

THE RUDDER

The Newsletter of the USS Continuum

JANUARY 2009



Yard sale

Our first yard sale is this Saturday, 7 a.m., but we have had to change the location to the Dolans'. And we need you there! We already have a lot of items, but if any crewmembers have items they would like to donate, please contact the Command Staff.

The goal is to have one sale every two months. The next sale after this one will be at DJ Allen's, 535 Gallant Fox Lane, Crestview, FL, on Saturday, April 4.

Costuming workshop

Our goal is to get every member in costume to help better promote the *Continuum* in our public functions. At our first costuming workshop on January 24, we discussed some ideas on which costumes members would like to wear. After the yard sale, we will continue by getting the supplies we need. For those who were not able to make the January 24 meeting, it is still not too late to get help with your costume.

Dues

For all those members who were with us when we reinstated dues last year: your membership will need to be renewed by the February ship meeting (Friday, February 20).

You can renew at any of our events or online at <http://www.region2.org/usscontinuum/join.html>.

Region 2 Summit

The Region 2 Summit will be held in Jackson, MS on March 6-8 at the Budget Inn & Banquet (1525 Ellis Avenue). Prices are as follows:

ADULT REGISTRATION

<i>Prior to Feb 15</i>	\$20
<i>Through the end of the Summit</i>	\$25

SATURDAY NIGHT BANQUET
Adult \$20.27
Child (10 & under) \$10.16

SUMMIT T-SHIRT
S, M, L, XL \$15
2XL, 3XL, 4XL \$17

Hotel rates are \$59 + tax per night. Reservations can be made by dialing (601) 944-1150. Please mention "STARFLEET Region 2" for the special price.

For more information, check out the Summit website at <http://region2.org/2009.php>.

Ronald McDonald House

Help us clean up the House – the Ronald McDonald House!

We need people to do some indoor cleaning and light yard work on Saturday, March 14, at 5154 Bayou Blvd.

April Command Staff Meeting

There will be no Command Staff meeting at Books-a-Million for the month of April. Because we will be having a yard sale at DJ Allen's in Crestview the day after the meeting, DJ has graciously allowed us to have the meeting at her place and stay for the evening.

Pensacola Symphony Orchestra

For those interested in going to "Finesse & Elegance" on Saturday, April 18 by the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra, please bring

\$20 per person to the April 3 CS meeting. The concert will be at First Baptist Church, 500 N Palafox, at 8 p.m.

Like we did on January 10, we will meet for a formal dinner at a restaurant beforehand. Location to be determined.

Camping

The next camping trip will be April 24-26 at Hurricane Lake. See http://www.region2.org/usscontinuum/camping_trip.html for more information.

Wrath of Con 2009

The Wrath of Con returns to the Marriott Bay Point Resort & Spa in Panama City on May 29-31.

The guests this year will include

- **John Billingsley** (Phlox – *Star Trek: Enterprise*)
- **J.G. Hertzler** (Martok – *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*)
- **Jerry Doyle** (Security Chief Garibaldi - *Babylon 5*; Nationally syndicated radio talk show host).
- **Gigi Edgley** (Chiana - *Farscape*)
- **Robert Meyer Burnett** (Writer/Director - *Free Enterprise*)

For more information and to order tickets, check out <http://www.wrathofcon.org/>.

Movie review: *The Unborn*

By Chris Hammonds. This article originally appeared at Axiom's Edge Science Fiction and Fantasy (<http://www.axiomsedge-scifi.com/>).

Rating: 1.5 Stars

(Spoiler Warning)

“Remember the penny arcades where we used to while away the summers as kids...” What, you ask, does this near-quote (it's as close as I can remember the line) have to do with *The Unborn*? Nothing directly. It is, however, the beginning of the *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* episode “Firefall,” which is about a ghost trying to isolate and take over the life of musical composer Ryder Bond, a ghost which is called a doppelganger in the episode. The plot of *The Unborn* is similar, with some foul language and “The Ring”-type shocks thrown in to make us forget what we're really watching. Unfortunately, not even the convoluted Holocaust tie-in, the semi-divine presence of Gary Oldman, and the striking good looks of starlet Odette Yustman can make up for the lack of any character with the innate charm Darren McGavin brought to his Carl Kolchak. I went into this film with a little hope. The trailer was all right—just all right—but the premise sounded interesting. Truth be known, though, I probably never would have went to the theater to see it if I hadn't just wanted to get out of the house. I did spend eight-and-a-half bucks on it, though, so I

did want something for my money. And that was what I got: something.

