



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

נא שימו לב לשינוי מקום ההרצאות בסדרת ההרצאות ע"ש עמוס גפן  
המפגש הבא יתקיים באוניברסיטת תל-אביב, בניין מקסיקו, חדר 120  
ביום חמישי 26.1.2006 בשעה 20:00. הכניסה חופשית  
נושא ההרצאה:

### מדריך להשמדת העולם (או חלק ממנו)

על אסונות טבע גדולי-ממדים – במציאות ובבדין

המרצה : ד"ר אמנון סטופ

ד"ר אמנון סטופ הוא מנהל מדעי של צומת נאסא בישראל באוניברסיטת תל-אביב  
(<http://nasa.proj.ac.il>). הוא חובב מדע בדיוני ומרצה על מדע פופולרי.

### חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

פעילויות התא מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2, בבניין ליד הבריכה.  
הפעילויות ללא תשלום.

15/1: סרט – ג'וני נמוניק

22/1: סרט – זכרון גורלי

29/1: הרצאה והקרנה בנושא אנימה. מרצה: רז גרינברג

מידע נוסף ניתן לקבל באתר התא (<http://sfir.tk/>) או בדוא"ל [sfir42@yahoo.com](mailto:sfir42@yahoo.com)

### סדנת הכתיבה ברחובות

סדנת הכתיבה הרחובותית תקיים מפגשים בתאריכים הבאים:

17/1: מניעים של דמויות

31/1: דמויות נמוכות

לפרטים נא לפנות ליולי גנטמן בכתובת [ygantman@yahoo.com](mailto:ygantman@yahoo.com)

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

## Film Reviews by Aharon Sheer

Film Review: **Star Wreck: In the Pirkinning** (2005), Directed by Timo Vuorensola, Writing credits Rudi Airisto, Jarmo Puskala, Samuli Torssonen, 103 min. In Finnish, with subtitles in English.

This is a parody of *Star Trek* made in Finland. I saw this movie at the *StarTrek* (Starbase 972) convention during Hanukah. According to the Internet Movie Database, you can download the film free from the *Star Wreck* internet site ([www.starwreck.com](http://www.starwreck.com)). If you are an adolescent *Star Trek* fan, I recommend you do that. Or you can buy the DVD through the site, which contains additional material about how the film was made.

Watching this movie was like watching an alien movie. The people speak a language which almost no one on earth can understand. Imagine one of the great heroes

of *Star Trek* suddenly appearing in the world of this movie. He won't be able to understand a word anyone is saying! How terrifying! It's like landing on an alien planet and discovering that your universal translator isn't working. Fortunately there were occasional subtitles in English.

I'm going to give away the plot secrets in this review. I don't think you watch a parody of *Star Trek* and *Babylon 5* for the plot, so I hope no one will be upset by this. The great hero of this movie is Captain James B. Pirk [Kirk in our time line], who (for reasons known only to speakers of Finnish) finds himself with his spaceship crew a couple of hundred years back in time – which is many years in our future. Their spaceship has been destroyed, so they have no way to get off the earth. And they are shocked to discover that the antimaterial space drive has not yet been invented.

But they have arrived just about the time the Vulgars [Vulcans in our time line] come out of space and visit earth, bringing to the people of earth the secrets of space travel. The Vulgars in this time line, of whom we see little, are fun-loving helots who are immediately drawn into the lives of hell-raising earth people, and ride around in fast convertibles with beautiful women. The Vulgars' earth hosts decide to take advantage of the Vulgars' concentration on having fun, and sell the Vulgar space ship – the only functioning space ship on earth -- to the Russians. Now Captain Pirk and his crewmates want to get back into space, and they decide that the Vulgars' space ship is just what they need. Pirk and his crewmates, which include the robot Info [Data in our time line], his Plingon [Klingon] first officer (whose name in Finnish I didn't catch), and his Commander Dwarf and Commander Fukov [I'm not sure who those are supposed to be], don't want to be stuck on earth in an era in which NASA has been closed down and there is no space program anywhere on earth. How will they get off the earth?

So they decide to go to Russia and work with the Russians in learning how to build space ships using the Vulgar space ship as a prototype. Somehow they persuade the Russian leader to cooperate, and in no time at all he and Captain Pirk, aided by the machine guns and tanks of the Russians, and the newly Russian-built space ships, have conquered earth. Captain Pirk then declares himself Emperor Pirk, ruler of the earth – yes the Russian leader objects, but to no avail.

