

head is becoming increasingly unattractive. He has been acutely aware of this, apparently, and to add more impact to his addresses he wants to have better and more exciting visuals to illustrate his points. Apparently one of the real cock-ups of his administration was along these lines. About a month before one of Reagan's major

THE MT VOID

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addresses on the Strategic Defense Initiative, a telegram was received at Industrial Light & Magic. Its text read:

"It is vitally important to the country that Industrial Light & Magic does special effects for Star Wars. Feel free to contact me personally with a proposal when you have some ideas." --Ronald Reagan

Apparently an executive at ILM received the telegram and just sort of sat on it. His official comment when contacted later was that he told a fellow worker, "Of course--who else did he think was going to do them?" Unofficially, it seems that he thought the telegram was either a joke or perhaps a piece of fan mail asking for a preview.

2. The Lincroft discussion group is looking for recommendations on books about alien religions, and also "a good SF-mystery novel, not involving a murder, that gives the reader a chance to figure the mystery out." [-ecl]

3. Dale Skran passed me a flyer for the following play. Neither he nor I are endorsing it, merely informing you, so if you don't like it we will not refund your money!

What the Morph Brothers Did
The New Comedy Sci-Fi Thriller
by
John Ahlin
with John Ahlin and Gary Arvedon
Directed by
Margit Ahlin
at
South Street Theatre
424 West 42nd Street (between 9th and 10th Avenues)

February 19--March 6, 1988
Tickets \$10
Information/Sales (212) 724-7744

"Ludwig and Gerrack Morph, two intergalactic entertainers of the year 2943, find themselves hopelessly trapped on a remote planet battling fate, destiny, each other and the amassed forces of Evil in the Universe. And that's only for starters in this hilarious look at the 30th century [sic]. Come see two of the future's unluckiest comedians and unlikeliest heroes, and come ready to root for the good guys--they need it."

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

AGENT OF BYZANTIUM by Harry Turtledove
Congdon & Weed, 1987, 0-86553-183-8, \$15.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1988 Evelyn C. Leeper

I had heard about this novel at Boskone, but couldn't find it in the Dealers' Rooms there. Then lo and behold! there it was in the Old Bridge Public Library! Well, you know me and alternate history novels (particularly the small minority that a_r_e_n't based on either the South winning the Civil War or Germany winning World War II), so I immediately checked it out and read it.

Well, uh, it was okay, I guess. I mean, the stories were interesting and the characters were reasonable adventure story characters, though nothing remarkable in characterization. But there was a certain sameness to the stories. They were originally written as short stories which appeared in various magazines (chiefly A_s_i_m_o_v'_s). This "novel" was formed by concatenating the stories, without any apparent additional editing. So in each story we get aside references to how Byzantium never fell, how St. Mahomet converted to Christianity,

what a beautiful cathedral the Hagia Sofia is, etc. Had this been edited better, Turtledove could have filled in some new background details instead of repeating these same ones over and over.

In addition, the stories all fit a set pattern. In each one, Basil Argyros (I may have the spelling wrong--it was a one-week book and I had to return it) discovers some amazing technological marvel--the telescope, movable type, brandy, and so on. Given that this takes place in the 1500s the period is right, but it's unlikely in the extreme that all this would center around one man. There's also a Mata Hari subplot that I could have done without.

I suspect this was a case where the individual stories were more enjoyable than the "novel" they formed. If you read this, do it a story at a time, but a week or so in between them. Turtledove has done another alternate history series, his "Sim" series which is running in A_n_a_l_o_g. I may not like it when it's issued as a novel either, but I have enjoyed the individual stories and recommend them.

NEVER THE TWAIN by Kirk Mitchell
Ace, 1987, ISBN 0-441-56973-0, \$3.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
Copyright 1988 Evelyn C. Leeper

Howard Hart, the last living descendent of Bret Harte (his grandfather dropped the final 'e' on the theory that one shouldn't use five letters when four would do), has been making a living as a minor

con-man when he is approached by a researcher who tells him that it was mere chance that stood between his ancestor and perpetual literary fame: had Samuel Clemens been successful as a gold miner in the West in the 1860s, he would not have turned to writing (as Mark Twain) and eclipsed the then popular Harte. Howard is currently being pursued by Federal marshalls for some fraud or other and realized that being the last surviving heir of a literary giant would be preferable to being that of someone relegated to the status of minor author. He also just happens to know some whiz-kid science-type (of the Zen philosophy of science variety) who just happens to have figured out how Hart can travel back in time to arrange all this.

