boardgamegeek.com/>. Although the user interface is not as friendly as it could be, there's a ton of great information available, and with a little perseverance you should be able to find what you want. The adverts alone are a good way to track down out of print games. Otherwise, get in touch, and I'll do what I can to help.

Ellis Simpson

s4simpson@gmail.com

Don't forget www.icon.org:

ICON 2014 – October 12-14 Tel Aviv



We'd love to hear your thoughts on any of the above subjects and we may publish some of them!

For Comments: E-mail: levbl_botwinik@yahoo.com. Tel: Leybl_botwinik 054-537-7729
 Assistant Editor: Leybl Botwinik. Founding Editor: Aharon Sheer. Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulou
 For free email delivery (PDF format) write to levbl_botwinik@yahoo.com
 Copyright © 2014 — Archives at: http://www.kulchik.com/levbl_botwinik/CyberCozen

כל הזכויות שמורות למחברים וליוצרים, כפי שצוינו. All rights reserved to specified authors and artists.