



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy  
In October: ICON2004

The ICON2004 Festival will take place October 3-5 (Succot vacation) at the Cinemateque in Tel Aviv. This year's topic is "Life and Death". Guest of Honor will be author Guy Gavriel Kay, one of the most successful and appreciated fantasy writers. Detailed information in Hebrew will soon be available at the ICON site: <http://www.icon.org.il>

באוקטובר: אייקון 2004

פסטיבל אייקון 2004 יתקיים ב-3-5 באוקטובר בסינמטק תל אביב. נושא הפסטיבל השנה הוא "חיים ומוות", ואורח הכבוד יהיה לא אחר מאשר גאי גבריאל קיי, אחד מסופרי הפנטסיה המצליחים והמוערכים ביותר כיום.

תוכנית הפסטיבל תעלה כבר בימים הקרובים לאתר הרשמי של הפסטיבל: <http://www.icon.org.il>

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

Review of TV Series *Enterprise*  
by Ted Henderson

(Ed. Note: As an enthusiastic viewer of the *StarTrek* prequel series *Enterprise*, shown on Sundays on **Star World** at 20:30, I was gratified to learn from old friend Ted Henderson that the series has been extended for another year.)

*Enterprise* is the current incarnation of the *StarTrek* series of programs which originated with the original *StarTrek* series (*StarTrek: TOS*) in 1966. It continued with *StarTrek: The Next Generation* (*StarTrek: TNG*) in the 1980's, then *StarTrek: Deep Space 9*, and *StarTrek: Voyager*. The latter two ran in the 1990's and to some extent overlapped *StarTrek: TNG* and each other.

The time frame of *Enterprise* is in the time before that of the original *StarTrek*. That being the case, the *Enterprise* of this series is somewhat simpler than the space ship in the original series. Warp Drive had been developed, but transporter technology was not as developed as in *StarTrek: TOS*, so that there is more use of shuttle craft for

missions away from the space ship. (In the original series, the transporter was devised to eliminate the need for shooting expensive shuttle sequences.) Even though the original creator of *StarTrek*, Gene Roddenberry, had passed away some years earlier, the producers of *Enterprise*, Rick Berman and Brannon Braga, had worked with him and were able to carry on with much the same spirit.

As in the original *StarTrek*, the crew is multiracial and multicultural (unless a nationality is given here, they appear to be American). The Captain is Jonathan Archer played by Scott Bakula. As in the original *StarTrek*, the second officer and science officer is a Vulcan, this time a female. Her name is Sub-Commander T'Pol played by Jolene

Blalock who is considerably sexier than Leonard Nimoy's Mr. Spock. The Chief Engineer is Charles (Trip) Tucker played by Connor Trineer. He lacks the cragginess and resourcefulness of Scotty in the original series. The Tactical Officer is the Englishman, Lieutenant Malcolm Reed, played by Dominic Keating who is English. The medical officer is Dr. Phlox, a Denobulan, a race not mentioned in any other *StarTrek* series. The communications officer and linguistic expert is Ensign Hoshi Sato, a Japanese, played by Linda Park who is actually a native of Korea. She gets to say considerably more than Lt. Uhura's "Hailing frequencies open," although her skirt is not as short. The helmsman is Ensign Travis Mayweather, an African American, played by Anthony Montgomery.

The series has just concluded its third season. The programs of the first two seasons were somewhat like those of the original *StarTrek* in that they were a series of episodes in which the crew was confronted with adventures as they explored the galaxy, or they encountered and had to interact with different races. Some of these different races which appeared in the original series were the Vulcans (already mentioned) and the Andorians, a race with bluish skin (they refer to the earthlings as "pink skins") and antennas sprouting from their head. The Andorians appeared in *StarTrek: TOS* "Journey to Babel" in which they played a considerable part. They also were seen in "Whom Gods Destroy". They were shown in several of the subsequent *StarTrek* series too.

The programs of the just concluded third season were an ongoing storyline in which the crew were attempting to intercept and destroy a powerful weapon launched at Earth with

the purpose of destroying Earth, by a multispeciated race called the Xindi. In the season finale, the weapon was boarded and destroyed by Captain Archer who was presumably lost in the subsequent explosion. (One criticism of all the *StarTrek* series has been that they always send their command officers on the most dangerous missions. Another interesting anomaly is how do you hear explosions in the vacuum of space?) However, in the last scene, we find him in the medical ward of a Nazi concentration camp! (In the explosion, there seemed to be a glimpse of P51 Mustangs.) This is what is known as a cliff hanger to encourage viewers to endure the summer season of reruns and come back and see what happens in the fall.

