

The WSFA Journal

June 2002

The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association ISSN 0894-5411

Edited by Samuel Lubell

lubell@bigfoot.com

The Foodless Kitchen

WSFA Election 2002

Balticon 2002 Review

Error Box

FANZINES

Translated from the
Sign Language

Martial Arts Moviews

Reviewed:

Iron Monkey 1 & 2

The One

Blade II

Review: Diplomatic
Immunity

Treasurer's Report

Reviews of
Spider-Man



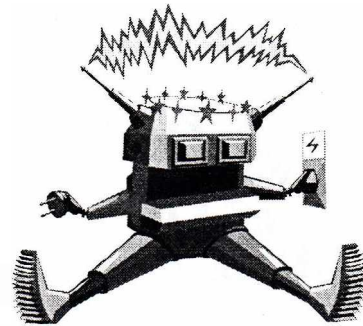
The Foodless Kitchen

The May third First Friday meeting opened with Grand Poobah Sam Pierce saying "Let's have a meeting." "Quiet Please" said Eric (in Hebrew). The meeting opened at 9:15 on the dot. There was no outstanding <or even moderately good> business. Treasurer's report, \$980.12 cents. Lee suggested a small party. Elspeth said we'll have it in October.

Mike said, "Capclave is coming. We'll do a little mailing. We looked at the hotel. It is still there. It has too many sprinkler heads, but what can you do. Sam L for Capclave future said he needs to work with the hotel. Capclave Far Future, "We'll have it even if it has to be in the backyard. Of course Alexis has a veto over that." Alexis said, "Good thing I wasn't paying attention."

Entertainment committee has been busy with their house but did decide "we're not doing the attic." Austerity said to bring food but not to piano. Put it on side table or dining room, not the kitchen table. Someone joked, "You have a kitchen you can't put food in. It must be a diet plan."

Activities committee organized a trip to see new Star Wars movie. George Lucas is premiering it for charity, "For Love of Children" at \$500 a shot. How often do you get a chance to have dinner with George Lucas?" Publications committee needs to develop a policy on what goes up on the web. Currently it is that email addresses are suppressed except when we want them to be public (Capclave.org addresses for instance). Email list is accessible only to WSFAans. Keith said volume is way down on the list. John P. said there should be a policy "no nude pictures of me." Colleen said, "But you're one of the stud muffins of WSFA" Eric said that gave him an idea how to make money fast. Elspeth said, "I'd pay money NOT to look at it."



Sam P. said that we'll do an election afterwards. Anyone can nominate someone. Trustee slate is just so we're sure there will be someone running for each position. Bob said, "If they're not here to defend themselves, you have to have their permission *in writing*."

Sam P has growling Hot Pockets beer. Alexis has books for sale. Lee G. has email of a missing child. New game out called Morrowind by Bethesda Softworks. Colleen announced LoC speakings including Attack of the Clones. Mystery convention. Elspeth's cat recovered from surgery but has another tumor. ConJose will do party floors if enough volunteer. Elspeth is a character in a Mercedes Lackey book <actually she's been one since ML's first book>, Richard is back from Europe with a Polish dictionary. Eric's brother is back from the Middle East. Lee won first prize in local Toastmasters, 2nd prize at division level. Will go to Regional on 18th. Trophy shows up real well on X-ray. TR visiting. Says hello. Arabic was not her forte. Meeting adjourned.

Attendance: VP Sam Pierce, Sec and 2003 chair Sam Lubell, Treas Bob MacIntosh, Trust and 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, Trust Eric Jablow, Trust. Nicki Lynch, 2002 Chair Mike Nelson, Bernard Bell, Sheri Bell, Colleen Cahill, Adrienne Ertman, Cathy Green, Scott Hofmann, Ron Kean, Jim Kling, Bill Lawhorn, Keith Lynch, Richard Lynch, Walter Miles, Kathi Overton, John Pomeranz, Judy and Sam Scheiner, Victoria Smith, Lee Strong, Andrew Williams, Ramona Winkelbaner, Doc Ryl, TR Smith, DR.

WSFA Election 2002

President – Trustees nominated Judy. John nominated Colleen who declined. Judy acclaimed.

VP – Trustees nominated Sam P. John nominated Colleen, no second. Elspeth nominated John P, who declined. Sam P. acclaimed.

Treas: Bob acclaimed

Sec: Sam acclaimed

Trustees: The slate was Scott, Eric, Nicki. Eric nominated Keith Lynch. He accepted. We actually had to hold an election. Nicki, Eric, and Scott were elected.

Balticon 2002 Review

By Keith Lynch

I got to Balticon a new way this year. I walked from my apartment to the Dunn Loring station, rode the Orange Line to L'Enfant Plaza, rode the Green Line to Greenbelt, rode the new B30 bus to BWI, rode the Baltimore Light Rail to the Pratt Street station, and walked the rest of the way. (In retrospect, the Lexington Street station would have been closer, being just two blocks away.) The total time was 3.5 hours. (I left home at 12:15, immediately after getting up, showering shaving, and checking for last minute email, and I got to the hotel at 3:45.) The total cost was \$4.55. MARC, which I rode prior years, costs more than that, not even counting the Metro fare. And MARC leaves me about three miles from the convention hotel. And MARC doesn't run on weekends or holidays.

