

Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

פסטיבל אייקון 2009

טעימות ראשונות מאייקון! פסטיבל אייקון - הפסטיבל הארצי השנתי למדע בדיוני, פנטסיה ומשחקי תפקידים - ייערך השנה בתאריכים 10-4 באוקטובר, בסינמטק תל אביב ומתחמים סמוכים. נושא הפסטיבל השנה הוא "עיר העתיד". באתר האגודה תוכלו למצוא מידע על חלק מהאירועים המתוכננים:

http://www.sf-f.org.il/story_1144

החל גיוס המתנדבים לפעילות במהלך הפסטיבל. התנדבות היא דרך מצוינת לפגוש ולהכיר אנשים נוספים כמוכם, החולקים את אותם תחומי עניין כמוכם, אנשים המגיעים מכל קצות הארץ בכדי להשתתף בפסטיבל. המתנדבים הם לב ליבו של הפסטיבל, ותרומתם היא שמבטיחה את הצלחתו. והכי חשוב, **התנדבות היא כיף!** פרטים מלאים על ההתנדבות תוכלו למצוא באתר אייקון: http://www.icon.org.il/2009/info_volunteers

עדכוני פרס גפן

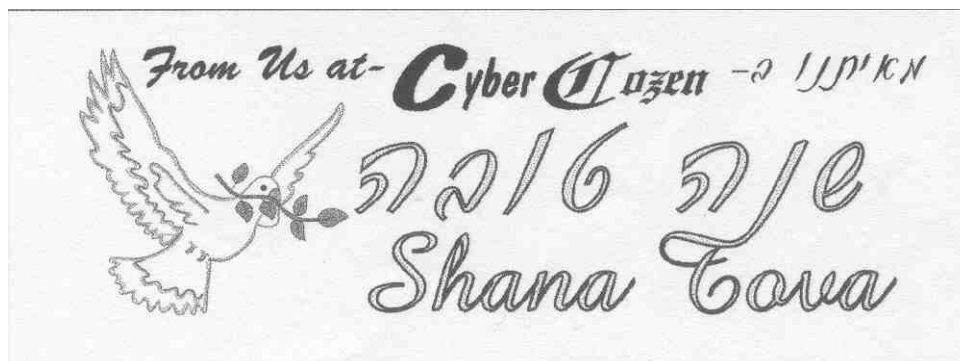
ההצבעה לפרס גפן פתוחה לקהל הרחב, ותימשך עד פסטיבל אייקון 2009 ובמהלכו. בסיום הפסטיבל יחולק פרס גפן ליצירות הטובות ביותר, על פי בחירת הקהל. הפרס מוענק השנה בקטגוריית ספר המדע הבדיוני המתורגם, ספר הפנטסיה המתורגם, ספר המדע הבדיוני או הפנטסיה המקורי, וסיפור המדע הבדיוני או הפנטסיה המקורי. טופס הצבעה המקוון נמצא בכתובת <http://geffen.sf-f.org.il/2009/stageB>.

חדש מפרויקט "פונדק הגפן": סדרת ראיונות עם יוצרים בתחום ואושיות קהילה. בכל יום חמישי מתפרסם ראיון חדש והגולשים מוזמנים לשלוח שאלות משלהם. עד היום התפרסמו ראיונות עם ורד טוכטרמן ועם הגר ינאי. **ורד טוכטרמן** - הסופרת, המתרגמת והאישיות הסגולה מכולן - מעניקה לנו ראיון שנון ומצחיק, בו היא חושפת סודות ממלאכת הכתיבה והתרגום, מספרת על ספר חדש שלה, על ניל גיימן ועל תוכניתה להשתלט על העולם! **הגר ינאי** - היא זוכת פרס גפן בשנת 2007 ו-2008 בקטגוריית ספר המקור על ספריה "המים שבין העולמות" ו-"הלוויתן מבבל". בראיון איתה הגר מספרת לנו הכל אודות זכיות העבר שלה. הפרטים המלאים באתר פרס גפן בכתובת <http://geffen.sf-f.org.il/?p=158>

תסכיתי פרס גפן 2009

גם השנה הוקלטו תסכיתים (פודקאסטים) של הסיפורים הקצרים אשר עלו לשלב ב' של פרס גפן. הסיפורים הוקלטו בעזרת צוות שחקנים ובליווי אפקטים ומוסיקה על ידי קבוצת "מספרי הסיפורים - תסכיתים מקוריים ברשת". הקבוצה מקליטה ומפרסמת מדי שלושה שבועות תסכיתים מקוריים ומעובדים בז'אנר המדע הבדיוני, הפנטסיה והאימה. אתר הבית של הקבוצה: <http://storytellers.co.il/>. לתסכיתים ניתן להאזין ישירות באתר הקבוצה או באתר icast בכתובת: <http://icast.co.il/default.aspx?p=Podcast&id=338034&all=1> כמו כן ניתן להורידם מאתר האגודה בכתובת: http://www.sf-f.org.il/story_1140

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



(New Year's Greeting by Miriam Ben-Loulu, September 1998)

Some Old issues (and other material) of *CyberCozen* can be sent to people who request them. Just email me. It was a great fanzine, once. First write, first get.