The time travel aspect of this novel seems to take forever to get going, Hart (and hence the reader) sees very little of Mark Twain, and the book is more like a Western novel than science fiction. You do get several long descriptions of the insides of frontier bordellos, but trust me, they're not worth reading the book for. The ending is also quite predictable. On the whole this is a pretty light-weight and disappointing read. One would do better to go read Twain--or even Harte.

ConFiction 1990 Information
Comments by Jacqueline Cote from rec.arts.sf-lovers
Rephrased by Evelyn C. Leeper

ConFiction (Worldcon 1990) will be held in The Hague, The Netherlands August 23-27, 1990 at the Netherlands Congress Centre (Congresgebouw) with Guests of Honor Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke, and Harry Harrison, Fan Guest of Honor Andrew Porter, and Toastmistress Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.

They can be reached via mail at:

WorldCon 1990
P. O. Box 95370
2509 CJ The Hague
The Netherlands

The local (U.S.) agent is:

Marc S. Glasser
P. O. Box 1252, Bowling Green Station
New York, NY 10274

Their e-mail address is:

mtune!rutgers!mimsy!uunet!mcvax!hasara5.bitnet!u00254
(see below for details). Other countries' agents available on request from me (ecl).

The membership rates are based upon the current daily exchange rate of the US dollar. Should the dollar drop by more than 10 percent of the current value (as per November 16, 1987 = progress report 1), i.e. \$1.00 = Dfl 1,80. Otherwise, we are forced to adjust the price to match the exchange rate of the Dutch Membership rates. However, if the dollar rises and passes the Dfl 2,00 limit, US membership rates will be adjusted. Members who have paid too much during that period will be reimbursed at ConFiction. This upon showing a receipt that will be mailed out by the end of each year. Fluctuations of less than \$5.00 will not be reimbursed, as banking fees and administration costs are equal to, or even exceed \$5.00. [Got that? -ecl]

ConFiction offers you two sorts of membership: Attending and Supporting. Either choice entitles you to voting rights for the Hugo Award and for the site election for 1993 (by mail or at the convention itself), of all the Progress Reports, any Newsletter appearing after you have joined, the programme book and any post-convention publication. An Attending Membership also buys you the right to attend ConFiction and all the programmes therein, including the meetings of the World Science Fiction Society business meetings. As a Supporting member, you may convert to an Attending member at any time by paying the difference between an Attending and Supporting membership.

Until December 31st, 1988 the rates, payable in US dollars, are \$65 attending, \$28 supporting, \$17 children's (for children under 14 in 1990; no voting rights but do receive all publications and may attend. Children under 3 are free).

All membership payments must be made payable to:

STICHTING WorldCon 1990
P. O. Box 95370
2509 CJ The Hague
The Netherlands

The organization accepts Access, MasterCard and EuroCard. Please, make out your payments (by international money order, or credit card) in Dutch currency only (Dfl). We do prefer payment by credit card, thus avoiding the rather expensive banking conversion rates. Alternatively payments may also be made through your agent in local currency (see above list).

A experienced Dutch Tour Operator (Convention Travel International), with an excellent reputation and co-operating with the Congress Building, will deal with hotel and travel organizations. The North-American members will be served by "Ask Mr. Foster" in liaison with Convention Travel International.

The e-mail address given above will serve as a mailbox for questions, etc., (e.g. changes of address, verification of your membership (in case you haven't heard anything for months), suggestions, minor/major disasters, etc.

The rules are:

- Clearly state in the subject line of your message "WORLDCON" and optionally your own subject, e.g. "Subject: WORLDCON, Membership verification". You must include "WORLDCON"!
- Keep your messages/requests short and to-the point. Send lengthy essays via slow mail, in order to avoid undue pressure on the node and the mailbox.
- Don't try to get a pen-pal this way.

Mail will be forwarded via hard-copy at least weekly to the chair of ConFiction. You may get a acknowledgement unless the volume of mail precludes this.

