

Cyber Cozen

Science-Fiction Newsletter

Vol. XII, No. 6; June, 2000



Farscape - New Series for Star Trek Fans Will It Come to Israel?

Star Trek fan **Ted Henderson** writes from Los Angeles:

"I regularly watch *Farscape* which is a *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* type space opera. It must be quite costly to produce as it utilizes great special effects, and two of the characters are Jim Henson puppets. The crew is traveling on a living space ship similar to the Vorlon ship in *Babylon 5*. I am particularly interested in the female character played by Claudia Black. These space operas always seem to feature very attractive women."

Ted also sent me the following quote from the *Los Angeles Times*:

"... light and lively action is the appeal of *Farscape*, now in its second season. It's a

humor-filled space opera in which assorted ragtag aliens and one lost American rocket jock wander unexplored galaxies in a living ship, evil commandos in hot pursuit. With the Jim Henson Co. as one of its producers, *Farscape* employs puppet-animation technology alongside its human cast to create alien creatures both wacky and worldly. Human hero John Crichton (Ben Browder) has dash and panache - as does his robust female alien friend Aeryn Sun (Claudia Black) - and he never takes his marooned condition too seriously. The show takes place in current time, which means Crichton can observe "This looks like an episode of *Melrose Place*" on which Browder appeared. Crichton is one of us."



Sci-Fi scale models

by **Avi Chami**

Here for a change is a subject I have not seen in these pages and would like to let you know about.

For approximately 50 years now there have been **scale model plastic kits** on the market. Although the reproduction of full-size, real-life objects (ships, machines, people...) is as old as we can imagine (as demonstrated by the rests found, for example, at pharaonic tombs), it was only with the global availability of plastic

injection molds that the hobby of scale modeling entered mass production.

As in other fields, progress is constant. Scale models that once were not far from toys nowadays show an incredible level of detail. These, together with the emergence of several technologies, most notably resin casting and photo-etched parts, enable the modeler to produce models that look extremely real.

(Continues on the next page)

CyberCozen by email? I can send you (free) a Hebrew Word 97 file each month if you like. Just write asheer@netvision.net.il and say so. Please remember that all items in **CyberCozen** are **copyrighted** by the author, so if you want to send such material on to others, **you MUST credit the author**. If it is a story, I expect that permission of the author will be requested **BEFORE** passing the story on.

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

Meetings (in Hebrew) on *Science and Science Fiction*

Next Meeting: **Wed. 28.6.2000, 20:00**

Prof. **Haim Finkelstein** (Head of the Art History department, Ben-Gurion University) on:

The Vision of Metropolis - future cities in early SF illustrations

Meetings are held in **Beit Ariela**, 25 Shaul HaMelech, Tel Aviv at 8 p.m.

Join the Society, go to its meetings! Call 03-528-3803 or 03-604-4959



01.01.01 - The end is also the beginning..

www.armageddoncon.org



From the beginning, in the 50's and 60's, scale models were devoted also to reproduction of Sci-Fi themes.

Today, the available kits can be classified in three major categories:

Science – Mainly space models of real craft. This includes rockets, spaceships, etc. Some examples of kits on the Israeli market: Space Shuttle + booster rockets (Academy – Korea), MIR space station (Heller – France), Apollo Lunar Lander (Revell – USA), etc. Of course many more models are or were produced from other countries (example: Ariane), and about past space programs, satellites, etc.

Sci-Fi spaceships – the quantity of available material is enormous. From *Star Trek* and related series, *Star Wars*, *Babylon 5* (to name only a few), to *Cosmos 1999*, *Battleship Galactica* and *Forbidden Planet*. One provider is AMT-ERTL (USA), which reaches Israel irregularly. There are plenty of providers available on the Internet, and shipping charges are dropping steadily. Take a look at www.starshipmodeler.com.

