

Timberjak by Don DeBrandt. See review on page 7.

BCSFAzine.pdf (#12)

With VCON fast approaching, I have very little time to devote to the zine. However, there will be a VCON special edition which will be available through VCON and at some local bookstores and libraries. The acrobat version will also be available on the web site. This special edition might not be mailed out so be sure to pick one up at VCON, or at

To subscribe to the BCSFAzine electronically, download the Adobe Acrobat Reader at www.adobestudios.com and install it onto your computer. There are over twenty five different readers available, one for almost every operating system and computer on the market. Make sure you get the correct one for your system.

Once you have finished installing the reader, e-mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca and let me know that you wish to change your subscription to the Acrobat version. You will be taken off the snail mail list and switched to my e-mail list. (*Subscription information is on page 2*).



JCHW

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Upcoming WCSFA Events

WCSFA Memberships

New	\$26.00
New Family	\$32.00
Renewal	\$25.00
Family (2 Votes)	\$31.00

(Above prices includes subscription to BCSFAzine. Please e-mail woolf@vcn.bc.ca if you wish to receive the magazine electronically.)

Make checks payable to WCSFA
(West Coast Science Fiction Association)

Send cheques to: **WCSFA**
#110-1855 West 2nd Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1J1

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May 1999 Volume 27, #5

BCSFAzine is the club newsletter published by the West Coast Science Fiction Association (A Registered Society) *W.C.S.F.A. is also known as B.C.S.F.A. which is the social branch of the organization.*

For comments, subscriptions suggestions, and/or submissions, write to:

WCSFA
#110-1855 West 2nd Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1J1

F.R.E.D. - Every Friday

The weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in joining us for an evening of conversation and relaxation, with pool table option. At the Burrard Motor Inn opposite St. Paul's Hospital (Downtown Vancouver) 6 blocks south of Burrard Skytrain Station. 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). #22 Knight/McDonald bus along Burrard. Begins 8:00pm. On the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

Contributor's Deadline - June 18, July 16, August 20. September 17th, October 15th, November 19th, December 17th. Send your submissions/loc to John Wong at 2041 East 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5N 1X9 or E-Mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca.

BCSFAine Collation - June 6th, July 4th, August 1st, September 5th, October 3rd, November 7th, December 5th. First Sunday of the month 4:30PM. Call Steve Forty (S.40) to confirm at 936-4754.

BCSFAzine Pickup at FRED - April 30, During May 21, June July 2nd, July 30th, September 3rd, October 1st. Last Friday of every month Pick up your issue of BCSFAzine at FRED! Pristine, mint condition copies are available at FRED. Call Steve to let him know you wish to pick up your copy. (These dates are approximate only. Due to production scheduling changes, the issues may be available one week early.)

Discount Movie Nights.

\$2.00 Tuesdays are back! When? The second Tuesday of the month (May 11th, June 8th, July 13th) at 6:30 pm. The place being New West Cinema at #229 - 555 Sixth Street, New Westminster. Meet in front of the Box Office at the above time and we'll decide on which movie, where to do coffee and in which order.

May 8th - (Saturday) **WCSFA General Meeting** at 1 pm. Firehall Branch Library. 1455 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver. (Tenth and Granville). Phone Doug Finnerty (526-5621) for more information.

May 18th (Tuesday) - **Night of the Writer Roasties** at 7pm. Tops Restaurant 2790 Kingsway, Vancouver. The book being "Dark Universe" by Daniel F Falouye. July's book will be "Bloodsport" by Lisa Smedman. Secure your copy now!

May 31st (Monday) - **FREFF** at 7pm, Stepho's 1124 Davie St., Vancouver. An inexpensively perfect place for a VCON postmortem.

Saturday June 12th (Saturday) **WCSFA Video Night**. Featuring a selection by R. Graeme Cameron! (As seen at VCON 24!) Meet at 8:00 pm. The address is: 316-4683 Arbutus St., Vancouver, BC V6J 4A3

Tuesday July 20th at 7pm. **Night of the Writer Roasties**. Annapurna 1812 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver. The book being Bloodsport by Lisa Smedman. Secure your copy now.

Monday June 28th at 7 pm. **FREFF** Caspian Restaurant 1495 Marine, West Vancouver. Persian cuisine at its best.

July 1st - **WCSFA Metropolis Playdium Arcade Challenge** on Canada Day. Play as much as you can for \$12.00 an hour all day from 10 AM to closing. How fast can you drive? How many aliens can you eliminate? Punch, Jump, Kick, Rip, and Tear down the opposition in furious gameplay! Drive an Indy car, race in Daytona, ride a Harley, slide in the Bobslead and go off road in Virtual Tracks. Do you have what it takes to be a virtual athlete?

Monday July 26th at 7 pm. **FREFF** Gain Wah 218 Keefer Street, Vancouver. Located on the edge of Vancouver's historic Chinatown.

July - **WCSFA Open House**. No firm plans on what we will do yet, but perhaps a minicon style event where there can be an art show, dealers, and panels. Perhaps we can even get a few local authors down to do readings and sign books. We may even visit a local book store to encourage new members to join up. Keep an eye here for opportunities to volunteer and help out the club!

August - **WCSFA Annual BBQ/Picnic/Beach Party**. Do you have a suggestion on where we can get together on the third Saturday of August? Let us know!

Keep an eye out here for future official **WCSFA** sponsored events.



Letter Of Comment

Dear John/Ken:

Many thanks for the newest issue of BCSFAzine, issue 311. The artwork is always great, even in black and white. Now to see what's behind that artwork.

Yvonne says that when she was printing out this issue, there were problems with pages 1 and 11. We didn't know that pages 11 and 12 were not to be printed. I think I can get by without a few URLs for Space:1999 websites. For pages that weren't meant to be printed, though, the print-out is pretty good.

It may sound terrible, but I have little time for TV, so I don't watch many shows Space:TIS broadcasts, except for their own programmes, like Space News and Space & Time. I see V-Con is advertised there...the V-Con folks should prepare a survey to find out where attendees learned about V-Con, and they'd have an idea of where to con-

centrate their marketing efforts and money.

