

USS Silver Fox



August Issue

From the Bridge



Happy Birthday, H. P. Lovecraft According to the H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society, Lovecraft was born on August 10th. Writer of weird and ghostly fiction, he is remembered as the second name after Edger Allen Poe as an early master of stories that were strange and outré. Among his themes were the creatures out of space and time that reminded us of demons and devils of ancient times. To Lovecraft, the idea was to take the reader out of their usual sphere of reference (the world as they knew it) till the reader experienced what Lovecraft called “cosmic awe”. Today we see and read stories about aliens and predators, slimy tentacle things that crawl out of the dark or from across space; beings that defy description with our ordinary lives. Lovecraft was one of the writers that started these ideas. And these types of stories encompassed only a part of Lovecraft’s dark universes.

Thank you, Howard. If you were alive today you would be 122 years old.

Or maybe you are still out there, somewhere.....

[Side note: For those who aren't familiar with Lovecraft's works you can look in on the website for the Lovecraft Historical Society, your local Wikipedia search, or theatrical films (they are on youtube.com):

- ❖ Dagon (also listed as H. P. Lovecraft's Dagon - film is loosely based on the story Shadow Over Innsmouth)
- ❖ Necronomicon (1993 - a short story anthology that is Lovecraftian in nature; I've read most of Lovecraft's stories twice and don't recognize any of the plotlines here)
- ❖ Stephen King's Mist (not a Lovecraft story but something he would've approved of)
- ❖ From the Mouth of Madness (another Lovecraftian story - takes reality and mangles it beyond recognition)



Club Business

This is the seventh issue of the current year. In all of the issues up to this point I have treated this newsletter more like a general interest fanzine (genzine). That's because the USS Silver Fox chapter of Starfleet Command still has only one member in its crew. This issue starts the trend of treating this newsletter more like a newsletter, complete with mentions of club business. As it's still just me here at the chapter, this section will be short. But I will try to be a little more business-like with the situation.

Activities seen recently: the crew's presence has been noticed at the Stateline Car Races, the Chautauqua Scandinavian Folk Festival, and the Chautauqua County Roller Derby (the Babes of Wrath took on the Rubber City Roller Girls, and lost).

Recruiting for the USS Silver Fox amounts to putting up flyers at the various businesses around Jamestown, plus the local Prendergast library. No takers yet, but that doesn't mean the effort isn't worth it. What the flyers do is direct potential fans to the SFC website where they can read all of our uploaded copies of the newsletters. I think this is a great idea. Somewhere, someone must be viewing these efforts, and that ends up being the best way of getting interaction happening with everyone involved. We may only hear from a few fans (most club activity is that way, with only a few hand-full of the hardcore members producing most of the activity in a club) but all of our efforts will get a chance to be seen and read.



As for the newsletter, I have so far kept it on a monthly schedule. I don't know how long I can do that by myself (hint, hint), but I have a number of features in me for any future issues.

Upcoming events:

- ❖ Need for more crew members. All ship positions are open but ship's C.O. (as always, members can play the role-playing aspect of the club as much or as little as they like).
- ❖ Discussions on all subjects: Star Trek, uniforms, Star Trek, activities, Star Trek, news, and other stuff (like Star Trek) ;-)
- ❖ Material for the newsletter: News, art, Letters of Comment, newsletter/fanzine trades, and so on.
- ❖ Add ideas here: _____



Space Patrol Orion: What if Star Trek was Made for German TV

In September 8, 1966, Gene Roddenberry and the NBC TV network brought us one of our favorite space-going science fiction shows - Star Trek. And on September 17, 1966, Roif Honoid, W.G.Larsen, and the ARD brought Germany a space-going science fiction show called Raumschiffes Orion (Spaceship Orion - also known as Space Patrol Orion). While the Star Trek series is well known, Space Patrol Orion hasn't been seen much in this country. This article is an introduction to this obscure German series, and how it compares to its American cousin.



The Premise:

Raumschiffes Orion features the adventures of the starship commander, Commander Cliff McLane, and his crew aboard the "fast space cruiser" Orion. The setting is Earth in the far future, where mankind has reached the stars and come into contact with alien beings called Frogs (Earth term: they are energy beings with humanoid form). McLane and his crew have to deal with problems like space pirates, the invading Frog aliens, and conflicting elements within Earth's own government. And, a unique element in the series is that the main headquarters for Earth's space fleet is an underwater city/ submarine base.

So why haven't we seen much of this series before this? The era this show was created shot the series on the black and white film. This would've prohibited the series from being seen on America's beloved color TV screens. Also, the show lasted only seven episodes. The series was considered to be too expensive to make; this despite the fact that the German ratings had the show at 56% of the viewing audience. However, the show has remained a cult classic with the Europe's fans. Also, the TV series has stayed alive via a series of novels reaching as many 145 stories.



