



Israel's English-language SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy NEWS 2016

מועדון הקריאה של חודש נובמבר יעסוק בספר "הגולם והג'יני" מאת הלן וקר (ידיעות ספרים, 2013).
 בירושלים יתקיים ביום חמישי, 24.11, בשעה 19:30 בבית הקפה "נגילה", משיח ברוכף 5, ירושלים. מנחה: **גלי אחיטוב**.
 בת"א יתקיים שבוע לאחר מכן, ביום חמישי, 1.12, בשעה 19:30 ב"קפה גרג", ויצמן 2. מנחות: **דפנה קירש** ואיילת ירושלמי.
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.

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

Israel's Race to the Moon / Spacell update:

Here's an update on Israel's very own space program – SF in the making, or more correctly transforming SF into reality:

<http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=f3d4308be1b5a547f0e56038c&id=8215fc9fac&e>

and see here for a report on Israel's race to the moon, as reported by CNN:

<http://money.cnn.com/2016/07/26/technology/google-lunar-xprize/index.html>

This month's roundup:

- Our (second) report on the 20th Anniversary celebration of the *Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy*
- Our new SF friends across the seas in Montreal, Quebec, Canada [to be continued]
- A special guest contribution: "Setting the Template: The Original Star Trek" by Shlomo Schwartzberg

And, of course, the Sheer Science section by Dr. Doron Calo: About Mars and Space Radiation (also Roamin' Black Holes)
 – Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

(...and still on the backburner [but getting EVEN closer to realization] the completion of the Zombie series special issue ...)



מזל טוב!!! חגיגת 20 שנה לאגודה

Congratulations!!!

20th Israeli Society for SF&F Anniversary

**Editor's Boo-Boo CORRECTED...**

Thankfully, I've located my misplaced scribbled notes that I took at the event ... so here's the final installment....

The ISSF&F 20th Anniversary Event– A Short Report (PART-II)

<http://www.sf-f.org.il/archives/1294>

As reported in the last issue of CyberCozen, the 20th anniversary celebration of the *Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy (ISSF&F)* that took place on Thursday the 18th of August, 2016 at the Tel Aviv ZOA House was well-attended and well-organized. Here are some more highlights.

Some Society Stats and Facts (hope I get this right first time — if not I'll send an update):

- About 400 paid members in Israel (I just joined too!)
- A handful of members abroad
- 7 board members and tens of active members (+ tens of volunteers during the conventions)
- Members are a mix of university students, professors, writers, etc. and any lover of SF and Fantasy
- 4 main conventions a year

NOTE that there are various 'affiliate' groups (e.g. fans of Terry Pratchett, Josh Whedon, gaming, etc.) who have their own membership and activities. They often collaborate, such as during the October ICON fest).

- In addition to conventions: periodic speakers, monthly reading group in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (sometimes in other cities as well); special members-only pre-screenings of upcoming movies; etc.
- Website (<http://www.sf-f.org.il>)
- Various writing contests and support for avant-garde SF&F oriented theatre (see short write-up following)
- Meimad ha-asiri [10th dimension] – Hebrew periodic publication containing short stories and articles
- Zion's Fiction – Project to translate Hebrew SF short stories to English and publish them

In addition to the highlights mentioned in our last issue

(where the honouree Emanuel Lotem also spoke of how he was introduced to SF in the first place: During his studies in England he found SF books in shops at every street corner. One of the first impressions on him was the book "Puppet Masters" by Heinlein – which also happened to be one of my first SF reads too!),

... there was a very humorous, very well done "SF" theatrical performance "ramzorim" [traffic lights] whose production was sponsored by the Society. The story starts as follows: Sometime in the near future, a dating company "Green Light to Love" comes up with a unique idea. A mathematician has developed a statistical analysis package, whereby he can get matching registered members to crash their cars at traffic lights – so that they can meet. Our main heroes are a woman mechanic (tough, tom-boyish, practical) and an accountant – if I'm not mistaken – who is the exact opposite of her in just about everything. They crash and realize that they were set up to meet. They begin to date but are so very very different – will Love conquer all, or did the algorithm make some serious mistake?... the humorous story and excellent acting won the audience over.

And after all that, a film viewing that I couldn't stay for.

All-in-all a wonderful and impressive 20th anniversary celebration!

