



The

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WOD NEWSPAPER

Fan Conventions • Pop Culture • Books • Comics • Cosplay • Indie • Gaming • Science

BABYLON 5 ENDURES AT PHOENIX COMICON

by Matthew Yenkala

Babylon 5 at PCC - All Photo Credit Jan Anderson

It's no secret that in a little over a decade, Phoenix ComiCon has grown from a small gathering of a few hundred fans to not only the biggest event of its kind in Arizona, but to one of the biggest pop culture events in the southwest. Thanks to a combination of astute management, excellent organization, and strong, varied programming. PCC--which topped 55,000 this year--is on track to be second only to San Diego ComiCon within a few short years.

Following last year's reunion of most of the Star Trek: The Next Generation cast, PCC's organizers this year set their sights on reuniting the cast of another iconic show: Babylon 5, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Amazingly, no other conventions, in this region or any other, were planning such an event--quite surprising, given the show's popularity and long-term influence.

The seed of the reunion was laid in summer 2012, when John Edwards, owner of the Arizona Pop Culture Experience museum & comic book store at Desert Ridge Mall, took a trip to San Diego ComiCon. Edwards, a major B5 fan, knew most of the cast and had worked with many of them in the late 90s, when his record label, Renaissance, released a CD entitled, "The Be Five", featuring songs written by Babylon 5 actor Bill Mumy (Lennier) and sung by Mumy and fellow stars Claudia Christian (Commander



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Photo Credit Jerome Indie Film Festival

THE JEROME INDIE FILM & MUSIC FESTIVAL

By Hal C F Astell

The Jerome Indie Film & Music Festival, which opens this month for its debut year, is probably the coolest sounding film festival ever conjured up, courtesy of founder Toni Michele Ross. She first saw Jerome when she was six and it was 'the world's largest ghost town'. She fell immediately in love with it, describing Phoenix as her hometown but Jerome her heart-town. No wonder that when she decided to run a festival, Jerome was the location she chose.

It's about as far from the bright lights of Hollywood as could be imagined and there are no bustling multiplexes to be found. The town is located halfway between Prescott and Sedona, but that doesn't quite hint at its charm. A better description would be to say that it's almost a mile up in Arizona's Black Hills, surrounded by the Prescott National Forest. Even just looking at pictures, it's hard to imagine a more memorable location for a festival, and everyone

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TWO YEARS OF CULT CLASSICS

by Hal C F Astell

The May double bill of The Goonies and The Monster Squad, hosted by local artist, Victor Moreno, at Tempe Pollack Cinema under his Cult Classics banner, sold out a 400 seat theatre. This is a monthly event and, for some months, the line to get in has wrapped all the way around the theatre's impressive foyer to end up where it started, like the Ouroboros worm eating its own tail. It's a sight to see.

To bring this many people into a cinema to see a couple of thirty-year old movies is an unprecedented achievement in a town where it often feels like an impossible task to get anyone out to watch anything. To do it every month is astounding. Yet Moreno is still building his audience after he debuted with Army of Darkness at the Royale in Mesa in 2011. That show sold out too but, because of the size of the venue, each of its two screenings could only seat 60 people.

July's show will be the second anniversary of Cult Classics and to celebrate, Moreno will be revisiting perhaps his most successful event, screening Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles during a pizza party. In between, he'll be showing The Princess Bride on June 22nd, and he's been having a blast putting up Fezzik flyers around town to advertise the event. These flyers proved so successful that people actually stopped Moreno to ask if they could buy copies.

I caught up with Moreno to talk about Cult Classics and its growing audience and reputation, and he explained that its success is due to this level of engagement. He doesn't just show movies, he hosts events which are merely centred around movies.

I recognize this concept from personal experience. I once enthusiastically let a co-worker know about a triple bill of Star Trek movies screening at Chandler Cinemas, but he wasn't interested. He had them all on DVD and was happy to watch them on his big screen

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Photo Credit Cult Classics

Thanks to Drawn to Comics for this idea: Distribution locations, please use this space to stamp your address.



Babylon 5 at PCC - All Photo Credit Jan Anderson

Susan Ivanova), Peter Jurasik (Centauri Ambassador Londo Mollari), Mira Furlan (Minbari Ambassador Delenn), Patricia Tallman (telepath, Lyta Alexander), and the late Andreas Katsulas (Narn Ambassador G'Kar).

"I was at San Diego," says Edwards, "and I ran into Claudia. She ran up, gave me a big hug, and we started talking. And that's what hatched the whole thing. Then I called Bill--who's a great musician and a real salt-of-the-earth kinda guy--and I said 'I think the time is right. People remember the show fondly. But if we're going to do this, we need to bring everyone'."

"I told [convention founder] Matt Solberg, 'I think I can get JMS', (JMS being the series creator and all-around-multi-media mensch, J. Michael Straczynski.) Matt said, 'We've been trying to get JMS for years; he always politely says no.' Well, I made two phone calls, and we had JMS."

In addition to Straczynski, Mummy, Christian, Tallman, and Furlan, several others ultimately fell into the mix: Stephen Furst (Vir Cotto), Jerry Doyle (Security Chief Michael Garibaldi), Andrea Thompson (telepath, Talia Winters), Tracy Scoggins (Captain Elizabeth Lochley), Jason Carter (Ranger Marcus Cole), Robin Atkin-Downes (telepath, Byron Gordon), and Julie Caitlin-Brown (Na'Toth).

Walter Koenig, better known as the original Chekov on Star Trek, but who had a key role as telepath, Alfred Bester on B5, was already attending PCC and graciously agreed to join the B5 programming.

Series lead, Bruce Boxleitner, who had previously appeared at PCC in 2011, was booked, but had to cancel at the last minute due to landing a role in the show, Cedar Grove for the Hallmark Channel.

However, for Edwards, there was one actor whose presence would make or break the event: Peter Jurasik.

"I considered Peter the linchpin," he says. "If you didn't have Peter...it just wouldn't have been right. The Peter/Andreas dynamic was the soul of Babylon 5." With Andreas Katsulas gone, Jurasik's presence was therefore crucial; fortunately, Edwards and PCC were able to make it happen.

While all of the actors remain on friendly terms and some are in regular contact, this was the largest single gathering of the show's personnel since the end of the series' run in 1998--even if several of them had a hard time believing the reason for the occasion.

According to Mummy, "My first reaction was: 'Gadzooks! It's really been 20 years!?! Seems like yesterday!'" Mummy's mind was made up "when I discovered that everyone was going. I was happy to know we were all gonna hang together. It's a big group. A lot of different personality types. But we get along, and get along remarkably well, considering."

Tallman joked, "I haven't gotten any older, so how did the show get so old?"

Emotions were high for cast and fans alike, not least because of the conspicuous absences in the B5 family. In addition to Katsulas, actors Michael O'Hare (Commander Jeffrey Sinclair), Jeff Conaway (Security Chief Zack Allan),

Richard Biggs (Dr. Stephen Franklin) and Tim Choate (Zathras) have all passed away since the show ended--or, in Babylon 5 parlance, "gone beyond the Rim".

The convention provided Straczynski with an opportunity to finally, once and for all, set the record straight about O'Hare's abrupt departure at the end of the show's first season. It's a tale that had never been told in public, and, one can sense, even very few people behind the scenes ever knew the truth. Having promised O'Hare that he'd keep the secret to his grave, O'Hare had laughed and said, "Tell you what--keep it to MY grave."

With the actor's untimely passing in September 2012 at the age of 60, Straczynski felt the time had finally come. In a panel room packed with hundreds of B5 fans, Straczynski talked for a little while about the show, gave some advice to those wanting to break into the industry, and spoke movingly about the other actors who had passed on, before firmly settling the rest of the panel on the topic of O'Hare.

"During the latter part of that season," said Straczynski, "it became clear that Michael was having physical issues that led to psychological issues. Things that could be addressed through medication and treatment. I could write him out for a couple episodes, but I couldn't write him out for long enough to get the kind of help that he needed. I was prepared to shut down the show."

"Michael said, 'Don't do it. Don't let me be the reason these people lose their jobs and this show falls. Let me try and get by,'" Straczynski continued. "And he soldiered on under a burden that no one else knew about, and he got through that season like a man clinging by his fingernails. I could see him suffer, I could see him fighting every day to stay in control, to stay focused, and I could see the raw, naked courage of the man, to keep fighting. We finished the season, and no one knew."

In addition to keeping his promise to O'Hare, Straczynski expressed his hope that perhaps those whose lives may be touched by mental illness, as O'Hare's was, will not be afraid to confront it and seek help.

Above all, Straczynski stressed, O'Hare had a special place for B5 fans. "I wanted you to know what he always said to me, how much he loved you guys, how much you mattered to him, and how much you sustained him. I'm not sure he'd have made it as far as he did without you." He said that Biggs and Katsulas had held the fans in equally high regard.

Straczynski's panel was one of several devoted to Babylon 5. Christian and Koenig conducted solo panels talking about their life, work and current projects. For Christian, this includes her culinary adventures, her recent book, Babylon Confidential, in which she talks about her struggles with addiction; and her upcoming military sci-fi novel, Wolf's Empire.

Mummy was also happy to talk about not only his acting; he's been at it since childhood, and is perhaps best remembered as Will Robinson from Lost In Space, but the causes he supports. He avidly advocates environmental concerns. And his music, he records under his own name, and he was also one half of Barnes & Barnes, the group responsible for the classic novelty tune, "Fish Heads". "I'm happy the album that we made, 'The Be Five: Trying to Forget', was remastered and re-released with two brand new songs that I wrote in honor of our experiences on the show and in honor of our fallen brothers in arms," he says. "I'm proud of that music; music is a great healer."

There were multiple fan-driven panels (see other B5 articles), a "B5 Bingo" game sponsored by www.B5Books.com (who have recently published the beautiful coffee table book "B5 at 20"), and a "Captain's Cantina" event at the nearby Renaissance Hotel. Doyle and Star Trek actor, Garrett Wang, MC'd a costume contest at that event, with Doyle sharing a truly off-color story about the last time he and Wang had seen each other--something about a helicopter, a joint, Enya music, and someone being--er--underclothed in the snow.

But the central event for all concerned was the public, onstage reunion of Straczynski and the cast, before a near-

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capacity crowd in the 4000-seat main ballroom of the Phoenix Convention Center. Following an introductory video by filmmaker John Hudgens, who also put together a moving tribute to the actors who'd passed away, and a short message from Boxleitner explaining, and apologizing for, his absence ("I woulda went with another take," Doyle cracked), Straczynski, Doyle and the cast hijacked the carefully scripted program.

Said Doyle on his radio forum, the Nationally Syndicated, Jerry Doyle Show: "They started off with these deep questions about the series," but it quickly became clear to him and Straczynski that "this isn't working, these fans know more about the series than we do! I had a few choice comments for the moderators, used a little bit of blue language to whip the crowd into a frenzy, and at that point we tore up the script, went off book and we had an absolute riot."

Speaking strictly for myself, having had a hand in shaping that script, I can assure all concerned that what they gave us was far, far superior to what was planned. I was also assured by nearly all of them that no matter what had been in the script, what happened, would have happened, regardless.

Story after story poured from the cast, some on-set anecdotes, but mostly about their friends who were gone--and most especially about Katsulas, who, it seemed, had no enemies (though Doyle shared a story about their time as roommates that no one who heard it will soon forget--the words "free ham" are all I can say; find it on YouTube), and who touched the lives of everyone he ever encountered. Possessed of a rich, gentle-yet-commanding voice, and a presence that even through the TV screen implies a kind of transcendent authority, it's been said of Katsulas, that he could have charged people to hear him recite the telephone book, and he would have sold the room out. Clearly, his absence casts the largest shadow, though Biggs, Conaway, O'Hare and Choate were movingly remembered as well.

"I watched them choke up one by one," says Edwards, speaking for all who were there, "and it was genuine emotion; it wasn't Hollywood."

Particularly moving, and moved, was Mira Furlan. The actress was still fresh from the horrors of the war-torn former Yugoslavia when she landed stateside and got the Babylon 5 job. Of being part of the show, Furlan said from the stage, "It lifted me to another life, and I don't have words to express my appreciation for that." Of her fallen colleagues, she all but merged with her character Delenn: "The loss is unbelievable, but as pathetic and stupid as it sounds to say this, they're here with us, and



we carry them with us."

"Those folks were our mates," says Mumy. "It hurts to recall the times we worked together and the fact that many of our pals are missing because they died, and then be expected to return to 'snappy patter' mode." On the other hand, he says, "It was nice to be onstage in the grand ballroom and see a packed audience stand and applaud what we were all a part of creating... Showbiz!"

The panel concluded with Edwards presenting Straczynski with a lifetime achievement award for his vast contributions to popular culture. "If you look at his body of work--he's earned it," says Edwards, and the thunderous applause from both stage and crowd did nothing to disabuse anyone of that notion.

The love and joy onstage carried throughout the ballroom, and into the actors' appearances at signing tables. Not a single fan reported anything but a positive experience of meeting their idols.

Indeed, hundreds of the Babylon 5 fans present had traveled, not only from across the country, but from the other side of the world, to be at this one-of-a-kind event, clearly putting PCC not only on the national, but on the international map; and none of them were disappointed.

Maggie MacAlpine of Atlanta, Georgia called the reunion, "a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a dream come true. It was a true community-building experience and an absolute joy to participate in."

Sandra Bruckner of Maryland, who'd worked with the show's production office on its official magazine and was an extra on the set a few times, said, "I loved meeting old friends--and making new ones. You just can't go wrong meeting people who love Babylon 5 as much as we all do. It was a fairly emotional time as well. Some of the cast members I've stayed in touch with; others I haven't seen in years, so that was absolutely wonderful. I enjoyed very much seeing the new generations of fans coming into the panel discussions and participating. Proves that Babylon 5 does stand the test of time." Of the overall experience, she calls it "wonderful, memorable, priceless."

Jan Schroeder of Clermont, Florida, who's also been involved with the publishing aspects of Babylon 5, said, "When I heard about the reunion I knew that I had to be there even though it meant coming all the way from Florida. It was a magical weekend that I'll always remember."

But the fan hit of the con was Benjamin Borkenhagen of Goslar, Germany, who spent the weekend dressed in a B5 military costume that came straight off the set and won himself just about every contest he entered. "I mulled over going to the con for quite some time," he says. "Finally, I decided to go, because it was probably one of the last chances to see so many of the B5 cast at one place. I was delighted how easily you could talk to the stars on a personal level."

