
Subject: SF-LOVERS Digest V6 #92
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>From SFL@SRI-CSL Mon Nov 29 21:33:29 1982
Reply-To: SF-LOVERS at SRI-CSL
To: SF-LOVERS@SRI-CSL

SF-LOVERS Digest Tuesday, 30 Nov 1982 Volume 6 : Issue 92

Today's Topics:

Books - Chalker's "Wellworld" series, Harrison's The Stainless Steel Rat, Wolfe's "The Book of the New Sun", Asimov's Foundation's Edge, Mushroom Planet, Binary Star, Hubbard's Battlefield Earth
Queries - explosive decompression
T.V. - favorite Star Trek episodes, Dr. Who players
Movies - the Other in SW/TESB, Dark Crystal, Blade Runner
Music - "Green Hills of Earth", Childhood's End

Date: 29 Nov 1982 10:05 EST
Subject: re : Chalker's "Wellworld" series
From: Chris Heiny

I read these, and have a rather low opinion of them. The first book was good, the next two were OK, but the last two were awful hokey. I found Chalker's lapses in plot consistency and use of `scientific' buzzwords annoying to the point of distraction. I'm still not sure what/who Nathan Brazil is : human? God? bloodred turnip with tentacles? Wandering Jew? pathological liar?

It strikes me that he spent a lot of time on the first book, had an idea for two more, which he wrote in about half the time; and then decided to write two more, which he slapped together in about a month, using previous characters to avoid having to think of too many new ones.

chris

Date: 29 Nov 1982 10:50:07 EST (Monday)
From: Ben Littauer
Subject: stainless steel rat and shrinking.

I've just finished the Stainless Steel Rat for President. I did not enjoy it as much as the previous volumes. I haven't read the others in quite a while, but my impression was that DeGriz was not quite as arrogant and infallible in the earlier stories. There were some nice lines (especially the names for the SSR in other languages, which is wonderful), but I was somewhat bored with the repetition of "trap the rat, rat bites" episodes. I also had this odd feeling that the DeGriz family reminded me of something, and I finally realized that they are quite similar to (though more dangerous than) the Addams family (especially as portrayed in Addams' cartoons, as opposed to TV).

I would recommend this one for SSR aficionados only.

The (Incredible) Shrinking Man (Woman).

I think that these were based on a novel called The Shrinking Man by Richard Matheson (I believe that's the name). I haven't read this one in a long time, either, but I remember that it wasn't bad, and that the main plot device (not counting various adventures at different sizes) was wondering what would happen when he shrunk to zero...

-ben-

Date: Monday, 29 Nov 1982 09:33-PST
From: Mike Urban
Subject: Book of the New Sun

As someone noted, Sword of the Lictor (third in Gene Wolfe's "Book of the New Sun") is now available in Timescape paperback. I bought it at Loscon this weekend.

Citadel of the Autarch (the fourth and final volume) is the current SF Book Club selection (along with Life, the Universe and Everything. What a pairing!!). At Chicon, Gene Wolfe said that he planned an additional novel (probably only one volume) dealing with events after the end of the Book of the New Sun.

The Book of the New Sun is outstanding. Because it was completely written and edited before publication (like Lord of the Rings), it is not really a series but is a long novel that has submitted to the economics of publishing. So people like Our Beloved Editor who don't like "series" stories will find it a different beast entirely.

Gene Wolfe will be autographing at Dangerous Visions bookstore in Los Angeles on Tuesday evening.