Here are some more pics:

20th Anniversary invitation:



The Society President, Liat Shahr-Kashtan and me:



Montreal SF Club [MonSFFA] [to be continued]

- By Leybl Botwinik

Just returned from a short trip to Montreal (and a few days in Ottawa), to visit my family in Canada. Unfortunately, this meant missing the annual ICON fest in Tel Aviv (and the reason this issue is a few days late). On the bright side, my son Nathaniel and I had the pleasure and privilege to meet some of the members of the Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association "MonSFFA".

We met the dynamic and super-friendly secretary Cathy Palmer-Lister, René Walling (who was chair of Anticipation, the World con in Montreal 2005, and MonSFFA's go-to person for anything SF/F outside the usual track), and Danny Sichel who Cathy named as: "probably the most literate of our members ... fantastic memory for detail".

Because I'm running late again, I'll have to put off the report on that get-together to our next (December) issue. Sorry – but it will be worth the wait.

[... to be continued]

Honouring the 50th anniversary year of Star Trek:

Setting the Template: The Original Star Trek



The crew of the original Star Trek.

With permission from the author, Shlomo Schwartzberg. Originally presented in 2013 at:
<http://www.criticsatlarge.ca/2013/06/setting-template-original-star-trek.html>

It's too bad the makers of **Star Trek Into Darkness** didn't actually pay attention to the TV series the new movie is based on. If they had they might have recognized that what made the original Star Trek so special was its originality. So why on Earth did they decide to not only revisit the premise of the terrific TV season one episode "Space Seed" that introduced Khan (Ricardo Montalban), a genetically altered super-soldier, from the Starship Enterprise's past, but also to crib so much of the excellent second movie in the **Star Trek** film franchise, **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan**, which brought Khan back to face Captain Kirk and his crew anew? The result: a pale film, one that failed to do justice to the show and even to the first new re-boot of **Star Trek** (2009).

What made the original TV series so lasting, I think, is that it really was like no science fiction series that came before. Prior to **Star Trek's** debut in 1966 (it ran for three seasons until 1969), the few glimmers of intelligent science fiction on TV were manifest in the original **Twilight Zone** (1959-64) anthology show and little else.

Thus, when Gene Roddenberry conceived of the series, which he initially pitched to NBC as "a **Wagon Train** to the stars" (figuring the suits would respond better to the western TV show reference), he made sure it was an intelligent, complex show that spoke, in disguised futuristic science fiction terms, to the issues of its time, like racism, war and gender differences.

So lasting was the show's groundbreaking impact, in fact, including in its depiction of American television's first interracial (albeit tame) kiss, that when Nichelle Nichols, the African-American actress who played Lt. Uhura on the show, and whom I once had the great pleasure of meeting, mused about leaving it, none other than the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. urged her to stay with **Star Trek**, citing Uhura's value as a role model for young African-Americans.



Star Trek was actually one of the first television shows I ever watched. We didn't get a TV in my family until I was almost seven, when we moved into a duplex in 1966 – my parents were likely saving up for that house and a TV set would have been a luxury at that point – so I initially encountered the show towards the end of its first season. I was already beginning to delve into science fiction, as a source for reading material, so my mother, probably knowing that, asked me to check out this TV show that was supposed to contain an advertisement for B'nai Brith, a Jewish community organization with which she was long involved, and let her know when the ad ran. Funnily enough, I never saw the B'nai Brith ad (did it actually exist?) but I was instantly hooked on the show.

My first memories of **Star Trek** were the green skinned dancing girl (in the two part "The Menagerie" episode, which introduced Captain Pike, Captain James T. Kirk's predecessor as Enterprise Captain) and the human chess pieces (I'm not sure which episode they were on). And Grace Lee Whitney (Yeoman Janice Rand on the show) was one of my first TV crushes, along with Yvonne Craig's Batgirl (aka Barbara Gordon) on the campy **Batman** series which aired around the time of **Star Trek**.

As I got older, and revisited **Star Trek**, I began to appreciate its complexity and smart use of some of science fiction's greatest themes, alternate worlds, time travel, dystopias, extraterrestrial encounters, all a far cry from the silliness of a show like **Time Tunnel** or even of the hokey looking aliens on **The Outer Limits**, which I didn't see until years later and found to be a derivative, flat show, very unlike **The Twilight Zone**, to which it was often compared, likely because both series were anthologies. (Then as now, critics and fans alike prefer semantic short cuts to comparing shows which are not all that similar in fact.)

