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BCSFAzine is the club newsletter published by the West Coast Science Fiction Association (A Registered Society) *W.C.S.F.A. is also known as B.C.S.F.A. which is the social branch of the organization.*

For comments, subscriptions suggestions, and/or submissions, write to:
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BCSFAzine is also available as a full colour Adobe Acrobat file.

WCSFAACTIVITIES

F.R.E.D. - Every Friday

The weekly gathering of BCSFAn's and all others interested in joining us for an evening of conversation and relaxation, with pool table option. At the Burrard Motor Inn opposite St. Paul's Hospital (Downtown Vancouver) 6 blocks south of Burrard Skytrain Station. 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). #22 Knight/McDonald bus along Burrard. Begins 8:00pm. On the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

Contributor's Deadline - July 16, August 20, September 17th, October 15th, November 19th, December 17th. Send your submissions/loc to John Wong at 2041 East 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5N 1X9 or E-Mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca.

BCSFAzine Collation - July 4th, August 1st, September 5th, October 3rd, November 7th, December 5th. First Sunday of the month 4:30PM. Call Steve Forty (S.40) to confirm at 936-4754.

BCSFAzine Pickup at FRED - July 30th, September 3rd, October 1st. Last Friday of every month Pick up your issue of BCSFAzine at FRED! Pristine, mint condition copies are available at FRED. Call Steve to let him know you wish to pick up your copy.

Discount Movie Nights.

\$2.00 Tuesdays are back! When? The second Tuesday of the month (July 13th) at 6:30 pm. The place being New West Cinema at #229 - 555 Sixth Street, New Westminster. Meet in front of the Box Office at the above time and we'll decide on which movie, where to do coffee and in which order.

Saturday July 10th 7 pm. **FREFF** Shanghai Paramount - 2550 Kingsway, Vancouver. Once again, I'm scheduling a Saturday FREFF because somebody wants one.

Saturday July 17th 1 pm. **WCSFA General Meeting** at 1 pm. Firehall Branch Library. 1455 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver. (Tenth and Granville). Phone Doug Finnerty (526-5621) for more information. Parking is available under library.

Tuesday July 20th at 7pm. **Night of the Writer Roasties.** Annapurna 1812 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver. The book being Bloodsport by Lisa Smedman. Secure your copy now.

Monday July 26th at 7 pm. **FREFF** Gain Wah 218 Keefer Street, Vancouver. Located on the edge of Vancouver's historic Chinatown.

August - **WCSFA Annual BBQ/Picnic/Beach Party.** Do you have a suggestion on where we can get together on the third Saturday of August? Let us know!

Saturday September 18th.

7.00 pm **WCSFA**

nual General Meeting and Elections. Special Time and Place. Misty's Billiards. 341 B. North Road, Coquitlam, B.C. Three blocks south of Lougheed Mall bus loop. Be there to elect the new executive for the new Millennium! Pick a President, Vice-President, Information Officer, Treasurer, Secretary, and three Members at Large. Choose wisely.

September - **WCSFA Open House and General Meeting.** A few local authors will be reading from their works at the Central Branch library to help promote **WCSFA** and the Vancouver Public Library. Keep an eye here for opportunities to volunteer and help out the club!

October 31st - UBC Science Fiction Society Annual Food Bank Trick or Treat. **WCSFA** is proud to join the UBCSFS in this charity event.

Note from the President

I recently heard several club members lament that this club "no longer puts on house parties". And so I would like to thank Doe Poirier and Les Shewchuk for graciously hosting one such house party last June 12, and to thank R. Graeme Cameron for providing the evening's entertainment. I really wish I could have been there, because I suspect that a good time was had by all who attended.

So yes, this club still puts on house parties. We would gladly schedule house parties on a monthly basis if only people were able and willing to volunteer their dwellings. In true WCSFA fashion, plenty of folks have stepped forward to volunteer places that belong to other people. Plenty of folks have also suggested that it is up to me (as President) to start badgering certain people into volunteering their homes for parties. Well I refuse to use the telephone for that vile purpose. I'll use this column instead.

The truth is that while it appears that this club has events scheduled well into October, there is still plenty of room on the social calendar for a few house parties. After all, there is no rule saying that all club events must be held on the third Saturday of every month. Nor is there any reason why summer barbecues cannot be held on Sundays. So if you are interested in hosting a future WCSFA event, feel free to contact anyone on the WCSFA executive with the details.

Keep an eye out here for future official **WCSFA** sponsored events.

Surf Us Out!

WCSFA-On Line at:

<http://spellbinder.bc.ca/bcsfa>

Check out our web site for all the information you need to be a local fan.

- Convention Listings • Ask Mr. Science
- SF TV Listings • VCON Web Pages
- Internet Links • Store Listings

Special Thanks to Alan Barclay for the Web Space

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

Sunday, July 18th, 1999 **Vancouver**

Comicon 11 AM to 5 PM Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC.

Special Guest: Jim Mahfood, artist of Clerks: The Comic Book, Grrl Scouts, Generation X: Underground, Oni Double Feature, Clerks Holiday Special, Zombie Kid.

Admission: \$2.00 per person.