"Although I was much too shy," he continues, "I had some really nice conversations. And the reunion panel was the icing on the cake. It was amazing to see all the attending cast members together on stage and telling stories."

A longtime internet "lurker" in the world of B5 fandom, he says that now, "I'm right in the middle of it! Due to my fantastic luck and my great fortune, I formed many new friendships almost immediately. So I am most grateful for the familial atmosphere in the fan community--which I am now an active part of!"

Cast and fans alike give unreserved praise to the convention itself and its organizers.

Jan Schroeder: "The con itself was well-run by folks who obviously cared about making it the best possible experience for both guests and attendees."

"This is the most human convention experience I've ever had," said Furlan from the stage, with several other castmembers echoing her sentiments.

Tallman confides, "I was worried about the event. Would it be well done? Would they have the respect for the show and all of us involved, or would it just be some kind of circus? Fortunately, the Phoenix ComiCon folks really know what they are doing, and made it fantastic for all of us. I felt very respected, and they went out of their way to make it a great tribute to the show, JMS and the fans."



Says Mumy, "It went great. The convention was run beautifully. Everyone was organized and nice. They treated us swell. I think the fans were very pleased."

"PCC brought a lot of people of like mind and appreciation together," said Doyle on his radio show. "And the organizers did an absolutely fantastic job"--especially at "keeping the convention center the temperature of a meat locker." (A boon to someone who has to sit and sign for hours.)

Beyond the losses that bind them together, the overriding sense of the Babylon 5 family is just that--it IS a family. Like war buddies, they've been through hell together--they have followed each other into fire, darkness, and death--and for all their differences as people and performers, their love for one another is evident. Like all families, there've been squabbles, fallings out, and internecine rivalries; but, according to Mumy, "We're all beyond any past negativity that would keep us from being together."

"It was lovely to see all my castmates," says Tallman. "I've also gotten to know many of the fans over the years, and I love that we were all together. I was so happy to celebrate our time together on the station, swap stories and laugh together. That's just the best. I lost my voice for the next three days! But it was fun. I had a blast."

Christian agrees. "I thought PCC was a magical experience and the convention provided the perfect venue for the B5 reunion to flourish."

For Doyle, who's been off the convention circuit for a number of years, the experience was, to say the least, a

I know who has been to Jerome raves about it.

The venues are just as unusual as the town itself. The Lighthouse Theatre seats 100; by day, it's the Jerome Fire Station. Trey Brayden Cinemahouse seats 300; that's a former JC Penney store now officially named the Lawrence Memorial Hall but normally referred to as Spook Hall. Finally, there's the Starlit Mine Theatre, a 500-seat parking lot near the Old Jerome Copper Mine, overlooking the city from the top of a mountain. Every image I see of Jerome screams quirky, unique and memorable, and these venues fit those descriptions perfectly.

It wasn't always a ghost town. Back in the 1920s, more than ten-thousand people lived in and around Jerome, working its rich copper mines, the most abundant in the state. By the 1950s, the town's population had dropped below a hundred, but a concerted bid to keep the town alive through tourism raised it over four hundred, which is where it hovers today. Needless to say, it'll surely feel as close as ever to the old times during the four day festival, which runs from Thursday to Sunday, the 13th to 16th of June.

The most notable resident today is probably Maynard James Keenan, lead singer of the bands Tool, A Perfect Circle and Puscifer. Outside the music industry, he owns and runs the Caduceus Cellars winery, sourced from his own Merkin Vineyards. Blood into Wine, the feature length documentary about his Arizona winemaking efforts is screening at Jerome, which will also feature wine tasting opportunities throughout.

That film was directed by Ryan Page and Christopher Pomeroy, who also shot the highly enjoyable Queens of Country, a hit at last year's Phoenix Film Festival, in Cave Creek. It ably highlights Ross's concept of showcasing truly independent material, in

the way that very few so called indie festivals still do.

The majority of the material being screened was deliberately sourced from the state of Arizona, with a few additional titles from further afield, such as Canada's Passionflower. To avid explorers of local film, this is a real treat because it allows us a rare opportunity to discover hard to find previous work by actors and directors that we recognize. No doubt many of them will be in attendance, as Jerome is only a couple of hours away from Phoenix. Film festivals are always great places to network with filmmakers; this one may well be unparalleled on that front.

Working through the schedule, I found many recurring names. Probably half of the films in the schedule can be easily connected with at least one another through an actor, director or crew member.

The most represented local talent I found was Kimber Leigh, with five titles on Jerome screens: three features as an actress and two short films as a director. The legendary David C. Hayes also appears in three features, one of which, Crushed Velvet, is one of nine films receiving its world premiere at Jerome. On the directorial front, three of Justin Hunt's documentary features are scheduled. Arizona's film community is a thriving one and even actors starting out on the ladder to future success are well represented: Chelsea Clare, currently shooting We Three in Phoenix, is in no less than three films in show, one short and two features. There are many more who probably fit that bill too.

Given the Arizona focus, it isn't surprising to see that Bill Pierce, the local film critic for the Examiner, programmed a selection of AZ Forbidden Films. As you can imagine, his strong background in the scene allowed him to select a fascinating set of subversive short films that touch on taboo subjects. I'll cover those in a separate article, but the inclusion of this set really highlights how uncharacteristically broad the

selections at Jerome are.

Not only do the films run the gamut of subjects, but they mix up documentaries with dramas and genre material, as well as older films with brand new pictures receiving their first screening. The short selections are vaguely themed, the forbidden films sitting alongside selections of comedies and dramas, plus quirkily named sets like Holy Moly Horror Shorts, Love Shorts Baby! and No Chick Flick Shorts.

As the name of the festival suggests, it's also not just a film festival, as a number of bands are booked to play live. Even there, connections are apparent, as one set of short films is devoted to music videos. Threefold Fate, one band playing the Starlit Mine Theatre were featured in Blood Moon Rising, a wild 2009 retro-grindhouse film by Brian Skiba, whose newest picture, 2013's Crushed Velvet, premieres at Jerome with many of the same cast and crew.

The opening night party on Thursday features the Sugar Thieves. Other bands and artists appearing at the festival include 2 in the Chest, Kevin Daly and Fallen Riviera, with more still to be announced. Let's see what the power of rock 'n' roll and the magic of cinema can do to this temporarily busy ghost town!

Hal C F Astell writes film reviews at Apocalypse Later, from the 1900s to the 2010s, with a focus on what most critics don't review. For the Frankenweenie feature, visit Roger Ebert. For the original 1984 short version Tim Burton made at Disney, not to mention the odd stuff he was doing before that in his spare time, visit Apocalypse Later.

<http://www.apocalypselaterfilm.com/>

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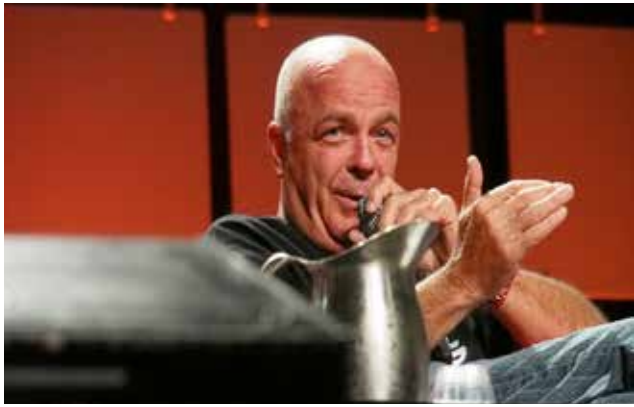
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reminder of times past--as well as an eye-popping, senses-overloading illustration of how much has changed in the interim, given the explosions of steampunk, cosplay, anime, and zombie culture.



“The best way I can describe it is, let’s say you were a drug abuser and you cleaned up your act and you were clean and sober for five years,” Doyle said on his radio show. “And you thought, you know what? Maybe I’ll dip my toe back in there and just kinda see how the water is--and you just skip everything and go right to heroin.”

As to whether the reunion fostered any sense of “closure” with the show, Tallman says, “I don’t have anything to close! I’m still friends with most of the B5

cast, and see them regularly or speak to them online. I work with JMS, so B5 is still part of the repertory.” She and Straczynski launched the multimedia platform, STUDIO JMS in 2012, with several high-profile film and print projects in active development.

“For me,” says Claudia Christian, “it was the perfect way to say goodbye to conventions, and goodbye to Babylon 5,” though she stresses that she will continue to make appearances when she has something to promote, such as her novels. “And I want to make it clear that my devotion to and appreciation for the fans of Babylon 5 will never wane.”

And how does Christian think those fans regarded the event? “For them, I think it felt like the beginning of a reunion tour or something to that effect!”

The ever-optimistic Mumy reinforces that thought, clearly voicing the hopes of nearly every Babylon 5 fan in the world. “There’s always that tiny voice in the back of your mind saying, ‘Who knows? Maybe we’ll make a B5 movie one day.’ Stranger things have happened.”

For me, Jerry Doyle’s last words from the reunion panel are still ringing in my ears. After sharing a story of his near-death-experience a few years back, he concluded, “We don’t know when it’s over. But as long as you’ve got today, and you have a choice, why would you choose to make it a bad day?”

In this, he was, perhaps unknowingly, echoing and underscoring what Straczynski himself had said at the close of his own panel the previous day: “Appreciate the people around you. Be generous with your kindness, with your words, with your affection. Remember the moments. When you go home, take that with you. Look at your friends, your family. Hold those moments. Flesh is fickle. Flesh goes in a second. But love persists.”

Whatever the future may hold for Babylon 5, its makers and fans, I can think of no more fitting epitaph.

This article would not have been possible without the patience of my editor, Patti Hultstrand. Thanks to John Edwards of the Phoenix Pop Culture Experience for his time and for helping make the event happen in the first place, to Lee Whiteside for his major role as well, and to Matt Solberg and Joe Boudrie of PCC for allowing it to happen. I would also like to thank Claudia Christian, Bill Mumy and Patricia Tallman for taking the time to share their thoughts on the event, and Jerry Doyle and his producer Brad Silvers, for permission to quote from the Nationally Syndicated Jerry Doyle Show. Major thanks to fans Maggie, Jan, Sandra and Benjamin, and above-and-beyond thanks to Captain Jaclyn of B5Books. And of course, to the Great Maker, J. Michael Straczynski.

WOD

VIVA AMAZING LAS VEGAS COMIC CON

Reviewed by Todd VanHooser

The Laughing Moon crew has returned from Sin City after closing out Amazing Las Vegas Comic Con. The last time we attended an event in Vegas was in 2010 after I discovered a small convention catering to both fantasy and horror. I had just released The Lamplighter Collection (a small collection of horror and suspense stories unrelated to my Laughing Moon series) and this seemed like a perfect place to launch the book. I’m a fantasy writer, I have a horror book ready to roll, this was the perfect fit, right? What the convention failed to advertise was that this was a fantasy, horror AND fetish convention. It was about as strange and memorable as you can imagine, complete with bondage booths, alien warrior comedians, magic acts, porn stars, and open-mouth staring.

I’m happy to report that Amazing Las Vegas ComicCon sported no bondage booths (at least none that I saw) but did supply some great memories and fantastic opportunities to speak with some helpful industry folks.

Although the con didn’t start until Friday, we arrived on Thursday afternoon and immediately began booth setup. Our outfit has grown since my last Vegas trip (which consisted of a banner and some books on a table). The current booth is inspired by one of the main settings in the Laughing Moon “Ragged Man” RPG book that came out in May. Visually it’s quite striking, but takes a little bit of engineering (and magic) to get set up. Three hours later we were ready to roll with 24 hours in Vegas to kill.

In typical Laughing Moon form, we decided to get out the dice and game.

Friday afternoon doors opened and immediately we were impressed with the size of the crowd. This continued to be the case throughout most of the weekend (hotel staff said there was anywhere between 12K and 15K attendees, but I never got this confirmed with the convention crew). The crowd was large and fairly consistent, comprised of everyone from your awestruck newcomer to your battle-hardened convention veteran. Sales were only average despite the crowd, and this was something communicated amongst several of the vendors and exhibitors. It’s hard to nail down exactly why that was the case. After all, don’t most people go to Vegas with money to burn? Or maybe that was the problem. The Roulette tables had already claimed the attendees money before they got through the doors. There was no shortage of interest, however. My crew and I spoke with dozens of people over the course of the weekend, and I felt like we were certainly able to get the word out about Laughing Moon.

We had featured cosplay at the booth for Friday and Saturday. In true Laughing Moon tradition, our character creations are unique to the Laughing Moon setting. This time around we featured “Ryder,” as illustrated by Ethan Scott in his piece “Red Right Hand.” Friday also featured the character of “Iriadel” from the graphic novel prologue, Candle, as well as “the Ragged Man” himself.

Saturday proved to be a showstopper



with our “Gobbler” terrorizing innocent bystanders at the booth. The application with this character is a little time-consuming, but the final product looks great. Attendees had a lot of fun taking pics with our Gobbler, though I can’t promise she didn’t bite.

I saw Stan Lee for the first time on Saturday. Fans are galvanized by his appearance, but I couldn’t help but wonder at the mind-numbing blur these events must be for him. I mean the man is practically a product being shipped off from one place to another, ushered down crowded aisles, shoved into photo booths, and shooting imaginary strands of spiderwebs at a million cameras. You’ve got to hand it to Stan the Man, though. Even at 90, he’s all cool shades and smiles.

That evening, Brianna Brock and Jesse James hosted a shindig at a casino lounge which proved to be a great gathering of artists, creators, cosplayers, and more. Lots of fun with some great people, and a



Picture credits: Todd VanHooser & Jesse James

great way to blow out a busy day.

On Sunday, I had the pleasure of speaking with Matt McElroy from DriveThruRPG. He offered many great ideas for the Laughing Moon crew to consider as we continue to push forward. Everything from conventions to attend to fun activities at the booth to show off our wares. It’s conversations like this that really inspire me to keep reaching.

Overall the event was a lot of fun, and I tip my hat to Jimmy Jay with Jay Company Comics and his staff for putting on the event. As for me, I had the pleasure of spending a weekend in Vegas with some of my favorite people. Truth be told, we didn’t leave the hotel. We did, however, have a lot of fun and rolled a lot of dice.

Stay up-to-date with all things Laughing Moon by following the links below!

www.toddvanhooser.com

WOD



ARIZONA ARTIST ALLEY

ARTIST COLUMNIST - Alfred Trujillo



So we meet again. For the first time! Well. Here I am. Doing what I do. And what do I do? Well. Short answer: I make comics.

