



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XXIX, No. 11; November 2017

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

- המועדון בירושלים יעסוק בספר "האם אנדרואידים חולמים על כבשים חשמליות?" מאת פיליפ ק. דיק (כתר, 1995, 2014). המועדון יתקיים ביום שלישי, 21.11 בשעה 20:00 ב"הליטת'ה", בית תה ירושלמי, רחוב הלל 6, ירושלים. מנחה: [שרה מולדובן](#)

- המועדון בת"א יעסוק בספר השני בטריולוגיית "חומרי האפלים": "הסכין המעודן" מאת פיליפ פולמן (כתר, 2004). המשכו של "המצפן הזהוב". המועדון יתקיים ביום חמישי, 23.11, ב19:30 בבית פרטי בת"א, באזור הטיילת וקניון "מגדל האופרה". כתובת מדויקת תינתן לנרשמות ולנרשמים למועדון. מנחה: [דפנה קירש](#)

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

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

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

A quick word from the Editor + This month's roundup:

So, the last few months have been very hectic. The September issue came out real late (mid-month) and I just barely made last month's deadline release of the October CyberCozen issue in early October. In reality, there is no deadline, but I try to get it out at the end of the 'previous' month, or at least within the first day or three of the cover month...

Other than Dr. Calo's "Sheer Science" article, each other installment is a 'pot-luck' presentation (though this month he also didn't manage to get one out). Whatever I manage to scrounge up on cool tech/science news, or anything I can cobble together for articles or reviews (book, TV or movie) – goes in.

On occasion, I get lucky and manage to nail someone down with a guest article – but that's unfortunately rare. On the bright side, the good people at MonSFFA (my new friends ☺ in Montreal), have offered to share and collaborate with articles from their own great publication "Warp".

Still, we'd like to see more activity from current members, and if you know of others who could contribute (and convince them to send something in), that would be great.

Note, that even feedback, comments and criticism (don't be too harsh, though) – would be useful.

My son, Nathaniel – the writer – is convinced I should expand to some sort of Facebook-like mode, or at least a Website (in addition to the PDF publication) – what do you think?

That all having been said, we're very fortunate this issue to have a spanking new, fresh-off-the-shelf, (just published) first-hand review of the newly released sequel to the 1982 *Blade Runner* movie: "*Blade Runner 2049*", by my good friend (and entertainment critic) Shlomo Schwartzberg in Toronto, Canada – taken, with their permission, from the wonderful "Critics at Large" website ([Highly Recommended](#)).

This month's roundup:

- A look at the first season of several new SF TV series
- *Blade Runner 2049* – Special guest movie review by Shlomo Schwartzberg from "Critics at Large"
- Dr. Doron Calo is taking a break from his regular piece in the "Sheer Science" column

And – hopefully next issue, more about my visit at Montreal's comicon.

+ !!! Breaking News (at the very end of this month's issue) !!!

– Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

What's UP? (that is: Up there, in Space):

How Cassini Changed Our Understanding of Saturn and the Solar System

By [Jessica Hall](#) (September 15, 2017)

..., Cassini has reached the end of its mission, and NASA deorbited it into Saturn this morning at about 8AM EDT.

Cassini launched on October 15, 1997, as Cassini-Huygens. Huygens, in this case, refers to the name of the probe's original attached lander. It entered orbit around Saturn on July 1, 2004. Huygens separated on December 25 of that year and landed on Titan on January 14, 2005. To-date, this has been the only successful probe landing in the outer solar system. Huygens was designed for a short-duration mission of about three hours, but Cassini's journey was just beginning.

For the full, fascinating story including pics, videos, and links, see:

<https://www.extremetech.com/extreme/255914-cassini-deorbit-retrospective?>

As an added bonus, someone posted the following link to NASA's own e-book about the Saturn/Cassini mission:

<https://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/resources/7777/>

Breathtaking Pics From Cassini's Journey to Saturn



Cassini went out like a gangsta today; check out these images from its 20-year mission.

By [Evan Dashevsky](#) September 2017

In October 1997, the Cassini mission—a joint project of NASA and the ESA—launched from Cape Canaveral en route to Saturn (with a few "gravity assist" fly-bys of Venus and Jupiter along the way). Cassini officially inserted itself into orbit around Ol' Hula Hoop Face in 2004 and has provided scientists with a steady stream of hot sexy science ever since.