In Memoriam

Clara C. Rimon, 1917-2009: Sci-Fi Fan and *CyberCozen* Contributor

By Nina Rimon Davis

At a time when most of Israel had never heard of Sci-Fi, the names Asimov, Bradbury and Heinlein – to name but a few – were part of our daily lives in the home I grew up in – a small house in Holon in the early days of the State of Israel. I used to spend hours opposite our long, uneven, hand-made bookshelves, looking in awe and fascination at the outlandish covers of those "pocket books", as my mother called them (for good reason, of course.) Robots, alien creatures, other-worldly grim landscapes, fanciful spires and elaborate spaceships adorned their covers and populated their pages.

Clara was an avid reader, but not an omnivorous one; she had what I called "a built-in b.s. detector", or, more politely, an innate ability to discern quality, to distinguish between good writing and bad. She had little patience with the latter. She never studied literature formally, nor considered herself a critic, but that she was – no doubt about it. You yourselves, dear readers, have probably come across some of her book reviews, published in *CyberCozen*. She didn't write them with the express intention of having them published. She wrote them mainly in order to express her views and share them with this newsletter's editor. I'm grateful that said editor found her reviews worth printing, and hope you enjoyed reading them.

My mom would never forgive me if I bored you, so I'll be brief with her biography: She was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1917, to a Jewish family, the next-to-last of seven children. As a teenager, she was introduced to HaShomer HaTzair, the Zionist-socialist youth movement, and made aliya to pre-State Israel in 1946, together with the group who established kibbutz Hatzor. She was a wife, mother, grandmother and actress, and inspired an appreciation and enjoyment of science fiction and fantasy in all of us. I say "inspired" rather than "instilled" advisedly, because she never advocated or lectured; but she did tell us: she gave us her opinion, expressed her feelings about and reactions to stories, sagas, movie adaptations. A few years ago, accompanied by my youngest son, Daniel, she was one of the oldest participants in the sf convention [ICON] that takes place annually in Tel Aviv. Her all-time favorite and hero was probably Isaac Asimov, whose non-fiction she admired no less than his fiction. In her late eighties she was reading his ... Bible. She never forgave Stanley Kubrik for allowing / creating a computer that disobeyed Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics.

"What will happen to all my sci-fi books?" Clara asked me wistfully, shortly before she died. "Don't worry, Mom. I'll take good care of them," I answered.

I am honored and proud to do so.

Nina –

I introduced Clara to Connie Willis, whom she really liked, and lent her several books. I will miss Clara.

Aharon

Book Review by Aharon Sheer

HaltinG StatE by Charles Stross (2007), 324 pages.

<p>Charles Stross (b. 1964) is a British sf author still under the age of 50. That makes him younger than most U.S. and</p>	<p>British sf fans. (Israel still has some young sf fans, although most younguns are fantasy fans.) He has been compared</p>
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to Ken MacLeod (b. 1954), Vernor Vinge (b. 1944), Neal Stephenson (b. 1959), William Gibson (b. 1948), and Bruce Sterling (b. 1954), although there are actually a few sf writers as young as Stross is.

This novel is mostly about advances in computing, and I might call it technofiction, rather than science fiction. The novel is near future, taking place in 2018 – only 11 years after it was published. However, the future described seems to me unlikely to be achieved by then. One idea is remote-controlled taxis. While in 2018 you can still take a taxi driven by a human driver, many taxis are driven by a person sitting comfortably in an office somewhere else, controlling everything by remote communication. When I consider all the problems a live driver has when he is sitting right in front of you, watching traffic in all directions, the thought of a driver depending on computer displays to know where and what he is doing frightens me. Not to mention the possibilities of disaster when there are little glitches in the remote communication system.

Another great Stross idea is CopSpace. Every policeman (cop) wears thick glasses which not only show the world, but also provide commentary. The glasses tell the policeman where he/she is and what he/she is looking at. Want to know the address of that building? It's displayed on the glasses. Who are the tenants, what do they do, what company, what business?

Who is that person standing on the street corner? A facial and body recognition system will tell not only the name of the person, but also provide the cop with medical history, police record, and many other pieces of information which in our world would be considered private, but in Stross's future every cop can request access to all of it.

Stross's presentation in this book is alternating chapters presented from three different points of view, two women and

one man. Each chapter is written in the second person, where the person referred to as "you" is the point of view character. Rather confusing. I did not find the three characters to be sufficiently strongly delineated to be able to know who was "you" in any section, but happily the title of each chapter tells the reader who the "you" character is.

One of the three viewpoint characters is Jack, a computer programmer, presumably based on Stross himself who worked for some years doing computing until the company he worked for crashed in 2000. A second viewpoint character is Elaine, a forensic accountant. She and Jack are supposed to find out who stole 30 million euros by hacking a many-player computer game (Avalon Four), which is an online role-playing game (ORG), in which each player has an account with real money. (The thieves were orcs, helped out by a dragon.) The third viewpoint character is Sue, a policewoman with CopSpace glasses.