Figures – In a wide range of scales, from 1:35 to 1:5, which means figures from a

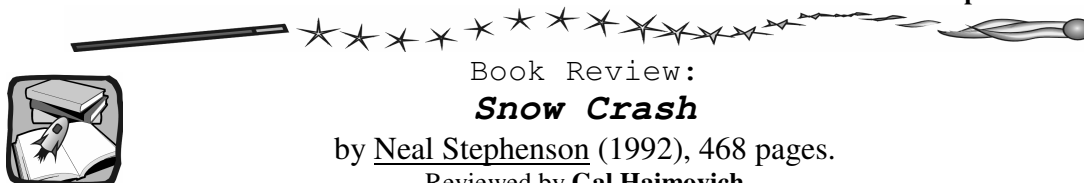
few cm. to 20 or 30 cm. tall. Themes also vary, including also Fantasy. For this specific topic consider paying a visit to www.gremlins.com to see the quality and diversity of models available.

The above mentioned categories are a first approach and cannot show you the wealth of possibilities available; for example, there are complete dioramas depicting, for example, scenes from *Star Wars* and including several spaceships, walkers, troopers, etc., all integrated in a landscape.

In Israel the local branch of IPMS (**International Plastic Modelers Society**) has existed for some ten years, with about 200 members. On Hanukkah each year an expo is organized, including contests and sales. At the last one, among about 300 models displayed (some of them of outstanding international quality), only ONE was from the Sci-Fi category. This is certainly not the situation at similar expositions held abroad.

If you want to know more about plastic models in general, or specifically about Sci-Fi models, or to join IPMS and try to give Sci-Fi models in Israel the outstanding place they deserve, please contact me:

Avi Chami email: Avi.Chami@ctp.co.il



Book Review:

Snow Crash

by Neal Stephenson (1992), 468 pages.

Reviewed by Gal Haimovich

When Aharon lent me this book, I had no idea the editors of Amazon.com (as reported in Locus 1/2000) had chosen it as one of the best SF books of the *century*. I took it rather reluctantly. I thought this was just one more cyberpunk book. I was wrong. This book has many great ideas linking ancient myths from Sumer, Babylon and the Torah with the development of languages and religions and with Viruses.

What's the connection? It's complicated to explain; you'll have to read the book. Even then it's not easy to understand. To summarize, a basic language was introduced into human civilization by a metavirus that travels through the universe and infects primitive cultures. This virus caused a change in neural pathways. It caused the creation of small "programs" of human cultures called "*me*" (e.g. *me* for baking bread, *me* for building a house, etc.). It also caused the spawning of all human-infecting viruses (being a biologist myself, I disagree with this theory). Back in Sumer there

was a man-god named Enki who could write *me* (a hacker) and he decided that society was stuck, so he developed a counter virus that reprogrammed the brain so people would no longer understand the basic language but could develop higher languages (the story of the Tower of Babel) and start using their brains.

The goddess Ashera, Enki's antagonist, is represented by another infective virus (I'm not clear whether it's a biological or an informational virus). One of its symptoms is talking in tongues (Glossolalia) – the basic language.

And now this virus seems to be striking again.

I found the background of the story much more fascinating. Stephenson describes a lawless future America: Each town or neighborhood stands on its own, usually controlled by a powerful cult or organization (such as the Mafia, the Feds, or Mr. Lee's greater Hong Kong). There are no police – just private, sometimes self-appointed, security agencies.

Teenagers, called **Kouriers**, running on Hi-tech skateboards, deliver anything to anyone and are generally accepted as neutral. The Metaverse is a virtual reality Internet.

In Stephenson's America, there are four things they do in America better than anywhere else: movies, music, software and high-speed pizza delivery.

Our hero, Hiro Protagonist, is a free-lance hacker, one of the founders of the Metaverse. He declares himself the greatest swordsman alive. He is also a delivery boy of Cosa-Nostra Pizza Inc., which belongs to the Mafia.

Hiro finds out early in the story that someone is spreading a computer virus called **Snow Crash** (snow crash is when your computer crashes and all you can see on the monitor is snow). This isn't an ordinary virus, it has a special effect on hackers – this virus has a *me* in binary code. When a hacker reads it, his brain "crashes".