Star Trek was singularly unique – to this day, in fact – in its use of science fiction writers on the show, assuring that the talented likes of **Harlan Ellison** ("The City on the Edge of Forever"), Theodore Sturgeon ("Shore Leave," "Amok Time"), Robert Bloch ("Catspaw," "Wolf in the Fold"), Norman Spinrad ("The Doomsday Machine"), Jerome Bixby ("Mirror, Mirror," "By Any Other Name"), David Gerrold ("The Trouble with Tribbles") and Richard Matheson ("The Enemy Within") brought sophisticated contexts and ideas to a medium which had generally treated SF like kid's stuff that didn't tax the intellect.

Not coincidentally, those episodes were among the best of the overall series, though the show's staff writers such as Gene L. Coon ("Arena," "Space Seed", which he co-wrote) and D.C. Fontana ("Journey to Babel") also wrote some fine episodes. I'd estimate that about a third of the show's 79 episodes were stellar, another third worth seeing and the rest, forgettable fluff, the latter mostly in the series' third and final season when NBC had pretty much washed its hands of the show after constantly shifting its time slot to its detriment. (Harlan Ellison dug up proof once that the network had even wanted the half human, half Vulcan Spock (Leonard Nimoy) to look fully human minus his distinctive pointy ears, though NBC never copped to it, he wrote, and fired some poor shmo who took the rap for NBC's lack of imagination.

The first pilot of the show didn't actually feature Spock as a character at all; that version of **Star Trek**, which the network passed on, cast Majel Barrett, Roddenberry's wife, as the Enterprise's first officer, instead of Spock. She later popped up on the actual series as Nurse Christine Chapel).

But it was **Star Trek**'s overall vision, I believe, that made and makes it so watchable to this day. From its use of Uhura, at that point one of American TV's few African-American characters and reportedly the first black female portrayed on TV who was not a servant, to the introduction of Pavel Chekhov (Walter Koenig) in the second season, a younger actor meant to appeal to the teen demographic but also a key Russian character at a time when the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was quite chilly, **Star Trek** seemed determined to be groundbreaking. (Diahann Carroll's sitcom **Julia**, the first TV show with a black lead, didn't come along until 1968.) And making the series a utopian vision of a future, the 23rd century, when all countries on Earth got along – if not the races in the wider universe – was a strong rejoinder to a world and an America so bitterly divided on so many levels.



From "The Trouble with Tribbles"

The show, too, evoked many moods, from the humour of "The Trouble with Tribbles," those furry creatures who wreaked comic mayhem wherever they went, to the darkness of the alternate Earth of "Mirror, Mirror" to the very moving denouement of "The City on the Edge of Forever," in which Kirk had to let the woman he loved die lest Earth's history be altered forever.

Paramount, too, was the very enjoyable banter and repartee between its three leads, the supremely and often irritatingly logical science officer Mister Spock, the emotional Captain

James Tiberius Kirk (William Shatner) and the cantankerous, old fart Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy (DeForest Kelley) who never quite adjusted to the futuristic technology of his time (I can relate.) Their triumvirate and the insults and words slung at each other were a hoot but also a touching indicator of the love and respect they genuinely had for each other. (It was also the one aspect of **Star Trek Into Darkness** that still resonated.)

The multiracial and multicultural supporting crew, including, besides Uhura, whose first name, Nyota, was never mentioned on the show but only in a later movie, Chekhov, the Scottish engineer Montgomery Scott (James Doohan), and the Japanese helmsman Hikaru Sulu (George Takei, who recalls that he was supposed to be less specifically Japanese than a representation of Asia as a whole) added much to the show, at a time when U.S. TV really didn't reflect the full, diverse panoply of American society.

The show was very low budget by our twenty-first century special effects standards – some of its more egregious faults, from the sloppy, obvious matte shots of the Enterprise, photographed against deep space, to the scene in the suspenseful episode "Shore Leave" where you were able to see the chain holding a supposedly menacing tiger, have been cleaned up in the re-mastered DVD versions of the show – but it didn't matter as much as it might have, as its rewards were so many.

Of course there were no shortage of clichés on the series, from the unnamed extras, usually wearing red shirts, who routinely died whenever a landing party beamed down to an unknown planet – writer John Scalzi's science fiction novel **Redshirts** directly addresses that plot point – to the show's pre-feminist view of women (the Enterprise's females, including Uhura, for that matter, were 'babes' who always wore miniskirts and sported excessive makeup, unlikely for the serious jobs they as part of the Enterprise crew would be carrying out in a realistic future.) And the communicators, bulkier versions of today's cell phones, used by the crew, would have been supremely impractical for day-to-day use in **Star Trek's** universe.

