



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

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חדשות האגודה – נובמבר 2017 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

- המועדון בירושלים יעסוק בספר "על חוד הסיף" מאת אלן קושנר (גרף, 2017), ויתקיים בהנחיית גלי אחיטוב, ביום שלישי 26.12, ב- 20:00, בבית קפה בירושלים. המיקום המדויק יקבע בהמשך ויפורסם באירוע בפייסבוק ובאתר האגודה.

- המועדון בת"א יעסוק בזוכה פרס גפן "הקבוע היחידי" מאת יואב בלום (כתר, 2016), ויתקיים בהנחיית איילת ירושלמי, במוצאי שבת 30.12 בשעה 19:30, בבית פרטי בת"א, באזור כיכר הבימה. כתובת מדויקת תינתן לנרשמות ולנרשמים למועדון, אצל רכזת הפרוייקט, [דפנה קירש](#)

כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)

לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או לדף האגודה בפייסבוק.

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

This month's roundup:

- *Blade Runner 2049* vs. the 1982 original – Interesting scene by scene video "trailer" comparison
 - A look at the first season of several OLDER SF TV series from 2011-2015 (some ongoing)
 - **NOTE:** Dr. Doron Calo is taking a break from his regular piece in the "Sheer Science" column – We would like to thank him for his contributions to date, and look forward for his future, periodic, offerings in upcoming issues.
- Therefore, I've taken up the slack with an article about a scientific paper proposing Alien spaceships may be real

And – as usual, interesting tidbits from various websites.

– Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

Radioactive Reader Remarks

Hey there, Leybl. Good to see another issue across the etherwaves, and some comments are in order.

First off, I know that busy feeling you wrote about on the first page. Every school term seems to get busier, but ... there is always something else to do.

Anyway, those capsule reviews of new television series is worth digging into as well. I tried watching *Star Trek: Discovery* and did not care for it. It sure looks nice - loads of great special effects and sets, makeup work and all - but the storylines are weak, plus the acting is terrible. I gave up after the first episode. I was not impressed at all.

Seth McFarlane's *The Orville* is a pleasant bit of *Star Trek* fanboyism: it doesn't offer much in terms of dealing with important issues or speculative scientific breakthroughs, but it is what it is designed to do, and that is to be light entertainment. It is a science fiction parody of a classic SF series. It's fun in spots despite hit or miss stories.

I haven't seen *Philip K. Dick's Electric Dreams* yet, so no comment there.

I also will pass on *Bladerunner 2049* because I have not seen that one yet. I liked the original *Bladerunner* movie, though, so I might eventually watch this one when it's available on DVD. At the rate current movies go that route, I should get a copy for my birthday next March.

That is it for now. Thanks again for the zine, and I look forward to your next issue.

All the best,

John Purcell [TX, USA]

Editor's comment:

Thanks for the feedback, John. I haven't seen these new series yet, so no comment on them myself. However, I do feel you gave up too easily: after only the first episode of *Star Trek: Discovery*? That's a bit extreme. Think of all the money they invested in the other episodes that are going to disappoint you (©)... See below for my continuing review of OLDER TV series. I almost gave up on one show after the first episode (and glad I didn't), and squirmed through 5 episodes of another (after which I did finally give up on it). All the best, LB

Back to Blade Runner 2049:

1) Feedback from Shlomo Schwartzberg, about his great article [my words ;-)]:

Leybl, you need only change the intro: I think you have it right except at the end where it also seems to suggest my piece comes from the Critics at Large site. You also have a slight error in my last name: s instead of z. The piece is fine otherwise

Editor's comment: Thanks again, Shlomo for the excellent analysis, though I haven't seen the movie yet, and have already heard from one reader, that she doesn't agree with you – hopefully we'll get that in writing for next issue ☺.

