



The

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Volume 1, Issue 5; August 2013

## WOD NEWSPAPER

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

## Cosplay Guest for CopperCon Visits with KWOD Radio

Interview written by Michael Bradley

Toni Darling has fast become a nationally known cosplayer and model. Her iconic Lady Thor cosplay and abs of steel make her easily recognizable to fans at events. At Phoenix ComicCon 2013 I saw her again at the Cosplay Calendar girls booth dressed as Halibel. Hundreds of fans swarmed her and the other awesome ladies of cosplay featured in the calendar.

It was my pleasure to be able to write some notes and arrange a time for Patti Hulstrand to interview her for KWOD Radio prior to Toni Darling appearing as a guest locally at CopperCon, following her guest appearance at San Diego International ComicCon and other events. The following is a paraphrase of key interview moments.

For the full interview, please go to:

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/kwodradio/2013/07/13/cosplay-lady-extraordinaire-toni-darling>

PJ - Thank you so much for taking the time to chat. You are famous for Lady Thor, Lady Death and now Halibel cosplay among others. How did this all start?

TD - Well, I always enjoyed nerdy things and going to renaissance festivals growing up. One day I saw there was going to be a Zombie Bikini contest in Mesa and I thought it would be fun. I showed up dressed as a cowgirl zombie and had fun. While I was there, other people encouraged me to do more outfits at other events.

PJ - That was just as recent as January of 2012? Things have moved quickly then?

TD - Yes, they have. I didn't really know about cosplay like I do now. Jim Miller at Geek Associated Press and Tasha McEntire gave me my start. Other cosplayers were nice and explained things to me. I want to really thank Cara Nicole, also known as AZ Powergirl. She took me under her wing and really mentored me in a major way. She's a great friend and I can't say enough about how much she has looked out for me and helped me.

PJ - Lady Thor is a very well known character of yours now.

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Photo Release Toni Darling

## CopperCon Revolution Movies: Plan 2001 from Outer Space

By Hal C F Astell



## PLAN 2001 FROM OUTER SPACE

Film programming at this year's CopperCon Revolution begins a week ahead of the event with a quirky one off screening at Tempe Pollack Cinema on Thursday, 1st August.

'It was the best of films, it was the worst of films...' quips Michael Fett, this year's CopperCon chairman, who is presenting what he believes is the best science fiction feature of all time alongside what history has been recording as the worst.

You won't be too surprised to find that the main attraction is Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece, 2001: A Space Odyssey, which stunned unprepared audiences on original release in 1968 and is still doing that 45 years later. The long, psychedelic ending remains one of the great visual treats of the cinema, only one of the reasons why this is the epitome of the film that you ought to see before you die and the film that you ought to see on the big screen.

Fett has an additional tie to this film. His home

town is Urbana, IL, at which 2001's psychotic computer, HAL 9000, was initially brought to life in Arthur C Clarke's original story. Another Urbana native was the late critic, Roger Ebert, who celebrated HAL by screening 2001 at the time and place of his birth in 1997.

On the other end of the cinematic spectrum is Plan 9 from Outer Space, made eight years earlier by outsider genius, Edward D Wood Jr. Plan 9 reached abiding fame when Michael and Harry Medved voted it 'the worst movie ever made' in their book, The Golden Turkey Awards. It kept that title for decades until the Mystery Science Theater 3000 folk

discovered and riffed Manos: The Hands of Fate, the bizarre horror movie that most experts now cite in its stead. I had a lot of fun comparing these two films earlier this year in my first book, Huh? An A-Z of Why Classic Bad Movies Were Made.

Plan 9 deserves to be seen on the big screen too but for a different reason. 2001 benefits from the full cinematic experience because of its epic nature. Plan 9 is a film best seen in a communal setting, where the unintentional humour works best. While it is certainly a terrible movie, it offers a considerable amount of fun to fans of the 'so bad that it's good' genre. Manos, on the hand, is pretty painful and is clearly 'so bad that it's bad'.

However bad Plan 9 is, it'll look good on the Tempe Pollack screen, projected through their new digital projector in high definition. You may have seen a poor DVD transfer of this film before, but the version being screened is the pristine remastered

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## George Reeves: TV's First Superman

by Wolf Forrest



It's been observed that there are three pictorial icons that are ubiquitously recognized around the world--the Coca-Cola logo, Mickey Mouse, and the Superman shield. Superman is the youngest of the three, although he turns 75 this month, and has had to play catch-up since his birth. He came into a world where Europe was gravid with war. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created him as an adjunct to Action Comics in June of 1938. That issue is now one of the most valuable comics in the world. Shortly thereafter, his exploits were found on the radio, voiced by future game show host Bud Collyer. His popularity continued to grow, and in 1941, the Fleischer brothers, creator of the animated versions of Popeye and Betty Boop, produced 17 cartoon shorts for movie theaters, and wartime saw Superman battling Nazis and Japanese as well as flying robots, dinosaurs, volcanoes, and magnetic telescopes, with Collyer continuing to provide a voice to the Man of Steel. By 1948, Superman was in theaters again, this time in chapterized serials starring Kirk Alyn as the caped hero.

He didn't fly in the beginning---his airborne

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Photo Credit Tatiana

*It's gone kind of viral on the web. How did you decide to do a female twist on such a famous male character?*

TD - Crossplay - or cosplaying the opposite gender character is pretty common now. I didn't start out to play Lady Thor. I liked going to ren fairs so I always wanted to have a character where I could wear armor. I had bought the helmet before just because I really liked it and I loved the character Thor. I have several of the comics and I am really into the story and the character. I made my own costume out of formed foam, but the one you see was made for me. So, I had the idea of a character with armor in my head long before it was Lady Thor. The outfit is actually really comfortable and they fitted it to me so I can wear it quite awhile at a time.

*PJ - In your Lady Death outfit you show a lot of skin and it has to be all white. How long does it take to get that look?*

TD - It's actually pretty easy. Most of it is sprayed on then I use some powder and even it out. The face and around the eyes takes a bit longer, but it's easier than you might think.

*PJ - You started playing Halibel recently. Do you get nervous with a new character, especially one showing that much skin?*

TD - No, not really. I mean, I want it to look really good and I spend a lot of time on that, making sure it the outfit is right. I am pretty confident and I enjoy playing the characters. I wanted to cosplay that story line for quite awhile and didn't really want to do the other characters. Halibel feels very natural for me.

*PJ - What is the best part of the cosplay experience for you?*

TD - For me it's really the other cosplayers, especially many of the girls I have become friends with. They really do support you and help and I look forward to events where we can be together. Surprisingly, we don't get to see each other as much as you would think. That is why I really look forward to

events like CopperCon, where I will be able to catch up with all my friends.

*PJ - So there's not a lot of friction between all of you going to the same events?*

TD - Not really. In most fields I know you would have a lot of competition and drama, but we don't have much of that. I think it's because we all got into this as fans and to have fun. I really enjoy my fellow cosplayers; they are great to be with.

