

Special SF Issue

I've received some mail encouraging me to do an all-SF issue, so for both of you, this SGJ is devoted to that particular writing genre. For those of you in ufology, stay tuned; UFOs will be back in the next issue. For the meantime, sit back and enjoy some comments on recreational reading.

Zines Received

New Wave Video Snacks #1, April, 1984. Michael Hall, ed.

Finally, I welcome the "interim" fanzine from Mike Hall. It contains little more than 19 book reviews to let us get up to date on his reading habits. I agree with his reviews of Blue Highways, Loose Tails and Telempath. The rest I haven't got around to yet.

Maple Leaf Rag #5, April, 1984. Garth Spencer, ed.

Hi, Garth. Sorry I took so long to reply to you. MLR is a nicely-laid-out Gestetner-zine, with letters, reviews and SF news. Thank God he includes relatively little on D&D and comics.

Gag #5, May?, 1984. Castalgard?, ed.?

Once again the strange people at RED River Bookshop surface with their whateveritis. This issue features more Supercow, Squarehead and comics reviews. Weird.

Neology V.8 #2, 1983; V.9 #1, #2, 1984. 1983 ed. John Wellington; 1984 ed. Georges Ciguere.

What can I say about Neology? It is visually interesting and chock full of articles relevant to the field, with letters, reviews, comments, locs, artwork and news on Canajan SF fandom. Waaugh!

Event Horizon Special Edition, May, 1984. ed. Judith Debra Dawn Tamara Zoltai et al.

This is a special issue consisting of the "best" of the EH over the past several years. It was put together primarily for Keycon, and includes such notables as all three Cliffhanger episodes (including the one by SGJ's own Conrad Fort). The artwork and articles (some fiction and poems) are all related to Trek. If you're into Trekdom, then you would probably find this zine appealing. If not, you could try...

Winding Numbers #7, 1984. ed. Randy Reichardt.

Back again after a short comatose state, WN details what Randy's been doing the past several years. What he conveys is basically everyone's plight: getting caught up in the infamous "this and that" syndrome. Glad to see you, guy.

Books Received

Battlefield Earth by L. Ron Hubbard.

"Recently there came a period when I had little to do." I'll say. Thus starts the introduction to this 1000-page epic by the founder of Dianetics, who reportedly went into hiding after he lost several court battles. Hubbard at one time claimed he received "cosmic inspiration" to write an earlier story, Excalibur, and some have suggested that Battlefield Earth was similarly inspired. Wherever it came from, all reports have the book as a good (long) yarn. Not only is it "soon to be a Major Motion Picture", but it comes complete with an ad for "the Soundtrack of the Book", "Composed by L. Ron Hubbard". What will Lafayette think of next?

The Far Side and Beyond the Far Side, both by Gary Larson.

These two eagerly-awaited cartoon books by the very weird Larson are easily the best for a very long time. My favorites: "Dinner With Andy" and "Ha! Webster's Blown His Cerebral Cortex." What a delightfully sick mind!

Conan the Librarian

by

Robert Howard

Conan the Librarian, an LA II employed by the University of Cimmeria, was bent low over a rude wooden table, stamping date dues. Six feet four inches tall, savagely muscled, clad in leopard pelts, he looked the very model of a modern major barbarian. His flashing eyes betrayed a quick intelligence, in spite of the fact that the crude northerner was completely illiterate. At that, Conan reflected, he was little worse off than some of the students.

The huge librarian was disturbed in his work by the entrance of a sinister figure. Dressed in the black robe and red beanie of his Order, Encaladius was a graduate sorcerer, and known to be a bad borrower. Once before the gray-clad Supervisor had spoken to him, warning that seven-day scrolls could be renewed but once, and threatening to cut off his hand. Conan hoped that the black one would not return, but Encaladius came, bearing a withered parchment.

"I am afraid that you won't be able to sign out that parchment. You have a 50¢ fine on a reserve scroll, call number 674 120 0001."