There's also the sticky business of the series' Prime Directive, a prohibition on the Enterprise's ever altering or affecting the natural development of the worlds and societies they came into contact with, except that's what they did week-in and week-out on the show. The **Star Trek** films, including **Star Trek Into Darkness**, were more likely to deal with that inconsistency head on.

On the other hand, I think the show's use of the concepts of the transporter beam, which

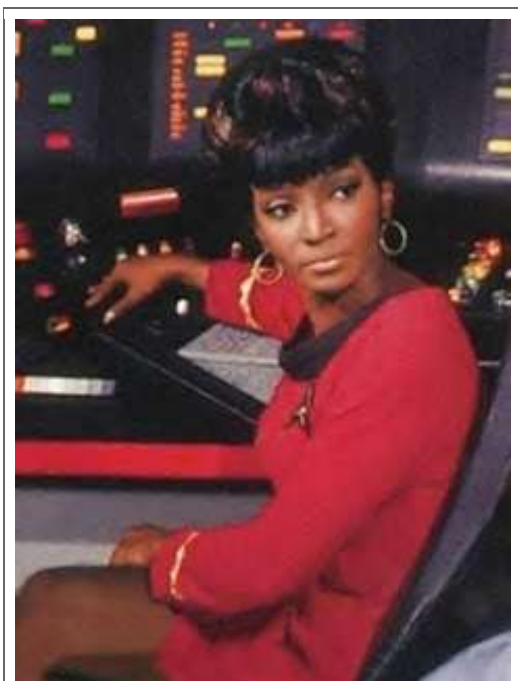
I also liked the geo-political realities of the series, from the Romulans, the mysterious stand-ins for Red China (as it was then commonly known; President Nixon had not yet visited there) to the Enterprise's perpetual nemeses, the Klingon race, who may not have looked as alien as they do on the later **Star Trek** series' but, to my mind, were much more entertaining.

Star Trek really had an all encompassing worldview, with the Starship Enterprise's mandate, as uttered in the show's opening credits, "to explore strange new worlds and civilizations," which it did. (The ensuing phrase, the poetic "where no man has gone before" was, unfortunately, later changed to the prosaic "where no one has gone before," which I'd argue was an unnecessary example of political correctness. As with astronaut Neil Armstrong's phrase referring to "mankind," "man" meant both men and women.)

scrambled and then reassembled human molecules so we could be sent down to other planets, and the Romulan cloaking device, which rendered their ships invisible to enemy eyes, are as neat now that I'm an adult as when I was a young boy devouring the show. The phasers are pretty cool, too. I don't even mind Shatner's overemphasizing of his dialogue, a tad pretentious, I'd say, since Kirk is such a likeable, compelling character nonetheless. (Leonard Nimoy was clearly the better actor.) There was also the hometown pride of Shatner being a Montrealer, though I didn't know anyone who knew him personally, just his mother, who was taught by my father.



Spock, Kirk and McCoy.



Nichelle Nichols as Lt. Uhura

The show surmounted all its flaws because of what did work on **Star Trek**, from the intelligent storylines to the deft futuristic touches dotted throughout the series. The later **Star Trek** shows were slicker and better made but I never found them to be as interesting as the original, despite **Star Trek: The Next Generation's** creation of a great new Captain (Jean-Luc Picard, played by Patrick Stewart) and the complex android Data (Brent Spiner). The **Trek** shows, after that, **Deep Space Nine**, **Voyager** and **Enterprise**, didn't even offer those types of great characters.

Maybe it's a function of my growing up with the first **Star Trek** series at a time when cultural imprimaturs had a deeper impact on me, but it's really only the original show which I can revisit on a regular basis and still enjoy as much as when I first watched its best episodes. From its stirring Alexander Courage score, whose reference in the Jim Carrey movie **The Cable Guy** (1996) was that movie's only decent joke, to its somewhat retro but also sixties look, **Star Trek**, unlike its more calculated successors which came into being precisely because what had once been a cult was now a full fledged movement, was the equivalent of the little show that tried and eventually succeeded resoundingly in terms of its later influences.

(It was also one of the pioneers of a fan base, inside and outside the SF writing community that was militant in fighting for the show's survival, something that is almost commonplace today whenever a fan favourite is in imminent danger of cancellation; though **Star Trek** fared better with its full three season run, compared to other shorter lived SF shows such as **Firefly** (2002-03) and **Jericho** (2006-08).)