I do get most of the zines Garth gets, with a few exceptions. I've noticed that I've fallen off a number of fanzine mailing lists. It's not that I haven't responded, but I think it's that American and British faneds don't want to spend the extra money to send their zines to Canada. Also, Garth's review of the Edo van Belkom book is spot on. Edo is a talented short story writer, especially for the horror/dark fantasy genre. He's also learned to market his work well, learning the art from Robert J. Sawyer.

Thanks for the latest V-Con flyer. There was a pleasant surprise for me on it...Juarne Michaud. Juarne lived in Toronto for the longest time, and we hadn't heard from her in some time. Many of us thought she'd gafiated, or was just working long hours. I guess she pulled up stakes and moved across the country. Wish she'd said good-

bye first...

The Worldcon bid...I can send info to you, but it might be best to just check out the website <http://www.torcon3.on.ca>. It has all the info needed to pre-support the bid for the 2003 Worldcon. It's \$20.03 Canadian or \$15 U.S. to join up, or C\$125 or US\$100 to become a Friend of the Bid, or Eager Beaver. Issue 5 of our newsletter The Incisors Report should be out soon with more information about our future plans, and which conventions we'll be attending. Join the group...we have approximately 1150 pre-supporters, and our chances to win are very good.

Time to wrap up. Take care, and see you next issue.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney.



The S'harrien POV

If I only had the time...

I would reply to excellent letters of comment like the one by Palle Hoffstein that appeared in BCSFAzine 310.

I would plant my garden.

I would clean my house.

I would be more interesting to my 5 year-old son!

I would read a book more often!

I would have less gray hairs.

I WOULD REMEMBER WHAT THE WORDS FREE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT MEAN!!!

It is going to be so quiet around here after May!

A frequent refrain of Con Chairs, I suppose. Not to say I am not having fun; I am. More that I am getting NERVOUS as VCon approaches rapidly. There is so much to do. And it never seems to end. My hat is off to past Con Chairs who worked full time and did this too! I can see where there are so many things that can go wrong! You really have to count on people and heaven help you if they screw up. It does change how I will look at other cons in the future. May lightning strike me if I ever say a nasty word about another con.

Enough Chair woes. We seem to be getting great response to our advertising VCon. Our membership is up to 131. Members and

guests are thrilled about the chance to see the Star Wars Movie. Thanks to A.C. Crispin for the idea. We are also getting some word back from corporate sponsors. I know Chapters is going to display our flyers in their stores and perhaps even donate to the con. There have been positive responses from Purdy's and Canadian Water Springs Co. Congratulations go to Tammy Midttun for all her hard work in finding and writing to sponsors. (I helped a little!)

I am waiting to see more BCSFA members join us for the con! C'mon y'all! Join the fun.

Lisa McGovern

40 WINKS

The Planetarium visit went very well. We had a number of BCSFA/WCSFans show as well as Rob from the S'Harrien. Included in the eight bucks we all paid was various short presentations, a demonstration complete with a wasp for entertainment (it landed on the demonstrators collar during one of his experiments), a show in the big auditorium with lasers, many hands on exhibits (including a piece of lunar rock you could touch), computer simulator/games, and a ride in a simulator (we got the dinosaur simulation). The group was there for about three hours, and then we headed up the hill for something to eat. I hope we can organize some other outings, as this was fun and interesting at the same time.

If you have any other suggestions that we can organize, please send them in to BCSFAzine so we can get to work on setting them up, or bring them to FRED. Speaking of FRED, it will be 20 years old on Friday May 7 (the date in the book of FRED lists it as being 1 year old on May 6, 1980, but May 7 is the closest date to the anniversary that is a FRED night). I will have the first book of FRED there and I hope everyone comes out and signs it on that night. I find

it hard to believe that FRED has been around that long, but it is nice to know that we have been getting a good number of fans, 15-20 most weeks, in the last few months. I will try and do my next column on FRED, as it is the VCON issue. Make sure you come out to VCON. It looks like it is going to be a good one with a good number already pre-registered, and the promise of a number of good authors, and parties. I hope there is a completed bid for next year in place by the time of this years VCON, as it will really help sell memberships for the next year if we have a firm commitment of it happening.

Steve 40



Surf Us Out!

WCSFA-On Line at:

 [http://
spellbinder.bc.ca/bcsfa](http://spellbinder.bc.ca/bcsfa)

Check out our web site for all the information you need to be a local fan.

- Convention Listings • Ask Mr. Science
- SF TV Listings • VCON Web Pages
- Internet Links • Store Listings

Special Thanks to Alan Barclay for the Web Space

Peter Pans

The Crow: Stairway to Heaven and The Crow: City of Angels

"You can't do high tragedy on a continuing [TV] series, or even high comedy. Because you can't sustain it week after week.

"You can't run your characters in emotional high gear all the time. You'll burn them out, they'll cease to be believable.

"And so, because the nature of the medium [of television] prevents you from being great week after week, many writers don't try to be great. They just try to be good. Instead of comedy and tragedy, they do melodrama and farce. They do the soft stories-the ones that are amusing, but not totally involving. They do the stories that are not about the most important incident in the characters' lives."

David Gerrold, **"The Trouble with Tribbles"**

You'd be hard pressed to find a better example of Gerrold's principle than **The Crow: Stairway to Heaven**.

I am a fan of the original movie, which is perhaps the best adaptation of a comic book to film ever made, and an excellent movie in its own right. A violent tragedy that turns the emotion and action volume up to 11 but still maintains control. (The star's accidental death during filming adds a myth-making note.)

The series pilot, which summarized the events of the movie, was painful to watch. One of my first impressions was, "There's way too much daylight." In the original movie, it's always either night or overcast. Sunlight is a rare, precious thing in the world of **The Crow**, a dark and decaying urban purgatory that burns every year the night before Halloween. The image captured on film is one of the nightmare metropolises.

The city of **Stairway to Heaven** (shot in Vancouver) is bright, clean and shiny. You just can't think of it as a place inhabited by junkie mothers and arsonist thugs. Worse, it looks so mundane. (You can see the old Woodward's rotating W sign through the circular window of Eric's apartment.) The damp, twilight Vancouver of the **X-Files** and **Millennium** is far darker than this.

