



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

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OLAMOT SF & FANTASY FEST coming up on 3-4th of April in Tel Aviv

See their Facebook page, or: <http://2018.olanot-con.org.il/>

חדשות האגודה – מרץ 2018 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

- המועדון בירושלים יעסוק באסופת הסיפורים "היה יהיה" (התשיעית (אגודה ישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה, 2017), ויתקיים ביום שלישי 27.03, ב-20:00 ב"חלישת'ה", בית תה ירושלמי, רחוב הלל 6, ירושלים. מנחה: [גלי אחישוב](#).
- המועדון בת"א יעסוק באסופת הסיפורים "היה יהיה" (התשיעית (אגודה ישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה, 2017), ויתקיים ביום חמישי, 22.03, בשעה 19:30, בבית פרטי בת"א, באיזור הטיילת ו"מגדל האופרה". כתובת מדויקת תינתן לנרשמות/ים למועדון. מנחה: [איילת גרשוביץ](#).
כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)

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

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

This month's roundup:

- Film review: Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets
- "Jews In Space"
- Sorry, no "Sheer Science" this month – hopefully, something dedicated, next time

And – as usual, interesting tidbits from various websites.

– Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

We were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of the great SF writer Ursula K leGuin.
We will honour her memory in an upcoming issue (contributions welcome):

Ursula K Le Guin, sci-fi and fantasy author, dies aged 88

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/23/ursula-k-le-guin-sci-fi-fantasy-author-dies-at-88>

Reader remarks about Orville and Discovery:

I wasn't sure I was going to stick with Orville, the humour was juvenile, in my opinion. The show got better, though I still wonder just where it wants to go. Sometimes it's satire, sometimes not. Sometimes it handles serious ethical well, other times it verges on silliness. For instance in the episode you mention regarding Bortus and the child born female, the crew uses examples that have no relevance to the child's species.

MonSFFA is planning a debate on Star Trek Discovery and Orville. Generally, feeling was that Orville was getting better and Discover was getting further and further away from the Star Trek universe. Since then we have learned that there are many universes, so the Discovery in this show is probably not in our Star Trek universe at all. To me, it looks like a whole different show riding on Star Trek's name to

win an audience. Anyway, I think that Orville VS Discovery panel discussion will be very interesting.

Cathy, Montreal

LB: My feelings exactly: Orville is at times silly, and at times very/pretty serious, and Star Trek Discovery is mostly just 'riding the name'. In some ways, Orville is truer to the 'tradition'.

CATHY:

Yes, exactly! Even the settings seem reversed, with Orville having the brightly lit sets and Discovery in the dark. No Star Trek set has ever been so dark.

Some fun from the Websites:

The first/new "Earth Federation"?

This Star Trek Federation-Style Org Examines Human Transformation

As world leaders wrap up talks in Davos, PCMag looks ahead to a Star Trek Federation-style body investigating 'The Transformation of the Human' in LA.

By [Sophia Stuart](#) - January 26, 2018

The human race is entering a new era. We **merge with machines** to restore damaged senses and organs through **implants** and sensory prostheses, and sequence DNA to sculpt **personalized clinical care** for molecular variants. AI **advises** us on matters of the heart, and **soothes panic attacks** at 4 a.m. **NASA's new robots** are ready for off-world colonies, and **giant 3D printers in the Mojave Desert** are testing prototype edifices for the Red Planet.



But all these big ideas have moral considerations that should not fall prey to partisan politics. To put this in geek speak, we need a (*Star Trek like*) Federation—a council of benign, wise

More robots?

The Adorable, Helpful, and Creepy Robots of CES 2018

Robots once again roamed the halls of CES, some cute, some odd, but all impressive.

By [Victoria Song](#) – January 12, 2018



Robots occupy a special place at CES. You usually find them in all shapes, sizes, and purposes in Las Vegas, and 2018 was no exception.

This year, we saw a continuation of the trend toward personable, adorable designs for consumer robots. Some of our favorites from last year, like **Kuri from Mayfield Robotics**, returned with added **adorableness and extra functionality**. Meanwhile newcomers like Honda's 3E-A18 and Sony's relaunched Aibo won our hearts with their winsome personalities and helpful natures.

Others still added a touch of novelty. The relatively affordable FoldiMate left us wondering if we really hate folding laundry enough to shell out \$1,000 to never do it again. Meanwhile, Sophia from Hanson Robotics had us questioning just how human we want our androids to be. And somewhere outside the convention center, **robot strippers**

governance—and the sooner, the better.

To read more, see:

<https://www.pcmag.com/news/358760/this-star-trek-federation-style-org-examines-human-transform>

showed us just how well they can work a crowd.

