

FUTURE TIMES

THE FANZINE OF

THE ATLANTA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

MAY 2002

VOL. 5, #5

Venus Below the Clouds

by Jan Sides

What lies beneath the thick clouds of the morning 'star', Venus. The Magellan Spacecraft was able to lift the veil by means of intense radar scrutiny from 1990 to 1994. The composite image below was color-coded to represent elevation; red for highlands, blue for valleys. Seen in the North is a large red area, Ishtar Terra, and the white spot is the largest mountain on the planet, Maxwell Montes. Venus, our sister planet, is very similar to Earth in size and mass, but it's closeness to the Sun and it's thick atmosphere make it the hottest planet in our solar system; at 400 ° F it is hotter than Mercury.

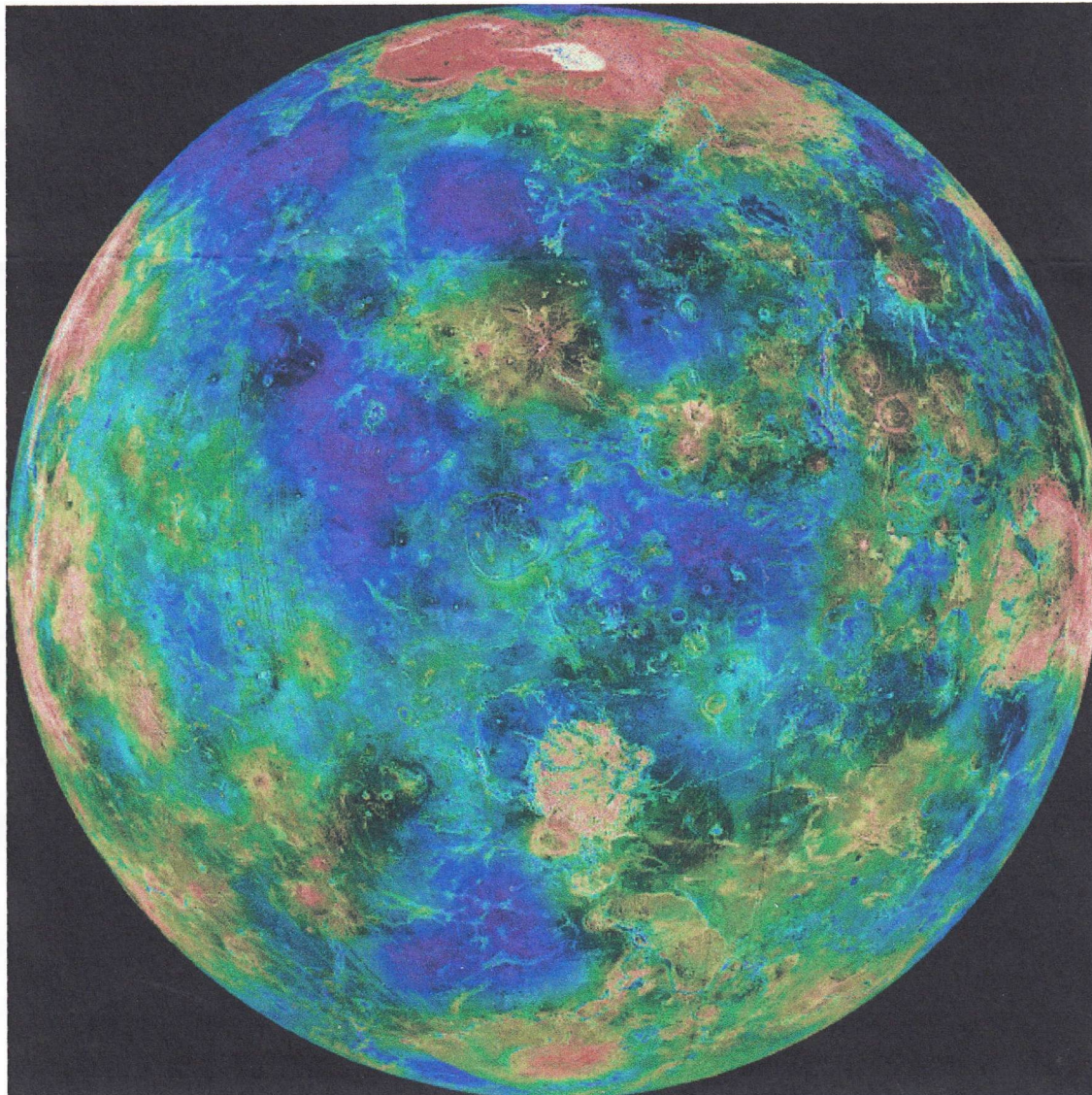


Photo Credit: Magellan Spacecraft, Arecibo Radio Telescope, NASA

FUTURE TIMES

May 2002

Volume 5, Issue 5

Future Times is the monthly publication of **The Atlanta Science Fiction Society**, a gathering of fans of Science Fiction, Fantasy and associated genres.

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Club meetings are free and open to the public. An official membership in **ASFS** is \$12 annual, and includes a subscription to **Future Times**. **Future Times** is available to other 'zines for *the usual*. Contributors receive a free copy of that issue.

The Atlanta Science Fiction Society website is : www.asfs.org

ASFS also maintains an E-mail list hosted by Yahoo! Groups. Anyone interested may join by directing their browser to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ASFS>

Our Yahoo! Groups site has a calendar which lists upcoming club and local SF events.

The **ASFS** mailing address is:

The Atlanta Science Fiction Society
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Atlanta, GA 30359-2008

Future Times Editor-Jayne Rogers

Thanks to contributors— John C. Snider, Jan Sides, Dawn Benton, and Lewis Murphy.

Cover art by Magellan Spacecraft, Arecibo Radio Telescope, NASA

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April 2002 Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Lewis Murphy, ASFS Secretary

