

SUMMER 1995, VOLUME 9, NUMBER 3

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# WARF

34

The Official Newsletter of the Montreal Science Fiction & Fantasy Association (MonSFFA)

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# Roll Call

## MonSFFA's Executive Committee:

Lynda Pelley: President

Cathy Palmer-Lister: Vice-President

Sylvain St-Pierre: Treasurer

## MonSFFA's Appointed Officers and Advisors:

Keith Braithwaite (Newsletter, Membership, PR); Sylvain St-Pierre (Membership); Bryan Ekers (Post Office Box); Colleen Magnussen (Mailings); Bill Strople (Snack Table); Michael Masella, Kevin Holden, David Legault, Trudie Mason, Andrew Weitzman, Dominique Durocher, Yolande Rufiange (Advisors)

## Newsletter Staff:

Keith Braithwaite: Editing, Layout, Word-Processing

Michael Masella: Laser-Printing, Non-Mac to Mac Computer File Translation, Typesetting, Word-Processing,

Lynda Pelley: Word-Processing, Photo-Scans.

Berny Reischl: Non-Mac to Mac Computer File Translation

Murphy: Typos, Misspellings, and Other Errors

**COVER UP:** *Warp* shutterbug Dan Kenney snapped this photo, for our cover, of fellow MonSFFAn Josée Bellemare posing with another costumer at Con•Cept '95's masquerade.

# 1995 MonSFFA MEETING SCHEDULE

ALL MEETINGS HELD SUNDAY AFTERNOONS, 1:00PM TO 4:00PM (SOME MEETINGS INCLUDE MORNING ACTIVITIES, WHICH BEGIN AT 11:00AM) IN THE ARTIMON I ROOM OF THE MARITIME HOTEL, 1155 GUY STREET (CORNER RENÉ LÉVESQUE), DOWNTOWN MONTREAL

1995 MEETING PROGRAMMING (SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER)

Programming subject to rescheduling and/or change

**SEPTEMBER 10:** An exploration of SF/F music, focusing on filking, movie and television-series soundtracks, and sci-fi and fantasy lyrics in rock and roll. Help us compile a top-ten list of SF/F movie/TV themes!

**OCTOBER 15:** Following on the popularity of last year's meeting on this subject, we revisit the world of SF/F art. Included will be demos of some of the illustration techniques artists use to create fantastic future worlds, sleek spaceships, exotic aliens, supernatural sorceresses, and brawny barbarians!

**NOVEMBER 12:** Programming to be announced.

**NOTE:** The organization of TransWarp '95, which was at first tentatively scheduled for sometime in June, then bumped into August, and later November, has moved forward very little over the summer. The event now appears to be in limbo. Further details as they become available. Also, MonSFFA's annual Christmas party is planned for Saturday evening, December 16; confirmation of this date and further details to follow.

JANUARY	15
FEBRUARY	12
MARCH	12
APRIL	23
MAY	14
JUNE	11
AUGUST	20
SEPTEMBER	10
OCTOBER	15
NOVEMBER	12

*Warp* is published six times a year by the Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (MonSFFA). Address all correspondence to *Warp*, c/o MonSFFA, P.O. Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2W 2P4. Subscription rate is \$12.00 per year; however, the subscription fee is included in the annual membership to MonSFFA, which is \$20.00 per year. MonSFFA is a non-profit organization dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of science fiction and fantasy in literature, films and television, art, music, costuming, model-making, comics and fanzines, and gaming. The opinions expressed in *Warp* are solely those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Warp* or MonSFFA. The use of copyrighted material in this newsletter is a no-no, but is not intended to infringe on any of the rights of the copyright holders. Come on people, lighten up. This is an amateur publication, intended for enjoyment only. "Few things are harder to put up with than a good example"—Mark Twain

# FROM THE CENTER SEAT

Wasn't that last issue of *Warp*, number 33, wonderful? Too bad we can't do full-colour covers every issue. But our budget just won't allow it, so we're back to our usual with this issue. Rest assured, though, colour cover or not, you are reading one of the best fanzines around!

We're in the middle of our summer break as I write this. No MonSFFA meeting in July, no BoA, not much going on. Things are moving slow and easy as everyone takes a well deserved vacation, relaxing under the sun, or by the pool, or by a campfire beneath a clear night sky.

Mind you, there are still plenty of SF/F things to do, places to go, models to ~~buy~~ build...

You may have taken in one of the summer's crop of genre movies, or attended a convention or two, like *Ad Astra* or *Toronto Trek*. I went to *Toronto Trek* this year, as did many MonSFFA members. It's Canada's biggest,

best, and most successful media convention, and it's *fan run*! You may want to make time to visit the exhibit of Canadian SF/F at the National Library of Canada in Ottawa. Don't put it off too long; the exhibit closes at the end of summer, if I'm not mistaken.

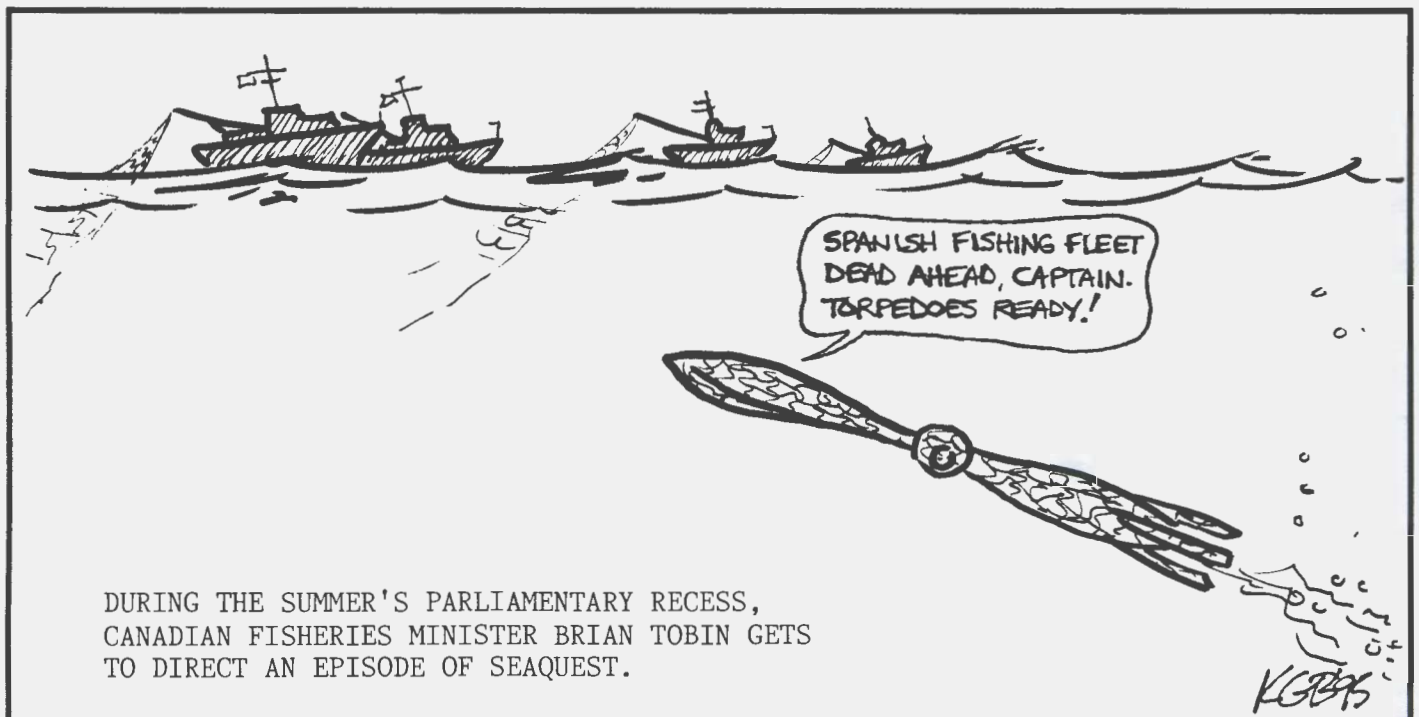
However you're spending your summer, enjoy it, and we'll see you later.

Lynda Pelley  
President, MonSFFA

P.S.: Here is MonSFFA's 1996 meetings calendar, tentative at the moment, to be confirmed probably by the time you read this. 1996's club meetings will take place on these Sundays:

- January 21
- February 18
- March 17
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- August 18
- September 15
- October 20
- November 17

Our Saturday evening Christmas party is planned for December 14.



# MonSFFA Membership Benefits

The Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (MonSFFA) is a Montreal-based non-profit organization dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of all activities which engage and support the interests of science fiction and fantasy fans. The benefits of membership in MonSFFA include:

## Membership Card

Your MonSFFA membership card identifies you as a MonSFFA member, allows you free admittance to the club's monthly events and entitles you to certain discounts at SF/F-oriented retailers participating in MonSFFA's discount program!

## Monthly Events

Attend MonSFFA's regularly scheduled events, held about every month (except during the summer), and meet other SF/F fans! Share interests, exchange ideas, view current and classic SF/F movies and TV shows, enjoy guest speakers and special presentations, participate in workshops and discussion panels, get involved in various club projects, and more!

## Discount Program

As a member of MonSFFA, you are in a position to save on your SF/F purchases, and your membership pays for itself within the year! If you buy an average of only \$4.00 worth of SF/F books, comics, collectibles, gaming and hobby items, etc. per week, your yearly MonSFFA membership will pay for itself in discount savings within the year! Full details of the discount program are printed in each issue of MonSFFA's newsletter.

## Newsletter

You will receive a one-year subscription (six issues) to MonSFFA's newsletter, *Warp!* Produced by our

members for our members, *Warp* keeps you up to date on club activities and brings you general news from around the greater SF/F community! *Warp* is also a forum for you, the members—we want your book and movie reviews, opinion columns, short fiction and humour, artwork, etc! And, as a MonSFFA member, you are entitled to place (non-commercial) ads in Warp at no charge—sell your old SF book collection, announce that you're looking for gaming partners, or whatever!