Mike

Date: 29 Nov 1982 1655-EST
From: Stephen R Balzac
Subject: Foundations Edge and beyond

Having just read FOUNDATIONS EDGE, I think it's a very interesting book. It is, however, somewhat weird toward the end when stuff from THE END OF ETERNITY, THE REST OF THE ROBOTS, and PEBBLE IN THE SKY get into it. Asimov as much as admitted that he set up the book to allow a sequel. Based on the events and loose ends left in EDGE, and his other books, especially PEBBLE IN THE SKY, I think it will be something like this:

Remembering that in PEBBLE, a Terran scientist discovered a "mind-expander" which had the effect of awaking high level mentalic ability in people, and that Terra resolved to keep this secret from the rest of the galaxy (which was almost destroyed by the Terrans, but for the actions of the protagonist, a 20th century man transported into the future) it would appear that lost Earth is the seat of a group of high level mentalics. They have been around longer than both Gaia and the Foundations, and also have the advantage that their powers can be awakened at full strength almost instantly. Gaia was able to hide from the Second Foundation; Earth could very likely hide its power from both. And so the fifth book will involve Gaia and the Second Foundation both hunting for Earth, which has secretly been manipulating the galaxy for its own purposes. Poor Hari Seldon. I'll bet he had no idea there was so much going on in the galaxy when he devised his Plan.

Date: Mon, 29 Nov 1982 1326-CST
From: marick at DTI (Brian Marick)
Subject: Mushroom Planet, Binary Star, Anthony Villiers

The Mushroom Planet books were written by Eleanor Cameron. There are, I believe, about five of them. The first is "The Wonderful Voyage to the Mushroom Planet" (or thereabouts) and the last is something of the form "X, Y, and Mr. Bass". As I recall, the books get more sophisticated as the series progressed -- my ten year old self thought the last was very adult. Since then, I've reread only the first book. Alas, the memory was better than the real thing, so I've not reread any of the others.

I tried ordering the "Binary Star" with the Vernor Vinge story; Dell said they were out of stock. At least one bookstore in the country (Uncle Hugo's in Minneapolis) had one copy last week.

Alexei and Cory Panshin have started their own small press. Coming soon (next year?) will be "The Universal Pantograph", the long-awaited fourth book in the Anthony Villiers series.

Date: 28 Nov 1982 0145-EST
From: Peter G. Trei
Subject: Battlefield Earth (for SFL)

[Permanent Committee to Overthrow the Government next Thursday after lunch]

(Yes Virginia, there ARE SF-Lovers in New York)

Last week I dropped into The Science Fiction Shop. I noticed 'Battlefield Earth' in the hardcover section, and asked about it. It seems that the book has zero to do with Scientology, and here are some more-or-less accurate quotes from the folks there:

"How bad is it? It's SO bad....."

"It's selling like hotcakes."

"Bad enough for five books."

"We've received offers of \$250 for the signed boxed edition." [Which does not exist yet and lists for \$125]

"I'm thinking of getting a signed copy as an investment. I normally don't like to buy literature purely for profit, but this doesn't count."

>From Baird's as-yet-unpublished review: "Not only has Mr. Hubbard not written any science fiction in the last thirty years, he apparently hasn't read any."

(All these quotes are a week stale, and possibly inaccurate. I apologise for both misquotes and any letterbombs.)

Peter Trei
@cu20c

PS: Columbia is not on the net, so don't try to reply directly to me.

PT

Date: 29 Nov 1982 11:39 PST
From: LFeinberg.es at PARC-MAXC
Subject: Re: explosive decompression

Clarke has written a short story involving the process of a man who must go unprotected into space for a short time. In an interview, he discussed the story, and what is and isn't known about it the matter. The effects of the zero pressure didn't seem to be as much a problem as the direct exposure to sunlight (this took place near the Earth, 2001 takes place much further away).

Sorry, I can't locate the story or interview. The novelization of 2001 might also discuss it. Lawrence

Date: 29 Nov 1982 15:18 EST
From: Denber.WBST at PARC-MAXC
Subject: Re: Explosive Decompression

"30 seconds at a probability factor of 8,137,445 to one against and falling, which just happens to be the phone number of a very good..."

A very good *what*? Statistician? Burly spaceship guard? For a good time call...? Don't keep us in suspense any longer.

- Michel

Date: 29 Nov 1982 12:47 PST
From: GMeredith.ES at PARC-MAXC
Subject: Decompression

There's a big debate on SPACE@MIT-MC regarding space suits, low pressure suits and no suits. If you want any of it let me know. I don't care to clutter a literary DL with a load of hardware talk.