In the U.S., this program is shown on the United Paramount Networks (UPN). Its programs, except for wrestling, are always near the bottom of the ratings, and *Enterprise* is probably in the lower fifth of the ratings. In general, the viewership of the traditional TV networks has fallen off mostly due to competition from cable and the internet. In spite of this, the program has been renewed for a fourth season. There is a hard core of fans, including me, who will watch anything with *StarTrek* in the title.

The program itself is not quite the same caliber as some of its predecessors, but it is still worth watching. I found the ongoing story line of the third season a bit tedious. Perhaps when *StarTrek* first appeared, it was rather unique among the programs of its time. Certainly the quality of special effects and sets has greatly improved over the years. I was gratified that the program was renewed.

*TV Guide* (Stephen Battaglio) explains why this relatively unsuccessful program was nevertheless renewed: "Studios typically need four seasons'

worth of episodes for their syndication deals, and *Enterprise* was one short. And while only Trekkers would care if the show were cancelled, Paramount knows it pays to keep them happy because Trekkers buy a lot of merchandise: *Star Trek* video games, books, dolls and other collectibles ring up about \$200 million a year in retail sales, bringing in royalties of \$20 million to Paramount. When Adams Media Research ranked the 50 all-time best-selling TV-show DVD box sets last

year, nine were collections of *Star Trek* seasons – selling at \$129 and \$139 a pop and each putting more than \$4 million in the studio’s coffers.

“*Enterprise* will help keep those revenue streams flowing. ‘It’s important to have fresh *Trek* product out there,’ says Marty Brochstein of *The Licensing Letter*, ‘There are still a lot of die-hard fans. And they want more.’”

### Video Film Review by Aharon Sheer

**K-Pax** (2001), 120 minutes. Directed by Iain Softley. Starring Kevin Spacey and Jeff Bridges. Rated PG-13 (for a sequence of violent images, and brief language and sensuality.)

Prot (pronounced Proat) is a patient at a mental hospital who claims to be from a far away planet. A psychiatrist at the hospital tries to help him. We found this a charming movie. It is talky ... not an action film. There are little or no special effects. You can almost watch it with your eyes closed. Prot’s doctor partly seems to take the approach that if he pretends to believe Prot’s story, maybe Prot will gradually give up his delusions. But from time to time Prot does things that suggest that maybe he really is from another planet. For instance, his doctor arranges for Prot to meet some astronomers. Prot knows things about his planet which have only recently been discovered by a small group of astronomers, and not yet published. He even (an unlikely task) can draw the orbit of his planet on a computer screen with a light pen. And that orbit is pretty complicated, as Prot’s planet circles (ellipses?) a double star. Prot remains calm all the time, but his psychiatrist becomes more and more desperate. It seems that Prot has informed him that on July 27 he’s going home. The doctor is

afraid this date has some traumatic significance. Who knows what his patient will do on that day? The doctor uses hypnosis to gain access to unconscious memories which hint that Prot was involved in a terrible tragedy five years before, precisely on July 27. An explanation for his strange delusions? The one puzzling thing to me about the movie’s story is, why was Prot hospitalized in the first place? It’s true that he doesn’t seem to know who he is. It’s true that his story is unbelievable. But so what? There are lots of harmless nuts running around. Why has he been put on antipsychotic medication? He does not seem to be dangerous, either to himself, or others. Why not treat him at an out-patient clinic? But then, from what I’ve heard about some psychiatrists, I suppose I should not be surprised. The movie is well acted. Not only the two main characters are well done, but several of the patients in the mental hospital (all remarkably well-behaved, perhaps because of the hospital’s heavy use of antipsychotic drugs) also arouse our interest. We enjoyed it. Recommended.

**Quote of the Month:**

“At birth, the typical brain probably contains over one hundred billion neurons....  
 “...neurons make contacts with other neurons, at points called synapses. Each neuron makes anywhere from a thousand to ten thousand synapses with other neurons. ... A piece of your brain the size of a grain of sand would contain one hundred thousand neurons, ... and one billion synapses, all ‘talking to each other’. Given these figures, it’s been calculated that the number of possible brain states – the number of permutations and combinations of activity that are theoretically possible – exceeds the number of elementary particles in the universe.”

From *Phantoms in the Brain* by V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, p. 8

**Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer**

*Kiln People* by David Brin (2002), 568 pages. Recommended by Sara Beck Svetitsky.