Norman Lear's **All in the Family** may have begat **Maude** and **The Jeffersons**, which begat **Good Times**, but **Star Trek**, astonishingly, gave birth to five TV series' in all (including an animated show), twelve movies (and counting), an actual NASA space shuttle called The Enterprise and several key catchphrases, including Spock's Vulcan salutation "Live Long and Prosper," whose hand gestures, interestingly, was appropriated by Nimoy from the Jewish Priestly Blessing given in synagogue by the Kohanim.

Truth is, without **Star Trek** paving the way and setting the template for smart adult SF on TV, nothing of quality that followed, J. Michael Straczynski's **Babylon 5** (1994-98), Joss Whedon's **Firefly**, Ronald D. Moore's re-boot of the 1978 series **Battlestar Galactica** (2004-09), would have been possible. Those shows might have been more sophisticated, intricate and nuanced than Roddenberry's creation, but by going where no SF show had gone before, **Star Trek** was the series that changed TV forever – and for the better.



– **Shlomo Schwartzberg** is a film critic, teacher and arts journalist based in Toronto. He teaches regular film courses at Ryerson University's LIFE Institute and the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre

Sheer* Science: From Water Bears to Wandering Black Holes

(* In memory of Aharon Sheer (7"ט) – Founding Editor)

– Prepared by: Doron Calo**, PhD (**our CC Sheer Science editor ☺)



Water Bears ???

With all the recent talk about humans going to settle on **Mars**, there is one tiny problem that must be considered first: **RADIATION!**

This is actually only one dangerous facet of space travel out of many, but it comes up not only during the flight to Mars, but also when the journey ends and humans actually set up the Mars colony and try to **raise crops**. The plants will need to be exceptionally hardy in all sorts of ways.

However, with respect to radiation, humankind may finally have a solution, thanks to a cute little creature called a **water bear**.

Water bears (they're actually called **tardigrades** – no connection to the Doctor's **TARDIS** as far as I know) are microscopic creatures that look like B-movie monsters when you look at them through a microscope. These little fellas can withstand extreme conditions with ease: conditions such as **extreme dehydration** and **hard radiation**. Some specimens of water bears were exposed to the **vacuum of outer space** and managed to survive! So how do they do it? Better yet, how can they help out the human race in this respect?

The tardigrade **genome** has the answers. When cells are exposed to extreme conditions such as dehydration or X-ray

radiation, the DNA molecule **breaks apart**. DNA is usually a pretty tough structure that can survive long after the host is dead and buried (remember **Jurassic Park** and where they got the DNA from...?).

However, X-ray radiation is bad news even for DNA. Not for water bears, though. They managed to evolve a specialized protein called **Dsup** that actively protects DNA from disintegrating.

That's all very nice for cute water bears, but we're talking about humans colonizing the **solar system** – and here's the connection. When researchers cloned the gene that makes the Dsup protein into **human cells** in a dish, it turned out that the engineered cells could suppress a whopping **40%** of radiation damage.

Obviously no one is going to genetically engineer humans in the near future (not even the Mars colonists), but we may be able to insert the magic gene into crops and turn them into **X-ray-resistant, Mars-friendly** vegetables that can flourish under the harsh conditions on the red planet and sustain the humans that will live there one day. **אשרי המאמין...**

Yet another weird space phenomenon: Wandering black holes



Just a short note to alert you that **wandering, or “rogue” black holes**, are no longer a speculation and were finally proven to exist. I’m talking about black holes that got knocked out of their regular place (usually in the **center of galaxies**) and started wandering the cosmos, leaving a trail of **devastation** behind them. A specific black hole, about **100,000 times** heavier than our Sun, was spotted taking a stroll on the outskirts of a galaxy some **4.5 billion light years** from Earth. That’s quite far, but look out! Astronomers believe that **hundreds** of rogue black holes (much smaller!) roam **our own galaxy** as we speak.

Fans of **Star Trek**, which had its share of black holes if I remember correctly, are probably pleased.

Links:

(Water Bear) Tardigrade protein helps human DNA withstand radiation

<http://www.nature.com/news/tardigrade-protein-helps-human-dna-withstand-radiation-1.20648>

(Black Holes) Astronomers Spot a Massive Black Hole That’s Gone Rogue

<http://gizmodo.com/astronomers-spot-a-massive-black-hole-that-s-gone-rogue-1787450161>

Here's Why Small Black Holes Are More Dangerous Than Big Ones

<http://io9.gizmodo.com/heres-why-small-black-holes-are-more-dangerous-than-big-1681979641>

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

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