



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

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Coming Soon:

"MeOrot" SF conference: <http://meorot.sf-f.org.il/2014/> Dec. 18 – Hebrew U, Jerusalem

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

כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים ב**לוח האירועים** (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד) לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף ל**רשימת התפוצה** או ל**דף האגודה בפייסבוק**. Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

A few words from the assistant editor:

I am sure you will be glad to know that Aharon has begun contributing again (see below). Would anyone like to volunteer something for next month?

Some ideas: Review of some of the recent SF/hero movies "**Guardians of the Galaxy**", "**Captain America – Winter Soldier**", "**RoboCop**", or the recent TV series "**Shield**", "**Tomorrow People**", "**Flash**", "**The 100**", "**Revolution**", "**More than Human**".

In this issue:

- 1) A quick look at the weapons of the future and today's 10 most deadly (see website).
- 2) After receiving some positive feedback on the short article about Robin Williams' demise and his starring role in the SF TV series "Mork and Mindy", I thought it appropriate to extend the memorial with a homage to his SF-related movies. In this issue: "The Bicentennial Man" (based on Isaac Asimov's stories).
- 3) It being soon after Hallowe'en (in Mexico it was the "Day of the Dead" weekend...), I thought it best to let all those tired/worn out undead Zombies lay deep, deep in the ground and we'll see their resurrection (i.e. 5th installment in the series) in a future issue.
- 4) A report about the recent ICON fest in Tel Aviv and the new project to translate Hebrew SF to English: "Zion's Fiction" (I like the name!)

Leybl Botwinik (CyberCozen assistant editor).

Submitted by Aharon Sheer:

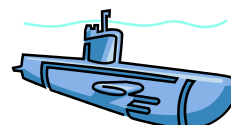
Science of the month: Are antibiotics losing their "punch"?

Click here: [Charting the course of antibiotic failure](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6207/311.1.short) or <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/346/6207/311.1.short> [free, after registration] - Caroline Ash

Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is a major public health problem. To better understand this in a clinical setting, Currie *et al.* analyzed a 20-year prescribing history of antibiotics by UK primary care practitioners and report a 12% increase in treatment failure (when a specific antibiotic fails to cure an infection). The authors found only small decreases in the ability of frontline drugs, such as penicillins and macrolides, to control respiratory tract and soft tissue infections. More worryingly, however, second-line antibiotics, such as cephalosporins and quinolones, often used to treat elderly and frail patients with pneumonia, showed higher failure rates since 1991. *BMJ* 10.1136/bmj.g5493 (2014).

Technology of the month: "You fight me, You fight my ... weapon!"

*Coincidentally (or not), this year's theme for the annual "MeOrot" SF conference (Dec 18 – Hebrew U, Jerusalem) is "milkhama lanetsakh?" [Eternal/Forever War?]. See: <http://meorot.sf-f.org.il/2014/>



From spit to stone to sling to spear to sword ... to semi-automatics, to submarines to stealth bombers (and their payloads) ... mankind has thought up numerous new ways, through the ages, to cause mayhem and destruction. In the worlds of science fiction, we've also seen the 'evolution' of weaponry: from Star-Trek personnel's hand-held phasers to Starship photon torpedoes. From Star Wars lightsabers, to fighter ship squadrons, to Deathstars (moon-

size-mobile-mega-spaceship-spacecraft-carriers and city-size super-bunkers – see:

http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Death_Star with planet-destroying particle beams) – and all the in-between personnel blasters, laser-shields, flying tanks, etc. (not to overlook BattleStar Galactica and Cylon Basestar arms and armaments and paraphernalia of near-equal lethality See:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylon_Basestar).



While the US of A's Nation Rifle Association (NRA) will argue for the right of individuals to be able to bear arms to defend themselves – generally speaking, though, weapons are meant for killing and not so much for 'defense'. The vast investment into the development of weaponry is mostly for their destructive purpose, and very few weapons or systems are designed to 'protect'.

Yes, there are "Iron Dome" and "Patriot" missiles and their like, to defend against missile attacks. And yes, there are numerous technologic and scientific spin-offs that benefit mankind – but these are few and far between.

