
Subject: SF-LOVERS Digest V6 #90
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Reply-To: SF-LOVERS at SRI-CSL
To: SF-LOVERS@SRI-CSL

SF-LOVERS Digest Sunday, 28 Nov 1982 Volume 6 : Issue 90

Today's Topics:

Books - Wolfe's "The Book of the New Sun", Harrison's "The Stainless Steel Rat", mushroom planet books
Misc - Media of science fiction
Movies - The Last Unicorn, 2001 movie sequel?, "the other" in TESB, Star Trek inconsistencies
T.V. - various shows

Date: 27 Nov 1982 (Saturday) 1857-EDT
From: KENNEA at Wharton-10 (Richard Kenneally)
Subject: Book of the New Sun

Actually, the third book, Sword of the Lictor is out in paperback at Encore books in Philadelphia. I bought it yesterday and it deserves its reviews. Also, the third book in the Jack L. Chalker Warden Diamond series is out in paperback. I haven't read these and would like to hear some opinions.

-]Rick

Date: 26 Nov 82 12:57:30 EST (Fri)
From: Khron The Elder
Subject: The Stainless Steel Rat

About 6 months ago, I heard rumors that Paramount or some such were going to make a movie of The Stainless Steel Rat or had already started. I haven't heard anything since. Anybody else know anything about this? I think I read it somewhere, though the magazine's

respectability was probably questionable.

-Rehmi-

Date: 25 November 1982 17:51 mst
From: Lippard at M.PCO.LISD.HIS (James J. Lippard)
Subject: Stainless Steel Rat for President
Reply-to: Lippard%PCO-Multics at MIT-MULTICS

It is available in paperback, published by Bantam. I note that the publication date is December 1982, I just picked it up at my local Walden bookstore, there were several copies.

Date: 27 Nov 1982 (Saturday) 1755-EDT
From: SPEAR at Wharton-10 (Daniel Spear)
Subject: Media of science fiction

The majority of the science fiction discussed in sf-lovers has been in 3 major media -- books, movies, and tv (with some recent, arguably weak, efforts in music) (and a little radio). I would like to see a discussion focusing on the relative advantages of these media, including why one would choose one over another, what is most effective for what sorts of things, etc. As I see it, there are 2 major types of sf as regards its medium: science fiction in the medium it was intended, and sci fi adapted from another medium. The latter includes many things, such as books and movies coming from the Star Trek tv series, movies from books, or even tv and books arising from radio (HhG). I believe it is generally considered that the original is better than its copies, in most cases. Why is this? Is it because the copy doesn't show enough imagination? Or is it because the original concept, as it was formulated, was particularly suited for the original medium? Should there be more people writing sf particularly for certain areas such as movies?

These are some of the questions in this area that I would like to see addressed. Any interest out there?

Dan

Date: 27 Nov 1982 15:22-EST
From: James.Muller at CMU-CS-GANDALF at CMU-CS-A
Subject: topics of discussion

In answer to a question a few weeks, the things that got me started on

sf were Heinlein's "childrens" books, which everyone seems to think are perfectly good reading for adults. I asked my librarian what would be some good science fiction to read, and she pointed me to Heinlein (this is 5th grade). I seem to remember immediately taking out ``Rocket Ship Galileo'', ``Space Cadet'', and ``Time for the Stars'' the first week, and eventually all the others, and then some of the "adult" Heinlein that my library had -- such pornography as ``Time enough for Love'' and ``Stranger in a Strange Land'' (incidentally there is a rock song based on this book, but I only heard it once about 5 years ago, and don't remember anything about it.)

Here's a question that I'd like to see discussed: What is the "best" episode of Star Trek? (Movies don't count.) Why? I mention this because WPXI just aired my favorite 2 hours ago.

My vote: ``Mirror, Mirror''.

Except for the initial incident which set up the episode, (an ion storm sent Kirk, Scott, McCoy, and Uhura into a parallel universe while they were beaming up) everything seemed fairly real. No blasts equivalent to 90 photon torpedos were absorbed by the Enterprise shields, no alien creatures burned "NO KILL I" into the ground.

None of this kneejerk extra killing went on. True, some of them killed each other, but killing an officer would undoubtedly been unsafe for a security guard on the ISS Enterprises. When Sulu and his three security guards threatened to do away with the good guys, Kirk's women (Marlena?) killed the guards and left Sulu alive, but then they were holding phasers and he just had a knife. Notably, none were killed during the first ten minutes of the show.