<https://www.pcmag.com/feature/352965/breathtaking-pics-from-cassini-s-journey-to-saturn?>

Scientists Propose Studying Hundreds of Asteroids with Nanoprobe Fleet – ExtremeTech



The solar system is rife with space rocks that never became planets, many of them orbiting between Mars and Jupiter in the asteroid belt. Scientists have been able to examine a few asteroids close up, and the [OSIRIS-REx mission](#) will soon grab a sample from one asteroid and return it to Earth. However, it would take ages to get a full overview of the wide variety of asteroids by visiting one at a time. A team of scientists from the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) has presented a plan to [study dozens of asteroids with a fleet of nanoprobes](#).

For full article, see:

<https://www.extremetech.com/extreme/256113-scientists-propose-studying-hundreds-asteroids-nanoprobe-fleet?>

SpaceX BFR: Fly Anywhere on Earth in Under an Hour

Elon Musk's space company may be focused on going to Mars and the Moon, but on-Earth travel hasn't been forgotten.

By [Matthew Humphries](#) September 2017

Elon Musk believes humans should be able to travel anywhere on Earth in under an hour, and for that trip to cost roughly the same as an economy airline ticket. That's Musk's latest idea for another use of the technology SpaceX is developing for off-world missions.

SpaceX is developing a super-heavy launch vehicle, which Elon Musk refers to as BFR. That's the short version of "Big Fucking Rocket" or "Big Falcon Rocket" depending on who you are talking to. As *The Verge* reports, while sharing SpaceX's revised plans for Moon and Mars travel missions, Musk pointed to BFR as also being useful for travel on Earth.

For full article, see:

<https://www.pcmag.com/news/356520/spacex-bfr-fly-anywhere-on-earth-in-under-an-hour?>

SF TV Series: Past, Present, Future

REVIEWED by Leybl Botwinik

Well, let's start with the hottest new ones... actually, I haven't started seeing them yet. I'm still catching up on some oldies-but-goodies, as well as some more recent ones.

For the record, however, we should list the newest releases and tell you a little about what the networks are saying about them – and hopefully someone will review them for the next issue(s) – when they've developed somewhat (first episode or two is not always a gut marker for how good or bad a series will be – as I'll point out later in this write-up).

Newest releases and what they're about

1) Star Trek Discovery

- I think everyone's excited about this one (I certainly am). Originally went on air in late September, it's already screened 7 episodes in the US (7th was just last night). Not sure if these are stand-alone storylines like in the original series, or an ongoing plotline. Will let you know, **as soon as someone steps up to write it up ☺**.

Meantime, here are some jump-start links. Note that the trailers look really good, and that they seem to display an under-abundance of male testosterone (i.e. there are some good actresses playing, and they seem to be carrying the show):

- o From IMDb: "Ten years before Kirk, Spock and the Enterprise, the USS Discovery discovers new worlds and lifeforms as one Starfleet officer learns to understand all things alien": Trailer at: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5171438/?ref_=nv_sr_1
- o Back in September, CNET had a series of promotional articles introducing the 'upcoming' series. For example: "<https://www.cnet.com/news/star-trek-discovery-cbs-all-access-trailer-sonequa-martin-green/>" Worth reading and it also has a trailer and some good links: <https://www.cnet.com/how-to/star-trek-discovery-how-to-watch-stream-release-date-time-cbs-new-netflix/> & also: <https://www.cnet.com/news/star-trek-discovery-trailer-first-look/>
- o For a sentence or two about the 59 TV shows now running (including the above and many SF and Fantasy ones): <https://www.cnet.com/pictures/2017-tv-shows-sci-fi-fantasy-and-geek-tastic-twin-peaks-legion-star-trek-discovery-defenders/>

2) The Orville (started Sept 10)

- Another one we haven't seen yet (although 7 episodes have already aired), and still on the Star Trek theme, is this spoof of it and the genre (and hopefully more successful than the spoof on the DC comics Super Heroes we told you about in a previous issue). Here's "10 Things to Know About 'The Orville': <http://www.imdb.com/tv/10-things-to-know-about-the-orville/ls020989388/mediaviewer/rm1574775296> and just for (more) fun, 25 TV Sci-Fi Comedies You Might Have Missed: <http://www.imdb.com/tv/tv-sci-fi-comedies/ls020422663/mediaviewer/rm3973196288>

3) Philip K. Dick's Electric Dreams (started Sept 17)

- Nor have we seen this (again, other than the trailer on IMDb: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5711280/>), although it looks really good (6 out of the promised 10 have already been aired). These are all stand-alone episodes based on Dick's stories with a markedly very appealing quote: "The future is still Human": <http://www.vulture.com/2017/10/trailer-amazons-philip-k-dicks-electric-dreams.html?>

More next time....