===== IMPORTANT =====

Be sure to include an e-mail address that has been tested (preferably from a BITNET site). [If anyone knows how to translate a UUCP address into a BITNET address, please let me know. -ecl]

Star Trek Funnies VII
by Edward M. Ives

Captain's Log, Stardate 6020.65

We are {on a routine benchmarking mission / heading for a rendezvous with the Potempkin to pick up some medical supplies that we have to bring to Alpha IV / going to LasVegas IX for some much needed R&R/ limping back after our encounter with the Reliant/Klingons/Black Hole} It's a tough job, but, as usual, we were the only ship in the quadrant. Everything is quiet, and yet somehow I feel...uneasy.

Kirk: Status, Mr. Sulu?

Sulu: Still traveling like a bat out of hell in a straight line, sir.

Kirk: Steady as she goes, Mister.

Sulu: Aye, aye, sir. Boy, I'm glad you gave me that order, I was just about to pull a couple of barrel rolls just for the hell of it.
(Sarcastic smile)

(A cute ensign steps on the bridge)

Kirk: Hmm, you seem to have changed your hair, ensign...?

Ensign: "Generic, sir. Ensign Generic."

Kirk: Ah, of course. The Astrobiologist.

Ensign: Almost, sir. Actually, my field is Astroexointroorgosociology.

Kirk: Well, why don't you stop by my cabin some time and we can put on our boots together afterwards?

Ensign : You have a booger hanging from your nose.

Kirk : (Wipes his nose the same way he wipes his mouth when it has blood dripping from it). Thanks.

(Whoosh)

Bones : Dammit, Jim, what the hell's the matter with you? Other people have funerals - why are we treating yours like a birthday? Wait a minute, did I say, funeral? Aw hell, I need some more Saurian Julips to get me through the rest of the day....

Spock: Sir! I am scanning a cloud composed of an energy of a type...
(dramatic pause)
NEVER BEFORE ENCOUNTERED. Good thing we designed our scanners to pick up even energies that we never even heard of before.

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It is approaching at warp 1.

Kirk: Hmmm. We can't be too careful. Go to indigo alert.
Raise sneeze guards over the salad bars. Pull the shades, too.

Spock: Captain - the cloud is now 100 kilometers distant. Size...OFF the SCALE (dramatic twang). Hmm. Must be pretty big considering we can tell how big STARS are with these scanners.

(The ship rocks. Everyone falls out of their chair, in different directions. Kirk executes a shoulder roll and brings his fists down in the small of Sulu's back, knocking him unconscious).

Chekov: Keptin! Our sneeze guards are down!

Kirk: Scotty!!! What's happening?

<Tinny Speaker>: Well sairr, haggis, clan, claymorrrrrrrrre, scotch, tartan.

Kirk: Do we have any phaser power?

<Tinny Speaker>: A few shots sairr. No, actually, I canna even gi' you tha'. We may have enough power ta do a few wheelies, sairr.

Kirk: We can't DO a few wheelies!!!!!!!!!!!!!!...Dammit, Spock! You're the science officer - I need answers!

Spock : I need data, Captain. And getting laid wouldn'thurt either.

Uhura: Receiving transmissions, captain! It's in Linguinicode!

Kirk: Put it on audio, Uhura.

Cloud: OOP! ACK! PHPPTHFFT!

Spock: Some form of gaseous feline, captain.

Kirk: And he's got us right where we want him...hmm...should I have him hit me, or should I fold?

Spock: Orders, Captain?

Kirk: GO FISH.

<Spock enters the turbolift. As it closes, we can hear him saying "fish tanks">

Kirk: <Hits intercom> OK, I want all my personal toadies in the conference room for a discussion.

Unknown and inexperienced crewperson, you have the conn. <leaves>

<In the Conference Room>

Kirk: All right gentlemen. Opinions?

Uhura: Sir, I believe...

Kirk: ...I said "gentlemen". When I want your opinion, I'll ask for it...MISTER.

McCoy: What are you going to do, Jim? Dammit, millions of lives blah blah you're obsessed blah blah I'm scared shitless blah blah I may just have to declare you unfit for command blah blah and anyway, why do we always call something we don't understand a "thing"?!

