



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

From Page to Screen to (smaller) Screen: Dune

by Bret Funk

Arrakis. Dune. Desert Planet. Home of the spice. Center of the universe. A book of astounding depth, dimension and appeal. The inspiration for five sequels, at least five prequels, a 1984 sci-fi cinema classic, and two six-hour TV mini-series. Herbert's characters, just about every one of them, are tragic; his commentary on the human condition is, at times, disheartening; and his vision of the far future can make a reader cringe. Why, then, have his works garnered such loyal following, and why, in a world where most adaptations fail miserably, does each iteration of his universe receive such strong praise?

The short answer is: they don't. At least, not from the same people. Many a heated argument and life-long enmity has begun debating the merits (and demerits) of Dune and its reworkings. Fans of the original books (or rather, book; there is as much discussion about Herbert's later works as there is about the adaptations!) talk quite disparagingly about the screen versions, pointing out numerous faults and skipped-over plot devices. Fans of the 1984 David Lynch movie pan the Sci-Fi channel's miniseries on numerous

grounds, and fans of the mini-series point out all the liberties that Lynch took in turning the book into a movie. While many readers have indulged in the prequel novels (written by Frank Herbert's eldest son, Brian), most feel that they do not truly recapture the feel of the originals, nor would they be successful on their own; they (and Brian) prosper only on the laurels of their shared creator.

Only a few (myself included) have been able to take pleasure from each incarnation of Dune (though I must admit to never making it past book four of the original

Chronicles; once three thousand years had passed and just about everyone I knew was dead, it got a little too weird...) It's not that the mistakes and liberties don't bother me – I roll my eyes as much as anyone when I see Lynch's weirding module! – it's just that there is something in the gestalt of Dune that transcends the glaring mistakes. Personally, I am drawn by the complexity of Herbert's universe, by the scientific, historical and anthropologic detail used in its construction. I am intrigued by the directors and authors who have opted to tackle this universe, and I want to see how their vision compares to my own.

Which screen adaptation is the best, though? And can either compete with the original?

Numerous elements contributed to the success of Dune. Alone, these elements make little difference; together, they create Herbert's universe, setting the mood and awakening readers' imaginations. Each adaptation and all of the subsequent novels used these elements – sometimes successfully, sometimes not – in an attempt to recapture the grandeur of the first book. Below are several of the most important elements.

Imagination: In this category, the books far exceed the movie, and imagination plays a factor in just about every other element. When reading Dune, or even the subsequent works, it is left to readers to imagine the universe, to create an image of the sweeping desertscapes, giant sandworms, exotic Fremen, and the universe at large. That is one of great appeals of a book, and when a screen adaptation comes along, I am often left wanting. Whether it is due to budgetary concerns or artistic differences, the movies' effects and the director's choices rarely match my own. As technology progresses, this gap will narrow somewhat – for example, the worms in Sci-Fi's dune movie more realistically than the models used in Lynch's, but Sci-Fi's worms are obviously a CG effect, and the ability (or the money) did not exist to make them not look animated – but technology can only take movies so far. It will never reconcile a reader's vision of a Guild Navigator with any director's. In such a case, imagination has already painted a picture, and no one's interpretation (with the possible exception of Frank Herbert's) will ever be able to supercede the reader's.

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RPG Corner (v2.9): Combat in Role-Playing Games

by Doug >!< Roper of EPIC Gaming

With the basics of setting and character creation down, it's time to take a look at some of the other basic systems budding Game Masters will need in place before play can begin. The first one I'll address is combat. Sooner or later, characters will get into fights, and usually it's sooner. The very first thing a Game Master should do when thinking about a combat system is decide how important combat will be to his games. Can combat be used to solve just about any problem, or will it only complicate matters more? Will it occur often or rarely, and in how many instances during a game session will combat be the character's only option? Deciding on combat's place in your world can go a long way to helping you design a system specifically for the needs of your game.

Types of and Reasons for Combat

I believe that there are essentially two types of combat in Role-Playing Games. The first I call Tension Combat. Tension Combat is a fight that serves as entertainment, and to break the stress of tense role-playing. It allows the players to blow off steam, and work out aggressions that they may have built up either in the game or in real-life. **Pure Recreation** and **Hobby** models of role-play usually employ this type of combat heavily. There is little chance of the character expiring, because the average enemy is slightly weaker than the character. This is designed to make the characters (and to some extent the players) feel empowered and self-assured, which may be an elevation from the everyday drag of real-life. Tension Combat is very melodramatic, and is all about action and fun. The bad guys are always bad (and are usually pretty obvious about it) and the only way to cure them of their crankiness is to make sure they all take dirt naps. Additionally, these combats more often than not involve non-humans as opponents. More challenging combats may occur against superior enemies, but the characters will always have some advantage to balance the fight, be it a nifty magic spell or item, or numerical superiority. Tension Combat can contribute to plot advancement, but it can also be used for an aside or a quick tussle just to loosen up. This form of combat is best suited for younger players, as it usually doesn't come attached with heavy moral repercussions or crisis.

The second type of combat Righteous or Heroic Combat, and serves more as a part of the plot than

Tension Combat does. Heroic Combat is basically any combat where there is a chance for the characters to die. It's an even fight, perhaps even with the playing characters at a disadvantage. The chances of success are about equal with the chances of failure, and the character's survival is not assured. This type of combat is used more in **Actor** and **Immersive** models of play, where the emphasis is on creating a more realistic environment for characters. There is a greater chance for a release of tension because the outcome is uncertain, but due to this uncertainty, the combat itself is much more stressful. These types of combat are more often than not pivotal to plot advancement or resolution, but they need not always be with the evil king or the horrific giant. Heroic Combat can be just as meaningful (if not more meaningful for some players) if it involves taking down a bully or protecting an innocent from an attacker. Because of the types of games in which it is placed (**Actor** and **Immersive**) the fallout of the combat is less secure, and the foes defeated are not necessarily one-dimensional villains, and they are less often non-humans. Surviving characters will have to deal with the outcome of their actions in ways that participants of Tension Combat won't, and players should be appreciative of the fact that Heroic Combat is the most brutal and final method of exerting their will over another person that there can be. They should also wonder if the exercise of their will was worth the price paid in pain and death. Due to the heavy consequences involved in this type of combat, reserving it for more mature players is probably best.

There are as many reasons as one can possibly think of to enter into combat, but the reasons for combat grow more serious as the lethality of combat increases. In a game where combat is somewhat less than deadly most of the time, reasons for fighting may be trivial because the players are aware that the characters are not likely to die. This is the case in games like *Dungeons & Dragons*[™] and *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*[™], both games which tend to have combat at their core, and where characters are not likely to die when facing relative equals. Characters tend to pick fights with little provocation. On the other hand, if the players suspect that any combat could mean the death of their character, it will require a strong motivation to get them into fisticuffs, and becoming involved in combat will mean that the character (and the player) is willing to risk death for that particular cause.

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Inner Views (Part II): An Interview with Don Pedro Colley

by Terry Crotinger/montanasings

Continuing my interview with actor, Don Pedro Colley, we talk about Space Academy and how he survived in Los Angeles as an unemployed actor. I have also included two emails!

Terry: In the script [For your character, Damon, in *Space Academy*], did it give any background of how you got on this little planet?

Don Pedro: Because I was disgusted with humanity, society, and all of it's pushing and shoving. And here you people are, the very people I try to escape from are here on my planet. Digging, and prodding and so forth. So I get upset and steal their robot. And that's what the show was about.

Terry: If they filmed anything about it [why the character was on a deserted planet] they cut it. So we have no idea how you got there.

Don Pedro: Must have been a sub-textual thing. It was in one line at one point or another or whatever. We rescue the robot and I'm recanting why I'm on this planet. That it was because I was escaping society. I just got sick of all the grabbing and pushing and shoving—no respect. The whole basic thing that society was at the time and that's why I found this planet and was very happy living all by myself until these people showed up, and started probing and digging and plucking.

Terry: What did you think of the set that they used, that they provided you with?

Don Pedro: It was a sound stage. It was the working of the art director's mind that the planet was... each kind of a show as I remember, it was a half hour show?

Terry: Right.

Don Pedro: Budgets limit the episodes to allow the film companies to work quickly. You imply an awful lot of things. So it was a very small set. Their sound stage was a small sound stage by comparison to the major studios. Filmmation...was filmed in an industrial area in the San Fernando Valley area, so the sound stages were actually industrial buildings and were smaller, much smaller. A lot was implied as to what our set looked like, and built so that it could be done quickly and with ease. And it was up to the actors to

bring life to their characters and their work... all those things that are implied, things you don't actually see. In editing they can edit and add in certain things, etc. It was shot on a limited budget, in a small area. But they did really well with it.