When asked at conventions HOW I am doing, a lot of people get a little smile from me saying "living the dream." I realize most people that say this phrase do so with a hint of sarcasm. Not me. I really mean it. Punch any date on your time machine between 1984 and now, and you can probably find me drawing, writing, or expressing grand proclamations of my aspirations to make comics.

I technically got a late start; at least at being a pro. But I have come a long way in the last three years. With my aspirations well within reach, JOIN ME and let's journey together as I take you through an adventure into the land of comic book living. Let's begin!

Phoenix International Airport. We open 'mid-battle'. No sleep, muscles ache, my kids, numbers and words run through my ringing head. A hard shell golf club case rolls behind me full of trade show banner stands and supplies. My lovely wife hauls about as many things as I do. The usual suspects are enclosed in suitcases: art prints, business cards, table cloths, and copies of our creator owned book, Project: Shadows. We'll get to the book later, don't worry. A suitcase handle breaks. Jerry rigging, I don't even have to use duct tape. An hour of sleep on the airplane, then touch down, rental car and GPS into town.

A delayed landing has us rushing to the Colorado Convention Center in Denver to set up for the second annual Denver ComiCon. The place has a line around the building before it even starts and during the next three days I draw my heart out, sell a whole suitcase full of art, modeling prints, and comic books while talking to a good amount of exhibitors on my routine sketching-while-walking/talking/eating etc... We break sales records, reconnect with a friend who was there when I started, and catch my favorite nerd rock band, Kirby Krackle, before the weekend is over.

I speak at a panel with Ben Templesmith, then I make a presentation on art by myself when just the weekend before at Phoenix I had the same panel with the help of Frank Cho, Mike Debalfo and other excellent artists. Collaborative art pieces for charity auctions I draw on pull a pretty penny for children's foundations, I meet two of my wife's childhood friends and just for kicks, we hit Casa Bonita on the way out of town. AWESOME sopapillas, don't eat anything else!

This is just one of many conventions. I was at 13 shows in 2012. It's been about 20 in the last 12 months. I make my living on the road, make art on the road, and even got married while at a convention (Thanks, Galaxy Fest!). It helps that my beautiful wife who is also my business partner is also a renowned cosplayer, Cara Nicole, aka AZ Powergirl (she also writes, edits, designs and even letters). We live the life many wish they could.

In my journey thus far, I have had my share of successes and I won't lie, some failures as well. But focusing on the positives, I now have a high profile (and funded) Kickstarter campaign for my comic book, a couple of television appearances, published books nationwide and...and... I'm even a model on a very cool D&D illustration!!

Want to know how I got started?? Tune in next month!

Having a childhood spent traveling; comic books were often the only friends available. Many of the characters in the 4-color worlds served as inspiration since early on. Alfred has worked professionally in the grand industry of comic making since 2010. Zenescope, Big Dog Ink, Chameleon and Moonstone were the beginning. In 2012, Alfred gave up life behind a corporate desk and began his own company 183 DEGREE STUDIO writing and drawing his first creator owned book PROJECT: SHADOWS.

When Alfred is not drawing, he can be found rocking out with his band Radiobox, or being a dedicated father.

alfredtrujillo.com

facebook.com/alfred183

COSPLAY CORNER

COSPLAY COLUMNIST - Cara Nicole/Az Powergirl



Good Morning! It's always morning.

As I stand behind a confiscated table, temporarily abandoned by its procurer, a young wide-eyed man stares incessantly at me. Fine. Not me, just my chest. This is not an uncommon practice for fanboys, just as it is not uncommon for me to swipe lonely convention tables. Eventually he opens his fool mouth and out comes some dumbassery any good momma would be ashamed of. That's right...you guessed it: "Nice tits". When I enquired as to what provoked him to be so blunt he simply shrugged and said, "Well, you're wearing it."

Has our online anonymity seeped so far into human interaction that we feel that these statements are acceptable? Where are your manners people? I shake my head in shame, not for the scandalous garb in which I present myself, but for the lack of integrity and competency of our society. It is not uncommon for con goers to ask if my breasts are "real". To which I politely lecture "what is real?" So that, dear readers, is today's question.

What Is Real?

Is a multitude of bra padding stacked like pancakes under natural breast tissue until it oozes out the top of a costume real? Is hair dye real? What about fake nails? Wigs? Hair extensions? Makeup? Rhinoplasty? Botox? What about using that profile picture from 10

years and 40 pounds ago? Most of the food we eat is genetically modified or chemically preserved or homogenized or pasteurized processed food product! What about epidurals, C-Sections, in vitro fertilization, sperm donation, surrogate mothers? Are those infants not "real"? If it's Photoshopped it never happened, right?

This, my friends, is why I live in the land of make believe. A world of cosplay and comic books. A magical place where I can be a mass murderer, superhero, princess, or even one of those gawd awful ponies. I tell my stories in my writing and my wardrobe. I am Cara Nicole/ Az Powergirl.

AZ Powergirl is a cosplay/model/actress/ comic creator and character designer in the Phoenix area. She has had starring roles in film and has been involved in the comic industry and the pop culture community doing 16 conventions last year. She has worked as a spokesperson for Marvel and Big City Comics Studio in addition to supporting local charity events and organizing and promoting for conventions. AZPG is a part of 183 Degree Studio and is publishing her own books showcasing her adventures in cosplay and her comic book stories.

azpowergirl.com/

facebook.com/azpowergirl





TV with a remote control that allowed for bathroom breaks whenever he liked. It's easy to see his point.

However, the growing number of Moreno's regulars would explain that he'd be missing out on plenty if he applied that attitude to Cult Classics screenings, starting with the communal spirit of enjoying a movie with a few hundred other people. Whether they come for the free pizza, free candy or just to see the DeLorean Moreno organized to be parked outside during the Back to the Future screening, most come back again and again to share a retro cinema experience with strangers who often become friends.

And all this happens because of the experience. 'You have to make it special,' Moreno says. He always has some sort of giveaway, courtesy of sponsors like Zia Records. He screens trailers before the feature or during the intermission between his twice yearly double bills. Those are interactive too, because through their reactions, audience members get a say in what will screen in future months.

Then there are the unique little touches that make an event memorable. When Cult Classics screened Stanley Kubrick's, *The Shining*, Moreno bought a brand new door and hacked a hole in it with an axe so that people could pose for photo ops. He's seen many people initially pass up this sort of opportunity, only to reconsider when they see just how much fun the people around them are having. Recapturing the classic 'Here's Johnny!' moment with Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall in a photo that the Cult Classics team will have available online later the same night, is a great way to 'break down the wall to the experience,' as Moreno puts it. It's easy to feel part of a family at these events.

Even before he started Cult Classics, Moreno was known for his movie prints. I have a collection of his older work and am proud to have some of his original art on my wall, signed by the actors he drew. His reputation on this front has only increased. While anyone can buy a regular ticket to just see a Cult Classics movie (and enjoy the experience), there are always a variety of other packages available for those who want more. Usually there are a couple of brand new prints on offer that tie to the movie being shown and often a T-shirt with the higher priced packages



too. It seems that many people are building collections much bigger than mine. Occasionally, there's something extra special like the mini Necronomicon that came with a VIP ticket for *Evil Dead 2*.

What's surprising to me is the sort of audience Moreno has tapped into. At repertory film screenings in the valley, I'm used to seeing people like me, movie buffs who like discovering obscure films we haven't seen before or revisiting ones we love that we may not have seen on the big screen. While people like me make up a part of the Cult Classics audience, we're far from the only one.

Moreno explains that there are regulars who show up to everything he does, who followed him from the Royale to MADCAP Theatres and eventually to Tempe Pollack, as those earlier venues closed, but the make up of his crowd generally changes depending on the film he shows. For horror movies like *Zombie* or *Shaun of the Dead*, he gets an older audience than when he screens comedies such as *Weird Science* or Pee Wee's *Big Adventure*. Fantasy films like *Edward Scissorhands* or *Labyrinth* draw people from all ages.

His most nostalgic movies, usually drawn from the 1980s, pull a surprisingly young crowd. Half the people who showed up to see *The Goonies* had never seen it before. Many of them weren't even born when it was released and even those who knew the film well knew it because they'd bought the DVD. They're too young to even remember VHS, let alone to have seen movies like these when they first hit theatres. This isn't the nostalgia kick I was expecting.

Moreno works hard to know his audience and what they want to see and he ensures that they're not just passive moviegoers but active participants in his events. Surely these are the keys to his success. Who knows what the next two years will bring, but if you head on over to Tempe Pollack and join the cult, you won't just watch it happen, you find yourself becoming part of it.

Hal C F Astell writes film reviews at Apocalypse Later, from the 1900s to the 2010s, with a focus on what most critics don't review. For the Frankenweenie feature, visit Roger Ebert. For the original 1984 short version Tim Burton made at Disney, not to mention the odd stuff he was doing before that in his spare time, visit Apocalypse Later.

<http://www.apocalypselaterfilm.com/>

WOD

Please Support Your Arizona Authors

 <p>J.J.M. Czep Fantasy Fiction & Romantic Suspense azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p>The Traveler's Club - Steampunk The Ghost Ship Fire & Ash - \$13.95 mbtimetraveler.com/store</p>	 <p>Greg Lundberg Sci-Fi Thriller \$8.99 Non-Fiction \$14.99 www.authorgreglundberg.com</p>
 <p>Blackstrap's Ecstasy \$13.95 - Pirate/Adv. \$9.99 - Intro Price azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p>The Twisted History Alt History - \$6.95</p>	 <p>Chet Shupe Non-Fiction; \$19.99 SpiritualFreedomPress.com</p>
 <p>Donald Jacques Fantasy Fiction & Romantic Suspense azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p>PJ Hultstrand Time-travel Romance - Chasing Time Series azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p>Lynn Boston, aka Bob Frank Urban Fantasy/Thrillers www.lynnbostonbooks.com</p>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheWODmagazine>

ConNotations NewsZine

Volume 23, Issue 3
June/July 2013
FREE

*The 23-Yr old Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror & Convention Newszine
of the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society*



Photo Credit PCC

Remembrance - Convention Friends

GARY HAYES - From Katy Payne

I am creating this event to spread the word in behalf of Rebecca Petithory-Hayes, to honor the memory and celebrate the life of her late husband, Gary, who passed away unexpectedly on May 29, 2013.

It will be held at the Tucson Science Fiction Convention in the Copper Ball Room in the afternoon on Sunday, Nov. 10th, sometime after 1:00 pm - the exact time is TBA. Here is a link to the website: http://www.innsuites.com/tucson_citycenter/

PLEASE HELP!!!! - Rebecca needs financial assistance to help cover funerary costs, etc. Just go to Paypal, and send money to email acct. tuazghostgirl@Q.com Any donations would be very much appreciated. Thank you!

Pictured with John Barrowman, from Torchwood television show, Good ole' Captain Jack. John Barrowman smiled and touched so many fans at Phoenix ComiCon. He genuinely loves us all. Here he is with some of our favorite TusCon crew. -- with Eric Hayes, Gary Hayes, Rebecca Petithory-Hayes and Cristi Simila.

This June 22 there was a Celebration of Life for Julie Douglas aka Julie of Blackwater. Julie was a fixture at all the old SciFi conventions as well as and member of the SCA back in the early years before her health kept her from playing. We will be getting together to share memories and stories (the more embarssing the better) of Mama Julie. They made Stone Soup with the orginal stone and BBQ meat from Honey Bears BBQ. And by special request there was Atholl brose, also known as God's oatmeal, as well as soda and Bheer. For the rest, they did a potluck, based on the last name.

Building The Buzz

AUTHOR NEWS:

FROM JAMES A. OWEN AND THE COPPERVALE STUDIO

All stories have a beginning...and all Beginnings, Have a STORY.

'This project is one of the most ambitious of mine. Many of you who read The Signal mostly know my work on The Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica series of illustrated novels. But what not as many people know is that those books were not my first great fantastic fiction project. That project was a dark-and-stormy-night comic book series I called StarChild.

'It has been in and out of print in a number of formats, but now, we've launched a Kickstarter project to collect EVERYTHING I've ever written and drawn that's associated with StarChild into one extraordinary, beautiful book.

'For those of you who like reading the stories I write, and especially those of you who enjoy my illustrations, just think of this as more than FIVE HUNDRED PAGES of an illustrated fantasy by the creator of HERE, THERE BE DRAGONS.

'For those of you who like my nonfiction such as DRAWING OUT THE DRAGONS, there is an additional TWO HUNDRED PAGES of development art, notes, sketches, commentaries, and essays.

'There is something here for everyone — including an exclusive preview of the upcoming FOOL'S HOLLOW novels (starting in 2014 from Shadow Mountain publishing) which are to me the ideal fairy tales that the StarChild graphic novels were based on — I just created those first. But make no mistake: these are the stories and art closest to my heart. Please, go take a look, choose from among some wonderful backer rewards, and help me bring this extraordinary, beautiful book into the universe. Just click the link o the Kickstarter page. And thank you for your support of my work — I appreciate it very much.

The StarChild Kickstarter Project. Here's the correct link: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1401678214/the-20th-anniversary-nearly-complete-essential-sta>

Thanks for your patience — and I hope you like what you read!

COPPERCON REVOLUTION! August 8-11, 2013;

Location: Windemere Hotel-5750 East Main St.,Mesa, Arizona 85205

Ph: (480)985-3600; Toll Free: (800) 888-3561

Media Guest of Honor: Mike Grell; Artist Guest: Trina Robbins; Artist Guest: Steve Leialoha.

CASFS BOOK SOCIAL FOR 2013

Meetings are 7PM, the third Tuesday of the month at Samurai Comics, 1051 East Camelback Road, Phoenix. - Contact is Randall Whitlock.