The April Meeting of the Atlanta Science Fiction Society was called to order at 2:15 pm on April 13, 2002. Eleven people were in attendance. President Anne Brunsgaard presided. A Treasury report of \$174.68 was reported. Publicity Director Jan Sides reported on the progress of the private screening of Spider-Man, telling the membership that flyers promoting the screening were being made and distributed.

Lewis Murphy announced SF author John Ringo would be the guest speaker at the June ASFS meeting. Also announced was the appearance of authors Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman at the Snellville Chapter 11 Bookstore.

There was a group discussion regarding whether to have a regular ASFS business meeting in May, following the Spider-Man screening. It was decided to continue to have the meeting as scheduled. Lunch following the screening was also discussed, but nothing was decided.

Possible future ASFS programming guests were discussed, included the Georgia Writers Association and the Dark River Writers groups.

Those in attendance were informed to read and correct their email preferences on the Yahoo! Groups website. Due to recent changes in the site, all subscribers had their preferences changed without consent.

Bill Ritch announced that the Atlanta Radio Theater Company would be performing "Welcome Back Potter", a Harry Potter parody, at the SciFi Summer convention later this year.

Jan Sides informed the membership of the IMAGE Perfect Pitch Screenwriting contest. Winners will have the chance to pitch an original script to a Hollywood studio.

No programming was planned, though several members attended the Atlanta ComiCom following the meeting.

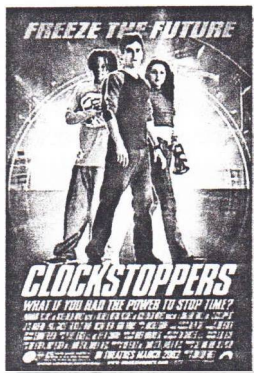
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Changes of Address

Please remember to notify ASFS of your change of mailing address, so you won't miss an issue of **Future Times**. Address changes can be emailed to:
missjayne@mindspring.com

Clockstoppers

Reviewed by John C. Snider



Opens March 29, 2002

Rated PG

Starring Jesse Bradford, French Stewart, Paula Garces, Michael Biehn, Robin Thomas, Gariyaki Mutambirwa

Directed by Jonathan Frakes

Written by Rob Hedden, Andy Hedden, J. David Stem, David N. Weiss

Studio: Paramount

Zak Gibbs (Jesse Bradford) is more or less your average suburban teenager. He just wants to spend time with his best friend Meeker (Gariyaki Mutambirwa), make enough money to have a down payment on a sweet ride, and impress Francesca (Paula Garces) - the beautiful new girl from Venezuela.