To read more, see:

<https://www.pcmag.com/feature/358509/the-adorable-helpful-and-creepy-robots-of-ces-2018?>

More robots? The following webpage displays some of the latest robot models:

<https://www.cnet.com/pictures/ces-2018-robots-pictures/>

Last month we told you of the upcoming (end of Feb) exhibition by the NY YIVO and co-presented with the Center for Jewish History (CJH), entitled "Jews in Space". The following tells us more:

In a semi-related article, see this about (Jewish) religious dietary issues in Space:

'Jews in Space' Exhibit Traces Jewish Culture Across the Cosmos

By Kasandra Brabaw, Space.com | March 3, 2018



NEW YORK

— A new exhibit at New York's Center for Jewish History chronicles the ties between Jewish culture and exploration of the cosmos, and includes some incredible artifacts from the history of astronomy and space exploration.

"Jews In Space" officially debuted at the center on Monday, Feb. 26, in partnership with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Walk through the exhibit hall and you'll find rare 18th and 19th century rabbinic tomes on astronomy in Hebrew, German and Yiddish, as well as a dreidel, a Torah pointer, a traveling menorah and other religious artifacts that traveled into space with the first Jewish American astronaut, Jeffrey Hoffman. The exhibit also features mementos from other Jewish space travelers, memorabilia from science fiction, and a detailed timeline of

Can You Keep Kosher or Halal in Space?

By Sarah Lewin, Space.com | April 18, 2017

Astronauts on the International Space Station can't follow strict kosher or halal laws — or stay totally kosher for Passover — but the scientists at NASA's food lab have a few options for observant space fliers.



Space.com talked with Vickie Kloeris, manager of NASA's Space Food Systems Laboratory, about the space station crew's options. The food lab is based at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, and its researchers are responsible for developing menus as well as producing and packaging the actual food that flies to the space station.

According to Kloeris, purely kosher meals (food prepared according to Jewish law) or halal (food prepared according to Islamic law) aren't currently possible for the space station fliers.

[\[Food Evolution: How Astronaut Chow Has Changed\]](#)

"It has nothing to do with the space station per se; it has to do with our food production facility," Kloeris told Space.com. "We have a single packaging room on the U.S. side. All of the food that's part of our standard menu that we provide — from what I understand, in order

Jewish accomplishments in astronomy and spaceflight.

"Jews in Space" was a year and a half in the making. Curator Melanie Meyers' husband originally suggested the center create an exhibit on Jewish people and science fiction. At the same time, the exhibitions curator of the YIVO Institute, Edward Portnoy, was working on a collection of rare rabbinical materials from the 16th to 19th centuries and found several astronomy texts, Portnoy told Space.com.

To read more, see:

<https://www.space.com/39864-jews-in-space-new-york-exhibit.html>

for them to be kosher and halal, they have to be done in separate, unique facilities. Therefore, everything we package would not meet that requirement."

Kloeris noted that it's possible to travel with a limited allotment of kosher or halal foods, in order to honor an astronaut's heritage; every astronaut is allowed a certain number of crew-specific containers sent to the space station, which can account for about 10 percent of their diet.

To read more, see:

<https://www.space.com/36494-keeping-kosher-halal-in-space.html>

Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets (2017)

FILM REVIEWED by Leybl Botwinik

[Disclaimer: I'm going to avoid the actual plot (see the movie or read the critical reviews) and want to discuss my overall impressions]

If you haven't seen the movie, watch this short clip first – to get an impression of the special effects:

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2239822/videoplayer/vi2408298777?ref=tt_ov_vi

Valérien and Laureline:



Alpha – The city of the thousand planets:



The movie is based on the French science fiction comics series “*Valérien and Laureline*”, published from 1967 to 2010. It was written by Pierre Christin and illustrated by Jean-Claude Mézières.

See this for a comparison of the comics and the movie:

<https://io9.gizmodo.com/a-guide-to-the-epic-scifi-movie-valerian-and-the-fanta-1789112928>



Director Luc Besson discovered the comics as a youth, and was later influenced during his making of “**The 5th Element**”. According to Wikipedia, that film (and others), including “**Star Wars**”, seem to have similar plot points, and have more than likely been influenced by the Valerian comics:

Several commentators, such as Kim Thompson of [The Comics Journal](#),^[22] film critic Jean-Philippe Guérard^[23] and the newspaper [Libération](#),^[24] have noted certain similarities between

the Valérian albums and the [Star Wars](#) film series. Both series are noted for the "lived-in" look given to their various settings and for the diverse alien creatures they feature. Mézières' response upon seeing Star Wars was that he was "dazzled, jealous... and furious!".^[25] As a riposte, Mézières produced an illustration for Pilote magazine in 1983 depicting the Star Wars characters [Luke Skywalker](#) and [Leia Organa](#) meeting Valérian and Laureline in a bar surrounded by a bestiary of alien creatures typical of that seen in both series. "Fancy meeting you here!" says Leia. "Oh, we've been hanging around here for a long time!" retorts Laureline.^[26]

— From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Val%C3%A9rian_and_Laureline



Now, consider the following:

- The movie had a 180 Million dollar budget
- A great director, Luc Besson (Lucy, 5th Element, Nikita, others – see this: http://www.imdb.com/videoplayer/vi1911535897?ref=tt_ecw_valerian_i_2)
- 43 years' worth of comics to base the story on (also animations), with a gamut of (fully developed) characters – both human and alien

... and yet, the movie was not at all successful at the box office

(See: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottmendelson/2017/09/05/box-office-why-movies-like-valerian-bomb-and-why-hollywood-should-keep-trying/#a479081760b2>).

The Bad and the Good

The movie had many positive things going for it. Unfortunately, it bombed on enough key 'attractions' that it received very mixed reviews, mostly poor ones:

- Poor casting. The main characters were not really great attractions – and not just because they were not 'big name' /familiar stars, but rather because they didn't seem to be the expected 'hero' – even if I or others didn't read the comic itself.
- Poor character development/portrayal and scripting. The main characters' acting, lines, and plot positioning were not up to par – and often stilted or expected.
- Too much of a good thing (see below). The fantastic special effects, loads of different types of aliens, and too much of everything caused a jumble, that could have been avoided by being more 'modest'.



On the positive side, the movie had great music and a lot of fantastic special effects, exotic settings, interesting alien depictions,

and much, much more. (See: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/aug/04/valerian-jupiter-ascending-science-fiction-film-flops>).



The alien depictions and special effects were successfully executed, with great and appropriate music in the background. For example, the opening few minutes ran David Bowie's "Space Oddity" ("...Ground control to Major Tom...") that was a perfect match for the background scenes of humans from different races and then with aliens of different species meeting peacefully and building "Alpha – The City of a Thousand Planets", an intergalactic space station city containing 30 million inhabitants and 3200 different alien species drifting away in space 700 million miles from Earth.

Several other scenes offered great presence (and/or great potential):

- The opening scenes on the peaceful paradise planet MUL that gets wiped

out by indiscriminate, warmongering humans

- The early scene on a desert planet that simultaneously runs a tourist attraction "Big Market" an intra-dimensional mega market of a million stores
- Hints at, or 'cameo tribute' appearances of aliens or characters from other movies seem to appear randomly in various scenes (for example, Jessica, the wife of Roger Rabbit)
- Rihanna's fantastic and sensual musical dancing scene as a shape shifting alien actress "bubbles". The dance scene itself has virtually nothing to do with the plot – but it an exceptional experience worth seeing

There were many lost moments, however, such as the alien crime lord in the "Big Market" who promised to avenge himself on Valerian for stealing his stolen goods and basically crashing one of his more important commercial transactions. Never heard of or seen again in the rest of the movie. Too bad, this had real potential for intrigue (and more fighting and shooting ☺).

Just as a thought, these last few days – what with the Jewish Purim festival where people can dress up as anyone (and anything) they want – one of my nephews dressed up as Charlie Chaplin and 'spoke' with printed cards and pantomime. As a result, we began reviewing and refreshing our thoughts and opinions about Chaplin's genius of about 100 years ago, when the original silent films were made. Except for a few slides of printed dialogue or narration that would pop up from time to time on-screen, probably 99% of the silent movie relied on facial and body movement/expression, setting and lighting, etc. Background music was also a factor. I was just wondering, if one were to do some selective editing, and only keep the music and run this movie with no verbal dialogue (and maybe have the actors act/look more 'alive') – if we couldn't create a better, more impressive movie... as I said, just a thought...

That having been said, maybe the director and scriptwriters tried to grab too much at once? Maybe, had they taken a smaller chunk of the 43 years of comics, and ran only one plotline from that, they could have been more successful, and then continued with future movie 'episodes' of the adventures of Valerian and Laureline. Maybe, we should more correctly rename this current effort as: "Valerian and the Movie of a Thousand Perils"

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

For Comments: E-mail: levbl_botwinik@yahoo.com. Tel: Leybl Botwinik 054-537-7729
 Editor: Leybl Botwinik. Founding Editor: Aharon Sheer (ל"ר). Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulou (ל"ר).
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