**As a MonSFFA member, you'll enjoy these benefits and more!**

MonSFFA is administered, on behalf of all of its members, by an executive committee, who are empowered to appoint officers and advisors to assist them with the operation of the club. Executive committee members are elected annually by vote of the general membership; any member in good standing may run for office.

The fee for a one-year membership in MonSFFA is currently \$20.00.

Please address all correspondence to: MonSFFA, P.O. Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2W 2P4.

## MonSFFA Discount Program

Listed on this and the next page are the SF/F-oriented retailers/dealers participating in the **MonSFFA Discount Program**. *We encourage members to frequent these establishments.* A valid MonSFFA membership card must be presented in order to take advantage of the discounts offered under this program. (Note: Certain exceptions with regard to the MonSFFA Discount Program may exist at some of these establishments. Conditions subject to change.)


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10% off on all orders (include your name, MonSFFA membership number and expiration date when ordering).

10% off (5% if paying by credit card) on models and role-playing games, \$10.00 minimum purchase.

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- 1500 Avenue Louise, Montréal, Qué. (514) 932-1139
- 5300 Avenue Decarie, Montréal, Qué. (514) 484-0666
- 1070 rue Notre-Dame, Lachine, Qué. (514) 637-0733

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MonSFFA and *Warp* welcome letters of comment and inquiry. Mail letters to: P.O. Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2W 2P4. Unless otherwise instructed, we assume all letters are intended for publication. Published letters become the property of MonSFFA. *Warp* reserves the right to edit letters where deemed necessary.

Dear MonSFFA,

Enclosed find my membership renewal. Sorry I haven't been able to attend many meetings this year. I've been away most weekends. Love the mag.

Jan Richman  
Montreal, Quebec

*We welcome your continuing support of MonSFFA, Jan; hope you can make it to at least a couple of our coming meetings and thanks for the note of praise for Warp.—Ed*

Dear MonSFFolk,

If letters to the editor were generally given titles, this one would have to be called "Yes...I Agree...But!" The reason I say this is that as I read *Warp* 33 (April 1995) I seemed to be saying that over and over, and therefore, as you'll see, it's a recurring theme in this letter.

Starting right at the beginning of the issue, regarding Lynda's "From the Center Seat" column on fighting to bring back *Babylon 5*: Yes...I agree...but! While I certainly agree that *Babylon 5* is worthy of our best efforts to bring it back to the poor souls in Videotron territory, I can hardly agree with Lynda's statement

that the show is worth saving "if only because it is an alternative to *Star Trek*." Sorry, but if *B-5* was poorly written and badly acted, I would gladly let it die even if it were the *only* alternative to *Star Trek*. Sci-fi fans shouldn't support a show just because it's sci-fi, they should make every effort to only support a show if it's *good* sci-fi.

Regarding the editor's reply to the letter from Chris Chartier ("MonSFFA Mailbag"), yes...I agree...but! While I cannot argue with a single thing you say in your reply to Chris regarding fan groups borrowing each other's ideas, the devil's advocate in me does note that despite all that, there are certainly cases that would be too close for comfort. I'm sure that, for example, more than a few eyebrows would be raised should a new Klingon club be formed calling itself Klingon Attack Group Canada (KAG Canada), or a new general sci-fi club calling itself the Montreal Science Fiction Association (MonSFA)! These choices of names would not necessarily imply any intended maliciousness on the part of the younger groups, but certainly a lack of courtesy. Therefore, while Chris may have been overreacting somewhat to the other festival's choice of a name, let's not assume that any name or idea in fandom is fair game, to be copied, imitated, payed compliment to, or whatever just because it's *only* fandom. There is a line that has to be watched between imitation and plagiarism, even in fandom. Now I'm not saying that this other festival necessarily crossed that line, but you cannot ignore that the line is there, and should be watched by all fan groups, just as a point of courtesy to each other.

And regarding your further comment on this topic that "no one is likely to confuse these two SF festivals, which are, after all, a couple of provinces apart": Yes...I agree...but! Never underestimate people's capacity for confusing two fan groups with similar names. I've certainly never been "miffed" with the club in the U.S.A. that chose to call itself the High Council of Gallifrey long after my club did, but at the same time, there have been many instances where people have confused the two clubs, and that's

despite their being in different countries!

Regarding Lynda's critical analysis of *Generations*, yes...I agree...but! While I cannot argue with a single one of Lynda's criticisms of this film, the strange thing is that I still enjoyed it! Well, maybe I've come to care too little about bad special effects (being a *Doctor Who* fan will do that to you), and maybe I just had such low expectations that I was happy to be even slightly entertained. After all, when you go to the farm expecting to find manure, the presence of a cow suddenly becomes a pleasant surprise!

Greetings to Bryan "Bashir" Ekers and congratulations on his ongoing story "Risk and Sacrifice." As we all know, a good *DS9* story is hard to find.

Regarding Keith's evaluation of *The X-Files*, yes...I agree...but! (Getting tired of that yet?) As brilliant as I find the series to be, am I the only one to find some of the season-two episodes travelling a little far away from the show's premise? They seemed to forget the story arc and instead chose to begin with Mulder getting interested in something completely irrelevant to his job (perfect example: a child is killed in an amusement park) and it just happens over the course of the investigation to have something X-file-ish behind it. Moreover, while I have nothing against horror and shock, the increasing amount of it this past season seemed to pull *X-Files* away from sci-fi towards the shock-theatre style of *Tales From the Crypt*. (You know the episode "Humbug," where the entire storyline is resolved by one of the sideshow characters eating the antagonist? Now didn't you expect the Cryptkeeper to pop out at that point and say "To be continued Saturday night at 11:00, on my show?" Not that any of this has killed my high regard for *The X-Files*, I'm just hoping that these are not signs of further changes in direction to come in the series.

Regarding your reporting on news of the new *Doctor Who* series being dropped by Fox, yes...I agree...but! (Last time I'll say that. promise.) You really should be reading your *Foreman Reports*,

MonSFFeditor! If you had, you'd know that the *Doctor Who* project received the go-ahead as a made-for-TV movie shortly after being dropped by Fox's New Series Department. The *Doctor Who* project has, in fact, been moved from Amblin to the new DreamWorks SKG superstudio headed by Spielberg, Katzenberg, and Geffen. This TV movie is expected to air in November on Fox and the BBC simultaneously. Will this lead to a new series? As with *Babylon 5*, that'll really depend on public reaction to the TV movie. So have no fear, the Doctor isn't quite dead yet!

Wow! Quite a lengthy letter touching on many aspects of the issue—now I know how Lloyd Penney feels! One final note: Thanks to all the MonSFFolk who took part in the Sci-Fi TV Survey that the H.C.o.G. put together not long ago. The results of the survey were compiled to form the basis for a *Family Feud*-style game.

Andrew Gurudata  
President, High Council of Gallifrey  
Lasalle, Quebec

*Indeed, you've covered a lot of ground with this one, Andrew; we appreciate the interest you've taken in our humble little fanzine.*

*Allow Lynda her editorial license. She's taking a bit of a shot at Trek in her column, not seriously suggesting that any old show, even a bad one, that isn't a Trek show is, for that reason alone, worthy of fan support. She did, after all, describe Babylon 5 as a "well written" series with "interesting characters" and "plenty of action," and so her comments should be viewed within that framework.*

*In the weeks following the publication of Warp 33, as you, of course, know, Babylon 5 was picked up locally by Channel 12 and Videotron cable subscribers once again have access to the show. This came about in no small measure because, encouraged by their respective leaderships, members of MonSFFA, The High Council of Gallifrey, Warp 9, KAG/Kanada, and other sci-fi clubs, along with internet users and just plain B-5 fans, wrote/faxed/phoned (independently and collectively) Channel 12 in support of bringing Babylon 5 to Montreal's TV sked. It worked! Cheers all around. MonSFFA was pleased to include, in our*

*TV commercials the first night B-5 aired on Channel 12, an official welcome to Montreal for the series.*

*You are quite right: there is a line that fan groups should not cross when selecting club and con names, and borrowing ideas from other similar groups. We don't think that the Maritime Science Fiction Festival crossed it, however, and our reply to Chris was written in that context.*

*If a Mississauga Science Fiction Association—or even a Mississauga Science Fiction and Fantasy Association—were formed, we wouldn't really be bothered terribly much by it because their activities would not likely impact a great deal on us. But the scenario you present, of a new SF club starting up in Montreal and calling itself The Montreal Science Fiction Association, would, of course, not be something that we'd like to see happen. And we'd certainly contact any such new group, inform them of who we are and suggest to them that the name they've chosen is, as you say, "too close for comfort" and would invite confusion. We'd hope that they'd have the courtesy to come up with another name, one that would not be misconstrued with ours. But if they insisted on calling themselves the Montreal Science Fiction Association, what, really, could we do about it? All that we could do is work to distinguish our club from theirs, and to try to make it clear to people that we are who we are and they are another group, not connected to our organization.*

*Trek is manure! Generations is a cow! You've got yourself a couple of great T-shirt slogans in the making there, Andrew. So you were "happy to be even slightly entertained" by Generations. Now there's a case of damning with faint praise! Perhaps the words of a wise man could be applied here: "Sci-fi fans shouldn't support a show just because it's sci-fi, they should make every effort to only support a show if it's good sci-fi."*

*Brian "Bashir" Ekers? "Barclay" seems to us more appropriate.*

*Like any TV series, The X-Files will occasionally be a little off of its game and have its weaker episodes, but when viewed overall, the show is, as you say, "brilliant." Horror has always been a major element of The X-Files, arguably more crucial to the feel of the show than are its SF elements. I can't agree that it's waded into Tales From the Crypt waters; Crypt is campy horror, X-Files*

*is of the hair-standing-up-on-the-back-of-your-neck variety.*

*I do read the Foreman Reports you send us and consider your publication to be among the best sources around of Doctor Who news. The Who news of which you speak came to be known to us after our Warp 33 report on the good Doctor had been put to bed. The information we ran in number 33 was the most recent and reliable information we had at the time. We are pleased to see that the Doctor Who project is still hanging in there, although other of our sources differ slightly with what you've stated. Spielberg is, apparently, out of the picture completely, the implication here being that Dreamworks won't be picking up the project in the wake of Amblin's having dropped it. Fox have agreed to allow a TV-movie script to be developed, but have not given the "go-ahead" to begin production on the project quite yet. They will make the decision to go with it or not sometime in mid-summer, after seeing a script. Official word is that until then, no production scheduling or casting will take place, nor will a projected airdate be given. Who fans, keep your fingers crossed!*

*Congratulations to you and Kim on your nuptials this summer, and we understand further congratulations are in order for you, Andrew, on a new job that you've accepted out Toronto way. We wish you well while we are, at the same time, saddened to see you both leave Montreal.—Ed*

Aux responsables de l'AMonSFF:

*Félicitations pour le succès de Con•Cept '95. Un succès attribuable au dévouement et au professionnalisme évident dont ont fait montre votre conseil et vos membres. Soyez assurées que les efforts investis pour mettre sur pied cet événement ne sont pas passés inaperçus.*

*J'espère recevoir ma carte de membre à temps pour votre prochaine réunion.*

Sincèrement,

Daniel Landry  
Montréal, Québec

*Bienvenue dans l'AMonSFF, Daniel! Tu devrais recevoir bientôt ta carte de membre, et nous espérons bien*

que tu viendras à la prochaine réunion.