The Similarities:

Both Star Trek and Raumpatrouille Orion share similarities common to the science fiction in the 1960s. Both dealt with paramilitary space organizations that traveled to interstellar locations; both had the usual spacecraft, robots, and rayguns. Gone were the cigar-shaped rocket ships of the previous decades; rocket power was too limiting for exploring other star systems. Star Trek had its warp drive, and Raumpatrouille Orion has simply faster-than-light engines. Also, the cigar-shape of the spaceship/starship is gone ...



... apparently a saucer-ship is more appealing (then again, both shows might have simply picked up on ideas from the movie Forbidden Planet). Also, an international crew was popular with both shows. This idea might've been picked up from the written science fiction of the day, plus the movie First Spaceship on Venus (1962) based on the novel The Astronauts by Polish SF author Stanislaw Lem. Both shows dealt with the character interactions among the crew.

The Differences:

Let me present each show in turn so you can pick out the details individually.

Star Trek first - The show was a product of the American TV shows of the 1960s. In short, the show used the space opera science fiction as platform for drama and a way to comment on the human condition. Other shows of that era used the same idea, but changed the genre to suit their interests; thus, others used doctor shows to comment on the human condition, used court room dramas to comment on the human condition and so on.

Plus:

- ❖ Capt. Kirk and Co. explored the galaxy on a cruiser sized starship with 402 crew members.
- ❖ It was an international crew, an inter-racial crew, and an interplanetary crew (Spock of Vulcan) all at once.
- ❖ The ship was far enough away from headquarters so most major decisions were made by the Captain and crew.
- ❖ Thus, the USS Enterprise had no regular home port. In fact, the Enterprise never landed on any planet.
- ❖ Only men had Captain's rank (for starships or above).
- ❖ Also, Kirk's disregard for General Order #1 never seem to get him in trouble.

Raumpatrouille Orion - This German show concentrated their stories on straight drama and adventure themes. Any comments on human nature were incidental to the main action.

- ❖ Commander McLane and Co. had a tight patrol section of space in which they explored. This was because McLane had disobeyed orders from his superiors in the very first episode, so that he and his crew had been demoted out of the wider space exploration. Thus crew of the Orion didn't have the freedoms Kirk and the Enterprise crew saw.
- ❖ A number of the episodes started from the Orion's home base - an undersea city. The Raumpatrouille Orion not only landed on planets, it also had a spectacular takeoff scene where it took off from the ocean floor, up to the surface, and then up into space.
- ❖ Drama happened when a problem appeared, and a quarter to a third of each episode was made up of arguments amongst the characters (on the starships and at home base). The problem was eventually solved, but not without a lot of angst first. McLane and Co. still had the final word on solutions to problems, but the discussions at home base did fill up air time. Plus, drama was increased back at home base by having two main political factions in on the discussion of said problems (the Terran Space Reconnaissance Division and the Galactic Security Service). As such, this series had a lot more politics than Star Trek did.
- ❖ Women here reached high ranks on this show. A regular character was General Lydia van Dyke, Commander McLane's superior at the Fast Battle Cruiser Division (which the Orion was a part of before McLane's demotion). In fact, since McLane and his crew were demoted, they were forced by the Galactic Security Service to add to their crew a security

officer - Lt. Tamara Jagellovsk - who could countermand McLane's orders (Alpha Orders).

- ❖ Also, the Orion had 6 crew members, with an international but not multi-racial people.



A Few More Details:

The sets and costumes in Raumpatrouille Orion were very different from those in Star Trek. First off, the control room on the Orion was very much covered in chrome. It also featured design elements that looked like they were from the local car manufacturers (and some of the controls in the control panel looking like water faucets rather than electrical controls). And if the TV series had trouble with its large budget, then a major reason could have been because the set designs were huge (both of the Orion space ship and on the Earthly sets). As for the costumes/uniforms, the photos accompanying this article show these to be very understated. This is balanced out by the fact that the “Frog” aliens are energy beings, and thus truly alien (I’m hoping the term “Frog” means something different in German than our English meaning of the word).

Finally:

This is an interesting little series. I have seen the seven episodes of the series twice, even though the actors speak German only. In which case, I treat these much like I do the “raw” Japanese films I’ve seen, reading the actions & emotions of the actors and do my best to figure out what’s going on. Copies of these episodes can be seen on both youtube.com and veoh.com. A little warning though, if all you do is place Space Patrol in either of the above search engines then you will find that there was three TV shows with that title. Try putting in Space Patrol Orion or Raumpatrouille Orion and you will get better results.

Enjoy.



Finally

I realize this makes for a skimpy issue compared to some of my past issues but I really don't have anything to add right. Plus I need to get this issue out as soon as possible to keep on the schedule I set. Yes, I know, this is an amateur newsletter and doesn't have to stick to a scheduled time line. Only I've done really well with keeping to a monthly post and would like to continue it as long as possible.

Enjoy the rest of the Summer. May you see rain,

LtJg. Jeff Wilcox





Human + Borg = Cylon