*PJ - What do you recommend to new cosplayers?*

TD - They should cosplay to have fun. Now that there is more popularity, people think there is a lot of money to be had and there isn't. We have a lot of people I don't even know that want to be in future calendars. They should start going to events, creating their characters and having fun first. Once everyone gets to know them and knows they really care about cosplay, those opportunities can come up. There are some people who don't understand and just want to show up, have someone make them a costume, and get paid. The few women who really do well in cosplay have worked really hard for years, making their own costumes and going to events because they are real fans.

*PJ - I was encouraged to ask you about your workout and diet regimen. I've been told you are famous for your abs?*

TD - (laughs) It takes a lot of constant work to stay in that kind of shape. You can't look that way all the time and women shouldn't expect that. I build up and workout following a strict regimen and then I do a reducing program before a major event or modeling shoot to get that kind of a look. I actually eat around six times per day; I just eat the right things in the correct amounts and follow my exercise plan. I work with a friend and if I don't feel motivated, we can talk and come up with an alternative to keep up. You can't stop with your routine or you can't maintain it.

I have exercise videos I am putting together and training videos as well as a diet plan. Once I finish my certifications I will be able to directly train people, which is something I am very committed to doing. If anyone is interested, they should contact me at my Facebook page, Toni Darling. I am more than happy to talk to them and help them out.

*PJ - I am looking forward to seeing you at CopperCon in August.*

TD - I am looking forward to seeing my friends there. The local cons like CopperCon give you a lot better opportunity to talk with people and to just have fun. San Diego ComicCon is exciting, but you also get really tired from the long schedule, the crowds and the amount of activity. I'm always happy when I can get to Arizona and spend time with my friends.



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The WOD Newspaper is a for-profit newspaper and webzine for Fan's of literature, art, music, and video who attend Fan-Conventions. The newspaper is published in Arizona and distributed to fans in the southwestern states of the US: AZ, CA, NV, and UT. We also distribute to selected locations in Washington, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Circulation is estimated at 7,000+ based on the numbers we were getting from a previous publication and the fact we also have a website to offer readers; thewod.net.

Subscriptions: Cost for a 12 issue mailing subscription is: USA: \$24. Amazon eZine subscriptions will be \$12. a year. Corporate subscriptions are available, please email us for rates.

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The WOD Newspaper (ISSN: Pending) is published 12 times a year by Wiz Kidz, International, 6020 N. 77 Place, Scottsdale, AZ 85250.

VOLUME 1, ISSUE NUMBER 5  
SUBSCRIPTION: \$24 for 12 ISSUES

Newspaper Advertising: The WOD reaches science fiction, fantasy, gaming and horror fans throughout the greater southwest states. Our ad rates are: \$200/Back cover, \$125/ full page; \$75/half page; \$50/ one-fourth page; \$25/one-eighth page; \$15/one-sixteenth page. Discount for cash or check payments. Payments accepted through PayPal. More information can be obtained by contacting Advertising at Email: [editor@thewod.net](mailto:editor@thewod.net)

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version. Fett also chose to screen it in its colorised form rather than the traditional black and white one, and I can personally vouch for that decision, having seen the colorised version at Chandler Cinemas a few years ago. Purists who usually despise colorised films tend to enjoy two such examples: Reefer Madness and Plan 9 from Outer Space.

This Plan 2001 from Outer Space event is open to the public with a ticket price of \$10, with a \$5 discount for those who have already bought memberships to CopperCon. For those who intend to but haven't yet, memberships can also be bought at the screening. Showing your ticket stub for the films will get you a \$5 discount from the regular \$45 membership price.

## COPPERCON FILM FESTIVAL

Most of the film programming at CopperCon proper will take place on opening night: Thursday, 8th August.

Kicking things off will be the ever-popular local convention attraction known as Barry Bard's At the Movies, with its neverending supply of swag and free posters. I'll be following that with a mini-film festival similar to the one I programmed for LepreCon 39 back in May. Both At the Movies and the film festival are free of charge and open to the public. For those whose interest is piqued by these events, CopperCon memberships will be available to purchase during

them at the regular price.

My film festival will begin at 8.00pm and include a ninety minute set of short films and a feature. As I did at LepreCon, I've programmed a varied selection that showcases the different aspects of the science fiction genre without sacrificing quality. There's a vague theme of revolution to fit with the con, so expect lots of rebellious characters and situations, whether they're rebelling against their overlords, their captors or simply their lot in life. One notable character is surely rebelling against reality itself; you aren't likely to forget him in a hurry.

Even with those thematic restrictions, I managed to mix it up to the degree that one film is animated, while another is a musical and a third is clearly wrapped around a graphics demo to show just how much can be achieved with CGI without spending a fortune. All films are in English, though one is a German production, and the oldest film dates back only as far as 2009.

## WONDER WOMEN

This year's CopperCon is primarily focused around authors and artists, without much else in the way of film programming. The one major exception is a special screening on Saturday evening at 7.00pm of the documentary, Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines, after which I'll be doing a Q&A with Trina Robbins, who's prominently

interviewed in the film.

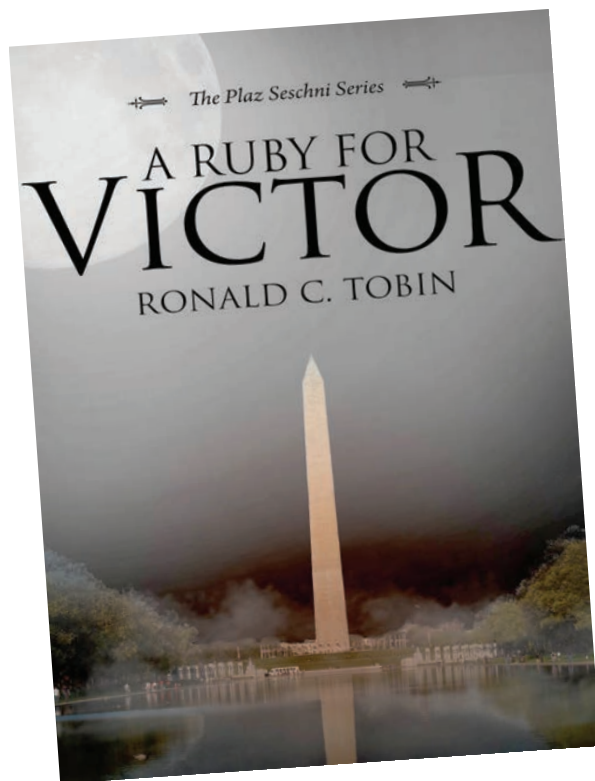
Wonder Women! takes a look at the women who did their part for truth, justice and the American way in a very male oriented field, whether you're counting writers, artists or characters. In and amongst the macho male superheroes whom we all recognise, there were female equivalents who could also be counted on to save the day. The catch is that, Wonder Woman aside, few of them are household names.