Dealers Tables: \$40 per centre table/\$45 per wall table. Free autographs, giveaways, and hourly door prizes. Buy, sell, and trade comic books, action figures, sport, non-sport, and gaming cards, and other collectables. For information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com http://users.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html

Sunday, July 25th, 1999 **Toy, Model & Collectables Show**

11 AM to 4 PM Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Buy, sell, and trade character toys, action figures, Beanie Babies, toy cars, Star Wars, model kits, trading cards, comic books, Barbies, games, and more! Admission: \$2.00 (\$1.00 for kids under 14) Dealers' tables: \$35

For information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com http://users.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html

Dragonflight August 27-29, 1999

P.O. Box 776, Seattle, WA 98111-0776 Dragonflight is an annual gaming conventions held at the Seattle University. Gamers gather to join in the friendship and the many games offered. The games played include play role-playing, miniatures, board games, card games, and networked computer games. The Dragonflight convention is held at the Seattle University. For more information on Seattle University visit their site at  <http://www.seattleu.edu/> Registration for DragonflightG- is \$31.00 through July 31, 1999. This includes, entry into the conventions for all three days.

Mail membership to Dragonflight 1999, PO Box 776, Seattle, WA 98111-0776, USA with your check.

MosCon XXI 10-12 September 1999

Where: University Inn, Moscow, Idaho Why: Because we're coming of age...

Guests of Honor: James P. Hogan and Tara Harper

Fan Guests: Dan and Theresa Fears

Artist Guest: TBD

Scientist Guest: TBD

Remember to RSVP for Mark's PARTY!

Incon October 16-17-18, 1999

Spokane Valley Red Lion, I-90 and Sullivan Road

Author Guest of Honor - Charles De Lint

Margret Organ-Kean - Artist GoH

24-hour gaming, including Magic, RPGs, miniature wargaming, Vampire LRP

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\$20 until Sept. 1, 1999

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For reservations call:

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or contact:

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Other enquiries;

incongames@yahoo.com

Terracon II, October 29-31 1999

Best Western Executive Inn, Fife, WA

Author Guest of Honor:

Dave Duncan

Media Guest of Honor: TBA

Special Media Guest:

Chris McDonell

Toastmaster: David Tackett

Registration: \$20 through 10/15/99

\$30 at door

OryCon 21 November 12-14, 1999

Columbia River DoubleTree Inn, Portland, Oregon. OryCon 21 will be a weaponless convention. Smoking allowed in designated areas only

Artist Guest of Honor:

Nene Thomas

Writer Guest of Honor:

Nicola Griffith

Editor Guests of Honor:

Warren Lapine

Science Guest of Honor:

Angela Kessler Charles

It's time to start preparing once again for Oregon's premiere Science Fiction and Fantasy event, OryCon! Now in its twenty-first year, OryCon will feature programming, workshops, an art show, a dealer's room, filking, dances, gaming, the Susan Petrey Scholarship auction, and more!

For more information:

OryCon 21

PO Box 5703

Portland, OR 97228-5703

E-mail: saxon@agora.rdrop.com

Telephone: (503) 232-6506

Viking Con 17 August 18-20, 2000

Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington. Viking Union 202 Box V-1 Bellingham, WA 98225

Science Guest Of Honour

Freeman Dyson

Author Guest Of Honour

Larry Niven

Art Guest Of Honour

Julia Lacquement

Special Guest Of Honour

George Dyson

Fan Guest Of Honour

Paul Carpentier

Julie McGalliard

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(Special rate for our Canadian friends.

\$20 CAN) until 12/31/1999



BCSFAZINE

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It is easy to change your subscription to this format. Go to the Adobe web site and download the free Acrobat Reader for you computer's operating system. (Make sure you get version 3 or higher).

Then e-mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca and let me know that you want to switch your subscription over. You will then receive the next zine in your e-mail.

A sample copy of the Acrobat BCSFAzine is available on our website.

 <http://spellbinder.bc.ca/bcsfa> 



By Palle Hoffstein

Firstly, now that we've all seen **The Phantom Menace** it's time to start talking about **Episode II!** **George Lucas** has written the screenplay will direct again, claiming that he feels none of the exhaustion that befell him after Star Wars and forced him to not direct ESB (*The Empire Strikes Back*) and ROTJ (*Return of the Jedi*). Primary shooting will take place in Fox Sydney Studios in Australia but producer **Rick McCallum** has said that there are no plans to shoot any outdoor scenes there. Tunisia will again be used as Tatooine. New Zealand has been scouted heavily by Lucas but there is no word on whether there will be any shooting there.* Production to begin in June 2000. **John Williams** has announced that he has been asked to score the next two prequils.

Natalie Portman (Queen Amidala) will be back for Episode II, as will **Ewan McGregor** (Obi-Wan Kenobi) and **Sameul L. Jackson** (Jedi Master Mace Windu). **Anthony Daniels** is returning in the role of C-3PO. **Ray Park** (Darth Maul) is rumoured to be back, but just as a fight choreographer. Who will play Anakin? No one knows but rumours have included such bizarre prospects as **Rick Shroeder** and **Leonardo DeCaprio** (Titanic), both now pretty much debunked. **Ryan Philippe** (Cruel Intentions, I Know What You Did Last Summer) and **Joshua Jackson** (Apt Pupil, Cruel Intentions) are the latest hot rumours for the role. Lucas and McCallum insist that casting won't begin until this autumn.