Having conquered earth, this leaves Emperor Pirk with nothing more to conquer, as the Russian-built spaceship copies are not interstellar – they can only get around in our Solar System. Russian quality! Pirk's attempts to conquer the other planets of our solar system do not lead to much. There is a wonderful scene showing a Pirk crewman after he has been beamed down to the surface of Mars – without a space suit. I remind you that this happens all the time in the *Original Star Trek* series – people are beamed down to alien planets or moons without space suits – but remarkably enough the atmospheric pressure and temperature are always fully comfortable for humans, and so is the atmosphere's composition. In this movie things are more realistic – Mars is deadly!

What will Emperor Pirk conquer now, with all of earth at his feet? Suddenly a maggot hole [worm hole] appears in space and Pirk and his intrepid crew go through it – finding themselves in an alternate universe where there is an alternate earth protected by a huge space station – Babel 13 [Babylon 5]! And there too everybody speaks Finnish! And there are the familiar captain Sherrypie [Sheridan] and lady first officer (whose Finnish name I didn't catch), along with some alien advisers, including a wonderful Vorlon, ready to defend the alternate earth against the attacks of Emperor Pirk and his

crew. Terrible battles ensue, in which we never know who is going to win, and who is going to lose, and even at the end are not quite sure of the results.

The movie's computer-generated special effects, all done on Samuli Torssonen's home computer, are pretty good. Even the non-computer-generated special effects are pretty good – like the Vorlon. There's lots of swearing (but mostly in Finnish), lots of drinking (typical of the Finns, no doubt), lots of pratfalls and sight gags, lots of fighting (but no one is ever seriously hurt on camera), lots of hilarious jokes in Finnish (the translation seems to leave a lot to be desired), plenty of puerile humor. *Galaxy Quest*, which was also never shown in the Israeli movie theaters, was a lot better. But then *Galaxy Quest* was a professional movie, and grossed 75 million dollars. This movie was entirely done by young amateurs in their 20s, and none of the actors got paid for their efforts. On that basis, it's a great film and I recommend it to all who think they will like it. Download it for free, or buy the DVD!

**Film Review: *King Kong* (2005).** Directed by Peter Jackson. Writing credits for screenplay: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, and Peter Jackson. Writing credits for original 1933 story: Merian C. Cooper, Edgar Wallace. 187 min. Rated PG-13 for frightening adventure violence and some disturbing images. Now playing in Israel.

Director Peter Jackson of course made the recent *Lord of the Rings* multology, so we expected to enjoy this one.

When you remake a great classic movie, like the 1933 *King Kong*, you can choose a variety of paths. One common one is to set the original story in the present time, the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and modify the story as needed to make it fit current conditions. But then you would face the problem that the modern audience will not believe in a story in which there are today unexplored islands on which live giant and up-to-now totally unknown animals. In the 1930s people might have been willing to believe that such islands still exist, but today no one would swallow such a story.

Director Peter Jackson has chosen a different course: He has elected to remake the original 1933 movie, and place it in 1933, when the existence of such unknown animals might still be conceivable to the audience. Essentially Jackson has chosen to expand and improve on the original movie. He has made a new version of the 1933 *King*

*Kong*, as if might have been made in 1933 if only cinema then had had the technological devices that we have today. And he has succeeded in this goal remarkably well.

Jackson has filled in missing gaps in the story, made it more clear and complete. His characters are more believable and better motivated. One of the great gaps in the original movie is the jump from the island to New York: One minute they have rescued the heroine from the clutches of the giant ape Kong, the next moment they are in New York preparing to display Kong to New Yorkers. But the tale of how they captured Kong for taking back to New York is not told in the original movie. Jackson has filled in that gap, and reasonably convincingly.

As in the original movie, there are dinosaurs on the unknown island, a fact about which, as in the original movie, nobody seems in the least bit surprised. The computer graphics is influenced by *Jurassic Park* and perhaps bettered. As in the original movie, the battles between the dinosaurs and other monsters, and

Kong the giant ape, are too frequent, too long and too drawn out – and just as unlikely. Kong has been living on this island all his life, and must be well-known to the dinosaurs and other monsters. They must have had enough experience to know that it's not worth taking him on. But, as in the original....