Zak's relationship with his dad leaves much to be desired. Zak feels slighted because Dr. Gibbs (Robin Thomas), a local university science professor who has mentored many star pupils, is just too busy to spend any quality time with him.

Unbeknownst to the rest of the family, Dr. Gibbs agrees to help out Dr. Earl Doppler (French Stewart), one of Gibbs' most brilliant former students. Doppler is working on a secret government project to develop a device that harnesses "hyper-time." Hyper-time allows a person to speed up, making it appear that everything else is standing still. The problem is, users of hyper-time also age at a hyper-rate, making it too dangerous to use for long. What Dr. Gibbs doesn't know is that Doppler is being held against his will by a government agent named Gates (Michael Biehn), who wants the hyper-time glitch fixed before his boss shuts the project down.

Things get weird when Zak accidentally finds the device (which looks like an ordinary wristwatch). At first it all seems like great fun, but when Gates and his henchmen realize Zak has the device, they'll stop at nothing - not even murder - to get it back!

Stop the Clock - Please!

Clockstoppers has a great premise, one that's been done before - but with nearly endless possibilities. The special effects are actually quite good: director Jonathan Frakes even makes use of some "low technology," effectively using mimes to simulate a crowd of frozen folk. Unfortunately, Zak and his buds come up with some stunningly un-creative ways to make hyper-time mischief. They observe birds and bees seemingly suspended in the air, move people around - even stop

traffic so they can cross the street at will. It's tediously unoriginal and predictable. Ironically, the unpredictability comes mostly when the film violates its own rules - several times things happen that are impossible or illogical even for hyper-time. There's a little excitement once Zak is plunged into the conspiracy, but even then the movie gets bogged down in its own ineptitude.

Clockstoppers was "hyped" as this generation's Back to the Future. If that's true, today's kids would be better off firing up the VCR and watching Marty McFly on VHS.

Rating: C



HUGO AWARDS NOMINATIONS

NOVEL

American Gods, Neil Gaiman (Morrow)
The Chronoliths, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor)
Cosmonaut Keep, Ken MacLeod (Orbit UK, 2000; Tor)
The Curse of Chalion, Lois McMaster Bujold (Eos)
Passage, Connie Willis (Bantam)
Perdido Street Station, China Miéville (Macmillan UK, 2000; DelRey)

NOVELLA

"The Chief Designer", Andy Duncan (Asimov's Jun 2001)
"The Diamond Pit", Jack Dann (Jubilee, Voyager Australia; F&SF Jun 2001)
"Fast Times at Fairmont High", Vernor Vinge (The Collected Stories of Vernor Vinge, Tor)
"May Be Some Time", Brenda W. Clough (Analog Apr 2001)
"Stealing Alabama", Allen Steele (Asimov's Jan 2001)

NOVELETTE

"The Days Between", Allen Steele (Asimov's Mar 2001)
"Hell Is the Absence of God", Ted Chiang (Starlight 3, Tor)
"Lobsters", Charles Stross (Asimov's Jun 2001)
"The Return of Spring", Shane Tourtellotte (Analog Nov 2001)
"Undone", James Patrick Kelly (Asimov's Jun 2001)

SHORT STORY

"The Bones of the Earth", Ursula K. Le Guin (Tales from Earthsea, Harcourt)
"The Dog Said Bow-Wow", Michael Swanwick (Asimov's Oct/Nov 2001)
"The Ghost Pit", Stephen Baxter (Asimov's Jul 2001)
"Old MacDonald Had a Farm", Mike Resnick (Asimov's Sep 2001)
"Spaceships", Michael A. Burstein (Analog Jun 2001)

Continued on page 4

RELATED BOOK

The Art of Chesley Bonestell. Ron Miller & Frederick C. Durant III (Paper Tiger)
The Art of Richard Powers, Jane Frank (Paper Tiger)
Being Gardner Dozois. Michael Swanwick (Old Earth Books)
I Have This Nifty Idea...Now What Do I Do With It?, Mike Resnick (Wildside Press)
J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century, Tom Shippey (HarperCollins UK, 2000; Houghton Mifflin)
Meditations on Middle-Earth. Karen Haber, ed. (St. Martin's)

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: "Once More, With Feeling" (Written & Directed by Joss Whedon.)
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Directed by Chris Columbus.)
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (Directed by Peter Jackson.)
Monsters, Inc. (Directed by Pete Docter. David Silverman and Lee Unkrich.)
Shrek (Directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson.)