Lucas has stated that Episode II will be more romantic than Episode I and darker. Episode III is said to be very dark (naturally). The current plan is for Episode II to cover the Clone Wars and the beginning of the fall of Anakin Skywalker. Skywalker's wife will be 24 years old and Anakin will return to Tatooine as a fully-fledged Jedi. Obi Wan will be the central hero of Episode II and watch for Jedi Master Mace Wandu to have a more significant role. Boba Fett's race, the Mandalorians will be featured in Episode 2, and Boba Fett and the Millenium Falcon will appear. There are currently no plans to bring back the Gunguns or Jar Jar (yay!). Word is the action will take place mostly on Tatooine, Corellia, Alderaan and Coruscant.

The most consistent rumour about the Clone Wars is that they are started by Palpatine as a measure against the Jedis. The rumour of there being two Obi Wans (one a clone turned to the dark side) has floated around for a couple of years now.

Lucas has stated that Episode II will be the first movie ever made to be shot entirely digitally (no film). It's no suprise that Lucas would be first to do this. Amazingly enough, film stock is so expensive that this should lower the film's budget considerably. As it is, the estimated budget is \$150 million with 3,500 estimated special effects shots (Episode I had 2000 fx shots). Filming in digital will apparently drop the budget to \$125 million. Lucasfilm has entered an agreement with Sony Corporation and Panavision to develop this technology. Parts of Episode I were shot with Sony's HDC-750 high definition camera (in the 1920x1035/60i format) and Lucas was happy with the results.

I'm still not sure why Episode I is called "The Phantom Menace". Rumours for the name of Episode II have include "Rise of

the Empire" and "Despair of the Jedi". More recently the names "The Ruthless Empire" and "A Bright Darkness" have come up. "A Bright Darkness" is the most Lucas-sy-sounding of them to me. Release Date: Spring, 2002.

As for Episode III: **James Earl Jones** has confirmed that he has signed up to again provide the voice of Vader/Anakin. He has claimed that his voice will be used only at the end of the Episode, when Anakin, who has slowly been replacing his body with cyborg parts, dons his familiar helmet.

** I have visions of George Lucas' Jedis battling Peter Jackson's Goblins in woods of South Island.*

It's the end of the century and Satan is looking for a bride. Where? New York City, of course! And **Arnold Schwarzenegger** (The Terminator) is the ex-cop who's gonna stop him. **End Of Days** is due to be released November 24, 1999, also starring **Rod Steiger** (In The Heat Of The Night, Dr. Zhivago), **Robin Tunney** (The Craft) and **Gabriel Byrne** (The Usual Suspects, Dead Man) as the Devil. **Armyan Bernstein** (Air Force One) is producing, **Peter Hyams** (Capricorn One, 2010) is directing, the screenplay is by **Andrew Marlowe** (Air Force One) and **Stan Winston** (Terminator II, Jurassic Park) is behind the special effects. Budget: \$100 million. Note: this production is on it's third director because of "disagreements" with Arnie, and rumours have them already over their initial budget.

The Devil also figures large in **Lost Souls**, a horror film due this October 8, starring **Winona Ryder** (Dracula, Edward Scissorhands), **Ben Chaplin** (Remains Of The Day) and **John Hurt** (Alien, Dead Man). This will be a directorial debut from famed cinematographer **Janusz Kaminski** (Schindler's List, Saving Private Ryan).

Gabriel Byrne will make another supernatural appearance in **Toby's Story**, a ghost story being put together by MGM, due for release sometime in late 1999. **Patricia Arquette** (Ed Wood, True Romance) and the amazing **Jonathan Pryce** (Brazil) will co-star.

Another ghost story in the works is Dreamwork's **What Lies Beneath**. A murder mystery/ghost story based on a story treatment by **Steven Spielberg**, this movie has signed **Harrison Ford** and **Michelle Pfeiffer** in the leads and will be directed by **Robert Zemeckis** (Contact, Forrest Gump, Romancing The Stone). Production has yet to start but there is already an announced release date of May 26, 2000. Two of Hollywood's biggest stars and one of Hollywood's best-know directors on a Spielberg project; expect this to make lots of \$\$\$.

I have been waiting so long for another SF film from **Ridley Scott** (Aliens, Blade Runner). The last SF project that I heard he had doing was an adaptation of writer **Richard Martheson's** masterpiece **I Am Legend**. Arnold Schwarzenegger was to star (a horrible choice you'll agree if you know the book) and the budget was to be around \$120 million. With Arnie doing **End Of Days** instead, Warner Brother seems to have lost interest. Last news on the production was a scaled down budget of \$70 million, **Kurt Russel** (The Thing, Big Trouble In Little China) in the lead (a much better choice)

and **Rob Bowman** (The X-Files movie) directing. There is no word if Ridley Scott is still involved. The major studios are no-doubt wary of vampire flicks with several recent big budget vamp flicks drawing poor box-office. **I Am Legend** has been filmed at least twice before; **The Last Man On Earth** with **Vincent Price** in 1964 and **The Omega Man** with **Charlton Heston** in 1971.