The film opens with our main character, Casey Beldon (played by the aforementioned Odette Yustman) jogging. She comes upon a glove lying on the path and turns to see a rather crusty looking boy (Ethan Cutkosky) just standing there staring at her. Then he becomes a dog wearing a mask staring at her. Then he runs off into the woods. She chases him, finds the mask half buried in the ground and pries it up finding a jar with a fetus in it. At which point she wakes up. The next day she's babysitting, on the phone with her best friend Romy (Meagan Good), when she hears something going on upstairs. She walks into the baby's room and finds the baby's six-year-old brother holding a mirror in front of the baby's eyes. The boy, Matty Newton (Atticus Shaffer), then turns and strikes her in the face with the mirror, telling her that “Jumby wants to be born now”. She goes home and shenanigans ensue. There's noise behind the mirror, potato bugs in the eggs (I know they're potato bugs because we noticed they had “potato bug handlers” in the credits), and this and that, and so and so and so and so and so. Oh, yeah, Casey also finds out at some point that she had a fraternal twin who died in the womb. And the twin's nickname? Jumby. (Bet you didn't see that coming.)

At some point Casey and Romy end up at the retirement home where Sofi Kozma (Jane Alexander), a Holocaust survivor who apparently meant something to Casey's mother (Carla Gugino), who committed suicide when Casey was just a little

girl and is seen only in flashback. Sofi at first denies any knowledge of Casey's mother and throws her out then later calls her back and tells Casey she's Casey's grandmother. Sofi then tells Casey about how she and her twin brother, Barto (Cutkosky), were taken to Dr. Mengele at Auschwitz and subjected to experiments; the Nazis, she says, were fascinated by twins. Barto died as a result and then came back to life, only it wasn't really him (apparently he was buried in the Pet Sematary). It seems that a dybbuk, the ghost of a dead person who wasn't allowed into Heaven so just wanders the netherworld, found a way into Barto's body. Sofi killed Barto again and the family became tied to the... ghost... by... blood... or twist ties or something—I kinda zoned out here. Then Sofi sends Casey to Rabbi Sendak (Oldman), who doesn't seem to know anything about the dybbuk except that he believe in it. The main point of all this is that the dybbuk is trying to enter our world again and will isolate and enter Casey through any means necessary.

We find that the dybbuk can take over people: it manifests in Matty again to first warn Romy away from Casey then murder her; it then takes over Romy's dead body but we don't see anything from that really. There's an exorcism—or maybe it was some guys exercising—and it takes over all the holy folk gathered by Oldman and murders them in various ways before finally taking over Casey's boyfriend Mark Hardigan (Cam Gigandet) and forcing Sendak and Casey to read from the Book of Mirrors (I'm not

making that up) to get rid of the dybbuk. This has the apparent effect of killing Hardigan. All of which sets up the shocking finale where we learn that Casey is... well, I think it's rather apparent, don't you? She keeps asking all through the film why this happening to her now. And we find out. Yes, twins are involved.

I don't really want to say this is a bad movie but honesty compels. There are some fairly creepy set pieces but nothing really stands out, the acting is average, the plot is hackneyed and derivative, the direction is average. It is a much better horror film than absolute crap like *The Strangers* or *28 Weeks Later*, but that isn't saying much really. Typical teen horror film, unfortunately. All the way through you're wondering why the dybbuk doesn't just take Casey over—it certainly doesn't seem to have any problem taking over anyone else. And the end—why didn't it just go into one of her twins without making all this fuss; she never would have known the difference. This drivel even made the trailer to the *Friday the 13th* remake look good (even though the trailer I saw tonight didn't show the one person I really care about seeing in it: Nana Visitor). All in all, a bad movie that was still much more interesting than the trailer to *Fighting*, which I also saw tonight.

Movie review: *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*

By Chris Hammonds. This article originally appeared at Axiom's Edge

Science Fiction and Fantasy
(<http://www.axiomsedge-scifi.com/>).

Rating: 2 Stars

Third films—second sequels—are usually such a degradation or rehash of the original ideas that those ideas have lost all vitality. *Alien* and *Aliens* are both fantastic films but *Alien3* was simply a dreary remake of the original, for example; even *Spiderman 3*, despite the massive amount of money it's made, is not nearly the film that *Spiderman* or *Spiderman 2* was. The third film in even planned trilogies is often a downer as compared to the original, with *The Return of the King* (the final chapter in the *Lord of the Rings* cycle) being the most obvious example of this; it is a good film, just not the cinematic greatness Peter Jackson gave us with *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*. So it was with trepidation that I went to see *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*. And even more trepidation than with the aforementioned films because I thought the original *Underworld* was just all right to start with, and never even saw the second film *Underworld: Evolution*. It does, however, have the attraction of a medieval setting so I decided to give it a chance.