Robbins is a perfect interview subject for this film, as she's one of the most prominent women to work in the comic book industry. She founded It Ain't Me, Babe Comix in 1970, the first title to be produced entirely by women. At that point, she'd already been prominent in underground comics and had contributed to the creation of the long running character, Vampirella. Her importance only increased across the decades and, as she's CopperCon's Historian Guest of Honour, you'll have plenty of opportunity to talk with her throughout the con.

*Hal C F Astell writes reviews of films from the 1900s to the 2010s at Apocalypse Later, with a focus on what most critics don't cover. He is the author of two books, Huh? An A-Z of Why Classic American Bad Movies Were Made and Velvet Glove Cast in Iron: The Films of Tura Satana. Both are available at Amazon.*

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

WOD



From Arizona Author,  
Ronald C. Tobin

*Well done, Ronald Tobin,  
I am hooked on your vampire  
series and looking forward  
to the next book!*

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

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acrobatics were a product of leaping, as evidenced by the voice-over in both the beginning of the Fleischer cartoons and the tv show which hit the airwaves in 1953, after the success of a feature film called “Superman and the Mole Men”--”able to leap tall buildings in a single bound”--when George Reeves was called upon to fill the red boots. The Kirk Alyn serials used animation to depict Superman’s aerial exploits. The low-tech effects available to the tv show was a wire harness, similar to the one used by Mary Martin as Peter Pan, then a platform was used to support Reeves when the harness broke during a stunt, and a springboard was used to show his takeoffs--but it was the first time that audiences saw him fly!

What makes Superman different from other superheroes, and Reeves different from other actors who played him? He’s an orphan, having been sent to Earth in a rocket when his home planet Krypton exploded, and has made it his mission to protect his adopted planet from harm. An added tragic component of this is that he continues to be haunted by his home planet--as fragments of deadly Kryptonite, it’s the only thing that can hurt him.

His values come from the midwestern sensibilities of his new parents, the Kents. His powers, specifically his super-strength, come from the energy of our yellow sun (Krypton had a red sun), so there’s no need to depict him as overly muscle-bound. Reeves had the right combination physically, and his charm, cleft chin and boyish grin aren’t nearly as apparent in the other

actors who played Superman.

Two memorable episodes illustrate the compassion that Reeves exuded as Superman. In “Panic in the Sky”, the Man of Steel saves his adopted planet from destruction by an approaching asteroid, and develops amnesia--risking the revelation of his secret identity in the process. The other, “Around the World with Superman,” shows Reeves using his x-ray vision to guide an operation that will restore sight to a little girl, then taking her on a memorable round-the-world trip in his arms as he flies over various famous landmarks.

The comic series bearing the Superman name did not change significantly in the 1950s, and continued long after Reeves’ sudden death on June 16, 1959, perhaps benefitting from the association. It wasn’t until the late 60s when a new team of writers and artists significantly changed the look of Superman that the connection between the comic hero and the tv star began to erode. Still, the reruns on television continued to keep Reeves identified as Superman until the Christopher Reeve version in 1978. By then, nearly two generations of Superman fans had invested solely in the George Reeves icon.

It has been said that the death of innocence for the baby boomers--the death of Camelot--occurred at the JFK assassination. I maintain it was the sudden, shocking death of George Reeves which stopped kids dead in their tracks. If Superman could die, what else was possible? On more than one public appearance, Reeves had to deal with kids testing out his super-powers--one little boy even brought a loaded pistol to

validate his Kryptonian invulnerability.

Television typecast Reeves, and may have been a factor in his depression after the show ended in 1957, although he directed the last three episodes of the show and was moving in that direction. Of the six seasons, the last four were shot in color, although few homes in America had color tv in the mid 1950s. The producers were thinking about the future, specifically syndication, and how right they were. The combination of Reeves’ acting and warmth, terrific theme music, good supporting cast, and above average special effects put the shows a quantum leap over everything else that was being done at the time.

So, did Reeves die by accident, suicide, or murder? There’s compelling evidence for all three scenarios. The film HOLLYWOODLAND doesn’t answer those questions, and several books on the subject don’t solve the mystery either. Yes, Christopher Reeve also died a premature and tragic death, but it was the suddenness of George Reeves’ demise that pushed his memory into mythic status.

*Wolf Forrest has been a freelance artist and writer for over thirty years. His articles and illustrations have appeared in such places as MIDNIGHT MARQUEE, CINEFANTASTIQUE, BACKYARD BUGWATCHING, and THE WASHINGTON POST. He is currently working on a pop-up book based on the film NOSFERATU.*

WOD

# MOVIE REVIEW: THE WOLVERINE

by Mathew Yenkala

Review Rating: 3-1/2 Stubs

Rated PG-13/126 mins/ Action/Comic Book  
Director: James Mangold  
Writers: Mark Bomback, Christopher McQuarrie & Scott Frank

**WARNING: Mild spoilers ahead.**

I’m told by reliable sources that one’s reaction to The Wolverine--the sixth film in the X-Men franchise and a follow up to both 2006’s X-Men 3: The Last Stand and 2009’s X-Men Origins: Wolverine--will be largely dependent on one’s familiarity with, and loyalty to, Chris Claremont and Frank Miller’s 4-issue Wolverine limited series from 1982, on which this film is ostensibly based. Those who hold that series dear to their hearts may well cry foul at how the material, and more importantly, the characters, are handled in this movie. Those who mainly know the characters and settings of the X-Men world from the films (or the 90s animated TV show) will probably enjoy the hell out of it.

Myself, I straddle the middle. I’ve only dabbled in the comics, but I’ve absolutely loved the movies, for all their flaws (no geek project on the immediate horizon has me more excited than next year’s X-Men: Days of Future Past), and I have spent many a night up late reading Wiki articles about the characters, their geneses, backstories, and varying incarnations and interpretations. And while I can certainly relate to the feeling of a beloved work being butchered for the screen, in this case, not having read that specific series, and being pledged to judge each film on its own merits (as much as I can), I can honestly say: this



movie doesn’t suck.

Set an indefinite period of time after The Last Stand, the movie finds Logan (Hugh Jackman) doing a Grizzly Adams impression in the woods (right down to interacting with his own Gentle Ben). Hunted, and haunted by nightmares of (or visitations from--the film is pleasantly vague on the subject) Jean Grey (Famke Janssen), who he was forced to kill in X3, he is a man with no will to live and no way to die, thanks to the regenerative healing powers of his mutation.

Then comes a summons to Japan, delivered by Yukio (Rila Fukushima), a deadly (though easy on the eyes) assassin/bodyguard who works for the ailing Mr. Yashida (Hal Yamanouchi & Ken Yamamura), whom Logan saved in WW2. Yashida, under the guise of repaying his life-debt, makes Logan an offer he almost can’t refuse: to relieve him of the gift/curse of immortality.