Two films about the planet Mars are in the works and it's a race to see who'll get to the screens first. Disney's **Mission To Mars** is currently due for release in the summer of 2000. The veteran director **Brian DePalma** (The Untouchables, Scarface) is directing and **Gary Sanise** (Apollo 13, The Quick & The Dead) and **Tim Robbins** (The Hudsucker Proxy, The Shawshank Redemption) will star. All I've found out about the story so far is that this film involves a manned Mars mission that goes awry, the ensuing rescue and a mystery to be solved. Written by **Jim and John Thomas** (Predator) and then re-written by **Graham Yost** (Broken Arrow) and **Ted Tally** (The Silence Of The Lambs). I'm looking more forward to Warner Brother's **Mars**, directed by **Anthony Hoffman**. **Val Kilmer** (Tombstone, The Saint) and Vancouver's **Carrie-Anne Moss** (the Matrix) will star. This flick involves a the members of a Martian expedition dying one by one while their pilot (Moss) orbiting the planet tries to save them. In a big casting improvement Moss replaces **Meg Ryan**, who was originally slotted for the role. Meanwhile, **Steven Spielberg's** Amblin Entertainment still have the rights to **Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles** but after two years of script development I'm wondering if this one will ever get done.

Walt Disney's team of Directors **Kirk Wise** and **Gary Trousdale** and Producer **Mike Mignola** (who all worked on Beauty and the Beast and The Hunchback of Notre Dame) are working on **Atlantis**, an animated film of an underwater expedition to find the famous lost city. **Mark Hamill** (Star Wars) and **Michael J. Fox** (Back To The Future, The Frighteners) are contributing voices. This feature is planned to be a serious adventure film with no songs. Due sometime in 2001.

Another animated feature, this one from Fox and **Don Bluth** (The Secret Of Nimh, Anastasia), **Titan A.E.** (formally called Planet Ice) is due this December. This might be the first animated SF spectacle, with alien invasions and journeys through space. Voice actors include **Matt Damon** (Good Will Hinting), **Bill Pullman** (Independance Day), **Drew Barrymore** (Ever After), **Nathan Lane** (Mouse Hunt) and **Hank Azaria** (The Simpsons).

The other big animation house is, of course, Warner Brothers. Word is that after the dismal showing of **The Quest For Camelot** that WB wants out of feature-length animated films. Certainly too many are now being made for the marketplace. What could be their last animated feature, **The Iron Giant**, opens August 6, 1999. Voices include **Harry Connick Jr.**, **Jennifer Aniston**, **Cloris Leachman** and the great **M. Emmet Walsh** (Blade Runner). This project was started by **Pete Townsend** (The Who), who once recorded a concept album on the original Ted Hughes children's book, but who is no longer associated on the picture. This feature will include no songs. The word from the test audiences is that this film looks amazing. There have been troubles with the score however; first **Danny Elfman** (Mars Attacks, Ed Wood) was involved, then it was **Michael Kamen** (Pink Floyd's The Wall), then **Alan Silvestri** (Contact, The Abyss) took over.

Last month I was lamenting that I could find no information on **Sleepy Hollow**. Here it is: **Tim Burton** (Mars Attacks, Ed Wood) will direct and **Francis Ford Coppola** (The Godfa-

ther, Dracula) and **Larry Franco** (The Thing) will produce. **Sleepy Hollow** will star **Johnny Depp** (Edward Scizzorhands) as Ichabod Crane, and will also star **Christina Ricci** (The Addams Family) and **Miranda Richardson** (The Crying Game). Filming took place last fall and the film is due to be released November 19, 1999. **Danny Elfman** (The Nightmare Before Christmas, Mars Attacks) will do the score. This picture will follow **Washington Irving's** tale of the Headless Horseman only loosely. I've found the entire script on the Internet and read the first 3rd and it's good. I've seen some pictures as well and they look fabulous. Depp also has an SF film in the works: **The Astronaut's Wife**, co-starring **Charlize Theron**, due out August 27. In this flick Depp plays an astronaut who returns from a trip in space a "changed man." Word is out that this is a remake of sorts of the 1958 classic **I Married A Monster From Outer Space**, starring **Tom Tryon**. **Rand Ravich** (co-writer of Candyman) is directing his own script. There are rumours about a re-shoot of the ending; usually a bad sign.

Samuel L. Jackson (The Phantom Menace, Pulp Fiction) is developing **Harlan Ellison's** novella **Mefisto in Onyx** for Miramax Pictures. He will also star. **Greg Widen** (Highlander, The Prophecy) has written the script and may direct. The story involves a "mind-jumper" who gets into the head of a serial-killer.

Lastly, I'm looking forward to Universal's take on **Bob Burden's** Dark Horse comic **Mystery Men**. This superhero film is in the can, has had very favourable test-previews and is due for release August 6. The cast looks fantastic: **Geoffrey Rush** (Shakespeare In Love) as The Evil Casanova Frankenstein, **William H. Macy** (Pleasantville, Fargo) as The Shoveller, **Hank Azaria** (The Simpsons, Godzilla) as The Blue Raja, Master of Silverware, **Ben Stiller** (Something About Mary) as Mr. Furious, **Janeane Garofalo** (Reality Bites) as The Bowler, **Paul Reubens** (Pee Wee Herman) as The Spleen, **Greg Kinnear** (As Good As It Gets) as Captain Amazing, **Wes Studi** (Deep Rising, Streetfighter) as The Sphinx and **Kel Mitchell** (Good Burger) as Invisible Boy. **Claire Forlani** (Meet Joe Black), **Lena Olin** (Romeo Is Bleeding), **Tom Waits** and **Jennifer Lewis** (The Mighty) also appear. **Kinka Usher** is directing; his first feature film. He's best known for directing weird commercials like the Nissan ad where the GI Joe doll steals Barbie away from Ken. How about that?