My dismay increased as I saw the same familiar scenes remade so poorly. Every plot point was watered down. The girl's mother is hooked on malt liquor instead of heroin, and is merely a blue-collar slob instead of a prostitute. The villains who raped and killed Eric's bride are flabby thugs instead of hardcore gangsters. The moral ambiguity of vengeance is watered down as well, shifting the focus to redemption and the "who does he help this

week?" format. (The sadly short-lived series **Brimstone** did a much better job of this.) In fact, the storytelling at times veers dangerously close to-dare I say it?-Touched by an Angel.

Mark Dacascos, who plays Eric Draven in the series, is a talented fighter, but that isn't really the point. He's too conventionally heroic looking for the part, well built and handsome. Moreover, he just isn't Brandon Lee.

Brandon Lee (a fan of the original comic) made a remarkably compelling performance, considering his prior work in kung fu B-movies. He portrays a person driven by an incredible amount of grief and rage, but also one who has only come to appreciate this life now that he can't stay. Lee also put his slight build and exceptional agility to good use, showing a man who has superhuman strength and grace but no particular fighting skill. Of course, you can't overlook the fact this was also his last performance. There's a special chill when you recall that some of his scenes were shot after his accidental death, with his face digitally painted onto a body double. ("I'm dead, and I move." Indeed.) It's like with Stanley Kowalski. There's Brando, and there's everybody else.

In short, **Stairway to Heaven** was **The Crow Lite**. I kept wondering why I, or anybody, would watch this when I could spend \$5 at a video store and watch the original.

This feebleness may have been necessitated by the demands of a syndicated TV series, which doesn't have the security of a late primetime slot for coarse language and mature concepts, or the nature of television itself. However, a faithful transition from movies to TV is possible. **Highlander** birthed a successful series that was consistent with both continuity and mood with the original movie, but also explored the setting creatively. (Having a charismatic leading man helped as well.) **La Femme Nikita** begat **Nikita**, which toned down the darkness but gave a tense, morally ambiguous story. (In the original French film, Nikita begins as a junkie cop-killer. In the series, she's a homeless victim of circumstance.)

I can only conclude that the people behind **Stairway to Heaven** just aren't trying. There's no vision here, no willingness to push the envelope. The series doesn't even approach the operatic intensity of the movie, and without that intensity, that catharsis the whole concept doesn't work. This series is somebody's product, not somebody's baby.

I don't blame James O'Barr (creator of the original comics) for what's happened to his story. He managed to get one magnificent movie adaptation of his work made; that's more than most novelists or comics artists can claim. He's entitled to his royalty checks from the series. True fans can wear out their tapes of the original, and ignore the series and the poorly received sequel.

The Crow: City of Angels is also bad, but in a different way. It's almost identical to the first movie, but makes every mistake the original didn't. They cast an inexpressive actor with a strong French accent in the lead. The audience's sympathy with the hero is shamelessly manipulated by the every device in the screenwriting book. Poor fight choreography, a murky and uninteresting setting.

There is some small cause for hope, in another sequel, **The Crow: Salvation**, currently in development. One of the co-writers is Chip Johannsen, a producer on **Millennium**, who at least knows what darkness looks like.

One of the Space Channel's promos for **Stairway to Heaven** ends with a clip of Mark Dacascos saying, "I'm not the same guy you knew." I have to wonder if this is somebody at Space giving us in the audience a warning.

Peter Tupper



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Upcoming Conventions

VCon 24 "Life in Space?" May 21-23 1998

GoH - A.C. Crispin and Michael Capobianco,
Artist GoH - Betty Bigelow
Toastmaster - David Bigelow **Location:** Days Hotel Surrey City Centre (formerly the Surrey Inn) 9850 King George Hwy., Surrey, BC
Room Rates: \$75/night
For reservations call: 1-800-663-0660
Membership Rates:
Memberships at the Door: (3 day) \$45 CDN, \$30 US (12 & under \$20) 6 & under are free.

VCon 24 is offering a KidCon with crafts, demos, masquerade and more!
To Volunteer contact Don or Lisa McGovern at 931-1241 or email dmcgover@direct.ca
Send memberships to: 1410 Regan Avenue, Coquitlam, BC, Canada. V3J 3B5
Website <http://www.geocities.com/area51/corridor/7214/vcon24>

WESTERCON 52/Empire Con

Spokane, WA Jul 2-5 1999
Author Guests: C.J. Cherryh, Barbara Hambly, Kristine Kathryn Rusch
Art Guests: Alicia Austin, Wendy Pini
Editor Guest: Ellen Datlow
Fan Goh: Larry Baker
Toastmaster: Betty Bigelow
MEMBERSHIPS:
\$45 until July 6 1998,
\$50 until December 31st,
\$60 at the door.
HOTEL: Double Tree Inn, Spokane City Center, 509-455-9600 or 1-800-222-8733

Rooms begin at \$75 / night (Extra for fireworks view on July 4th.)
For more info: 509-891-5762
westercon52@webwitch.com
www.webwitch.com/westercon52
or write:

Empire Con P.O. Box 7477
Spokane WA 99207
Viking Con 17 August 18 - 20, 2000 (Tentative)
Mathes and Nash Halls (Tentative)
Western Washington University
Viking Union 202 Box V1
Bellingham, Washington 98225
Guest of Honour, Freeman & George Dyson
Guest, Larry Niven
E-Mail JMPassey@aol.com
Memberships \$15 US/\$20 CDN until 12/31/99

Dragonflight

P.O. Box 776, Seattle, WA 98111-0776
Dragonflight is an annual gaming conventions held at the Seattle University. Gamers gather to join in the friendship and the many games offered. The games played include play role-playing, miniatures, board games, card games, and networked computer games.

The Dragonflight convention is held at the Seattle University. For more information on Seattle University visit their site at <http://www.seattleu.edu/>

DIRECTIONS: Take I-5 to the James Street exit. Go east on James Street. At Broadway, James Street becomes Cherry Street. Continue on Cherry to 12th AVE. Bellarmine Hall is on the corner of Cherry Street and 12th AVE.
Registration for DragonflightG- is \$31.00 through July 31, 1999. This includes Entry into the conventions for all three days.
Entry into the convention an hour earlier on Friday then people who are not preregistered.
Mail membership to Dragonflight 1999, PO Box 776, Seattle, WA 98111-0776, USA with your check.