In the 1980's the US tried to develop an inter-connecting satellite (and land-based) net of laser-like weapons as a missile defense against any potential ICBM strike and against nuclear bomb carrying long

range bombers. The 'Strategic Defense Initiative' (SDI) was dubbed the 'Star Wars' project. It wasn't ever completed. Wikipedia has a good set of notes on this. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Defense_Initiative

Jules Verne was one of the few who envisioned how the two: the offensive weapon and the defensive system could work together for a mutually beneficial task in his "From the Earth to the Moon" – where the manufacturer of 'bigger and better' artillery pieces joined forces with the maker of better – more resilient – armor, to build the rocket and firing system to send a mission to the moon.

So yes, it is possible to beat swords into plowshares – we just need to want it, and it can be done.

All the above, of course is just an intro to the interesting site I recently came across showing 10 of today's most lethal, destructive, military weapons...if that's your thing, or you are just curious: http://americanlivewire.com/2014-04-15-top-10-powerful-military-weapons-modern-age-11/?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=referral

We follow up on the tragic news of Robin Williams passing from this existence to, hopefully, a better place, with more about his SF-related film roles – in a review of “Bicentennial Man” (in the previous – October – issue of *CyberCozen*, we touched on his debuting SF TV series “Mork and Mindy”)

But first, to warm up, here are some related links on the Web:

1. **Robin Williams' Best Sci-fi Roles | fourthdayuniverse.com**
fourthdayuniverse.com/reports/2014/08/robin-williams-best-sci-fi-roles/
 Aug 12, 2014 - **Robin Williams**, the man who practically defined comedy for a generation, committed suicide yesterday. I won't relay the details of his death or ...
2. **Little known sci-fi fact: Robin Williams was turned down by 3 ...**
www.blastr.com/.../little-known-sci-fi-fact-robin-williams-was-turned-do...
 Jul 21, 2014 - This is so depressing, we might just need to watch one of those severe downer **Robin Williams** movies and cry for a while.
3. **Reid Kemper's Science Fiction Blog: Robin Williams and ...**
www.reidkemper.com/.../robin-williams-and-science-fiction-from.html
 Aug 13, 2014 - **Robin Williams and Science Fiction**: From Mork to Bicentennial Man. You've likely heard about comedian/actor Robin Williams' unfortunate ...

Movie review: “Bicentennial Man” (1999-starring Robin Williams)

by Leybl Botwinik



The plot is based on a short story of the same name: “Bicentennial Man” by Isaac Asimov – that I once read – and the novel “Positronic Man” by Asimov and Robert Silverberg – that I never knew existed (in fact I never knew Asimov collaborated with other writers).

Let's first take a look at the IMDB Storyline -

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0182789/?ref =nv_sr_1

“This film follows the 'life' and times of the lead character, an android who is purchased as a household robot programmed to perform menial tasks. Within a few days the Martin family realizes that they don't have an ordinary droid as Andrew begins to experience emotions and creative thought. In a story that spans two centuries, Andrew learns the intricacies of humanity while trying to stop those who created him from destroying him.”

... That's not exactly correct. Continue reading....

The setting: somewhere in America. **The time:** sometime in the not too distant future. As the opening credits roll, we are witness to the sounds of mechanics churning away in the background, and bits and pieces, wires and mechanical parts, of what looks like robotic appendages being manufactured.

In the movie's opening scene, we see that the head of the Martin household has ordered a standard household robot from the “NA (North American) Robotics”

company. It's a surprise for the family, with the two technicians wheeling in an oblong (metallic) crate, like one is used to when ordering a new fridge, for example. The older of the two daughters is unimpressed (all her friends have one), and she later orders the robot “Andrew” to jump out the 2nd story window. One of the first things Andrew (the robot's newly dubbed name, when the youngest daughter mishears “android” and call him “Andrew”) does, is project a spectacular 3-D holographic sound and light show

proclaiming Isaac Asimov's now classic 3 laws of robotics.

Andrew is an all metal "NDR-114 [DOMESTIC]" machine, whose company motto is: "A LIFETIME OF SERVICE & SECURITY". When we first meet Andrew, he has no facial expressions. Other than slight intonations in his voice, only his eyebrows and eyelids can move and 'express' anything.

He is just another household appliance... until we discover, that he begins to take initiative and has certain creative wood-working skills that actually earn him money (the head of the household, Mr. Martin, allows Andrew to eventually open a separate bank account for this). As the family warms up to him, and he to them, we begin to understand that Andrew is different from other mechanical servants. As the movie unfolds, he is first permitted to wear clothes and later receives an upgrade in his metal face so some minor expressiveness can be projected, and much later, receives a synthetic skin that is pasted

over his metal armor to give him a human look – and we then see the real Robin Williams' face before us.

