

CyberCozen

Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

המפגש הבא בסיידרת ההרצאות ע"ש עמוס גפן יתקיים בבית-אריאלה, שד' שאול המלך 25, תל-אביב,

ביום רביעי 30.10.02, בשעה 20:00 - הכניסה חופשית

הנושא: אייזיק אסימוב – האיש והמוסד

ההרצאה תעסוק באחד הידועים והפוריים ביותר בין סופרי המדע הבדיוני. מי היה איזאק אסימוב? מדוע כתב כל כך הרבה? מה תרומתו הייחודית למדע הבדיוני? האם וכיצד עמדו יצירותיו במבחן הזמן?

המרצה: ד"ר עמנואל לוטם - עורך ומתרגםMore information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Eli Eshed chosen "Best Israeli Writer of the Year" by Ma'ariv

By Eli Herstein**Eli Eshed**, one

of the most active science fiction fans in Israel, an "Israeli SF&F society" veteran and a long time writer for the Society's web site, the *Tenth Dimension* (the Society's quarterly publication), *CyberCozen* and *isf.co.il*, has been declared "Best Israeli Writer of the

Year" for 2002(AD) (תשס"ב) by the popular daily newspaper *Ma'ariv*.

His Hebrew book *From Tarzan till Zbeng* about Israeli pulp fiction literature was published this year. It was described in *Ma'ariv* as "filled with love and nostalgia" for our most beloved heroes of the past.

Eli regards to himself as a culture explorer, a kind of "Indiana Jones" - without the heroic part. He lives in Tel Aviv and is a hunter of old Hebrew pulp fiction books in general, and old Hebrew SF&F books in particular. His web site is at this link:

<http://www26.brinkster.com/yovalr/eshed.htm>

From Tarzan till Zbeng is Eli's third Hebrew publication, after *Original Hebrew Science fiction* (1999) and *Tarzan in the Holy Land – Transformations of Tarzan in Hebrew Literature* (1999), and is available in any bookstore from "Bavel" publishing house.

Recommended Recent Israeli Hebrew sf and Fantasy Reading by Eli Eshed

רשימת ספרים ישראלים מומלצים לקריאה מאת אלי אשד

מד"ב - Science Fiction

שריאל שני - *הנוכרי בסכך הגדה*. ידיעות אחרונות 2000. מותחן על המרדף אחר תגלית גנטית שביכולתה לעצור את הזיקנה והתגלית של הוכחות של ביקורם של חיזורים בכדור הארץ בעבר הרחוק שהתערבו בהתפתחות האנושית. הנדסה גנטית.

אדי בן מיוך - *ללא מילים*. אופוס 2002. סיפור מתח על ניסיון של מנהיג ערבי פנאטי להשתלט על העולם באמצעות מגבר מחזק את הכוחות הטלפטיים.

ורד טוכטרמן - *לפעמים זה אחרת*. הוצאת אופוס 2002. קובץ של 26 סיפורי מד"ב. אחת היצירות המעולות בשניים האחרונות. מומלץ מאוד!

נאוה סמל - *צחוק של עכברוש*. ידיעות אחרונות 2001. ספר של כמה סיפורים על השואה, כולל סיפור עתידני שמתרחש בשנת 2009, וסיפור נוסף שמתרחש בשנת 2099 ודן בשאלה כיצד תוצג השואה בעתיד הרחוק. מומלץ.

פנטסיה - Fantasy

דודר פרייך - *צדוק בנפתולי התשוקה*. הוצאת בבל 2002.
מונולוגים של אינטליגנציה מלאכותית.

אלכס אפשטיין - *מתכונני חלומות*. בבל 2002. סיפור
פנטסיה מורכב מאוד על יצירתם של חלומות מסוגים
שונים. מומלץ מאוד!

ראובן קרייך - *עוזאי פורא*, 2002 (במקור יצא לאור ב-
1983 תחת שם העת "ריקי קלר") עלילות נערה תל
אביבית מודרנית שחוזרת בזמן באופן קבוע לממלכת
יהודה התנכית של ימי המלכים עתליה ועזיהו וחזרה
באירועים שם. בעצם רומן היסטורי אבל גם על
ההיתמוודות של בני זמנינו עם תקופות עבר.