Les commentaires positifs sur Con•Cept '95 sont toujours appréciés, mais il faut savoir que ce congrès est maintenant indépendant de l'AMonSFF. Il est vrai que l'AMonSFF a fondé Con•Cept et l'a guidé durant ses premières années, mais nous concentrons maintenant nos efforts dans d'autres directions et Con•Cept vole très bien de ses propres ailes. L'AMonSFF en tant que club participe encore activement en tant qu'exposant et nous fournissons de nombreux panellistes au programme. Certains de nos membres continuent de faire partie du comité directeur de Con•Cept, dont John Zmrotchek, le président pour cette année. Nous nous joignons à toi en félicitant les organisateurs de Con•Cept '95 pour un travail bien accompli, et nous ne manquerons pas de leur faire parvenir tes compliments.—Ed

Hello MonSFFA Members,

I am interested in your association and I'd like to hear more about it. Please send information.

Alain Daigle  
Ville de la Baie, Quebec

Bonjour,

Pourriez-vous m'envoyer des informations sur votre organisation, soit sous forme de livres, documents,

dépliants, etc. Ce sujet m'intéresse beaucoup.

Merci à l'avance,

Lyne Lévesque,  
Montréal, Québec

Hello!

Please send me information on joining the MonSFFA fan club.

Jacques Lussier  
Montreal, Quebec

Mesdames/Messieurs,

Je suis une fan de la science-fiction. J'ai bien aimé la nouvelle émission *Babylon 5* et j'aimerais avoir des renseignements concernant les acteurs qui participent à cette émission ainsi que des renseignements concernant l'AMonSFF.

J'aimerais avoir ces renseignements en français si cela est possible. Dans le cas contraire, j'aimerais que vous me les envoyiez même s'ils sont en anglais.

Veuillez accepter, Mesdames, Messieurs, mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Nathalie Milot  
Joliette, Québec

Thank you all for inquiring about

our club. We have sent you each an information package which outlines just exactly what MonSFFA is and what we do. We hope that you will find MonSFFA of interest and we hope to soon welcome you to our ranks.—Ed

Nous vous remercions de l'intérêt que vous portez à notre club. Nous vous avons envoyé à tous un résumé de notre structure et de nos activités. Nous espérons avoir chatouillé votre curiosité et comptons bien vous voir rejoindre nos rangs sous peu!

Nathalie: La plupart des acteurs principaux de *Babylon 5* sont de nouveaux venus dans le domaine de la télé-SF, mais il y a quelques vétérans de marque. Bruce Boxleitner (le capitaine Sheridan) a tenu le rôle de Tron dans le film du même nom, et a également joué dans les séries non-SF *Scarecrow* and *Mrs. King* et *Bring 'Em Back Alive*. Bill Mumy (Lennier l'assistant de l'Ambassadrice Delenn) est nul autre que la version adulte du petit garçon qui jouait Will Robinson dans *Lost in Space* (Perdu dans l'Espace), et qui a également fait partie de la distribution de la version originale de *The Twilight Zone*. Andreas Katsulas (G'Kar, l'ambassadeur Narn) est apparu sous les traits du Romulan Tomalak dans *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Finalement, Walter Koenig, l'artiste invité le plus mieux connus sous le nom de Chekov, a joué à deux reprises le rôle d'un flic télépathe dans *Babylon 5*.—Ed

## Bulletin Board

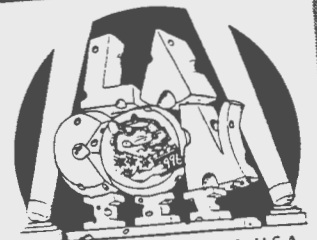
CONGRATULATIONS TO  
MONSFFA MEMBER BERNY  
REISCHL AND HIS BRIDE-TO-BE,  
J.J. SOBSEY WHO WILL BE  
MARRIED LABOUR-DAY WEEKEND

1996 Worldcon  
**L.A.con III**

c/o SCIFI, P.O. Box 8442  
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ANAHEIM HILTON & TOWERS  
Anaheim Convention Center  
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Connie Willis



ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.  
August 29-Sept. 2, 1996  
Thu-Fri-Sat-Sun-Mon (Labor Day Weekend)



# MonSFFA Androm

"ALL THE CLUB NEWS THAT FITS, WE'LL PRINT!"

## HAVE YOU MOVED?

Have you changed residence during the summer? If so, please remember to let us know what your new address is before the post office stops forwarding your mail! If we don't know where you now are, we won't be able to send you your MonSFFA mailings. Let us know, also, of any phone number change.

## DISCOUNT PROGRAM

It has been brought to our attention by one of the club's members that Librairie Astro seems to no longer be offering MonSFFA members a discount, as advertised under the club's discount program. This retailer has, at various times in past years, issued conflicting information on whether or not discounts would be offered to our members. We had, we believed, cleared up the confusion and understood that discounts were to be offered to our members, as we've been advertising. However, it now seems clear to us that Librairie Astro has opted *not to participate* any longer in the MonSFFA Discount Program.

*We therefore advise all MonSFFA members that Librairie Astro is no longer a participant in the club's discount program.*

We, of course, respect a discount-program participant's right to unilaterally terminate their involvement in our program. We thank Librairie Astro for their years of patronage and wish them well.

Meanwhile, Nebula Books has moved to a new, larger locale, just down the street and around the corner from their old St-Mathieu store. Their new address is 1832 St-Catherine Street West; their phone number remains 932-3930.

Lastly, it is with regret that we pass on news of the destruction by fire of discount-program participant Empire Comics. Thankfully, no one was hurt.

Our best wishes go out to the management and staff of Empire Comics; we look forward to their reopening the store. Obviously, Empire Comics' participation in MonSFFA's discount program is postponed for the moment; more information regarding EC as it becomes known to us.

## APRIL MonSFFA MEETING

The club's April meeting took place on the 23rd in our usual room at the Maritime Hotel. Attendance was around about 30.

The meeting's program was devoted to the art of amateur SF/F video-making. A home-made sci-fi/ninja/adventure movie, *Delta Squadron*, produced by MonSFFA member André Poliquin, was screened during the couple hours prior to the 1:00PM start of the meeting.

André, along with fellow MonSFFA Sylvain St-Pierre and Keith Braithwaite, took the floor to discuss what's involved in making your own SF/F video, from scripting, set design, costume- and prop-making right on through to location shooting, acting, the creation of special effects (on the cheap!), and finally, editing and post-production. They showed a number of clips in illustration of what they were talking about, including a reel of Sylvain's *very impressive* home computer-generated visual effects.

Sylvain had shot live-action footage, the month before, of a handful of MonSFFA members in and around our meeting room, and melded this footage together with a sampling of sci-fi effects (beam-outs, force-fields flickering, disintegrations, etc.) that he created on his PC. Sylvain also hooked up his camcorder, live, to our big-screen TV and demonstrated a few simple camera techniques, and a few easy and effective ways to do titles.

Keith showed some of the raw

footage shot for the MonSFFA Video Project, revived and now in the works again, and André displayed a number of the costumes, props, and miniatures that he's used in his video productions. The meeting had a good laugh during André's screening of *Delta Squadron* outtakes and bloopers. The latter half of the afternoon was devoted to the screening of another of André's sci-fi/ninja adventures, this one a sequel to the morning's offering.

The club's thanks goes out to André, Sylvain, and Keith for putting together our April meeting. Thanks also to Graham Darling for arranging for the big-screen TV rental.

## MonSFFA VIDEO PROJECT

The club's video-makers were out on location early this summer, just before everyone went away on their summer vacations. Readers of this column will know that John Matthias has organized interested club members into a video production unit. John and his crew propose to finish making the short, sci-fi/farce that the club set out to make a couple of years ago, but shelved half complete. Under John's direction, the revived MonSFFA Video Project has moved a step closer to being finished; all of the live-action scenes which were left unshot when the original project was suspended are now in the can. A special effects prop shot remains the production's last to be filmed, after which work can begin on editing, and on the addition of post-production visuals and sound effects.

## RENEWALS

As always, your membership renewals are *vitaly important* in seeing that this club continues to operate; please be sure to renew *on time*.

# CONVENTION

CAN-CON'95/  
CONVENTION 15/  
BORÉAL 12  
par Yolande Rufiange

Bonjour, la fin de la semaine du 12 au 14 mai 1995 s'annonçait bien remplie avec le jumelage de deux conventions, l'une anglophone, l'autre francophone, l'ouverture officielle de la nouvelle exposition à la Bibliothèque Nationale sur la science-fiction et le fantastique au Canada, et la remise de prix de Boréal et celle des prix Aurora.

Aucune convention organisée par des amateurs ne se passe sans accroc, nous avons tous nos histoires d'horreur ou de fou rire à raconter. Le plus gros hic de cette convention fût l'absence de livre-programme, promis et réalisé, mais qui n'a pu passer jusqu'à l'univers de l'hôtel Talisman où avait lieu la majeure partie de la convention. Constamment promis pour bientôt ou le lendemain et peut-être même pour après la convention, un mois plus tard, je n'ai toujours pas de nouvelle de ce fameux programme.