Hiro, with his ex-girl friend (also a hacker), another girl who is a 15-year old Kourier named Y.T., and the Mafia, go on a quest to find the guy who is spreading **Snow Crash** and bringing back the Ashera virus. Among the evil men is the most frightening man in the world, called Raven. Raven likes to cut people up with glass knives and he owns a hydrogen bomb that he carries on his bike. His hydrogen bomb is set to go off when Raven dies.

It was a pleasure to read this book thanks to Stephenson's sense of humor (he describes a 2-page memo on tissue paper), and his sometimes eerie but detailed descriptions of life in future America.

I don't think it qualifies as one of the best of the century but certainly of the last decade.

Recommended. (*Snow Crash* was also reviewed in *CyberCozen*, September 1999, by Aharon Sheer.)



TV Review:

New CGI animated series

Roughnecks:

The Starship Troopers Chronicles

By **Raz Greenberg**

Say what you will about Paul Verhoeven's 1997 adaptation of Robert Heinlein's novel **Starship Troopers**, there's one fact you'll have to acknowledge: the film was a visual standout. Using not only state of the art CGI (computer generated images) but also masterful photography, that made an incredible use of colors, and careful attention to details while designing the production, made it one of the best looking science fiction films ever. While many fans of the novel complained that the script didn't follow it closely, the film's visual qualities, in my opinion, brought it very close to the atmosphere Heinlein wanted to create.

Roughnecks: The Starship Troopers Chronicles (Sunday to Thursday, Channel 3, 13:30), the animated TV series based on the film, seems to be relying on the film's visual strengths. It tells basically the same story: a group of three friends joins a mobile infantry unit called *The Roughnecks* to fight a war in outer space against a race of intelligent bugs attacking Earth. Pretty much like the movie, the series focuses on the battles between the human soldiers and the bugs, with a soap-opera sub-plot revolving around three characters: Johnny Rico, a member of the unit who is loved both by Dizzy

Flores, a fellow mobile infantry soldier, and Carmen Ibanez, a spaceship pilot. While the film's violence was drastically toned-down in the series, in order to make it more accessible for a young audience, from what I've seen so far, familiarity with the movie is still necessary. If you haven't seen the movie, you'll have a serious problem making sense of the overall plot or the character relationships.

The show was done completely in CGI, and from a technical point of view, looks very impressive. Every character, every spaceship, every giant bug and every battlefield involving them was fully drawn and animated using computers, and I have to admit that it has a unique and different feeling to it. The show's animators even went a step further and added some new tools to this digital battleground, most notably maneuverable giant space-suits, an element which existed in the novel but was missing from the movie (and also makes a gesture towards Japanese "Mecha" animated shows). Unfortunately, when you take a deeper look into this technical marvel, you find out that it's not that impressive after all. It's largely unimaginative to start with – almost no effort was done to give the CGI characters individual personality: they all move the same way, have

the same body language, and their faces look too much alike. To make matters even worse, it becomes clear at a very early point that the animation directors of the show have no idea as to how they can generate tension or interest using this medium. While the action sequences of the show were clearly inspired by the film, as well as James Cameron's **Aliens** and the late **Space: Above and Beyond** the shows seems to copy all of their good looks but none of their brains. The action sequences have a flat, uninspiring feeling to them, and are not likely to leave you interested in what's going to happen. To top it all, the show uses some of the worst voice actors I've ever heard: they all speak with an annoying by-the-way tone that will freak you out after five minutes of watching.

The scripts are even worse. Dialogues are every bit as annoying as the voice acting. Characters don't even have the cardboard personality they had in the film – they just don't have any personality at all. And the episodes lack any feeling of pacing whatsoever: just a series of action sequences patched roughly together in a shallow excuse for a plot. This could have been okay if the action sequences were any good, but as I mentioned before, they aren't.

With its CGI animation and electronic musical score, **Roughnecks: The Starship Troopers Chronicles** has the overall mise-en-scene of a televised computer game – unfortunately, it's about as exciting as watching somebody else playing.