"Call number!" the magician hissed. "Give me the name, you filthy barbarian!"

At once Conan's handsome face was transformed into a mask of rage. The Barbarian Anti-Defamation League would hear about this!

"It is called 'The Use of Lizard Tongues in Spells to Raise the Dead', and is a required reading for Necrophilia 120."

But reason was lost on the maddened sorcerer. He howled the magic words "Vive le Quebec libre!". At once plumes of black smoke filled the air. Coalescing rapidly, they were transformed into hissing cobras. They struck at the mighty librarian, who drew his gleaming broadsword. In less time than it takes to adjourn a union meeting, the serpents' heads lay on the floor.

But lo! (a deer, a female deer) that was not the end of Conan's misfortune. For each head struck off, two new ones grew back! Verily, now, the barbarian prayed to his god Naimark, for he knew that his end was at hand.

Suddenly, however, he remembered what his good friend Hercules had once done in a like battle. Taking a flaming torch from a carrel (the student was asleep anyway, and hardly needed the light), he applied it to the bleeding necks of the serpents, so that no new heads could grow back. The barbecued snakes were soon defunct.

Conan then seized Encaladius' neck. The young sorcerer was gifted with superhuman strength, but how could he fight the mighty Conan, who broke the neck of an ox when he was but 16 (the ox was a physics major)?

"All right! All right!" he squeaked "I'll pay the fine!"

The next day Conan did not mention the incident. After all, such events were usual for the two to ten shift.

Time and Punishment (11 May 1981)

Time on My Hands (Oct. 1982)

As Time Goes By (May 1983)

all by Warren M. Solomon.

These three Ben Hardy stories are hilarious romps through parallel universes, bent timelines and twists and triple twists in plots. Some scenes are confusing enough to send you running for pen and paper to figure out the sequences. All appeared in, of all places, Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine. They were pointed out to me by Vladimir Simosko. Thank's, Vlad. Your fish is showing.

Dear Chris,

Recently I read in the Free Press a review of a book of so-called double dactyls, a light verse form much like the limerick. I thought you might like a few samples for your fanzine.

1. Higgledy-piggledy
Asimov's robots, they
Went to Keycon and they found it a bore
They would have done the guests
Grievous harm bodily
Were they not protected by the First Law.
2. Jiggery-pokery
Robert A. Heinlein sent
Millions of fans flying off into space
But when he spouted his
Fascist philosophy
Brave Starship Troopers just fell on their face.

Tolkien freaks might like this one:

3. Gil-galad Elendil
Elves of Lothlorien
Found Queen Galadriel drowning in tears
Sad that the zing had gone
Out of her wedded bliss
Now that she'd been married 5000 years.

This poem refers to the eternal life of the Elf-kindred, and the fact that a marriage counsellor might be necessary if you had to live with one man forever.

4. Burroughs' Pellucidar
Thundering dinosaur
Caused all the readers of pulpzines to gape
Who would have thought that a
Man could get filthy rich
All on the back of a Son of an Ape.

Of course, there is still the limerick.

There was a young man from Japan
Who wanted to become a fan
So he went to the Con
Saw the girls with naught on
And Conan the Librarian.

Finally, there is something we may call the "partial limerick."
It goes like this:

There was a young man from Hong Kong
Unable to tell right from wrong
So he became a Liberal cabinet minister.

Of course you realize that all of the above is the product of
a very demented mind.

So long,
Laurence "Sasquatch" Sokoloff

Conan in the Chambers of Torment

by Robert Howard

As Gregor Samsa awoke from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a giant cockroach. Sorry, wrong story. Let me start again.

When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton. No, that's not it, either.

Now the Philosophy Department of the University of Cimmeria was terra incognita, and few of even the bravest dared venture there. In its halls foul orcs performed their abominations, huge trolls would waylay travellers, and loathsome aggies leave their dung (Xiaoping) everywhere. So it was that Conan the Librarian, mighty-hewed seeker after knowledge, tread the halls with trepidation. Trepidation was on his coffee break.