J'ai surtout assisté aux ateliers francophones de Boréal, y retrouvant avec plaisir un auditoire sympathique, sarcastique, obsessif mais toujours enthousiaste sur tous les aspects de la science-fiction et du fantastique qui s'écrit et se défend bien au Québec. Il commence même à bien se défendre du côté anglophone grâce aux traductions de plusieurs textes de nos auteurs les plus reconnus.

On peut y côtoyer en toute simplicité, mais avec

enthousiasme les Daniel Sernine (dont un roman vient de faire l'objet d'un film réalisé par un étudiant d'université), Élisabeth Vonarburg, Jean-Louis Trudel, Yves Meynard, Joel Champetier, René Beaulieu, Jean Pettigrew, Francine Pelletier, Natasha Beaulieu.

Les prix Boréal 1995 ont été à: Daniel Sernine, dans la catégorie du meilleur roman; Alain Bergeron, dans la catégorie de la meilleure nouvelle; et Claude Janelle pour l'anthologie *L'année de la science-fiction 1991*.

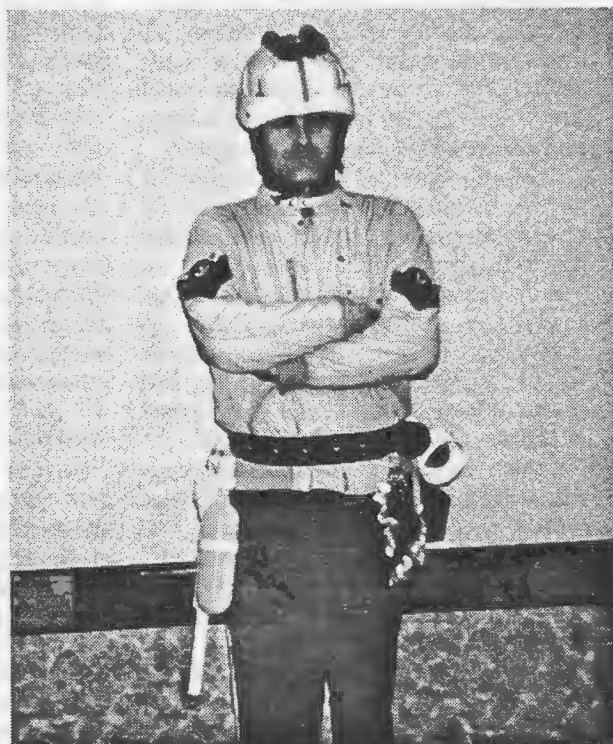
Les prix Aurora: Meilleur livre en anglais, *Virtual Light* (William Gibson); Meilleur livre en français, *La mémoire du lac* (Joel Champetier); Meilleure nouvelle en anglais, "The Fragrance of Orchids" (Sally McBride); Meilleure nouvelle en français, "L'homme qui fouillait la lumière" (Alain Bergeron), et "L'envoyé" (Yves Meynard); Meilleur ouvrage en anglais (autre), *On Spec* (revue SF, publiée par la Copper Pig Writers' Society); Meilleur ouvrage en français (autre), *Solaris* (revue SF, Joel Champetier, éditeur); Accomplissement artistique, Tim Hammell (*On Spec*); Accomplissement fanique ("fanzine"), *Under the Ozone Hole* (Karl Johanson et John Herbert, éditeurs); Accomplissement fanique (organisation), Cath Jackel (*On Spec* et la convention NonCon); Accomplissement fanique (autre), Catherine Donahue Girczyc (animatrice, *Ether Patrol*, émission de radio).

CON•CEPT '95 REVIEWED  
by Keith Braithwaite

Over the weekend of March 31-April 2 this year, local fandom enthusiastically embraced the return of Con•Cept, which was absent from con calendars in '94 while organizers took the year off to rebuild after a weak showing in '93.

Most Montreal cons these past couple of years have focused almost exclusively on media SF/F. Refreshingly, Con•Cept (our only *truly* multi-interest SF/F convention) offered fans in '95 the most varied mix of SF/F activities that we've seen in this town for some time.

The con's chair, MonSFFA's John Zmrotchek, "honours," in his program-book "Chair's Letter," Montreal's many fan clubs, without whom, says John, "our convention would never have existed." Indeed, Con•Cept was founded by a local fan club (MonSFFA, in fact), and the members of these clubs form the core of the con's support. It has always been important for Con•Cept to offer a great deal of diversity in its programming, mirroring the diversity of interests entertained by the clubs, and by Montreal's SF/F fans in general. Con•Cept is at its best when its focus is broad, and '95's event served up a wonderfully eclectic spread of programming, covering topics literary, media, visual-artistic, scientific, fannish, and just



Con•Cept '95 masquerade: MonSFFA member Graham Darling as an RCMP vampire hunter

# REVIEWS

plain fun! And like never before, the con enlisted the direct aid of local clubs in programming the weekend's three tracks of discussion panels and presentations. Clubs were invited to provide panellists, and/or to conceive of and host their own panels. They responded to the invitation with much zeal; MonSFFA led the pack, hosting no less than six panels, including the popular "Where Are All The Flying Cars?"—which asked if the "promises" of science fiction have failed to materialize—and "Drop-kick the Dumb Dolphin," which had a bit of fun trashing lame sci-fi series *seaQuest*.

Kudos to Con•Cept '95, which managed to get just about all of Montreal's SF/F community involved in the con, making for a fun and entertaining con, and generating plenty of good fannish vibes all around.

Those staples of the SF/F con, the dealers' room, art show, masquerade, video room, and con-suite were all a part of the package, along with Con•Cept staples the scale model competition and display area, the latter a room dedicated to exhibits mounted by some of the local genre clubs. A special track of anime videos ran all weekend, too.

The con's guest list was headed up by SF writers Spider and Jeanne Robinson, illustrator Vincent Di Fate, and comics writer Len



Con•Cept '95 masquerade: This Star Wars duo includes MonSFFA president Lynda Pelley as Princess Leia

**NOTES ON:  
CANCON '95/  
CONVENTION 15/  
BORÉAL 12  
(OTTAWA, ONTARIO;  
MAY 12-14, 1995)  
by Susan Denham**

CanCon, a convention dedicated to "Canadian content in speculative literature," featured quite an SF/F buffet this year. The con hosted both Canada's annual national SF con, Convention, and Quebec's French-language lit-con, Boréal; handed out two annual SF awards, the national Auroras and Quebec's Prix Boréal; saw the National Library of Canada kick off its landmark Canadian SF/F exhibit; and prevailed upon Canada Post to introduce the first of its new series of stamps celebrating Canadian comic book heroes. But despite such an impressive line-up of events, CanCon was poorly attended.

Reviews are mixed. At least one attendee found the whole thing too snobbish, criticizing CanCon for not sufficiently catering to the interests of fans, in favour of programming a "pro-oriented" affair at which the country's professional SF/F writers hung out together, talked shop, and celebrated their own artistry. A few of the MonSFFen in attendance commented that the con was okay, but that the discussion panels were somewhat dry and often boring. Other reviews run counter to these evaluations; one pegged the con as "relaxing and enjoyable" and the panels as "superb."

CanCon suffered from a number of serious organiz-

ational difficulties, one of which resulted in the non-appearance of the con's program book. Promises were made that each attendee would be mailed their program book, but to our knowledge, the books have not yet materialized. In that the con lost money, the treasurer, perhaps, doesn't have the budget for a mailing.

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## 1995 AURORA AWARD-WINNERS

- Best Long-Form Work in English:** *Virtual Light* (William Gibson)
- Best Long-Form Work in French:** *La mémoire du lac* (Joel Champetier)
- Best Short-Form Work in English:** "The Fragrance of Orchids" (Sally McBride)
- Best Short-Form Work in French:** "L'homme qui fouillait la lumière" (Alain Bergeron) and "L'envoyé" (Yves Meynard)
- Best Other Work in English:** *On Spec* (SF magazine, published by the Copper Pig Writers' Society)
- Best Other Work in French:** *Solaris* (SF magazine; Joel Champetier, editor)
- Artistic Achievement:** Tim Hammell (*On Spec*)
- Fan Achievement (Fanzine):** *Under the Ozone Hole* (Karl Johanson and John Herbert, editors)
- Fan Achievement (Organizational):** Cath Jackel (*On Spec* and NonCon)
- Fan Achievement (Other):** Catherine Donahue Girczyc (hostess, *Ether Patrol* radio show)

Strazewski. As an artist, I, naturally, relished talking shop with the celebrated Mr. Di Fate and closely studied the samples of his marvellous work on display in the art show. Not normally one for the folk singing kind of thing, I nevertheless quite enjoyed the amicable Spider Robinson's Saturday evening concert. Con•Cept's guests were all very approachable, engaging, and seemed genuinely to be having a good time.

The con, spread over several floors of its downtown host hotel, proved a bit difficult to get around and was further plagued by a bank of *really* dysfunctional elevators. Annoying, but not so much of a drawback as to spoil a most enjoyable convention.

Con•Cept's return was well received by SF/F devotees—paid attendance was healthy, reportedly at near or slightly over 400, enough to comfortably cover operating costs—and in that Con•Cept strives to serve as many of the interests of local fandom as possible, it's return is welcome. I rate Con•Cept '95 a solid success right across the board.

Con•Cept '96 has secured as one of its principle guests Terry Pratchett, author of the riotously funny *Discworld* series. Should be fun!