More MovieMania next month, including stuff on the X-Men movie and Steven Spielberg!

PS: I've been asked to identify my sources but that would take up as much space as the article itself. The web pages for the major studios are a good place to nail down leads and corona.bc.ca is the very best place for movie rumours (unsubstantiated or otherwise). I tend to start at corona, check the studio pages and then check the actor's web pages and fan pages for confirmations. I try to identify rumours as such. No info comes from Internet newsgroups.



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corner with their backs to the rest of the room), making random interjections about topics they were not discussing and then getting upset and complaining loudly when they asked if he would mind leaving them alone.

Let's not even get started about Security geeks who seem to feel that, as my friend Paul puts it, I am an NPC in their live action role-playing game.

It cannot, simply cannot, be argued that fandom has become a haven for the misfit: people who cannot find acceptance in the "normal" world. A large number of fans, and I include myself here, find real friends for the first time when they discover fandom. That aspect of sci-fi fandom, the providing of shelter for the socially inept or emotionally withdrawn people, is a good thing. **TO A POINT.**

I think, for me, that point has been jammed into flesh and twisted. I have ceased to be able to tolerate people who are rude, ignorant and inept (those words will occur over and over in this article), simply because they had unhappy lives. My early life would have destroyed a large number of people. I was never physically abused; the emotional and social scars still haunt me. The only reason I haven't killed myself is that I was lucky to have a couple of people who actually loved me. Not that they were easy to live with, either. But the traumas I survived from them made me stronger. I have been as unhappy as it is possible for a human to be.

And, yet, I can respond to the words "excuse me". I shower. I don't believe that it is somehow my born right to interrupt other peoples conversations because "they can't possibly be talking about anything as interesting as I have to say." (verbatim quote)

By nurturing the incapable and unteachable, by allowing these people to believe that their disgusting childish behavior is acceptable, fandom is choking itself. People who no longer wish to have to put up with this crap flee fandom screaming—and they're usually the capable and efficient people needed to run things like, oh, VCON.

I hear a lot of back-patting in fandom: fans are smarter than average; fans are more open-minded; fans are more liberal; fans are more tolerant.

Bullshit.

Fans are no more or less smart than similar cross-section of society. Knowing about how physics applies to the Enterprise doesn't make you a physicist. Fans are among the most clique-y, conservative groups I've ever encountered. Try to have a political conversation that doesn't degenerate into name calling or spend five seconds trying to make friends at about half of the room parties thrown at any con. And fans are very tolerant. Till you disagree with them. Then they want you dead.

Most people are like that actually. Can't get away from it.

It would be mitigating somewhat if fans were really as amusing as they think they are. Some of the wittiest, more biting funny people I've ever met in my life have been fans. MOST seem to feel that reciting Simpsons quotes and making puns are the height of intellectual humor. I have spent a six-hour car ride trading the aforementioned quotes. I have made puns. Decent people are usually ashamed. Fans aren't even silly. Silly requires a certain level of self-possession and confidence. Monty Python was silly. There are reasons why their brilliance has never been equaled.

And what passes for silly in fandom is usually just infantile and childish.

'Course, I believe in infantile and childish. Immaturity can be a weapon ("Did you know you can be really childish?" "Yeah. And we can be a armed mob, too."), but you gotta pick your spots. And despising everyone around you who doesn't meet your standards of wacky as "mundanes" is just down-right appalling.

Look, this wasn't some dramatic prelude to an announcement of my GAFIation. I'm still in; I particularly like going to conventions (days of drinking and buying Buffy T-shirts). But I give fair warning: the gloves are off. I'm not going to accept criticism from people who do nothing for WCSFA about my involvement. I'm not going to forgive, with pity, willful ignorance by grown-ups who should know better.

Thank you.



PETER PANS

"The Phantom Menace"

Peter Tupper

I didn't want to write this.

My uncle took me to see Star Wars when I was four, during one of earliest showings. Since then, it has been embedded in my mental-cultural DNA, as it did for most people my age. The Star Wars trilogy was, to me, the ultimate cinematic experience, and some part of me still craved more. I wanted it to be good.

When I first wandered into the Web's vast intelligence network focussed on the new Star Wars prequel, I was pumped. In my mind, a glorious movie unfolded. One that would have cutting edge special effects, beautiful design and a bold story, plus hopefully one that would make the Star Wars universe less white and male. Once I actually said that not seeing the new Star Wars would be like not knowing who was President of the United States.

Yet a certain dread built up in me. The more I learned, the more misgivings I had. Then the title was announced, with a resounding thud. Then the hype seriously began. When I saw the huge displays of coloring books and toys, I half-expected Mel Brooks as Yogurt to pop up and reiterate how the most powerful force in the universe is merchandising. And then George Lucas, mastermind of a multimedia extravaganza like the Second Coming, had the gall to say, "Hey, it's just a movie."

Alas, he's right, and it isn't a terribly good one, as I discovered when I went to see it at a screening reserved for V-Con members.