ספריות וספריי העתיד במדע הבדיוני (חלק שני)

Future Libraries and Librarians in Science Fiction (part 2)

מאת **אלי אשד** Eli Eshed

ספריות בלי ספרנים

כיום, וברור שבעתיד שבו היא קיימת אין כול מקום לספרן/מידען כפי שאנו מכירים אותו כיום. בספר זה מתוארת דה הומניזציה מוחלטת של מקצוע המידענות והוא חוגג את ניצחונם המוחלט של הצרכנים האנושיים ותוכנות המחשב ששוב אינם זקוקים למסדר אנושי שיתווך ביניהם ויעריך את עצם החשיבות והאיכות של המידע דומה שזוהי ההנחה ברוב סיפורי ה"סייבר פאנק" שבהם הגיבורים הם גולשים ברשת ומחפשי מידע שבהחלט אינם זקוקים לשום מידען שיעזור להם בחיפוש מידע מעבר לתוכניות המחשב שקיימות כבר ברשותם כמו אלה שתיאר סטיפנסון. האמינו לי מידענים שקוראים סיפורים כאלה מרגישים מאוד לא בנוח לגבי עתיד מקצועם. ואולי כן יהי עדיין צורך במידענים גם בעתיד כזה? לא כול הסופרים כה משוכנעים בכך שבעתיד יעלם המידען או אפילו גם הספרן.

אך באופן כללי רוב הסיפורים על השגת מידע בעתיד (וכיום הם מרובים יותר מתמיד) אינם מציגים מוסד ספרייה או מאגר מידע. ההנחה המובלעת שבהם היא שכול אדם יוכל להוציא את כול המידע הדרוש לו מהאינטרנט בלי כול עזרה של מתווך, או לפחות ללא עזרה של מתווך אנושי וכך מבחינת סיפורים אלה מקצוע הספרן/מידען לא יתקיים בעתיד. דוגמה לכך

הוא ספרו המצליח של ניל סטפנסון Neal

Stephenson **SNOW CRASH** (1992) שבו בעתיד הממוחשב באופן מוחלט כאשר הגיבור נאלץ לחפש מידע מסוים הוא פונה לתוכנת מחשב וירטואלית שנקראת "הספרן" ומופיעה כאשליה של אדם העונה לכול הסטריאוטיפים הקיימים של הספרן והיא "ספרן היעץ האולטימטיבי" שהומצאה בידי ספרן בספריית הקונגרס. הסופר קורא לתוכנה זאת "מטה ספרן" והיא למעשה הפיתוח האולטימטיבי של תוכנות ה **knowbot** שמחפשות מידע לפי הוראות המשתמש

ספרנים כמספרים

סוג של ספרייה עתידנית אנושית יותר (תרתית משמע) מתואר בספרה של Ursula LeGuin **ALWAYS COMING HOME** (1985). לה גוויין מתארת חברה עתידנית כמעט אוטופית שבה כול ישוב קטן מחובר לספרייה מרכזית שממנה הוא מקבל את כול המידע לו הוא זקוק (למעשה סוג של אינטרנט). לדעתה של לה גוויין בחברה שבה כול המידע ממוחשב וזמין לכולן דווקא שם יהיה צורך לנקוט בגישה שונה לגבי מה יש לשמור בארכיון או בספרייה. תינתן תשומת לב גדולה ביותר להעברה האוראלית וכך באופן פרדוכסלי נחזור לתקופה שלפני המצאת הכתב כאשר כול המידע הועבר אוראלית (דבר שקורא כבר היום כאשר יותר ויותר אנשים קוראים פחות ופחות ומעדיפים להשתמש באמצעים ויזואליים

של הטלביזיה ומשחקי המחשב). הספרנים בחברה זאת שאינם צריכים לעסוק יותר באיסוף ארגון וניהול המידע, מתוארים כמספרי סיפורים מקצועיים ומלומדים המתמקדים בתקשורת עם אנשים ובהעשרת המסורת התרבותית שלהם. עוזרי הספרנים דואגים לספרייה/מוזיאון/ארכיון ששם שומרים הן דברים כתובים, ובגדים, עצים, כלים, וכו', כול דבר שנחשב ל"חשוב" לשימור והצגת התרבות. הספרנים מתוארים כמי שמעורבים מאוד בחיי הקהילה שלהם הרבה מעבר למציאת מידע עבור לקוחות.