*Above: Con•Cept '95's masquerade participants gather on stage*



*Right: Party animals at Con•Cept '95*

*Below: Guest of Honour Spider Robinson (seated) sings and plays at his Saturday evening concert*

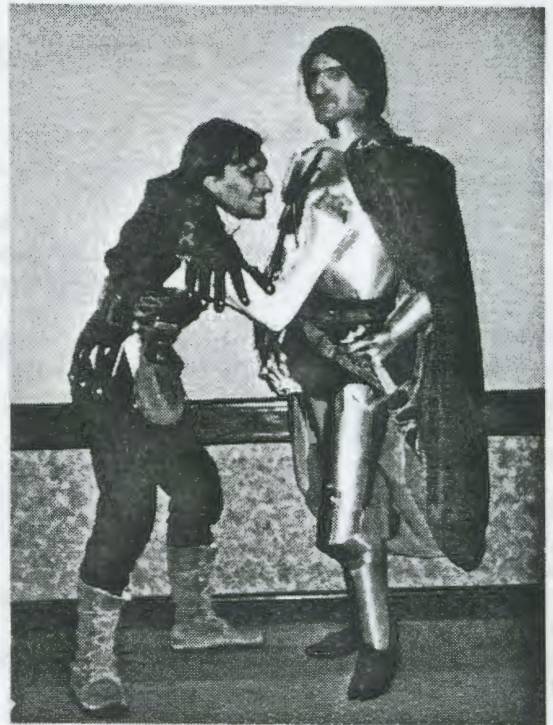
*All Con•Cept '95 photos by Daniel P. Kenney*



# Chivalry lives at Con•Cept '95



*Sir Galahad, a Knight (favourite colour: blue)*



*His squire prepares him for a night out.*



*He meets a sorceress...*



*...and a princess...*



*...and a Klingon!*



# Risk and Sacrifice, Part 5

by Bryan Ekers, from a story idea by Keith Braithwaite

*Bryan Ekers' DS9 story concludes; parts 1, 2, 3, and 4, ran in, respectively, Warps 30 (Summer '94), 31 (September '94), 32 (February '95), and 33 (April '95).*

*"...there's a chance I won't come back, Commander, and if I don't, you'll have to explain to Starfleet what happened to two of their people and three runabouts," Sisko read.*

Ensign Ro seemed better now. In a quiet moment aboard the *Rio Grande*, Kira had pulled her Starfleet file from the computer. Kira was surprised to learn that Ro had been offered a posting at DS9 when Starfleet had taken over the station; she would have been Kira's chief assistant. The offer might have meant two different things: either Starfleet was giving Ro a difficult assignment and a chance to live down her past difficulties, or they were attempting to bury her in some far-off post, thus hiding one of their problems from view.

Ro had started to mist up again, but steadied when the human Barclay put his hand on hers. Ro's voice was clear when she reported: "Remote control over the *Ganges* and *Yangtze* nominal. We've got the Herald bracketed."

Barclay withdrew, to the recesses of the runabout. He checked the connections from Jelenik's orange, glowing, meter-wide powersphere to the runabout's power lines a final time. Everything was in place, but he'd have to stay at his post to monitor the power levels. "Tractor beam reports ready," he called to Kira. "We'll be operating at 300 percent above normal. The other ships will supplement."

*"...What we're about to attempt must be kept from the Bajoran people. If it becomes known that Starfleet runabouts were used to destroy a Bajoran religious symbol, there'll be a bloodbath. The emotions during the*

*festival are running high, and it's fair to expect the worst."*

"Tractor beams locked," reported Kira, checking her display. "Let's take a nice, slow curve."

"Aye, sir," replied Ro gloomily. Her fingers darted across the controls. "Point one degrees starboard." She felt sick.

"The powersphere is working...fine," said Barclay. He had wanted to describe how wonderful the device was, how efficiently it operated, how beautifully it gave

*...the Herald was an ugly particle swarm surrounding a dirty central mass...*

power to the *Rio Grande*. On reflection, he decided neither woman needed to hear his raves just then.

"Point two degrees from original course," said Ro flatly.

"I estimate nine hours, 31 minutes to impact," reported Kira.

*"...Dax and O'Brien don't know what I'm doing, and I want to keep it that way. I know how curious humans are, and Trills as well, but I'll have to ask you not to use the station's sensors to track our progress, and don't try to communicate with us. The less attention brought to us, the better. Luckily, Bajorans have always considered it bad luck to track the Herald's trajectory. Sort of like tempting fate, I guess. I just hope they won't notice the course change until it's too late."*

Kira was struck by how unreal it

all seemed. At only a few hundred meters, the Herald was an ugly particle swarm surrounding a dirty central mass which yielded easily to the tractor beams. The majesty was gone.

"Major?" started Ro.

"Ensign?"

"What if we ran a runabout into the cloud with the engines set to detonate? Wouldn't the shockwave blow apart the cloud?"

"Ask your friend," replied Kira harshly.

Ro glanced back at Barclay. He cleared his throat uncomfortably. "No. Not even if we sent in all three of them together. The cloud is spread out over too large an area."

"What about splitting the Herald?" asked Ro. "Can we cut it in half, still leave something for the Jalani?"

Barclay glanced at Kira, and let his eyes drop. He began to slowly turn away from Ro, though it hurt him to feel her eyes burning into him, looking for guidance.

"We can't," intoned Kira. "We don't have time."

Ro's background was tactical, not technical, and crazy, unworkable ideas tumbled through her mind. "The shields. We could make them into a forcefield."

"The cloud's over 3 million tons," replied Kira. "It would be like holding back a tidal wave with a sheet of paper."

"What about—"

"Damn you," said Kira evenly. "Don't you start looking for an easy way out." She abruptly turned to glare at Ro. "Don't! Bajorans will have to live without the Herald, but they will live. If that cloud hits during the Jalani, everyone will see it as Preta's final judgement and they'll die thinking it was all for nothing. They'll die." Ro looked away from Kira, hiding her face for a moment while Kira continued. "We can stop it. It'll be ugly and it'll hurt, but we'll stop it." She angrily hit a few controls. "Three point two degrees

from original course. Six and a half hours to impact."

*"...Because we'll need maximum power on the tractor beams, we'll have to steal energy from everywhere else, including the shields. I haven't told Ro and Barclay this, but I'm sure they'll figure it out very quickly."*

"29 degrees from original course," reported Ro.

Kira peered at her own monitors. "Anti-matter cloud bearing 13, mark six. Range: 6 million kilometers. Three hours, 12 minutes to impact."

Barclay glanced at Kira. "Ganges reports mild power fluctuation. I'm compensating."

"Acknowledged," replied Kira.

No words were spoken for another 20 minutes.

"I keep thinking," started Kira, "that we should be performing some kind of ritual. But I don't know which one would apply."

"Minstaal," said Barclay.

Kira frowned, glanced at Ro, then turned to look at Barclay.

"How do you know about Minstaal?" she asked.

"Laren told me a little bit," he replied. "It's a lot like...well, Valhalla is what some Earthlings call it. Where the spirits of the honoured dead go."

Kira smiled condescendingly. "I don't think so, Lieutenant."

"No, he's right," offered Ro. "If Preta thought we didn't need the Herald anymore, she'd call him to Minstaal."

"Why wouldn't we need the Herald anymore?" asked Kira.

"Well, Bajor demonstrated its faith by surviving the Cardassian occupation. What other proof would Preta want?"

Kira had to think about this for a moment. "So we're Preta's agents."

Now it was Ro's turn to ponder. "Yeah, I guess so. And Bajorans *have* acted for the Prophets before. Usually just before they entered Minstaal themselves."

Kira chuckled. "Saint Ro."

Ro laughed. "Kira the Righteous."

"That's *Major* Kira the Righteous to you, Ensign."

Ro casually pointed back at Barclay. "Reginald the Virtuous." With a subtle smile and small shake

of her head, she indicated to Kira this was a lie.

*"...Please convey my highest regards to the others in case of...well, I'm sure you know. You might have to make up a convincing story for my disappearance. Just say I was killed when the first ship hit the station."*

"45 degrees," said Ro. She was sombre again.

"800,000 kilometers to impact," said Kira. "41 minutes."

"The Ganges and Yangtze are operating at redline," called Barclay. "Going to secondary systems." He skillfully manipulated the remote controls.

*"...You must make certain that Jelenik keeps his word to me, Commander. He does command a certain respect, and his followers will be looking*

*...she turned to look at him, and saw him disappear in a transporter beam. "Barclay!" she screamed.*

*to him for some sort of rational explanation for the Herald's course change. If he won't claim it was a miracle, you'll have to. Jelenik's influence is greater than yours, but the Emissary of the Prophets carries some weight, too."*

The anti-matter cloud was a sickly-green dot, barely within visual range. It grew steadily as they approached.

"Gamma radiation count is rising," said Kira. "Four rems per year." She blinked. "Four point one."

"Forward shields at minimum," said Barclay.

"Can we spare the power?" asked Kira.

"Uh, buh-barely."

"Keep as big a margin as you can, Lieutenant. We need the tractor beam more than the shields."

"But—"

"Reg!" yelled Ro. "If we don't aim the Herald properly, nothing else matters."

"Terrans," muttered Kira. She and Ro exchanged a brief nod.

"The radiation's interfering with the Ganges' remote," observed Ro. "I'm boosting the signal. 50 degrees from original course. We need 52. It'll be close."

Kira checked the clock. "18 minutes."

*"...I can't explain how ashamed I feel, Commander. I'm doing what the Cardassians never dared. They could have destroyed all our holy places. I guess they thought the more we prayed for salvation, the less we'd fight for it. I guess they were wrong."*

The sickly light of the cloud was hurting Kira's eyes. She looked away, at the radiation counter. "60 rems. The hull is blocking some of it." She knew Ro and Barclay wouldn't press for further details. She raised one hand. "Lieutenant, the second we have the Herald's course set, I'm dropping the tractor beam. I want full impulse *and* shields on all three runabouts. Understood?"

"Nuh-no problem, Major."

Ro had started to hit the console with the edge of her hand; a hard, steady beat. Kira considered asking her to stop, until she noticed the lines her own fingernails had carved into the hard polymer side of her chair.

"51 point eight," said Ro sharply.

Kira moved her hand onto the tractor beam control. She glanced at the rad counter. "90 rems and climbing."

"51 point nine."

Barclay looked up sharply. "We've lost the remote with the Ganges!"

"Reconnect!" barked Kira.

Barclay tried. "It's not working! We've lost its tractor beam."

"Get it back, Reg!" yelled Ro. "We'll miss the impact point! Reg! Barclay!" When he failed to answer, she turned to look at him, and saw him disappear in a transporter beam. "Barclay!" she screamed.