What in fact took place was stranger than even he could imagine. Passing by a lonely office, on which was marked in blood-red letters "Prof. John F. Lange", the mighty barbarian heard a low, moaning sound. Entering the dreaded door he found a lovely student strapped to a heavy, wooden table. The blonde girl was effectively bound and gagged, and almost naked. Her huge breasts were bare, and her naughty bits were covered by a thin cloth that would not have fed a moth on a crash diet. The startled Conan freed the struggling maiden.

"Bound and enslaved by a man!" she wailed. "What a humiliation! What would my friends in Women's Studies 99 say?"

"I understand what you mean," replied the clever barbarian. "For although I am but a myn, the Womyn's Centre has taken me into their confidence. You have been made into a sex object, and a fitting subject for the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Pornography and Prostitution. The question is, who is the Male Chauvinist Swine who has done this, and how can we catch the perpetrator of this vile deed?"

The poor woman, however, was too distraught to answer. Therefore, the wise Conan turned to the Source of All Knowledge, and the Comforter of the Perplexed: the Library. In its ancient tomes were found the answers to all questions, as well as enough dust to raise a hacking cough in a brontosaurus.

Although Conan could not read, he had the aid of the lovely reference librarian. Walking through the stacks, the pair came upon an ancient volume, The Complete Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy Lists, by Maxim Jakubowski and Malcolm Edwards. Obviously a pernicious writing, full of ancient slanders and useless lies.

"Read it," Conan ordered his companion.

There, on page 224, he found his answer. "John F. Lange" was really John Norman, author of Slave Girl (not Girls) of Gor, and other tales of sadomasochism and bondage! In a flash Conan returned to the philosopher's office, stepping gingerly through the aggies' doo-doo.

"So, Norman, you thought you could get away with tying up a co-ed?"

"I don't understand what you're saying," replied Lange, but the whip on his desk gave him away.

Within a short time the mighty Conan had thoroughly rearranged the pornographer's face.

"Help, help!" the unoriginal novelist cried.

Whereupon the door flew open, and dozens of sinister, black-robed figures thrust their way into the tiny office. Books were overturned, a coffee pot broken, and general mayhem committed as the mighty Conan fought off his attackers. Yet even his mighty strength could not defeat them all. In a short time the great barbarian was helpless.

"You shall be bound and gagged," cackled Norman. "You shall be flogged and whipped!"

"I thought you only did that to women," sneered the defiant Conan. "Or are you really a repressed homosexual?"

The pornographer's face turned livid with rage.

"Face it, Norman, you're a pansy! Three times you've been voted Wimp of the Year by the Woody Allen Fan Club. Who's your boss, Norman? A fairy like you could never lead these black-robed terrors!"

"How right you are, Conan," said one of the least conspicuous of the black men. "I am the leader here."

He threw back his hood to reveal his hated features.

"Dr. Torture!"

Yes, Dr. Torture! A renegade philosopher, who argued that our present penal system was so unjust, a return to medieval torments would be better. Dr. Torture, whose wife bought him a new rack for his birthday. Dr. Torture, owner of the Calvin Klein designer thumbscrews. Dr. Torture, Master of Evil, Despoiler of Women, Causer of Tooth Decay, the Bane of Cimmeria!

"Okay, boys, bring out the branding iron!"

At this point the author realizes that the story is becoming somewhat lengthy. He advises his readers to take a short intermission.

At that moment the door shot open. Bang.

"Ethics Man!" shouted all those present.

Yes, Ethics Man. In everyday life a mild-mannered philosophy professor, Arthur Schafer, ignored by those in positions of power (who are usually vicious clowns anyway), in times of trouble and moral uncertainty he becomes Ethics Man, only to be ignored by everyone else as well. Ethics Man, a hero who defends the principle of right above might, who holds true to the principle that rational consideration of moral problems can make all our lives just a little bit more pleasant. Unfortunately, since most people can't pronounce any word of more than two syllables, who cares?