More to the point, all the characters seemed to act in a very reasonable way. Notably, Captain Kirk's was angered with the mercenary from Chekov's(sp) guard who saved betrayed Chekov to save Kirk and then expected a promotion with Kirk. Kirk also took risks to avoid killing the Halkans, spared Chekov, and fought to convince the evil Spock that the Empire was wrong. Spock's actions all seems perfectly logical in light of his environment. He still seemed to have that Vulcan curiosity too. I thought it said a lot for McCoy that he was willing to risk not getting back to the real universe in order to save the evil Spock.

The clincher: Spock looks really neat with a beard.

The flaws I saw were that the evil Kirk was portrayed as being less intelligent than the good Kirk, which seems unjustified; and the Computer was handled in typical hokey manner. Well there's the heart of the matter! How many Star Treks are there that you can only see two

flaws in?

What, me, verbose?

Jim

Date: 26 November 1982 20:37 mst
From: Lippard at M.PCO.LISD.HIS (James J. Lippard)
Subject: Mushroom Planet books
Reply-to: Lippard%PCO-Multics at MIT-MULTICS

The Mushroom Planet books were probably my first exposure to science fiction as well. I remember checking them out from the school library in 1972 or 1973. Does anyone know the titles of these books? The author's name was Cameron, I think, I can't remember her first name. I also seem to recall reading another book by the same author, something about unicorns and a note hidden inside a Christmas tree ornament.

Jim

Date: 24 Nov 82 13:57:46-PST (Wed)
From: decvax!wivax!linus!genradbo!mitccc!cutter at Ucb-C70
Subject: Review: Last Unicorn

THE LAST UNICORN is a wonderful movie. Admittedly, I thought I was in for the standard G-rated slop that those intellectual eunuchs (sp?) in Hollywood put out. I was wrong.

First off, the screenplay was written by the author of the book it's based on, The Last Unicorn, by Peter S. Beagle. Therefore, it is at *least* 90% accurate to the book. Second, the music is down to minimum: there is only one disgustingly sweet, dripping with sentimentality, totally useless love song, and that is kept short. There are only two other songs, the credit music, and another that floats in and out. Third, the animation is from all those wonderful guys in Japan; the same folks who brought you SPACE CRUISER YAMATO (aka StarBlazers), SPACE PIRATE CAPTAIN HARLOCK, GALAXY EXPRESS 999, etc, so watch for those huge eyes. It is quite good animation, considering the movie was produced by Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass, who brought us such Saturday morning wonders as "Speed Buggy" and "The Jackson Five" (remember that one??). And lastly, the cast. The voices are done by some really good people, among them Angela Lansbury, Alan Arkin, Jeff Bridges, Mia Farrow, Tammy Grimes, and (of course) what animated would be complete without Paul Frees.

The plot (if you have never read the book) concerns a unicorn who is obsessed with finding out if she is truly the last unicorn in the world. It's not a very big plot, but it makes for an enjoyable movie nevertheless. TJust the butterfly is worth seeing it ten times over.

-- Joe --

(p.s. ElfQuest animated: Fall, 1987/Spring, 1988 !!!!)

Date: Saturday, 27 November 1982 14:06-EST
From: RG.JMTURN at MIT-MC
Subject: In defense of The Last Unicorn

In issue 89, John Redford pans "The Last Unicorn" because it is not, in his opinion, faithful to the book, and has less detail than a movie like Star Wars.

Unfortunately, he overlooks a critical distinction between SW and TLU. SW was a screenplay before it ever was a book. Lucas could tailor the story to fit into a 90-120 minute medium. The Last Unicorn is a deep and textured story, and there is no way it could be fit into a commercial length. Therefore, Beagle did the only thing possible, he trimmed down to the basic story.

In addition, SW is a live film. It's easy to make a live film gritty and full of detail, you just add props. Animated films have to rely on making the limited elements of a cel as good as possible. We're not likely to see Disney quality animation until computer aided animation becomes popular, the love Disney put into his work isn't cost-effective anymore. But TLU comes closer than 90% of the other crud released as "animation".

Finally, I think in some important ways, TLU is a better film than SW or ET. Those movies have everything going for them. They have scripts and plots developed specially for the medium. They have happy endings and characters people can indentify with. And they have big budgets to splurge on effects.