The story opens with Viktor (played by Bill Nighy) touring the cells in which the Lycanthropes (and I'm guessing here there is a difference in name between the completely animal werewolves and the partially human ones) are caged and killing one who had just given birth to the Lycan we will come to

know as Lucian (Michael Sheen). Viktor thinks about killing the babe as well but then decides to keep it so he can raise it as a slave with preternatural abilities who he will never give anything to do, other than use his bite to create other Lycans, which the vampires will keep as slaves with preternatural abilities and never give them anything really to do. Lucian grows up and falls in love with Vik's daughter Sonja (played by the incredible Rhona Mitra). There's all manner of palace intrigues and battles and really cool poses before the end of the picture, which almost seems like a tacked on piece to tie this film to the original *Underworld* (which means the filmmakers here accomplished in two or three minutes what it took Arthur P. Jacobs et. al. two films to do with *Planet of the Apes*). All the way through I'm thinking they should make a *Kull* movie that looks like this.

The plot of this film was pretty much what I expected it to be. The story wasn't bad really. The story of slaves rising up to throw off the chains of their oppressors, especially when those oppressors are as harsh and cruel as the vampires of this picture are shown to be, is usually a rouser. The main problems, though, are all with the vampires themselves. When we watch them, see the things they do, the way they do things, we're left wondering how these clowns could ever become the top of any food chain. Their "warriors" stomp around in armor carrying their mean looking swords and bellowing orders to their slaves and yet we are constantly shown that Lucian and Sonja, together or separately, can

take virtually all of them in pitched battle. After watching a few battle scenes the scene where the two lovers are captured is nearly impossible to believe despite the superior numbers of the soldiers. More, all through the film you can't help wondering why the Lycanthropes who live in the perpetually dark forests surrounding the vampire stronghold and prey on anyone or anything that enters those forests haven't simply overrun the city already. The soldiers could certainly do very little to stop them.

But the main problem with the film for me is the Council members and most especially Viktor himself. If the soldiers seem slow and muddleheaded, their leaders are even more so. These "leaders" rail constantly about the absence of one of their number, Sonja, wondering where she is and why she isn't attending to her duties in the Council Chamber when it is obvious on even the most cursory examination that her heart and mind are far better suited to lead the defense forces. I realize that this is all about what Viktor wants for his daughter but that he can't see where she'd best be utilized is just one more indictment of his ability to command, and the Council's as well since they leave him in charge. In a rare moment of clarity a Council member comes forward with a plan to use Lucian and the Lycans as a defense force that can go outside the walls and battle their own kind on their own terms. Viktor dismisses the notion out of hand, preferring, apparently, to keep the Lycans digging for gold and blacksmithing. And Nighy just seemed kind of tired in this film to

me. His performance at the beginning reminded me of nothing as much as Bunny Breckinridge as The Ruler of the Universe in *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Got a little better through the film.

I didn't give much detail about the plot of this film in this review because I realize there are many who haven't had a chance to see it yet and want to. Also, I have read several reviews that say this is the best of the three *Underworld* pictures, which I don't get at all (I did think *Resident Evil: Extinction* and *Day of the Dead* were the best films of their respective trilogies so I'm not against the notion on principle). And I don't mean to give the impression that I didn't enjoy the film. I liked it for its atmosphere although the acting was rather flat and the story was hackneyed and derivative; I often had the idea I had seen certain things before, not sure why or where. It was much better than *The Unborn*, and I did get to see a new trailer for *Watchmen*, which put me in a good mood right off. And, after another trailer I'm even looking forward—God help me—to Bay's remake of *Friday the 13th*; did all right with *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Book review: *Odyssey – The Omnibus Edition Collecting the First Three Books in the Shatnerverse*

Ratings:

The Ashes of Eden - 2 Stars

The Return - 1.5 Stars

Avenger - .5 Stars

Have you ever been so awestruck by a celebrity that it

affected the way you do things? This past August, I attended the *Star Trek* Convention in Las Vegas. I'd met celebrities before and was perfectly at ease with them. They're just people, after all. Some are nice, some gregarious, some fearful of their fans—I was walking across the casino floor toward the convention rooms and Dominic Keating (Malcolm Reed from *Enterprise*) is walking toward me; he notices my convention badge and practically runs away—but just people. I went to a breakfast with some of the folks from *Star Trek: Deep Space 9*, and it was all right. Nana Visitor (Kira Nerys) sat down next to me at the table and I talked to her like I would anyone else. Nicole de Boer (Ezri Dax) and Armin Shimerman (Quark) both sat next to me (I had maneuvered so that the only two empty chairs at my table were on either side of me) and everything was fine; Chase Masterson (Leeta) didn't sit down, preferring to walk around the table and talk to us (in fact, I never saw her sit down any time during the convention). But then the one person I really came to see sat down next to me. I've loved Salome Jens since I was 16. She was in a great episode of the original *Outer Limits* with Robert Culp, and she was in what I consider to be one of the best sci-fi films ever, *Seconds*, with Rock Hudson. She played the Founder Leader on DS9 and is a truly fantastic actress. And I couldn't say a word. I just sat there and listened to her talk to all the other people at the table. I managed a weak "Hello" when she sat down. And that was it. I had done the one thing I never thought I would do.

What, you may ask, does all this nonsense have to do with the three William Shatner-written books I'm reviewing herein? Simple: I've read glowing reviews of these books, they're bestsellers, and one would think that no one would know *Star Trek* in general and more specifically James T. Kirk's character than the man who played Kirk for thirty years. William Shatner, to be sure, has moved on from *Trek* and played many other characters in a long and diverse career—from fighting killer arachnids in the vastly underrated *Kingdom of the Spiders* to fighting crime on the streets in *TJ Hooker* to fighting for money as Denny Crane—but he still goes to conventions and reminisces and answers fan questions about *Trek*, so he hasn't left it completely behind. He has also written a best-selling series of sci-fi novels, the *Tekwar* series, so he knows how to sit down and create a story, presumably. Why, then, are these three books so bad? Actually, they're not all that bad, once you get past the characters and the plots.

The first book, *The Ashes of Eden*, has by far the best characterization of Kirk. I can almost see him doing everything in the book—except that the plot is so hackneyed: an alien world holds the secrets of immortality and Kirk must protect that world from his arch rival who's now the head of Starfleet. Maybe if we had never read a story about this kind of world (*Star Trek: The Next Generation: Insurrection*), and maybe if we had ever heard of this Admiral Drake before. But the worst thing to me is what was done with the characters of Sulu and Chekov, who are put at each other's

throat for virtually no reason; I just couldn't see these two characters, friends in the *Trek*-verse for over thirty years at the time of this story, acting this way. Spock and McCoy were handled fairly well, as was Uhura, and that, coupled with the handling of Kirk, is the only reason to give this book a look at all.

The plot of the second book, *The Return*, is very simple: A Romulan/Borg alliance conspires to bring James T. Kirk back to life in order to use him to destroy the Federation one person at a time. Oh, and he has Borg nanites implanted in him that will kill him in a week, too. In this one the characterization of Kirk really falls down, but that's understandable because he has been shown to have been brainwashed by the R/B alliance, programmed to be a killer. The main problem, for anyone who knows *Trek*, is the alliance in the first place. The Borg do not ally, they assimilate. The main problem here, though, is the characterization of the *Next Gen* characters, which are just off. Here, we also see the *Next Gen* Spock and McCoy, both of which are done all right. Kirk is shown at the end to be dying, having disappeared on what is believed to be the Borg Homeworld.

Then we fall to the absolute bottom of the barrel with *Avenger*. There is nothing to be recommended in this story. The characterizations are awful and the plot—that Vulcan eco-terrorists have invented and disseminated a virus that makes entire planets completely uninhabitable—is ridiculous. The very notion that James Kirk met Spock's father, Sarek, as a teenager on Tarsus IV, where Kirk was

witness to the massacres overseen by Kodos the Executioner (from the TOS episode, "The Conscience of the King"), and that Kodos and Sarek were members of a terrorist group (the explanation comes at some point that Sarek was a member of the political wing of the group, basically), and that Sarek was actually murdered rather than dying of Bendii Syndrome is just all too incredible. It's a good thing to have twists and turns, but they have to be at least partially believable. Nothing here was.

The main problem with these books for me is that they reminded me of something Brannon Braga said in the film *Trekkies*. Braga was talking about the "open submission" policy the *Star Trek* TV shows had and he mentioned someone who sent in scripts that always had "Ensign Jones" saving the ship, saving the Klingon Homeworld, saving the Universe. These books are simply Captain Kirk saving everyone over and over again. I know that's what a lot of *Trek* would seem to be anyway but here that seems to be all there is to them. I like Shatner as an actor, and his portrayal of Kirk on screen is great, but his writing of the characters he has spent over half of his life with leaves much to be desired. Mostly, I just desired better ideas and a better writer.