A rush of warm familiarity came over me when I saw the gold credit scroll across the starfield. And when I saw beautifully designed spaceships and a female captain, I was willing to relax and let it come over me.

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Problem was, I couldn't relax. The most obvious problem is the breakneck pace. Scenery and technology were thrown at me as fast as possible, then abandoned just as quickly. Tattooine was well developed, a believably cluttered desert town, but we're in and out of the underwater Gungan city in minutes, and Naboo seems to consist of one small city and empty forests. Perhaps Lucas' great innovation in Star Wars was creating fantasy worlds with a believable amount of clutter and scuff marks. They felt real, and made you sink into them during the time you spent there. Here, we're in and out of Naboo and Coruscant so fast that we never get that lived-in feel.

Lucas' interest in speed is well established in his other movies, and it drives the two most effective scenes in the movie: the pod race and the climactic lightsaber duel, both well executed but with empty payoffs. When Anakin Skywalker left his mother, I felt nothing. When Qui Gon Jinn died, I felt nothing. Time and again, I felt like my emotions were being commanded instead of earned.

I wasn't even sure who was supposed to be the protagonist. I went into the movie assuming Obi Wan Kenobi would be the lead, but he was given little to do, even for a foil or sidekick. The two Jedi Knights are just younger and older versions of the same bland, stalwart hero. Queen Amidala's character, if any, is lost under her elaborate costuming. Darth Maul was the walking picture of aggression, but he was just an attack dog for another shadowy villain. And Jar Jar Binks... It's strange that R2-D2, a small man in a mechanical shell, remains as oddly endearing as it was 22 years ago, while Jar Jar Binks, made of cutting edge CGI interacting with live actors, is about as appealing as a 6ft Furby.

Part of this stems from the paranoid, control-freak way Lucas films actors. The actors were doled out scripts almost a page at a time, and given only brief periods for rehearsals. They may not have known just where in the movie their scenes fell, and thus couldn't hit the right emotional notes. Thus, fine character actors like Ewan MacGregor and Liam Neeson were wasted, reciting empty lines. There wasn't a scene like the trip to Alderaan, when you just got to see the characters interacting.

Another factor is that this may be the most special effects laden movie in history. Nearly every shot has some kind of CGI or blue screen or other effect involved, and it must be hard to emote well when you aren't even sure where your character is supposed to be or what's supposed to be happening around him.

Perhaps the most damning error is making it a PG-rated movie suitable for kids. That explains the deeply annoying Jar

Jar Binks and the battle droids being about as menacing as a set of tinker toys. There's no reason Anakin Skywalker and Queen Amidala couldn't have been in their teens or early 20s, but Lucas seems to have forgotten that kids dream of being adults, not kids. Making them older could have added a dash of romance to a passionless movie.

It's just good clean bloodless fun. Yet what's at stake here is murky underhanded politicking; the invasion of Naboo is a crisis fabricated to permit a power grab elsewhere. Even adults would have a hard time engaging in something that abstract. We're told the Naboo people are suffering under the occupation, but we never see anybody thrown out of their home. In Star Wars, we are shown that the Empire can and will wipe out billions of lives just to prove a point, which justifies the carnage our heroes inflict later.

Without a clear form of jeopardy, everything that follows lacks meaning. We're wowed by the breathless onslaught of scenery and technology, but we never care about the people involved. Watching the movie is a bit like eating one of those gaudy candy/toys you remember as being fun from when you were eight: the sweetness becomes cloying, and you find yourself wanting something of substance.

If we take Episode One in isolation, ignoring that it is a Star Wars movie, and put it next to the bloated, empty, dumb sci-fi epics we've seen in the last two decades like *The Fifth Element* and *Stargate*, it fits right in. Star Wars has degenerated into the genre of inferior imitations it spawned.

Note that *Phantom Menace* is the first movie Lucas has directed since *A New Hope* (which nearly destroyed his

health), and his other efforts at moviemaking have been uneven (e.g. producer of *Howard the Duck*). It's possible that *Phantom Menace* is the real, mature George Lucas, and that *THX 1138*, *A New Hope* and *American Graffiti* were the flukes.

Thus the question of "What went wrong with Episode One?" becomes instead "What went right with *Star Wars* and *Empire Strikes Back*?" Well, *Empire* was directed by Irvin Kershner and co-written by Leigh Brackett and Lawrence Kasdan and it contains a darkness and maturity not seen elsewhere in the original trilogy. It is my fond hope that, before 2002 when Episode 2 is slated for release, somebody will sit down with George Lucas and have a long talk. Maybe he'll share the writing duty and let somebody else entirely direct it. However, in interviews Lucas has placed his chances of directly Episode 2 as anywhere between "probably" and "inevitably."

Any Star Wars fan can list the plot points that need to be covered over the next two movies. Foremost is how a sweet, brilliant kid like Anakin Skywalker can turn to the dark side and become the incarnation of asthmatic evil, Darth Vader. Showing how good people wind up doing bad things is a strong theme, but exploring it may be beyond Lucas as a writer and a director. It means creating a large gray area in a black and white world.

Come 2002, I'll probably be there to see it in the first few days, even if it is another one-man show, and no matter how unfavorable the consensus on Episode One. When something is that deeply rooted in your mind, the common text of generation, it becomes immune to criticism. It's just something you do, out of sheer habit if nothing else.