Terry: You weren't concerned with the set? What it would look like on film?

Don Pedro: No. That's another department, that's the art department. That's their responsibility to be in concert with the cinematographer and director and the producer, and it's the actor's responsibility to try and breathe life into his character. And part of doing that is making the character react to his situation: being where you are, the time, the period you're in. That's all part of building a character. I would say it wasn't anything like working on Planet of the Apes. We were in a full size studio sound with sixty-five to eighty-five foot catwalks in the huge, monstrous set that was really laid out versus a thumbnail sketch. But that's about what it was like working there. But it's a job, and we do the best we can with what you've got.

Terry: Tell me a little bit about the actors. What were they like to work with?

Don Pedro: The only one who really sticks out in my mind is the real cute girl, the sexy one.

Terry: There were only two girls. Pamelyn Ferdin or Maggie Cooper. When I talk to fans, they refer to both of them in that light! One was blonde and short and the other tall and brunette.

Don Pedro: I think it was the short blonde. But I think she was the youngest of the two girls. That was in 1977 and that was the first busy year I had had in about five years—busiest from 1973-1977. I almost didn't work in the industry. Remember 1973? It was the year of the energy crunch when we had all those long lines and everything. Up until that point, a great deal of the minorities were working a lot. I mean a lot! I was on something every other week—we were starring, guest starring, moving a lot. And then, when the energy crunch hit, it was as if somebody turned out the light. Right at that time, some jackass reviewer came along and said, 'Why, that's black exploitation! You're exploiting those poor people... how can you do that?'

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Whatever Happened to the Starship Enterprise? (Part II)

by Erin Branham

A five-part look at the history of Star Trek and its fandom through the eyes of a lifelong Trekkie.

Where No One Has Gone Before... Sort Of

There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune...

- William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act IV

I wanna be the Captain of the Enterprise..."

- the B-52s

1986 rolled around, and a rumor spread slowly through fandom that there was a new Trek series in the making. I attended my first convention that year. SF cons are a world unto themselves, and every assumption made by non-fans about Trekkies is in a general way placed on all people who ever stepped foot in a convention hall to celebrate anything from *Doctor Who* to *Planet of the Apes*. Yes, it's odd to dress up as aliens and fictional characters and get together to put on silly fan spoofs of beloved universes. But there is something that is misunderstood about this practice. It is theatre in which anyone can participate and has a flavor I suspect is not so different from ancient pagan festivals where people played at being gods and acting out grand mythologies. It's also a hell of a lot of fun. Cons are a chance to step outside of everyday life, tap an old and powerful energy, and be something else, something grand and magical and silly and wondrous for a little while. If you've never attended a con in full costume, you should try it. Go to Taco Bell for lunch and stay in character as a Klingon or a Borg. Mess with people's heads. It's your right as an SF geek.

While this wasn't the first Trek con to visit my hometown of Memphis, Tennessee – a place that was certainly no stranger to fanatics, being the home of Elvis Presley – the particular con I went to was of a new breed. Professionally run rather than fan-conceived, it was the sort that had sprung up around the country since the advent of the big screen Trek ventures. With this new Trek a-birthing 2000 miles away in Los Angeles, fandom found itself in a strange mood. In the market area were t-shirts imprinted with the faces of Kirk, Spock and McCoy and emblazoned with the emphatic statement that, "We don't need a new crew!" We didn't know much, only that Gene Roddenberry was involved in the production, and that it would not include any of the original crew. People were not happy about this eventuality. Some were outright pissed. Others, like myself, were grudgingly intrigued

and highly wary. Could the magic be recaptured? It seemed doubtful. In the syndication years, scarcity had bred far more than a rose-colored viewscreen. The originals had grown to a status that the word legendary does not begin to describe. The bar was set pretty high.

Star Trek: The Next Generation premiered with "Encounter at Farpoint". It looked great, felt stiff – but John DeLancie as Q (a god-like alien, that marvelous staple of Trek) could easily have held his own with Shatner in an overacting contest, and all in all there was just enough of the old spark to make it worth tuning in the next week. TNG's first season was not what you would call stellar. Its second season wasn't much better, and Trekkies seemed to largely be watching with the idea that mediocre Trek was better than no Trek. It wasn't Kirk and company but there were flashes of something interesting. The whole thing was problematic, for TNG was conceived for dual purposes. Paramount wanted to capitalize on the audience they had found with the *Star Trek* movies. People had turned out in droves to see *The Wrath of Khan* (still by far the best movie Trek ever), *The Search for Spock* and then *The Voyage Home*, which pleased a much wider audience than just Trekkies. Playing for silly humor, and carrying an environmentalist theme that tickled the liberal fancies of a huge swath of Yuppies, the fourth movie installment had really sealed the deal. There was money to be made. Meanwhile, Gene Roddenberry, who had been subjected to the painstakingly earnest criticisms of fans for twenty years, found himself in a position to correct all the things they had been complaining about for so long. *Star Trek* had, quite rightly, been nailed for preaching equality – and then dressing its female officers in micro-minis and making them say ridiculous things like "Captain, I... I'm frightened" on a regular basis; for talking about a Non-interference Prime Directive, and constantly interfering in other cultures; for holding up peace as the greatest ideal, and having an itchy trigger finger on ye olde photon torpedoes. TNG was his opportunity to fix all this.

To be fair, most of these problems had not been Roddenberry's fault to begin with. The network execs had nixed the pants Roddenberry's female officers wore in the original pilots. The network had also demanded more action and less peaceful resolution of problems. But there was little doubt that Gene had mellowed into a PC sensibility that would be a

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The Writer's Block: Writer's Block No More!

by Charles Gramlich

The title of this column is "The Writer's Block," but I realized recently that I haven't talked at all about the thorny subject from which that name arises. I've started to do so a couple of times, but the problem is that I've never actually experienced the phenomenon. Once I've gotten my butt into the chair, I've never had a problem with getting myself to write. True, I occasionally have problems making myself actually sit *down* in the chair, but that's out of laziness and procrastination, both of which I suffer from in ample amounts. Those things are not the same as "writer's block" to me. They are just an attempt to avoid the effort of writing in the first place.

What exactly is writer's block, then? I take it to mean that someone who wants to write or considers themselves a writer can sit down at their computer, turn on their fully capable system, and then stare at the blank screen without finding anything to write about. They never get to the first word, or if they get past the first word or two they just can't keep the flow going.

As far as I can see, there are only four rules to follow (and I didn't invent these myself) if you really want to be a published writer. These are:

1. You must start writing.
2. You must finish what you start.
3. You must submit what you finish.
4. You must repeat 1 through 3 as long as it takes.

Writer's block violates the very first of these rules and ensures that you'll never get past that initial step. But you don't *need* to suffer from writer's block, and one simple fact should help convince you of that. The fact is that the "act" of writing is completely and totally safe, without even the slightest risk of embarrassment or reproach.

You write alone. The words are on a sheet of paper or on a computer screen in front of you, and no one else in the *world* knows they are there. Think about the enormous freedom this gives you. You can say anything you want without fear of contradiction or of being laughed at. You can try a thousand ways of putting material down on the page and then, if you need or want to, you can throw it all away and never let anyone see it. Is this not a liberating concept? It means that there is never any reason not to start writing. No *possible* harm can come from it. And, you will have portaged right past the first white water barrier on the river of writing success.

But *what* do you write when you sit down to that empty screen? Feeling safe at the computer might not give you the words to put on it. Well, I'll tell you what I do. I write pretty much every day, though less on weekends, and there are many times when I have worked my posterior into my chair and found that I had no idea of what I wanted to write about. I write anyway, and you can too.

Take a few deep breaths, let your mind wander a bit, and write whatever comes flowing into your awareness. Use free association to put words on the screen and help you combine those words into sentences. Sometimes I just start typing and let my fingers do the thinking for me. Ray Bradbury used to do this too, and it worked for him.

If you need a bit more structure, then write about your childhood. Start with, "My Mother was..." or "My Father was..." or "I grew up in..." Or you can do something as easy as, "I look around the room and I see..."

At worst, you are getting your writing juices flowing. Better, you're getting practice at description and practice at excavating your past for the detail that makes a writer's work come alive. And best, as you write the old ideas and experiences may begin to percolate and combine until you find yourself racing along far beyond your own life into the magical world of making stuff up.

That's where the fun begins, and writer's block ends.

There is a theory which states that if anyone discovers just exactly what the universe is for and why we are here, that it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. Then there is a theory which states that this has already happened.

—Douglas Adams

Website Error Notification:

It was recently brought to our attention that an error was occurring on the T-Press website whenever someone filled out a form, including the form for joining this newsletter. This problem has been resolved and all forms should be functioning normally again. If you or anyone you know attempted to join the newsletter within the last month, please be advised that we did not receive your request and you should submit the form again.