I had packed the previous night. As usual, I carried just one small bag.

One disadvantage to Metro/B30/Light Rail that no eating or drinking is allowed, and there are no bathroom facilities.

For once, the person working registration didn't ask me for identification. Maybe because I was wearing the BSFS/WSFA name badge that Joe Mayhew had made for me to wear at the Balticon two years ago.

Immediately after getting my con badge, I went to the front desk to pick up the DeepSouthCon Flyers, as I promised Nicki. They weren't there. I checked again that evening, and twice on Saturday, both at the front desk and at the concierge stand. Nobody had seen them. However, they did show up on the flyer rack sometime Saturday or Sunday. I don't know who put them there. I see that Nicki and Richard are the fan guests of honor. The convention is in Huntsville in mid-June, and doubles as FanHistoriCon.

I no longer go to many panels. I can read the same material in less time in Analog and other venues. I go to cons for more interactive events. Mostly just for random conversations. As such, I have fairly low standards. A con that consisted entirely of waiting in line for registration would be enjoyable to me.

I did attempt to go to one panel on Friday, but the host, Charles Sheffield, didn't show up. Someone said he had been seen in the hotel, so I volunteered to go look for him since I know what he looks like. I didn't find him. The next day, he showed up and said he had told Balticon that he would only be available Saturday, and was dismayed to find he had been scheduled for Friday and Sunday events.



I noticed that the hotel's Internet kiosk had been replaced with a piano. Maybe they assume everyone has their own laptop PC these days.

I stayed up overnight on Friday, as I had planned to. I'm on a night schedule, and I didn't think I'd be able to get to sleep before sunrise. Especially since I had been sleeping poorly the past six weeks.

The con suite closed at about 3 am. People continued to hang out at the bottom of the spiral stairs adjacent to the con suite. There were several couches there. The crowd gradually thinned out until there were only three of us left by sunrise. The other two were a pair of teenaged girls. One had been born just two days before the Challenger explosion. The other, who was even younger, hadn't even heard of that disaster.

On Saturday, I spent a few hours manning the Capclave half-table, which doubled as the UK in '05 half-table. More importantly for Capclave, during the whole con I chatted with dozens of people all over the con, many of whom are fairly local but hadn't heard of Capclave, handed them flyers, and directed them to our table.

Exactly what do you mean
when you say you could put
my head to good use, Baron
Frankenstein?



For the past several years, an obscure actor has been selling videos from a table in the long hall (not the dealer room). The only movie he had been in that I had heard of was Plan Nine From Outer Space, in which he plays one of the policemen. That movie is justly famous as the worst ever science fiction movie, with terrible acting, horrible continuity flaws, a ridiculous plot, and utterly abysmal special effects. I had been looking for a copy for years. At each Balticon, I told him I'd buy a copy of that movie if he had it. This Balticon, he recognized me, and said he set aside a VHS copy of the movie just for me. So I bought it and one other Ed Wood film. I look forward to viewing it at my parents' house in a few weeks. (I don't have a VCR.)

Someone noticed something crawling on the wall of the con suite. I took off my glasses and looked at it closely, and identified it as a juvenile male german cockroach.

Most parties each night were on the 3rd floor of the north tower. The Saturday parties on the 3rd floor included NSS, Arisia, and the combined UK in '05 and Capclave party. One party on Saturday night was on the 19th floor. It was promoting a new glossy fanzine called Nth Degree (<http://www.nthzine.com/>). At that party we played Password. It takes at least four players, who try to get each other to name a secret word based on hints. Decades ago it was a game show on TV. Surprisingly, I did much better in the "lightning round" than when given unlimited time.

I noticed that the window of that 19th floor room opened all the way, unlike most windows in the hotel which opened just a crack or not at all. After the party, I got crash space with them, on the floor. I'm fortunate in that I'm perfectly comfortable on the floor, so long as I have enough blankets that I can keep warm enough. I arranged for crash space with them Sunday night too, but they decided to leave the con early, so I had to look elsewhere.

I only played two other games at Balticon. Scrabble and Chrononauts. I came in second out of four at Scrabble, narrowly losing to a two person team.

On Sunday a dealer lost about \$700 when someone (not a Balticon member) reached over her table into her cash box while another person distracted her. One of the culprits was caught, but the cash wasn't recovered. A collection was taken up among the members to reimburse the dealer, and more members were recruited as badge checkers to keep non-members out of the dealer room and other places they don't belong.

On Sunday no sooner had Paul Levinson sat down at the autograph table in the dealer room as scheduled at 5 pm than it was announced that the dealer room was closed for the day. Oops.