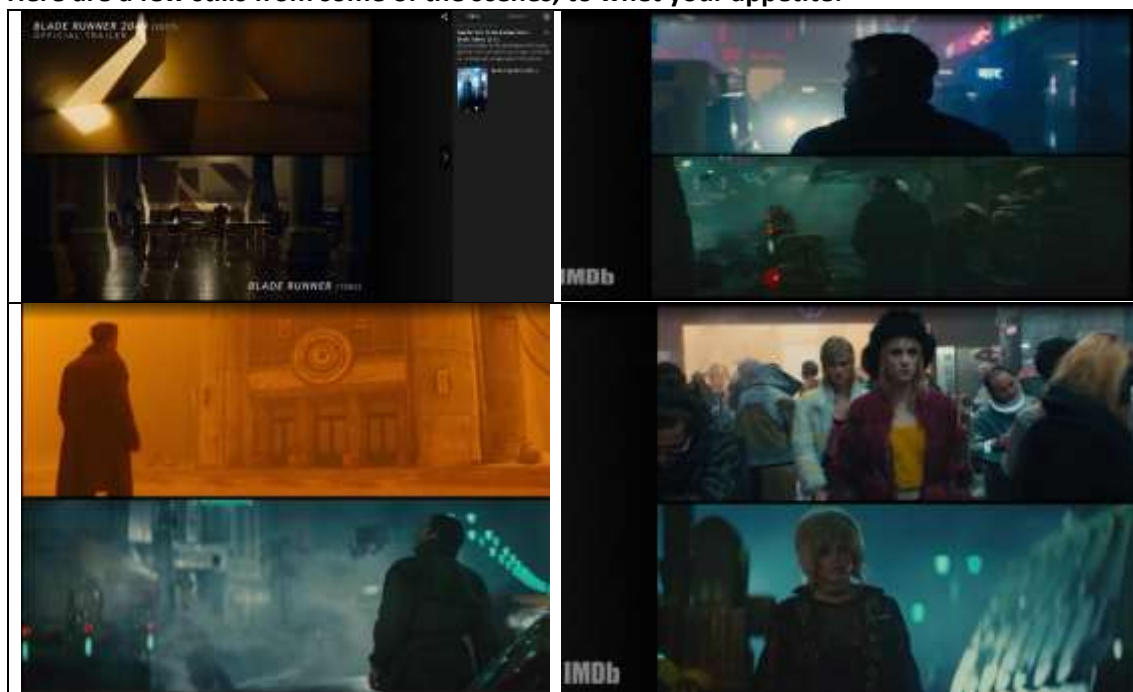
The rest of the readers should be made aware, that in the end, Critics at Large published the other article (the one I gave a link to – so that's the reason I couldn't find a link on their site for that article, even though you've been very prolific and written numerous articles for them), and therefore, Shlomo's became our very own personal and exclusive publication. Of course, he has the rights to it, only we can proudly say, that 'you saw it here first'. Keep up the good work Shlomo (and sorry about the misspelled last name. Maybe if you send more of your great articles, we'll get the spelling right ☺.

2) POSSIBLE SPOILERS, but very interesting... Here's an IMDb blow-by-blow (videoshot-by-videoshot) 2:17 minute 'trailer' comparison of both the original and the new Blade Runner 2049. It shows similar scenes, or parallel scenes one on top of the other – like a 'Before' and 'After' set of video clippings. Done very well.

Oh, and it's not just the visuals, you have to hear the voice-overs as well. Coincidence or planned? Short, and worth watching:

http://www.imdb.com/list/ls053181649/videoplayer/vi245020953?ref=tt_ecw_2049_i_1

Here are a few stills from some of the scenes, to whet your appetite:



Just for 'fun' (but watch out, Toto, for the Wicked Witch of the West...):

KANSAS CITY, Mo.

- Do escalating tensions with North Korea have you scared of a nuclear apocalypse?

If you're a resident of the Kansas City metro area, you have less to worry about: The city has the best shot at survival out of the 200 largest metro areas in the country, according to Realtor.com.

The site analyzed home and property attributes in the cities to determine which was most conducive to enduring nuclear fallout.

Read more here:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/heres-the-best-place-to-survive-if-theres-a-nuclear-apocalypse/ar-AAuhMBL>

SF TV Series: Past, Present, Future

REVIEWED by Leybl Botwinik

Last month, we presented some of the most recent SciFi releases – most of which we haven't watched ourselves (with the slight hope, that maybe someone would react and send us some feedback on them that we could print. That only partly worked out, with John Purcell's comments (see the "*Radioactive Reader Remarks*" section above). Of course, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE FOR YOUR COMMENTS, dear readers... So feel free to tear apart the various TV series (and/or our own commentary on them).

This time 'round, we're going to talk about some past releases that we've just recently watched, or have started watching – that were originally released between the years 2011-2015 (some of which are still ongoing). Enjoy!

1) Falling Skies (2011-2015) 52 episodes

Not much to say about this one, except we watched the entire first season. Apparently, it was rather successful, having made it through 5 seasons (52 episodes).