MosCon XXI 10-12 September 1999

Where: University Inn, Moscow, Idaho
Why: Because we're coming of age...
Guests of Honor: James P. Hogan and Tara Harper
Fan Guests: Dan and Theresa Fears
Artist Guest: TBD
Scientist Guest: TBD
Remember to RSVP for Mark's PARTY!

Incon October 16-17-18, 1999

Spokane Valley Red Lion, I-90 and Sullivan Road
Author Guest of Honor - Charles De Lint
Margret Organ-Kean - Artist Guest of Honor
24-hour gaming, including Magic, RPGs, miniature wargaming, Vampire LRP
Lots of tour- prizes! **neys and**

Plus Anime, Art Show, Autographs, Banquet, Charity Auction, Costume Contests, Dances, Dealers, Doll Costuming, Fan Clubs, Hall Costume Contest, Masquerade, Panels, Parties, Writers Workshop and much more!

WEEKEND PASSES:

\$15 until May 1, 1999
\$20 until Sept. 1, 1999
\$25 at the door
BUY EARLY / SAVE MONEY
Children 11 and under FREE if accompanied by an adult
For reservations call: (509) 924-9000
or contact: inconregistration@yahoo.com
Other enquiries;
incongames@yahoo.com

Terracon II, October 29-31 1999

Best Western Executive Inn, Fife, WA
Author Guest of Honor: Dave Duncan
Media Guest of Honor: TBA
Special Media Guest: Chris McDonell
Toastmaster: David Tackett
Registration: \$20 through 10/15/99
\$30 at door

OryCon 21 November 12-14, 1999

Columbia River DoubleTree Inn, Portland, Oregon. OryCon 21 will be a weaponless convention. Smoking allowed in designated areas only
Artist Guest of Honor: Nene Thomas
Writer Guest of Honor: Nicola Griffith
Editor Guests of Honor: Warren Lapine
Science Guest of Honor: Angela Kessler Charles

It's time to start preparing once again for Oregon's premiere Science Fiction and Fantasy event, OryCon! Now in its twenty-first year, OryCon will feature programming, workshops, an art show, a dealer's room, filking, dances, gaming, the Susan Petrey Scholarship auction, and more! For more information:

OryCon 21
PO Box 5703
Portland, OR 97228-5703
E-mail: saxon@agora.rdrop.com
Telephone: (503) 232-6506

Viking Con 17 August 18-20, 2000 Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington. Viking Union 202 Box V-1 Bellingham, WA 98225
Fan GOH Freeman Dyson
Author GOH Larry Niven
Art GOH Julia Lacquement
Special GOH George Dyson
Fan GOH Paul Carpentier and Julie McGalliard
Memberships \$15 US (\$20 CAN) until 12/31/1999

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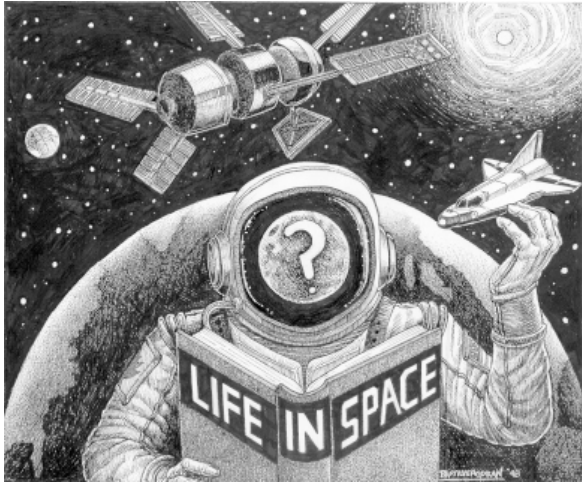
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VCon 24

“LIFE IN SPACE?”

Guests of Honour - A.C. Crispin

Artist Guest of Honour - Betty Bigelow **Toastmaster** - David Bigelow

Location: Days Hotel Surrey City Centre (formerly the Surrey Inn) 9850 King George Hwy., Surrey, BC Room Rates: \$75/night For reservations call:1-800-663-0660

Membership Rates:

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6 & under are free.

May 21-23, 1999

VCon 24 is offering a KidCon with crafts, demos, masquerade and more! To **Volunteer** contact Don or Lisa McGovern at 931-1241 or email dmcgover@direct.ca Send memberships to: 1410 Regan Avenue, Coquitlam, BC, Canada. V3J 3B5

🌟 **Website:** <http://www.geocities.com/area51/corridor/7214/vcon24>

VCON 25 BIDS

Last chance to bid for the ever important Year 2000 VCON 25! Rest assured that the convention will be Y2K compatible. Bids for the upcoming VCON 25 are to be presented at the May 8th General meeting at the Firehall Branch of the Vancouver Public Library. (1455 Wet 10th Avenue Near Granville). To present a bid, the committee must meet the following conditions:

1) A convention committee composed of a Chair, A Treasurer, A Hotel Liason, and two of any of the following positions filled. Operations, Hospitality, Registration, Programming, Dealer's Liason, and Art Show Liason.

2) A realistic budget written for submission the the WCSFA executive showing expected expenses and income.

3) A prospective guest of honour who has indicated the ability to attend and a detailed report of the expenses of bringing this guest to the convention. (Transportation, food, accommodations and any other expenses as requested by the guest.)

4) Letter of Intent for the hosting site. This should include intended programming space requirements for the convention, equipment that may be needed, room rates for convention members, and any other information required by the hotel.

5) \$500 start up funds. This money should be raised by the bidding con-com. This stipulation is intended to demonstrate to the WCSFA executive the ability of the con-com to a organize and promote an event and raise money through memberships and other fund raising events. If there is no bid by VCON 24, WCSFA will sell memberships to VCON 25 and the winning bid will be awarded the money raised.

Be sure to come to the WCSFA General Meeting on May 8th at the Firehall Branch of the Vancouver Public Library! A vote will be made by the general membership of WCSFA on which bid will be accepted. Memberships to VCON 25 will be sold at VCON 24.