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Absolute Magnitude. Warren Lapine, ed.
Interzone. David Pringle, ed.
Locus. Charles N. Brown, ed.
The New York Review of Science Fiction, Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell & Kevin J. Maroney, eds.
Speculations, edited by Susan Fry

FANZINE

Ansible, Dave Langford, ed.
Challenger. Guy Lillian III, ed.
File 770, Mike Glyer, ed.
Mimosa. Richard & Nicki Lynch, ed.
Plokta. Alison Scott, Steve Davies & Mike Scott, eds.

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Strange Horizons (www.strangehorizons.com), Mary Anne Mohanraj, editor-in-chief
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JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD

Tobias S. Buckell (2nd year of eligibility)
Alexander C. Irvine (2nd year of eligibility)
Wen Spencer (1st year of eligibility)
Jo Walton (2nd year of eligibility)
Ken Wharton (1st year of eligibility)



INTERNATIONAL HORROR GUILD AWARDS

Winners of the International Horror Guild Awards were announced at the World Horror Convention near Chicago, Illinois. In addition to the winners listed below, writer William F. Nolan was presented with the the Living Legend Award, as previously announced.

NOVEL

Threshold, Caitlín R. Kiernan (Roc)

FIRST NOVEL

Ordinary Horror, David Searcy (Viking)

LONG FICTION

"Cleopatra Brimstone", Elizabeth Hand (Redshift)

SHORT FICTION

"Onion", Caitlín R. Kiernan (Wrong Things)

ILLUSTRATED NARRATIVE

Just a Pilgrim, Garth Ennis & Carlos Ezquerro (Titan Books)

COLLECTION

Through Shattered Glass, David B. Silva (Gauntlet Press)

Continued on page 5

ANTHOLOGY

Night Visions 10, Richard Chizmar, ed. (Subterranean Press)

NONFICTION

Wild Hairs, David J. Schow (Babbage Press)

PUBLICATION

The Spook

ARTIST

John Picacio

FILM

Ginger Snaps (directed by John Fawcett, written by John Fawcett and Karen Walton)

TELEVISION

no award



British Science Fiction Awards

Winners of the British Science Fiction Association Awards for 2001 were announced at the 2002 Eastercon, Helicon 2, in St. Helier (Jersey) on 31st March 2002:

NOVEL

Chasm City, Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)

SHORT STORY

"The Children of Winter", Eric Brown (Interzone #163 Jan 2001)

ARTWORK

Colin Odell, Cover of Omegatropic (by Stephen Baxter; BSFA)

NONFICTION

Omegatropic, Stephen Baxter (BSFA)



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Damon Knight 1922-2002



SF author, editor and critic Damon Knight—founder of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association of America—died April 15 at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene, Ore., after a long illness. He was 79.

Knight published his first story in 1941 and went on to write 13 novels, beginning with Hell's Pavement in 1955, and more than 100 short stories, the Associated Press reported.

One short story, "To Serve Man," was adapted into a well-known episode of The Twilight Zone. Knight published his last novel, Humpty Dumpty: An Oval, in 1996. Knight won the Hugo Award in 1956 for reviewing and the Grand Master Award from the SFWA in 1995.

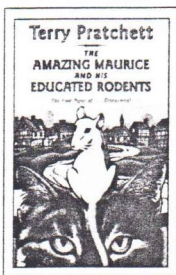
Knight was influential as a teacher, critic and organizer and served as first president of the SFWA. He also edited Orbit, a science fiction anthology series, the AP reported. Knight and his SF-writer wife, Kate Wilhelm, taught for 27 years at the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop, held annually at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Knight is survived by his wife, two daughters, two sons, two stepsons and seven grandchildren, the AP reported.



Maurice and His Amazing, Educated Rodents
By Terry Pratchett

A Review by Dawn Benton



Let me be honest and up front in this review. I am a huge fan of Terry Pratchett's work. I have enjoyed everything of his that I have had the occasion to read. I am also a fan of traditional fairy tales and have read hundreds of traditional ones as well as many modern re-interpretations. If you have an aversion to either of the above categories, this work may not appeal to you.