There was only one party Sunday night. A video party, "B movies about the A bomb". With about 20 people in a small hotel room, all watching the TV, and loudly giving commentary, it was pretty difficult to hear what was going on. Since the movies were on DVD, I suggested enabling closed caption. It turns out there weren't any closed captions, but there were foreign language subtitles. So Spanish subtitles were turned on, which helped make the movies even more absurd. The only one which sticks in my mind involved giant ants. No, it wasn't "Them," but a more recent film, one I hadn't heard of.

I thought I had arranged for crash space on Sunday night, but when I went to the room at about 3 am, although my key card worked, I found the door latched shut, so I figured the hosts had changed their minds. (It later turned out they simply thought I was already in the room, in a pile of blankets on the floor.) So I spent late Sunday night trading infinite resistor puzzles with Carl Devore and Marc Drexler. After they and everyone else went to bed, I got a couple hours sleep under the table in one of the function rooms.

On Monday I helped tear everything down and pack the truck. The dead dog party didn't start until teardown was finished, at about 9 pm. I had to leave almost immediately if I were to catch the light rail in time to catch the next-to-last B30 bus from BWI. (The last B30 was scheduled to arrive at Greenbelt just ten minutes before the last train was to leave that station, which is cutting it too close.)

When I got to the light rail station and tried to buy a ticket, I discovered the ticket machine didn't accept 20s, and I didn't have anything smaller except the change I needed for the B30 bus. (I hadn't bought a round-trip ticket on Friday, since you can only buy a return fare for the same day.) I was trying to make up my mind what to do when someone pointed out in disgust to their companion that the kiosk said that there was no service after 7 pm on holidays. Monday was of course a holiday.

So I walked back to the hotel. I got crash space on the floor of Hal Haag's room after he and Lisa Goldstein finished playing a very slow board game called Frag, which involved unsuccessfully attempting to kill each other with a succession of more and more lethal and unlikely weapons. The game ended at about 2 am, by which time the dead dog party had wound down.

The room the dead dog party was in contained everything that remained of the con, including numerous rented laptop PCs in boxes. Unfortunately, hotel security couldn't get the door to lock. Bill Squire agreed to spend the remainder of the night in the room, sleeping on a couch pushed against the door.



irregular pavement.

On Tuesday I helped pack up what was in the dead dog room into a car, and then unload both the car and the full-sized truck at the BSFS clubhouse. I put my remaining Capclave flyers on their flyer rack. Lisa also helped unload the truck, even though she's small. She asked about some loud shouting and cursing that was coming from a nearby apartment that she found alarming. I explained to her that that was rap music. They may have been playing it to drown out the noise we were making, wheeling literally tons of stuff down an alley with very

I asked the BSFS members about Joe Mayhew's library, which he had left to WSFA, and WSFA had given to BSFS. Nobody knew anything about it. While small contributions of

books had dribbled in over the years, there definitely hadn't been any donation of several hundred books at once.

Hal Haag then drove Lisa, Bill, and I back to the DC area. Hal dropped me off at the Wheaton Metro station. I saw that I had never been there before, as I would have noticed the unusual layout -- two platforms on the same level, with a wall between them. I got home at about 6 pm, but not before running into my brother on Metro, on his way home from work.

The following Friday I saw downtown Baltimore nuked, in the new Tom Clancy movie. I'm glad the terrorists waited until the con was over.

Error Box

by Lee Strong

March 2066

"Twenty.

"Nineteen.

"Eighteen."

The trouble with having a computer count down is that it left the humans with nothing to do but think of all the ways that something could go wrong.

Keep cool, thought Captain Anderson. *The robot-piloted ship tests worked fine. All we're doing is creating a Thorne-Hawking quantum tunnel ahead of the ship and jumping into it.* He breathed deeply to steady his own nerves without giving his crew any. *The toroid structure of the singularity keeps the tunnel open long enough for us to pass thru and provides a passageway at the same time. The accelerated time phasing smooths out the turbulence. We go from Earth orbit to Mars orbit in one jump. Just like Han Solo except with real scientists and real technicians surveying local spacetime a hundred times, dotting every t and crossing every i. The robot tests worked just fine.* He repeated that mantra to himself as the countdown climaxed. He covertly crossed his fingers... just in case.

"Three.

"Two.

"One.

"Zero. Experimental Hyperjump Six commences now."

The universe changed.

As predicted.

Anderson saw the starfield outside the forward window flicker briefly. There was a sensation, more felt than seen, that a ring of fire rushed past the *Thomas Alva Edison*. The stars changed... very slightly. From a stellar frame of reference, the difference between Earth orbit and Mars orbit was minuscule.