The action takes place mostly in Edinburgh, Scotland, where Stross lives at present with his wife and cats. In 2012, Scotland became independent of Ruling Britannia, and is now one of the many countries in the European Union. (It's about time, after having been under brutal English domination for over 300 years.)

Stross specializes (as does his hero Jack) in technobabble. Consider this description, given to policewoman Sue, of Hayek Associates, the company that was just robbed of 30 million euros:

"We're a diversified economics consultancy and market-maker. We run virtual central banks for ORGs [massively multiplayer online role-playing games]. We stabilize the economies of seventeen imaginary realms with a combined VM2 – that's, uh, a measure of the total virtual money supply – about the same size as Japan's. We're primary contractors for a tier-one game, VIRTUOUS GOLD, that has almost

12 million players, paying €120 a year for access and averaging another €260 on extras.... What it boils down to is, we're responsible for ensuring that 20 million players who spend roughly €6 billion a year to participate in our clients' games don't see their virtual stakeholdings vanish into mid-air.

"... When a customer clicks through the license conditions to play the game, they're agreeing to add their phone as a node in a distributed server. More players equal more servers – not for themselves, I might add, we *never* run a server node for any given game on the same host as the client for that game, that would be asking for trouble – but at the back end, we're in the processor arbitrage market. The game programmers' biggest problems are maintaining causality and object coherency while minimizing network latency...." [p. 51-52]

Policewoman Sue comes to a neighborhood new to her:

"CopSpace sheds some light on matters, of course. Blink and it descends in its full glory. Here's the spiralling red diamond of a couple of ASBO [Anti-Social Behaviour Order] cases on the footpath (orange jackets, blue probation service tags saying they're collecting litter). There's the green tree of signs sprouting over the doorway of number thirty-nine, each tag naming the legal tenants of a different flat. Get your dispatcher to drop you a ticket, and the signs open up to give you their full police and social services case files, where applicable.... This is the twenty-first century, and all the terabytes of CopSpace have exploded out of the dusty manila files and into the real world, sprayed across it in a Technicolor mass of officious labelling and crime notices.... (If

only half the tags weren't out-of-date, and the other half was free of errors...)." [p. 76-77]

The story of the search for the thieves gets complicated and frightening. Jack is single, but his sister has daughter. When he gets a phone call in which he hears the voices of children playing in a playground, and a voice says, "think of her children", and hangs up, he and we get the chills. It reminds us of the Mafia.

When Jack searches out someone at a gaming convention who seems to be involved in the whole business in some ugly way, the guy mentions some Chinese criminal outfit, and asks for protection. When Jack replies he's not from the government, the guy stabs him – but damage is prevented because the knife smashes into Jack's pocket keyboard, and not into Jack.

Not long after that the guy who gave the speech I quoted above Hayak Associates is murdered. Then another frightening event occurs: Jack and Elaine are riding in a remotely driven taxi when they are warned by phone that the taxi has been taken over by the enemy, the taxi runs wild, and tries to smash into oncoming traffic.

It begins to appear that the entire computer infrastructure of the country of Scotland has been taken over by some enemy; even CopSpace can no longer be trusted, not to mention all cellular communications. Is it the Chinese?

And the thing is that much of the battle takes place in the virtual world of Avalon Four, where Jack is a gigantic bear three meters tall and has to fight all kinds of evil creatures, taking advantage of his knowledge of the gaming code and various code snippets that he can use as weapons when needed.

Perhaps Stross is warning us that a totally computer controlled future world leaves us super-vulnerable to vicious enemies who are worried only about themselves. When your drinks are mixed

and served by a future robot, perhaps someone in some small town in China or Burma will take over that robot and poison your drink. And you will never know who did it, or why.

Overall it's a pretty exciting story, but very confusing, and far from pleasant.

The heroes are attractive, positive people, but the things that happen to them are not. Happily, I don't believe that this disastrous future will be functioning anywhere as soon as 2018 – certainly not in Israel.

Kim Schuefftan comments on author Charles Stross:

“Stross has good language skills, but, as a once technical writer (mebbe he still does that kind of work), I feel he gets swept away by the blahblah potential of the jargon, and the result is a kind of solipsism. There must be plenty of readers in technical fields who enjoy his fancies and follies, but I find his teknochnitzle excessive and heavy. A bissle more restraint.....?”

Historic Photo -- Brian Aldiss Visit to Israel - May 1996
(the beginning of the end of the Rehovot Science Fiction Club)

On the bottom left is Eli Eshed, world's foremost expert on Israeli sf and fantasy; top left is Tova Silverman, Rehovot sf Club co-host; far right is Avner Friedman, founder of the Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy; and in the blurred middle by the door, British sf and fantasy author Brian Aldiss. Photo taken at a meeting of the Rehovot Science Fiction Club, in the Silverman home.



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