TLU had a locked in plot way too long for a movie, a bitter-sweet ending which leaves several characters less than happy, and a budget which couldn't be anything over a million or two.

It's easy (comparatively) to take a film with all the breaks and make a hit, but to take a story which isn't really meant for the medium, and make a releatively good film out of it takes much more. It usual takes an act of love, and I think Beagle put out what Lucas and

Spielberg didn't have to.

It may take a powerful artistic vision to surpass a reader's imagination, but it takes love and care to bring a book to the screen with any success, and I intend to respect that effort by nominating TLU for the Hugo (assuming nothing better comes along...)

Flaming Forever,
James

Date: 27 November 1982 17:07-EST
From: Steven A. Swernofsky
Subject: The Last Unicorn (movie)

Last night I saw the movie "The Last Unicorn." It is animated feature which portrays the quest of a Unicorn, a young magician, a helpful girl, and ultimately, a heroic prince, to find the lost other Unicorns. The movie is a beautiful expression of the legend and magic which goes with good fantasy stories.

The movie draws its power from the telling of a tale which is sweet and pretty, and evocative of a proper fantasy world. It builds gradually, as a quest should, from the first doubting by the Unicorn ("Unicorns do not vanish. We may be killed if we leave our forests, but we do not @i(vanish).") to an exciting resolution ("Not all the magic in the world can save her now. That is what heros are for.") The plot is uncomplicated, but still leaves room for challenge, response, and doubt by the characters, and even comic relief.

I found the characters to be likeable and well-portrayed. I especially liked Alan Arkin as the young-magician-seeking-wizardry. (I must admit to a feeling of anomaly; after seeing "The Seven Percent Solution" I now associate that voice permanently with the character of Sigmund Freud.)

To John Redford (VLSI at DEC-MARLBORO), who said that "[i]t takes a powerful artistic vision to surpass a reader's imagination," I note that a powerful artistic vision should in fact @i(supplement) the reader's imagination! I think that "The Last Unicorn" does just that.

-- Steve

Date: 26 Nov 82 22:02-PST
From: mclure at SRI-UNIX

Subject: 2001 movie sequel?

I've heard a dubious rumor: that Kubrick is working on a sequel to 2001 in-line with the 2010 Clarke book recently released. I just can't believe that Stanley would demean himself (and the original movie) to do a sequel; it isn't his style to do two movies on the same subject or even using the same background.

Does anyone know the real story on this?

Date: 25 Nov 82 19:13:26-PST (Thu)
From: decvax!littvax!sii!mem at Ucb-C70
Subject: Re: The Other

Interesting theory (about Boba Fett). I didn't get any impression, though, that Darth Vader was putting up with any insolence from him. And it certainly isn't the case that Darth thinks he is the top living Jedi; remember how he admits that the Emperor is stronger. First in the communication with the Emperor (The emp indicated as how he felt a strong presence in the Force, Darth agrees, all the while kneeling). Next in his conversation during the battle with Luke, Darth says something to the effect that the Emperor knew that if they (Darth and Luke) joined forces, they would be stronger than the Emperor. Thus, an admission of being weaker than the Emperor.

Mark E. Mallett

Date: 26 Nov 82 15:02:22-PST (Fri)
From: harpo!seismo!rocheste!FtG at Ucb-C70
Subject: The Other

Here's one vote for Other=Leia. Other suggestions seem ludicrous.
Question: why did Leia know to turn back to rescue Luke?
Question: Why has Luke and Leia been like brother-sister (hence Hans as the romantic interest)?
Question: Why is it "princess" Leia, i.e. role of royalty/Jedi future rulers of empire after successful revolution????
You can send congrats on insight next may to...

FtG at rocheste

Date: 26 Nov 82 18:49:02-PST (Fri)

From: decvax!utzoo!watmath!bstempleton at Ucb-C70
Subject: Re: The Other

Vader is not the top living Jedi in any way, and he knows it:

- 1) He defers to the emperor (my master) quite clearly.
- 2) It is unknown who would have won the vader-obiwan fight if obiwan had not given up the fight to enter this higher plane he is in. If obiwan could have beaten vader, then Yoda could too.