PLOT: Our planet Earth has been invaded with almost everyone dead. The few survivors of the alien attack gather to initially fight for their lives to survive the invading forces, and then attempt to organize themselves to fight back.



This is one of those typical Apocalypse-Survival plots – like in *Walking Dead* – where it doesn't matter how the situation came about (plague, zombies, earthquakes, sub-zero temperatures, demons, dragons, etc.), only this time it was decided to add an SF angle with Aliens being the 'bad guys'.

As such, and similar to storylines in, say, the *Walking Dead* series, the story is mostly about survival of the group, and 'obviously' includes humans who exploit other humans.

The Good and the Bad: SF-wise, you have some distant alien flying ships sometimes patrolling the skies, and more up close, aliens with multiple legs as well as 2-legged alien killing machines/robots. Also, the kids and youth that are captured by the aliens have a part biological, part (seemingly electro-mechanical) exo-spine-like thing literally drilled into their backs and connected to their spinal columns, through which the aliens can control their minds, and turn them into zombie-like slaves. Forcibly removing this part-metal 'spine-tap' kills the victim, until later in the first season, when a non-lethal way of disconnecting has been worked out by the surviving humans.

There are some good twists, like why the aliens are killing off the adults, but are preserving the youth/children... and more.

We personally liked one of the characters – a History professor – and his philosophic/historic/martial insights about surviving and fighting, etc.

End of season one has an interesting twist, that may or may not motivate us to continue watching. Enjoyable for those who like the 'last man standing vs. alien' genre.

2) Defiance (2013-2015) 39 episodes

PLOT: From IMDb (partially edited by me): "*In the year 2046. Over thirty years, after various alien races arrived on Earth, the landscape is completely altered, terraformed nearly beyond recognition. A mysterious stranger, Nolan (Grant Bowler) and his side-kick/companion, the alien woman-child Irisa (Stephanie Leonidas) arrive in the outpost town of Defiance, in what used to be St. Louis. They come to trade for some needed wares, and are on their way out when they get caught up in the local politics.*"



As they settle into town – overseen by the mayor, Amanda Rosewater (Julie Benz) and filled with residents like the powerful human mining boss Rafe McCawley (Graham Greene), enterprising lounge owner Kenya (Mia Kirshner), and the ambitious alien Tarrs (Tony Curran and Jaime Murray) – events begin to unfold that threaten the fragile peace this border town has fought for.”

Here’s another take from IMDb: “The series is set in the near future, where aliens known collectively as Votans have come to Earth seeking a new home after their solar system was destroyed. However, when they reached Earth, they discovered that despite a prolonged negotiation with the government on Earth, they were not welcome. Rather than turn away, they began a war with the humans. During the war, the Votans dropped terraformers on the planet and transformed the surface; scorching the earth, opening chasms in the ground and covering the surface of the planet in dust and debris. After decades of war, a ceasefire is declared when both sides realize they must focus on survival on this new almost turned alien planet. The series largely revolves around the character of Jeb Nolan, who was only ten years old when the Votans arrived, and later served in the military during the war. With the war now over, he returns to his hometown of St Louis to find it's no longer the city he left; it is little more than a refugee camp. Deciding his services are needed, Jeb takes up the role of Chief Lawkeeper in Defiance, so he can protect the town from dangerous clashes between humans, aliens, military scavengers and other dangerous visitors who occasionally enter the town.”

(http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2189221/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl)

The Good and the Bad: The story feels like a Western with a lone wanderer showing up in town – doing some good, and then reluctantly accepts becoming its sheriff. A large chunk of the various episode plotlines deals with roughnecks of sorts, power struggles, secrets, etc. The alien Tarrs of that “rule” their sector of the town could just as well have been a specific sect of extreme Christians, Chinese Tong, or Mafia bosses. There are some love plots and intrigues, and the SF aliens don’t really feel alien, nor do the alien ‘dangers’ abound. Even the idea that the very ground has been re-sculptured (terraformed) is almost never seen in the early episodes, so that doesn’t even make a mark on the story’s SF aspect (the barren world of “*Mad Max*” looks more authentic). Instead, we have typical ‘western’ scenes with bounty hunters, fights in a ring (see “KillJoys”, below), love triangles, etc.

At first, the story seemed to be like the future world of “*Falling Skies*” (i.e. survivors of the invasion rebuilding their lives in a destroyed and overturned world), but it seems to peter out, and the sub-plot that starts in the first episode, of some great secret hidden in town – just doesn’t make it. Note that we only watched about 5 episodes, then got bored. “*Bonanza*” or “*High Chaparral*” were much more interesting and entertaining, all things considered.