Money Is No Obstacle – or is it?

With the *Elemental Triangle* established (see April, May & Sept. issues), it is time for us to move onto the fourth archetype in our series, namely, *Obstacle*. Without obstacle, drama could not unfold. Story would not only lack dynamic, but it would be reduced to flat, one-sentence summations. Consider these examples:

1. Luke Skywalker assists Princess Leia in her quest to return the stolen Death Star schematics to the Rebel Alliance and, after a weakness is identified, goes on to exploit it, thereby destroying the enemy's weapon of mass destruction.
2. Jeran Odara, made aware of the Boundary's weakening status and danger of collapse, alerts the King and secures the help of distant allies to confront the threat.

What we are left with when obstacles are removed is not story but synopsis, and a very brief synopsis, at that. Without a series of hurdles, all stories would be a swift sprint to the finish line. Those elements, which stand between a protagonist and her goal, are, then, the very building blocks of drama. This is *Obstacle*.

But whereas a single, primary, *quest* typically confronts the *waif protagonist*, indeed a considerable series of obstacles will bar the way between her and the fulfillment of that *quest*. In shorter stories, naturally, fewer obstacles will confound the protagonist, but suffice it to say that – generally – the intensity of the drama increases in direct proportion to the number of obstacles contained in the tale.

It is important to point out, that by my saying the dynamics of drama are orchestrated chiefly by *Obstacle*, I am not implying *comedic* story is served by an alternate structural archetype. Indeed, *Obstacle* is as integral a part of the *comedic* structure as it is of dramatic story forms. To clarify, it may help to distinguish what I mean by my use of the term, *drama*.

In this sense, I am not using the term *drama* as the antithesis of comedy, rather as a synonym for what might be a better word to use here – tension. Does this make my meaning clearer? Shall we say, then, that the fourth archetype of fantasy (and other good) writing – *Obstacle* – is the building block of *tension* in a story?

All story, even comedy, has tension. Tension builds

as the reader anticipates the obstacles the protagonist faces on the journey to satisfy *quest*. For instance, a comedy of errors would be a specific genre of comedy in which the sheer number and interconnectedness of *Obstacle* is particularly fantastic. Such tales are often supported by a series of near misses: perhaps two people who are surely destined to be together but whose meeting is perpetually put-off by a sequence of mishaps (obstacles).

Tension within story, like that of the bobbin on a sewing machine, has a lot to do with the degree to which we are satisfied with the end product. If kept too slack, the piece falls apart; it lacks adherence. On the other hand, if too tight, tension will tear the very fabric it is meant to shape. Studying a bobbin, you will notice that it demonstrates a rhythm that combines both moments of taut thread feeding and ones in which the spool allows the thread to lay lax. This rhythm is comparable to the optimal dynamic within story.

What I am trying to convey is that, although good stories will involve multiple hurdles for the protagonist to leap (or circumnavigate), these challenges should not be identical in height. The tension should vary. Neither Luke's confrontation with Tuskan Raiders in the Tatooine desert nor his temporary impingement in the Death Star's trash compactor are as difficult an impasse as trying to land a direct hit on the reactor ventilation shaft while flying at break-neck speed through a tight canyon under laser fire. Oh yes – and with a time constraint thrown in for good measure. This observation serves to point out a stern relevancy: the measure of the obstacle's height must include what lies in the balance – what stands to be lost. In the desert, the most pressing concern for Luke is his own survival. And while that should seem enough, by the time Luke is trailed by Vader down that Death Star service ditch consider this: not merely Luke's, but the survival of countless lives, hang in the equation.

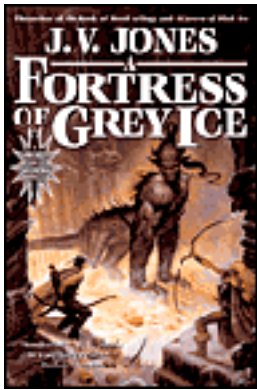
Overall, the tension should increase, yet not in a direct ascending line toward climax. Peaks and valleys will create a more natural, pleasing dynamic. And if I sound a bit like Dr. Ruth for just a moment, it is not without reason: the rhythm of satisfying drama is not unlike the undulating course of *sexual* tension. After all, that too, ends with a climax.

The assignment this month for readers is to select a novel from your shelves and to see if you can identify the dynamic pattern built into it by its author. I don't

Reviews

A Fortress of Grey Ice

J.V. Jones



Tor, Sep 2003

\$25.95, Hardcover, 672 pp.

ISBN: 0765306336

Review by Harriet Klausner

Though they know this is probably their last stand as a people, the Sull, feeling that they have been left with no choice, prepare for war. Their only hope of defeating the overwhelmingly superior forces of the Endlords

resides in their most sacred warrior, the Reach. However, this special warrior is Ash March, but she was not raised among the tribe and is nowhere near to help her people. In fact, the Sull leaders realize her Reach powers are growing, but she has no idea how to fully use them. Though feeling helpless, with or without their most sacred warrior, the war between light and dark is inevitable, but with her the Sull leaders see a slight hope while without her they die in a lost cause.

Meanwhile Raif Sevrance remains a hunted outcast from his Clan Blackhail for accusing the new chief of arranging the assassinations of their respective fathers. Under new darker and deadlier direction, Raif leaves Clan Blackhail under a cloud, but with his morality.

However, he can no longer brood over his fate and what he lost because his destiny resides with Ash; if he can liberate her, that is, because she is a dupe of the forces of the dark. Together they may save a world;

separately both will die. First Raif must find her, but that means traveling through the most feared place on the orb, the Want, where the Fortress of Grey Ice lies. If Raife can reach his destination, with certain death at every step, then his quest to save a world begins, but without Ash and her power at his side even early success will prove futile.

Though a second book in a trilogy, *A Fortress of Grey Ice* avoids the filler feel of many middle tales by moving the quest forward with exciting adventures. The introduction also will help readers like this reviewer remember what happened before, but it is better to re-read the first novel (see *A Cavern of Black Ice*).

Still, the key to this book is the lead characters and the various races that seem genuine; this makes the world seem so real. Raif is typical of the sub-genre hero as his personal ethics keeps him on a path of light though the never-ending dark of the Endlords that seems ready to engulf everything in its way. However, though much of the action focuses on a solo Raif, the heart of this novel and its predecessor is Ash. Not only does she know nothing about her people, having been raised away from them, but she also understands little about her power and how the evil side uses her as a pawn in their objective to conquer the world. She serves as a flicker of hope yet it is the dark that "owns" her. Only Raif can lead her to her role as a savior, but his quest is as dangerous as hers will be if she connects with her people the Sull in time to save the world.

Fans of epic fantasy will enjoy this powerful entry and look forward to the final tale, hopefully with less of a time lapse, but of the same quality.

Science Fiction Author Quiz

by Charles Gramlich

(Answers of page 17)

They wrote the novels that changed the science fiction landscape. But have you read them? Do you know them? Can you match the authors on the left with the titles of their most influential works on the right?

Zero to five correct is a bad sign. Maybe you watch too much TV? Six to ten correct is a good score. You're pretty well read. More than ten? Hey, watch some TV and stop embarrassing the rest of us.

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Walter M. Miller Jr. | Dune |
| 2. Isaac Asimov | Stranger in a Strange Land |
| 3. Frank Herbert | Neuromancer |
| 4. Arthur C. Clarke | Hammer's Slammers |
| 5. Ray Bradbury | Dhalgren |
| 6. Poul Anderson | Triplanetary |
| 7. David Drake | A Canticle for Leibowitz |
| 8. Theodore Sturgeon | Ensign Flandry |
| 9. William Tenn | Of Men and Monsters |
| 10. Robert Heinlein | Foundation |
| 11. William Gibson | The Martian Chronicles |
| 12. Samuel R. Delany | 2001: A Space Odyssey |
| 13. EE "Doc" Smith | More Than Human |
| 14. Gordon R. Dickson | Dying Inside |
| 15. Robert Silverberg | Dorsai! |

Reviews

Freddy vs. Jason

Robert Englund, Ken Kirzinger, Kelly Rowland



New Line Cinema

August 2003

Peevish Reviews

by Sherri Craig

*Because No Matter How Popular
it May be, it Still Has Nits to be
Picked...*

As a teen, I was a major Freddy Krueger fan. I had a battered old fedora (left over from my Indiana Jones worshipping days) and the plastic Freddy glove that was all the rage at Spencer's Gifts in 1990. I made sure that I was tuned in to MTV whenever they had Freddy hosting all the videos that happened to be based on *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. I remember vividly the Fat Boys video, The Fresh Prince video, and my personal favorite, the ultra cool Dokken video. I also remember waiting anxiously for the movies to come out, which my friends and I would flock to in screaming, giggling packs with the token adult who went off to watch some Mel Gibson movie while we had our thrills. Just the idea of teens learning to become warriors in their dreams to defeat a psychotic killer was just *so cool*.