Nevertheless, there he was.

"Seize him!" screamed Dr. Torture.

"Wait a minute!" replied E.M. "Surely a philosopher, even one so degraded as yourself, realizes that rational argument, not force, is the only sure solution to any problem?"

"Of course," stuttered Dr. Torture, realizing that he had fallen into Ethics Man's trap.

"This shall be a duel to the death!" continued our brilliant hero. "Syllogisms at fifty paces!"

The deadly contest began.

"Suppose," the oily Torture suggested, "that a terrorist group planted an atomic bomb somewhere in Toronto. If torturing a captured terrorist would save the lives of three million people by revealing the location of the bomb, who would not do it?"

"Very clever, Torture. But everyone knows that such a thing never happens in real life. Instead of limited pain for limited ends, torture is always used by sleazy dictators who get their jollies by throwing their enemies to the crocodiles."

The desperate Dr. T. now realized that his situation was, well,

desperate.

"But suppose," he continued, "that we wish to reduce the awful cost of the penal system, especially now that our government is thirty billion smackers in the hole. Surely the money necessary to maintain expensive prisons should not be wasted on the dregs of society?"

"A good point, Torture. But don't you see? Most people see torture not just as a rational punishment, but a way to end crime altogether. Give them a few klops with the rubber hose, and then they'll talk! No more expensive lawyers letting muggers get through legal loopholes! But once again, that never happened in real life. Former ages used torture, but did that ever end crime? No! Cutthroats thronged the alleys, and highwaymen terrorized the roads. Modern day Cimmerians think they invented crime in the streets. But they're wrong, wrong, wrong!"

Utterly defeated, the miserable Dr. Torture had no choice. Releasing Conan (but making a date with the blonde co-ed for Saturday night) he slunk with his men off into the wilderness. Eventually he was denied tenure, and cast into the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"Thank you, Ethics Man," said Conan. "You have shown me the true way to social progress."

"But Conan," said our modest hero. "I am only doing my job. That is what philosophers are for, or at least until they replace us all by putting all the money into Computer Science. Until then, auf wiedersehn."

Next week: Conan in the Twenty-Fourth Century.

The Song of Rutkowski

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

By the shores of Gitchee Gummee

By the shining far Foundation

Fear the Plan of Hari Seldon

Thousand years of barbarism

All take place at the Convention

See the fen at the Convention

Drinking mead and drinking brandy

Drinking wine and drinking whiskey

Fallen heroes under tables

Fighters fly not to Valhalla

Go instead unto Transcona

Awful, horrid place, Transcona

Full of dull and bourgeois people

Philistines who got no culture

See the hucksters and the painters

Hucksters selling old, dead novels

Broken, ripped and torn-up volumes

Far beyond the aid of Gitta

Mighty mender of hurt volumes

See the artist painting Klingon

Pointed ears, no that's a Vulcan

See the Trekkies with their phasers

The most evil of God's creatures

See the Editor Rutkowski

Far-out maker of new fanzine

Trashy, trashy, trashy fanzine

Will he find the flying saucer?

Will he find the bug-eyed monster?

Who could care, this is the ending.

Amazing Books and Collectables, 343 Margaret Avenue, in the exact same location as the former Paperback Galaxy, this small store has a good selection of new SF & F, and a fair-sized collection of comics. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Angus Murray Gifts and Books, 163 Stafford Street, it's hard to say if this is an art store with books or a book store with art, heavy on the Canadiana. Poor selection of SF&F. Good selection of children's books, New Books only. Prices: Expensive.

Black's Vintage Books, 915 Serpent Street, just off the tip of the tip. A wide selection of used books. Fair selection of SF&F. Great selection of used HC's. Prices: Reasonable.