But before Logan can really decide whether or not he is ready to live out a natural lifespan and then finally

die, all hell breaks loose, and the choice to become mortal is taken away from him. After an encounter with the villainous Viper (Svetlana Khodchenkova, in what should be a star-making turn), his healing powers stop working. For the first time in his life, pain and fatigue start to not only affect him but impede him. Still, he may be without country, cause or kin, but at heart he is a soldier, and he does what duty and honor demand.

Unfortunately this is where the film gets a little dicey. There are so many agendas at work, and so many characters, many of whom seem either redundant or extraneous, that it gets a little hard to keep track of them all, and it seems like much of the action during the middle act is killing time before the final showdown.

The main through-line follows Logan as he strives to protect Yashida’s granddaughter, Mariko (Tao Okamoto), from her ex-boyfriend, her fiancé, her father, and Viper, all of whom are after her as being the key, and heir, to her grandfather’s fortune, and how that will benefit or block their own selfish interests. Inevitably, they fall for one another, just in time to have Mariko snatched right out from under his claws, forcing him to go on the hunt for her. The final confrontation, featuring the Silver Samurai, is knuckle-rattling and bone-crunching action at its best, though one senses that it should have packed a somewhat bigger emotional punch.

Throughout the X-Men film series, no matter how good or bad any given entry may be, Hugh Jackman’s portrayal of Wolverine has never been less than consistently great. (Even his cameo in 2011’s First Class was a scene-stealer.) This movie is no exception and in fact, affords him the chance to take the character up several notches. By now, Jackman has come to

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# THE HISTORY OF SUPERMAN

by Michael Bradley

As Superman hits its official 75th Anniversary this year it is worth reviewing one of the most enduring and unique comic book superheroes in history. This is not a comprehensive list at all, as that would take an entire book to discuss. As early as 1930, Phillip Wylie had a similar character in the book, “Gladiator” and the same year writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster try to sell the story of “the Super-Man” who was actually a bald villain. Siegel and Shuster retooled the character and finally sold “Superman” to a publisher in 1938 in Action Comics #1, beginning the legendary hero we know today.

From that beginning, Superman, his powers and his political stance have changed with the times. In 1938, he was able to leap an eighth of a mile, outrun a steam locomotive and pick up a car. He fought against street crime in the urban city, corruption and crooked politicians. Following the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, comic readers wanted a hero with good farm-raised mid-West values who would come to the big city and fight against those that caused them harm physically and financially. He was a hero for his times.

In 1940, the villain Lex Luthor is introduced, first as being red-haired then later as bald. The red-haired industrial

baron with political connections played upon the real belief that the powerful “Tammany Hall” style politics in cities such as New York bought off politicians and police and left the common man in the lurch. Many villains in Superman are portrayed as bald or portly, somehow slovenly and less manly. In comparison, Superman always has an abundance of rich hair and a tall, muscular stature.

World War 2 brings new villains for the American people. During the war years and afterwards, Superman fights America’s enemies. He is shown in 1940, prior to our entry into the war, ending Europe’s problems by rounding up Hitler and Stalin and punching them in the nose. His straight-forward bravery and belief in “truth, justice and the American way” were patriotic themes that rang true to Americans who fought and died in World War 2 and Korea. His character thrived on the radio and on television. The Superman radio show ran from 1940 to 1951, replaced by the well-known black and white TV series from 1952 to 1958.

After that period, America suffered from the prolonged conflict in Vietnam and a mixed view of overseas conflict. Many superheroes and comics in general were deeply affected by the overall social malaise. The common villains of the 1930s to 1950s were no longer those feared by the public as a whole. From the late 1950s up through the early 1970s the



abilities of Superman increased to include faster-than-light travel speeds and his villains turned to outer-space aliens and technology. It was the generation of UFOs, the Twilight Zone, the Cold War and fear of extra-terrestrial life. As computers and machinery expanded, workers now feared replacement by machines.

As a result, Brainiac is introduced, a villain that is alien and steals cities with a shrink ray and keeps them for his own amusement, and Bizarro, a machine copy of Superman. As technology increases in society, simply being able to run fast and punch villains is not enough. The villains are now technology and space travel, so Superman had to keep pace.

The 1970s were a low point in Superman comics as gimmicks were employed to try to revive the series. These included a reboot of Superman’s powers to make him less indestructible, saw him move from the daily planet as a reporter to anchor of a TV news program, and even saw a “Superman vs. Muhammad Ali” comic in 1978 where the two combine to fight an alien invasion. From 1973 to 1986 the cartoon “Superfriends” invited a new generation to learn about Superman, Batman, Aquaman and others.

During this period of globalization, the nuclear arms race, the OPEC embargo, the environment and economic concerns were on the mind of the public. As a result, villains were polluters, nuclear proliferation, multi-national corporations and those holding back magical remedies for the fuel shortage to make profits. In 1978, the first Christopher Reeve movie is released based on those themes and it does well.

In 1980, Reagan is elected and the United States pulls out of its economic slump and has the longest period of non-wartime growth in history. Whether the 80s were a great time of economic growth, or economic excess, is a matter of perspective. When Superman 2 came out in 1980, the villains were once again General Zod and his team. After Star Wars was released in 1977, the special effects and the theme for this Superman sequel seemed outdated in comparison. The third

Superman movie in 1983 was turned into a slapstick comedy and Richard Prior added to try to make it current with the upbeat mood of the country, but it failed.

In 1993, DC Comics killed off Superman in Volume 2, Issue 75, which became the best selling issue in history. After that, Superman was split into four different candidates to become the new Superman. None of those caught on with the public, and so the original Superman reappeared several months later. The saving of the character occurred from 1993 to 1997 with “Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman” the romantic TV series with Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher. It was not coincidental that the series involved contemporary settings and issues, a more introspective and conflicted Superman, and more romance. Times were good and people were focused on suburbia and love stories.

This was followed up by the very successful “Smallville” series from 2001 to 2011, which focused on teenagers, high school, up-to-date social issues, and young love. The youth-oriented soap opera era was strong as discretionary spending among teenagers rose while their angst increased. These good time feelings were lost in 2011 with the attacks on America by Al-Qaeda and the ensuing wars.

While the comics continued throughout the history of Superman with very few interruptions, the public demand for more Superman films had waned. In 2006, Superman Returns was an attempt to reboot the movie franchise, but it failed to tap into any of society’s fears or needs and had a poor showing and reviews. The most recent, this year in fact, Superman: The Man of Steel might have what it takes. It combines a yearning for traditional values of right and wrong, with a pensive introspection about whether it is right to survive because you are stronger or more advanced.

Time will tell where the Superman franchise goes from here. After 75 long years, all we can really say is thank you, congratulations, and keep the new stories coming.