July 16, 2013 - Maus I and Maus II by Art Spiegelman

August 11, 2013 - Haze by L. E. Modesitt, Jr.
(To be held at CopperCon Revolution www.coppercon.org)

August 20, 2013 - Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff by Christopher Moore

September 17, 2013 - Daredevil: The Man Without Fear, Daredevil: Born Again by Frank Miller

October 15, 2013 - Sabriel by Garth Nix

November 19, 2013 - Sandman: Preludes & Nocturnes, Sandman: Doll's House, Marvel 1602 by Neil Gaiman

December 17, 2013 - World War Z by Max Brooks

LOCAL SPECIAL EVENTS -

Thursday, July 4, 7pm
LEATHER STRIP
Club 910 LIVE
 910 N. McClintock Drive, Tempe, Arizona 85281
<http://www.hornsandhalosaz.com/>

Friday, July 5th
FIRST FRIDAYS ART WALK
Downtown Phoenix
<http://artlinkphoenix.com/first-fridays/>

Friday, July 12
MESA SECOND FRIDAYS ARTWALK
Downtown (Main Street), Mesa
<http://www.2ndfridaynightout.com/>

Saturday, July 13, 11pm
THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
"Beach Party Night"
Presented by Midnight Mayhem
AMC Deer Valley Theater
www.midnightmayhem.org

Saturday, July 13
Devious Minds Productions & Relentless Beats Present
THE CRYSTAL METHOD
The Monarch Theater
 122 E Washington St., Phoenix, Arizona 85004
<http://www.devious-minds.com/>

Saturday, July 20
Arizona Rollergirls Presents
ROLLERDERBY MASHUP BOUT
Broadway Recreation Center
 59 East Broadway Rd, Mesa AZ 85210
 Doors 6pm/Bout 7pm/Tickets \$13/Kids under 8 FREE
www.arizonarollergirls.com

Saturday, July 20
Cult Classics Presents
The Neverending Story
Pollack Tempe Cinemas
 1825 East Elliot Road, Tempe, Arizona 85284
<http://www.cultclassicsaz.com/>

Saturday, July 27 8pm
Mighty Mike Saga & Kill The Alex Present
I LOVE INDUSTRIAL
The Monarch Theater
 122 E Washington St., Phoenix, Arizona 85004
<http://www.mikesaga.com/>

Friday, August 2
FIRST FRIDAYS ART WALK
Downtown Phoenix
<http://artlinkphoenix.com/first-fridays/>

Friday, August 9
MESA SECOND FRIDAYS ARTWALK
Downtown (Main Street), Mesa
<http://www.2ndfridaynightout.com/>
Saturday, August 10, 11pm

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
"Classic Rocky"
Presented by Midnight Mayhem
AMC Deer Valley Theater
www.midnightmayhem.org

Saturday, August 10, 8pm
Horns & Halos Productions Presents
FETISH HEAT 2013
The Venue of Scottsdale
 7117 E. 3rd Ave., Scottsdale, Arizona 85251
FULL Hotel AfterParty!!

Friday, August 30
SPLAT! PAINT & FOAM PARTY
Arizona Event Center
 1300 S Country Club Drive #105, Mesa, Arizona 85210
Text "SPLAT" to 602-315-9023 for a chance to win free tickets!

In addition to Midnight Mayhem's monthly ROCKY HORROR productions at AMC, two other locations are doing THE TIME WARP THIS SUMMER with ongoing shows...

Saturday, June 22 through Saturday, July 27
THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
Pre-Party (21+) 10pm, Movie Midnight
UltraStar Theaters at the Ak-Chin Multitainment Resort
Maricopa, Arizona
Audience Participation provided by Midnight Mayhem

Friday, July 12 - Saturday, August 10, 2013

Desert Stages Theatre Presents
THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW (original stage play)

Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 7:30 pm, Sundays at 2 pm (No show July 18th)
Scottsdale Desert Stages Theatre
 4720 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale, Arizona 85251
desertstages.org

CopperCon Revolution's Announcement

On Thursday August 1st, 2013, CopperCon: Revolution will be showing a special screening of 2001: A Space Odyssey with Plan 9 From Outer Space at the Pollack Tempe Cinemas at 7PM. 2001: A Space Odyssey will start at 7PM with Plan 9 From Outer ...Space starting at 9:30 PM. You wanted the best science fiction films of all time and we're giving them to you in one sitting. Tickets for the showing are \$10 to the general public and \$5 with a membership to CopperCon: Revolution which will happen August 8th-11th 2013.

For more info visit www.coppercon.org

WOD Media has come to an agreement with CASFS, Inc. to carry their ConNotations Newszine inside our newspaper and online webzine, The WOD. As of this issue, ConNotations will have four pages of local Arizona news on a monthly basis, which increases the frequency of this local 23-year old newspaper. We are happy to help this staple in the fan/convention industry and hope to continue its publication, at least in part.



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CONNOTATION EVENTS

THE DREAD FLEET EVENTS:

MUD WRESTLING V MAIN EVENT

July 27th, 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm
Revolver Records; 18+ Only
Roosevelt Road, Phoenix, Arizona
\$10 pre-sale / \$15 door

Another wild and dirty night with the pirates, wenches, dancers and derby girls! The DREAD Fleet is bringing the fan favorite Pirate Mud Wrestling to a more Metro Phoenix centered location this time around. This is our fifth year getting down and dirty with the Arizona Roller Derby, Arizona Roller Girls, bint Hazine and rumor has it there will be a few Fireland Faeries sliding in.

TALK LIKE A PIRATE DAY VI

September 21st, 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm
Westgate City Center
6770 N. Sunrise Blvd., Glendale, AZ
21+ Bars; All Ages Outdoors
\$10 pre-sale/ \$15 door

Can you believe it? Year six of the great Arizona Talk Like a Pirate Day! Prepare for even more adventure than ever before as The DREAD Fleet brings back Moon and her mermaids, belly dancers from bint Hazine and other local dance troupes, drummers and wandering musicians, sword fights and this year pirate merchants, and Irish dances. Westgate offers a beautiful outdoor center for the festival activities and several pirate friendly bars. Adventure, dancing, wenches, mermaids, and rum; all for a great cause as we raise some booty for The Bergamot Institute!

www.eventbrite.com/tlapdaz
<http://www.facebook.com/tlapdaz>

DREADFUL DEATHS

October, 4th & October 11th
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

A performance for the history books! The DREAD Fleet presents some of the most DREADful Deaths throughout history. A great opening to the Halloween season that includes some education with the decapitation.

HOWL-O-WEEN

October 25th – 26th
6:00 PM – 10:00 PM
Phoenix Zoo, Phoenix, Arizona
All Ages

We are here to scare again this year! Enjoy another performance by undead pirates, be spooked by mates who wander free from Davey Jones, and grab some sugary treats and booty from the dead man's chest. For images from last year's Howl-o-Ween check out www.theDREADfleet.com

PIRATE FALL FEAST

November 2nd; All Ages
7:00 pm – 10:00 pm
Time: TBA; Location: TBA

The DREAD Fleet invite you to their se-

cret pirate port for an evening of fine faire, entertainments, dancing, music, games, and of course a live steel tournament with a fine lot of treasure to the winner!

For more information and tickets:
www.eventbrite.com/dreadfeast

Kinky & Geeky in Arizona - for those who combine geeky interests with alternative lifestyles including but not limited to Poly, GLBTQIA, and BDSM. Our munch is the 4th Wednesday of the month at Nello's in Tempe at 7pm, our game night is 2nd Friday at the Denny's on I17 & Dunlap from 6pm onwards. There are other parties and events throughout the year. Find us on Fetlife.

AUTHOR EVENTS:

Upcoming Signings / Events at
The Poisoned Pen - 1-888-560-9919
4014 N Goldwater Blvd. Suite 101
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
www.poisonedpen.com

Changing Hands Bookstore
6428 S McClintock Dr., Tempe
Contact Changing Hands bookstore for details on signing limitations. 480.730.0205
www.changinghands.com

Velma Teague Library is located at 7010 N. 58th Ave. Glendale, AZ 85301 Ph.623-930-3431

B&Ns locations can be found at BN.com
WRITING WORKSHOPS:

East Valley Writing Workshop
Wednesdays, 6:00 PM
at Village Inn in Mesa, AZ

East Valley Writing Workshop
Every Sunday 1:00 PM at Shadow Mountain Village - Main Clubhouse in Scottsdale Publishing, Networking, and Marketing Meetup -- Starting in September on the THIRD Saturday, monthly at Shadow Mountain Village - Main Clubhouse - 2pm - 4pm
8780 E McKellips Road, Scottsdale, AZ

GETTING STARTED WITH SELF-PUBLISHING; Sept. 14, 2013, 8am–5 pm School's director of outreach and a publishing veteran, and Nic Lindh, the Cronkite School's webmaster and instructional technology analyst, who has created ebooks for multiple Cronkite School projects. Price: \$200; \$50 discount available for ASU faculty, staff, students and alumni. Use discount code "ASU." To register: <https://www.regonline.com/cnma2013>

GAMING & COMIC BOOK EVENTS:
HOTACE COMICS & COLLECTIBLES is having many events throughout the year include sword fighting, Magic tournaments, Spiderman and other characters visit the store, Laughing Moon girls signings, Author Book signings, comicbook workshops etc check our website at www.hotacecomics.com for our events listings.

JUNE 16 - SEPTEMBER 29 - **The Art of Video Games** at the Phoenix Art Museum. The exhibit explores the 40 year evolution of video games as an artistic medium. Traveling from the Smithsonian American Art Museum the exhibit features 80 games presented through still images, video footage and interactive displays. Free on Wednesdays from 3pm to 9pm. For more info <http://www.phxart.org/exhibitions/videogames>

GAME DAZE:

ALL EVENTS CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT: <http://www.gamedaze.com/GameDaze-Whats-Happening.aspx>
ARIZONA MILLS

5000 Arizona Mills Circle #530
Tempe, AZ 85282

ARROWHEAD TOWNE CENTRE

7700 W. Arrowhead Towne Center #2256
Glendale, AZ 85308

CHANDLER FASHION CENTER

3111 W Chandler Blvd #2416
Chandler, AZ 85226

PARADISE VALLEY MALL

4550 E. Cactus Road #302
Phoenix, AZ 85032

SUPERSTITION SPRINGS CENTER

6555 E. Southern Ave. #2026
Mesa, AZ 85206

TUCSON MALL

4500 N. Oracle Road #166
Tucson, AZ 85705

PARK PLACE MALL

5870 E Broadway Blvd # 258
Tucson, AZ 85711

POP CULTURE PARADISE

707 S. Forest Ave. #A, on ASU Campus
Tempe, AZ 85281 (480) 557-6640
Calendar: morethancomics@yahoo.com or get calendar online at <http://www.popculture-comics.com/>

EMPIRE GAMES

1766 S Greenfield Rd #102, Mesa, AZ 85206 - 480-813-1525
<http://www.empiregamesaz.com/pmwiki.php?n=Main.Calendar>

DRAWN TO COMICS

Marvel vs Capcom 1st Fridays 6pm
HeroClix. Sat 1pm
Sit-and-Sketch with local artists.
3rd Saturday, 6pm-8pm
Check FaceBook for other events

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Hammerhead 40K Club Meeting.
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Hammerhead Club 40k tournament. 1st Wed, noon
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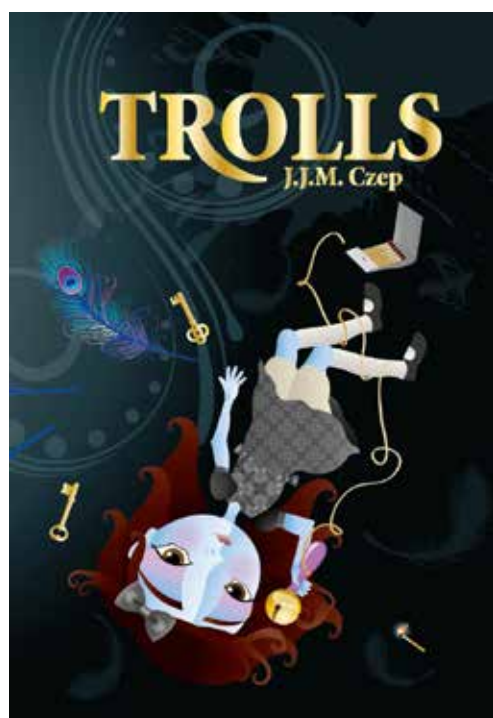
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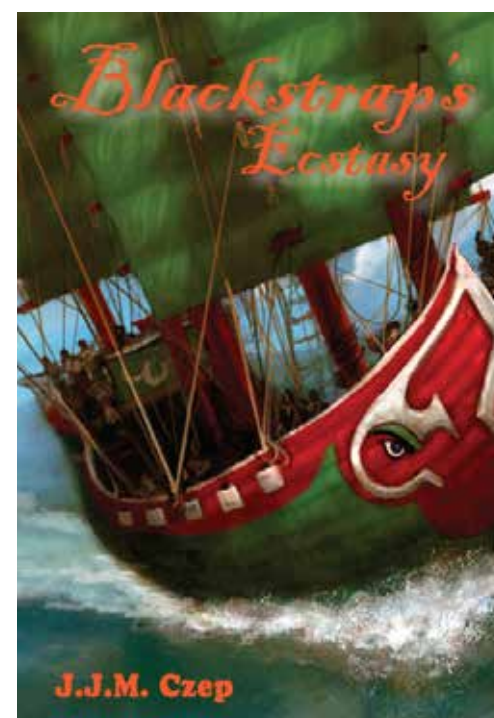


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Ghostbusters at Film Bar

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Bridging the Gulf Between Science-Fiction and Science Fact

Science Columnist: Sean Ellis

It's a popular refrain nowadays: "Where's the jetpack I was promised? Where are the flying cars? The hoverboards?"

As much as we look in admiration on the "prophetic" works of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and other nineteenth and early twentieth century science-fiction visionaries, we wag our heads in disappointment and even mockery at more contemporary scribes, who promised us an amazing future with unbelievable technologies, where space travel would be as commonplace as a drive to the corner store. Oft times, our world more closely resembles the dystopian imaginings of Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and E.M. Forster, men who are considered science-fiction writers only by virtue of the fact that they wrote of a possible (and sadly all too likely) future, and not because their stories were rooted in hard science. Science, and by extension, hard science-fiction, seems to have failed to give us that gleaming Utopian future we were promised.

Space travel seems especially to be an area where the reality has come up short. It took just 66 years for us to go from Kitty Hawk to the moon, but in the forty-odd years since, we haven't done much with that accomplishment. Instead of the permanent moon base envisioned by Arthur C. Clarke in the 1968 novel/movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, we have retreated back to low earth orbit. And Mars? Oh, we talk about it once in a while and send out robots to explore our nearest neighbor, but setting foot on the red planet seems less and less likely with each passing year.

One reason for our disappointment is that we focused a little too much on the fiction part of science-fiction. We've always thought of space travel in heroic terms--brave explorers, venturing into the final frontier. Space is just a big empty void, a sea of mostly nothing between the planets and stars. Crossing it is just a function of fuel and staving off the endless boredom...at least until we can crack the secret of faster-than-light travel. What's so hard about that?