3) Dark Matter (2015-2017) 39 episodes

PLOT: From IMDb: “In the dystopian 27th century, six people wake up on a deserted spaceship with no memory of who they are or what they’re doing there. They reluctantly team up and set off to find answers with the help of a female android.” And “Five hundred years in the future, a renegade crew aboard a small spacecraft tries to survive as they travel the unknown parts of the galaxy and evade warring factions as well as authority agents out to get them.”



They wake up from suspended animation pods, not knowing who they are or what they were doing before exiting the pod. They slowly begin discovering hints and clues as to their backgrounds. There is the silent deadly martial arts oriental, a girl stowaway, a rough egocentric mercenary type, a battle-tough woman, etc... and a token android.

Since they’ve been mind-wiped, they call themselves 1, 2, 3...6 by order of when they woke up and met the others

The Good and the Bad: This one started off well, with lots of tension between the crew members who all suspect each other of various schemes, back-stabbing “disloyalty”, etc..

Unfortunately, we think the series ran itself into the ground by being too much like *Firefly* (2002-2003), without the charisma of that crew. On the other hand, there were some things we liked, and for just passing the time, it's OK (though we only saw Season 1 of 3 – not sure it will continue into 2018):

Here are some of the SF-ish ideas we liked:

- 1) The 'female' android. At first there is a 'coldness' in her, and then she seems to 'warm up' (showing signs of 'feelings'). As a response to this conflict in her logic, she creates a 'clean' virtual reality duplicate of herself to monitor her and discuss why she is acting strangely – maybe program corruption, etc.
- 2) On one of the stations they visit, there is an exclusive tourism service (reminds one a little of the service in *"Total Recall"* – though much different) called "TRANSAT (- if we're not mistaken?)". The service provides you with a clone that will go on vacation for you, and its memories/experiences will become yours. The way it works is, you enter a pod (like for 'sun tanning'), decide where to visit – let's say in a jungle on a planet in the next galaxy – and a newly manufactured clone with your mind/memories wakes up at that destination's TRANSAT branch, behaving exactly like you, 'being you', and experiencing everything.

When the trip is over (you decide how long) all the experiences are transferred back to you in the pod (where you were asleep), and you wake up as if your own real body had actually experienced the trip. The clone soon disintegrates, but this way, you can visit far afield and save on travel expenses (though not accommodation – but maybe nutrition?), and also not be in danger of disease, hardships, death, etc. – at that close or remote destination. – Sounds like fun.

4) KillJoys (2015-) 32 episodes

Plot: The story is about government assigned Bounty hunters called "KillJoys". At the beginning it's about a crew/team of two, the leader of which is a female (Dutch, played by Hannah John-Kamen), and the 'assistant' male (played by Aaron Ashmore). They are soon joined by his brother (played by Luke Macfarlane) – an ex-soldier with a dark secret he's trying to chase down.

From IMDb: *"In the Quad, a planetary system on the brink of a bloody interplanetary class war, a fun loving trio of bounty hunters attempt to remain impartial as they chase deadly warrants."*



The Good and the Bad: The IMDb quote makes it sound like 'fun' but it's mostly not. The running plots are more-or-less stale and boring (we watched the first 7 out of 10 episodes in first season) – they even tried a fight in a ring, maybe hoping that this ploy would pick up audience interest... (they tried that in *Defiance*, above, too). On the other hand, the running background sub-plots keep one's interest (e.g. Dutch was brought up as an assassin and is called upon again and again to follow her calling), and the acting is mostly good to excellent. The actors are good. The series seems to be OK, and has passed its 3rd season, with apparently more to go, so it seems possible, that it's been getting better.

5) The Expanse (2015-) 36 episodes

Plot: From IMDb: *"A police detective in the asteroid belt, the first officer of an interplanetary ice freighter, and an earth-bound United Nations executive slowly discover a vast conspiracy that threatens the Earth's rebellious colony on the asteroid belt."*



In the background, we should add that there is a power struggle between the very advanced idealistic space-faring Mars colonists and their warships, planet Earth and its exploitive and snobbish citizenry with their warships, and the poor and exploited 'third-class' worker citizenry in the asteroid belt preparing to revolt against Mother Earth.

