



BABBLE-ON



A zine (though of modest proportions) for *The Babylon Project* #3.

Contents © Peter Maranci February 1995.
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#1 of ?

I'd hoped to make this a full zine, with features and comments; unfortunately time presses heavily on me right now (as always). Rather than wait until next time I've decided to produce this scattershot affair as is, and do a proper job later.

However, I'm not at all sure how regular "Babble-On 5" will be; I like the show very much, and am never at a loss for a loud opinion to broadcast, but I have a hard time making the deadline for my own APA as it is—not to mention work, roleplaying, and now acting. I'll be back as often as I can.

One more point: Though I'm on the Internet, I don't keep up with the B5 newsgroup. Nor am I as knowledgeable about the show as any other contributor, probably. Any mistakes or slips are just that, born of ignorance. If I repeat the obvious, accept my apologies in advance.

On with the show.

AN INAUSPICIOUS START

I hated the pilot for *Babylon 5*.

In fact, I hated it so much that I actually walked out of the room in the first half hour; occasional glances into the living room confirmed what the groans of my friends told me. Wooden acting, soap-opera quality writing of the poorest sort, drawn-out, boring plot, pretentious dialogue... *Babylon 5* was a big disappointment. It seemed that *Star Trek*—for all its faults—would remain the only decent long-lasting science fiction show on TV.

Two years later: *Babylon 5* is by far my favorite show on the air. I don't even watch *Star Trek* anymore (neither *DS9* nor *Voyager*), and a new episode of *B5* is usually one of the high points of the week.

Obviously something changed.

I'm not sure whether the change was in me or in the show; unfortunately I either erased or lost my videotape of the pilot episode, and so can't go back to check. Still, there's no doubt in my mind now that *B5* is an outstandingly impressive show. The occasional bad episode is thus all the more painful, because my expectations are higher. But the bad ones are rare enough that it's not a major concern.

I even got to like the acting of Sinclair, and was sorry when he left—though I spent much of my time during the first few episodes I watched "MSTing" a la Mystery Science Theater 3000, inserting pleas in Sinclair's mouth for the ability to express some sort of emotion. ☺

Am I the only one who thinks that Sinclair was strangely like Robert Mitchum?

A B5/RPG CONNECTION?

As I mention in the box below, the various plot threads, overall structure, and use of continuing vs. bit characters in *B5* remind me very strongly of a school of roleplaying that I learned many years ago, and have expounded ever since. It's a creepy feeling, in a way; watching the show, I *feel* when a new twist should be revealed, or a change in mood is necessary—and more often than not, that's what happens. Chris Aylott pointed out to me that Larry DiTello, the story editor of *B5*, is a fairly well-known roleplayer. I can't shake the suspicion that JMS has done some roleplaying too. If not, he'd be a natural.

Who the &@%\$#! is —>Pete?

Renaissance man, Doctor of Letters, inventor of the rotating left-handed laser scalpel, this fiend is responsible for—whoops, wrong zine. ☺

Vital statistics: Age: 30 (31 by the time you read this); hair: red (balding); beard: neat; eyes: black; glasses: wire-rimmed; height: 5'11"+; weight: decreasing (thanks to painful workouts); measurements: **HEY! ENOUGH ALREADY!** ☺

By day I work in a law firm, doing things I'd rather not think about. By night I publish *Interregnum*, an APA for adults that covers roleplaying games and science fiction/fantasy in general. I've been writing zines for five years, as well as the occasional odd piece of fiction.

I also run a couple of deep-characterization roleplaying campaigns. *Babylon 5*'s continuing plots often remind me of the extended story arcs of my campaigns. Someone on the *B5* writing staff apparently thinks like me, poor fellow. ☺



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Incidentally, Zathrus from the B4 episode was almost frighteningly like some of the non-player characters I've created for some of my games. Watching him gave me a strong feeling of *deja vu*.

I've been sometimes a bit tempted to run a roleplaying campaign in the B5 setting—but never seriously, as I have too many game commitments as it is.