While the outspoken, wise-ass goofball killer appealed to my sense of coolness, my husband was drawn to the silent, juggernaut-of-mayhem type. He owned a variety of hockey masks, each in a different state of disrepair and caked with assorted amounts of gore. The romantic interludes in our early years consisted of cuddling to the all night splatterfest every Friday the 13th. Before this latest installment, the two movies we saw in the theatre after our relationship began held rank over our anniversary as times of celebration, and my husband's favorite "gripe about your spouse" anecdote is about the time I made him go get popcorn before *Jason Goes to Hell* started and caused him to miss the gratuitous nudity in the first 5 seconds (we now get to the theater one hour and fifteen minutes early to ensure good seating and adequate time for snacks).

Jason X came and went last year without too much a fanfare, another movie with the theme song, "Let the Bodies Hit the Floor." It was good, in a cheesy *Xena: Warrior Princess* kind of way. Okay, so it was a bit more like *Andromeda* (sporting various members from that

show's cast). It was slightly "lighter" than the previous *Fridays*, but it was still enough to satisfy the fans.

Freddy, on the other hand, had been out of the limelight way too long...and he was pissed about it. In *Freddy vs. Jason*, Freddy's ego is bruised because no one remembers him. Since he has no one to remember him and be afraid of him, he is powerless and cannot escape his imprisonment in hell to wreak havoc on Elm Street. Freddy cannot enter the dreams of the Elm Street children unless someone remembers him. Once they remember him, they fear him, and Freddy thrives on fear. When the fear makes Freddy strong enough, he will be able to kill his victims in their dreams.

The Springwood police department, in a fit of (somewhat farfetched) brilliance, isolates the problem and controls the dreams of the town's youth with the aid of an experimental medication. Freddy, having no portal into the waking world any longer, decides to use Jason to do his dirty work. Jason has the uncanny ability to *come back*...from anything. He was merely biding his time in hell until some reckless teens decided to go have sex and abuse drugs at Camp Crystal Lake. Freddy, appearing in the form of Jason's manipulative mother, tricks him into awakening. "Mother" (is the whole horror movie genre overly Freudian or what?!) tells Jason that the evil teenagers are in Springwood, so he heads over that way to exact his revenge.

Once gory murders start popping up all over town, the Springwood grapevine begins to cry "Freddy." The plan works to perfection and Freddy is able to enter the dreams of the children. Unfortunately, every time Freddy corners a dreaming victim, Jason happens along and knocks them off first. This irritates Freddy to no end. With the aid of a mind controlled teen (who looks a little too much like Jay, from Jay and Silent Bob fame) and a large dose of sedatives, Freddy pulls Jason into the dreaming world in order to finish him off. Jason realizes that he's been duped by Freddy, and puts up a fight. Unfortunately, Freddy has the home field advantage.

Meanwhile, back in the waking world, the Elm Street children decide to pull Freddy out of the dream world and allow Jason to have the advantage. They pack up the sedated Jason and head over to Crystal Lake. From there, it is a bloody gorefest until the end. The end is like all of the ends that have come before. One couple survives, to be taken away in an ambulance, smiling because peace has once again been restored to the cosmos.

Con't on page 9

Reviews

Freddy vs Jason(con't)

Know only this about the ending: that everyone will be happy with it. This is a well-made, well-written movie for what it is. Of course, no one in the audience is going there to see *Citizen Kane*. The movie does just what it sets out to do. It entertains the fans. The actors are likable. Jason Ritter (John's son) and Monica Keena, the teens centered on the most in the movie, are adequately angst-filled and courageous. Robert Englund shines once again as Freddy. It is obvious that he enjoyed the role. Ken Kirzinger is new to the role of Jason, but pulled it off magnificently. His boy language added a voice to the silent character. Both Wes Craven and Victor Miller had a hand in the characterization within the movie. These two gentlemen are Freddy and Jason's creators,

respectively. The writers, Damien Shannon and Mark Swift, work wonderfully with the mythology of both characters and interweave them believably. This isn't a film that was thrown together for a fast buck. It was thought about and written with the fanbase in mind. That very element is what makes this movie so great. It may seem sacrilegious to compare *Freddy vs Jason* to *The Lord of the Rings*, but I cannot help but to make that connection. The time and effort involved in giving the fans what they want paid off in the end and made this movie number one in the box office for two weeks and kept it in the top ten afterwards. I give this movie a remarkable one nit (and that was only because the Jay look-alike bothered me). Here's to a rematch!

Inheritance Simon Brown



Daw, Oct 2003
\$6.99, Paperback, 432 pgs.
ISBN: 0756401623
Review by Harriet Klausner

Queen Usharna Rosetheme is dying, but is not worried about the succession, as her oldest son Beryama will inherit the throne. Instead she is concerned with how the Twenty Houses will support her son and his three half-siblings. Especially concerning her is her youngest, Lynan, son of a deceased war-hero commoner. To keep the lad safe she has somewhat ignored him, but that has not stopped those who believe he is not worthy – due to his common blood or his father's enemies – from wanting him eliminated. A recent assassination attempt thwarted by his father's faithful Captains from the Slaver War, Kumul Alarn and Agar Parmer, saved his life. In turn the Queen uses one of her keys to save Agar at the cost of bringing her closer to death. She knows that anytime one uses the keys, one loses life expectancy.

When the queen dies, the keys that were the prime source of her power and her victory in the deadly Slaver War are distributed to each of her four children. However, unity fails when Areava and the twenty houses decide to eliminate Lynan, holder of one of the magical keys. Once again the loyalty of Kumul and Agar saves his life following the betrayal from people he shares blood with and of course the Twenty Houses seeking purification and increased power. What worried Usharna in life has come to pass through her

death, as her children are divided and her country is split, with Lynan vowing vengeance and intending to use his key to claim what was stolen from him.

The opening installment of the "Keys of Power" series is an incredible epic fantasy that is must reading for sub-genre fans. The storyline is action-packed yet insures that readers follow the exploits of fully developed characters. The adventures never slow down even as Simon Brown introduces the cast in such a way that the key (no pun intended) players seem real and the magic genuine.

The Queen and the two former captains are heroic figures willing to sacrifice themselves for people they care about as well as for the good of the country. Usharna in particular is quite a role model as she speeds up her death march by using a key to save the life of Agar, a man who means nothing to her except that he risked his life to keep Lynan safe.

The four siblings all have distinct personalities so that the audience can see dramatic differences between each one of them. Beryama feels the pressure mounting on him and struggles to follow his mother's sage leadership. Though she denies it, Areava hates Lynan, for his father replaced her father, whom the Queen executed for betraying her. She masquerades her deep negative feelings behind the cloak of fearing a commoner having a key of power. Olio is everybody's friend perhaps because he seems too harmless, but though he is intelligent he sounds too fainthearted to lead, as he avoids difficult confrontations. Finally the star of the tale (and probably the trilogy) Lynan grows from a hedonistic kid into a strong, ethical man. The support cast enhances these personalities. Perhaps, the only problem with *Inheritance* is waiting for book two to be published.

Illuminations Speculative Fiction Writing Contest Winner!

It is our pleasure to announce the winner of the Illuminations Speculative Fiction Writing Contest: A. Christopher Drown of Cordova Tennessee, whose story, *The Battle*, stood out among the submissions. *The Battle*, an intriguing look into the mind of an uncommon knight, had the perfect mixture of style and originality, and we are happy to award it the grand prize. Congratulations, Aaron; we wish you the best of luck!

Next month, readers will be treated to our second place winner, *No Going Back*, written by Deidre Rhine of Lexington Park, MD. Her story, a heart-wrenching,

futuristic tale of familial separation, made our decision a difficult one.

Also in next month's issue, expect to see *Ivan's Journey*, a work written by ambitious eleven-year-old Alexander Rickert. His story impressed us so much, we decided to create an Honorable Mention category specifically for him.

We at the Illuminata thank everyone who submitted a story to the contest, and we encourage you to continue writing. Check in periodically at the T-Press website for future contest information.

THE BATTLE

by A. Christopher Drown

There was magic at work. He could feel it, dull and churning, deep in his belly.

The knight stood motionless, taking in the inexplicably familiar scene. The enemy was poised on the opposite side of the narrow valley; legions of armored men and horses in countless rows, silent and gleaming, banners and pennants of boastful crimson raised high. Comprising the front ranks was an endless line of men clutching pole arms of varying, vicious makes, giving the enormous army the look of a single, collective beast, bristling in anticipation of the savagery to come.