Unfortunately, the reality is that traveling through space introduces a host of challenges that can be tough for our

earth-based sensibilities to grasp.

We know for example that prolonged periods of weightlessness cause muscle wasting and bone density loss. Floating in the free fall of space is just not the same as floating in a swimming pool. Constant acceleration, or perhaps a spinning centrifuge design might offset these problems, but those solutions are much easier said than done.

The biggest danger in space though is cosmic radiation, and new data gathered during the interplanetary voyage of the Mars rover Curiosity have revealed the extent of that danger to future astronauts who hope to someday plant our flag on red soil.

Here on earth, we are largely protected from cosmic rays by our atmosphere and magnetic field; the most dangerous type of radiation from space that we must contend with is ultraviolet light, which can cause sunburn and skin cancer with prolonged exposure. In space, there is considerably less protection. An astronaut aboard the International Space Station for six months receives a dose of radiation that is about ten times higher than what the average person on earth receives. Astronauts on a mission to Mars--the shortest possible journey would last the same six month period--would receive about five times as much radiation as those on the ISS or nearly fifty times what we would be getting back here on earth, significantly increasing their risk of cancer. Double those numbers if you include the return trip.

You may be asking, why not just raise shields?

Radiation is a tricky subject. Visible light is a type of electromagnetic radiation, with light "particles"--photons--traveling in wave patterns of different frequencies. We can feel these rays striking our skin in the form of thermal energy--heat--but visible light does not go very deep into solid matter. If you've ever stuck a flashlight in your mouth and observed how your cheeks get red, you've seen this effect at work; most of the wavelengths of light are absorbed by your skin, and only a faint red glow can be observed. Increasing the frequency or energy of photons will result in deeper penetration into matter, and can have ionizing effects--essentially, knocking electrons loose from atoms. Ionizing radiation can lead to the kind

of cellular mutations that cause cancer. Some types of EM radiation, such as X-rays, can only be stopped with a shield of dense metal, such as lead. Exposure to X-rays or microwaves (yes, the kind you use to pop popcorn and heat up water for a cup of tea) can cause cellular damage, but limiting exposure can greatly reduce the risk of cancer-causing mutations.

Cosmic rays however are a different story. In the simplest possible terms, cosmic rays are ions--material particles with an electrical charge--released by exploding stars throughout the universe. Cosmic ray particles, unlike photons, have mass. It's a bit mind-boggling to think about how much energy is involved in transporting these particles across thousands of light-years, but maybe this will help.

Imagine a grain of sand, a mere irritant if it gets in your eye, or if several of them collect in your shoe, but driven by the desert wind, those grains of sand can burrow into your skin and scour the paint off your car. Fortunately, we can cover up and protect ourselves. It's the energy that makes the difference; the more energy the particle contains, the more damage it can do. If ultraviolet light is like the grit in a sandstorm, then X-rays might be compared to the output of a commercial paint-stripping sandblaster.

Now, imagine replacing the sand with pebbles. It takes more energy to propel a pebble than it does a grain of sand, but the amount of damage is considerably greater because the pebble is more massive than grains of sand. Accelerate that pebble to ballistic velocities and you've got a bullet. That's the difference between EM radiation and cosmic rays.

As unbelievable as it sounds, there is no practical way to shield a spacecraft from cosmic rays. These particles have so much energy that walls of concrete and lead don't even slow them down. We are relatively safe here on earth because our atmosphere absorbs most, but not all, incoming cosmic ray particles, and that protection decreases with altitude.

The flight crews of commercial airliners will receive more exposure than people who spend their lives at sea level, and the health risk--the radiation exposure from a cross-continental flight is about half that of a chest X-ray--while relatively minimal cannot be ignored. Astronauts embarking on a mission to Mars would be playing a game of Russian roulette with cancer, and that's just one of the many thorny scientific realities that have confounded our fiction-inspired dreams of colonizing the rest of the solar system.

The problem of cosmic radiation is by no means insurmountable, but it well illustrates how science fiction can raise our expectations beyond what is reasonable, and in so doing, intensify our disappointment if--and let me stress this--if we don't apply our not-inconsiderable intellectual resources to the matter of finding a solution. Science-fiction writers are not prophets of science, predicting what our future will be, but rather are more like cheerleaders, telling us a future we can have if we just work toward it. No matter how much team spirit those cheerleaders can rouse, the game can only be won by the players on the field.

It's often been said that the average person has more computing power available to them in their smart phone than NASA had during the first moon mission. Where we are consistently coming up short is in science and mathematics education. All of that technological power will not advance us toward loftier goals unless we have trained and talented people using it to solve the problems that keep science-fiction from becoming science fact.

Sean Ellis is the author of several thriller and adventure novels. He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Policy from Oregon State University. Sean is also a member of the International Thriller Writers organization. He currently resides in Arizona, where he divides his time between writing, adventure sports, and trying to figure out how to save the world.

WOD



FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE:

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To find out more about this historic lady in space, here are a few suggested readings: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/06/201361684426500122.html>

FEATURED FICTION: THE DRIFTER - PART ONE - A Sci-Fi Serial Story

By Michael Bradley

With a shocking blare of white light and an intake of breath Tony burst into reality. Looking around, he was strapped down on a bed in a sanitized room, like a hospital. A man in a lab coat turned and looked down at him.

“Awake now, are you?”

“Where am I? Why am I here?” Tony sputtered.

“You took quite a shock; we are making sure you are well. This is the Peace Center. We are healing you.” The man tapped away on his hand held device.

Tony moved his neck about taking in the scene. “What shock?”

“Well when we pulled you from the pod you said you were time traveling.” The man shook a bit with restrained laughter.

“Pod?”

The stranger squinted and flashed a pen light device in Tony’s eyes. “Yes, the retrieval pod. You were found wandering about talking nonsense. I’m afraid your brain is not what it should be. After some tests we can fix you up.”

“Fix me up? I don’t want you tampering with my brain.” Tony struggled against his restraints, to no avail.

“You don’t want to be at peace? To take your place as a productive citizen of society?” The man made a dismissive ‘tsk-tsk’ sound.

“I don’t want to be at peace like some robot, I want

to be me. What is wrong with you Doctor?”

“Doctor? What an antiquated term. I am a Peacekeeper. We can’t have you railing against society, causing chaos and violence now can we? Why would anyone choose violence, conflict and rebellion over peaceful coexistence? Don’t worry, whoever you are, we will fix your brain patterns so you fit in nicely.”

The man left the room. Alone, Tony struggled to get free. His arms and legs were held firmly in place by some kind of plastic straps. He looked around, frantic.

“I have to get out of this place!” Tony yelled, sweating beading on his forehead.

“Don’t I know it Tony!” Came an answering voice next to him.

Tony looked over from his seat in the cockpit at the pilot. A well-dressed older man was holding the yoke and adjusting the thrusters.

Tony’s mind reeled and he felt sick.

“Where are we?”

“Down there is New York. As soon as we get our vector from station we head up north to my place in Maine like we talked about Tony.” The older man looked over at Tony. His forehead furrowed, “What is it Tony? You didn’t already take it did you?”

Tony had no idea what was going on. He mumbled, “No, of course not.” He looked out the side of the private jet cockpit down at the city. New York gleamed of silver plastisteel and transparent glassrock. “It looks



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so peaceful from up here.”

“It should Tony, not a crime, not even a punch thrown or an insult uttered since you developed The Protocol forty years ago.” The man listened on his com. “Clearance, we have a north vector. Let’s go relax and get some home-cooked lobster. World Headquarters can wait for a few days. You’ve earned a rest, and even though I’m just a figurehead as Earth President, I could use a few days to be myself too.”

Tony tried to process it all. Who am I? Where am I? When am I?

“Mr. Perez?”

Anthony Perez, Tony to his friends, turned to his lab manager. “Yes, Monica?”

“I’m sorry Boss, it’s just that you seemed to phase there for a minute. The pill will do that. I don’t know how long you will be with me. You have to remember you have the bomb inside you. You have to remember who and when you are and what you have to do.”

“Monica? Bomb?” Tony was trying to hold on, to stay in one place, one time.

“Boss, I warned you not to do this. Stay with me Mr. Perez. Stay with me just a few minutes. Focus on your index finger like you told me to remind you.”

Tony started to look at his finger in curiosity. Bright light flashed, he felt a tug at his mind. Crap, where am I going now?

WOD

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www.westercon66.org

MOVING PICTURES: THE RULES ARE, THERE AIN'T NO RULES

By Matthew Yenkala

In the last two columns I've covered why movies matter and my feelings about the differences between criticism and review. In both cases, I meant to conclude with a rundown of the "rules" by which I plan to write my reviews. In both cases, I got sidetracked. But I'm stubborn, so let's try again.

It IS tricky, though. I want to give readers at least a general sense of why I review the way I do. But I don't want to restrict myself too much by laying down rigid, inflexible strictures which I will inevitably bend, break or violate at one time or another. Whenever I feel an exception is warranted, which will be often, since every movie is different--and then dodge the charges of hypocrisy of not living up to my own rules.

But I will lay out some general parameters.

As I've previously mentioned, my primary reaction to a movie is based, first and foremost, on the answer to two questions. First, was I entertained? And second, was I moved?

More often than not, the answer to question one will be YES. I enjoy all kinds of movies. And I've been entertained by movies that some have considered awful, derivative, and worthless. We all have our guilty pleasures, right? But the fact is, I'm a cheerleader for every movie I pay money and spend time to go see.

As to the second...Well, I am very easily moved. I wear my bleeding heart on my sleeve. Sometimes even the silliest, most banal things will tug at my heartstrings. I'm a softy. At the same time, I intensely dislike artifice; an insincere tear-jerker will leave me cold. And when I'm profoundly moved...well, if you see ever see such a movie with me, you'll know when that is.

Another factor that deserves mentioning in this context is bias. To wit: in this issue, I've reviewed three films for which I was biased in one direction or another--but in each case I forced myself to set my biases aside and be as objective as possible.

In the case of THE INTERNSHIP, I like many of the key players. And even though my review begins with a somewhat cynical (albeit accurate) rundown of how predictable it is, you'll notice I still found some positive things to say about that movie. I was just disappointed that the sum was not greater than the parts.

As for THIS IS THE END--I'm truly not a huge fan of many of the film's key players. And yet, I walked out having enjoyed the film immensely and with a new measure of respect for all of them. And I have no shame in admitting it.

MAN OF STEEL, meanwhile, had a triple whammy going against it: my generational attachment to the Donner/Reeve films; my cordial dislike of producer Christopher Nolan's general tonal and stylistic approach; and my active dislike of virtually everything director Zack Snyder has ever done. And yet, against all odds, the film knocked it out of the park, so much that since the preview screening I saw, I've been telling everyone how good it is, and shortly after I submit this review, I'm going to see it again.

There's one final thing to consider: movies have been my passion since I was very small. I've read extensively about films, film history, and filmmakers. I've been on sets. I've run productions. I have friends--from directors to PAs--who make their living in the industry, and many more friends who plan to--myself included. It's not easy. No one sets out to make a bad film. Even if you were to point to, say, TROMA--they're still going for something, a certain kind of "bad" that has its own quality. No studio invests money in a film unless they think they're going to recoup their investment; no group of writers, artists, craftsmen, gives their time--even if they're getting paid--to something they hope will suck. Oh, they may know it's going to suck, but--they still give their all, because they're pros and they love what they do, even if they don't love every project.

Sometimes the makers of films that are considered bad are the most sincere of all, and the most surprised when their films fail to be well-received. I have to respect that. And I've actually noticed I spend more time dissecting a bad movie than praising a good movie--though I'm hardly the first to do this--which is probably a good topic for a future column.

So, I repay that investment on their part with my own: I try to approach each movie honestly, for what it is, on its own terms, and determine from there--after answering the two questions cited above--what



level of sincerity I believe the filmmaker to have. And THAT is where I often depart from my peers, both among fans and critics. I'll value a less-than-perfect film from an earnest filmmaker over a film that's perfectly polished but lacks heart and soul, any day of the week. If I detect an overabundance of artifice, cynicism, or--there's no other word for it--douchebaggery, chances are, I'll be turned off.

One final thought. I'm not above taking criticism myself. In fact, I'm more than happy to engage in debate, and explain why I rated a film as I did. I can agree to disagree quite well, and I'm more than able to see someone else's point of view as valid even if I don't share it. Some film-loving friends of mine, one of whom is quite well-established in the world of film criticism (Mr. Hal C.F. Astell of Apocalypse Later, who happens to also write for THE WOD), were astonished, for example, that I found anything good to say about movies like "Burt Wonderstone" and "The Host". And looking back, I was probably overly generous to both. Would I knock the ratings I gave them down a bit? Sure. But I won't retract what I had to say about them, because it honestly reflected how I walked out of the theater feeling and thinking.

In all aspects of my life, including watching and writing about films, I go with my gut. To do otherwise isn't even an option. And in the end, THAT is my first, last and only rule.

WOD

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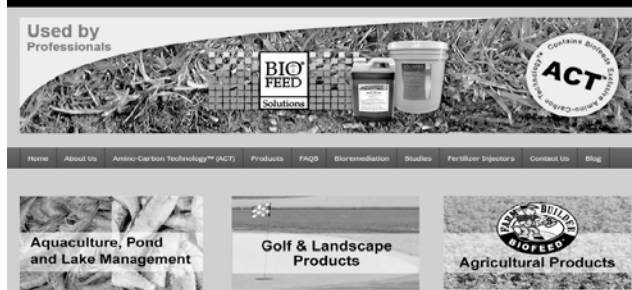


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MOVIE REVIEW: Star Trek: Into Darkness

Reviewed by Michael Bradley

Recently it was pointed out to me by a fellow columnist that I am a movie critic while they are a movie reviewer. Having given some thought to the distinction I would have to agree. In an era where the focus is on advertising and trailers, I believe movie studios should be held to a higher standard when spending tens or hundreds of millions to produce a roughly ninety minute entertainment. That is why I am glad for once to be able to wholly endorse a film - Star Trek: Into Darkness.

Canon is important to me, even in a movie line which has been “reset” into an alternative timeline. What made the original Star Trek TV series such a phenomenon was not big budgets or special effects. It was the great characters, interaction and vision of humans with the same foibles and attributes as now, cast into the future. The characters are well known - Captain Kirk, the brash, egotistical womanizer, whether with human or alien women, always ready to fire phasers but fiercely loyal to friends and stupidly brave. Spock, the stoic, emotionless logical being, struggling with his human half. Bones, the wry, cynical doctor. Uhura, the modern successful woman officer. Scotty, Chekov, and Sulu along with all the other characters overly defined by national accents and quirky personalities.