The end of the movie, in New York, has been improved visually in a very nice way. Kong, having escaped from his New York captors, and having gathered up his beloved heroine, climbs the Empire State Building, at that time the tallest building in the world. At the end of the movie the giant Kong is at the top levels of this building. And Kong is big! But in this movie, Jackson has put Kong in perspective. The Empire State Building is nearly 400 meters high. Kong is eight meters tall. Jackson lets us see Kong on the building from the distance. What's eight meters versus 400? From the

heroine's perspective Kong is gigantic, but standing on the top of that building, Kong is a fly on a flagpole!

The only important part of the plot Jackson has changed is that in the original movie, Kong has fallen in love with the heroine, but the heroine has fallen in love with the ship's first mate, and is going to marry him. In Jackson's version, the heroine has fallen in love with Kong. Doesn't Jackson know that Kong has halitosis? When Kong opens his gigantic mouth, the heroine can hardly stand the smell. Really, Peter Jackson, some things are just not believable.

As one who loves the original 1933 version of *King Kong*, overall I think that Jackson succeeded in doing what I think he set out to do: Remake the original movie, as if in its original time and its original setting, and do it better. Good show!

### Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

*The Martian Inca* by Ian Watson (1977), 202 pages.

High in the Andes Mountains in South America live the descendents of the Incas. Near the end of the 1400's the Incas established a great empire. At the time of the empire's destruction by the Spanish, they controlled an estimated 12 million people, not only in the mountains but also on the western coast. And yet, in 1532, the Spanish destroyed this empire. Since these high Inca mountains (with a mean elevation of about 4,000 meters!) require a very difficult physical adaptation, the Incas there have apparently mixed little with the Spanish conquerors; the residents are still today mostly pure Indians, and millions still speak the ancient language, Quechua. Watson's book introduces us to these descendants, with their very un-European customs and

thought processes.

In parallel we have the tale of an American trip to the planet Mars. In 1977, when this book was written, everyone believed that America would settle space. The idea behind this future trip is exceptional, however. The Americans have developed a giant space weapon, a great gossamer mirror which can be spread out in space, and which can focus the rays of the sun onto a small area on Earth. This weapon, called "Warming Pan", could be used to burn up an enemy below, without endangering the subsequent conquest of the area: no radioactivity, no dangerous chemicals, no bacteria. Just pure clean heat. Changes in world politics have made the deployment of such weapons unacceptable to the

Americans, and then the question is: What to do with this enormously expensive device? The answer: Use it to terraform Mars. By concentrating the sun's rays on the polar ice cap of Mars, the cap can be melted, releasing enormous quantities of water and gases, and giving Mars an atmosphere and oceans. Within decades, Mars will be fit for human habitation. So three astronauts are now on their way to Mars, to carry out this great program.

The Russians, a little jealous, have decided they can outrun the Americans, even if they can not defeat them. They send a robot to Mars to gather Martian sand and bring it back to Earth. They can do that faster than the Americans can get there, and they do. Unfortunately, the returning spacecraft, filled with sand, has a technical failure, and crashes in the Andes, next to a small village. The Martian sand carries an infection, which attacks many of the villagers, giving them a brain disease. The Spanish doctors try to treat all the sick people, and manage to kill all victims they treat. They then burn all the bodies, so there will be no evidence for anyone to see. However, two of the Indian sick get away from the doctors, and recover completely, but dramatically changed. These two Inca descendents then lead a great revolt, intending to reestablish the ancient Inca Empire. And – at first – they are fabulously successful.

But – how will all this affect the trip to Mars? For, at the same time as this disease attacks, and these Incas are

changed, reborn, three Americans are on their way to a landing on Mars. So you can see that we have an exciting scenario. Should the astronauts land on Mars? Should they deploy “Warming Pan”? Should they be allowed to come back to Earth?

Watson's style is really wild at times. The changed Incas have strange thoughts – even weirder than ordinary Incas. But even the American astronauts in the spaceship (which is shaped like a torus) have strange ideas. During the flight only two men were awake at any one time. Shortly before reaching Mars, they all need to be awake together. Here is a passage that really struck me, describing their encounter on awakening:

“The three men watched each other as curiously and jealously as wives introduced to mistresses at an unfortunate cocktail party, or husbands to lovers, eyeing one another carefully for signs of subtle personality shifts in each partner, which a third partner had provoked in secret while they slept. Ghosts of infidelity stalked the torus. Meeting again thus before Mars, they felt shocked by an unexpected access of imagined femininity: a kind of repaired virginity as human beings. None alluded outright to this almost sexual sense of strangeness, for all three sensed that it could spark a bitchy substanceless quarrel.” (p. 125)

An author who can write a passage like that is at least as weird as his Inca heroes.

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