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no JavaScript
totally unofficial



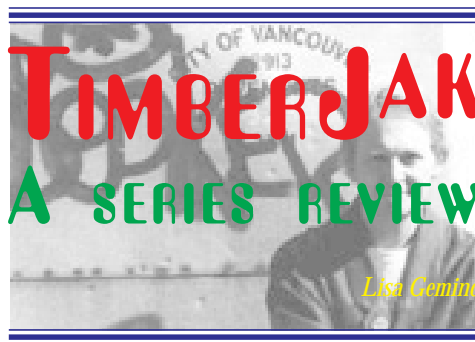
British Columbia has, over the years, hosted a great many career speculative fiction writers. Spider Robinson; William Gibson; Sean Stewart; Nick Bantock. All but Sean still live here.

Add a name to the list: Don DeBrandt. Vancouver fandom knows Don—biblically, in some cases. His first book, **The Quicksilver Screen**, was published in 1992, by Del Ray. Then came a few years of collateral concerns: new agent, new publishers. Now the rest of the world sees what Vancouver always knew. Don is no one-book wonder. Ace commissioned a trilogy. The first book, **Steeldriver**, came out last year. The second, **Timberjak**, is newly published. The third, **Citymyth**, has gone to the publisher.

The trilogy, though it does feature reoccurring characters, is linked more by style, theme and structure than more standard elements. Don calls it cyber-folk. Each is based on a science fiction re-telling of a different folk: **Steeldriver**'s story is that of John Henry; **Timberjak** is the tale of Paul Bunyon; and **Citymyth** is an ambitious blending of many different urban myths, the folk tales of the post-modern age.

(Those of you un-familiar with the original stories: **READ A BOOK.**)

As a friend of Don's, and more importantly as a long-standing member of the BCSFA Writer's Workshop, I have had the privilege of seeing all of Don's work (save **The Quicksilver Screen**) in progress. That includes the above-mentioned trilogy as well as two un-published works. Bearing



this in mind, I cannot actually *review* the books since I have only seen uncorrected first drafts. But I would like to comment on them, especially since **Timberjak** has hit the shelves here in town.

The basic idea behind the books was always a very strong one. Folk tales, or tall tales, have a resonant power that keeps them alive. Each, in and of itself, contains all the elements that make great fiction. Action, romance, conflict, brave deeds, extraordinary feats. Don has re-worked only the framing details; the heart of the tales remain their own.

Speaking as a member of the Writer's Workshop, my personal preference is for **Citymyth**. Not for the story itself but for the stylistic choices made during its construction. First person, as the other two are in third, the main narrative (essentially a rescue/caper tale) is punctuated with several side-bar short stories high-lighting the origins of several of the main characters. Each story, written in a different genre, stands alone. They are, aside from the rest

of the book, some of the strongest work Don has ever done. The book itself...what I read, *and bear in mind I read un-corrected first drafts, not even proofs...* is flawed. Don has fixed those flaws.

I have issues with both **Steeldriver** and **Timberjak**. Both are good. The latter is better. But I have come to believe that my reaction to **Steeldriver** is slightly colored: the book of Don's that I critiqued immediately before was his second-best work, topped only by the one before. These two excellent works are both still unpublished. As well, **Steeldriver** partially hangs on a concept I despise only slightly less than time travel: AI.

Coming into it fresh, **Timberjak** is good, solid space opera. It has a compelling and intelligent plot and unlike **Steeldriver** doesn't have bad guy that the reader *likes*. At heart, like all good fiction, a love story.

A love story about a man and a planet.

Go buy it. Actually, it is kind of your duty. Vancouver fandom should be supporting Vancouver authors. Buy it. Read it. Buy **Steeldriver**. Read it. When **Citymyth** comes out next year, buy it. Read it. The reward will be in owning and absorbing three good books.

Hopefully, the collateral effect will be building Don's rep with Ace enough that they take a risk on those two unpublished works and Vancouver will be blessed with yet another world-class writer.



STAR WARS PRE-PREQUEL GATHERING

On Friday May 14th, there will be a Star Wars event held at the Starfish Room, 1055 Homer St., Vancouver, 682-4171. (No minors please.) Doors open at 8pm, with show time at 9:30. Tickets are \$12.00 in advance or \$14.00 at the door. (\$12.00 if you are in costume). The host for the evening and Jedi Master of Ceremonies is Patrick Bahrich, a local stand-up comedian and actor. Also involved in presenting the evening's activities is Pearce Visser who is another big SW fan and is also the head of a comedy troupe.

Advance tickets are available at two Vancouver record stores: Zulu Records (738-3232) at 1869 West 4th Avenue, which charges a \$1.25 service fee and Scratch Records (687-6355) at 109 West Cordova which charges a \$1.00 service fee.

On the program for the evening are: SW comedy improv, SW music (mostly prerecorded) costume contest, three other contests, several short SW films, and the destruction of

the Death Star piñata (helmets with blast shields are provided). There are three categories in the costume contest: dark side, light side and unaffiliated (which means anything that doesn't fit into the first two categories), and group themes. The other contests include a video game contest, a Wookiee call contest, and a trivia game show. Most of the SW amateur films being shown are ones that were shown at the Blinding Light Cinema in Vancouver last December.

There is a web site with more details on this event. It is:

www.gathering.direct.ca/index1.html. If you have any questions, send e-mail to: anderw@direct.ca

A final note: Maybe any of us who are planning on going to this event should take along some VCON flyers, or maybe someone should e-mail the event organizers and tell them about VCON.



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SF BOOK REVIEWS #10

by Donna McMahon

But first...! Just to tell you that these brilliant reviews also appear in “Tomorrow SF”, Algis Budrys’ science fiction magazine, which can be viewed at www.tomorrowsf.com. Drop in and take a look. And now for:

Promised Land, Connie Willis & Cynthia Felice (Ace 1997) # **Halfway Human**, Carolyn Ives Gilman (Avon 1998) # **With the Lightnings**, David Drake (Baen 1998) ## (# paperback available at Vancouver Public Library. ## VPL hardcover.)

Arrgghh!