שלמה בן צור - *נשורת מילולית*. חלונות 2000. ספר
מד"ב סוריאליסטי המבוסס על שיריו ודמותו של
המשורר העברי הידוע **דוד אבידן** שהירבה לכתוב שירי
מד"ב. גיבור הסיפור הוא "דוידיאן", מעין אסטרונאוט
החי בחלל בקיום שמבוסס על יצירתו ותפיסותיו של
אבידן. מלא בציטוטים משירי אבידן. ספר בידי מאוד.

Garbage Films at ICON? by Aharon Sheer

Israel's annual sf and fantasy convention, **ICON**, was held for 3 days during Hol HaMoed Succot at the Cinemateque in Tel Aviv.

Raz Greenberg

I gather that **Raz Greenberg** was mainly responsible for choosing the films shown at **ICON** 2002. Raz is certainly the most knowledgeable person I know when it comes to films. I've known Raz since he was a child. His grandfather, Dr. Shlomo Shapira, was a friend of mine for the last ten years of his life, a very kind, sweet man, one of the nicest people I've ever known. Shlomo was a chemist at Nahal Soreq, and a good one. There is a video film of Shlomo giving a wonderful lecture on chemistry at the University of Florida, and in that film you can see Shlomo's gentle intelligence shining through. When I look at Raz I see his grandfather (from the back they look exactly alike). Shlomo was also a science fiction fan, and we used to trade books.

This nostalgic introduction is intended to indicate that my title is not intended as a slur on Raz - heaven forbid. Nor should it be construed as suggesting that ALL the films at **ICON** were garbage. For one thing, I didn't see all the films at **ICON** (many were shown past my bedtime). But, in fact I have an explanation as to the overall mediocre level of the films that I saw at **ICON**.

Why it is hard to choose films today for a CON?

Nowadays everybody has seen everything good - even the teenagers. Cable and satellite TV show an enormous range of films. Anybody who keeps his eye open can today see almost every sf or fantasy film ever made, on TV. Not only that, but we now have those giant video and DVD rental outlets. No so long ago video films were rented from little hole-in-the-wall stores whose collection of fantasy and sf was limited, if it existed at all. Nowadays we have **Blockbuster** and **Anak HaVideo** with six copies each of anything any good that was ever made. If it wasn't on TV, somebody rented it last week and saw it at home.

I personally have a collection of over a hundred sf films, including many of the best ever made (and some of the worst), from **Bride of Frankenstein** (1935) to **The Day the Earth Stood Still** (1951) to **Blade Runner** (1982) to **Gattaca** (1997). I enjoy showing them to people, and there was a time when people would actually come to my house to see these films. Nowadays when I invite someone to come to see a film, the usual reaction was "Oh, I saw that on TV last week". It doesn't matter what I want to show, it was on TV last week. (And if it hasn't appeared on TV yet, it will soon, or in one of the video superstores.)

So what can you show at a con that lots of people have not yet seen? The answer seems to be: oddball, far out movies from Taiwan, very recent really low-budget American sf films, little-known Japanese "sf" animation films, pilots for forthcoming series, cult films that

only very selected audiences will like, or films so bad that they are funny to a selected audience. My comments below about films seen at ICON should be seen from the point of view that I am quite sympathetic with the problems that Raz had in selecting films, and think that he did a very good job. Here are my comments on the films I saw.