WOD

Continued from Page 3

own this role in such a way that it will be hard to ever see anyone else take it over. Here, he balances ferocity and heart, guilt and longing, with such seeming effortlessness that it’s hard to tell where the actor ends and the character begins.

The rest of the cast is generally solid as well, though Okamoto’s Mariko really does seem a bit flat, and definitely seems not quite dynamic enough to capture the heart of someone like Logan, even at his most introspective. But this is more than made up for by Fukushima’s Yukio, who must be seen to be believed. She seems a far more appropriate match for Wolverine, though I guess that would be straying too far from the source material. And speaking of that source material, I’m told that in comparison, these two characters are the most problematic, as they each bear only fleeting resemblance to their ink-and-paper counterparts.

That said, director James Mangold infuses the film with a sense of gravitas not present in any of the prior installments (particularly X3), and it has an internal integrity and intelligence that easily leaves the sloppy Origins in the dust (though in fact this film manages to seamlessly integrate and harmonize the often contradictory continuity of all of the previous films--quite a neat trick). The action is consistently well-choreographed, and a set-piece fight atop a train moving at 300 miles an hour definitely raises a new bar for this type of moving combat sequence. All of the production aspects are (unsurprisingly) top notch, though I don’t recommend 3D: the post-conversion barely registered for me. (Also, be sure to stay through the first part of the closing credits for a tag/teaser that will quite literally blow your mind.)

Nitpicks aside, I found The Wolverine to be a vastly entertaining film in its own right as well as a mouth-watering lead-in to Days of Future Past. But I must close with this: on the way home from the screening, I did stop and pick up the collected edition of the classic Wolverine comics miniseries. I will begin reading it shortly after I submit this review, and we shall see if it retroactively affects how I feel about the film. I hereby reserve the right to retract (Wolverine’s-claws-style) or modify this review in whole or part at some point in the future. (Or the past.) We shall see. Until then--Excelsior!





# ARIZONA ARTIST ALLEY

ARTIST COLUMNIST - Alfred Trujillo

Alright. Last month, I promised to tell you how I got started. But we all know: The Doctor LIES. Fortunately for you, I'm not The Doctor. BUT first, I'm writing this just a few days shy of embarking on a magical journey to San Diego, so let's talk about that!

ComiCon International, San Diego ComiCon, SDCC... and stuff.

When this time of the year rolls around, I'm often asked if I'm exhibiting, what my table number is, etc... etc... My only time to have exhibited there was with Zenescope Comics. At this moment, San Diego is not a financially feasible place to exhibit. Yet, I am still going. I'm working on doing signings and have a few other things lined up. By the time you read this, I'm sure I will have even more stories to tell. At this very moment, I have finished a set of seven sketch covers to be dropped off at CGC's booth in San Diego. I've incorporated some kind of Japanese aspect to each cover. We'll see who notices. Also, I have a couple of other commissions to get done. All in due time. (By the by, if you ever want some art commission work, I'm your guy!)

Ok, ok. Let's talk about getting into comics. Go to conventions. There. I've said it. What? You want more? Fine. Let's see if this is at all helpful.

We're back at 2009. I had not been actively trying to get into the 'business' very long back then. I'd gotten some good mentoring by the amazing Loston Wallace as well as many members of the art critique forum Penciljack. Online critique forums are great. Invaluable. I highly recommend them. They will teach you to #1, most importantly, of the highest benefit...can you guess? No. Ok. They will teach you to have tough skin. When you're in the art biz, especially commercial art, especially comic art...there are always things to be expected. Ways things are done. Tried and true things without which you will be reinventing the wheel for decades...and these things can be learned by showing your art to more experienced artist who, if you're lucky, won't JUST tell you that you suck, they will tell you what, why, and how to improve. To all you aspiring artists I say, find such a place, post your art and ask them to 'give it to you'. The rate at which you will improve will astonish you, your girlfriend, your mom, heck even your pets! And pets are hard to impress.

Where was I? Oh yeah, I went on an improvement rampage. Reading about storytelling, studying lighting, hittin dem anatomy books and trying to piece it all together. I created some page samples and on a friend's recommendation, I went to the very next available con: Emerald City Comicon. Seattle is like 1400 miles from Phoenix and it was my first experience attending a convention since the 90's. I printed a bunch of samples at the Copymax and talked to everyone at the show who made eye contact. Took my stuff to Marvel, took my stuff to Dark Horse, showed it to EVERY artist there I could and got some more critique. To those of you with the ability to go to a convention, I highly recommend not just showing your art, but also find out when art workshop panels take place and be there, or be square. And learn some very cool stuff from others.

Everything I learned, I took back home to Phoenix. I applied ALL the critique, did some more work and took the sum of all my efforts to my local con, Phoenix ComiCon. I shared a table with a friend for a day and a half and showed my art to DC and Zenescope Entertainment. There I met Raven Gregory whom I now consider a dear friend. Raven is not only the editor-in-chief at Zenescope, but also their head writer. I got my first published book with them after he saw my art, gave me a shot and got me the book. I have now been published by quite a few independent publishers, but I still remember that feeling of accomplishment getting my first book. It looked great when I was done. I even finished it several days under the deadline too. More on deadlines later!

Ok, my fine readers, I must be off. I have comics to write, commissions to draw and stories to tell. Don't forget to add me on facebook, check out my website and buy stuff through my store. Drop me a line if there's anything you'd like to talk about and we will see each other, figuratively speaking, next time. Until then, don't stop believing! Onward! And...stuff. Peace!

alfredtrujillo.com

facebook.com/alfred183



# COSPLAY CORNER

Cosplay Columnist - Cara Nicole/Az Powergirl



Where am I now?

I never know anymore. At this point the cities all run together. All I can do is hope that I didn't forget something...again.

I remember the time I forgot to bring my clothes to the con. That's right, all of them. I had my costumes and that's all that really matters. Fortunately, I had some good fans buy me some underwear and bring me shirts and pants. I felt like I was in that music video Thrift Shop. But I was grateful. I am fortunate to have such generous and caring people in my world.

Or there was that time I forgot my double-sided tape; otherwise known as boob tape. Without it my nipples keep popping out of my costume. As I frantically text EVERY cosplay girl I know, even with most of the Cosplay Calendar girls in attendance, the only lead to my tape deficiency was Kip Mussat. He's an artist! Why is he the only person at the show with two-sided tape? It all worked out and I, yet again, save myself from what is referred to in this circle as a "Cara Nicole Moment".

And then there are the days when I wear Jennifer from my comic book Project: Shadows and don't have time to get the two hour tattoo drawn on my arm. So what do I do? I wear the jacket that goes along with the suit. Problem solved.