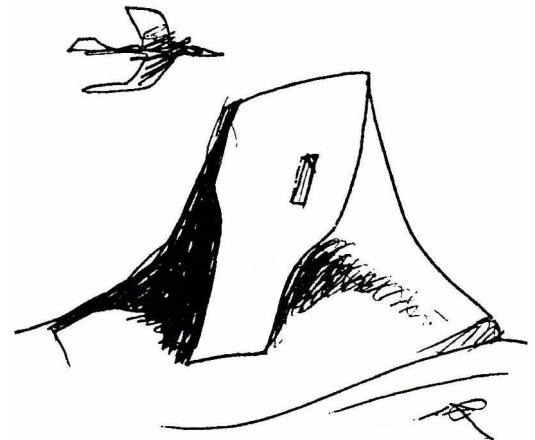
Anderson breathed deeply. He spoke to his crew, the recorders and history. "Very good, people. Look sharp. We appear to have made the first manned hyperjump successfully.

Anyone with unusual physical symptoms, sing out." There were a few seconds of silence.

The captain continued. "Ms. Mueller, what does the radar and lidar show?"

The Swiss navigator spoke excellent English. "We are precisely where theory predicted, captain. We are 100,000 kilometers from the Martian surface trailing the planet in orbit. I can see the planetary surface, Deimos, and Phobos precisely where they should be. I can not see any of the nearer asteroids yet but that's normal." She turned to Anderson and smiled. "The radar and lidar only function at the speed of light. Our signals haven't reached the asteroids yet."

Anderson smiled back but kept his face professional. *Lightspeed is now obsolete!* "As long as we don't run into them. Ms. Los, call Solis Lacus tower, announce our arrival and dump our data



to them. Then do the same for Luna and Earth. And thank everyone for their good work." His fingers covertly uncrossed.

"Aye, keptin." The radio operator frowned. On a Russian, that was a formidable sight. Her hands flew across her workstation control panel. "This is odd. I cannot hear Solis Lacus tower. They are not transmitting. At least, not on the standard band." She turned her head to speak more clearly into her microphone, saying, "Solis Lacus tower, this is Coalition of Nations spazekreft *Tomas Elva Edison*. Kome in, plis."

Anderson frowned. "Ms. Mueller, are we in the predicted position relative to Solis Lacus?"

"Yes, captain. I can see the colony's radar silhouette on the surface precisely where predicted." Now she frowned. "The laser reflections are strange, but the colony appears intact."

Ms. Los's chanting suddenly stopped. She turned a knob and a strange voice filled the small cabin, "Kaor. ¿Ya mo larkod? ¿Mu do Tomas?"

Anderson was the first to speak. "What is that? Does anyone recognize that language? Ms. Los?"

"Nyet, keptin." She turned back to her microphone. "Solis Lacus, spik English, plis." She repeated her request with increasingly force.

The strange voice and Ms. Los went back and forth for several minutes, both gradually rising in volume as tempers eroded professionalism. Finally, another voice at the Martian end cut the first one off. The *Edison's* crew could hear a muffled conversation over the open microphone. Then the new voice began speaking slowly, articulating words carefully.

"Hello, do you understand English?"

Ms. Los snapped, "Aye, Solis Lacus. We understand the language of international spazeflit very well. Wot took you so long to respond?"

There was a distinct pause before the new voice resumed. "I apologize but English is a Ja... an Earth language. Only a few specialists speak it here on Barsoom."

FANZINES

By Ted White

Fanzines are a basic part of science fiction fandom, having been in existence as long as fandom itself - the past 70 years. Fanzines are a reflection of many fans' interest in the printed word and amateur publishing. The publication you are reading this in is a fanzine, but a specialized one. A variety of other fanzines are also available - many of them by request - and this column will cover some of them each issue.

All fanzines are published as a hobby and lose money. Their editors appreciate money to defray their expenses and sometimes list single-copy or subscription prices, but they appreciate even more your written response - a Letter of Comment, or LoC. Feedback - better known in fandom as "egoboo" - is what fanzine publishing is all about.

Check out the fanzine below and broaden your participation in fandom.

SFFF #3, Winter 2001 (Mike McInerney, 83 Shakespeare St., Daly City, CA 94014-1053; available "by all the usual methods" - "but especially welcome are trades [of other fanzines] and L[etters]O[f]C[omment]" - no price listed, but send a buck or two for postage; e-mail to elandem@worldnet.att.net)

If you ever wondered what fanzines were like 30 or 40 years ago, here's an excellent example, somehow time-machined into the present. Mike McInerney wandered into my Greenwich Village mimeo shop one day in 1961 and asked me to help him put out the first issue of his first fanzine. We've been friends ever since. And in that time Mike has published a number of fanzines, but often with long gaps between the issues. The last issue of *SFFF*, for example, came out in 1997.



Little has changed in the way Mike puts out fanzines except for their mode of duplication. Once he cut mimeograph stencils with a typewriter; now he uses a Macintosh Performa 631CD and a copying machine. But the layouts remain simple and functional, and most of the art is either old or timeless. *SFFF* is good example of what I call the "journeyman fanzine." It's not spectacular, but it's solid. Mike isn't a much of a stylist and keeps his own writing to a minimum, but he's put together an interesting fanzine.