*** *** ***

And now for our **Special Guest Review** by our sometimes contributor, Shlomo Schwartzberg – with his and the site editor's permission – from the "Critics at Large" website.

From the Editor: The original *Blade Runner* movie came out in 1982 – that's 35 years ago, about the world in 2019 (that's 2 years from now) – a bleak future that doesn't look like it's going to happen (thank God). The new movie takes the 2019 story 30 years into its future to 2049... It must be a parallel world story ☺.

Just for fun (1):

Harrison Ford in *Blade Runner* (1982)

vs.

Harrison Ford in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017):



Just for fun (2):

Harrison Ford in *Star Wars* (1977) vs.

Harrison Ford in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015)



(LB)

Missing the Magic: Blade Runner 2049

Movie review by Shlomo Schwartzberg

The following contains some spoilers for Blade Runner 2049.

Did we really need a sequel to *Blade Runner*, one of the most iconic science fiction films ever made? I never thought we did, even though the original (of which there is much to recommend) still has its share of flaws – a thin storyline, basically revolving around a clichéd police procedural, some lumpy dialogue and a futuristic vision that is out of date, a weakness of most SF movies that have a “**Best Seen Before:**” expiry date. (Its version of 2019, a mere two years away, obviously, won't come to pass.)

However, the 1982 original, once shorn of its utterly unnecessary narration, (and with the mistake on how many replicants there really were finally corrected), remains one of the few SF movies that actually looks like it's set in the future and offers an often magical, poignant and riveting vision, courtesy of director Ridley Scott and screenwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, capturing the essence of Philip K. Dick's enthralling 1968 novel “*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*”.

***Blade Runner 2049* – despite the presence of Scott (producing this time), and Fancher (who co-wrote the movie with Michael Green) – is a complete bust, emotionally flat, repetitive, and tedious and, at nearly three hours, about an hour longer than *Blade Runner*. It's a bloated film that is a tough slog to sit through.**

Set thirty years after *Blade Runner*, it begins with a new model Nexus-9 replicant (android) named K (Ryan Gosling), a Los Angeles based “blade runner” (parlance for cops who hunt down replicants), investigating an older model Nexus-8 replicant, who's been on the run for years, alongside other replicants with open ended life spans. (I'm not sure about that detail. The Nexus-7 replicants in *Blade Runner* were essentially acting out and rebelling as their programmed lives were

coming to an end. But if we take this as gospel, the movie suggests that the new Nexus-8 models were created after the rebellion of the Nexus-7 ones in *Blade Runner*, which strikes me as unlikely since making them long lived is the last thing anyone would do).



K's investigation leads to the revelation of a deceased replicant, who died during childbirth, a revelation that upends the whole meaning of what makes replicants inhuman; if they can conceive, then they need to be thought of in an entirely different way: perhaps as human themselves?

The dead replicant also leads back to Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), the star of *Blade Runner*, who at film's conclusion was revealed as possibly being a replicant himself. (I won't spoil things and tell you whether he is or not, which this film unveils, but I will point out that the ambiguity of Deckard's 'reality' was more interesting when we didn't know for sure one way or another what he actually was.)

In a nutshell, that's the (lame) story, as K tries to track down Deckard and in so doing, finds out things he didn't know about the machinations behind those who create and utilize replicants for their own means and ends – as well as coming to an understanding about himself, just as Deckard did 30 years earlier. Yes, the idea of replicants being able to procreate is a fascinating one but it's a small kernel in a lengthy plotline that mostly limps along and takes its sweet time getting to the (anti-climactic) point.

To my mind, *Blade Runner 2049* is also aping too much of *Blade Runner*'s plotting where Deckard chases after renegade replicants and finds out what's what. (*Blade Runner 2049*'s action sequences are, unlike those in the original, pretty heavy handed and unconvincing.)