That’s where your faithful reviewer left off (after Charles Sheffield’s **Aftermath** in review column #9), and that’s where I pick up this month.

Imagine you are an intelligent, ambitious young woman, just graduated from university. You travel to a backwater planet in order to settle your deceased mother’s affairs, hoping to collect your inheritance, and get away within 24 hours. When you arrive, the lawyer informs you that you were betrothed as a child and, under the laws of this dismal colony, you are now legally married to a hick farmer who is here to take you back to his remote rural hovel.

Would you: a) go with said hick husband in the faint hope of eventually collecting your inheritance and a divorce or b) run screaming for the nearest space shuttle, never to return?

Of course, if Delanna Milleflores had not stayed on Keramos there would be no **Promised Land**. But “unlikely” hardly begins to describe the premise of Connie Willis and Cynthia Felice’s novel.

Welcome to Keramos—planet Australian outback. Settlers live on remote lanzyes (farms) amid a vast arid landscape populated only by “semi-sentient” natives the settlers use for target practice. For reasons never convincingly explained these space-age people eschew airplanes and instead travel thousands of dangerous overland miles in solar-powered caravans, taking weeks and risking death. They also communicate via ham radio (not video or internet or holo). Well, heck, maybe it’s a lifestyle choice.

Because this book was well written and moderately entertaining, I stuck with it, hoping for a payoff. I did not get it. There are no intriguing plot twists. The ultimate plot device, telegraphed all the way through second half of the book, came off ludicrously. The romance (yes, Delanna falls for her hick husband) was utterly predictable. And one more cute pet scene would have started me screaming.

If you’re trying to convince a Harlequin Romance fan to switch genres, I suppose this might be a starter book, but otherwise AVOID.

An immense relief after that book was **Halfway Human**, by Carolyn Ives Gilman. Protagonist Val Endrada is a xenologist living on the advanced planet Capella. She is barely eking out a living in its information-based economy, so when she stumbles across an asexual human from the closed planet of Gammadis, she realizes she’s struck a bonanza. No one has ever seen a Gammadian before. All the big corporations will want access to Tedla, to get data about its peculiar world where there are three sexes—males, females and neuters (called “blands”).

But things are not that simple. Val finds herself drawn to the anguished Tedla and takes Tedla to live with her family. Soon she finds herself in conflict with the corporation she’s working for when they decide to remove all of Tedla’s memories—allegedly to cure suicidal depression, but more likely for political reasons.

As Tedla tells Val its life story, the reader gets a remarkably vivid portrait of a slave culture. Blands are servants of the male and female minority on Gammadis, and are not considered truly human even by the most liberal intellectuals. But the untouchables and their masters are inextricably bound up with each other economically, socially, and even sexually, in a complex tangle of love, fear and hate. This precarious balance is threatened when the first Capellan anthropologist arrives and begins questioning their taboos, inadvertently tipping the blands into rebellion.

Carolyn Gilman, who is a museum exhibition developer, has obviously done her research on slavery, and she also creates wonderfully complex characters who are all far more affected by their own societal prejudices than they want to believe. Her upper crust Gammadians echo the attitudes of Confederate slave owners, English gentry, or Indian nobles. And the blands, although they suffer terribly, nonetheless defend their society’s practices and beliefs, and turn their anger and blame against their own kind. On Val’s home world, Capella, Gilman also makes a credible attempt at portraying a future version of our own culture, but this is less successful—probably because it’s too close to home.

This is a terrifically intelligent and complex book with only a few minor flaws, such as the last few anti-climactic chapters. A more passionate wrap-up was really needed to give balance to the wrenching intensity of earlier scenes. Still, this is one of the best SF books I’ve ever read and I give it an enthusiastic recommendation.

And now for something completely different. David Drake has for years been one of the hottest selling authors of military mayhem SF, and I (gritting my teeth)

if I could figure out his appeal.

For the first 120 eventless pages of **With the Lightnings** I was still wondering. No first time novelist would ever sell a book with this rambling, tedious set-up. Our hero, Lieutenant Daniel Leary, walks around the streets of Kostroma City, pausing to think about his entire life, remember every detail of the space navy’s armaments, and contemplate the history and politics of the galaxy for the last five decades. Meanwhile, our heroine, librarian Adele Mundy, builds bookshelves and sorts old books while contemplating her own tragic past.

Consequently the reader has far too much time to pick away at the ridiculous technology which has been papered onto what is essentially a Hornblower or Viet Nam novel. The spaceships all land planetside in the ocean and dock in harbours. As part of their space drives they have “masts” and consequently employ “riggers” in the crews. Although mention is made of electronic records, Adele spends her time sorting stacks of musty paper books, which include the paper logbooks from space ships. And so on and so on.

It isn’t until things begin rolling with a political double-cross and civil uprising that the book becomes interesting. From that point on, Drake delivers lots of action performed by characters who are stereotypes, but competently drawn and entertaining nonetheless.

And by the end of the book I certainly understood Drake’s loyal following. He has caught precisely the qualities of the military that attract people—the feeling of pride, competence and comradeship, being part of a team, solving problems, challenging your own physical and mental limits, defending a code of honour, and the sheer excitement of engaging in battle.

Moreover, Drake is a supremely good writer when it comes to giving his readers the emotional “pay-off” (call it dramatic “closure” if you will). Lieutenant Leary overcomes tremendous odds to win his battles, but after the events he waits with trepidation for the navy’s decision whether to promote him or discipline him for his maverick conduct. Drake lets the tension build, then delivers good news in front of Leary’s loyal crew to delighted cheers and celebration. Heck, I HATE military books and I had a tear in my eye.

I could list dozens of silly details in Drake’s book, and there’s no question he gets away with writing long swatches of lousy material because he’s a big name. Nonetheless, I’d have to rate him as an excellent formula writer who gives his readers their money’s worth.

Comments? Rebuttals? Suggestions? donna_mcmahon@sunshine.net.



...Continued from last issue.