The lead article is a gently caustic review of the movie *Dances With Wolves* by Lee Hoffman. (I'm guessing the movie was a lot more current when she wrote the piece.) Lee is one of the Biggest Name Fans in fandom, but she's also the author of a number of award-winning western novels (as well as several SF novels), including *The Valdez Horses*, which was made into a movie. In "Dances With Wolves In Sheep's Clothing" she concludes that "switching around the Good-Guy and Bad-Guy labels hardly seems like such a wonderful development in social progress."

The letter column, running six pages, comes next and supplies the fanzine's centerpiece.

It is followed by Steve Stiles' report on the 1962 Chicago Worldcon, reprinted (complete with Steve's contemporary illustrations) from Mike's *HKLPLD* #4 (summer, 1963). Here, most of all, the sense of Fanzines Past is palpable because this is a xeroxed copy of the original 1963 fanzine piece and in it Stiles captures very well the feeling of fandom and the Worldcons of that era. Both the piece and the art are youthful Stiles; in the ensuing 40 years Steve has developed a unique style and has been published in *Heavy Metal*, *Stardate* and a number of comics and is one of the best artists in fandom.

The piece gave McInerney a good excuse to run a page of photos from the 1962 Worldcon as the fanzine's back cover. Stiles can be seen in three of the six photos.

SFFF runs only 22 pages - two articles, letters and some editorial nattering - and is pleasantly unpretentious. Check it out.

Translated from the Sign Language

For the WSFA third Friday meeting 5/17 Sam P banged the gavel even though Judy was here (with no voice)

"You could do sign language and translate" said Madeleine.

Meeting called to order at 9:18.

At the last meeting we elected a bunch of experienced not old officers. No treasurer so we'll assume we have some money. "If he went to Acapulco on our money, he's swimming now", said Colleen.

Lee for the activities committee said the club is doing Star Wars tomorrow night, meet at Skyline at 9. Show starts at 9:15. "We'll have lots of fun and make lots of nasty comments. Someone called back from WETA asked if want to do phonathon weekend after Balticon. Need at least five people. Lots of fun. Last time I got a obscene phone call. We'll circulate it."

Sam P. said "Last time we met for dinner first and then went to the studio. And then went for drinks afterwards, that's why I couldn't remember anything." Major impact to the fact...

Lee said, "We'll have a choice of shows, last time we had the leavings." Cathy said, "I thought faith healing of pets had potential."

Lee said, "They'll get me a list of shows." Sam P. said, "It's two weeks away." Lee said, "I'm not running the thing."

Eric warned, "Just watch out for falling chads."

Alexis for the entertainment committee said, "Arafat said, if mistakes we made, he's to blame. Bush surprised that Jimmy Carter spoke in Cuba, 'I didn't know he spoke Cuban.'"

Erica will auction off a dvd of Batman and Robin.



World fantasy will have a remote guest of honor, Jack Williamson, Will be the 75th anniversary of his first short story. The master of Ceremonies will be Doug Winter. He's written on the genre including books on King and Barker. Quick, clever and cheap transportation. But he's a lawyer specializing in aviation disasters. Sam P said, "So he's an airplane chaser." Mike added that there may be more guests as we move around.

Elspeth said, "World Fantasy committee members will do a hotel walkthrough on Sunday. Crawling

around measuring things."

For Capclave present Elspeth said, "I've been talking w hotel about getting an additional room for the dealers. We're pinning down the dates for next year, it looks like we'll get Sam's preferred date." Sam, said this was three weeks out of Worldcon. Elspeth said, "Better too close to worldcon than too close to World fantasy."

Lee. Said, "I'm thinking about having everyone paint themselves green." Eric warned, "It's not easy being green."

Sam said that the Publications committee likes to thank Keith for putting up some 95 and 96 journals. Keith said, "I put up ten more since last meeting. I won't be able to keep up that pace since I got these on disc. If anyone sees problems, let me know."

Lee suggested that, "Since many people don't think about viewing the WSFA page, could the Journal have updates as to what is new on there."

A discussion about how to put a search engine on the pictures took place, too quickly to be fully chronicled.

Mike said, "The SMOFs list was discussing why there was two people with the same name for one of the pictures."

Lee said, "We have sponsors for the web page. Do we have a list of people? Could the publications committee do that?" That raised the issue of who is doing the website payment?

Alexis said, "We got a bill for \$25 so we just paid it." Sam P said, "It should be the treasurer." Alexis said, "So we'll pass it along to the treasurer."

Sam P. said that the Publications committee will pass a list around

Old business. Erica will host a Fifth Friday observed, on Sat June 1st at 4 o'clock until we drown you in a hot tub. Anyone who comes earlier will encounter a child's birthday party.

New Business. None.