Date: 29 Nov 1982 09:49 EST
From: Kovnat.HENR at PARC-MAXC

Subject: Best ST episode

I don't remember the title but my vote for the best Star Trek episode goes to the following story:

In this episode McCoy accidentally injects himself with a very strong drug during a magnetic storm whose source seems to be the surface of the planet that the Enterprise is orbiting. McCoy subsequently goes mad, beams down and jumps through a mysterious machine which shows all of time, both past and future. Kirk and Spock follow McCoy into the machine and end up in depression era USA a few years before the outbreak of WWII. They wind up in a soup kitchen run by (I can't remember her name) but during the story, Kirk falls in love with her. Spock meantime determines that this woman has two possible futures: either she will become the leader of a national peace movement that will delay the entrance of the US into the war, resulting in Nazi victory and therefore Kirk's and Spock's world will never exist, OR she gets killed in a car accident.

Without spoiling more most of you probably recognize this episode by now. It was written by Harlan Ellison and is not only my favorite ST episode but also in my opinion one of the best episodes of any TV series ever. Why? In one hour the story flows from danger to humor (Kirk trying to explain Spock's ears to a 1930's policeman) to love to frustration (Kirk's because of his knowledge of the two fates of the woman and Spock's because of his trying to repair his tricoder "with little more than stone-age knives" (this quote may be slightly off) -- one of the few times we Spock actually get what may be called angry). It all hangs together and flows. The writing is a cut above standard TV fare thanks to HE and finally (this may be apochryphal) the episode is noteworthy because it is the first time that the word "Let's get the HELL out of here" was heard on a prime-time network show.

Date: 29 Nov 1982 1024-EST
From: DAVID.LEWIN
Subject: Favorite Star Trek episode

My vote goes to "The City at the Edge of Forever" by Harlan Ellison. In essence it is a time paradox story, nicely done, pitting Kirk's sense of duty (to ensure that his future occurs) against the life of the woman he has fallen in love with.

From: duntemann.wbst

Date: 29-Nov-82 14:22:32 EST

Subject: Random notes

Time to purge the tubeside notebook buffer into the network:

There was a whole stack of paperback copies of Sword of the Lictor at the Left Bridge Bookshop in Fairport New York as of today's lunch hour; they should be percolating westward in the next few days. I had the good fortune of having dinner with Gene Wolfe a couple of months ago, and asked him how many of his "fancy words" he had invented. Answer: None. All are either completely legitimate archaisms, or else portmanteau combinations of legitimate words. No smerps! I checked more than a few in the OED and located them all. What a mind! The "fifth book in the series" (it really isn't part of the series) will probably be called The Urth of the New Sun, and it will contain Severian. However, the story line is completely independent of the first four books.

I believe that Beowulf Shaeffer once had to schlep Carlos Wu across hard vacuum in a Larry Niven story which I think was called "The Borderland of Sol" { 1974 } and cautioned Wu to keep his mouth OPEN. One wonders why...

I remember (God knows why) a beebop song from the early sixties called "Haunted House." It was largely about monsters and such, but had this peculiar verse:

From outer space there came a man,
Drank the hot grease from the frying pan,
"Hey that's hot!" I began to shout--
Drank the hot coffee right from the spout...

If we've dug this far for SF in popular music, I think we may have at long last struck bottom.

Rather than poll on the best Star Trek episode, how about the worst? My top five votes all go to the silly thing about the Yongs and the Comes. Having to watch Kirk receive the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag is about as embarrassing as having your maiden aunt inform you that your fly is open. Or worse.

TV SF suffers from dry rot because most TV SF is series based, and in a series you cannot allow your characters to either gain or lose anything important from episode to episode. Character evolution is what makes good fiction, in any genre or any medium. TV could do excellent low budget SF by adopting an anthology format similar to Night Gallery and resisting the temptation to play toward the kiddies.

But don't look for it; I gave up TV as a whole to the scrap pile years ago.

Nothing yet beats the printed word. Cherish it.