*"...By Jelenik's plan, impact should take place at about 1:30, station time. If we can't stop the cloud, you'll have to evacuate with whatever ships you can*

get. *Wish me luck... Benjamin. Kira out.*"

Sisko looked at the clock on the datapad. It was 1:27. His headache was gone.

Kira looked at her sensors. "He's on the *Ganges*! We've got the third tractor beam!"

"52 degrees!" shouted Ro with obvious relief. "Tractor beam disengaged. Maximum impulse."

With the inertial dampers running on minimal power, both women were pressed into their chairs. The *Rio Grande*, with the *Yangtze* in a remote control grip, screamed away from the comet and the cloud. To Kira, looking through the canopy of the *Rio Grande*, the starry blackness of space was blinding after the horrible light of the cloud. The *Ganges* moved into her view, piloted by Barclay. At once, Ro understood what he was doing. She manoeuvred the *Rio Grande*, putting it directly between the cloud and the *Ganges*. The enhanced shields of their runabout would protect his.

Kira saw the rad counter flashing in red. "150 rems!"

The dust surrounding the comet began to meet the fringe of the cloud, creating explosions that were pure and white and silent. The chunk of ice and rock that was the comet's heart was slowed but not stopped by the pressure of the blinding heat, hotter than the surface of Bajor's star. The shields of the *Rio Grande*, enhanced by Jelenik's powersphere, sparked and sizzled. Barclay raised the shields on the *Ganges*, and automated circuits tripped aboard the *Yangtze*, activating its shields. Superheated plasma and a light that burned filled space, buffeting the runabouts. Ro began to cry, her shoulders shaking with each thrash of the ship. Kira reached over and took Ro's hand. The momentum of the cloud and the momentum of the comet forced a new direction for the joined remains of both, away from the runabouts, away from station, away from Bajor. The light would flicker for days and finally die in the icy cold of the void.

To Benjamin Sisko, standing on

the quiet Promenade with his hand on his son's shoulder for support, the tremendous light was a simple flare in space; brilliant, but small and distant.

A Bajoran man, also watching the light, walked over to them. He glanced at Sisko's uniform.

"Commander Sisko, I presume," he said offhandedly, still watching the distant flame.

"Yes," replied Sisko. "Secretary Jelenik?"

"Yes."

A brief silence passed between them.

"Something of a miracle, Commander," said Jelenik in a hollow tone. "Wouldn't you say?"

"Yes, I would," agreed Sisko. He still had the datapad. He casually pressed a few keys to erase Kira's message and Jelenik's flight plan.

Jake glanced at the pad in his

*Superheated plasma  
and a light  
that burned filled  
space, buffeting  
the runabouts.*

father's hand, and caught a glimpse of Kira's letter before it disappeared forever. "What was that, Dad?"

"Oh, nothing important, son. Not anymore."

Barclay had an acid taste on his tongue. His hand, where he had been braced against the console for support, had a painful burn. He ran the back of his hand across his forehead, wiping away the sweat, and tried to steady his breathing before hailing the *Rio Grande*.

Major Kira's face popped up almost immediately. "That was a very brave and stupid thing to do, Lieutenant. With all the radiation, you might have transported onto the *Ganges* in pieces."

"I know, Major. I hate transporters." Barclay suddenly realized how fast his heart was

beating. "But I hate dying more." He took a deep, shivery breath, and realized he could hear Ro sobbing through the communication link. "We should be far enough away to drop the shields for a few seconds. Can you beam Ensign Ro over here? I have to be the strong one, now."

Kira nodded, and gently guided Ro to the runabout's transporter. As she did, she realized all her fingertips had painful radiation burns. She set the transporter controls with her knuckles, dropped the shields, and beamed Ro out.

Barclay guided Ro to a chair on the *Ganges*, knelt beside it and held her. Her tears were cold and many. Barclay held her very tight, feeling her shaking, absorbing her grief. He brushed away a lock of Ro's hair, and found a small radiation burn on her temple. Barclay kissed the burn gently to make it better, though he knew he couldn't. Suddenly her arms were around him, crushing him with grief, sadness, anger. He rocked her gently and wished he could hold her forever.

Unlike Ro, Kira would be content to express her grief in private. She moved over to and sat down in the pilot's chair. She left her arms in her lap; her finger burns were beginning to hurt. "Computer, voice control."

"Voice control activated," replied the computer in its neutral tone. *The uncaring voice of technology*, mused Kira.

"Re-establish the control link with the *Ganges* and the *Rio Grande*, and erase all runabout flight logs for the last 10 hours, authorization Kira Tango Charlie seven one."

"Link complete. Logs cleared."

"Begin radiation protocol, put the shields back up on all three runabouts, and set a course for *Deep Space Nine*. One-eighth impulse."

"Estimated travel time two point one hours."

That was fine with Kira. It would give her a chance to recover at least partially, if only for appearance's sake. She could feel the tears begin to build, but before they started she spoke a final time.

"And send a message to DS9, Commander Sisko's eyes only." She paused. "Tell him Preta has decided to bring us home."



# THE IMMOBILE EMPIRE

by Alain  
Peyrefitte

Book Review by  
Joe Aspler

Today's history lesson is the stuff of great space operas. It also holds a lesson for those who say we don't need scientific research, space exploration, or anything else that helps us to expand our knowledge or to ask questions about the unknown.

Imagine an empire that long ago discovered the secret of star flight. But after years of exploration, imagine that the great empire has decided that everything worthwhile is at home and has given up starfaring. Add a brash new empire that has just discovered the star drive. Representatives of the new empire turn up on the doorstep of the old empire. What happens next? In the best traditions of space opera, now add a precocious adolescent, with more brains than most of his elders. But this isn't science fiction. This is the history of the British embassy to China, in 1793.

At the time of Marco Polo, western Europe was just coming out of the Dark Ages. China was so far ahead of Europe in so many areas that many Europeans treated Marco Polo's descriptions of his life in China as fable.

About 50 years before Columbus, Chinese fleets, led by their great explorer-admiral, Zheng He, sailed around Asia and India, reaching the eastern coast of Africa. The smallest Chinese ship was at least as large and as seaworthy as any of the ships of Columbus and his European contemporaries. By the standards of their time, the 15th century Chinese explorers were peaceful ambassadors. Many early European explorers were little

better than pirates.

What happened to China? In the decline and fall of the Chinese Empire, bureaucrats played more or less the same role that lawyers currently play in our culture. Appalled at the expense, bureaucrats found excuses to stop long-range exploration. The first excuse was cultural. China, the "Middle Kingdom" (the center of the Earth), had all that anyone needed. Therefore exploration was pointless. The second excuse was national defence. Since China's traditional enemies attacked by land, China had no need for sea power. (They forgot this one when they found their coastal cities and shipping at the mercy of other nations' pirates). Large ships were destroyed, records of Zheng He's voyages were destroyed, and eventually, the Chinese were forbidden by their government to travel abroad.

Imagine that the Chinese had continued their voyages. Imagine that the first Portuguese explorers sailing around the coast of Africa had run into the Chinese. Would the Chinese and the Europeans have gone to war? Would the inhabitants of Africa, India, and Asia have looked upon the Chinese as protectors against European pirates? Although this is a long shot, would the Catholic inquisitors have learned something about religious toleration from the Chinese?

None of this happened. The Chinese returned home to stay, behind locked doors. Europeans continued to trade with China, but only under conditions that were tightly controlled by the Empire.

In *The Immobile Empire* French historian Alain Peyrefitte has written a fascinating account of the embassy sent by the British government to the court of the Emperor Qianlong. At a time when their navy was needed for the start of the wars of the French Revolution, the British sent two ships and 700 men to China. The travel time was what we might expect for a voyage through a fictional space empire: about eight months each way. One of Britain's most respected diplomats, Lord George Macartney, was appointed

**"...a lesson  
for those who  
say we  
don't need  
scientific  
research,  
space  
exploration,  
or anything  
else that  
helps us to  
expand our  
knowledge..."**

ambassador.

The British did not count on the complete lack of interest on the part of the Chinese government in anything outside its realm. Peyrefitte quotes never-released documents, including notes written by the Emperor himself. To the Chinese, the British were just another group of visiting barbarians bringing tribute to their "rightful" ruler. The Emperor's notes about the British were scornful in the extreme. The barge that carried the British party even carried a banner announcing that this was the "tribute embassy of the barbarians."

The reply from Qianlong to King George III was the perfect expression of isolationism. Foreign ambassadors had never before been allowed permanent residence in Peking. Therefore, it was unthinkable that a British resident ambassador could be allowed. Nothing could be allowed that did not have a precedent. Qianlong's lack of interest in foreign trade or products was monumental. For reasons of diplomacy, the full translation of his reply to King George III was not given to the British government. The following excerpt is a good reason why:

*You, O King, should simply act in conformity with our wishes by strengthening your loyalty and swearing perpetual obedience so as to ensure that your country may share the blessings of peace ... Let the King reverently receive them and know our kind regard for him.*

In turn, published diaries and documents from members of the British embassy showed their growing disdain for the Chinese. Those documents also show their complete lack of understanding. Conditions which the Chinese meant as compliments were taken as insults. Conditions which the Chinese meant as insults were sometimes taken as compliments!

Perhaps the most fascinating document is the diary of Thomas Staunton, the 12-year-old son of the aide to the British ambassador. Young Thomas was the only member of the British delegation who managed to learn to read and speak Chinese. This was partly the result of

Chinese law, which forbade the teaching of their language to foreigners. This was also, no doubt, the result of traditional British complacency.

Thomas Staunton grew up to become a noted scholar and public servant. Decades later, as a member of Parliament, he was a leading spokesman for British military intervention when China would not allow a free hand to British trade interests. Despite his position as Britain's leading scholar on the Chinese government and language, Staunton could not escape his environment, the one that used to say that "God is an Englishman."