This novel is based upon the story of the pied piper, which is not a traditional fairy tale but a poem by Robert Browning. However, Pratchett certainly tips his hat to the traditional fairy tale in that one of his characters is named Malicia Grimm, and her grandmother and aunt are mentioned as the collectors and publishers of "Grimm's fairy tales". Her position in the story is to act as the self-conscious heroine of a fairy tale. She is constantly mentioning what has happened in other 'stories' and acts as if she were the protagonist in an unrolling work. The other main

protagonists are Maurice, a cat and confidence trickster, Keith, a young man who plays the pipe, and various magically enhanced rats. Maurice and the rats lived in the garbage dump for the Unseen University, which is the local university for wizards, and have been magically brought to the point of self-awareness. The rats rejoice in names such as Dangerous Beans, Darktan, Sardine, Delicious, Nourishing, etc. "The kind of name you gave yourself if you learned to read before you understood what all the words actually meant, and reading the warning notices and the labels on the old rusty cans gave you name you liked the sound of." Maurice has persuaded the rats to take part in a swindle. They appear to "infest" a town. Maurice shows up and claims the piper. Keith, can pipe the rats away. The town pays the fee. Keith pipes, and the rats all go away. Once outside of town, all parties to the swindle split the purse. At the point at which the novel opens, this game has been used in several towns. The rats want to retire and agree to one last gig. As all parties approach the town of Bad Blintz, things begin to go awry.

I don't want to give away too much of the good stuff. Let it just be said that there are an assortment of villains from the petty to the really evil. Plenty of heroism is displayed (mainly by rats). Pratchett does his usual excellent job of setting up a fantastic mirror image of our reality which is close enough to make you wince every now and then. Plus, as an added bonus, my favorite Death shows up in a brief cameo at the very end.

Nebula Award Winners Announced

The Nebula Awards, honoring SF works from the year before, are voted on and presented by active members of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. The SFWA's more than 1,200 members include most of the leading writers of SF and fantasy.

Novel

The Quantum Rose by Catherine Asaro

Novella

"The Ultimate Earth" by Jack Williamson

Novelette

"Louise's Ghost" by Kelly Link

Short Story

"The Cure for Everything" by Severna Park

Script

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon by James Schamus, Kuo Jung Tsai and Hui-Ling Wang

Special Award

President's Award: Betty Ballantine

George Alec Effinger 1947-2002

Award-winning cyberpunk SF author George Alec Effinger died April 26 in his home in New Orleans. He was 55. Effinger, an alcoholic, suffered from recurring health problems. The cause of death has not been determined.

Effinger wrote nine novels, including thrillers and mysteries, and six short story collections. He enjoyed early success with his first novel, *What Entropy Means to Me*, and with a series of cyberpunk novels in the 1980s, including *When Gravity Fails*. "Schrodinger's Kitten" won the 1988 Nebula Award and the 1989 Hugo Award for best novelette.

Effinger was perhaps best known for a series of stories featuring Maureen Birnbaum, a shopping-crazy teen dropped into settings and situations that parody science fiction, and Xena style warriors. The stories were collected in 1993 in *Maureen Birnbaum, Barbarian Swordperson*.

Upcoming Events & Conventions

May

May 11, 10:00a.m-Noon: **SPIDERMAN, Special Screening**. Regal Hollywood 24, I-85 Access Road. Cost: \$6.50.

May 11, 2:00p.m: **Atlanta Science Fiction Society Meeting**. Sandy Springs Branch of Fulton County Library.

May 24-26: Oasis 15. Radisson Plaza, Orlando, FL. GoH: Ben Bova, Mike Conrad, Michael Longcor and others. Memberships: \$24 until 4/30, \$28 ATD. Info.: OAFIS, PO Box 940992, Maitland, FL 32794-0992; 407/263-5822; jcr@digital.net

May 24-26: Vulkan. Atlanta Marriott Century Center, Atlanta, GA. GoH: John Billingsley, Barry Morse and others TBA. Info.: Joe Motes, PO Box 297122, Pembroke, FL 33029-7122; Web- www.vulkan.com

May 25-26: Wonderfest. Executive West Hotel, Louisville, KY. GoH: Joe Dante, Kevin McCarthy, Rick Sternbach, Peter Woodward and more. Memberships: \$17/day, \$22/weekend. Info.: WonderFest USA, Inc., P.O. Box 5757, Louisville, KY 40255-0757; info@wonderfest.com; Web- www.wonderfest.com

June

June 8, 2:00 pm: **ASFS Meeting**. Sandy Springs Branch, Fulton Co. Library. Guest Speaker: SF Author John Ringo.