This is a humorous, enjoyable, fascinating book. Brin explores the meaning of “self” in a fun way. Filled with repeated surprises, the author makes philosophy (or solipsism) a delightful game. The basic idea is that a person can make a short-lived copy of himself, including his brain and its contents. The brain’s contents are represented by a Standing Wave, which is transmitted over a short distance (not more than a meter) to the brain of a clay copy (using neuro-ceramics) of the human body. Brin is a physicist, and not a neurologist, and, as the above **Quote of the Month** from *Phantoms in the Brain* by neurologist Ramachandran shows, this is about as likely as being able to use a Standing Wave to copy the universe.

The short-lived clay copies, called “dittos”, survive only about 24 hours, but their existence revolutionizes existence. Bored by your job? Send a ditto. Have to meet someone you might not like? Send a ditto – if the experience is successful, just upload the ditto’s experiences back to your brain (every ditto has a built-in desire to upload its memories to its original.) But if the experience is not pleasant, just let the ditto die (as the 24 hour life span limit approaches, the ditto has the desire to go into the nearest ditto trash bin). Since the ditto has all your knowledge and desires, it will of course (really?) do just what you intended it to do when you created it. (And if it doesn’t, if it runs away to do what it pleases, then it’s called a ‘frankie’, short for Frankenstein. But frankies are rare.) And one nice thing about dittos is that you can send them to do things you would never dare to do yourself, and then upload the experience afterwards. Sexual perversions. Extremely dangerous sports (if your ditto survives). For example, consider this quote:

“One flashing sign yelled E-VISCERAL. Touts stood outside, dyed in garish colors, beckoning passersby to enter for ‘the trip of your lives’. Through gutted walls I saw that a twenty-story building had been converted into one giant thrill ride ... a wildly gyrating roller coaster without straps or safety backups, and with the added feature that many customers had guns – trading shots with those streaking past them in other cars. What fun.” p. 358

Furthermore, war has been replaced by War Games between dittos. Send your army of dittos against their army of dittos, and settle your disagreements by letting the winner get what he wants.

The pathetic human beings are the millions that cannot make functional copies. Condemned to live in only one body! Nobody will ever marry someone like that. Dittos are identified by their color. It’s forbidden by law to make a ditto that looks like a real human being. A medium quality ditto (no sense of smell, for example) is green;

maybe used for household tasks and shopping. A really cheap one is red, for heavy manual labor. A better one is gray; your personal representative – perhaps with hyper-tuning for concentration. Close to the top of the line is ebony (in some ways better than a human being) and the best is platinum. So when you see one on the street you have some idea of what you are dealing with. The story revolves around the wish-fantasies of Brin's hundred-years-in-the-future world. Ditto life-extension? Ditto-to-ditto copying? The technology does not yet exist. What if somebody finds ways to do these things?

Brin's idea is as good a basis for a science fiction novel as faster-than-light (FTL) travel is a basis for a science fiction novel. After all, for most sf novels, FTL is just an excuse for an adventure story in a strange world. Here we have an adventure story about people who have multiple temporary copies of their body and brain. Brin even has his villain provide a scientific explanation as to why the copies are imprinted in clay:

“A Scotsman [A. G. Cairns-Smith] came up with the idea, ... almost a century ago [1970s], and it really was quite clever.

“By that time, biologists agreed that a rich soup of organic compounds must have formed on Earth, almost as soon as the planet cooled enough for liquid oceans. But what happened next? How did all those drifting amino acids and such get organized into tidy, self-replicating units? Cells, containing DNA and the machinery for reproduction, didn't just happen! Something got them jump-started!

“That something may have been vast beds of semi-porous clay, spanning whole sea bottoms, offering an enormous array of patterned surfaces to protect growing molecular clusters. Providing templates for the earliest organisms. Setting a few on the road to greatness.” p. 392-393

“dittos” also provide a chance for Brin (and his friends) to make puns. What is the ditto of a detective? A ditective. What is the kidnapping of a ditto? A ditnapping. And how about a ditto with a psychoceramic disease? Lots of fun here.

One problem is that the book is too long (568 pages). That's common nowadays, but here there is only one point-of-view (POV) character. And it's all in the first person. We start out with the hero's green ditto. The next day the real hero goes into action. And then his gray ditto is off somewhere else. After that, still another gray ditto. Then next day's green. Etc. It's complicated keeping track of who is where when, but it's always the same voice. Too bad Brin couldn't have had two different POV characters, each with his or her own dittos. But I guess that would have been too hard to follow. It's complex enough as it is. It's easier to get away with such length when you have several characters each with his/her own point of view, but with only one POV....

Good reading. Recommended.

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