In a book review in a past issue of *Warp*, I discussed the British Arctic and Antarctic explorers of the last century, who never allowed good sense and experience to modify their behaviour. The same might be said for 19th century Chinese bureaucrats. Until the attack on Peking by European troops in 1860, China didn't even have a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They only had a Department of Tribute. Peyrefitte quotes the Chinese official who, as late as 1867, expressed astonishment that European countries could consider their kings and emperors to be the equals of the Emperor of China.

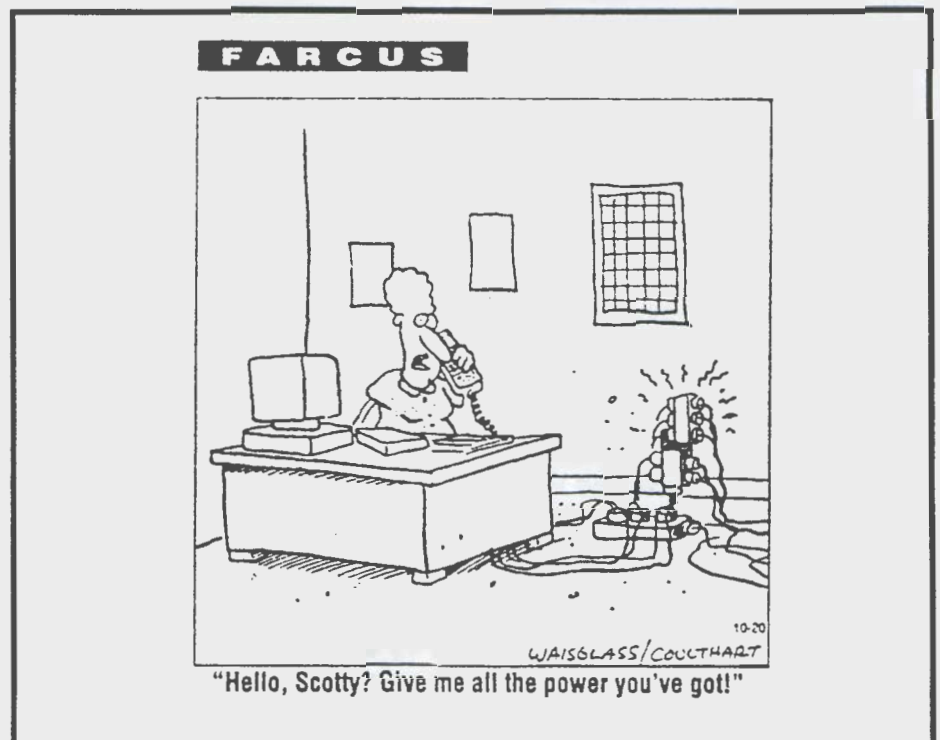
Some things never change. For all of its Marxist-Leninist-Maoist

rhetoric, China's Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 was really a traditional reaction to foreign ideas. Peyrefitte quotes a telling, and typical, 1960s statement: "Better a Chinese train that runs late than a capitalist train that runs on time."

During the planning stages of the 1793 expedition, the British considered themselves to be the equals of the Chinese, or perhaps even their inferiors. After the lessons of the Macartney mission had sunk in, the British decided that the Chinese refusal to meet Europe on European terms indicated Chinese inferiority. Out of that attitude came one of the great tragedies of the 19th century: the rapacious exploitation of China by the European powers.

Peyrefitte has written a powerful account of another time and place. He has not fallen into the trap of fitting the attitudes of today's world into the 18th century. But he condemns those in the 18th century who thought they could keep to the Middle Ages forever. A special note of recognition goes to his translator, Jon Rothschild.

So the next time somebody disparages the cost of education, research, and exploration, use this book as an example of the cost of isolationism. And if they won't read the book, you can always hit them over the head with it.



# MOVIE REVIEWS, PART I

The summer's hit SF/F movies await you at your local theatre, while many of the also-rans have already been yanked from screens. But you'll be able to catch 'em on video soon enough! *Warp's* reviewers take a look, now, at Hollywood's Summer '95 offerings:

## CASPER

When I first read that there was going to be a Casper movie this summer, I expected another feature cartoon in the *Jetsons* or (shudder) *Care Bears* style. When I saw the teasers, my eyes started to twinkle: "Hey, this looks good!" But was it going to be? After all, *The Mask* had superlatively good special effects but, although not without merit, was

way overdone for my tastes.

Well, *Casper* was a delight! Everything I loved about *The Addams Family*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Beetlejuice* is in this movie. Even the original *Casper* cartoons contributed heavily, but the writers handled things in such a way as to avoid the kind of silliness that taints *The Flintstones*.

Do not expect anything sinister or gross; *Casper* is a very light movie. Maybe a bit too cute in places but still the perfect antidote for some of the more depressing fare that is too often the norm these days.

The effects are so flawless that I have no doubt that we are not all that far from the day when it will become impossible to tell a flesh and blood actor from a computer-generated character on the screen.

And to behold the grandiose mansion where most of the action takes place was, alone, worth the price of admission. I would not mind living there myself!

Go see this movie. You will come out of the theatre with a smile on your face; even you, Kevin.  
—reviewed by Sylvain St-Pierre

## CONGO

A fabled treasure, an expedition of adventurers, a lost city deep in the jungle guarded by a breed of killer apes, all topped off with an erupting volcano. Sounds like one of those turn-of-the-century Lost Race adventure novels Georges Dodds wrote of in his recent feature article in *Warp*.

*Congo* is based upon a novel (by Michael Crichton) of more recent vintage which sports many of the features of those old favourites of Georges'. But I'd advise Georges against running out to the nearest theatre to catch this flick. I think he'd find it disappointing.

Nothing happens in this movie! We're looking at a group of mostly clichéd characters running through a pastiche of action scenes in a convoluted plot which ends with their finding what they're looking for, then running away as the aforementioned volcano goes boom. It's not that the actors, effects, or production values were particularly bad—not that they were phenomenal, mind you, they just weren't *bad*—it's that the plot went nowhere, leaving the audience without any kind of a payoff for sticking with the story for two hours.

A few of the principles succeed, occasionally, in rising above the lacklustre tale. Of note is Laura Linney, playing the expedition's only woman, Karen Ross, an ex-CIA type who works for a ruthless communications corporation. She has been sent to locate a rare variety of diamond which will ensure that her company corners the market in a new, high-tech communications technology. In a stroke of counter-



Casper: a delight

cliché characterization, she's the smartest, boldest, and bravest member of the expedition, and drives much of the film's action. Usually, such characters are written as male.

But the Karen Ross character notwithstanding, this movie will leave audiences unsatisfied.  
—reviewed by Carl Phillips

### BATMAN FOREVER

The third Batman movie isn't nearly so brooding and darkly gothic as the first two. A new director—Joel Schumacher, taking over from Tim Burton—lightens up a little and has more fun with the whole thing. More importantly, Schumacher allows Batman to step forward and *actually* star in his own movie!

Val Kilmer is under the cowl now, following Michael Keaton's departure from the role, and does a fine job of it. He's a more animated, athletic, up-front Batman than was Keaton, much to the benefit of the series, which, under Burton, put far too much emphasis on the villains, and not enough on the title character.

*Batman Forever's* two colourful villains, the Riddler (Jim Carrey, who is tailor made for the role) and Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones), certainly get their licks in, but do not so dominate proceedings to the extent that, for instance, Jack Nicholson's Joker did in the first Batfilm. Bruce Wayne/Batman's adoption of orphaned circus acrobat Dick Grayson, who becomes Robin, is given it's fair play on screen against the over the top, comic book antics of the two villains in a silly plot that doesn't really matter. This Batman movie, then, corrects the villain-heavy imbalance of its two predecessors. A welcome move; after all, Batman is the hero, here, the guy we're paying to see.

Throw in Nicole Kidman as the required babe; redesign the Bat-suit, Batmobile, Batplane, and Batboat; mix in a generous number of wild stunts, and you've got yourself a thoroughly entertaining comic book on the big screen.

(An aside: With the principle Bat-villains now all having had their turn, what can we expect to see in the inevitable *Batman IV*? A team-up with Warner Bros.' other comic book

superhero property, Superman, would certainly make for a big event. But with Christopher "Superman" Reeves tragically felled by an accident which will probably leave him paralysed for life, this scenario won't likely go anywhere. Perhaps we'll see the return of the Joker, or a teaming up of all these Bat-villains. Personally, I'd like to see the Batman/Catwoman relationship explored further. Or, the introduction of Batgirl. Any excuse, really, to fit shapely women into skintight leather or spandex!—reviewed by Keith Braithwaite

### APOLLO 13

Superb! A must-see movie. I highly recommend *Apollo 13*. Prepare for a tension-packed ride all the way, terrifically acted and wonderfully crafted.

Director Ron Howard has fashioned a first-rate film as he recounts the gripping details of one of manned spaceflight's most dramatic stories.

April 11, 1970, 13:13 hours: Apollo 13 lifts off. Following the historic first lunar landing of Apollo 11 the year before, public interest in the space program was rapidly waning. Apollo 13's mission was seen as routine, nothing new. In contrast to their wall to wall coverage of the Apollo 11 mission, American TV networks were largely uninterested in Apollo 13. Then disaster struck.

April 13, a few days into the mission: an explosion tears open Apollo 13's service module, severely disabling the craft and placing her three-astronaut crew in grave danger. Suddenly, all eyes are on the crippled spacecraft as the moon landing is abandoned and desperate mission controllers buck the odds, engineering gerryrigged solutions to one critical problem after another as they sweat to bring the astronauts safely home.

*Apollo 13* is an historical drama, and going into the theatre, we know, of course, that the astronauts did make it home safely. But knowing how it all turns out in no way diminishes this story's suspense. I was riveted, breathless on the edge of my seat from mission commander Jim Lovell's heart-stopping

"Houston, we have a problem" right through to the nail-biting splashdown.

Tom Hanks, as Lovell, along with Ed Harris as flight director Gene Kranz, deliver top-flight performances, heading up a solid cast that includes Kevin Bacon, Bill Paxton (*Aliens'* Hudson), Gary Sinise, and Kathleen Quinlan.

Add to great acting great special effects. Real NASA film footage *pales* next to the state-of-the-art CGFX used here to render the spacecraft. Never has a Saturn V launch been so spectacularly depicted on screen.