Book and Brier Patch, Grant Park Plaza A personal favorite. Large collection of new SF&F, as well as everything else. Fair selection of children's items. A fine independent. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Book Fair, 305 Portage Across from Eaton's and beside Advance. Large collection of used SF&F, as well as all other categories. One of the busiest shops in town. Large selection of new and used comics. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Books and Volumes, 1910 Pembina Highway Near the University of Manitoba, in Southpark Mall. Good selection of new books, all types. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

The Bookshelf, 3041-B Portage Avenue, all types. Fair collection of SF&F. Some comics. Great selection of children's books. Caters largely to Harlequin readers. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Boston Bookshop, 327 Osborne Large selection of used SF&F. Many items are overpriced, but the selection is unique. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Classic Bookshops, (five locations in Winnipeg) Usual predictable selection of new books. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Club Bookstore, 419 Corydon Recently opened. Small selection of all categories. Some SF&F, as well as some new comics. A small store with some charm. Prices: Reasonable.

Colles, (five locations in Winnipeg) Usual predictable selection of new books, with some remainder bins. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Comic World (Doug Sulipa's), 189 Portage Large collection of used SF&F, many overpriced. Large collection of comics, same comment. Contains also a large selection of used records, same comment, again. Still, recommended to be checked out. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Cony's Bookshop, 302 Notre Dame Interesting specialized selection of "socialist" material, including stuff on disarmament, peace, etc. Prices: Reasonable.

Ducharme's, 192 Marion Impassioned collection of used books and comics. Check out if you have the time and patience. Best known for its cribbage tournaments. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Evola's Book Cellar, 117 Queenston in the basement of a "trendy" shop. Excellent selection of Hebrew literature. Prices: Expensive.

Family Book Exchange, 367 St. Mary's Road Good selection of used books. Some SF&F and comics. Caters to the Harlequin crowd. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Growing Minds, 269 Edmonston Huge selection of children's books. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Hull's Family Bookstore, 300 Edmonston Huge selection of Christian literature. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Librarie Landry Lites, 180 Frowmchar Good selection of French language books. Good selection of SF&F, as francica, including French and European titles. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Mary Scorer books, 121 Osborne Large selection of Canadiana, as well as a notable selection of children's books. Where the "is" crowd hangs out in the Village. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

McCall's Bookstore, 1875 Grant (Edmonton Mall) A clean shop, with a good mixture of all types of books, heavy on the Canadiana and coffee-table books. Fair SF&F selection. Open Sunday. Prices: Expensive.

Pembina Book Exchange, 1195 Pembina Highway Small shop with a varied selection of used books, catering largely to the Harlequin crowd. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Pratt's Sky Books, 171 Westminster A terrific and spiritual store, heavy on the Zep and astrology. Some really neat stuff. Some SF&F and burlesque. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Red River Book Shop, 346 Cumberland The largest collection of used books in the city. Comics, records and a whole lot of other stuff. Nothing like it in many cities anywhere. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

St. James Book Exchange, 309 Barry A large selection of used paperbacks, in a poorly-organized fashion. Lots of comic in somewhat better shape. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

Stalk Book Exchange, 711 Mountain A fair-sized collection of used SF&F. Good collection of used paperbacks of other categories. Most notable is its large collection of "adult" reading material. Prices: Cheap to Reasonable.

U.S. Smith, (two stores in Winnipeg) Best chain of the bunch. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

Styx Comic Service, 1858 Arlington Very large collection of comics on display. Also a respectable collection of paperbacks, including SF&F. Prices: Reasonable to Expensive.

University of Manitoba Bookstore, Fort Garry Campus Said by some to have the best selection of SF&F in Winnipeg, though I disagree. Still, worth checking out. Prices: Reasonable.

This survey of Winnipeg bookstores was done by Conrad Fort during the course of the year. It is recommended only as a general guide.