Behind him, from the corner of either eye, the knight could see his own forces eager to charge, armaments equally deadly, equally dazzling in the brightness of midday, draped in gallant, regal blues.

A gentle breeze murmured through the lush, ankle-deep grass then died away, leaving the air again heavy and tight with the shared hatred of the two camps. Every soldier stood at perfect, rigid attention; even the horses were calm and unmoving as each group awaited the other to issue the first calls for attack.

A magnificent spectacle, yet there was no escaping the sense he'd been there before. The formations, the quiet – as though something from a dream.

Only there were differences. He could just grasp from the far reaches of his memory a red brick house on a pleasant little street; beyond that, an endless, blazing desert; further still, a sea. No, a lake – vast and tranquil, surrounded by misshapen trees and thick, cloying mud.

Magic was the only explanation; some sorcerer weaving an incantation to befuddle him and steal his ability to lead his troops. He scanned the back-most lines of the crimson brigades, squinting hard against the sun to make out anything or anyone that looked as though –

There: an old man with short, gray, beard, dressed in brown robes, his own strange, blue sword at the ready. A wizard! There was no doubt.

Disgust roiled up within the knight, his chest swelling in anger at the notion of so dishonorable a tactic – employing a magician to help manage what any deserving warrior should be able to accomplish on his own. Satisfying his outrage would have to wait. There was but one tactic to defend against magic: focus one's resources on the sorcerer first and hope to overwhelm his capacity to protect himself. Otherwise his men might as well strip off their armor and fight naked using curses and sticks.

He turned to order the archers to light their arrows and loose a volley on the enemy mage's position but was too late – their foe was suddenly upon them. There'd been neither cry nor horn, but with breathtaking swiftness the two sides crushed together as though compelled by some unseen might.

The knight attempted to draw his sword but found his arms pinned against his body by the mad tide of man and beast. He tried to shout to his soldiers, to order them to regroup and mount a proper defense, but the clatter of armor and the chaos of the surge left him helpless and unheard.

But that was not the worst of it.

He was horrified by the creatures before him, by the hordes of mangled and maimed red-clad soldiers

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Original Fiction

The Battle (con't)

marauding past. Few possessed all four limbs, yet they marched-forth unyielding, a nightmarish flow of grotesquely disfigured faces. As he fought to extricate himself from the clawing, hell-sent masses, he collided with the giant form of a man blindly wielding an even larger halberd – blindly, because the man had no head.

The knight ducked, causing the giant's blade to cleave away the majority of plumage from atop his helmet. He threw himself against his decapitated assailant, felling him like a great oak onto his fellow combatants. They each tried to rise, but other bodies quickly piled on, burying them beneath the wreckage of countless other soldiers. He tried to free himself, but the weight of the men above pressed down, crumpling his armor until there was barely room to draw air.

Then from the heavens thundered the voice of a goddess. "DANNY! Dinner!"

It wasn't the first time he'd heard that sound. As before, it was vague, like distant memory, but nonetheless welcome as it brought the battle to a mercifully abrupt halt.

He lay there, unable to move. There were no cries of agony from the wounded as expected, no groans from the staggered and barely conscious. Absent also were the customary smells of war – charred flesh, drying blood, the soiling of the freshly slain. As before, everything was still.

Soon the weight eased from the knight's chest. Brightness from somewhere he couldn't distinguish flooded his eyes. Perhaps he was already dead. He felt himself roll over from his stomach. He gazed up into the late afternoon, at the cottony ceiling punctuated by gaps of resplendent amber-violet. It gave him some small ease to simply lie and consider the beauty of it.

To his utter terror, from that tranquil sky swooped down a colossal hand and scooped him from the earth. Panic gnashed at his brain. He wanted to scream, but the rush of wind past his face denied him sufficient breath. Up he soared, stopping at what could only be an unthinkable height. Then the hand turned over.

And dropped him.

The knight plummeted into what looked to his dismay like an immense bag, already filled with the mangled bodies of comrade and enemy alike. He crashed into the pile of fellow captives, tumbling a short distance before coming to rest on his back. The young face of a god eclipsed the sky, smiling down at him before drawing the mouth of the bag closed, condemning the knight to blackness.

There was no pain; fear quickly ebbed as came, once more, the certainty of magic at work, tickling him deep in his belly. When the dark finally took full hold of him, it too seemed inexplicably familiar.

Genre Word Search

T T S X Y R O R R O H S
T A Z F A N T A S Y L V
D A A T F E H Z N P G W
E C D E H F O B E Q W E
L Z M A E R T S P I L S
I O M Y S T E R Y T O T
O R K R I O D V T E A E
B E C N A M O R T I E R
D O T T N D G E N R E N
R S G L S M P Q N M U W
A P K N Z E L K V C W I
H N L S P R W C V F H O

Authors fear them, anal-retentive readers love them, but love or hate, no one can deny that genres are everywhere. Libraries, bookstores, even video rental stores are full of them. It's an ever-growing and often confusing list. Is this book alternate reality or trans-dimensional SF? Where, exactly, would one file a book about a time-travelling, vampiric alien trapped in seventeenth century London? These are both valid questions, but today, the tables are turned. See if you can find the genres below in the jumble to the left!

SF
YA
FANTASY
HARDBOILED
MYSTERY
GENRE
ROMANCE
WESTERN
HORROR
SLIPSTREAM

Original Fiction

The following was written by the Illuminata's Terry Crotinger. We decided to include this story to honor the role played by mentors in our lives. In both reality and speculative fiction, mentors are often the key to victory. Whether it be Obi-Wan's gentle and honorable example or Dumbledore's inconspicuous bumbling, mentors make our lives, and our stories, much more enjoyable.

Concerning A Mentor's Gift, Terry writes the following:

My Mentor's Gift really was a gift. I worked with Steve, a computer repair business owner, who

mentored me in building custom computers and upgrade/repair in our very rural part of NW Arizona. In exchange, I kept his shop clean. He admits he likes to talk and gets distracted when customers come in; mistakes in this business can be costly. I was his gatekeeper and public defender when he got 'crispy'. It was a wonderful arrangement. I taught him guitar; he'd teach me to burn CDs flawlessly. Beautiful was his Christmas gift to me. This ficlet is my tribute to him, his humor, his skills, and his friendship.

A brief fantasy ficlet that lives in cyber-space...and sits on my desk.

A Mentor's Gift

Terry Crotinger/montanasings

Even though my fingers keep hitting the wrong keys, I get anywhere I want. I can surf, slide; hack. I am a master. It's not my fingers that my computer obeys; it is my intent, my will. For understand, *Beautiful* is a custom built job that was a gift from my mentor.

What a mentor! He who guided me through clock-speeds and setting jumpers, who warned me about over-clocking and AMD processors ('they run hot, you know'), may have added a little more than he intended. Or did he?

There, in that dingy walled cavern with wondrous guts of technology in careful disarray, surrounding what was comfort and refuge to me, sat *Beautiful*. I knew this because the crinkly sticky-note, smudged and pale, that was stuck to the old monitor told me so. Having never seen a more mammoth energy housed in such an uninspiring computer case, I stood breathless in awe.

He who built that wonder was a Harley riding apparition with flowing white beard and bandana skullcap. Who he learned his skills from, he would not say, but any beast would submit to him and live or die in upgrade-hell at his whim. He was mystery and monster, a cyber god.

My mentor was an awful taskmaster and often chastised me, "I told you to ground yourself! See what you have done? The static has killed the beast! Be gone!" And I would live in shame, dusting the alms of other worshiper's beasts, until his favor shined on me again.

But he could nurture, as well. Body to body, nose to nose, he would gently coach as I attempted a life-saving operation, coffee and chew lingering on his warm breath. "Careful, it is a tight space. It is proprietary, you know, very tricky, a tricky-spasm. That's right, take out the RAID card and you can reach that cable. Of course you can do it. Was it not I who taught you? Ah, see! You have made it live again. The beast lives!"

But alas, I have moved on and my mentor continues his arts in solitude. And though my burdens require an unfamiliar path, *Beautiful* is by me, always. She is an Ebenezer of his faith in me.

I cannot help but smile. My *Beautiful* is truly unique. He imparted a quality never before found in any other beast that I have brought back to life using that which he has taught me. She is a rare jewel in all of upgrade-hell. For you see, my mentor knew me, not just as apprentice, but as a creator knows and loves his creation. And as I travel cyber-space and discover all mysteries, he is with me. No RAM is needed, no hard drive, no processor. For my mentor was terrible and powerful. His spirit inhabits her, somehow, for I have searched.

I key in data, but I am pretending. I simply imagine my destination and I am there. My merest thought sifts through mega-searches unmercifully, slashing until the heart of cyberspace is mine to possess. So, when I truly keyboard, a tedious activity, it is only to keep up my skills. I continue this pretense, because who would believe me?