The new Star Trek movies capture those characters and that spirit of human interaction under futuristic alien conditions better than I had ever hoped possible as a long time fan. The casting is simply perfection. Chris Pine nails Captain Kirk as the lucky but arrogant leader that you cheer for even though you know they deserve to get in trouble. Zachary Quinto was born to play Spock. Zoe Saldana recreates Uhura with an appropriately strong modern take on the role. Karl Urban plays Dr. McCoy so well I swear I see DeForest Kelley on the screen. Simon Pegg brings the perfect humor to scenes without being campy or foolish. No offense intended, but I actually prefer Pegg’s portrayal to Doohan’s original. The interaction among them all brings pure pleasure to my fanboy senses.

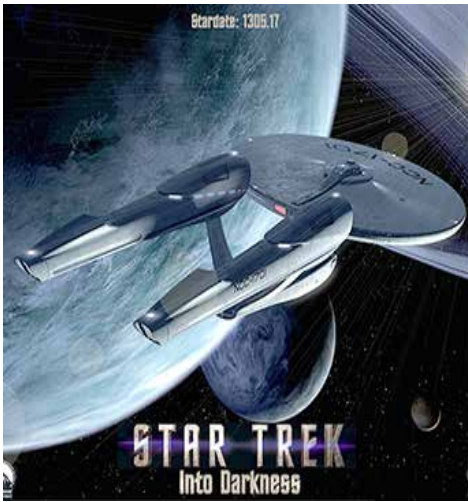
You might wonder why I am at paragraph four and have not mentioned the plot. That is the beauty of a well written and directed Star Trek feature. You don’t even care what the plot is, you just enjoy watching it happen. The plot is great though as well. For die-hard fans you will recall that Captain Christopher Pike was the original USS Enterprise Captain in the series pilot, and later was returned to the scene of that episode. In this time line, things happen differently. Pike is the father figure for Kirk who lost his father at

the beginning of the last film. The search for family, friends and belonging while growing into responsibility are foremost to the new Kirk. This is the theme shared by other crew members as well as they chafe on each other while clinging together for friendship and belonging.

Benedict Cumberpatch of Sherlock fame plays the villain. His updated portrayal of Khan loses all the 1970s campiness of the earlier version played so over-the-top by Ricardo Montalban. The movie is modern, edgy and has great visual effects. However, it is the personal drama that makes it so enjoyable.

The film has geo-political overtones about what people are willing to do to get an edge on their potential enemies and where lines should be drawn, including a “drone strike-like assassination” versus “arrest and trial” decision for a terrorist. It was good that unlike other recent fare that have come off as preachy or even as propaganda for particular partisan beliefs, this one leaves the questions more to the viewer without giving definitive answers. Kirk makes calls which are illegal, but you are not always sure they are right or wrong.

As a Star Trek fan, I grew weary of the long line of mediocre films that preceded the last two. It is great to see that the new reboots were able to capture that original sense of wonder, fascinating characters, sense of family with all the squabbles, and a great plot with little unnecessary



diversion. The very end was not as I would have made it, with the final confrontation with an Admiral seemingly too willing to be fully evil. That character sticks out all the more because all the others are so complex.

Alice Eve joins the cast as Dr. Carol Marcus, a new romantic interest for Kirk. In the original timeline Kirk and Marcus produce a child during a tryst unknown to Kirk. The grown child meets Kirk and is then slain. Who knows what will happen in this timeline? The good news is that Alice Eve was able to be strong and feisty enough to hold her own in screen time with Chris Pine, though the relationship between Spock and Uhura is by far more interesting, as you will see when you enjoy this outstanding film.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: NOW YOU SEE ME

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Reviewer Rating: 4 stubs

Rated PG-13/115 mins/Crime Thriller

Director: Louis Leterrier

Writers: Ed Solomon, Boaz Yakin & Edward Ricourt

Everyone’s heard the old line--”There are only [X] number of basic stories”. This is something that writers, in particular, have to contend with regularly. Though the good ones know the secret: it doesn’t matter how “basic” or even “derivative” a story may be; what matters is how the story is told, what fresh twists or amalgamations the writer can bring to it, and above all, how it can be filtered through his or her own personal filter to make it fresh, and more importantly, to make it their own.

Hollywood, of course, has its own spin: If something worked once, it’ll work again. Audiences? They’re so deadened, they’ll never know we’re feeding them the same dreck over and over in new packages.

This accounts, at least partly, for the plethora of sequels, prequels, remakes & reboots that have increasingly inundated movie (and TV) screens in the last

couple decades (though nostalgia is also a factor there). But let’s face it--studio filmmaking is an assembly line, and the parts (and manufacturers) are largely interchangeable. Which isn’t to say that there’s no value in the results--like with auto manufacturing, professionals are capable of making quality product to order, even if it’s safe and predictable.

But in the filmmaking world, this does have the effect of making anything even remotely fresh or original stand out like a pulsar. And on that score, NOW YOU SEE ME stands tall.

Boiled down to its most basic component, it’s a heist thriller. But the spin here IS quite fresh, at least to this reviewer. The heist(s) in question are undertaken by a group of stage magicians, working to the instructions of a powerful but unseen and unknown (even to them) puppet master. The foursome--played by Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Isla Fisher and Dave Franco--are plucked from varying levels of street-magician obscurity to fulfill the grand designs of The Eye, an ancient order of “true magicians”, whose origins stretch back thousands of years to ancient Egypt, and whose goals are appropriately mysterious.

The first job (the robbing of a Paris bank

vault, remotely, from a Las Vegas stage) goes off swimmingly--to the disbelieving eyes of thousands of spectators, among them billionaire, Arthur Tressler (Michael Caine), and magician-turned-debunker, Thaddeus Bradley (Morgan Freeman). Bradley is soon enlisted by FBI Agent, Dylan Rhodes (Mark Ruffalo), a man with a haunted past and a mission to keep after “The Four Horseman” through their second and third heists (New Orleans and New York, respectively). Rhodes is unwillingly saddled with the assistance of a green Interpol agent from Paris (Melanie Laurent), who continually encourages him to think outside the box.

Director, Louis Leterrier keeps the pace and the tension tight. There isn’t a lot of room for extraneous characterization. The archetypes are clear, and for the most part, so are their motivations. The performances are uniformly strong and the chemistry is believable (no doubt a welcome by-product of the fact that several of them have worked together in other projects). Some of the after-the-fact explanations of the magic seem a bit implausible (even given the setup); other aspects of the storyline seem downright perfunctory; but all work well enough within the confines of the story, and none detracts from the movie’s watchability or enjoyment factors.



I certainly won’t divulge the film’s final trick. Doubtless, some will have guessed it long beforehand, but it struck me as a nice left-field twist. I’ll just say that the performer on whom it rests does such an excellent job throughout the film of deflecting speculation away from themselves, it really does pack a punch--and yet, in retrospect, it’s brilliantly, blindingly obvious. And it passes one of my personal tests of ANY story: on the second viewing, it’s a different film entirely. And that’s real magic.

Now let’s see if they’ll be able to resist titling the sequel Now You Don’t...

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: WORLD WAR Z

Reviewed by Michael Bradley

I was looking forward to seeing World War Z after the trailers on television. The thought of Brad Pitt bringing his resources to a film along with “fast zombies” looked interesting. Unfortunately, the trailers are more exciting than the film. In summary, you get to see lots of close ups of Brad Pitt wondering what to do next, amazingly convenient plot devices, and zombies that had me laughing at several points during the movie, along with others in the audience.

It is not that Brad Pitt acts poorly in the film, but there is absolutely no character development. He has a family he cares about that his friends use to blackmail him into helping them. How is that for a story? His character is some vague UN investigator, leaving you to wonder if he was para-military, medical, just good at mysteries, or what? The movie never really explains what his expertise is in.

The beginning is the best, and even slightly scary, as zombies attack with lightning speed and people turn in just twelve seconds. It gets you fired up for an action packed thriller that never happens. Instead, Brad Pitt is so important, though we never find out why, that they break out all resources to rescue him. After that, he’s whisked magically to Korea, Israel and Cardiff despite the world falling apart. In each place he observes a few people un-attacked. The story is so linear that you know at each point he will get a clue, move on, and solve the problem.

There are so many plot holes but one bares mention above the others. Israel has managed to heed early warnings and protect its people behind a huge wall and track entrants through controlled ports of entry. Do they bother to have even one guard or weapon on the walls? Of course not, let’s not notice the zombies



until they are jumping over.

After he and his friend along the way magically survive an aircraft crash and then magically find a WHO research center while both wounded, he gets a revelation why the zombies don’t attack certain people. One that there is absolutely no reason for him to come up with based on the movie. What follows includes zombies that squawk comically like chickens and one that clicks its teeth like Fire Marshal Bill from In Living Color. At both points the audience was actually laughing out

loud.

After that, Brad Pitt’s character magically communicates his vaccine around the world despite a dead satellite phone, UN personnel around the world put together the cure despite worldwide crisis, and Brad Pitt is picked up and taken across the Atlantic to be with his family. It was the least scary zombie film ever and one of the most poorly written mystery/adventure films as well. The movie’s earlier action scenes are entertaining, but overall the film is a disappointment.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: THIS IS THE END



Reviewer Rating: 3-1/2 stubs

Rated R/107 mins/Comedy
Director: Evan Goldberg & Seth Rogan
Writers: Seth Rogan & Evan Goldberg

Growing up in a fairly religious household, I saw my share of Biblical epics as a kid--The Ten Commandments, Ben Hur, and (of course), The Bible, among others. A little later in life, as I found out more about “Hollywood Babylon” and the scandalous lifestyles of the stars who were playing these pious Biblical figures, I sometimes wondered how they would have reacted if the Lord had smote them down right on the sets of their films, for the sins of hedonism and hypocrisy. (Such thoughts were courtesy of the concomitant Apocalyptic conditioning I received.) I’ve come a long way from those self-righteous days, but I’ve still never lost my sense of ironic amusement at the disparity between

what was portrayed and the lives of the portrayers. But with THIS IS THE END, despite its mocking tone, I finally get my childhood wish-fulfillment.

These days, of course, anything of a religious or spiritual nature is openly regarded as suspect by Hollywood, and if it does appear as anything but a convenient plot device, it’s portrayed as either a debilitating character flaw, or an object of ridicule, or both. Here, though, all is not quite what it seems.

The premise is simple: Hollywood. Today. June 2013. Right Now. Actor James Franco is having a party at his new mansion/compound. Among those invited are fellow actors Michael Cera, Jonah Hill, Emma Watson, Craig Robinson, Jason Segall, Paul Rudd, and Christopher Mintz-Plasse, along with pop star Rihanna, and the mensch of the Apatow generation, Seth Rogan. Pointedly not invited is mullet-headed good ol’ boy, Danny McBride.

A reluctant guest is Rogan’s childhood friend and fellow actor, Jay Baruchel. An east coast hipster who professes to hate Hollywood, largely because it’s driven a wedge between him and Rogan. Jay looks and feels pasty and out of place. Going into town to buy smokes, he tries to explain all this to Rogan--and that’s when the fit hits the shan.

Columns of blue light draw some people, seemingly at random, up into the heavens, leaving others behind. Driverless cars crash into telephone poles. Fires erupt. Sinkholes appear everywhere, including right outside of the Franco place, claiming B-list victims

right and left, such as Mindy Kaling and David Krumholtz. And the oft-maligned, Michael Cera, gets a gruesome onscreen demise that will doubtless please his many haters.

Steeling themselves into the compound, survivors Jay, Rogan, Hill, Robinson and Franco struggle to make sense of it all. But over the next hour, as they contend with surviving a post-apocalyptic world, which includes an attack from an axe-wielding, F-bomb-dropping Emma Watson, Ghostbuster-esque demon dogs, a possessed Hill and a cannibalistic turn from McBride, they come to the inevitable conclusion: The Book of Revelations wasn’t bullshit. Judgment Day is at hand. And those raptured into the sky were the pure souls who’d earned their way to Heaven by being good people. So it’s hardly surprising that none of the famous Hollywood actors, with their decadent lifestyles, were deemed worthy. But is it too late for those--ahem--”left behind”?

The difference between THIS IS THE END and that eponymously titled story is that THIS IS THE END is intentionally comedic.

Making this film was a brave move by Rogan, the current king of the slacker/stoner generation. By basically playing caricatures of themselves, he and his fellow actors, most of whom have as many detractors as fans, are all playing to their respective public images--for better and worse. Cera is widely viewed as a narcissistic walking hormone. Hill’s niceness comes across as too good to be real. Franco is regarded as a pretentious, effete dandy. And McBride is the white

trash cousin/neighbor you DON’T want to invite to your housewarming party. A generation earlier, this role would have belonged to Randy Quaid. The actors could have tried to use the movie to counteract their negative publicity. Instead, they feed the fire, to comedic effect--and it works. In spades. I’m speaking as one of the converted. I’m not a huge fan of many of those involved, including Rogan, Hill and Cera; but after this movie, I think I’m cool with all of them. Well, maybe not Cera.

On the spiritual side, the film makes an interesting companion and counterpoint to, say, Kevin Smith’s DOGMA. But that film was made by a believer who was tackling the hypocrisies he saw in his own faith, without questioning the nature of the faith itself. In this case, the apocalyptic setting is a device, used somewhat cynically, to make wry comments and sly observations about a number of topics--the Prepper mentality, the softness of self-centered actors, and the nature of what it means to be a good person. But above all, at its core, it’s a story about the value of friendship and loyalty.

Regardless of whether the filmmakers actually believe in the secular salvation they espouse, it’s to the film’s credit that it manages to be utterly profane, yet relatively pure of heart. Its final messages--don’t be a douchebag, beautifully illustrated by Franco’s final scene, and value your true friendships--are ones I hope everyone who sees this movie take to heart, especially the Frat Bros.

Oh, and Channing Tatum’s cameo is his Best. Role. Ever.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: THE INTERNSHIP

Review Rating: 1-1/2 stubs
Rated PG-13/119 mins/Comedy
Director: Shawn Levy
Writers: Shawn Levy & Vince Vaughn

(What follows is an almost verbatim conversation between your humble reviewer and his good friend Justin.)