Announcements. LoC will be having a speaker on May 30th, R.A. Salvatore (sp). Colleen had to sign an disclosure form and they sent her four copies. June 28th will have the author James Garney of Dinotopia (12:10pm at Pickford Theater, 3rd Floor, Madison Building, Library of Congress), July 16th China Mieville (12:10pm, Dining Room A, 6th Floor, Madison Building, Library of Congress). All thanks to connections through publishers.

Barry has a bag of books. Lee said Smithsonian has exhibit of Dinotopia. It is wonderful. My son took me to a rave for mothers day, I loved it. Eric, May 30th 2002 Free for All picnic. Play is Two Gentlemen of Vernoia Beach, NJ. <Hello Sopranos> The Don is the Don.

Elsbeth took cat to vet. Had surgery again. Cone of obedience. Abner and Sara Mintz introduced themselves as being in MD meeting for a while. Old Earth books has a shopping cart on website and got an order. Cat Meier is a college grad and her mother is here. Looking for a job. Eric suggested renting herself out as a HOV companion. Jim has been signed to a record label called Dilou Records.

New people. Aly Parsons here and Marlin Pierce.

Meeting unanimously adjourned 9:42

Attendance: Pres. Judy Kindell, VP Sam Pierce, Sec and 2003 Chair Samuel Lubell, Trustee Scott Hoffman, Trustee Eric Jablow, Trust. Nicki Lynch, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, Sheri Bell, Colleen Cahill, Adrienne Ertman, Carolyn Frank, Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Bill Jensen, Elspeth Kovar, Keith Lynch, Richard Lynch, Walter Miles, George Shaner, Steven Smith, Michael Taylor, James Uba, Michael Walsh, Madeleine Yeh, Sara and Abner Mintz, Mike Bariman, Cat Meier, Paul and Aly Parsons, Marlin Pierce.

Martial Arts Movies Reviewed

By "Bruce" Lee Strong (Well, that's what they'd call him in Australia)

Iron Monkey

Chinese language version © 2001; English language version © 2002

Now this is a Asian martial arts film done right!

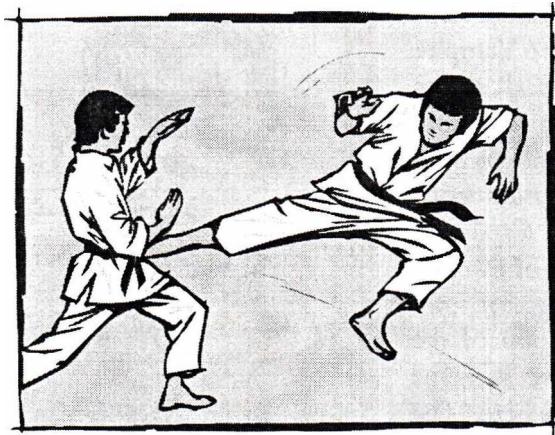
The story is set in 1858 when China was undergoing a major civil war (curiously not mentioned in the translation) and drought. Evil officials prey on the helpless, enriching themselves by stealing food sent to relieve the hunger. A Zorro-like figure, the Iron Monkey, steals from the corrupt governor

and distributes his money to the poor. Unable to capture the outlaw, the governor traps a wandering scholar-monk into hunting him down just as the even more evil Royal Minister arrives in town. The whole thing is skillful kung fu martial arts fun, including the little known techniques of the ugly virgin and the flying umbrella.

While the primary appeal of this Chinese Robin Hood story is blazing martial arts action, other storytelling virtues are not neglected. All the major characters have some good character development, some fairly obvious, some subtle. The emotional relationships are deep and sincere, and more so than Zorro or Hood attempted. The plot is not very complex, but who cares? The evil governor takes it in the shorts and the other bad guys get burned. Grittier and less lyrical than *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, but even more satisfying because of that.

I rate *Iron Monkey* ★★½ on the five star scale, equivalent to a "C÷" on the high school A-F scale.

KARATE



Iron Monkey 2

English language version © 2002

This "semi-sequel" is a painful attempt to cash in on the success of the first *Iron Monkey*. While not without some virtues, it is best avoided.

This effort is set during the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. A poverty stricken brother and sister dupe a naive but skillful martial artist into assuming the identity of the legendary Iron Monkey so they can scam money. Unknown to them, another martial artist has assumed the role in order to fight an arms merchant supplying the invaders. Eventually, the two Monkeys get together and make a monkey out of the arms dealer.

Despite the promising concept, this is merely a generic Hong Kong chop-sockey martial arts action movie combining minimal plot and character development with the justly infamous unsynchronized lip movements. The sets and costumes are badly done, and lack the "feel" of the 1930s. The movie does include some positive patriotic themes and plotting, but, overall, it's merely tiring. In the end, I felt that the filmmakers had made a monkey out of me.

I rate *Iron Monkey 2* ★½ on the five star scale, equivalent to a "D-".

The One (2001)

Ah! More martial arts madness! But this time it's encapsulated in a neat little science fiction story.