Still, it would be a great universe to play around in. Perhaps someday someone else will run a game? Hint, hint, Chris. ☺

CHANGE FOR THE WORSE

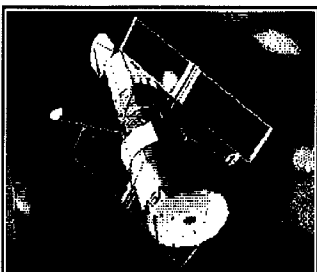
A number of friends shared my strong disappointment with the new actress who plays N'toth. We realize that actors sometimes have to leave unexpectedly. Of course it's sometimes not possible to create a new character to replace the old, and so the role must be recast. That being the case, however, why didn't they do the intelligent thing and cast someone who looked—and more importantly, *sounded*—like Caitlin Brown? With her softer features and high-pitched voice Mary-Kay Adams is a terrible choice for the role. Not does she use her abilities as an actress to offset her physical shortcomings. Caitlin's style was strong and tough, refreshing to see in a recurring TV female (even if she is an alien). Mary-Kay seems to be playing N'toth as a delicate little girl. That's wrong, both for the character and for the species.

A PREDICTION

D'len will become pregnant and have a child by a human father: the ultimate proof of the common heritage of the two species. That child will be destined for a major role in the Great War. My guess is that the father will be Sinclair, which means that his present fiancée is probably going to die...

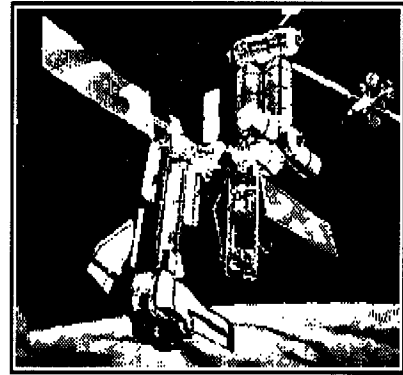
RANDOM BITS:

¶ In "All Alone in the Night" I noticed something odd: when Sheridan had a vision of Kosh while imprisoned, Kosh sounded *exactly* like the strange turtle-aliens from the PBS production of The Lathe of Heaven in the 70's. Both the sound effects and the cryptic remarks were virtually identical. It's probably just coincidence, but I wonder...



While all this discussion about The Lord of the Rings has been going on, has anyone tried to work out the significance of the name of the show and station itself? It would be interesting to see a thorough analysis of

Babylon, with all literary and historical references mapped out. For example, has anyone seen anything that might correspond to the Hanging Gardens? What about Biblical references?



At one point I'd counted 5 actors from old SF TV shows who'd appeared on Babylon 5. Walter Koenig is the most obvious, of course. Two more obscure roles interested me, however:

Robert Foxworth (playing Admiral Haig), who was the android Questor in the failed Roddenberry pilot The Questor Tapes, and

...the actor who played the henchmen in the episode where Sinclair was kidnapped and put through virtual reality torture to make him reveal what happened at The Line. Not only did that actor play one of Kahn's men (possibly his son) in Star Trek: The Wrath of Kahn, but he also played the title role in The Phoenix, a short-lived and somewhat New-Agey show about an alien that used crystal powers (from the early 80's?).

WITHER B5?

What's going to happen to B5? Will it last out the 5-year run? I certainly hope so, and until last week I assumed it would—after all, any show that I like must be good enough to stay on the air (like Max Headroom, Get A Life, Quark...when will I ever learn?).

At Boskone last weekend, though, I saw a flyer asking for help to "SAVE BABYLON 5!". I hadn't realized that there was a danger—is there? I'll admit that I wondered if the Trek people might be trying to kill B5. It does make the new shows and movies look pretty sad.

Is that what science fiction has come to? I hope not. Until next time...

—>Pete

COLLOPHON:

Text: PC-Write 2.5 (an ancient program indeed).
DTP: Publish-It 4.0 for Windows