RAMA 1/2

(Sweden) The title was originally supposed to read "Rama One and Two", instead of "Rama and One-Half". Thanks to an unforeseen language barrier amongst the post-production crew, it was one of many glitches left unchecked. As you may have guessed, this was an ambitious attempt to combine Arthur C. Clarke's two Rama novels into one film. Book One is resolved within the film's first thirty minutes, as Rama goes by in a "There you see it, there you don't." In the next half-hour, we are introduced to the expedition members who are going to explore Rama. It is during this segment that the audience can be forgiven for wondering if the director thought he was directing a Scandinavian sex comedy.

After much bickering, backstabbing and bed-hopping the crew finally reaches Rama (nearly missing it when the chief engineer attempts to reconnect a loose double-entendre to the bulk of the plot). Inside Rama, our heroes (and heroines) find a series of water pools. Naturally, they decide to go swimming, not realizing that these are genetic storage banks. Storing the DNA codes for a number of long-extinct alien species, these banks will turn anyone entering the pool into a likeness of one of the creatures. There is a remedy for those who succumb to this affliction. That involves taking a hot bath in H2O. Unfortunately, the crew discovers that immersing oneself in cold water will bring on a relapse. The rest of the film explores the many ways of delivering water to other people hot or cold.

RANXEROX THE MOVIE

(Italy) Animated. Liberatore's original terminator android with a bad attitude is back. A comic book character that even predated Arnold Schwarzenegger's take on nasty robots, Ranxerox is just the sort you will grow to like. This is because his friends, charges and employers are much worse. In an urban sprawl that seems to indicate most of Italy has finally entered the Rust Age, Ranxerox goes looking for the lost little girl he is supposed to be baby-sitting, not realizing of course that she is the baby-sitter until it's too late.

Sticking to the very essence of what made the original comic work, the plot line metaphorically tears apart Italian society, while Ranxerox does it literally. Those who enjoyed Sylvester Stallone's stunning rendition of John Wayne playing Judge Dredd in that comic book's film adaptation will appreciate an anonymous Italian voice actor's approach to Ranxerox; Sylvester Stallone playing Arnold Schwarzenegger playing a number

The 1999 CANNES FESTIVAL

Of European Speculative Film

By Doug Finnerty

of Jack Nicholson's early roles.

TIN TIN IN THE LAND OF THE FASCISTS

(Belgium/Canada) Animated. Thanks to another one of Professor Calculus' botched experiments, Belgian comic book character Tin Tin ends up in a parallel world where the Axis won the war. Finding out that his counterpart is a sergeant in a Flemish SS Battalion is not so big a shock as realizing that his faithful dog, Snowy, has been replaced with an Alsatian Wolfhound, named Adolf. An even bigger shocker is the revelation that one major reason the Allies lost was because Professor Calculus was working on Enigma (before signing on with the Manhattan Project when England fell). Trapped in a world he never made, Tin Tin must decide whether to love it, leave it, or change it. An underlying subplot of the movie concerns the Nazis' first use of television. A showcase trial of a Belgian cartoonist named Herge, in which the stated objective is to find out whose side he was really on during the war. Negative reactions to this film from Europe's far right have eclipsed those of the politically challenged, who are still fighting to keep Herge's first published work (Tin Tin in the Land of the Soviets) off the shelves.

THE UNDERWATER SPACESHIP GRAVEYARD

(Russia/UK) A British tabloid TV program teams up with Anton Layevsky, the self-styled "Edison Carter of Moscow TV", to prove that the Russians have been dumping other things into the sea besides spent reactor cores.

WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM

(Germany/Sweden/UK) Stockholm, 1962. In this adaptation of Kieth Laumer's classic novel, American embassy staffer Brion Bayard (Harrison Ford) is abducted by British agents. Or rather, British agents from a parallel world ruled by the com-



of Great Britain, Imperial Germany and the Kingdom of Sweden. Their virtual monopoly on interdimensional commerce is threatened by a bombed-out radioactive parallel world ruled by what appears to be French Algerian colonists. A world ruled by a different, Brion Bayard. Owing to the deteriorating situation in Algeria, the organizers at Cannes had a very hard time overriding the objections of the French government in getting this film shown here.

ZARDOZ II

(Ireland) It has been more than a generation since the events in the previous movie. Zed (Sean Connery), his fellow Exterminators, and their respective co-dependents have settled down to a pastoral lifestyle of carnal knowledge, alcoholic beverages, and heavy metal muzak. Unfortunately on the other side of the Atlantic (our side), a ruthless dominatrix of a dictator has seized power. In keeping with the previous movie's "Wizard of Oz" subtheme, this would-be tyrant has designated herself as the Wicked Witch of the West. Using the rationale that the previous administration's lack of long term planning and common sense has led to a lack of trees, she is in the process of dispatching her army of tin woodsmen to get more. While his comrades do their best to fulfill the roles of cowardly lion and brainless scarecrow in the face of this threat, Zed has the sudden revelation that he is actually an Immortal. No, not those upper-class twits with a death wish, as portrayed in the previous movie (called Eternals), but a race of beings that has coexisted with humanity since the beginning of time. Needless to say, should this sequel do well at the box office, talks will begin on integrating the next Zardoz film with the next installment in the Highlander series.



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Recent years have witnessed a renaissance of interest in the incomparably inept movie producer, director and screen play writer Ed Wood Jr. The Tim Burton film ED WOOD is the apogee of this renaissance, introducing a new generation to the fervid amateurism and blind enthusiasm of the man voted worst director of all time. Such films as PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE and BRIDE OF THE MONSTER are Wood's gob-smacking jaw-dropping mind-boggling legacy. Still, his fans thirst for more.

Being an avid fan of his ineptitudeness, when I heard that his non-fiction book on how to succeed in Hollywood was finally going to be published, I immediately placed an order with WHITE DWARF BOOKS. Visions of page after page of bad writing filled my eager soul, chapter after chapter of howling hilarity, a feast of festive insight into the muddled mind of the master of mediocrity. Alas, after a year of waiting, I was to be disappointed.

HOLLYWOOD RAT RACE is a perfectly straightforward work of non-fiction commentary on the Hollywood scene, competently and clearly written, and totally unpublishable. How so? Because this is not so much a 'How to Succeed' book as a '10,000 reasons why you won't succeed' book. There might be a market among starlet wannabees for the former, but no market exists for the latter, people don't buy books to learn how to fail. This book was finally published because of the current interest in Ed Wood himself, his intended target readership when he wrote this circa 1965 would have recoiled in horror.