MATT: Hey Justin, you wanna catch a movie this weekend?
JUSTIN: Sure, what's out?
MATT: I was thinking "The Internship".
JUSTIN: Ah! Vince Vaughn & Owen Wilson, together again.
MATT: All hail the Comedy Mafia! Wanna guess how the movie goes?
JUSTIN: I predict that Vince Vaughn is a fast-talking hustler who hides a secret heart of gold behind his rough exterior, and Owen Wilson learns that everyone has to grow up someday. Or vice versa.
MATT: Yeah. What do you want to bet that one of them ends up with an uptight but super-hot chick who's totally out of their league?
JUSTIN: Yep, she may look like an unkempt nerd, but once those glasses come off and she lets her hair down, it's sexytime!
MATT: Oh, and they're bullied by some smartass, brown-nosing corporate tool who gets what he deserves in the end.
JUSTIN: And there has to be a crusty veteran CEO that they make sour first impression on, but who they eventually win over with their tenacity, sincerity and out-of-the-box thinking.
MATT: Oh, and let's not forget how they rally a team of bottom-of-the-barrel misfits to a last-second victory.
JUSTIN: Or the gratuitous party scene.
MATT: By gods, the movie is ruined.
JUSTIN: We wrote the whole thing in 5 minutes.
MATT: We are geniuses.
JUSTIN: We should write every "Bro" comedy for the next decade.
MATT: Still want to see it?
JUSTIN: Yeah, but let's fist-bump every time we're right.
(2 hours and multiple fist-bumps later....)
MATT: It's too bad we couldn't find a sucker to take a bet on our predictions.
JUSTIN: We might have at least won back the money we shelled out for admission.

Once upon a time, according to legend, there existed a loose confederation of comic actors and writers known informally as "The Comedy Mafia" (aka "The Frat Pack"). Vaughn and Wilson were both supposedly members, along with peers like Will Ferrell, Jack Black, Ben Stiller, Steve Carell, Wilson's brother Luke, assorted lesser-known lights like the great David Koechner, and such producers/directors as Wes Anderson,

Judd Apatow and Todd Phillips.
Of course, none of them would own up to such a thing. They were all just friends who worked together and became successful at more or less the same time, went the party-line response. Of course, the denials lent it all the more credibility to the notion that the Comedy Mafia was really a thing.
However you want to spin it, for a few years, it seemed, these guys could get any project off the ground, any retro-hip reboot greenlit, and the hip young college-age Frat Bros in the audience would flock to see it, wallowing in the retro-hipness of it all. ANCHORMAN, OLD SCHOOL, DODGEBALL, SCHOOL OF ROCK, ZOOLANDER, and Wilson & Vaughn's signature pairing, WEDDING CRASHERS, were among the hits (there were plenty of misses, too, such as Wilson & Stiller's STARKY & HUTCH).
But times change. Aligning with Seth Rogan, Apatow spun off into his own brand, related to and overlapping with but distinct from "Mafia" tag (though retaining the "Frat Bro" appeal). Ferrell and most of the others have remained variously bankable, but the collective white-hot streak that bound them all together has long gone cold, and it's been a while since either Vaughn or Wilson, in particular, have really connected with audiences. And unfortunately, with its 2 hour running time, artificial generational clash, and thoroughly predictable formula, THE INTERNSHIP won't do anything to change that.
The problem with THE INTERNSHIP--a high-concept comedy in which former wristwatch salesmen Vaughn & Wilson, finding their wares obsolete, con their way into a highly coveted intern program at Google, normally reserved only for highly educated Gen-Y babies--is that it doesn't really settle on what it wants to be. Is it a wild, sexy college comedy? A coming-of-middle-age dramedy? A meditation on the differences between generations? A comment on the central role technology plays in modern life? An attempt to return Vaughn & Wilson to the creative and commercial heights of WEDDING CRASHERS? It tries to be all of those things, and unfortunately, it's not very successful at any of them.
Not that there's anything wrong with the tried-and-true formula of misfits overcoming tremendous odds, or the other genre that THE INTERNSHIP floats with, that of slightly over-age fish out of water. Both are durable classics. But it's an uneven mix, and employed in tandem here, they just don't gel. Which is a shame, because it really could have been something special.
Which isn't to say it's devoid of highlights. John Goodman and Will

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Ferrell make funny cameos, as do Rob Riggle and Gary Anthony Williams. The "band of misfits" are all played by appealing young actors, particularly Tiya Sircar as Neha (who lets on early that she fantasizes about being "Slave Leia" in a Star Wars cosplay--more on this later). Aasif Mandvi, best known from Comedy Central's DAILY SHOW, is almost terrifying as the Google supervisor overseeing the internship program (the anticipated "crusty CEO"), while Max Minghella--memorable from another movie that dealt with a pioneering web giant, THE SOCIAL NETWORK--plays the film's snotty, uptight villain to British-accented perfection. (I suppose he'll be tapped to star in a movie about YouTube next.) And Rose Byrne nails the smart-but-sexy librarian-type (adding her native Aussie accent) whom Wilson falls head over heels for.
Where the movie fails, though, it fails badly. Particularly baffling is the notion that, apparently, no one over 21 is expected to be familiar with such pop-culture mainstays as STAR WARS (a 35 year old franchise), THE X-MEN (a 60 year old franchise), or HARRY POTTER (OK, not quite 20, but c'mon--who HASN'T seen or read those stories?). Instead, Wilson and Vaughn make countless 80s references (particularly to Flashdance) that their young charges don't get (but which most Gen Y-ers that I know would get instantly, because 80s nostalgia has been in for quite some time now--retro is hip, remember?). Of course, the point was to make these two seem dated and out of touch with the young folk, but--it just doesn't wash. (Not least because, lest we forget, Generations X and Y have a great deal in common--they regularly meet in a Giant Room of Slack, filled with pot



smoke, videogames, pop culture talk, and ADULT SWIM playing on endless loop.)
Rather than serving as a bond between generations, THE INTERNSHIP instead manages to alienate both, falling flat in the process. Even the would-be-rousing climax (set to the title song from Flashdance, of course) where the Meek Overcome is so manufactured it barely raised an eyebrow. Which is a shame; there's a lot of talent in this room, talent that has some classic comedy films to its credit. But this patchwork of clichés isn't one of them. Too bad about that.
Postscript: given how prominently it was setup, I was disappointed to see that there was no payoff to the "Slave Leia Cosplay" discussion. Tweeting this to actress Tiya Sircar, she complimented me on my astute observation and assured me it exists as a cut scene, and pointed me to director Shawn Levy, who in turn responded that it will be included as part of an extended, unrated version on DVD.
Who knows, maybe the film will play better in that format. I'm willing to give it another shot in a few months. After all, who can say no to Slave Leia?
WOD



Through perilous adventure, and with the help of some unusual companions, Stefani and Robbie learn that things aren't always what they seem, that inner strength and friendship are mighty powers that can stand against even the darkest magic, and that home, while not always perfect, might not be such a bad place after all.
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MOVIE REVIEW: THE HANGOVER PART 111

Review Rating: 2 stubs
 Rated R/100 mins/Comedy
 Director: Todd Phillips
 Writers: Todd Phillips & Craig Mazin,
 based on characters created by Jon Lucas
 & Scott Moore

In 2009, THE HANGOVER came out of nowhere and went on to become the top-grossing R-Rated comedy in history (at least until it was dethroned by 2012’s TED). It made stars out of Bradley Cooper, Zach Galifianakis, and Ed Helms, and allegedly made everyone who saw it laugh until they were sick. At least, that’s what I’ve heard. Me, I saw it, I laughed a few times, I was entertained (especially by the great Ken Jeong’s, psychotic Mr. Chow), but my ultimate takeaway was--”Meh”. My true comedy love of that summer came a couple months later, in the form of the little-seen and unfairly maligned, THE GOODS: LIVE HARD, SELL HARD--which was trailered with THE HANGOVER, featured many of the same cast members, but spectacularly failed at the box office--though I personally still consider it the funniest movie I’ve ever seen, and if you haven’t seen it, I recommend you find and watch it. NOW.

This 2011’s Thailand-set sequel, imaginatively titled,THE HANGOVER PART II, was, literally, more of the same--with extra emphasis on the MORE part. The *exact* same plot, the *exact* same formula, just dialed up to 11. The same guys, on a bachelor party bender in a strange city, retrace their steps to find

out how the hell they got wherever they woke up with blotto memories (in both cases due to a narcotic mickey slipped by Galifianakis’ entitled, eternal man-child, Alan). The trail leads them through any number of “shocking” and “outrageous” twists, mostly sexual and scatological, as well as a few would-be touching romantic moments. None of which bothers me. If I considered low or blue humor a problem, I wouldn’t be writing this review while wearing a Beavis & Butt-Head T-shirt.

If anything, what bothered me about both movies was the artificial juxtaposition of moments that were supposed to be tender and/or profound mixed with the locker room humor. For my money, the first movie, especially, oversold it. It might play well to the frat boys, but despite the talented and appealing cast, I just didn’t buy it. And PART II was nothing less than an endurance test.

So when this inevitable PART III was announced, I took some solace in director, Todd Phillips’ pledge that it wouldn’t be a mere retread, that it would cover new ground, and that, most importantly, it would “end” the trilogy once and for all.

So does it? Well....
 First things first. It’s vastly better than PART II. That said...

PART III may cover a little new ground geographically (namely Mexico), but it revisits every setting from the first two films, and the final action is again set in and around Las Vegas. The gross-out factor is taken down a notch from the second installment (though an early scene involving a giraffe and a freeway overpass

is genuinely unsettling), and the “YOLO” aspect has a real tinge of desperation to it: these characters are literally fighting for their lives.

And that’s the main difference here: Tone. For a comedy, it’s extremely dark--darker than either of its predecessors. At times it approached maudlin--and occasionally grisly. Despite my issues with the first two films, I suppose that I’d taken for granted that when all was said and done, for all the Wolf Pack’s wacky shenanigans, there are no serious-to-permanent consequences to their actions. That’s no longer the case. For the first time, there’s an actual body count; and it’s not necessarily to the film’s betterment. The scenes where characters die are not funny, or even played comedically (something that, say, Tarantino is a Master at); they are gratuitous and definitely leave a bad taste.

Focusing on the positive: Cooper, Helms, odd-man-out, Justin Bartha, really do seem to invest in their characters more than might be expected; they don’t just phone it in. In particular their staging of an intervention for Alan, coping with his father’s untimely death, trying to finally push him into the adult world, is almost touching. John Goodman DOES phone in his performance as a ruthless crime enforcer, but hey--it’s John Goodman, so it’s OK. A welcome reappearance from the first film’s, Jade (played by my future wife, Heather Graham) lightens things up a bit in the middle and helps create a possible bridge to the 2029 reboot, HANGOVER: THE NEXT



GENERATION. And Ken Jeong, as the perpetually psychotic, Mr. Chow, never puts a foot wrong--despite his playing a genuinely reprehensible character.

But the buzzworthy cameo is none other than Melissa McCarthy as the pawn shop clerk who captures Alan’s heart (apparently, in Hollywood movies, chubby people can only be matched with other chubby people, especially if they’re FUNNY chubby people). Her character was a bit of a misfire for me. The character engages in pretty rampant elder abuse, something that will always hit my buttons wrong--call me crazy. Though a mid-credits tag featuring her and the Wolfpack waking up in a Vegas hotel room after yet another psychotic adventure (a hint of what PART IV might have been?) is predictably amusing.

In any case, if this truly IS the last we’ll see of these characters (Dear gods, please yes), it’s certainly a relief--to me, to audiences, and, presumably, to the actors and filmmakers. Besides, where else could they go? Another planet? (Dear gods, please no.) Let the Wolfpack ride into the sunset. I’ll howl for them.

WOD

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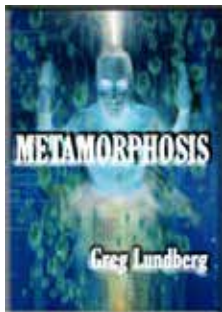
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WOD Bookshelf

METAMORPHOSIS

by Greg Lundberg

Greg Lundberg creates a grand universe of amazing technology and creepy aliens. I am not typically a reader of science fiction, but I really enjoyed Metamorphosis. The blend of high technology and ancient artifacts was well done. Greg does a great job of detailing how things work in his universe, without boring the reader. Half the fun for me was learning the science.



The story has the usual suspects; the genius rebel kid, the pretty but smart romantic interest, and the heroic leader. And, the heros; Ben, Jennifer, and Commander Eric Forest, face off against the arrogant alien warlord and his horde of followers. This is not to say the characters are poorly done; to the contrary, I enjoyed Greg's use of the characters and the depth he adds to the standard. While much of the relationship twists are expected I feel that was the point in this book.

It really is all about the world building. From the technology and the engineering behind the spacecraft and other tools - including the witty AI, Jack - to the history surrounding the alien races, every detail is considered. I would love to pick Greg's brain concerning the research that had to have gone into this story.

It is no wonder though that the tech is at the fore, Greg's other passion is engineering and it is clear in Metamorphosis.

-- Reviewed by Jenn Czep author of "Blackstrap's Ecstasy" and "Trolls"

BLACKSTRAP'S ECSTASY: A CORSAIR CAPTAIN'S LOG

By J.J.M. Czep

Publisher: The Dread Fleet

Gennie, Madblade, thief, Blackstrap, Solange de LeRenard, Cinta... all complex personalities of one Blackstrap Gennie, Captain of the pirate ship Ecstasy. Born to wealth and privilege only later to be cruelly

orphaned by the French inquisition, the young noble girl Solange makes her way in a world fraught with danger and terror. Her ship is attacked and her benefactor killed, leaving Solange to choose between a pirate's life and death. Having nothing to lose and no family to go home to, she chooses life as a pirate; bonding to her fellow shipmates and changing her name. Given the opportunity to lead a boarding party, Gennie wins for herself a ship, a crew, and the title "Pirate Captain" of the newly christened ship Ecstasy. Now Blackstrap Gennie can travel the seas to whatever destination she or fate decides. Cross her at your own peril, she's unpredictable and deadly with a blade, a gun, or an empty bottle of the finest rum (you're paying, of course). It's a pirate's tale told by J.J.M. Czep.