--Jeff Duntemann (Duntemann.wbst@PARC-MAXC)

Date: 29 Nov 1982 16:14:50 CST (Monday)
From: Jeff Bowles
Subject: Favorite Star Trek episode

Sorry, guys. The BEST Star Trek episode was "The Menagerie."

Jeff

Date: 28 Nov 82 23:44:33-PST (Sun)
From: Stephen Willson
Subject: the other

>From Rolling Stone, June 12, 1980, an interview with George Lucas (by Jean Vallely):

Jean: "... Let's get back to 'The Empire Strikes Back' for a moment. In the movie, Ben says Luke is the last hope and Yoda says, no, there is another."

Lucas: "Yes. [Smiling] There is another, and has been for a long time. You have to remember, we're starting in the middle of this whole story. There are six hours' worth of events before STAR WARS, and in those six hours, the 'other' becomes apparent, and after the third film, the 'other' becomes apparent quite a bit."

Jean: "What will happen to Luke?"

Lucas: "I can't say. In the next film, everything gets resolved one way or the other. Luke won the first battle in the first film. Vader won the second battle in the second film, and in the third film, only one of them walks away. We have to go back to the very beginning to find out the real problem."

Also, I remember someone on this list dialed in and said that when Lucas saw the speculation that had gone on on the list his response

was, "Remember the clone wars. Anything could have happened." or words to that effect.

So, based on all this, my speculation is:

- 1) Luke marries the Emperor's daughter to unify the Empire.
- 2) The other is an as yet unknown character.
- 3) The real meat of this is the Father vs. Son conflict. How is it that a good guy like ob1 would hide the truth from Luke about his Father? He wouldn't. But Luke searches his feelings in TESB and seems convinced that Vader is his father (Vater in German means, "father".) Ergo, both facts are true courtesy of the Clone Wars. Luke will kill his pseudo-father.
- 4) Outside prediction: most of the final battle will take place at the Emperor's place. The general scheme will be similar to Episode IV: while the remaining rebel forces battle the Emperor's forces, the real battle will be happening between Luke, ob1, Yoda, Darth, the Emperor, and the "other" (the Emperor's daughter who will no doubt slay the Emperor as a big surprise). This last bit because Jedi don't seek revenge, and Lucas, who seems to have some Zen in him, no doubt wants the evil forces to be self-destructive.
- 5) Leia is the daughter of a Senator. She's not bigtime royalty. She and Han will get married the same time Luke and the "other" do.

-- In hopes of inspiring discussion,
-- Steve Willson
-- UC Irvine

Date: Monday, 29 November 1982 11:53-EST
From: Skef Wholey
Subject: The end of Luke's twerpiness and his clonely dad

From: Nathaniel Mishkin
Subject: The Other

Perhaps he's not the twerpy and
irresponsible "I've got to go help my friends, damn the training"
guy
I thought he was.

Indeed. It looked to me like Obi Wan was acting (badly) when he was trying to get Luke to stay. Seems that his leaving training could have been a form of test or a part of his training. He did what was right and good, not what his teachers wanted him to. Also, somewhere between the beginning and the end of the movie people (like Han) stop calling him ``kid." It looks like he's matured or something. How

about that! Character development!

From: Jonathan Alan Solomon
Subject: The Other [rebuttal]

On a similar note, I would like to put forth the following theory: If Darth Vader is indeed Luke's father, than I propose that Obi Wan is Darth Vader's father. Like father, like son, eh?

Hey, people! Why have you all forgotten the CLONE WARS? I'll bet good money that there's at least one clone in the Luke, Darth, Obi Wan, and Luke's dad group. To explain Darth being Luke's daddy: Luke could be a clone of Darth, or Darth could be a clone of Luke's real dad (whoever he was).

--Skef

Date: 29 Nov 1982 12:08 PST
From: LFeinberg.es at PARC-MAXC
Subject: SW:ROTJ

Darth Vader wants help from his son overthrowing the Emperor, so together they can be new Emperors. Luke Skywalker wants to end the evil Empire. Together they will defeat the Emperor, but both (or at least Vader) will perish in the process, cleaning up the loose ends. The "other", the new hope of the Jedi, will carry the flame on to the next bunch of movies.