He starts out innocently enough, pointing out that minimum requirements to slipping a foot in the door at major studios include get-

HOLLYWOOD RAT RACE

A book review by R. Graeme Cameron.

ting a recognized agent, a membership in the Screen Actor's Guild, and a good set of professionally shot photos. He also advocates learning many skills in addition to acting, pointing out that Doris Day had to play baseball in one of her films, Linda Darnell football, Shelly Winters had to fight, Claudette Colbert to ski, and so forth. All good advice. But then, in subsequent chapters, everything turns sour as he reveals what happens to star struck girls hoping to turn a good face and figure into a movie career.

First of all, many talent agents holding auditions in small towns are scam artists. Girls may pay money for 'screen tests' in front of cameras with no film, or win bogus 'beauty contests' and be sent to Hollywood to stay in a cheap motel, spend 15 minutes in front of a camera (again with no film) in a dingy hole-in-the-wall studio, and be sent home with a certificate guaranteeing the clip would be shopped around Hollywood. Don't call us, we'll call you. Secondly, Hollywood itself abounds in scam artists, as Ed explains:

"For every legitimate producer, there are dozens of phonies! Then add to that the corrupt actors, writers and agents. You're fighting a thousand to one chance of losing every cent you have or can muster and your virginity to boot, without ever seeing the inside of a studio."

The worst case was the chap whose career consisted of getting girls to pay him to record their voice professionally, then once he had them inside his soundproof studio, to rape them. Untold numbers of girls kept quiet for fear his recordings of their ordeal would be sent to people in their hometowns. It was years before this louse was finally convicted. Sad. And not exactly inspiring for wannabee starlets. Being told point blank that the average Hollywood career lasts just eight years is a bit of a shocker as well. No wonder the publishers wouldn't touch this book. It is full of things no one, certainly not girls fresh out of high school, want to hear. Ed speaks very plainly indeed:

"Sex is a violent and dangerous business — don't you ever forget it! For every decent film, there are dozens of these sex films being made every month — and dozens of you will work in them. You will find yourself in them, if you stay in the Hollywood rat race any length of time."

Ed fails to mention that numerous porno films were written and directed by himself, so many that he himself failed to keep track. And finally, in reference to his own arrival in Hollywood:

"I found myself very broke in a very short time, and in a very unfriendly town. As you will."

This is all very depressing. So what's to be found of interest to modern fans of Ed Wood? Some wonderful anecdotes concerning the likes of Bela Lugosi and Criswell, numerous references to angora sweaters (Eddie's personal fetish), and several superb examples of typical Woodish understatement, such as:

"Our newly released ORGY OF THE DEAD will be a pleasant surprise; it was filmed using a wide screen process and exciting colour. It could well become a classic in its field... We've had to use a certain amount of nudity... However, we try not to put in nudity just for nudity's sake..."

Ahem, let me point out that ORGY OF THE DEAD consists of nothing but nudity, being a series of strip acts by prominent (in more ways than one) strippers of the day, introduced by Criswell wearing one of Bela Lugosi's Dracula capes. (Criswell used to appear on Johnny Carson's TONIGHT SHOW to utter his amazingly bogus psychic predictions and then plug ORGY OF THE DEAD. He did this for years.) Take my word for it, the nudity cannot be said to advance the plot. Plot? What plot?

Most enticing of all, is a reference to one Micheline Senecal "just outside of Montreal, Canada, who read one of my articles a few years ago and has been my constant penpal ever since... when finally she is ready and does come to Hollywood, I will be in a position to help her. One important thing — she will not have to face the Hollywood rat race the way I see it."

I can't help but wonder what happened to Micheline. Did she ever go to Hollywood? Did Ed Wood Jr. promote her career? (And since we've never heard of her, maybe he did.) Does she still possess their correspondence? Just as a certain Mr. Conover once published his exchange of letters with H.P. Lovecraft, dare we hope Micheline will someday publish her communications with Ed Wood Jr? Another potential classic. Publishers take note!

To sum up, any book with chapter titles like "How to Live in Hollywood Without Money" and "How to make a Cheap Picture and Fail" is well worth reading. I'll let Ed Wood Jr. have the last word:

"That's the Hollywood as an insider knows it. Trouble. Problems. Heartaches.... Believe it or not, your life is more real than the Hollywood scene."

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StarWars - The Phantom Menace

3B's StarWars Page - The Phantom...
w1.1861.telia.com/~u186101689/StarWars/frame77.html

Star Wars - Episode 1: The Phantom Menace

Sat, Mar. 13, 1999 — 3rd update. Newsflash: Get the latest Star Wars news: X-Wing Alliance game, Anakin names, Bono, SW spoof and FX news. Sources state.
www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Palace/9557/index.html

The Phantom Menace trailer version B

ADSDAQ - The Banners That Pay! The Phantom Menace trailer version B. As soon as trailer B is available it shall be displayed here. Click the link to...
www.thephantommenace.co.uk/trailerb2.htm

Star Wars Episode 1 The Phantom Menace Pictures

A collection of Star Wars Phantom Menace Pictures, almost all that are released by Lucasfilm and pertain to...
www.users.wineasy.se/doot/starwars/pictures.html

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www.micro-man.com/dfitt/rockworld/starwars.html

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Star Wars resource page on the GO Network
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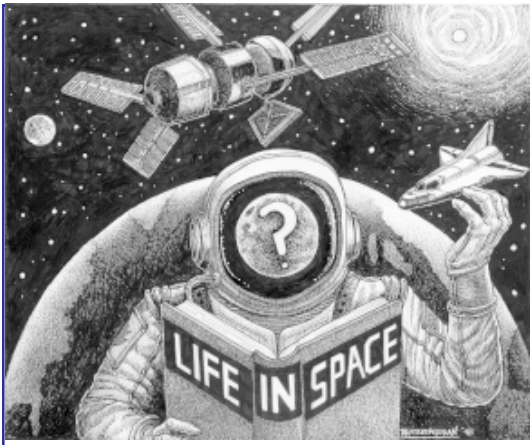
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