Conan the Canadian

by Robert Howard

As Conan the Librarian awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found that he had been thrust by a time warp into the distant future. By the twenty-fourth century Islamic fundamentalism, acid rain, and Liberal patronage had long since combined to put industrial civilization down for the count. In the geographical expression once known as Canada, where separatist movements had always gathered like flies on manure, countless petty nobles reigned. In the great city of Winnipeg was found the high throne of the Doern, King of Manitoba. For the Lords of Manitoba so styled themselves after a wise legislator of ancient times, who defied the central authority in the weighty matter of language. From that first Doern came the changeless principle of the West: that no central government should ever be respected in any of the Canadian lands, and that all problems from drought to high golf scores should be laid on the hated gate of Ottawa.

Yet all was not well in the wheat-golden lands of the West. For the Baron of Brandon, once a trusted vassal, had gone insane (after a Jets' game) and now cherished a mad dream: to unite all the lands of Canada by force, and bring an end to the beloved anarchy. Evil tidings now came to Winnipeg, and to the ears of Conan the Librarian, after he learned the language and customs of that distant land.

For strange were the customs of that people, and weird the sound of their language to the great Cimmerian. They put vinegar on French fries, and delighted in eating places called "salad bars". So devoutly did they repeat a certain word of their language that Conan knew it to be a god, and so worshipped Eh until he learned better. These people said "zed" instead of "zee", spoke of following "shedules", and formed their lips to speak other barbarisms. Strange were their ways, yet they called on the mighty barbarian in their distress, and he came to their aid.

They arrayed the great warrior in chain mail, so that he might defeat the Knights of Brandon, and over his armour dressed him in garments fit for a king. He wore tacky brown shoes, with white socks. His suit was of green checks, while beneath it was a purple tie. Gold chains adorned his neck, so that many men called him Mr. T, though he knew not why. So dressed he waited on the walls of Winnipeg, until the dreaded foe should come.

The foe did not come, but rather waited outside the gates. And as the days passed a strange weariness seized the limbs of Conan, and all his men. Their hearts grew faint, and the will to fight quietly faded. Drunks would sleep in gutters, and no one noticed. Businessmen in three-piece suits would sleep in gutters, and no one cared. Men died in the alleys, and no one could tell the difference. In time, by rolling a drunk for his spare change, Conan learned the hideous truth.

An ancient curse had settled over the land. For it had been decreed by the gods that Winnipeg should be the most boring city on earth. There the parks were green and fresh, but youths with blaring radios spoiled them for all. There the symphony played noble music, but it was always in the red. In the halls of the lawmakers clarion bells sounded, but their only purpose was to stymie the legislators, and to prevent any work from being done at all. So Conan did what must be done.

With brutal threats and savage beatings he roused his soldiers, almost dead with ennui. Taking them out of the accursed city he surprised the Brandoners at their great camp, in the place that was once called West Kildonan. There the huge Librarian did mighty deeds.

A dozen men he slew, and took their bus passes from a dozen others. The Baron of Brandon was overthrown, and his men fled before Conan's face (he looked like Eugene Whelan). In the midst of battle Conan disappeared from before men, but his lieutenant, Sir Ayres, a giant of a man, took the surrender of the enemy.

For the time warp had closed, and Conan was drawn back irresistibly to his own century. He saw the world whirl by him, as the centuries backward fled. He saw the twentieth century, where, in the nasty country called Israel, three million Jews were pushing around a hundred and fifty million Arabs. He saw the nineteenth century, where a loony nobleman named Selkirk decided to save the peasants of his country, by giving them a one way ticket to a frozen hell at the end of the world. Lucky peasants. He saw the distant past, where the Captain Radames loved the captured Ethiopian princess, Aida. The Pharaoh had them entombed alive, since he disapproved of mixed marriages (also noisy sopranos).

So it was that Conan came back in the end to his own time. He fell out of the sky onto the stall of Yentl the Fruit seller, who complained to the authorities. Now this Yentl was really a woman, although dressed like a man, but that is another story. Conan told the wise men of his people of the strange events that had happened to him, but they, of course, did not believe a word he said, and branded him a liar.