So far, so good. It's now Saturday. Saturday is ALWAYS Powergirl day. As I dig through my bags and suit up I soon realize...you guessed it...my cape is missing. And what is attached to my cape? My disk and chain. What's a Powergirl to do? I could go capeless and say I'm Galetea. HELL NO! She has white boots, a smaller window, and white gloves. Am I just being picky? Maybe I should just wear Jill Valentine and then wear the spare costume from my creator-owned comic, Polly Gunn. Or...let's see... I have gold paper, if there is a vendor with a button press I can buy a cape at cost from my friend that sells Superman memorabilia (Powergirl is in the Superman family so the shield on the back is kosher), do the double disk suit that doesn't have a chain, and ditch the belt! Still a cannon PG costume! I'm all good. Except, no good, I can't find a button press. But wait, I find a necklace at the bottom of my bag. I can remove my pendant and hmmm....well what do you know, I have a Project: Shadows button. It's mostly gold and advertises my comic book. PERFECT!!

Cosplay isn't without its problems. When you have a table at a convention, product to sell, panels to present, and autographs to sign, guess what? You better be there. Like the time I broke my toe a few days before a con. The full-time high heels weren't going to cut it. So I thought hard and did an inventory of my costumes and characters and put together a Powergirl from the issue number one re-release from 1992. I got loads of comments and made people think and ask questions. I created an opportunity to educate fans about my character and show that I know my stuff. On another occasion I wore my Superman shirt with the negative space cut out. That became my best selling print. And it's not just about me. At one show my good friend forgot her Black Cat mask. So what did I do? I sat her down, pulled out my makeup and painted one on her. Remember, good friends don't let friends do bad cosplay.

As I pack for each show, I reflect on these times. I do my best to remember everything I need. Con life isn't without its ups and downs. At the end of the day, there is nothing that good friends, amazing fans, and duct tape can't fix.

azpowergirl.com/

facebook.com/azpowergirl

Youtube/theazpowergirl





# THE POLITICS OF SUPERMAN

by Michael Bradley

Superman is the only comic superhero whose alter-ego is the weakling. Clark Kent is a portrayal of how Superman, or Kal-El, views us. In order to fit in and be anonymous, he gets a mainstream, average salary job of news reporter. He wears standard clothing, not too fancy, pretends to be scared of conflict and myopic to the point he has to wear glasses to see anything. It is interesting that our protector views us as weak, lacking vision and plain. In his real persona, he has a Fortress of Solitude, to get away from all the humans and their problems, rises above the planet to get strength from the Sun, and flies around in a bright outfit.

This superficial look at the character is instructive. What makes Superman such a lasting character in our comic canon then? Superman has always been portrayed as the personification of the average, common sense, moral Mid-Western farm boy given super power to do what is right. His character is most successful when fighting villains that portray what we are angry at, fear, or hate at any given time. He gives strength for us to defeat these “villains” of our collective conscience for us, so we can deal psychologically with our own real world limitations to solve these issues.

Superman crash lands in Kansas and is raised by the Kent family with good solid values. When he learns about his superpowers, he keeps them hidden, then makes a choice to use for them good based on his adoptive upbringing. These adoptive parents are the entire basis for the longevity of the character. He is after all an alien, come to America, adopted and culturally mixed into the melting pot, and he becomes one of us. That is the American story. His tagline, less popular in this self-questioning era where patriotism is no longer viewed with universal approval was “Truth, Justice, and the American Way.”

What if he had landed elsewhere? At the 2011 Phoenix ComicCon film festival I had the unique pleasure to watch an indie film that explored this issue. Unfortunately, I

can no longer find the person who made it to give them credit. (Please let us know.) As memory serves, the title of the short was “Urbemensch” and it had Superman landing and growing up in Germany, prior to World War 2. As a result, he adopted their nationalism and fought for the Third Reich, saying something like, “Hard-Work, Discipline and the German Way.” The film shows him in prison, being asked to execute himself for supporting a country that committed the holocaust since no one had the means to carry out the sentence themselves. Wow.

What if Superman landed in a different country or a different time period? You can see that regardless of when and where, he would be different. In fact, one can hardly see him as a hero to many of us under those circumstances. It is his rural American upbringing that makes him our standard-bearer.

Now it is 2013, and America is divided on a political map nearly 50-50 red vs. blue. Many believe in a Creator, many do not. Many believe America is the greatest nation on Earth, many believe we have only gained greatness by using too many resources and impoverishing others. So what is a movie maker to do? I believe that Superman: The Man of Steel contains both messages, playing subtly to both belief systems.

First, for the red staters - Jor-El can be viewed as a Holy Father sending his son to Earth as a sacrifice for our sins to live his life as our Savior and point us to the true path of righteousness. He is adopted after being in a barn by a childless couple and raised by a simple man who uses his hands and believes. He spends times hiding his powers, knowing that when he reveals them, the current powers will try to deny him and maybe persecute him. Finally, he risks all, he is tempted by the enemy of his father in the wilderness to betray the world, but chooses to help and protect the weak. He is hurt and seemingly destroyed, but rises up to rescue people who might not deserve it. Sounds a lot like the gospel stories, doesn't it?

What factors lead to his decision? The good red state upbringings, the traditional family, being humble and working hard are among the key factors. He falls for



the sweet, successful and witty girl next door type, gets angry when his Mom is harmed, and chooses the moral path. All that has led several to see this as a pro-red state movie. I can see that too.

Now, for you blue staters - At the beginning, the movie almost has sympathetic feelings toward General Zod and his team. After all, they tried to stop the government of Krypton from destroying its environment through force and were imprisoned even though they were right. They are somewhat reminiscent of Occupy Wallstreet protesters willing to take the fight to the authorities while Jor-El simply lets the establishment ruin their world. The recent Sci-fi series Continuum plays this same thread of emotion showing the fine line between fighting the system and terrorism.

General Zod only wants to find a new home to rebuild his race. If we needed a new planet and found a perfect one full of rats, we would have no problem killing the rats and moving in. That is his perspective. Here is where the movie tells you Zod is wrong. That he has crossed the line.

Kal-El has lived with the rats, likes them, and likes his Mom and Lois Lane a lot, so he is ok with more Kryptons, but not by killing humans. Kal-El is the key as he holds the entire genetic code for his people. In the end, they had to add lines to make him kill Zod, because he was not really anti-Zod. In fact, the humans in the background were helpless and just stood staring. So why does Kal-El choose to destroy his own people?

He says to Zod, “Your people they had their chance.” In my opinion, Kal-El is indicting western civilization and the United States as having had our chance, using up too many resources, living too well and now it is time for “others,” the weak onlookers of the world to get their chance. So, Kal-El destroys the ship with the baby nursery, basically aborting or euthanizing, the future of Krypton's population. He chooses to destroy the advanced environment-ruining people for the less advanced people of Earth.










When asked at the end if he was a friend of America or not, he does not mention truth, justice and the American way. Instead, he appears by destroying a reconnaissance drone, telling the military they cannot spy on him and he will do whatever he thinks is right. It is very much an anti-drone strike, moral relativistic, non-patriotic response to the question. To help smooth over the red staters, he adds - “Hey, I grew up in Kansas, how more American can you get that that?”

