Assignment 8: Analyzing Film Genre Conventions in Spaceballs.

Film genres are a set of conventions repeated and developed throughout film history. Science fiction is a popular genre that often takes current technology, particularly space technology, and shows how it might be used in the future. The Star Wars Trilogy as well as The Star Trek movies are some of the most popular science fiction movies ever made. Spaceballs is a science fiction movie that attempts to use every science fiction convention for humor. This fact puts Spaceballs in the revisionist science fiction film genre.

The science fiction genre has traditionally used costumes to provide a sense of superiority and power. An example of this is Darth Vader in the Star Wars series. His dark costume is designed to show his evil and the helmet and cape make him appear superior. Spaceballs continues this tradition in a slightly different way. Dark Helmet, the villain in Spaceballs, wears a black costume to signify evil, but his helmet is comically large. This is done to provide humor and make Dark Helmet look stupid, which occurs many times throughout the movie.

Another convention in science fiction movies is to use futuristic modes of travel, such as Star Destroyers in Star Wars or teleporters in Star Trek. Spaceballs does this as well, but again puts its own spin on it. Spaceball One is a ship similar to a Star Destroyer, but
its length has been dramatically increased. This provides a few comical scenes throughout the movie, such as the first sequence where the camera pans the entire length of the ship. Lone Starr’s ship, Eagle 5, is a Winnebago RV with wings. This is done to provide humor and to add another layer to the character of Lone Starr.

Science fiction movies have also traditionally used special effects to create futuristic weapons. Star Trek used it to create Phasers, and Star Wars used it to create the lightsaber. *Spaceballs* also used special effects to create a futuristic weapon, the Schwartz. The Schwartz is used to create a lightsaber like object emanating from rings worn by Lone Starr and Dark Helmet. This is used comically in the battle between Lone Starr and Dark Helmet. In this battle the Schwartz “lightsabers” end up entangled and the two characters have to work together to solve the problem and finish the battle.

*Spaceballs* uses costumes, futuristic travel, and special effects as do classic science fiction movies, but *Spaceballs* puts its own twist on it. This movie used costumes to provide superiority, futuristic travel to provide humor, and special effects to create humorous weapons. Since *Spaceballs* uses genre conventions in the non-standard way it is a revisionist science fiction film.