Even those of you who have never had much interest in the space program, I'm sure, will find yourselves electrified by this story. And if you're a NASA junkie, this flick will just positively send you right into freakin' orbit!—reviewed by Keith Braithwaite

More reviews in part two of this feature, next issue.

### WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT... (Compiled by Reed King)

#### JOHNNY MNEMONIC

Dubbed "Johnny Moronic" by some critics, it was one of the first summer movies out of the gate and opened to mixed reviews. It did reasonably well at the box office in its first few weeks, but then dropped off.

#### VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

John Carpenters' remake of the '60s classic just wasn't all that scary, and a bit silly, in fact; not what you want in a horror movie.

#### FIRST KNIGHT

Hollywood, its finger ever on the pulse, responded to public clamouring for yet *another* telling of the Camelot story. Critics bought Sean Connery as Arthur, but not Richard Gere as Lancelot. Hasn't generated much interest, or box office.

# SENSORS

## FACT, RUMOUR AND SPECULATION FROM AROUND SF/F-DOM

### FILM OF ROSWELL ALIENS' AUTOPSIES TO AIR ON TV

UFO junkies worldwide will be watching with great interest when, on August 28, TV networks (Fox in North America) broadcast a film purported to be of autopsies performed on the bodies of extraterrestrials recovered at a flying saucer crash site near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947.

The film was supposedly made for the U.S. Air Force as a visual record of the dissections. The freelance cameraman who shot it, unbeknownst to the air force, made a copy for himself. He kept it all these years and has now sold it to Merlin Productions, based in London, England, under the condition that his identity not be revealed.

While scientists for whom the film was previewed have unanimously dismissed it as a hoax, they are at a loss to explain how it was faked.

### CANCELLATIONS AND NEW SCI-FI TV

Cancelled genre series: *Earth 2*, *Sliders*, *VR-5*, and *TekWar*. New shows are on-deck, ready to fill the void left by those axed.

*Space: Above and Beyond* (Fox) is from ex *X-Files* writers/co-executive producers James Wong and Glen Morgan. The series will follow the adventures of a group of military cadets who find themselves called up to front-line duty in an intergalactic war after Earth's best fighter squadrons are destroyed.

*American Gothic* (CBS), written and produced by '70s teen star Shaun Cassidy (!), hopes to attract the *X-Files* crowd with the story of Trinity, South Carolina, a small town where lurk dark secrets. Gary Cole plays Trinity's demonic sheriff.

*Deadly Games* (UPN) is a comedy/adventure about a scientist

whose video-game creations come menacingly to life. The scientist, his wife, and assistant must stop these video villains from destroying the world. Genre veteran Christopher Lloyd plays Sebastian Jackal, the show's resident digital bad guy. Each episode of the series will feature a guest villain; *Trek NG*'s LeVar "Geordi" Burton has the gig in one of the early episodes. Leonard Nimoy is the show's creator/producer.

And *Dark Zone* (syndicated), a Canadian-made series, promises to

bring new levels of violence to televised SF!

### DORN BOARDS *DS9*

Michael Dorn will, reportedly, join the cast of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* this season, as everyone's favourite Klingon, Worf.

### SEAQUEST GETS NEW CAPTAIN

NBC's *seaQuest DSV*, a ratings loser, has survived cancellation and



Above: Space cadets

Below: A soldier of the future does front-line duty in Fox's new sci-fi series, *Space: Above and Beyond*



moved to another night (Wednesdays at 8:00). With Roy Scheider reportedly contracted to appear only in a few episodes this season, the Captain Bridger character has been retired to an island retreat; Michael Ironside ("V") is the *seaQuest*'s new captain.

### DOCTOR WHO TV MOVIE?

Fox nixed the idea of a new TV series for the Doctor, but have now agreed to consider a *Doctor Who* TV movie, and if such a movie proved popular, the network might change its mind and go with a weekly series after all. At the moment, a script is being finalized. Fox is expected to decide any day now if it'll green-light the start of production.

Steven Spielberg, whose production company originally pitched the idea of a new *Doctor Who* TV series to Fox, is no longer involved in the project.

### MOVIES

Jodie Foster has dropped out of the film *Contact*, based on the Carl Sagan novel, and it looks like producers may now cancel the production.

*Jurassic Park*'s sequel will be called *Jurassic Park II: The Lost World*.

Whoopi Goldberg is a cop teamed with a human-sized Tyrannosaurus Rex (!) in the fantasy/action/comedy *T. Rex*, due in theatres November 17.

The Borg—in their full-blown, nasty, not their nice, Hugh-Borg mode—are to be at the center of the story in the second *Next Generation* movie. An American Thanksgiving '96 release is planned.

### CANFANDOM

#### Aurora Awards

William Gibson's *Virtual Light* and Joel Champetier's *La mémoire du lac* were voted best novels, English and French, at this year's Aurora Awards (Canada's annual national SF awards). *Under the Ozone Hole* picked up the trophy for best fanzine, and more than a few fans were surprised to find that Winnipeg WorldCon chair (yes, that's WorldCon chair) John Mansfield did

not get the nod in the Fan Achievement (Organizational) category. John led the crew that brought Canada its first WorldCon in 21 years, and only its third ever. No small feat. "A prophet without honour, etc.," commented *Opuntia* editor Dale Spiers, who feels that the Auroras are "not very representative of the best in Canuck SF." (See page 11 for the list of 1995 Aurora Award winners.)

### Brief Notes of Interest, Conventions

Con•Cept '96 (March 21-23) lists *Discworld* author Terry Pratchett as its Guest of Honour.

Vancouver's V-Con will be revived. The con had been retired a couple of years ago by fans who were finding it too expensive and exhausting a project to run. The 21st V-Con is scheduled for the Victoria Day weekend, 1996.

#### Local Doctor Who Club's Future in Question

The future of Montreal's *Doctor Who* fan club, the High Council of Gallifrey, appears to be in some doubt as the summer nears its end. The club's president, Andrew Gurudata, has accepted a job offer in Toronto, and he and his new wife, fellow fan Kim Nakano, will soon be

moving west down the 401. No member of the High Council, it seems, is prepared to pick up the reigns of the club in the wake of Andrew's departure, leading to some speculation that the Council will fold.

While wishing them all the best, Montreal fandom is sorry to see Andrew and Kim go; they will be missed.

#### Con Job: Trekkies Lose Their Latinum

About 100 Ottawa-area *Trek* fans are out \$60 apiece. They bought tickets from Dan and Christine Kremer for a weekend convention, which was to include a buffet dinner with guest Majel Barrett Roddenberry. But the Kremers appear to have skipped town with the money!

After they failed to pay for their function-space rental by the required deadline, the city's civic center, which was to be the site of the con, pulled the plug and the event was cancelled. A local TV station that ran commercials advertising the convention has also yet to see the colour of the Kremers' money. The couple have disconnected their phone and vacated their apartment with several months rent owing. The regional police force's fraud unit is investigating.

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Others \_\_\_\_\_

Autres \_\_\_\_\_

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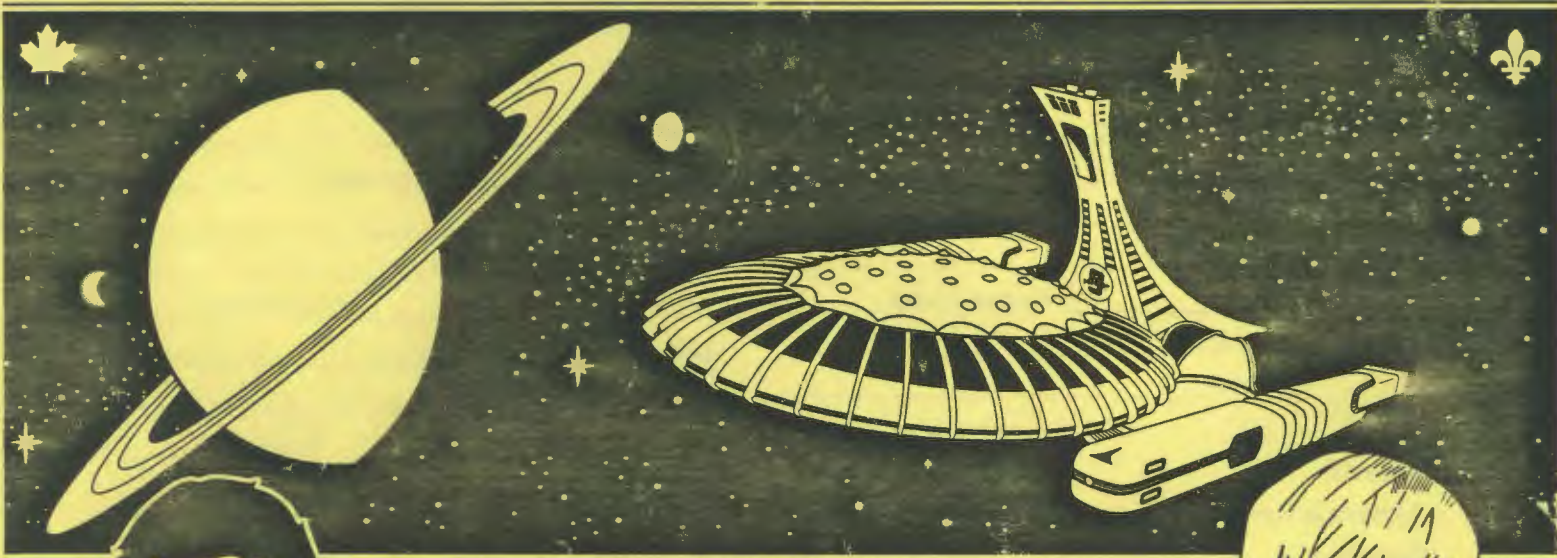


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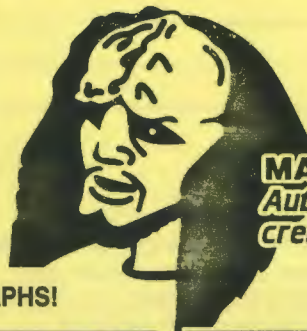


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