How more American indeed? It seems the latest film has masterfully included both the blue stater and the red stater viewpoints in an ambiguous new hero in the latest Superman film. It is masterfully accomplished so that all audiences can enjoy the film and see what they want to see. As with Superman through the last 75 years, this one is also a product of the current political viewpoints in our nation.



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

 <p><b>Michael Bradley</b> mbtimetraveler.com/store</p>	 <p><b>Steampunk-Sci-Fi</b></p>	 <p><b>Horror</b> Available on Kindle</p>	 <p><b>Fantasy Fiction &amp; Romantic Suspense</b></p>	 <p><b>Donald Jacques</b> azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p><b>Donald Jacques</b> Non-Fiction Space</p>	 <p><b>Donald Jacques</b> Non-Fiction Space</p>
 <p><b>J.J.M. Czep</b> Blackstrap's Ecstasy Pirate/Adventure</p>	 <p><b>Blackstrap's Ecstasy</b> Pirate/Adventure</p>	 <p><b>Trolls - Fantasy</b> thedreadfleet.com</p>	 <p><b>PJ Hultstrand</b> Time-travel Adventure - Chasing Time Series azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p><b>PJ Hultstrand</b> Time-travel Adventure - Chasing Time Series azpublishingservices.com/BookStore.php</p>	 <p><b>Ronald C. Tobin</b> www.ronaldctobin.com</p>	 <p><b>Sci-Fi Thriller</b></p>
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*The 23-Yr old Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror & Convention Newszine  
of the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society*



Photo Credit Jim Miller/Tatiana - Alony-media

## Apocalypse Girls Have Arrived!

Every two weeks, the Apocalypse Girls will bring you a new episode of State of the Multiverse. State of The Multiverse is an in depth round table discussion of pop culture topics as seen through the prism of a female perspective. Special guests show up to add their expert viewpoints and opinions on the week's topic.

More than just "angry nerd rants" and "tell me what inspires you" interview questions, State of The Multiverse goes deeper to find meaningful insight into geek culture and those that shape our Multiverse.

This week we take a look at our Geek Culture and tackle the topics: Do Real Nerds Still Exist?, Geek Cred, Geek Life, and Geek Hierarchy.

The Girls include Ariana Morgan, Cira Corellia, Sable Switch, and Samantha Crush.

Check out the four segments on the New Mutiny Media's channel on YouTube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLevcYOsZV8GFvabnaYYLz1rzhcsoiTeC1>

## 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](http://www.coppercon.org)

### 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.

**August 11, 2013 - Haze by L. E. Modesitt, Jr.**

(To be held at CopperCon Revolution [www.coppercon.org](http://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**

WOD Media has come to an agreement with CASFS, Inc. to carry their ConNotations Newszine inside our newspaper and online webzine, The WOD. 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 community and hope to continue its publication, at least in part.





## CASFS Business Report - (May and June 2013) By Gary Swaty CASFS Secretary

**CASFS Board of Directors--** -- Chairman: Mark Boniece, Vice Chair: Jeff Jennings, Secretary: Kevin McAlonan, Corporate Treasurer: Sharan Hoyle, Other Board Members: Gary Swaty, Susan Uttke, Mike Willmoth. **CASFS Procedural Officers:** President: Kevin McAlonan, Vice President: Gary Swaty, Secretary: Gary Swaty. Additional Officers: Historian/Archivist: Jim Strait, Quartermaster: Bob Beckwith, Webmaster: Open, Keeper of the Databases: Open, ConNotations Editor: Patti Hultstrand. **CASFS Convention Officers** -- CopperCon 33 Chair: Michael Fett, Banker: Mark Boniece -- CopperCon 34 Mark Boniece and Sharan Hoyle. Meetings are at Denny's at 23rd Avenue and Northern, Phoenix on the last Friday of the month except for October through December when they are on the second Friday.

**Elections** - Only one office changed. Kevin McAlonan was elected CASFS President replacing Randall Whitlock, who declined to be renominated.

**CASFS Bookclub and Social, Samurai comics, 1051 E. Camelback** (Turn in at 11th St. And park behind) 7:00 PM on the third Tuesday of each month – In May we discussed Blackout by Connie Willis. In June we discussed Redshirts by John Scalzi. We had 10 attendees for Redshirts. Lots of new faces. In July we will discuss Maus (Books 1 and 2) a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman.

**CopperCon 32** - Bob LaPierre Chairman. Mark Boniece reports that the loss appears to be \$2600. The number is still not final.

**CopperCon 33 Revolution-** To promote the Con, on August 1st, 2013. CopperCon REVOLUTION will present a special screening of 2001: A Space Odyssey w/Plan 9 From Outer Space at the Pollack Tempe Cinemas (NEC Elliot & McClintock, Tempe AZ) with 2001: A Space Odyssey starting at 7PM and Plan 9 From Outer

Space will start around 9:30 PM. What better way to see the best science fiction film of all time than with the Cult Classic Plan 9 From Outer Space. Tickets are \$10 for the general public and \$5 to the membership of CopperCon Revolution (Member Coupon Code Required). Buy your membership at the event. Preparations for the convention are in high gear. All seems well. Success hinges on obtaining improved attendance. Look at the website to Grok the wonderful events scheduled. ([www.coppercon.org](http://www.coppercon.org)) On the publicity front, Cu33 had an ad in the Phoenix Comicon program book and the Con was promoted there. Membership numbers have been low. The convention needs 400 paid memberships to break even, we have only 48. We need 80 roomnights to make the first reduction in function space costs, we have 41. Buy memberships! Reserve your room!

**CopperCon 34** - Mark Boniece Chairman-- This convention is in the very early planning stages.

**Websites** - Mark Boniece, Webmaster-- He is handling routine updates to the CASFS site. Lyle Dillie is designing the CopperCon 33 Revolution Website. It is magnificent and flexible.

**ConNotations** - (Editor: Patti Hultstrand) For at least the next three years ConNotations will appear Monthly as a four page section in WOD, a widely circulated Science Fiction and Fantasy Review publication. It will no longer be mailed. Review Books continue to be available. Patti needs more reviewers so the work load can be spread out.

**Audit Committee** - No change - The Audit Committee report is still in process. A preliminary report was presented to the Board. The membership will receive the Final Report when it is finished.