Without going into the whole plot, we find Andrew developing certain levels of independence and 'humanity' over a period of several decades, and in fact at some point he requests "freedom".

To return a moment to the beginning of this article, the line in the IMDB review that bothered me, was "...while trying to stop those who created him from destroying him".

There is, in fact only one brief moment when Andrew may have been in danger. This is near the beginning, when the head of the household, Mr. Martin, confronts the manufacturer with the fact that Andrew is different. The manufacturer is willing to replace Andrew with a 'correctly' functioning android – but is refused. This moment might have actually been a danger for Andrew – had Mr. Martin, decided to replace him – but in fact he doesn't.

Some movie notes: In the first scenes of the film, Robin Williams, the versatile actor, wondrously manages to "project himself" beyond the limits of the metallic shell, so we feel HIM and not the ROBOT. His way to express a kind of 'human touch' other than by well thought out and executed camera zooms of his artificial eyes and eyebrow gestures is by certain phrases one expects from him: slightly witty, slightly cynic, like in the TV series "Mork and Mindy". As Andrew becomes more 'human', these begin to appear more and more in the dialogue. I was also very impressed by the person or team that created the metallic costume Williams wore. Although essentially 'metal' it seemed to have a softness to it. In fact, it still had the general shape and form reminiscent of Robin Williams, including the face mask. So when you look at the pictures, it reminds you of him.

A final (maybe ironic) note, is that the story, based on Asimov's short story and book – although about the machine that wants to 'live' and 'love' and be 'human' – nevertheless takes into account two factors that without them, Andrew would probably not have 'survived'. 1) The real human factor – **COMPASSION**: Mr. Martin was very sympathetic to Andrew. Someone else could have scrapped him, or taken advantage of him. 2) The power of **MONEY**: Thanks to his creativity and woodworking skills he was able to amass a great amount of wealth over the years (again, that Martin allowed him to keep) – that facilitated him in achieving many of his goals.

And one side note: Asimov's original short story was expressly written (as far as I can remember) in honour of the USA Bicentennial year (1776-1976). The producer of the movie – according to the credits – was Chris Columbus (Harry Potter, Gremlins, etc.) for "1492 Productions"... interesting... ☺

Next time: *More Robin Williams' SF movies.*

ICON 2014 Festival Review



by Leybl Botwinik

Last month (October 12-14), Tel Aviv hosted another of its fun-and-famous ICON SF and Fantasy festivals over a period of 3 days

See pics and feedback (in Hebrew) at: <https://www.facebook.com/Festival.Icon>.

The last one I was at, was a few years ago. At the time, I only stayed for a few hours, and only on one day. This time, however, I visited all three days (also for only a few hours) and stayed at my son's table, where he was selling his Hebrew SF book. At the table and during a bit of wandering around, I observed and talked with all sorts of fascinating people – those who were dressed up in funny, strange, outrageous, or even simple costumes – and those like me, who weren't.

There were lots of young people, many in groups. There were also many parents with kids and sometimes kids with parents. The difference? Many of these parents knew what to expect, and seemed as interested, if not more so, than their kids (mostly quite young) – but they all found it quite fun. Some (older) kids, however, came with parents that seemed totally lost, and who were probably wondering when the 'Aliens' landed and why they hadn't heard about it in the news... I'm wondering if maybe a special "Intro to SF and Fantasy and Gaming" session might not be in order for such people. Maybe even on a bi-hourly basis (like periodic 'tours' given in museums and such).

What I found particularly fascinating was the great energy being generated by all the participants. First of all, there were hundreds of science fiction and fantasy and gaming lovers of all ages. In order to handle this amount of people, the various organizations had tens of volunteers helping around in various capacities. This in itself was impressive. There were about 190 activities and lectures and films and other events throughout the 3 days.

In addition to the planned events, I personally witnessed gatherings of like-minded youth, sitting playing Dungeon-and-Dragons types of card games, or sitting down on the side, or even in the middle of the open areas for a pow-wow ('kum-zits'?) and even a spontaneous sing-along.

I thought it was great fun and a tremendous achievement. The organizers did a wonderful job and should be highly commended – as should be their host of enthusiastic volunteers.

If you haven't been to an ICON fest yet – make sure not to miss the next one. I'm sure you'll find something there that will appeal to your particular interests and tastes.

I'd like to just take this opportunity to personally offer a hearty welcome to the new batch of readers that signed up at ICON to receive CyberCozen!

**Hope you enjoy us – and hope to hear from you,
and that you may even decide to write something for us.**

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

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