Starblazers (1974), Japanese "sf" animation series for children. This is the film I was thinking about when I used the word "**Garbage**" in my title. I admit, when I saw it, I did not realize how old it is. Judged by today's standards, the animation is primitive, the colors garish, the music childish. Emanuel Lottem, in a talk at the con, said that one of the requirements of science fiction is that it not contradict known scientific facts. Sf can speculate and extrapolate, but it cannot contradict the truth. In this film we are informed, for example, that the distance from the Earth's moon to Mars is "thousands of light years". The heroes test their new warp drive in their new space ship ("The Yamoto"), and travel from the vicinity of Earth's moon to Mars in minutes. "Warp drives" are sf speculation, and we can accept that. Had they said that the ship traveled up to hundreds of millions of miles from the Earth to Mars in minutes, OK. But "thousands of light years" - when the closest star to our sun is four light years away? Why didn't somebody with a minimum of scientific knowledge check this nonsense out? Later on their space ship passes by Jupiter. There we are informed that the gravitational attraction of Jupiter is so great that any spaceship flying near by would be sucked in! Their ship is forced to land on a great rocky island, which floats on top of Jupiter's *atmosphere*. It has plants growing out of the rocks! Had the movie's premise been true, the Voyager I space probe, which went by Jupiter and photographed it in 1979, a few years after this film was made, would have been sucked in by Jupiter's gravity, and never been able to continue its mission! In 1974 if you had said you found a gas island, maybe even living gaseous intelligent beings, in Jupiter's atmosphere - that would be sf speculation. But rocky islands floating in the atmosphere? How can such garbage be fed to little children in the guise of an **sf** series? I can see how a ten year old child might enjoy this colorful and exciting children's series very much, but I cannot see why anyone can call it *science fiction*.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000), China. What bothered me about this film is that there are so many sword fights and other battles. I particularly don't like fights between women, and in this film there are two women heroines who specialize in the martial arts. I also don't like scenes in which ten men gang up against one woman, where their objective is to kill her - even if in this battle it is the one woman who succeeds in killing all the men.

The photography of this film is beautiful. The music is a curious mixture of Western and Chinese, with the themes played on the cello by famous cellist Yo Yo Ma. We have a classic Chinese story of intrigues, struggles between different groups, and love affairs. What makes it suitable for a sf/fantasy con? The real fantastic part is that the martial arts group revealed in this film has secret methods that enable them to leap up walls, jump from roof to roof, and cavort through the top branches of trees. That is, experts in this group can do a kind of "flying", although they must touch down from time to time - it's more like impossibly gigantic leaps from point to point. So with this irrelevant super power - it adds NOTHING to the basic story - this is fantasy instead of simple hand to hand combat.

Soul Music (1996), England. This seven part British mini-series is based on the Terry Pratchett book of the same name. It seems like it would be very difficult to do a series based on Terry Pratchett. In his books language is the motivator - plays on words and bon-mots. What can you do visually with this? In fact, I found the first couple episodes boring, as they heavily emphasized word play, and this does not go well on the big screen. The second half gets to the cinematic elements: the hero sets up a rock group, and they began performing. In each appearance they play in the style of some well-known Earth rock group, from **Elvis Presley** to **The Sex Pistols**. Of course rock is unknown in Discworld, but the people of Discworld are enchanted by the music (perhaps in more ways than one), and this imaginative group is a tremendous success. We see them traveling through the Discworld countryside, from town to town, performing before large audiences. But they have enemies too, who are not pleased by their success, and have other plans for the hero. Forget that this is Discworld and this still remains a pretty good fantasy story (even Death is a major character). Over all, I enjoyed this one, and recommend it. Buy the DVD.

Six String Samurai (1998), U.S. Here is another film in which martial arts is a major portion. It starts out with an sf parallel history idea - Russia conquered the U.S. in 1957. Only one small area of the U.S. remains free: **Lost Vegas**, where playing good rock music is still a favored activity, and the best musician is chosen the leader. The Russians guard the borders, but people who want a place to play their music will try to get there. So will people who want power. The hero, dragged down by a hungry but helpful little boy who refuses to be abandoned, faces one trial after another in his attempt to get to Lost Vegas with his wonderful six string electric guitar. However this is not really an sf movie - although it could have been - but a fantasy film. The hero is a sort of Paul Bunyan - a super figure who can defeat anyone with his magic sword (which can even cut arrows out of the air before they can hit him). Since I was tired of martial arts after **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon**, I was not pleased to watch this one. As I gradually realized that the hero is a mythic fantasy figure, the story become more palatable. Still, even in this imaginary parallel world I would have hoped for more of an sf look at a post-holocaust world and less sword fighting. There is some humor in the movie, interesting music (a mixture of Russian and American rock), and lots of desert scenery, with a few primitive Nevada towns. The scenes with the little boy are curious indeed - this is a very strange abandoned boy - but it is obvious the director intended some of them to be touching. The film doesn't quite work, but if I had seen it by itself rather in the context of the con, I might have liked it better.