This movie starts straightforwardly enough with a narrator declaring a multiverse of universes, many inhabited by multiple versions of individual people and patrolled by multiversal cops. Said cops arrest an assassin in an alternate Los Angeles for the 123 counts of killing his transdimensional counterparts. However, he escapes via quantum tunnel into our universe where he attempts to finish the job by killing his last counterpart, thereby making himself ghod. The story then settles down to some really nifty martial arts chase and battle sequences in which the hero finds that he is truly struggling with himself.

As a fan of both alternate universes and martial arts, I naturally enjoyed this uncomplicated story. The science fiction was well done and created an imaginative story of a man killing himself for fun and profit. The martial arts sequences were suitably spectacular. And the human interests of love and friendship were not neglected. Yet the parts blended smoothly together to form a cohesive whole with enough emotional depth to satisfy the keenest mind.

I rate *The One* ★ ★ ★ on the five star scale, equivalent to a solid "C".

Blade II

The waitress at the restaurant adjacent to the theater knew my tastes and asked what movie I was planning to see. "Blade II: I like seeing vampires getting killed." She hasn't spoken to me since.

And there's plenty of undead bodies in this cyberpunk thrill ride. Blade is a half-human, half-vampire "Daywalker" who has all the vampire powers without any of their liabilities. He and his allies hunt the bloodsuckers down relentlessly until the Overlord of the Vampire Nation sends a couple of ninja vamps to request an alliance. It seems that a genetic experiment has resulted in a new super-vampire Reaper that preys on vamps, and both human and vamp must unite to stop the new menace. The Overlord gives Blade control of a Bloodpack fire team of vamp special forces that were training to hunt *him* down, and the emotional relationships are pure poison. The bulk of the film is a cyberpunk bughunt with multiple betrayals to liven things up.

Being anti-vampire, I naturally enjoyed the depiction of the vamps and their servants as goths and lawyers. There is some character development but not a lot since action is the thing here. The Blade universe vamps disintegrate much as the Buffyverse ones do. The Reapers remind me more than a little of the Aliens from Warrant Officer Ripley's universe, so I score the film weak on originality. But, hey!, you get to see vampires killed and life is good.

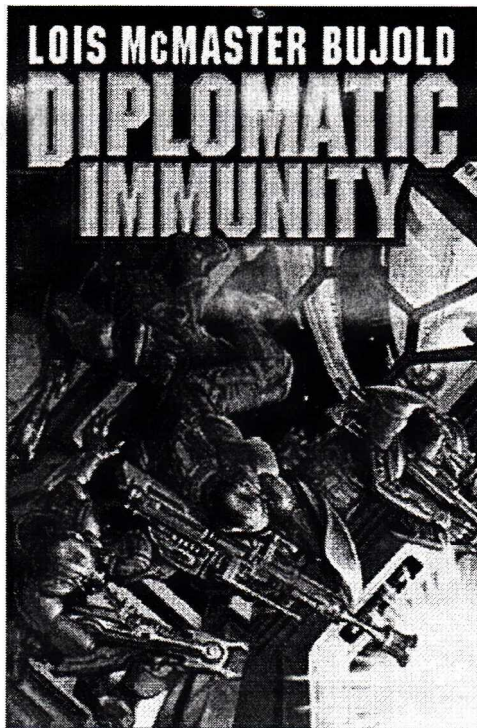
I rate *Blade II* ★ ★ ½ on the five star scale, equivalent to a "C-" on the high school A-F scale.

Note: the e-mail that suggested how to change HTML to plain text is at <http://www.wsfa.org/list/htmlbegone.htm>



Diplomatic Immunity by Lois McMaster Bujold Reviewed by Samuel Lubell

Bujold has won four Hugos for books and stories in the Miles Vorkosigan saga. This is understandable because the books combine frantic plots (especially *Brothers in Arms*), interesting characterization especially of Miles, and fairly transparent prose. The series gradually evolved from military science fiction to something much more. Her previous book *A Civil Campaign* was especially interesting in its focus on romance and politics rather than action-adventure without even the mystery elements that had provided the structure for *Memory*, *Komarr* and even *Cetaganda*. In that evolution, sad to say *Diplomatic Immunity* seems a major step backward. It's simply not as deep nor as good as the series has been since *Mirror Dance* nor is it as much fun as some of the others. It reads like yet another Miles



adventure, nothing special. That said, I do need to confess finishing the book within four hours of acquiring it at the library.

In *Diplomatic Immunity*, Miles is himself but most of his supporting cast isn't present (neither Ivan the Idiot nor Gregor the emperor appear and the book is weaker for their absence). His new wife is present but has only a minor role. Also along for the ride is an old friend from Miles' mercenary days. Also missing is much of the introspection and character growth that has made this series more than just typical space adventure.

