



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### תוכנית פסטיבל "אייקון 2010: מבעד למראה" עלתה לאתר!

[אייקון](#) הולך ומתקרב, ואתם ודאי סקרנים לגלות את הדברים המדהימים שמחכים לכם השנה. בימים אלה עלתה לאתר הפסטיבל [התוכניה](#) הגדושה באירועים, הרצאות, מופעים, סרטים ושפע של הפתעות. היכנסו עוד היום וחפשו את האירועים שמעניינים אתכם.

מכירת הכרטיסים המוקדמת כבר נפתחה! השנה, לראשונה, יותר משתלם לרכוש כרטיסים מוקדם מאשר בזמן הפסטיבל, ולחשוב כמה שיותר בגדול - המחיר לכרטיס זול יותר בכרטיסיות מאשר בכרטיסים בודדים. בונס חדש: מי שאינם חברי אגודה יוכלו להצטרף אליה ללא תשלום נוסף בקניית כרטיסיה של עשרה אירועים!

כל הפרטים על המכירה המוקדמת [באתר הפסטיבל](#). אתם מוזמנים גם להצטרף [לאירוע פסטיבל אייקון בפייסבוק](#) ולעקוב אחר עדכונים [בעמוד הפייסבוק שלנו](#).

**אייקון 2010: מבעד למראה. 26-28 בספטמבר באשכול פיס, רחוב הארבעה בתל אביב, מול**

**מסעדת Porter & Sons**

**אייקון 2010: גם בפייסבוק**

בעמוד הפייסבוק שלנו תוכלו למצוא עדכונים שוטפים, פרטים ראשוניים על האירועים העיקריים שמזמן לנו הפסטיבל, וגם הפתעות נוספות. אילו הפתעות? אם נגלה לכם, זו כבר לא תהיה הפתעה, נכון? אז [בואו לבקר](#).

#### מועדון הקריאה

מועדון הקריאה של חודש ספטמבר יתקיים במהלך פסטיבל "אייקון 2010: מבעד למראה". הספר שיידון במפגש יהיה "מבעד למראה ומה אליס מצאה שם" מאת לואיס קרול. המפגש יתקיים ביום שלישי, 28 בספטמבר, בשעה 16:00 באולם 5 באשכול פיס. את המפגש ינחה נדב מילר-אלמוג. לפרטי האירוע בתוכניה – [ראו כאן](#).

הספר שיידון במפגש בחודש אוקטובר ייבחר מביין זוכי פרס גפן לשנת 2010. המעוניינים להנחות מועדוני קריאה ברחבי הארץ מוזמנים לפנות בדואל למרכזת הפרויקט, ליאת שחר: [liat42@gmail.com](mailto:liat42@gmail.com)

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

### Book Review by Aharon Sheer:

*Starman Jones* by [Robert A. Heinlein](#) (1953), 253 pages.

This is one of Heinlein's many "juveniles", books intended for teenage readers, what Heinlein called "boys' books". In those days only boys read sf. Each such book has one or more young heroes, one of whom is a teenage boy. In this book, the hero is of indeterminate age, a boy named Max Jones whose farmer father died when he was in high school.

Max had to take over the family farm and run it by himself. He was forced to drop out of high school in order to keep the family farm going. In the future described in this book, the government is trying to keep small family farms going by making it illegal to stop farming. The owner of the farm can only sell it to someone who will continue to farm it. The only

exception would be if the government needs the land for something more important, say a new road. Only in that case could the land be used for a different purpose. So Max is stuck on the family farm for some years. And then Max's mother gets remarried (surprise Max, here's your new father!). And the new father sells the farm to a wealthy group which has talked the government into rezoning the whole area for some new purpose. We don't know how old Max is (except that he's a "minor", which in 1953 in the U.S. meant he was under the age of 21). But ex-farmer Max is big enough and strong enough and mature-looking enough to pass as an adult. After a violent run-in with his new step-father, Max runs away. After some exciting shenanigans, and getting a fake id and fake personal history, he is able to get a birth on a space ship, and goes out into space. Hence, the book's title, "Starman Jones".