It is said, that when an apprentice needs a mentor, the spirits will provide. This is often a strange coupling, but I have seen it with my own eyes. It is another mystery.

We teach as we are taught, and when I impart a special boon to my apprentice, I will know what to do.

The following poem was sent to us by the Illuminata's own Sherri Craig. It is a poem describing (quite accurately) the emotions and sights to be found late light at any (or many) of the Science Fiction conventions held around the world. For any of you who have attended a Con, I'm certain that this poem will evoke some memories.

Exoticon 3:16

St. Lee preaches the Gospel
of Whitney Houston
camped out
on the hotel room floor
after communion with a bottle
of Re-Animator Fluid
deep baritone pounds out
each
word
slllllllllllllloooooooow l y
thought ful ly
agony
3:33 am
on the bed
head under a pillow
I cursed the hotel
no doubles
only King Sized
Hell
Dreux
ever ready
better than a boy scout
sleeping bag in the other corner
his maglight pierces the darkness
shut up, man
I've killed for less
silence
hope
salvation

I believe that children are our future
Sherri Craig Spring 2003

RPG Corner (con't)

In my fantasy world, combat is exceptionally deadly (as I believe any kind of combat is when we are talking about two regular Joes throwing down on one another). Swords, axes, maces and arrows are designed to kill, and are capable of doing so with surprising speed and efficiency. An unarmored man who is stabbed in the chest, abdomen, upper arm or upper leg could bleed to death in minutes. A man hit in the neck, head or heart will die instantly. Even with armor, the right blow will end combat in moments, and there is usually no way to ensure what kind of damage a character will inflict. Since I feel combat should be so deadly, and used only as a last resort, my combat system can be very simple – as I wouldn't need to worry about a lot of extra factors like speed, agility, armor, or a particular weapon proficiency – and the results would be profound.

Next time, we'll take a look at the following things: An initiative score to see who can react quicker in combat (combining speed, agility and weapon familiarity into a single category), some kind of modifier or different types of armor representing the protection it gives to the character wearing it, a method for determining how the characters can hit one another which will include little details like the weapon's weight, balance, speed and quality, the amount of damage that a weapon can inflict, and how to determine where that damage is inflicted (As I said in last month's character creation column, area specific damage means lethal combat). We'll also set up the mechanics for using these statistics in an actual combat.

KeyCOMMENTary (con't)

recommend doing this in bed, however. Let's seek one satisfying rhythm at a time here. Look for the obstacles the *waif protagonist* must overcome in order to continue toward fulfillment of her *quest*. Go ahead and chart them if you're really cerebral.

Writers, the assignment to chart your obstacles for comparative height (*intensive impact*) is more essential. It will be helpful as well, maybe even fun. How well have you orchestrated the intensive rhythm of your work? Is there always at least one obstacle within view of the reader (having obstacles *out* of the protagonist's view can be *very intensive*)?

So far in our series we have considered the *Waif-Quest-Whoosh* of the archetypal *Elemental Triangle*, and now, *Obstacle*. Next month we will delve into the fifth archetype: *Companion*. I hope you'll join us.

Inner Views (con't)

Then, every time, it was labeled black exploitation. If a movie dealt with black or minority peoples in the main theme, it was considered exploitation. It was like somebody took and cut our arms off...

Continuing my interview with actor, Don Pedro Colley, we talk about how he survived in Los Angeles after he was robbed as a struggling black actor.

Terry: [After you were robbed] What did you do?

Don Pedro: I ended up driving a taxi cab in Beverly Hill from '73 to damn near '75 then moved up to the San Fernando Valley and was driving out there. I couldn't get [an acting] job. I couldn't go on a job interview. It was insane. I switched agents because my main agents had all gone into retirement after 1973. I felt displaced and I got another agent and she ended up disappearing with some money from a commercial that I did. I saw the commercial playing on television, I said, "Surely, I'm supposed to have some money here." And another month goes by and I kept calling the agent and could never get hold of her. 'Out of town, in Washington D.C', and she passed it off a couple times I was able to talk with her that she was growing the agency in Washington and New York, and that she had things set up for me back there; it kept me mollified as it were until I said, 'This is ridiculous!'

I could never get her on the telephone, so one day I tracked down the telephone address and went to where the phone was. I found the house—totally empty and there was the phone on the living room floor. No furniture, no nothing. So I contacted all the right people, and the agency that was paying for the commercial told me they had sent her checks and she had cashed them but I never got anything. There was seven to eight thousand dollars involved in it. So they re-issued me new checks and sent the government after her because it was grand larceny. So I got another agent, and that agent wasn't doing anything whatsoever for me. And I stumbled around.

One day I was working and in God's favor, then the next day, "Oh, sorry. Have you ever worked before? What did you say your name was? What kind of work do you do? I don't find you on any list here. Are you sure?" That kind of rejection notice... it burns. '77 hit, and I did about five or six projects. I'm back in it again! In 1978 I was on a two hour episode of *Starsky and Hutch*. They flew me to Hawaii with Joan Collins

and Samantha Eager... and we're over there fourteen days. Came back, did Space Academy. I did about five projects in 1977. But it was only 1977. From that point I'd be absolutely lucky if I put in twenty days actual acting work in a full year. The rest was taxi cab driving or trying to get some kind of job. By late 80's I decided that this is insane! I left L.A. and went to San Francisco and got an agent from years before. And went to work as a security guard at the St. Francis Drake, St. Francis Hotel. And I was coaching tennis. I had three jobs there. Went back to L.A. in 1992. I did a commercial here, a little voice work there. I got robbed one night. Yeah, I didn't think it would happen but it did. A black guy robbed me.

Terry: They must have been really foolish. You're not exactly a little guy!

Don Pedro: Junkie types, lucky he didn't have a knife or a gun. I turned to start my car and he jumped me and told me to give him my money or he'd kill me. Twisted my neck and could have snapped my head. I had seventy dollars in my pocket, and a little voice said I should just give him the money. So I reached in my pocket and held the money out. I tried to grab his arm, but he was in the back seat and had better leverage. Then he got out of the cab and ran to an apartment building that was part of his setup.

When I gave chase and got to the front door it closed right after him. So I took my number fifteen shoe and made mashed potatoes out of that door and he was stuck in the lobby...saw me coming after him with all the fury...and slipped out a side door and went down along the alley. The only thing I've ever seen run that fast was a deer in full flight. Well, the apartment manager wanted to sue me. I told him it was a setup. I told the cops it was a set-up, that he knew someone in the building. Ended up having to pay for the door. That was two hundred dollars or more. And they were upset that it wasn't five thousand.

Terry: So you quit driving a cab after that?

Don Pedro: I was kind of out of it after that. I went to one of those temporary agencies and they placed me in a stock brokerage firm in Beverly Hills answering telephones and giving stock quotes on the computer. Folks would call up, I'd give them information and then they'd say 'Gee, you have a nice voice.' 'Well,

Con't on page 15

Inner Views (con't)

thanks. A lot'. Apparently somebody called into my supervisor because people were calling, asking for me to deal with them because the others were such jerks on the phone to them and they weren't getting the information or they'd get hung up on. My little twelve-year-old supervisor in his little white suit and tie called me on the carpet one day and said, 'We're getting complaints.' 'Really? For what?' 'You're being too nice to the customers.' 'What?!' 'Yes, you're being too nice to the customers and we can't have that. You have to work to...blah, blah...' One day Warren Buffet called, and I just happened to pick up on him. The biggest of the big guys!

Terry: Warren Buffet! Doing his own calling! That's kind of a surprise.

Don Pedro: It was surprising. I was totally surprised. I gave him his information and he said, 'You're a nice fellow. I'm going to call your supervisor'. Oh-oh. These supervisors are twenty-two year old kids. Forget quality. They just want quantity. Keep it moving as fast as possible. So I tried to bite my tongue. By now people started calling and asking for me. I made \$7.30 an hour to stay alive, putting in 14-15 hour days just to make my rent and pay parking for my vehicles. My vehicles got broken into and I got robbed in my apartment building. L.A. was just...I lived a block and a half from Hollywood Boulevard, too.

When I first got to Los Angeles, people used to walk down Hollywood Boulevard and there would be bumper-to-bumper traffic and everyone would be saying, "Hi" and "Hello". You'd see old movie stars and new movie stars. People were friendly. By the 90's, Hollywood Boulevard after 5:30 at night looked like an industrial warehouse district! Every business up and down the boulevard has steel cages over their windows that slip down. Everything is locked up at night with graffiti from ground to second floor on every building and every steel cage door on the streets. Nobody walked the street. The only traffic on the streets was emergency vehicles and police cars trying to break up gunfire or drug beatings or prostitution. It was a total war zone during... it was insane.