Basically the book is a detective story. Miles is sent to unravel a complex series of events involving a conflict between soldiers from his planet of Barrayar and security forces on a Quaddie space station. The Quaddies are genetically engineered to have four arms and no legs so many Barrayarans consider them mutants and so are prejudiced against them – a prejudice all too familiar to the dwarf-sized Miles. The plot is basically Miles discovering what is really going on (which is not what it

seems) and convincing the space station's authorities that he's right. Unlike most of the other volumes that's it.

The other problem is that Bujold tries to drag in references to past books, that will confuse those who don't follow this series closely. Fans of Miles and Bujold have doubtlessly already picked this up. For everyone else, this is not the place to start. *Barrayar* works well as a one-book introduction or pick up the collection *Borders of Infinity*. Or among Bujold's later works *Komarr* is a good place to start.

Treasurer's Report By Bob Macintosh

Well, the balance is now \$349.12. To get there, we did the following: Acquired dues from Sam Pierce, Chuck Devine, Chris Damrosch, Cat Meier, Bill Squires, Ron Taylor, Covert Beach, Walter Miles, and Ramona Winklebauer (\$90.00), a contribution of \$120.00, and received book revenue of \$38.00. Expensed WSFA First Fridays for Feb, March, April & May (\$100), WSFA Journals (\$132.31), and one insurance policy renewal (\$651.00). This covers from February to May.

Capclave 2001 is extinct, its checking account closed, and moneys transferred to Capclave 2002. A residual amount slipped into WSFA's account in the amount of \$112.37 to balance everything out.

Review of Spider-Man by Candy Madigan

I LOVED it!

Except for the fact that the role of Gwen Stacy was played by Mary Jane Watson, and they can't kill her off, it was perfect. I figure they did that on purpose for the people who had never heard of Spider-Man until long after Gwen's death.

They did a beautiful job of making the characters in the movie look like the characters in the comic book. You looked at Robbie Robinson and *knew* he was Robbie Robinson, you didn't have to be told. You looked at Aunt May and Uncle Ben and they **looked** like Aunt May and Uncle Ben. MJ's features were perfect! The width of her face and her dimples were **just** right. It was amazing! I suspect that the actress isn't a natural redhead, but phooey! Who cares? That's what hair dye is for.

The spider that bit Peter was genetically modified to have all the traits of all the spiders, so that explained how he was bitten by one spider and 'can do whatever a spider can', and instead of web shooters, the web was something that he produces himself. (I guess that was to avoid having to explain how a HS student could be that much of a chemistry wiz.)

I don't remember the issue in which Norman Osborne became the Green Goblin, so although I know he did it to himself, I'm not sure of the accuracy of that scene.

The scene where he's holding MJ (Gwen) and the cable car and telling Peter to choose was straight from the comic. The only difference was that in the comic Gwen died and in the movie Peter saved MJ. Then he hunted Gobby down and sure enough, the Goblin was killed by his own glider **exactly** like I remember it. It was neat watching that scene and knowing just what was coming.

And at the end where Peter and MJ kiss and he tells her that all he can be is a friend, when he walks away and MJ put her hand up to her lips in startlement, it was clear that she'd just realized that Peter and Spidey are the same person.

I can barely wait for the sequel. Any bets that it will be the Lizard that's the new villain?

Review of Spider-Man by Lee Strong

Scott is right. This is a good movie... one of the best.

Peter Parker is your average 98 pound weakling science whiz who's pushed around by everyone except the girl of his dreams. (Nothing for sf fans to identify with here!) An accident in a genetic engineering lab empowers him with the proportionate abilities of a superhuman spider. At first, he's bemused by his new powers and the scenes where he has to learn their use are some of the best. But, just as he's decided on a career as a professional stunt wrestler, dual tragedies strike, awakening him to his destiny as a crime fighter. Will Spider-Man beat the Green Goblin? Will he get a job, a girl and a life? Stay tuned for the first exciting episode to a modern legend brought to the Big Screen!

This is an exciting film that combines flashy action and witticisms with solid emotions and serious thoughts about the responsibilities of power. Not bad for a comic book brought to life! As a setting, New York City is more compelling than Gotham City, and the characters more vivid. The actors turn in solid performances in their roles, and there are many nice touches in the storytelling. I particularly liked Peter coming down to breakfast once his powers kick in, and his first, less than inspiring costume. Flash and dash dominates the latter half of this epic, but never obscures the fundamental humanity of "the Human Spider."

A couple of sidebar comments here. I couldn't help comparing Spider-Man with the 1989 Burton Batman. This is inevitable since both films undertake the re-creation of similarly motivated classic comic heroes for the modern audience. Spider-Man takes some unnecessary riffs at its rival, which is a shame, because it succeeds without them. Struggling Peter Parker is more appealing than the remote Bruce Wayne without any cheap shots. On the other hand, those stories about the aborted World Trade Center ending are true. The original ending had our hero creating a giant spider web between the Towers, but that was redone to avoid offending the real world victims of real world super villains.

This marvel should appeal to veteran fans and newcomers alike. I rate Spider-Man as ★★ ★★ on the Five Star scale.