

animal skills. He could defeat any jungle animal because he was half human. It is very convenient since he seems to have the power of both the animal and the reasoning human.

In those days MGM would just keep grinding out "Tarzan" films for the lower half of double bills. It cost very little to make a Tarzan film. After all, they had a lot of stock footage, already paid for. They did have to teach Cheeta to ham it up in front of the camera in a way no self-respecting chimp would. But that was a lot cheaper than launching human actors into a whole new story.

This series is a classic case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. None of the Weissmuller "Tarzan" films is much more than a weak melodrama by itself, but each is entertaining, much like the Burroughs novels themselves. One is not a whole lot better than another.

Sprinkled through the month of May TCM will show:

TARZAN AND HIS MATE (1934)
 TARZAN AND THE AMAZONS (1945)
 TARZAN AND THE HUNTRESS (1947)
 TARZAN AND THE LEOPARD WOMAN (1946)
 TARZAN AND THE LOST SAFARI (1957)
 TARZAN AND THE MERMAIDS (1948)
 TARZAN AND THE SHE-DEVIL (1953)
 TARZAN AND THE SLAVE GIRL (1950)
 TARZAN ESCAPES (1936)
 TARZAN FINDS A SON! (1939)
 TARZAN THE APE MAN (1932)
 TARZAN TRIUMPHS (1943)
 TARZAN'S DESERT MYSTERY (1943)
 TARZAN'S HIDDEN JUNGLE (1955)
 TARZAN'S MAGIC FOUNTAIN (1949)
 TARZAN'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE (1942)
 TARZAN'S PERIL (1951)
 TARZAN'S SAVAGE FURY (1952)
 TARZAN'S SECRET TREASURE (1941)

[-mrl]

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Well, it had to happen eventually. After over twenty years, we are splitting up. No, not Mark and I--my palmtop and I. I started using one back in 1993 or so, but the time has come for a (partial) separation.

Why? Well, first of all, it is getting very hard to read text on it. It uses old technology--black letters on a green background, not backlit. Even when enlarged, there are many pairs of letters and numbers that are hard to distinguish.

Another reason is that the spreadsheets on the palmtop are Lotus-1-2-3 spreadsheets. These are not supported even in the ten-year-old version of Excel that runs on our Mac. To upload and use them, I have to load them onto our old netbook which is running a *twenty*-year-old version of Excel (and nothing else), converting them to Excel and then copying them to the Mac. Needless to say, this is inconvenient.

A third reason is that while the palmtop is very convenient in that it runs on two AA batteries (which usually last a couple of weeks), it is much heavier than the new Amazon Fire Tablet I got.

And this addresses the fourth reason--the palmtop does not connect to the Internet. The result is now I always carry the tablet, meaning I have been toting both of them around.

(Nor does the palmtop take pictures, a feature that is handy to have.)

Unfortunately, switching over is not straightforward. Pretty much all the files that had been mastered on the palmtop could be moved fairly easily to the Mac, and then copies of the reference files (e.g., our book catalog) can be easily copied to the tablet. But the master copies of things like the appointment book have to be on the portable unit, so I basically had to enter manually all the appointments from the palmtop into the tablet. (I miss the "go-to- specific-date" feature, and there seems no way to backup or archive the appointment book, so I'm still putting the important stuff in both. :-)

On the other hand, the tablet is totally inappropriate for composing text files (trip logs, etc.). So I am still going to use the palmtop for "word processing", without actually carrying it all the time. For example, I am writing this on the palmtop while sitting on the sofa. And creating and editing spreadsheets is even worse. This means that all the files like catalogs have to be updated on the Mac at home rather than on the palmtop wherever I happen to be.

So I am gradually working out the various hiccoughs in changing over. I just hope I won't have to do this again for another twenty years. :-) [-ecl]

Not This August ... but Soon (comments by Dale Skran):

I remember movies like WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE. There was always, at least in my gauzy memory, a scene of the mighty rocket being built. A long hull stretched into the darkness, swarmed by scaffolding and welders, a cascade of tiny stars falling to the ground between up thrust steel ribs. Our stiff-lipped heroes (rarely, the heroine) walked amongst the machines, carrying blue prints and wielding slide rules, shouting orders to the workers. Alone at a desk sat a grizzled scientist, frantically working against the clock to complete the design before the world ended or the aliens attacked.

The real future is never quite like the imagined future. Things are sometimes done in different ways, perhaps even stranger ways than we could imagine, like Pinterest and Snapchat and Russian Troll Farms using Facebook to attack the US. And the future never comes the way we wanted it. We're still waiting for hotels on the Moon and flying cars.