June 14-16: SciFi Summer. Hotel Doubletree, Atlanta, GA. GoH: George Lowe, Lisa Getto, Gwen Knighton and more. Memberships: \$15 until 5/1, ask about ASFS group rate. Info.: Joe Vecchio, 2043 Esquire Drive, Alpharetta, GA 30005; 770-753-0779; joeve@bellsouth.net; Web- www.sci-fi-summer.com

June 14-16: DeepSouthCon 40. Huntsville Hilton, Huntsville, AL. GoH: Allen Steele, Connie Willis, Vincent DiFate, Nicki & Richard Lynch and more. Memberships: \$30 until 5/31. Info.: DeepSouth-Con 40, PO Box 4857, Huntsville, AL 35815-4857; 256-883-4493; dsc40@con-stellation.org; Web- www.con-stellation.org

June 24, 7:00 pm: **Book Signing**. Chapter 11 Books, Snellville Plaza, Hwy 78, Snellville, GA. Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman. Info.: 770-736-0502. lmurp02@mindspring.com

Why Do the Studios Keep Paying for Shows They Evidently Don't Want Us To Watch?

Commentary by Dawn Benton

Currently I am extremely irked at TV executives in general. Recently three programs (all roughly in the SF and/or fantasy genre), which I enjoy, have been cancelled. First to go was *The Tick*. A truly original and funny program, *The Tick* does not seem to have had any backers at Fox. The show never played in a consistent time slot. In fact, to find out if and when it was on, I had to resort to searching the TV Guide on-line website. One week it never aired, while the next week it was on two times on different nights of the week. It takes some time to build your audience. I am sure that I was not the only viewer beginning to watch when the show was axed. Given the fact that *The Tick* aired only around nine episodes scattered around in this random fashion, it is no wonder that the program failed to deliver the ratings necessary to keeping it on the air.

My second pet peeve is the canceling of *Special Unit 2*, a quirky and amusing show which dealt with the adventures of undercover cops dealing with "links", fantasy beings which preyed upon the human occupants of Chicago. The show had an attractive cast and in the episodes which I caught displayed sufficient cleverness in its scripts to keep my attention. Again I was just developing the habit of watching this show when I read that it had been cancelled. To keep matters interesting, it had just been announced that the show had been renewed for an additional nine episodes when UPN did an about face and cancelled the show.

My most recent peeve is with Sci Fi. They have just announced the cancellation of "*The Chronicle*", a truly decent little program of which I have become very fond. This program was quite good. Again the cast was attractive. They held your interest and made you want to turn in again next week. The stories were pretty decent, featuring the sort of items which show up on tabloid newspapers but in this context being true. One of the main pleasures of this program for me was the series of genre in-jokes that were sure to show up in every episode. For instance, in the episode set in China town, James Hong played a character named David Pan, a clear allusion to his character Lo Pan in "*Big Trouble in Little China*". Plus, one of the regulars, Wes, was a genre fan and made constant allusions to items such as the *Phantom Edit* which were immediately recognizable to your true fan. Again, I had just made "*The Chronicle*" a regular part of my Friday night schedule when Sci Fi cancelled it. Sci Fi's behavior in this respect has been particularly egregious lately as they have recently cancelled several shows including *Lexx* and *The Invisible Man*. Now Sci Fi is supposedly a channel which focuses on genre pro-

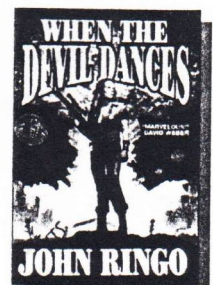
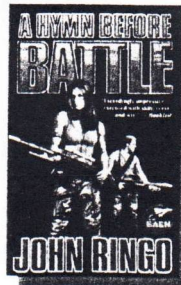
gramming. No matter how excellent a program is, it takes time for people to find it and develop the habit of watching. How can it possibly make any economic sense to develop a show, run it for a dozen episodes, cancel it and replace it with another show just to do the same thing with the second show?

