Subject: I just read the short story "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank"...
Posted by Salvatore on Mon, 07 Jan 2013 13:56:47 GMT
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....and it was *barely* like the film. I could go on in parenthetical
detail on how bad the film is, but if you're subscribed to this
newsgroup you ought know that already.

Here are the main differences:

FINGAL'S NAME: In the book, Fingal's first name is never mentioned. In
the film, it's arbitrarily set to "Aram".

FINGAL'S JOB: In the book, Fingal's job isn't described, but he's
apparently wealthy enough to afford the time off for a "doppel", as well
as his own choice of an animal. In the film, Fingal only has 47 credits
(or whatever that is in dollars) to his name.

FINGAL'S DOPPEL: In the book, Fingal gets a lioness. In the film, Fingal
can only afford a baboon. Furthermore, Fingal doesn't abort his doppel
in the book.

FINGAL'S BACKSTORY: In the book, Fingal is content at his job, and has
no need to see a "psychist". The film fabricates a crime of "viewing
cinemas" and forces him to see an old lady who has a terrible time at
remembering his name.

SCHOOLCHILDREN: There is no "'Children Of The Damned day' at the brain
institute" in the book. The book actually starts at this point; the film
takes artistic license with the story for everything before this scene.

MOM, MY NUTS: Fingal doesn't say this in the book, but it's funny to hear
in the film.

LOST BODY: In the book, Fingal is notified that his body has been lost
by the doppeling company (also unnamed in the book), and the company
offers to settle any lawsuit Fingal may bring upon them with a large
amount of cash. In the film, Appollonia notifies Fingal, and the big,
bad corporation tries to keep the mistake under wraps until the Pat
Benetar lookalike leaks the story to the press.

THE VIRTUAL WORLD: This is where the book *far exceeds* the film. In the
book, Fingal is sent multiple pamphlets in his virtual world that
explain what happened, how the problem is being solved, and what he
should do in the meantime. The book leaves the audience hanging.

THE VIRTUAL "CASABLANCA": ...is only mentioned in the film. This part of
the plot isn't in the book at all, and I say "Thank God". It turned a good

cypherpunk story into a bad romance film.

CUBE TIME: The book actually explains what this is: the "identicubes" used for doppeling have a limited shelf life. Luckily, cube time has nothing to do with virtual time in the computer. Time in the computer passes much, much slower by than in the real world. (In the book, it's explained that a year of virtual time is equal to six hours in the real world.) The film makes up some tragic story about the computer sucking in a person's identity.

FINGAL'S VIRTUAL LIFE: The book tells a story of how Fingal uses the company screw-up to his advantage. He makes up a virtual library, and an entire university course on computers is fed in from the computer to his virtual world. Fingal takes a course, earns a degree (essentially for free, since he can fabricate his own money), and comes back to the real world prepared for getting a much better job. In the film, Fingal messes up the real world's weather patterns, makes a fat guy fart Monopoly cards, and spends his free time pretending to be Humphrey Bogart.

"I AM INTERFACED!": This ridiculous climax only exists in the film.

Thankfully, a few people at PBS actually read the short story. Here are places that they actually *used* parts of the book, and where the actors did very well:

APPOLLONIA'S INTERFACE: Appollonia can enter Fingal's virtual world at will, and she does so as often as she can.

SYNTHO-SLEEP AND THE TECHNO-LOVE: The entire part of the film, from where Fingal virtualizes a female co-worker coming onto him to where Appollonia chides him for doing so, is directly from the book, though in the book Appollonia is less angry and more disgusted.

A FEW MORE COMMANDMENTS: Once again, this part of the film is taken verbatim from book.

SCRUBBING BUBBLES: When Fingal enters a part of the virtual world that corresponds to a place in the real world that he is unfamiliar with, the computer fills in that part with garbage, which looks like an old iTunes visualizer in the film. (The book explains this better than the film, but it's the same in both media.)

I only wish this short story were re-done by a much better film studio and director nowadays, or at least turned into a nice graphic novel. I'm sure John Varley would agree with me, too. To quote him:

 "It was filmed, starring Raul Julia, and shown on PBS. I don't think it
 was entirely successful..." -- John Varley, being entirely too accurate

about this film.

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Blah blah bleh...
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