But sometimes the future sneaks up on you. After long delay, it happens. And now it is happening. Men and women are building, not the first ship that will go to Mars, but the prototype of that ship. In a place called San Pedro, California, a giant tent has been erected to shelter the construction of that first prototype while a factory is built nearby. This unseemly rush is driven not by fear of descending comets or the slimy tentacles of grotesque monsters, but by the blazing engines of commercial competition and sheer ambition. Yet behind it all we know that there lies a real monster, father time himself, ticking away the seconds of Elon Musk's life. The world may have time, but Musk does not. He has perhaps twenty years of vitality in which to pursue his dream of settling Mars. And so the devil drives.

The task is immense. First learn how to build rockets independently of governments that would never endorse Musk's plan for a city on Mars. Then make them cheap enough to gain a big share of the global launch market. And then make them re-usable, and cheaper still. And bigger. Then to learn how to dock in space, and land back on the Earth. To develop new rocket engines fueled by methane, which can be manufactured on Mars, allowing for cost-effective return voyages. And finally to put humans into orbit, and bring them back. But all of this has been done by SpaceX, or will be done soon.

SpaceX has grown from nothing to the global leader in rocketry--the company to beat. With the successful launch of the Falcon Heavy, SpaceX has again broken new ground. On seeing the simultaneous return to launch site of the two side boosters even long time doubters started to shake their heads and admit that maybe Musk should be taken seriously. One imagines them nodding numbly while seeing the live video of Musk's Red Tesla roadster circling the Earth before being blasted toward Mars. For a long time a lot of people have made a big bet that Elon Musk and SpaceX are going to fail. That this arrogant upstart outsider will never get a rocket to fly, or to land, or be re-used. One wonders how many Falcons need to reach orbit before these skeptics are silenced by the obvious. Eighteen last year. Eight so far this year, a pace that will end with 24 total. Fortunately Musk does not measure his success by the silence of doubters but by the roar of rockets.

Soon, possibly as soon as next year, the first "Big Falcon Spaceship" may rise from the pad for a short hop. There will be failure, and failure. But then success, and success, and more failure. But sometime soon--not this August, nor August in 2019, but some August soon, the ground will shake as it never has before, and the most powerful, most advanced rocket ever built will rise from the ground. The first stage (the "Big Falcon Rocket") will gracefully return to the launch site, landing in a cradle without using legs, ready to launch again. The second stage (the "BFS") will vault skyward, orbit the Earth, deliver as much as 150 metric tons of payload to Low Earth Orbit, and return to the surface, landing this time with legs, ready to be re-fueled and launched again, this time toward the Moon and Mars.

On that day, the world will have changed. Dreams that seemed too large to ever become real will simply become business plans. Editorial writers will rhapsodize about how the space age we've been waiting for is finally dawning. That it was inevitable. Foreordained. But it never was, and still is not. The sight of the Red Tesla heading toward Mars has awakened a new generation of critics who dread the thought of humans living on Mars. And those critics will grow in number with each step Musk takes forward.

We must hope that they will be opposed by wiser voices, and that soon more ships will be built, and launched toward Mars, starting years of a desperate struggle to build a base on Mars capable of manufacturing the fuel needed to return to Earth. This will be followed by more years, and then decades as colonists live and die building a civilization on Mars. And then one day, long after Musk is dead, Martian colonists will erect a statue to honor him, perhaps side-by-side with another of Gwen Shotwell, and surrounded by the no doubt numerous heroes and heroines who died building Mars.

But those present on that day will still envy the souls who even as I write this are working in a giant tent to assemble mighty winding machines to fabricate the largest composite rocket ever built. No sparks from welding fill the air; instead we hear the hum of vast machines slowly laying carbon fiber over a giant tube. It is happening. Right now. Not like in some old movie, but much better because it is real.

See <https://www.teslarati.com/spacex-bfr-factory-rocket-tooling-site-activity/> for some pictures.

With a tip of the hat to one of my favorite SF novels--NOT THIS AUGUST--by C. M. Kornbluth. [-dls]

India, THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, and Libraries (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to [Mark's comments on India](#) in the 04/20/18 issue of the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

Thank you so much for sharing part of that long, lost ledger of your trip to India. I cannot help but be impressed that you two had the luck of the Irish to make such a journey. India seems to me like a truly exotic and completely alien landscape. I used to think of England and Europe that way, but now that I have been to a half dozen European countries, and planning to return next year for the Dublin, Ireland World SF Convention, Europe no longer seems so distant. India, on the other hand, is one nation that is not really a place I would like to see, although there are definitely places there--notably the Taj Mahal--that are on my bucket list. I envy you two. What a trip! [-jp]

In response to [Evelyn's comments](#) in the 04/13/18 issue and [Gwen's comments](#) in the 04/20/18 issue on THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, John writes:

I may have to reread THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. It has been too long--over thirty years--since first reading it. I wager that this time I would get much more out of it now that I have had an entire lifetime of experiences to inform my understanding of the book. [-jp]

And in response to [Evelyn's comments on EX LIBRIS](#) in the 04/20/18 issue, John writes:

That collection of library stories reminds me that one of my Pinterest pages is "Library Porn": a collection of photographs taken at all sorts of suitably beautiful libraries around the world. In fact, last summer we actually visited a couple of old and gorgeous libraries; one was in Cambridge and the other in London. The ancient tomes lining the shelves were one thing, but the main draw was the architecture. Man, I just love spiral staircases that wind up to multiple levels of still thousands of more old books. What a glorious sight! [-jp]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Okay, here begins my series of reviews/comments/ratings for the fiction and dramatic presentation categories of the Retro Hugo Awards, in this case for works published or released in 1942.