The Good and the Bad: Of the five series we are doing these mini-reviews on, this month, this was by far the best, in our opinion – and we almost missed it. Why? Because the pilot/first episode was rather slow. The series is based in 3 areas – or more correctly with 3 main characters: the male officer on the interplanetary ice-freighter and his surviving crew's adventures, a solitary male detective on a main asteroid belt station and the corruption and intrigues he faces, and a high-class elderly woman diplomat on Earth (played very well, considering the boring part – by Shohreh Aghdashloo). It was the part with the diplomat on Earth which seemed to bog everything down. Her acting was top-notch, only the role and the circumstances kept interrupting the storyline's flow – not only in the first episode, but throughout.

Fortunately, we kept concentrating on the other two and virtually ignoring the scenes on Earth, and thus kept our fascination with the show keen and alive. In many respects, there are no 'wow' special effects, yet at every moment, one can feel full Sci-Fi effects in the series. It's easy to imagine X-generations from now (maybe as few as 3-5), when mankind will have started inhabiting the various possible habitable areas of the solar system (Mars, space stations, asteroid belt), that there may be similar political, socio-economic, as well as military intrigues that may follow. We only saw the first season, but it was well worth it, and are looking forward to continuing.

Here's an interesting article, in preparation for getting us 'up there' into space:

Bezos, Musk Have Different Ideas About How to Pay for Space Race

Jeff Bezos has sold \$4 billion of Amazon.com Inc. stock in the past three years, including \$1.1 billion just last week, using most of the money to support his space company, Blue Origin LLC.

That sets its business model apart from other billionaire-backed space ventures, Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies Corp. and Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, which have both taken outside funding and moved more quickly to commercialize operations.

"As the world's richest man, Bezos has a unique ability to develop his own space transportation company and maintain 100% ownership,"

Continue here: <http://www.industryweek.com/emerging-technologies/bezos-musk-have-different-ideas-about-how-pay-space-race>



Hmm... Star Trek: The Original Series – fact or fiction (ignore typos on the website, of which there are a few):

15 Secrets You Didn't Know About Star Trek: The Original Series

By Christy Box (Nov 26 2017)

Star Trek: The Original Series kicked off one of the most successful franchises in television history, spawning five more TV series and more than a dozen movies. Fans have loved the adventures and explorations of Starfleet for decades, and that all began with the original Enterprise crew in the 1960s.

...

The early history of *Star Trek* was fraught with conflict, feuds, tight budgets, and difficult decisions. It was a long road to make this series into the franchise that has stood the test of time. Here are the **15 Secrets You Didn't Know About Star Trek: The Original Series**.

For the complete article, see:

<https://screenrant.com/star-trek-the-original-series-dark-behind-the-scenes-secrets-facts/>

Sheer* Science: Alien Starships?

(* In memory of Aharon Sheer (ז"ל) – Founding Editor)

– Prepared by: **Leybl Botwinik**

Here's an interesting theory from Harvard, in an article that was written up in March of this year, which we've only now discovered. A link to the actual paper is also provided below, at the end of the excerpt:



New Harvard theory: Aliens have star-powered spaceships

Scientists discovered a massive radio wave, and they can't find a good explanation for it. Unless ...

by [Ilana Strauss](#) | Thursday, March 16, 2017

A couple of scientists from the well-respected Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics recently wrote an [astrophysics paper](#) that is so awesome, [it will make you want to read an astrophysics paper](#). The scientists have been puzzling over some weirdly strong radio wave bursts in space, and they've come up with an explanation: **aliens**.

"An artificial origin is worth contemplating and checking," said Avi Loeb, an Israeli-American professor who worked on the study.

It all started when an astrophysicist was combing through the archives in Australia's Parkes Observatory, and he noticed a mysterious spurt of radio activity. It was short but intense. Really intense. Like, 500 million times the power of the sun intense.

Space is full of weird light, so that's no big deal, right? Wrong, apparently. Scientists have been trying to figure out what the burst could be for 10 years, and they still don't know. Some think it's a massive, particularly weird star that collapsed into its core. Or maybe it's a solar flare that somehow managed to travel across the known universe. Or ...

Yep. Aliens. At least, that's what the Harvard-Smithsonian scientists are proposing. You can start freaking out now....

LINKS:

For the rest of the article, see:

<https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/innovation/harvard-university-theory-aliens-have-star-powered-spaceships>

For the Harvard scientific paper, see: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1701.01109.pdf>

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the above topics and with your OK, we may publish them!

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