Terry: So what have you been doing since then?

Don Pedro: I hung on until I got out of there. In 2000 I finally moved out—it was the 7th. of March, 2000, and

I came to Oregon. My dad built this house out in the woods. He'd go hunting and fishing—it was they're vacation house. I asked myself what the hell am I doing in L.A. when I have this home in the mountains and there's no reason for me being here anymore? None whatsoever. I can't work. I'm trying to make it on these little jobs. I'm going backwards, I'm going out. Such anguish and such tension and such anxiety on a twenty-four hour basis—just trying to stay alive. One year during this period, I was finally able to get an agent; a manager. Young, hot. Sent [me] on 70 auditions in one year. And I didn't get one job. 70 times! That was unheard of from never having to go out to audition.

The script showed up, I would go out, stand in line in a group of people, a group of 50-100 people, and audition for an acting job and never getting...not one. So his contract with me was for five years and if at the end of [that time] he let you go. Five years went by, although we were friends, he let me go. I put out my press packages and resume and bio cover letter to 70-80 different agents around L.A and one person responded who was a person I knew from way back in the late 60's, early 70's when I was hot. He decided he would take me on but I didn't sign with him. I just gave him some pictures and he said he'd try for me. No work.

Terry: Nothing, huh?

Don Pedro: No. Temp agencies—when you were finished [in the acting industry], you were out of a job. So by the spring of 2000 even my unemployment was gone. I was living on my little pensions check from Screen Actor's Guild. Can you imagine \$638 a month? \$400 went to rent. Couldn't afford to drive my car if you could get an interview. So, I came home. It was three o'clock in the morning when I finally got out of L.A. and for months after that they asked, "Why did you leave? Did you die?" "You can't leave L.A.!" "You can't do that." Bye, I'm outta here.

They eat you up and spit you out. It does it for everybody unless you hit a series or feature that gives you star status where you can go and really negotiate \$1,000,000 for yourself and gives you something to fall back on. Of the hundred thousand registered members of our union, less than 1% is able to make a living out of the acting business.

The following three e-mail were received following the conclusion of my interview with Don Pedro:

Con't on page 16

Inner Views (con't)

5/15/03 Hi Terry,

Things are going pretty well here. Just came back from a Comic Book Convention in San Francisco. Shared a table with Kathy Garvy of "Family Affair". This is the second time we have been on the same bill at an event. During the show, about a dozen people came by my table to tell me that they worked with George Lucas at his 'SKYWALKER RANCH', and that he is in the process of re-editing his "THX1138" film in preparation for release on DVD!! They also made reservations for me to meet with George on the 30th of this Month, before he goes off the Australia to shoot the last installment of 'STAR WARS'. Yours,.....DPC

5/22/03 Hi Terry!

I'm getting my itinerary set up for my weekend at 'THE RANCH', on the 30th. I guess I'll have about half an hour to talk to George [Lucus] I usually do about four to five Conventions a year, in many cities. Even been to Canada, and have penciled in a possible trip to England next yearDPC///

7/2/03 Hi Terry!!,

Things are on going here. I believe I have another Convention coming up in Sept 2003. We're in the process of finalizing travel now. The end of May, I spent a week on Skywalker Ranch; getting to sit down with George Lucas for about a half hour; having lunch in the 42,000 square foot main house, which is also George's office; being housed on his 6000 acres in an Alpine Lodge; asked to a special screening of 'FINDING NEMO' in an old winery which has been converted to a High Tech sound and editing building consisting of three sound stages, one, so large as to record a full 110 piece Orchestra; watching a Baseball game between the staff on their own diamond; going to the beach on his own thirty acre lake, all because I had done a Comic book Convention at Moscone Center in San Francisco, and several of the people that stopped at my table to get an autograph, work at Georges' 'INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC STUDIOS'.

They told me that George was taking his very first movie, "THX1138", out and re-editing it for a winter release on DVD. These kids took my card and passed it around the place. The next thing I know, I get a call from the public relations department asking me to come and meet with George, plus do an on camera interview for the DVD. LOVE,.....DPC///

Whatever Happened (con't)

cornerstone of *The Next Generation*. The series' bible, a guide for staff writers, demanded that humans no longer had baser instincts in this fictional universe. All conflicts had to come from the outside – internal problems amongst the crew were forbidden. It was Future Perfectis – and god, was it boring. That Trek returned from the dead ten years after its last rites is usually cited as the grand miracle of fandom. But it's not. That TNG survived its dismal first season to find its audience – that was a miracle. And it wasn't the magical power of Trek that was solely responsible. Filmed science fiction was in a Renaissance, thanks largely to George Lucas. The Star Wars trilogy had tapped a mysterious part of the cultural imagination and spawned a generation of people who liked space ships and funky aliens, without necessarily being attached to the conceptual core of science fiction, and they were starting to tune in – just in time.

There had been flashes of utter genius towards the end of TNG's second season. Out of a sea of bland plots "The Measure of a Man" reared up. An extraordinary exploration of the meaning of respect for all life masked in a trial over an android's right to control his own destiny, Trekkies watched – and after we had scraped our chins off the floor, we roared. Trek was truly back. Following was "Q Who", an episode that changed the stock supercilious god-like alien into a complex mentor of humanity. Then there was a settling back into sheer mediocrity – and the single worst episode ever of Trek "Shades of Gray", a pitiful clip show – a clip show! That was something – sitcoms – did. (Please read the disdain dripping from my voice.)

But then (cue dramatic music)... If season one of *Star Trek* was Hellenistic Greece, seasons three and four of TNG were the Pax Romana – an age of glorious expansion and total control. TNG ruled the world of television SF unchallenged – and life was good, because the stories were good. "The Defector" told of a legendary general who would give up everything to prevent war. "The High Ground" dared to declare that the only difference between a terrorist and a general was determined by who won. The Trek universe was being expanded as we were taken into the details of the warrior-culture of the Klingons – once enemies, now allies – all shot through the personal struggle of the character Worf. Captain Picard was put through a terrifying ordeal of being eaten alive by machines in the most celebrated cliffhanger of SF television "The Best of Both Worlds".

Con't on page 17

Whatever Happened (con't)

At the same time, the middle-of-the-road eps continued to come, and actually predominated. The occasional stinker popped out too – but overall TNG was more consistently good than the original series (and don't think it doesn't pain me to admit that any Trek was better than *Star Trek* in any way). And brilliant runs continued to happen, up to and including the conclusion of the series. From "Darmok", a beautiful take on the nature of communication, to "The Inner Light", a stunning tale of an entire life lived in twenty-five minutes, TNG continued to reach the heights set by *Star Trek*. It kept a core concept of portraying seeming enemies as allies waiting to happen with episodes that found common ground between humans and almost any kind of life. "The Defector" painted Cold Warriors on both sides working for peace rather than destruction. "Home Soil" and "Silicon Avatar" found crystals, some tiny, some huge, to be life worthy of preservation and communication. Social allegory continued with episodes that took on environmental degradation, addiction, the treatment of the elderly and homosexuality. But most importantly, after a slow start the characters were becoming compelling – well, some of them were. Patrick Stewart as Captain Picard had done what none had thought possible and created a commander who rivaled Kirk. Worf and Data had personal arcs that were fascinating and endearing. Solid SF concepts were explored regularly – everything from time travel to genetically engineered societies.

There were weak spots to be sure. After losing the one female character cast in a traditionally male career – security chief – the other women on the show were consistently under-explored and relegated to nurturing roles. The rowdy sexuality of the original series was toned down and with it, some of the fun was lost. The decree that these characters had to always and without fail be noble and righteous leached a degree of complexity from the stories. If not for the wonderfully-nuanced performances of the best actors on the show, the characters might have remained as stiff as they were at first.

Still, fandom was riding high. Cons were huge touring shows – sure the home-grown quality and creativity of the fan-run cons had been replaced by professionally-produced conventions that were mostly about selling stuff – but they were everywhere, and just about everyone was happy. Oh, there were a few endearing curmudgeons who rejected *The Next Generation*, but they were more like kindly grandpappies

romanticizing the good old days than actual critics. Word came around that as TNG was winding down, yet another Trek series was coming to our living rooms. It was a halcyon time and it seemed like Trek might go on forever with new adventures and quality stories. If the geek stereotype didn't disappear for the dedicated, it certainly got tuned down about ten notches. Trek had gone mainstream – marginally maybe – but mainstream nonetheless. People didn't have to be into SF to dig it and many felt no pressure to partake of the original series. TNG had found itself and stood firmly on its own two feet, and Trek fandom had expanded to a new level.