ויש גם את ספרו של Vernon Vinge ורנו

וינג' **A FIRE UPON THE DEEP** (1992), אחד מסיפורי המד"ב הקלאסיים של זמננו, וללא כול ספק ביחד עם **סידרת המוסד** זהו ספר המד"ב החשוב

החייזרים. ספר זה הוא בהחלט יוצא דופן בכך שמקצוע הספרנות מוצג בו כמקצוע של הרפתקנים שבחיפוש המידע שלהם ברשת הגלקטית עלולים להיתקל ולהתמודד עם הסכנות האיומות ביותר שניתן להעלות על הדעת.

ביותר העוסק בספרנים ובמקצוע הספרנות בעתיד. אחת מהדמויות הראשיות בו היא ספרנית של העתיד הרחוק, עתיד שבו יש מעין "רשת אינטרנט" גלקטית. גזעים שונים מתקשרים זה עם זה דרכה לאורך מאות אלפי שנות אור. במשך מיליוני שנים הספרנית בספר זה תפקידה ליסקור את "מאגרי המידע" של גזעים שונים ברשת וללקט ולסדר משם מידע עבור מעבידיה



(המשך יבוא -- To be continued)

Science Fiction and Fantasy

News and Rumors

Collected and brought to you by **Guy Eldar**



While looking for this issue's hot stuff to tell you all about, I came across some possible casting rumors for two upcoming movie releases. While the names of the suspected new stars aren't familiar to me, the two movies are much more interesting.

The first is a motion picture version for the hit comics series *Spider Man*. Columbia Pictures are making it and it is supposed to open fall 2001. The story is based on the one we know from the comics. Peter Parker, a gifted high school student, is bitten by a spider that he subjected to radiation. The spider's bite produces an unusual side effect for young Peter, resulting in spider-like strength and agility proportional to a human physique, as well as a mysterious sixth sense. Deciding to fight crime, Peter fashions a costume and constructs various devices to aid him in his adventures.

The *Spider Man* production is well on its way, and you can find details on the net at www.spidermanhype.com.

The second movie that caught my eye, based on the hit book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

For those of you who haven't read the book yet, here is the plot summery. Orphaned and living with his despotic aunt and uncle, eleven-year-old Harry Potter lives a dreadful life eating their scraps and sleeping under the stairs. But soon young Harry receives a letter that will

*Comments, News and Rumors, facts and sites would be appreciated. Write to: eldarguy@netvision.net.il
Please subject messages as "News and Rumors".*

forever change his life: the everyday world around him is not all what it seems to be and magic is very real. There's a world of spells and sorcery hidden behind what we see as the common and everyday, a place where the "Muggles" like his foster parents (also known as average ordinary people) don't know -- or don't want to know -- exists.

Soon extraordinary events intervene in young Harry's life and he finds himself being taught the mysterious ways of true magic at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Treated by the fantastic denizens of Hogwarts as a celebrity, it's here Harry will learn about magic wands, centaurs with Welsh-accented dragon eggs and arcane potions as well as the true reason why he has a lightning-bolt scar emblazoned upon his brow. The evil wizard Voldemort, who took the life of his parents and gave Harry his scar, has been missing ever since ... but now that Harry knows the truth about his legacy Voldemort is returning.

As with every good fantasy book, I hope Warner Bros. won't ruin this book. It does, however, seem to promise to be a good film. We'll have to wait and see. On top of that, I hope Warner Bros. remember the classic series that is coming out on film – *Lord of the Rings* – and that *Harry Potter* will have to stand up against it.

For Comments: POB 9443, Tel Aviv 61093. Email: asheer@netvision.net.il. Tel: Aharon Sheer 08-947-1225.

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For mail delivery of *CyberCozen*, please donate 30 shekels per YEAR; For airmail to US \$15; If Aharon Sheer can hand-deliver it, 15 shekels.

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עבור משלוח בדואר של *CyberCozen*, הנכם מתבקשים לתרום 30 ש"ח לשנה; עבור דואר אויר לארה"ב \$15; אם אהרון שיר יכול למסור את העיתון באופן אישי, 15 ש"ח.