Flight of the Dragonfly by Robert L. Forward.

Another gem from a physicist who accidentally can write good science fiction. Real SF, by the way. With relativistic travel, biologically-plausible aliens and a nice writing style. Mind you, it's a lot like Dragon's Egg in a lot of ways, and that weakens it considerably. Nevertheless, it remains one of the year's most interesting SF novels.

Blue Highways by William Least Heat Moon.

Besides Reichardt and Hall, I have seen no less than four excellent reviews of this book. Recently, Gene Shalit raved about it on Good Morning, America. Well, that just about does it, right? Moon's excursion into America does tend to get bogged down under overemphasis by the time he reaches Maine, and you learn a lot about places you really couldn't care less about, but it's all part of one man's fascinating quest for meaning, and ultimately worthwhile.

Keycon 84 by Carla Robertson

Yes, it's true. I sneaked (snuk) into Keycon under a false name, paid my expensive twenty bucks registration fee, and left soon after. First of all, let me state that I do not find true pleasure in D&D, fantasy or comics. The trouble was that that was what the con consisted of. Having taken over three floors of the Delta Winnipeg, the very expensive con could only lose money, which I'm told it did. But what the heck, it was all in fun.

I was disappointed to see so little SF at an advertised "SF" con, but if you like that sort of stuff, Keycon was just right. There were unfortunately few book hucksters, but lots of comics. The selection of movies, however, was great. There was lots of gaming, along with trivia contests and the usual costume judgments.

Personally, I think that the con could have been much better on a smaller scale, and at a smaller fee. This might have allowed for less overhead for its backers to bear. Better volume than profit, I say. On the whole, however, I felt that it was not bad for a first con of its kind in Winnipeg (ignoring UnCon for the moment). Everyone in attendance seemed to be enjoying themselves (especially the trekkies), and that's what counts, I guess. I think it'll be better next year.

Hollywood's First Near Eastern Western!

A Fistful of Shekels

starring Clint Eastwood

directed by Steven Spielberg

executive producer Conrad Fort

Scene: Palestine, 1885.

Synopsis: Fleeing oppression in his native Russia, Yehudah Greenburg joins the First Aliyah and comes to Palestine, becoming the Man With No Name, Avraham Ben-Zvi. Receiving a few thousand francs from the Baron de Rothschild, he hopes to plant an orange grove in the south. Little does he suspect, however, that trouble is brewing in the little one-camel town of Beersheeva.

There the corrupt Turkish¹ governor, Mustapha Aziz, has joined forces with the evil landowner, Selim Pasha (there's always an evil rich man in these things somewhere). This Selim is known as the "Pushy Pasha", because of the way he takes over other people's land. He is not to be confused with Abdul Hamid, the "Pasta Pasha", who has grown fat from eating too much spaghetti. It must be admitted, however, that it is hard to find a good Italian restaurant in Jerusalem at this time.

Anyway, Selim and Mustapha conspire to steal the goats of the impoverished sheikh, Amir Al-Hussein. There is a hint of romance (in Islamic countries you get only a hint, and even then the Hint wears a veil) as the sheikh's daughter Habiba falls for the Man With No Name. Eventually, with the aid of his friend Yitzhak Shamir (not the famous one) and his faithful Indian companion Dr. Krishna Maharaj (known as Hairy Krishna, because of his long beard) Avraham clears the varmints out of town. He then rides off into the sunset (but not too far, since it was Friday, and horses aren't allowed to work on Shabbas).

See Arabs revolt against their Turkish masters ("Sire, the Arabs are revolting...")!

See Passions blaze across the silver screen!

See Clint Eastwood try to plant oranges in the Negev!³

Coming soon to a theater near you.

1. wave of immigration to Israel
2. Palestine was at this time under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.
3. desert in the south of Israel

Special thanks to Laurence who provided much of this issue.

© 1984 by Chris Lubowski. Mailing address: Box 1918, Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R2C 2A2.