If the Other was on the cloud city, and yoda could not see the fate of those there when luke left, then they should have had some concern that all their eggs were in one basket. This gives support to the idea that the other is not from the group of central characters, but it could also be Lando, who the ROTJ trailer says plays a big part in the third movie.

Remember: Yoda thought Luke was too old for Jedi Training and accepted him because he had already learned from ob1 and the rebels.

Date: 27 Nov 1982 0507-PST
From: Henry W. Miller
Subject: Battlestar, etc

This evening, in the Bay Area, they had a re-showing of one of the best BATTLESTAR GALACTICA episodes, "The Living Legend", starring Lloyd Bridges as Cmdr. Cain, the master of the lost Battlestar Pegasus.

This episode had all the right features; the discovery of another Colonial war ship, that was thought to be lost. A conflict between the the respecting commanders. Father vrs son, Father vrs daughter, friend vrs friend, warrior vrs warrior, and all on the same side!!!

Baltar, foul being that he is, slipping in his own solid bodily wastes, when he realizes that Cain is after him. Massive alien (CYLON) attack forces moving back and forth, trying to outwit Adama and Cain, who have already figured out how to counteract the Cylon's attack plans. Romance (only implied) between Adama's son, Apollo, and Cain's daughter, Sheba.

The destruction of a Cylon base, ("Yucky Cylons", as my nephew is fond to say), well, what else could you want?

Well, I wanted it to live.

B.G. died a tragic death. It had the largest budget of any TV series, and yet it died. Why?

Dry rot.

I mean, every other week, Apollo or Starbuck would crash on some desolate planet, similar to the old west, be made town marshall, and go out to kick some booty.

OK, OK, the episodes with the Terra crisis were different, but can you believe Edward Mulhare as an invisible Angel named John?

And, Patrick McNee as the Devil? (He did a good job as a surrogate) (Has anybody ever figured out what was in the wreckage on that planet?)

What I am getting at, is will anyone ever figure out how to do good SF on TV? "Lost in Space" was good until several episodes, then it became the "Dr. Smith, Will Robinson & Robot" show. We are talking a downhill slide.

I always enjoyed "Time Tunnel", even though the facts were not quite right.

"Buck Rogers" was just fun, even tho it was played in a serious vein. I enjoyed it.

"Twilight Zone", sigh.

"Night Gallery", my two favorites are: "The Messiah on Mott Street" (starring Eddie G. Robinson), and "They're Tearing Down Tim Riely's Bar".

"Outer Limits", one of my favorites is when Carroll O'Connor plays a Martian. (Can you imagine Archie Bunker as an "illegal" Alien?)

But, what I am getting at is Dry Rot.

Star Trek had two good seasons, then was handed over to a person who had no concept of the series, and, it died. I shan't mention his name, but he was interviewed in a two part article in STARLOG magazine a few months ago.

He lambasted Dorthy Fontana (D.C. Fontana, story editor of Star Trek for the second and third season) and David Gerrold, the young unknown who wrote "The Trouble with Tribbles".

Now, not to be a name-dropper, but David and D.C. are old friends of mine. His portrayal of them in the interview are about 180 degrees from real life. Therefore I take anything he says with a horse sized salt lick.

Star Trek suffered badly in it's third season. Bad scripts, bad directing, and being placed at 10 PM on Friday evening, away from it's main audience.

I have watched "The Powers of Matthew Starr", and while I found it cute, I much preferred "Mr. Merlin"; the interaction between Bernard Hughes and young Clark Brandon was much better.

What I am trying to say is that there is a legitimate place for SF on TV. Stop giving us the candy pill; give us the real stuff.

-HWM

Date: Saturday, 27 November 1982 15:31-PST
From: Jonathan Alan Solomon
Subject: ST2WOK; inconsistencies; your opinion

1) Dates: It's Romulan Ale, isn't it? Who said Romulans have to obey the same dates the Federation did (Note that the Hebrew Calendar and the Julian one don't use the same year either. If you had a bottle of wine dated 1986 in Hebrew it would be some 3746 years old!)

I can't explain #2. I cheated a bit on #1, but that's show biz...

--JSol

p.s. I thought it was the other way around. I thought they were looking for CETI-ALPHA #5, and found #6 instead (i.e. that #5 blew up, made #6 into #5). If I'm right then there's the bug (in your head), else the bug is real. Anyone know for sure?

End of SF-LOVERS Digest