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Answers to Author Quiz (quiz on page 7)

1. A Canticle for Leibowitz, 2. Foundation, 3. Dune,
4. 2001, 5. The Martian Chronicles, 6. Ensign Flandry,
7. Hammer's Slammers, 8. More Than Human, 9. Of Men and Monsters, 10. Stranger in a Strange Land, 11. Neuromancer, 12. Dhalgren, 13. Triplanetary, 14. Dorsai!, 15. Dying Inside.

Mystery: Here, again, the books triumph, though not even the prequel books can boast much mystery. Excluding the minority introduced to Dune via either of the screen versions, the plot, along with all its twists, turns, victories and failures, was given away during the first reading. Not knowing the outcome binds readers or viewers to a work. *The Crying Game* and *The Sixth Sense* lose much of their appeal once the secret is known, and mystery novels become tiresome if the culprit is identified in the first five pages. Because most viewers have read the novel – in fact, it is likely that reading the novel is what attracted them to the film version – the element of mystery is gone. This detracts from the overall enjoyment, especially when a director's vision contrasts with that of the reader.

Even the prequel novels lack mystery. Though one does not know how the plot lines will play out, the overall ending is known, since it results in the universe created by Dune. Readers know which characters live and which die; who will become a major player in the future and who will not. This is perhaps the greatest failing of prequels: they only appeal to fans of the original. Brian Herbert's books are entertaining, but only to those already enamored with the Dune universe; and even to them, only in a secondary way. On their own, these books would have little appeal.

Sandworms and special effects: These are the meat and potatoes of Dune, and one of the elements that give each version its appeal. These hulking yet graceful beasts are both the creator and destroyer of Dune, Gods and monsters all wrapped up in one neat package. They inspire the imagination, a harmless creature grown to gigantic proportions, and, since everyone knows what a worm looks like, the reader's vision generally matches that of the director, eliminating the Imagination disparity mentioned above.

In both screen versions of Dune, the sandworms were well handled. Criticisms are few, and the consensus is that both directors did a decent job with the materials at their disposal. Both worms aren't quite real, but the fault for that lies in the technology; perhaps the next adaptation of Dune will boast worms so lifelike that viewers will fear the desert the way that *Jaws* watchers feared the ocean.

The other special effects in the movies are not as well done as the worms, but given the technology available, they are acceptable. Special effects in movies have to be considered objectively; they are not yet able to compete with pure imagination, and one cannot expect them to be perfect. Thopter models, no matter how skilled the cinematographer, will always look like

models, and close-up CG effects do not have the detail necessary to fool the eye. True fans of SF know this and use their imaginations to augment the effects, creating the reality necessary to believe.

Pronunciation and Language: Perhaps my biggest frustration with the screen versions is an inability to understand what the characters are talking about. In the books, readers are given immutable words and left to their own to develop pronunciations for them. This does result in some confusion when readers try to discuss the novels, but in general, everyone can figure out what everyone else is talking about. Readers are also given detailed explanations of complex processes, like the spice cycle and history of the universe, that leave no doubt as to how and why things work the way they do.

In the screen versions, this is not always that case. Time and entertainment concerns force editors to cut out long and boring explanations, making directors gloss over major elements and viewers accept some concepts on faith or overly-simplified dialogue.

In addition, language can become a barrier in the screen versions. For continuity's sake, one might think the majority of characters would pronounce words similarly. While it is a fact that people from different planets, or even different parts of the same planet, will pronounce words and names slightly differently, even when there is a standard language, in Lynch's version, every character – even those from the same family or tribe – has a different pronunciation scheme and, occasionally, a different accent altogether. Perhaps this a realistic approach, but for the sake of the uninitiated, it might have been better if Lynch had sat down with the cast and said, 'Hey, this is what the names are supposed to sound like!' In the end, multiple pronunciations lead to confusion; those unfamiliar with the books might think that 'Leto', 'Lay-TO', and 'Lee-AY-toh' are three different people.

The Sci-Fi channel rectified this to some extent. Most of the Fremen had a similar look and spoke a similar dialect; pronunciations were standardized a bit more throughout the series. Yet a new problem surfaced! Sometimes, the Fremen's Czech accent was so thick it was hard to understand what they were saying! Realism is essential in a screen adaptation, but so is ease of understanding. To give a story like Dune appeal to viewers outside of its established fanbase, a director must make it comprehensible.

The weirding way and artistic license: This is an element poorly handled in the film versions, Lynch's moreso than Sci-Fi's. My personal interpretation of 'the weirding way' was that it was a form of martial

art, a way that a small woman like Paul's mother could subdue a much larger and experienced warrior like the Naib Stillgar. There was no magic involved, no odd technology.

In Lynch's *Dune*, the weirding way became a unique, sound-related technology that gave those with a 'weirding module' the ability to do amazing things. This interpretation of the 'weirding' way is not even hinted at in the books, and its inclusion is one of the strongest criticisms against the 1984 adaptation of the book.

Sci-Fi Channel's weirding way was closer to that spoken of in the book. (It might even be dead on with Herbert's vision, but it doesn't match my own imagination, so it remains a point of contention.) Characters with the ability had a heightened awareness and reflexes; they could move blindingly fast and catch an enemy off guard.

One must allow for artistic license in any adaptation, but again, the farther a director's vision stands from a reader's imagination, the less appeal the reader will find in the work.

Acting: The true test of any adaptation is whether the actors play their parts convincingly, a difficult feat when each viewer's imagination has created a subtly different character. Among the screen versions, no clear winner in this area emerges, as both adaptations made some choices that appeal and some that repel.

William Hurt's portrayal of the tragic Duke Leto was good, but it looked wooden and stale when compared to the magnificent performance of Jurgen Procknow. Alec Newman played the character of Muad'Dib excellently in the Sci-Fi Channel's two *Dune* movies, accurately showcasing the character's internal struggle, but his whiny and frustratingly annoying portrayal of the young Paul Atreides left much to be desired. Kyle McLaughlan's performance was more even, but if anything, his character tends toward the other end of the spectrum. McLaughlan's Paul/Muad'Dib showed little development throughout the movie; he was the Fremen's savior from the moment the movie opened.

It is hard to choose between the supporting cast, and in the end, a viewer's favorite will depend upon which portrayal most closely matches his vision. Personally, I preferred Lynch's Stillgar and Dr. Kynes (by a narrow margin) to Sci-Fi's, but I felt that Sci-Fi's Chani and Gurney Halleck (no offense, Patrick Stewart, but P.H. Moriarity's performance was dead on!) far better captured the essence of the characters. All in all, the Sci-Fi channel did a better job of matching actors to the characters they played.

Climax: The problem with many books, especially those in a series, is that they do not have the resolution

necessary to make a good movie. In the case of *Dune*, that is not entirely the case. The movie ends on a strong note: Paul Muad'Dib and his Fremen have captured *Dune*, eliminated the Harkonnen threat, and have the Emperor of the Known Universe under their thumb. Paul has fulfilled the Fremen's prophecy and will lead them into a new future. This moment is perhaps the highest in the series; after *Dune*, at least until the end of *God Emperor of Dune*, tragedy and bittersweet victory dominate.

But for Lynch, the ending was not strong enough, and because of it, he made perhaps his greatest mistake. He allowed Paul's victory to correspond to a rain storm, a symbol of great victory for the Fremen, who have lived in a barren desert for centuries. But is this a victory? Ignoring that fact that there is virtually no moisture in the planet's atmosphere and that there is little evidence that victory in battle can induce drastic weather changes, readers of the books know that rain is definitely *not* a good thing for Arrakis.

One can only wonder why Lynch would add this dramatic effect. For entertainment value? To give the story a more happy ending? More likely than not, it was to appeal to those unfamiliar with *Dune*. This is a mistake made by many: thinking that an adaptation will appeal to those outside of the work's existing fanbase. In the end, this tactic usually backfires, as it did in Lynch's *Dune*. Those unfamiliar with the book found the movie strange and confusing, and those who love the book thought that Lynch had modified or eliminated many of the work's key elements. Lynch's movie is a classic, beloved by many, but even those who love it have a hard time comparing it to Herbert's vision.

Sci-Fi channel did a far better job mimicking Herbert's story, though in defense of Lynch, they had nearly six hours to work with compared to his two and a half. In telling an epic tale, time plays a major factor; no two-hour movie will be able to fully delve into the minds of multiple characters or fully convey all the nuances of a several hundred page book. The freedom of time gave the Sci-Fi channel an ability to explore Herbert's world more fully, keeping them from glossing over, or eliminating, entire subplots and conversations.

In viewing screen adaptations of classic books, the role of Imagination is too strong; the world created by a director will never be able to compete with the one made by a reader's mind. Every difference will be a mistake, every oversight a grave error. In the end, both screen versions of *Dune* have aspects that appeal to fans of the books, but neither they, nor any to come, can compare to Herbert's original.