Lawrence

Date: 29 Nov 1982 1528-EST
From: Gregg Wolff
Subject: Dr. Who

Dr. Who 1:WILLIAM HARTNELL
Dr. Who 2:PATRICK TROUGHTON
Dr. Who 3:JON PERTWEE
Dr. Who 4:TOM BAKER
Dr. Who 5:PETER DAVISON

Basing my information on facts revealed in The Three Doctors episode there were no other incarnations [i.e. not covered in the series].

Peter Cushing also played the Doctor in two feature length films released in the 1960's. Peter Davison I believe can be seen in the HHGTHG TV Series playing the Dish of the Day. One other additional note: The BBC has just released a few more Dr. Who stories including one story from each of the incarnations.

-Gregg

Date: 29 Nov 1982 1020-EST
From: DAVID.LEWIN
Subject: "Green Hills of Earth"

Ralph Winter, an important figure in experimental jazz, has set the words of Heinlein's "Green Hills of Earth" to music in a new work, "Missa Gaia" ("Earth Mass"), which he recorded at the Grand Canyon and in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. In an interview on NPR's "All Things Considered" he explained the genesis of this work, and mentioned the story of Rhysling, the blind spaceman/balladeer.

Date: 29 Nov 1982 9:44:12 CST (Monday)
From: Jeff Bowles
Subject: Eskimo Nell?

There's a particular rhyme/song/something to the title of "Eskimo Nell". I've got a friend who wants a copy. Can anybody help me out?

If it's what I think, probably you shouldn't send a copy to the SF-LOVERS list. If there's sufficient interest, I will send copies to interested parties...

Jeff

Date: Monday, 29 Nov 1982 09:52-PST
Subject: The Dark Crystal

The Dark Crystal was first announced in a big way at Worldcon last year in Denver, where there were storyboards and stills and the like. At that time, principal photography was just being finished, and a

summer release was anticipated. Would YOU have wanted to release a fantasy film this summer? They wisely decided to wait and build their publicity for a Dec 17 release. At Chicon, an additional presentation was given, including a 6-minute clip which, the audience was told, was from the completed film.

The film is your basic quest story in which the young hero Jen and the heroine Kiri (the last of the Gelfling race) are called upon the end the power of the evil Skeksis, who use the Dark Crystal for their evil purposes.

The original artwork by Brian Froud ("Faeries") has been skillfully realized by Jim Henson's artisans. A museum exhibit of the characters, sets, and props (artifacts?) from the film was recently on display in Los Angeles at a folk-art museum. There was also a video-tape promotion film (this film was also at Chicon and on the streets of Westwood Village, in different versions).

If the story is any good at all, this will be a wonderful film; the "look" of it is beautiful, at least. And no, Frank Oz is NOT the voice of Augrah (sp?), the earlier publicity films were "rough cuts" in which he provided an interim voice that made Augrah seem like Yoda's grandmother.

Mike

Date: 28 Nov 82 14:24:42-EST (Sun)
From: J C Patilla
Subject: blade runner query, kid sf

I just got around to seeing "Blade Runner" this weekend, and I now dimly recall an argument in this digest about smallpox scars - I don't remember any discussion of such from the movie. Did I miss something, or was the print I saw missing something ?

Re juvenile sf - I read the Mushroom Planet books, too, and had completely forgotten them until seeing them mentioned here. Another excellent book, as I recall, was "A Wrinkle In Time". Fairly good adventure, science involvement, non-sexist plot, neat aliens.

Date: 29 Nov 1982 1602-PST
From: Don Voreck
Subject: Correction Correction Childhood's End

My claim was that the song was about the book. I only told about parts of the book that the song seemed to talk about.

YES the children DO leave in space ships contrary to the contradiction and they also return to the earth as and destroy it as David Lewin described.

Sure my spoiler leaves out most of the book, including the conclusion. I only gave the parts of the plot which I felt were relevant to the song. It is a valid explanation of that sub plot and a huge spoiler. It is a very long book and a very short verse.

Don

End of SF-LOVERS Digest