It's just good clean bloodless fun. Yet what's at stake here is murky underhanded politicking;



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LETTER FROM HELSINKI

Teemu Leisti teemu.leisti@nokia.com

“The future ain’t what it used to be.” This little observation on science fiction was coined already a few years back. If the science fiction of ages past were to have come true, we’d already be living in gleaming cities of towering spires and commuting by air cars powered by nuclear energy. Or perhaps some of us would be trying to eke out a living in a post-holocaust wasteland. Or we’d have colonies on the Moon.

Who knows, maybe some of these visions are yet to be realized. However, for this column, I’ll talk about an aspect of technology that figures in one form or another in most future-oriented science fiction, though usually in the background: telecommunications.

In SF, it is usually taken for granted that high-quality, ubiquitous telecomms is available to residents of the future. Picture phones, TV on the walls, wrist communicators, and such equipment abound. One of the more thoughtful and prescient SF writers, Arthur C. Clarke, elaborated for a few paragraphs in his 1976 novel “Imperial Earth”, which takes place in 2276, on an instrument called the “comsole”. The word is a contraction of “communications console”, and means essentially a computer terminal which makes available all the information humankind has ever produced or assembled. It is indexed and cross-referenced for ease of use, and presented by a very sophisticated user interface that understands natural-language queries.

Like the communications satellite, this idea of Clarke’s is simply too sensible not to be built in real life. Indeed, the Internet of today is already a sort of rudimentary implementation — one might say proof of concept — of this idea. However, it still has a way to go to fulfil Clarke’s vision, for instance in the areas of indexing, availability, ease of use, and comprehensiveness.

In any case, telecommunications and information technology are probably the most rapidly developing areas of technology today, and are making many ideas formerly dreamt of only in SF works come true, not to mention throwing out things no one has thought of before. They are among the technologies making our world truly a science-fictional place. For instance, I don’t think anyone really saw the Internet coming, at least not in its current form. My current work at Nokia Telecommunications involves mobile-Internet integration, and that’s what I’d like to concentrate on here.

I probably don’t need to inform you, dear reader, what an explosion the spread and development of the Internet, originated in the late 1960s, has undergone in this decade. It will no doubt continue to develop and form the backbone of the global information infrastructure of the next century, or at least until it’s replaced by something even better, or until it mutates so much it’ll have to be called something else.

Another recent success story in telecomms is the mobile phone. Originally a plaything of the rich, over the last 20 years or so it has become smaller, lighter,

cheaper, and more capable, so that in many countries a significant percentage of the population now owns one. In Finland, the ground breaker in this respect, over 60% of all inhabitants now have a mobile, and the ratio is still growing rapidly. In industrialized countries, the mobile phone might eventually become as common as the ordinary fixed-line telephone. (Incidentally, Finland is also the world leader in Internet nodes per capita, so this is a very appropriate place to be working on mobile data.)

In order for the equipment manufacturers and phone companies to keep making money, and to survive the fierce competition, they have to keep introducing better and more capable phone models all the time, so they can justify charging high prices for the latest models, even while competition drives down the price of the basic models and airtime. One result of this drive is that mobiles will incorporate more and more non-voice services. For instance, the short message service (SMS) — sending short messages from one mobile to another — is extremely popular with Finnish teenagers. And SMS is just the beginning.

Once you consider the development trends I’ve outlined above, connecting the mobile phone to the Internet is kind of a no-brainer, as far as future services go. In recent months, there has been a great deal of activity around mobile-Internet integration, or mobile data, or however you want to call it. Telecomms equipment manufacturers, phone network operators, chip companies, computer manufacturers, software companies (including the mighty Microsoft), all are positioning themselves to take advantage of the emerging mobile data market, to be worth zillions in a few short years.

The market is only in its formative stage, and several different standards are struggling for dominance. However, there is one set of standards, WAP, that has a good chance of succeeding. A couple of years ago, a number of telecomms companies (manufacturers and operators) realized that it would be to everyone’s benefit to arrive at mobile data standards that would allow equipment from different manufacturers to connect with one another, so that the wheel would not have to be invented more than once. Thus was born the WAP Forum, for “Wireless Application Protocol”, which is actually a portfolio of standards currently under development.

I won’t bore you with the details, but the idea is that if you buy a WAP-compliant phone, you will be able to use it in any WAP-com-

pliant operator’s network and use WAP-compliant services on the Internet.

This becomes especially valuable considering that the world’s major telecomms manufacturers have recently come to an agreement on standards for the so-called “third generation” mobile phone. (Analogue phones are the first generation and the currently available digital phones are the second generation.) This means that 3G phones are going to be usable anywhere in the world. The most successful 2G standard, GSM, is widespread only in Europe, Asia, and Australia.

I’m running out of space here, so I’ll take more about the possible 3G services to be created, other interesting wireless developments and emerging standards, and some blue-skying, in the next column(s).



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CANADIAN SF, FANTASY, COMICS & JUVENILE MARKETS

compiled by Garth Spencer (for his June 1999 Web page update)

The following is a vastly belated list of Canadian SF and fantasy writers markets. I meant to update my Web page list quarterly, but it hasn't been updated for a year. Still, I am always on the lookout for more information, either to complete or to update these market lists and submission guidelines. Please advise me of errors and omissions by contacting me at my e-mail address.