Here's what Heinlein said about his juveniles:

"My next attempt to branch out was my first book: *Rocket Ship Galileo*. I attempted book publication earlier than I had intended to because a boys' book was solicited from me by a major publisher. I was unsure of myself -- but two highly respected friends, Cleve Cartmill and Fritz Lang, urged me to try it. So I did... and the publisher who had asked for it rejected it. A trip to the Moon? Preposterous! He suggested that I submit another book-length MS without that silly space-travel angle. Instead I sold it to Scribner's and thereby started a sequence: one boys' book each year timed for the Christmas trade. This lasted twelve years and was a very strange relationship, as my editor disliked science fiction, disliked me (a sentiment I learned to reciprocate), and kept me on for the sole reason that my books sold so well that they kept her Club out of the red -- her

words. Eventually she bounced one with the suggestion that I shelve it for a year and then rewrite it. But by bouncing it she broke the chain of options. Instead of shelving it, I took it across the street... and won a Hugo with it. *Rocket Ship Galileo* was a fumbling first attempt; I have never been satisfied with it. But it has never been out of print, has appeared in fourteen languages, and has earned a preposterous amount in book royalties alone; I should not kick. Nevertheless I cringe whenever I consider its shortcomings." [from *Expanded Universe* (1980), p. 207]

Heinlein's first juvenile, *Rocket Ship Galileo*, was published in 1947 – I read it about 1950 but was not impressed. The Heinlein juvenile rejected by Scribner's twelve years later, which eventually won the Hugo award, was *Starship Troopers*, published in 1959. By that time, I was no longer reading Heinlein juveniles. It was decades before I read it. After that, I think he stopped writing juveniles.

Back to *Starman Jones*. Heinlein builds a future with details. For example, Max talks with a man in a truck stop restaurant. The man says,

"This dump used to have automatic service – and it went broke. The trade went to the *Tivoli*, eighty miles down the stretch. Then the new owner threw away the machinery and hired girls and business picked up. Nothing makes food taste better than having a pretty girl put it in front of you." [p. 33]

Max comes to a spaceport city and asks a policeman for directions. The policeman says,

"Take this slide to the next intersection, change and slide west. Big building with the guild sunburst over the door – can't miss it. Stay out of restricted areas.' Max left without waiting to find out how he was to

know a restricted area. The Guild Hall did prove easy to find; the slide-walk to the west ducked underground and when it emerged at its swing-around Max was deposited in front of it." [p. 39]

In Heinlein's future world, you can make transitions from one region of space to another, perhaps many light years away. Max explains faster-than-light space travel to his girlfriend Ellie:

"You see, that's just what an anomaly is, a place where space is folded back on itself, turning a long distance into no distance at all."

"Then space *is* warped."

"No, no, no! Look, I just folded your scarf. I didn't stretch it out of shape! I didn't even wrinkle it. Space is the same way; it's crumpled like a piece of waste paper – but its not warped, just crumpled. Through some extra dimensions, of course."

"I don't see any "of course" about it."

"The math of it is simple, but it's hard to talk about because you can't see it. Space – *our* space – may be crumpled up small enough to stuff into a coffee cup, all hundreds of thousands of light years of it. A four-dimensional coffee cup, of course."

"She sighed. 'I don't see how a four-dimensional coffee cup could even hold coffee, much less a whole galaxy.'

"No trouble at all. You could stuff this sheer scarf into a thimble. Same principle. But let me finish. They used to think that nothing could go faster than light. Well, that was both right and wrong. It..."

"How can it be both?"

"That's one of the Horst anomalies. You can't go faster than light, not in our space. If you do, you burst out of it. But if you do it where space is folded back and congruent, you pop right back into our own space again – but a long way off. How far off depends on how it's folded. And that depends on the mass in the

space, in a complicated fashion that can't be described in words but can be calculated."

"But suppose you do it just anywhere?"

"That's what happened to the first ones who tried it. They didn't come back. And that's why surveys are dangerous; survey ships go poking through anomalies that have been calculated but never tried...." [p. 79-80]

You first have to get your ship up close to the speed of light. They have powerful engines that can do that. Then you make the transition, and instantly end up at a nexus somewhere else. Magic.

"The approach to an anomalous intraspatial transition can hardly be compared to any other form of piloting ever performed by human beings, though it might be compared to the impossible trick of taking off in an atmosphere plane, flying a thousand miles blind – while performing dead reckoning so perfectly as to fly through a narrow tunnel at the far end, without ever seeing the tunnel. A Horst congruency cannot be seen, it can only be calculated by abstruse mathematics of effects of mass on space; ... in making a Horstian approach the ship's speed approaches that of light -- and reaches it, at the last instant." [p. 115]

The same ship can not only jump light years, it can also land instantly on the surface of a nearby planet. Very useful.