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כל הזכויות שמורות למחברים וליוצרים, כפי שצוינו.

ArmageddonCon registration now open!

ArmageddonCon (<http://www.armageddoncon.org>), now called
“**Armageddon 2000**”
is now finally getting underway! ArmageddonCon is being jointly organized by
Mishkenot Sha'ananim and the *Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy*.

The convention will be held in *Jerusalem*. Featured guests include
**LARRY NIVEN, JOAN D. VINGE, PAUL J. MCAULEY, DR. JACK COHEN,
and JIM FRENKEL, with IAN WATSON as toastmaster.**

It will begin on Thursday the 28th of December with two days of panel discussions,
workshops, films and other Con activities .

On Saturday night, December 30th, we will hold a gala masquerade at the world-
famous *HaOman 17* club, where we will present the **Armageddon award for
Apocalyptic fiction.**

On December 31st we will take the convention to *Megiddo (Armageddon)*.
Activities will include an archeological tour, concluding discussions, a party and the
countdown to the true end of the millennium!

Full membership covers participation in all the outlined activities, including travel
and refreshments. As the con approaches prices will rise, so please register early! If
you are unable to attend but would like to support us, consider purchasing a
supporting membership.

For full details of cost and how to register, visit this page:

http://www.armageddoncon.org/arcon_register.html

If you are looking for a hotel near the convention site or are interested in touring
Israel before or after the convention, visit our tourism services page:

http://www.armageddoncon.org/arcon_tourism.html

If you would like to help us publicize ArmageddonCon and are attending another
convention or otherwise meeting SF fans or people who may be interested, we have
flyers and posters available to download at:

http://www.armageddoncon.org/arcon_publicity.html

Finally, we invite you to nominate novels, novellas and short stories for the
Armageddon Apocalyptic fiction Award:

http://www.armageddoncon.org/arcon_award.html

We hope to see you at the end of the world!

Dotan Dimet,
ArmageddonCon webmaster
<http://www.armageddoncon.org>
Armageddon, Israel **con@sf-f.org.il**

Please fill out this form and send it to Mishkenot Sha'ananim by mail or fax

To: Mishkenot Sha'ananim,
 P.O. Box 8215, Jerusalem 91081, Israel
 Phone: +972-2-673-0003/7
 Fax: +972-2-673-0147

I would like to register for **Armageddon 2000: Yet Another End of the World?** on the 28th-31st of December, 2000, at the Laromme Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street and Number _____

City _____

State _____

Country _____

Postal or ZIP Code _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Academic Background (degree): _____

Organization (SF or Academic): _____

I am a Member of the **Israeli Society of Science Fiction and Fantasy**, my membership number is: _____.

- Please register me as a **full** member.
- Please register me as a **supporting** member.
- Please convert my supporting membership to full membership; I enclose the difference in fees.
- Please convert my full membership to a supporting one and refund the difference in fees.

I enclose a cheque for the sum of _____ NIS / US Dollars, made out to Mishkenot Sha'ananim.

I wish to pay by credit card, my Credit Card details are:

Credit card Type:

- VISA MasterCard American Express

Expiration Date: __/__/__

Card Number: _____

Card Holder's Details:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

ID (Israel residents) or Passport number: _____

Nationality: _____

ArmageddonCon Membership Fees:

Until 1st November 2000: 400 NIS (ISSF&F member), NIS 550 (Israel), \$140 (Overseas)

Until 15th December 2000: 470 NIS (ISSF&F member), NIS 650 (Israel), \$160 (Overseas)

At the gate: 500 NIS (ISSF&F member), NIS 700 (Israel), \$175 (Overseas)

Supporting membership costs NIS 120 (Israel) or \$30 (Overseas) and can be converted to full membership by adding the difference up to the full membership fee at the time of conversion.

Refunds: Payments made, minus \$15 (NIS 60) registration and handling fees, will be refunded by Mishkenot Sha'ananim, for cancellation notices received at Mishkenot Sha'ananim by the 1st of December, 2000. Beyond this date, no refunds will be available.