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(Gary Thomas, July 98)

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You may also send tidbits of Canadian SF events and info to Mark Lefebvre at MisterBuny@aol.com — Carol Weekes can be reached at dk986@freenet.carleton.ca

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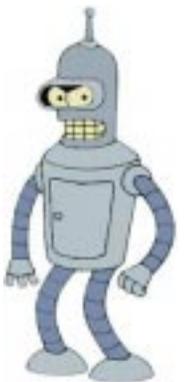
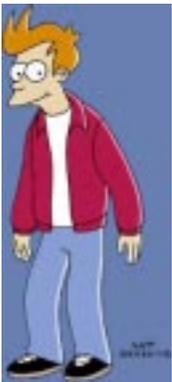
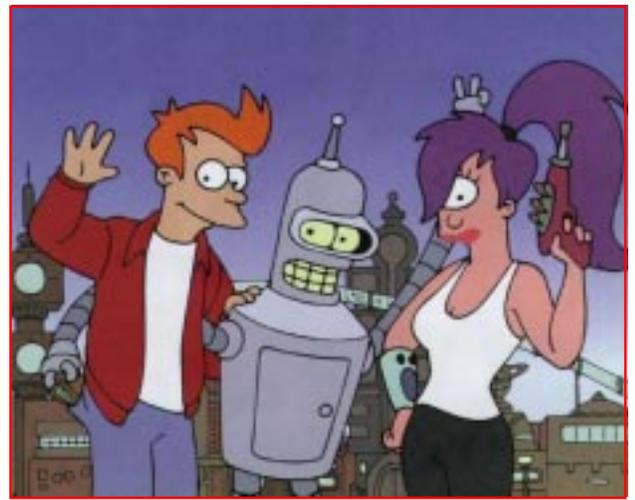
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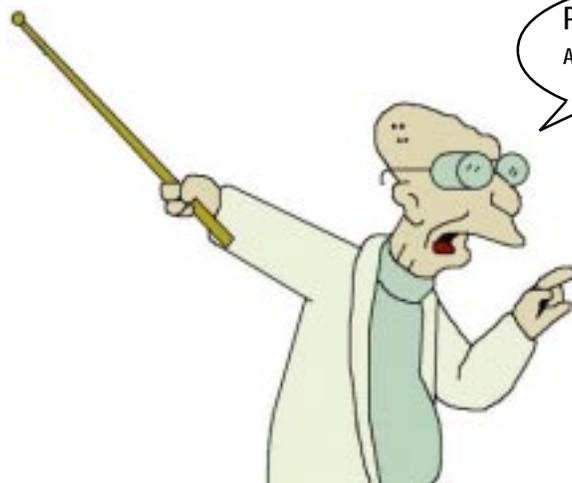
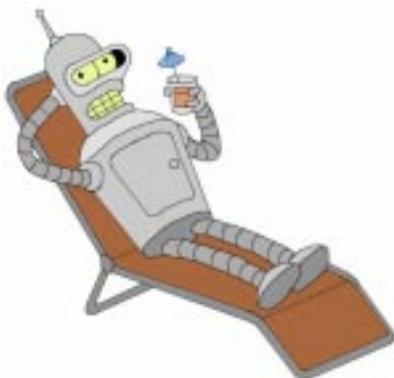


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Letters

Dear John

I hope you will forgive a handwritten loc on the May BCSFAzine. The past couple of months have been dreadful for me. My typewriter broke down and I got very sick for a while. When I couldn't find a non-electric typer as a replacement, I bought an electronic machine but I haven't been able to afford to use it for fanac because I can't find a source here of fabric ribbons that fit it and I can't afford new film ribbons once or twice every week. I'm sure I failed to comment on at least one issue of your clubzine during the weeks when I did no fanac at all, for which I'm sorry. I have a lead on an acoustic typewriter and hope it will permit me to resume soon writing locs without electricity, the only sane way to do it.

Peter Tupper has removed even the slight possibility that I would ever think about watching the two Crow movies he reviews.

I'm totally flabbergasted to learn from Doug Finnerty that Rama 1/2 disposes of Rendezvous with Rama in a half-hour. The biggest virtue of the Clarke novel was the slow unfolding of a spaceship's mysteries and the sense of wonder it ignited in the reader.

But I believe I'll keep watch for a remainder or used copy of Ed Wood's book. Graeme makes it seem much more fun than any of Ed's movies. I suppose Ed exaggerated wildly how things were in mid-century Hollywood, but I've read enough stuff in biographics and memoirs written by others in the film industry to believe things happened sometimes as Ed claimed.

The page listing coming conventions makes me feel alienated from fandom. I don't recognize the names of any of the fan guests of honour.

It's good to know that Don DeBrandt's literary career is starting to take off. But it

would be even better if he could find the time and energy to do an occasional fanzine piece as he did so well in the old days.

I read a David Drake novel for the first time several weeks ago. It seemed well done. But this type of military science fiction will never be good enough to counter my built-in reluctance to read either fiction or non-fiction based on the supreme evil, organized violence in its most extreme manifestation of warfare.

Yrs,

Harry Warner, Jr.

Hello there!

It was brought to my attention that you have Exhumed Magazine included in your list of publications. Exhumed ceased publication a few years ago and should be removed from the list.

Thanks for the attention anyway!

Spiros Bettas