As for *Blade Runner 2049*'s look, it's actually been desaturated here, compared to the ravishing original, which was beautifully shot by Jordan Cronenweth. It's the same world, as in *Blade Runner*, hopelessly polluted, perpetually raining, with most of humankind now living off-world (on other planets), though the Asian dimension of that movie has been largely excised – the majority of the inhabitants in *Blade Runner*'s future L.A. were of Asian descent, presumably having chosen not to join the exodus from Earth. But director Denis Villeneuve's vision in *Blade Runner 2049* makes it more akin to *The Matrix* and other grungy dystopian visions and hence less compelling and unique than what was offered on screen in *Blade Runner*. I miss Vangelis' haunting *Blade Runner* score, too; *Blade Runner 2049*'s score (by Hans Zimmer and Benjamin Wallfisch) simply doesn't resonate.

I had hoped, too, that a sequel to *Blade Runner*, would, at least, do something new and go beyond *Blade Runner* by expanding our knowledge of its futuristic world outside of the United States. It doesn't, and its few SF reveals don't go anywhere interesting. For example, apparently all of the world's computer screens were wiped clean in the mid-2020s as the world went dark for ten days. But we don't find out why that happened, why the power came back when it did and how society changed as a result.

With so much permanently lost info, that's something we ought to know. But as is usual in science fiction movies emanating from Hollywood, the SF doesn't go very deep. And what is it with Villeneuve's deadly dull approach to SF? He's a talented filmmaker, as he demonstrated in *Incendies* (2010), but as with *Arrival*, his stagnant 2016 first contact extraterrestrial movie, his overly reverential take on science fiction results in an overly clinical and dry film, the last thing *Blade Runner 2049* should be.



That leaves the acting or what little the actors get to essay. Harrison Ford is adequate in his role, suitably haggard as someone who's been on the run for 30 years. Gosling, however – a replicant who wants to feel human (he even sets up a household with a holographic girlfriend) – really doesn't have much to play, and is reduced to a glum, serious demeanour that makes him seem more human than robot as his police boss (Robin Wright) observes. It's a role that doesn't allow him much range.

The rest of the cast, including talented performers like Wright (*Wonder Woman*), Lennie James

(*Jericho*, *The Walking Dead*) and Israeli Arab actress Hiam Abbass (*The Syrian Bride*, *The Visitor*), are pretty much wasted here, though Jared Leto overacts in his part as the blind (!) inventor of the current model of replicants, having taken over the villainous Tyrell Corp. from *Blade Runner*, after it went bankrupt.

There's also a ridiculous sex scene in the movie, involving K, already done before in Spike Jonze's 2013 movie *Her*, but it's mostly silly because of when it occurs: at a time when it's the last thing K would be considering.

Ultimately, *Blade Runner 2049* doesn't venture into any new territory not already tilled by the original. Its high themes – notably what does it mean to be human? – were already asked and answered in *Blade Runner* so why go over them again, to diminishing effect? The movie's final 'surprise' also hinges on an intuitive deduction made by K that comes out of nowhere. I quizzed several people who had seen the movie and they couldn't figure out where it came from, either, nor does the Wikipedia explanation for this satisfy me in the slightest. The movie obviously has its fans and most film critics seem to like it but at the end of the day, it's really a forgettable, unnecessary affair.

– Shlomo Schwartzberg is a film critic, teacher, and arts journalist based in Toronto. He teaches regular film courses at Toronto's Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, the Prosserman Jewish Community Centre, and Ryerson University's LIFE Institute. He recently completed teaching a six week series in London, Ontario, on "The Provocative and Exciting Cinema of Israel".

From the Editor: For another *Critics at Large* viewpoint on "2049" see:
<http://www.criticsatlarge.ca/2017/10/blade-runner-2049-review.html#more> (LB)

About Critics at Large:

Publishes daily thought-provoking, independent criticism on all aspects of popular culture by an international group of writers. Founded in January 2010 by Kevin Courier, Shlomo Schwartzberg and David Churchill, **Critics at Large** makes it possible for established and emerging critics to practice their crafts outside of the constraints of commercial media. In an era when arts journalism is increasingly driven by careerism and conformity, we appeal to voyeurs of the arts rather than mere consumers.

Their motto [LB: I love this]:

"Never trust the artist. Trust the tale."

The proper function of the critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it."

- D.H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature*.

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

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*** BREAKING NEWS ***

Of all the places ... Saudi Arabia grants citizenship to a robot!

See: <http://www.jerusalemonline.com/news/middle-east/the-arab-world/saudi-arabia-grants-citizen-to-robot-31999?>

And:

<https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/10/26/a-robot-who-once-said-it-would-destroy-humans-just-became-the-first-robot-citizen/23257030/>