I will start with "Best Novel", or rather, five of the six nominees. DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT will get a stand-alone review next week, and I will announce my rankings for this category.

BEYOND THIS HORIZON by Anson MacDonald (Robert A. Heinlein) (Astounding Science Fiction, April & May 1942): Heinlein was so prolific in some months in the 1940s that he adopted several pennames to avoid having his name dominate the tables of contents of magazines issued in those months. He also used specific names for specific types of stories. (A more recent example would that "Iain Banks" wrote mainstream works, but "Iain M. Banks" wrote science fiction.)

"The police of a state should never be stronger or better armed than the citizenry. An armed citizenry, willing to fight, is the foundation of civil freedom." Here clearly "the police of a state" is not referring to the state troopers, but to the military of a nation. Maybe when he wrote this in 1942 it seemed to make sense (although in the middle of World War II, I would not have thought so), but certainly now it is totally unrealistic. Given that nations must prepare to defend against other nations, is it reasonable to say that nations should not have ships, or planes, or heavy artillery? Or should individual citizens be the ones who have ships, or planes, or heavy artillery? And just how are they going to buy them? There have been many cases in the past in which an armed resistance has proved ineffective against a more heavily armed state,

"An armed society is a polite society." This very famous Heinlein comes from this novel. It has been discussed at length elsewhere, so I will summarize. This is true only when there is a reasonable level of government authority to maintain order, in which case one might be polite anyway. In a weak or dysfunctional state, one may see a lots of guns, but not much politeness. And as far as people like the Las Vegas shooter, the number of armed citizens will not affect their politeness--or deadliness.

Also apparently Heinlein thinks this arming of the citizenry should extend only to men. While occasionally a woman might be armed this is considered an anomaly and somehow "unnatural" (sort of like women wearing trousers was at the time).

The book is also structured oddly, with an attempted revolution in the middle (so much for politeness), and the last part covering some ill-defined philosophical project, and also possible telepathy. Oh, and there's a man from the past who has somehow traveled forward in time.

DONOVAN'S BRAIN by Curt Siodmak (Black Mask, September-November 1942): I have no idea if all the medical jargon made any sense, or how much was based in fact, but it made the book hard going at times, and I just never could get caught

up in the story.

ISLANDIA by Austin Tappan Wright (Farrar & Rinehart): This unavailable either from my library system or used at a reasonable price, and it is over 1000 pages long. You're on your own. (A few years ago, I noted that all the Retro Novel finalists combined were still shorter than any one of the current Novel finalists. That is not true this year.)

SECOND STAGE LENS MAN by E. E. "Doc" Smith (Astounding Science Fiction, November 1941 to February 1942): I tried reading FIRST LENS MAN in 2001, GALACTIC PATROL in 2014, and GRAY LENS MAN in 2016, found them all unreadable, and gave up on them. This time, I'm saving myself the time. Its low rating is based on my reading of three other books in the series.

THE UNINVITED by Dorothy Macardle (Doubleday, Doran / S.J.R. Saunders): It is hard to read this without being reminded by, and influenced by, the film version. That I happened to see the film version less than a week before the nominations were announced merely made this more evident. So while reading it, I kept noticing differences between the book and the film.

For example, in the book Roderick Fitzgerald is an author. In the film, he is a musician, possibly because expressing emotion through music is clearly easier in a film than in a book, and indeed one of the main ways one does this in a film.

In the book, Stella is 18 and Roderick is 23. In the film, she is 19; Roderick's age is not given, but Ray Milland was 37 at the time, and looks it. The result is that the relationship between them is a lot less creepy in the book.

The book seems adequate enough, though there also seems to be a lot of superfluous scenes of Roderick writing his play, meeting with people about his play, re-writing his play, and so on. My other problem is that I am just not a big fan of ghost stories, at least in written form. (Somehow, I enjoy cinematic ghost stories more.) This, of course, is a problem with the Hugo Awards (and others) in general--one is usually presented with a mixed bag of stories in a category and has to compare them. This category, for example, has a political novel, a space opera, a philosophical novel, a technology novel, and a ghost story. For most readers, at least one of these will not be their cup of tea. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time--a tremendous whack.

--Winston Churchill

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