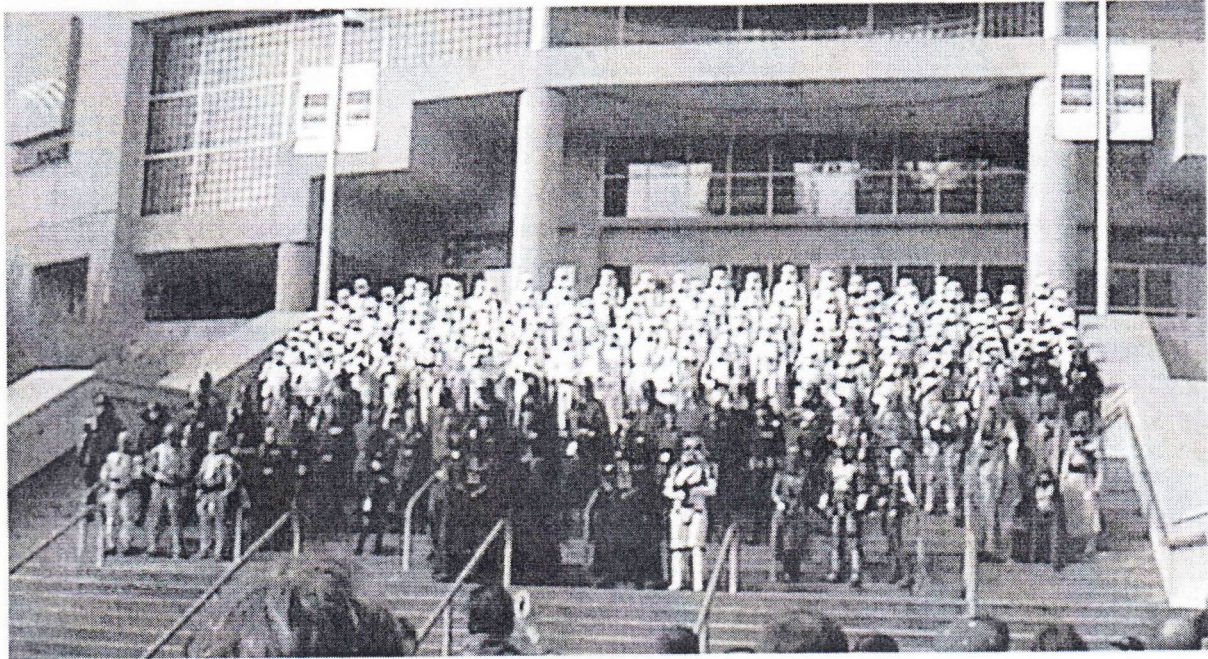
None of the programs discussed was a standard cop/hospital/lawyer drama. They were all programs which were a bit off the usual beat and could be expected to take a little longer to develop an audience. Why put the effort into starting them if the home network didn't believe in its property enough to give it time to grow? Also just what sort of ratings are networks expecting these days? Given that there can be six hours of network programming at any given hour of prime time in addition to all the offerings of cable, movies and sports, what is a reasonable percentage of the audience to expect to attract? I freely admit to almost total ignorance of how ratings and ad revenue interrelate except to expect they correlate positively. Also I understand that if a show can not generate enough revenue to cover its production costs, it would be unattractive to keep on. With these provisos understood, is there no market niche for shows which deliver a small, steady audience accompanied by reasonable costs? I am pretty sure that the people who did watch my three programs probably fit into one of the desirable demographics which advertisers are always trying to reach, considering how genre TV generally skews heavily male.

As a fan of genre television, I find these cancellations indicative of a trend making it a colder world generally for any genre program. I am left feeling rather bleak about the chances for any new genre shows to keep a place in any TV schedule.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Meet Georgia SF Author
John Ringo
At the June 8th ASFS Meeting





Members of the Atlanta groups, the Georgia Garrison of the 501st Legion and the Hothlanta Rebels attended the 2nd Star Wars Celebration, which was held May 3-5th in Indianapolis. This is a group shot of the 501st attendees who worked as a security force for the convention.



FUTURE TIMES
The monthly newsletter of
The Atlanta Science Fiction Society
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