Heinlein has used his five years of experience serving in the U.S. Navy to imagine that a large starship, with both a large crew and some passengers, will be run like a sea ship. Division of the ship's workers into classes of work, chain of command, place of officers and passengers in the spaceship's hierarchy, all seem to come from ship experience. Max works his way up in the ship's hierarchy, starting as someone who takes care of the many animals in the ship (part

of the source of the food supply for the ship, which takes many months to make its voyages from star to star, and has to feed its crew and passengers). This is a job that Max, from his farming experience, knows and enjoys.

But Max also had an uncle who was an astrogator, and Max has some remarkable talents. Max has a phenomenal memory. He never forgets anything that he's ever read. He read all his uncle's books on astrogation, he knows them all. Gradually he works his way up, eventually become an apprentice astrogator. But here Heinlein's view of the future fails. He knows, correctly, that spaceship astrogation will require computers. But he doesn't understand anything about computers. Not many people did, in 1953. Heinlein knows that computers work in binary. So if you want the computer to make a computation, you have to input the observational data into the computer in binary. Otherwise, how can the computer do the calculation? So the astrogation books have tables giving the BINARY values of various numbers. The poor astrogators collect observations from their sights, and then convert them into binary using these tables. And then they input the binary numbers into the computer by hand, binary digit by binary digit. In truth, in those days, people input binary numbers into the computer either in octal (one digit 0-7 for each triplet of binary), or even in hexadecimal (one letter 0-9, or A-F, for each quadruple of binary). But even that Heinlein did not know.

Alas the Chief Astrogator dies of a heart attack. His replacement is much less competent. Max can do all the conversions from decimal to binary in his head, since he knows the tables by heart. But the other guys do not accept his abilities, and refuse to let him do the work. And they make numeric mistakes, sending the poor ship to an unknown location. Lost in space! Fortunately, there is a G-type star nearby, with a habitable, Earth-like planet circling it, and

so they land there and have to learn to make a new life on a new planet. Max has a discussion about the new planet with his ship-passenger girl friend Ellie:

“Max, tell me all about it.’ She turned and looked out.... ‘Is there anybody on it?....’

“...we haven't seen any signs of cities or towns or anything that looks like civilization.’

“What do you mean by “civilization”? Not a lot of dirty old cities surely?’

“Max scratched his head and grinned. ‘You've got me. But I don't see how you could have it, whatever it is, without cities.’

“Why not? Bees have cities, ants have cities, challawabs have cities. None of them is civilized. I can think of a lovely civilization that would just sit around in trees and sing and think beautiful thoughts.’

“Is that what you want?’

“No, it would bore me to death. But I can think about it, can't I?...’ [p. 169-170]

Sure enough, Ellie and Max are captured by a group of local animals that look like centaurs. It doesn't take long to realize that these animals have a language, a sort of snuffling and snorting with which the centaurs communicate with each other. Max tries to imitate these noises, but does not succeed in getting any ideas across. They are forced to walk with the centaurs, one of whom seems to be responsible for them.

“It became apparent that they were entering a large centaur settlement. The path opened out into a winding, well-tended road with centaurs going both directions and branching off into side roads. There were no buildings, none of the outward marks of a civilized race – but there was an air of organization, of custom, of stability. Little centaurs

scampered about, got in the way, and were ordered aside....

"They stopped at last in a very large clearing, well filled with centaurs. Their master patted the lines that bound them and thereby caused them to shorten until they were fetched close to his sides. He then took his place in a centaur queue.

"A large, grizzled, and presumably elderly centaur was holding court on one side of the 'square'. He stood with quiet dignity as single centaurs or groups came in succession before him. Max watched with interest so great that he almost lost his fear. Each case would be the cause of much discussion, then the

centaur chieftain would make a single remark and the case would be over.

The contestants would leave quietly. The conclusion was inescapable that law or custom was being administered, with the large centaur as arbiter." [p. 205]

The great thing about Heinlein is his wonderful, very convincing characters. Heinlein knew all kinds of people, and he is superb at describing them with their strengths and weaknesses. His books are very human, even if they take place in a future quite different from ours. Good reading. We just have to ignore the fact that he did not know the future. Inputting data in binary!

## Advice Column: More Advice to the Lovelorn from Salacious Sal

(January 1996)

Dear Sal,

What can I do? I'm desperate. I am a beautiful female, intelligence-enhanced Secretary Bird. I love dancing, but I can never find a good partner because I have two write feet.

**Ms. S. Bird**

Dear Ms. S. Bird:

I suggest you find a war veteran -- perhaps one of the Eagle clan since they have many talons -- who has prosthetic feet. Ask him to remove them and leave them in your care. With your two write feet and his two left feet you should do all right.

**Sal**

Salacious  
Sal



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