Odyssey 5 (2002), U.S.-Canada. This is the two-part pilot for a new series. The premise is weird, although familiar to sf readers. There is some force out there that likes to destroy worlds. When a world reveals itself as having intelligent life, through its radio and TV broadcasts, this force comes and destroys it. At the start of the series, astronauts are in space in a shuttle called **Odyssey 5**, with a variety of missions to do. Suddenly - as they watch - earth burns up and disappears. Their ship is damaged; they are knocked around, but survive. Once they figure out what has happened, they realize they are the only remaining human beings, and have only a few hours until their air runs out and they die. At this point, they are saved by an alien, who has dressed itself up as a human and talks English. "I'll give you

a chance to save your planet", it says (more or less), "I'll send you five years back in time, and plant you in your own bodies as you were five years ago. Try and find out who or what is plotting to destroy Earth, and stop the destruction." At this point it becomes an **X-Files** series. The astronauts are back on Earth in their younger bodies, they know that someone, somewhere on Earth, is going to destroy the earth in another five years, and they have to find out who it is, and stop it. It looks good to me, and interesting to see how, here in the pilot, they have already got major clues as to what is going on. If you like **X-Files** you'll like this one.

Jeremiah (2002), U.S. J. Michael Straczynsky, the creator of the much-beloved **Babylon 5** TV series, has created a new TV series. As in **Six String Samurai** this is a post-holocaust world, but happily it is not one sword fight after another. In this story, all the adults on earth (anyone past puberty) died from a strange disease, leaving a world with only children. The series takes place 15 years later, as most of the things left over from the original world have deteriorated or been used up. Grown-up, uneducated ex-children try to recreate a civilized world, or remain in barbarism. Instead of constant martial arts, we have an intelligent attempt to understand how society might have gone downhill, and how it might rise up again. There are plenty of nasty and power-hungry people to provide excitement, and some unexpected pockets of intelligent drive and will. **Jeremiah** is a real sf series, with great promise. Let's hope it continues in a sensible direction.

What else was there at the con?

I enjoyed **Emanuel Lottem's** talk on author Larry Niven's **Tales of Known Space** series. Dr. Lottem translated many of Niven's books into Hebrew, and he knows Niven and the historical period in which Niven worked, and works today. The talk was thoughtful and interesting, and inspired some discussion of just what sf is, or should be, and why many sf authors (like Larry Niven), as they get older, end up writing soap operas (called "anthropology") instead of sf.

Emanuel Lottem also did a workshop on translating English into Hebrew. He took someone's translation, and compared it line by line with the original. He encouraged a discussion of each word and phrase, what it means and how it could or should be translated. I learned that Dr. Lottem spends more time studying a single sentence (as part of understanding an author's entire style) than most translators spend on a page (often with no attempt to understand the author's style).

Didi Hanoch's entertaining talk on "New Waves in Science Fiction" discussed the past waves of change in sf, from the 1930s to the present ("New Wave", "Cyberpunk", etc.), and pointed out that in this current decade there is no significant sf movement - which may or may not be a problem.

Israeli sf authors: There was a presentation of three author guests of ICON: **Vered Tochterman, Guy Hasson, and Edy Ben-Mayor.** Unfortunately, this was hosted by one of the authors. It should have been chaired by someone sharp-tongued and entertaining, like, say, Didi Hanoch, who would have asked questions that might have roused the authors from their lethargy and produced a spirited discussion.

What else was at the con? Films were shown from 10 pm to 2 am which I did not see. Lots of **Star Trek** episodes. A lot of role-playing. ICON was well-done and varied enough for any sf/fantasy taste.

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