-- Reviewed by Greg Lundberg author of "Metamorphosis" and "ePublish your Book for \$350"

BABYLON STEEL (2012)

By Gaie Sebold

Madam of a whorehouse who used to be Goddess's Avatar tries to find a missing girl, but finds more there that she has to handle. She finds out the other Avatars from her home plane are looking for her ring to help them become real Gods and she has to stop them without falling prey to the primal desire to return to Godhood. Great supporting characters and lots of them aren't human, with an interesting take on an Arabian/Medieval world. Sex trade is really underplayed but is funny where she uses it.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - www.prescottlibrary.info



THE BREACH/ COLD COUNTRY/DEEP SKY

By Patrick Lee

I loved this series. It is a very quick read as there is lots of dialogue. A cop who got out of prison goes hiking and finds "Whisper," which implants an idea in his mind to save a pretty scientist and he finds out about "The Breach." It is a portal where strange tech comes out, but the government scientists aren't sure if the gadgets are from the future or a different dimension, and of course, there is a plot to destroy the world. This series reveals things about human nature that are both wonderful and awful and is well-matched by the cool tech (both good and bad) that they have to deal with. The action stays tight and the character development and motivations are believable. Our hero wants to help and what he finds out about the plot and about himself is really mind-bending. He could have been a monster but he tells himself not to be. The second and third ones continue the story ratcheting up the action and the cost to our hero may be more than he can bear.

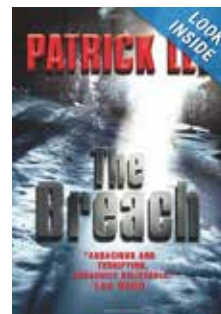
-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - www.prescottlibrary.info

THE BROKEN ONES (2012)

By Stephen M. Irwin

After each person gets saddled with their own personal ghost, the world goes crazy as people try to deal with something so out of their usual experience. Detective Oscar Mariani doesn't know who his ghost is or why it chose him, but he still tries to do his job. A series of ritualistic murders of disabled girls causes him to search out the possibly bad cop who he thinks is involved. But what he finds is way bigger than that. Characters feel like real people and the concept and development of the world-building is great. Probably there will be no sequel though as this had a complete ending.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

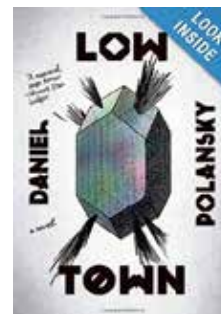


LOW TOWN (2011)

By Daniel Polansky

Great fantasy mystery similar to Fafhrd & the Grey Mouser or Harry Dresden but our protagonist is on the other side of the law until the death of small girl forces him back on the side of the law as he investigates sorcerers, noblemen, crooks, all of which bring back memories he would rather hide. Great book by a new author. Can't wait for more.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - www.prescottlibrary.info



CLEAN (2012) SHARP (2013)

By Alex Hughes

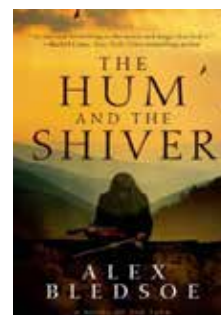
High powered telepath who is also a recovering Satin addict tries to find serial killer who is using telepathy to kill people who have talent. He has to figure out why and how and who and the Guild that controls ESP persons may be responsible. Lots of great characters and the plot line is very intricate. In the 2nd book, his job is on the line as budget cuts to the police department mean he has to increase his cleared case rate and make his contribution worth keeping him. Great use of illegal biotech with interesting development of his backstory. Not really similar in story line, but maybe in atmosphere, to the Harry Dresden series; but if you liked those you will probably like these too.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

THE HUM AND THE SHIVER (2011)

By Alex Bledsoe

This is my new favorite author. Mix Fae with Appalachian Hill Folk, add in music and a wounded Iraq war heroine and you've got a great combination. First Daughters, flying fae, two warring clans and a death omen that can't find its target make for fascinating reading. The



COMICPALOOZA 3: CONVENTION REVIEW



Reviewed by Amanda Oviatt

As with every Convention, Comicpalooza this year had a number of special guests. This year, two very important special guests were Avery Brooks and Patrick Stewart. You might know Avery Brooks as Benjamin Sisko of Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, or Hawk from Spenser for Hire. Brooks has been a professor of Theatre at Rutgers since 1976 (even during his Deep Space Nine years). Patrick Stewart has an impressive actor's resume: Jean Luc Picard (Star Trek, The Next Generation) Professor Charles Xavier (X-Men movie franchise), Ebenezer Scrooge, and a variety of other film, television, and a multitude of theatre performances.

Despite their other credits, the two are perhaps most popularly known for their Star Trek characters.

The first Q&A we attended was for Avery Brooks. Commander (later Captain) Sisko has long been my favorite Star Trek commander. Perhaps it is because Deep Space Nine is the one Star Trek show that ties the characters to a single location. On DS9, the Federation Officers must face all the consequences of their actions and interactions with the peoples they encounter (either through the Wormhole, on Bajor, the Klingons, or Cardassians).

No, that would be why Ds9 remains my favorite Trek. Sisko is my favorite probably because is a family man. Picard is no family man. Kirk has a son, that he does not help raise. Janeway did not have children. Sisko was

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HUM is what you feel when a Tufa loves you and the SHIVER is what you feel when one hates you. The family dynamics are tight and the genealogy of the Fae traveling from England before Columbus to settle in North Carolina is an unusual take on fairies too. The sequel, Wisp of a Thing should come out in July 2013 but is already generating a positive buzz.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - www.prescottlibrary.info

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consistently conflicted about caring for his son and the residents of Deep Space Nine. Benjamin Sisko had to play the diplomatic games with non-Federation societies on a frequent basis, balancing Bajoran, Cardassian, Klingon, Federation, and a number of others who found their way to his station.

During the Avery Brooks Q&A, he spoke like an educator. One question raised by the audience was "Did you think, at the time, that what you were doing on DS9 was profound?" His answer: We cannot be profound every day.

The lightest moment of the Q&A was when a fan asked him, "In light of 3-D printing technology, and how it can soon be used to replicate food like in Star Trek, are you upset about the lack of Flying Cars we were promised?"

"WHAT!!!!!!!" To be fair, the audience was just as confused.

To the question, "What is the worst role you've ever had to audition for?" he had an interesting tale:

Once, when he was a young actor, he was practicing his music and got a call from his agent. A director in Manhattan wanted to see him audition for a role in a play about Malcolm X, that day, as soon as he could get there. Brooks rushed over, and the role that he was wanted for? "Black man in a Pink Hat."



Avery Brooks said that once, during the early years of DS9, (not at Comicpalooza) me was asked, "What is it like to play a black Captain in Star Trek?"

"WHAT!!!!!!!" You can't play Black, pink, brown, purple, or green. You can't play a color, he explained. Playing a Captain? amazing.

Patrick Stewart's Q&A followed afterwards, in a larger arena and in front of a

larger audience than that of Avery Brooks. Stewart, fresh off the set of the latest X-Men movie.

The warm-up for Patrick Stewart was amazing. Ryan Chase, a local Radio DJ (104.1 KRBE's Morning Show) talked to the audience, along with a local TV newscaster. (I had a moment of happiness here: Mr. Chase is on the morning show that I listen to if I can deign myself to wake up early enough to listen to a morning radio show. Double Nerd awesome for the MoonSedai! Professor X and one of my favorite DJs!) He donned a Red Star Trek uniform to wear when Patrick Stewart arrived.

Ryan Chase asked the question: "I had the opportunity to work with Brent Spiner (Data on TNG) on an episode of Enterprise. And he told me he's never watched an episode of TNG because 'the last thing you want to do after 16 hours on set is watch more Star Trek. Is this true with you as well?'"

"No offense meant to Brent, I know he's a local Texan, but he lied. That might be true of Bill (Shatner). But no, I think that's false. I have watched TNG, not every episode, but it's on my bucket list."

He then told an interesting story.

Once, some time ago, he checked into a hotel and ordered room service. Tired, he turned on the television, and caught an episode of The Next Generation on. He did not remember the episode, so he was watching it. The bellboy who delivered his room service gave him a look that said 'as soon as I get back to my buddies, I'm going to tell them I've seen this pathetic sight Patrick Stewart reliving his glory days.'

Other interesting tidbits: He liked Star Trek (2009) but had not yet seen Into Darkness. His favorite episode of

Next Generation was Inner Light: in part because it is a 'fan favorite' but also because he had the chance to work alongside his son. Picard is an imitation of his father, Professor X has more Patrick. There are a number of roles out there he still wants to play, a list as long as his arm. He keeps in touch with one of his childhood teachers, and invited this teacher to his Knighthood ceremony. Later this year he's going to be in a production of Waiting for Godot and No Man's Land with Ian McKellan, Billy Crudup, and Shuler Hensley.

Perhaps one of the most touching moments was in about his work with Amnesty International. Patrick Stewart discussed how his father suffered from PTSD and abused his mother while he was a child, and thus has worked in two types of charities. Perhaps I'll just show you the video. (Posted on Youtube by Heather Skye):

He works in two different types of charities in memory of his parents: supporting charities to help women get out of abusive situations for his mother, and helping his father by supporting charities that assist returning soldiers.

The two actors each handled the room of fans in two distinct styles. Avery Brooks talked like a professor, no surprise, since he is a teacher. He had less questions to answer, but mostly because every question had a long answer.

Patrick Stewart was relatively laid back, and seemed perfectly comfortable on a stage in front of 1,000 people. I did not know that Patrick Stewart was as dedicated to Amnesty International: I actually walked away with a deeper respect for the actor because of this Q&A.

In my earlier blog Nerds in their Natural Habitat, I discussed the "Nerd Tribal Chieftans." The two have used their status as "actors who used to be Star Trek Captains" to talk to fans, speak out about matters that concern them, to do some good for the world. It is their willingness to talk to fans, answer questions, and discuss their experiences that allow them to remain relevant to Nerd culture despite their respective shows being off the air for many years.

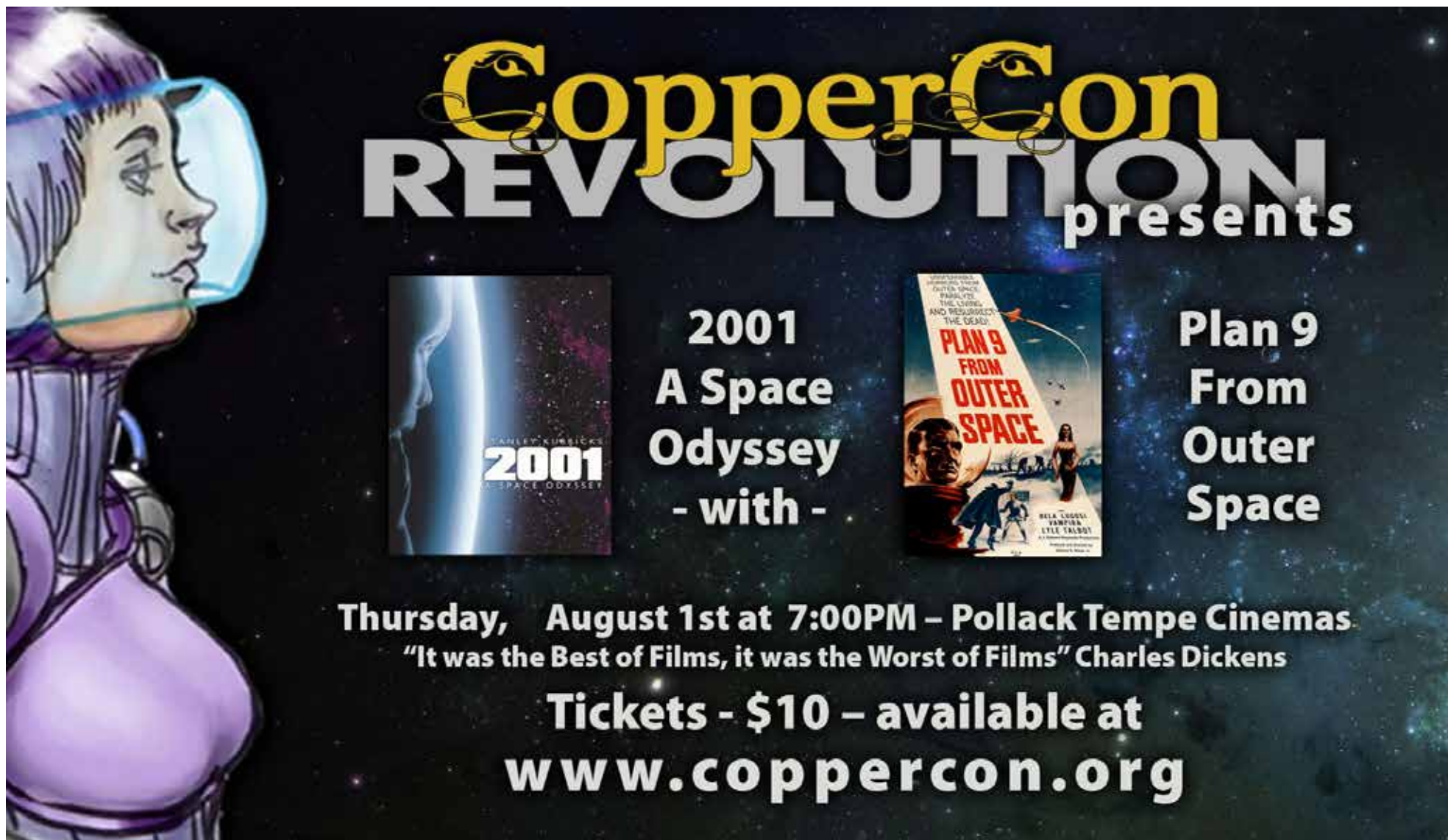
Additional Notes: On a personal level, I was touched emotionally during the above given speech. Women's rights and help for service members are two very important things in my life- as a Veteran and as a woman. Much has been said in other places about how awesome Patrick Stewart is, how amazing he was to show this fan support, and how awe-inspiring his stance is on domestic abuse. I am proud to say I was there at that moment, and even though the fan hugged was another fan, I felt like this was Patrick Stewart showing his support for female fans everywhere.

Patrick Stewart is my new hero.

I am Amanda Oviatt, and I believe that Dr. Pepper and M&Ms just might be manna from Heaven. I have a Master's Degree in Women's History from the University of Houston, Clear Lake. I have worked in Retail Electronics, movie rentals, education, Karaoke, and the U.S. Army. Some of my personal interests include fantasy books, SciFi television and movies, 1960s rock, video games and tabletop role playing games. I live in a haunted hotel with my evil wizard and am guarded by two ferocious dire schnauzers.

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