Spock: <Generic comment about McCoy's predilection for irrelevancy>

McCoy: Why, you green-blooded inhuman blah blah mother was a librarian blah blah father was a computer blah blah why don't you just go back where you came from blah blah love the federation or leave it blah blah you've got pointy ears to boot Nyah Nyah!

Spock: <Feeble attempt at sarcasm that makes McCoy's blood boil>

Kirk: Dammit gentlemen, stop this senseless bickering, I need ANSWERS! <clenches hands together and executes "Kirk move" on table, smashing them into it as if it were someone's back.> Owwww! <nurses hands>

Spock: Captain, the problem is not simply a gaseous cloud. It is PROFOUND STATEMENT ABOUT REAL NATURE OF PROBLEM.

Scotty: But tha's impossible!

Spock: Nevertheless, Mister Scott, it is a FACT.

McCoy: Would you listen to this guy? We're talking about UNIVERSAL ARMAGEDDON, and he's spouting FACTS!!!!!!!!!! <Falls on the floor and begins having an apoplectic fit>

Spock : That "thing" could teach us how to make a walnutthe size of a warp engine.

Scotty: A Warp Engine? You're bullshitting me!

Spock : Vulcans do not bullshit.

Kirk: Well, I'm the captain, so it's MY decision. In this case, I don't

think we need a fake vote to come to a decision, so I won't have you raise all your hands like the good little toadies you are. Oh, what the hell, let's just have a fake vote anyway. Gentlemen, risk-taking is our business! That's what we're paid for! America, freedom, the star-spangled banner, apple pie, Bruce Springsteen! Now come on, let's have a fake vote!

(McCoy reluctantly holds up his hand)

Kirk : Then it's decided. We'll try to mind-meld with it even though I may be risking thousands of lives by doing so!

(On the Bridge)

Spock: When would you like me to attempt the meld?

Kirk: We're going to do it at POINT BLANK RANGE.
(Thunderous Crash of Cymbals)

Sulu: Point blank range, sir?

Kirk: That's right. We'll get up real close, mind meld, maybe even plant a few antimatter bombs, and then back out the way we came.

Sulu: Point blank NOW sir.

Spock: Pain. The Chamber of the Ages. No Kill I! Like Ike I !

Kirk: Hmm, does it mean that it likes Ike or that Ike likes it?

Sulu: Orders, Captain?

Kirk: <Knits his brows, frowns, starts looking constipated>

Sulu: Sir??

Kirk: <Strokes his chin, wipes blood from the corner of his mouth with the back of his wrist, rubs his pot belly that is badly obscured by the special green uniform shirt with the symbol in the wrong place>

Sulu: Sir??

Kirk: All right. Uhura, I want you to send a subspace message to Starfleet. "We are going to blow ourselves up with that awesome new just-plain-big bomb we installed. Keep all ships away from

here forever." And use code 6, Lieutenant.

Uhura: But, sir,...

Kirk: USE CODE 6. Must you question my every order? (Fondles three

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steel balls he has been shifting around in his palm). Okay,
Scotty, on my mark, I want you to eject all methane and ignite it.

Scotty: Ahhh. The flatulation maneuver.

Kirk: Okay, Sulu, I want you to bring us in real close until we're right
up against that thing. Then we're going to plant a stink bomb at
POINT BLANK RANGE <Thunderous crash of music>

Sulu: Aye Aye Sir.

Kirk: Spock, on my mark, I want you to flood all decks with neural gas.

Spock: Ready on your command.

Kirk: No, wait...BELAY THAT ORDER. <Dramatic Twang>
Instead, flood all decks EXCEPT FOR THE BRIDGE.

Spock: Yes, Sir.

Kirk: Sulu, after we plant the bomb, I want you to go to Z minus 1000
kilometers, Z plus 1000 kilometers, then bring us PARALLEL to
whatever that...THING is.

Sulu: Ready to execute standard Kirk orbit.

Kirk: Spock...?

Spock: I have already begun my calculations for time warp, Captain.

Kirk: Okay. Scotty, on my mark, I want you to cut all power except for
lifesupport. And throw some cardboard pizza trays out the
shuttlecraft doors - maybe we can convince them we're hurt badly...