## LOCAL SPECIAL EVENTS -

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

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, 8pm  
CineGeeks Presents  
FDR: American Badass  
featuring Cosplay &  
Audience Participation  
2710 W Bell Rd Phoenix, AZ 85053  
<https://www.facebook.com/CineGeeks>

Saturday, August 10, 11pm  
THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW  
"Classic Rocky"  
Presented by Midnight Mayhem  
AMC Deer Valley Theater  
[www.midnightmayhem.org](http://www.midnightmayhem.org)

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

Saturday, August 17, 9:30pm  
Cult Classics Presents  
2-Year Anniversary Party! Featuring  
Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure  
Pollack Tempe Cinemas  
1825 East Elliot Road,  
Tempe, Arizona 85284  
<http://www.cultclassicsaz.com/>

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

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# CONNOTATION EVENTS



## THE DREAD FLEET EVENTS:

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

### 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](http://www.theDREADfleet.com)

**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](http://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](http://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  
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To register: <https://www.regonline.com/cnma2013>

**GAMING & COMIC BOOK EVENTS:**  
**HOTACECOMICS&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](http://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>

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### POP CULTURE PARADISE

707 S. Forest Ave. #A, on ASU Campus  
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Calendar: [morethancomics@yahoo.com](mailto: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  
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3rd Saturday, 6pm-8pm  
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Mondays & Thursdays, 6pm.  
Magic Drafts. Tues, 7pm  
War Machine. Wednesdays, 4pm  
Hammerhead 40K Club Meeting.  
Wed & Thurs, noon  
Hammerhead Club 40k tournament. 1st Wed, noon  
Magic The Gathering League. Wed, 6pm  
Friday Night Magic. Fridays, 7pm

### SAMURAI COMICS

(check website for correct store location)  
Yugioh Tournament. Sundays, noon  
(Cmlbk) & Sat, noon (west valley)  
Anime Club. Sundays, noon (west valley)  
Pokemon. Sundays, 2pm (west valley),  
Wed 5pm (Cmlbk)  
D&D Encounters. Wed, 6pm (Cmlbk)  
Magic, The Gathering. Friday, 6p (both stores), Tues, 6pm (west valley), Sat 1pm (Cmlbk), Mon 6pm (Cmlbk)

## CONVENTIONS:

AUGUST 3-4 - **MARICOPA CON** - Arizona's Grass Roots Game Convention  
<http://www.maricopacon.com/>

AUGUST 17- **CAN'T STOP THE SERENITY** - Tucson; Annual charity screening of Joss Whedon's Serenity and Dr. Horrible's Singalong Blog at the Fox Theater, 17 West Congress, Tucson, Arizona. <http://azbrowncoats.org/>

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NOVEMBER 2 - **RUN FOR YOUR LIVES ZOMBIE 5K** at Wellington Ranch, Sacaton AZ. <http://www.runforyourlives.com/locations/arizona/>

NOVEMBER 8-10 - FRIDAY - SUNDAY - **TUSCON 40** at the Hotel Tucson City-Center, 475 North Granada, Tucson AZ 85701. Guest of Honor: Juliet Blackwell, Artist Guest: Jessica Feinberg; Toastmaster: Ed Bryant. Room rates \$69 studio, \$79 suite, \$89 Jacuzzi suite. Hotel phone 520-622-3000. Memberships rates \$50 thru 11/01 and \$55 thereafter and at the door. Paypal available, More info TusCon, PO Box 2528, Tucson, AZ 85702-2528 or email: [basfa@earthlink.net](mailto:basfa@earthlink.net) or web at <http://tusconscificon.com/index.html>

JANUARY 9-12, 2014 - **DARKCON 2014**. Location Phoenix Airport Marriott at 1101 N 44th street Phoenix 85008 Phone number 602-273-7373  
Convention room rates: Regular \$129.99 single, double, triple, quad, Deluxe \$149.99 single, double, triple, quad. Use the event code DARKCON to get the convention rate. <http://www.darkcon.org>



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August 13 - Jeff Guinn signs Manson at 7pm

August 19 - Chelsea Cain signs Let Me Go at 7pm

August 21 - Frederick Forsyth signs The Kill List  
- 7pm at The Arizona Biltmore

August 28 - Margaret Coel signs Killing Custer at 7pm

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# TWO YEARS OF TOKUSATSU THEATER!

By Hal C F Astell



That name is sourced from a Japanese term meaning 'special filming', usually used to describe anything that includes giants robots, monsters, superheroes and their ilk. It celebrates its second anniversary at 10.00pm on Friday, 9th August at its current home, FilmBar in downtown Phoenix. It promises to be just as insane, as host Damon Foster will bring back more Japanese superheroes but add masked wrestlers into the mix for good measure.

Foster is a real local character, whose passion for this sort of material is obvious even to those who've just met him. He's

As an intrepid explorer into the darkest and most obscure corners of Cinematic Hell, I've experienced some truly trippy films, trust me. Possibly the trippiest film I've ever seen on the big screen was the wildly insane Ninjascope: The Magic World of Ninjas, presented at the late and lamented Royale in Mesa back in 2011.

A feature length re-editing of the first four episodes of Masked Ninja Red Shadow, a Japanese TV show from the sixties, it was the simple fight between the forces of good and evil that you might expect, merely with invisibility teleportation, giant toads and more cliffhangers than could comfortably be counted to spice it all up. To make it even more special, I arrived at the Royale that night with my family from England in tow, all of whom were reeling from their first encounter with 110 degree Mesa heat. To this day, they're not convinced they even saw a movie, merely experienced a mass hallucination.

They were here on holiday and soon went home, of course, but I've been able to enjoy a lot more Eastern weirdness since, because Ninjascope was only the first of many salvos in my favourite ongoing valley film series, Tokusatsu Theater.

been happily immersed in Asian, especially Japanese, weirdness since he was a small child growing up in San Francisco. Tokusatsu Tuesdays, as this series was known at the Royale, was his first venture into live presentation, but he's been introducing the eager to Asian culture for years through his essential zine, Oriental Cinema, which had enough of a reach that I bought the first issue at a Japanese mall in London. That was decades before I moved to Arizona and met Damon for the first time at Chandler Cinemas, to which he brought an amazing collection of posters in support of the screening of Inframan, an outrageous 1975 superhero movie from Hong Kong that's one of his favourite films.

Foster's knowledge is unparalleled and the material he has access to isn't far behind, built out of decades of tape trading. More years ago than I'm sure he'd care to count, he swapped videocassettes with contacts in the far East. They'd send him TV shows featuring giant monsters and superheroes; he'd send back episodes of Monty Python. Everybody won!

The tape trading circuit is how he ended up with three juvenile Korean comedies from the early eighties starring Shim Hyung-rae. He describes the humour as awful, really hard to endure stuff, but around it was every sort of magic in the Asian cinematic toolbox: dinosaurs, vampires, aliens, kung fu, giant monsters, costumed superheroes, kung fu monks, you name it. So Foster cut out the crap, re-edited all the cool bits to make a vague sort of sense and wrote new dialogue to explain it. Then he brought in friends to provide the voices. The result, Shaolin vs Frankenstein, was my first experience at voice acting and I'll be eternally grateful to Damon for giving me the opportunity to be part of such a gloriously insane project.

If that sounds like your cup of sake, Tokusatsu Theater may well be your new favourite place to be once a month. He alternates months between film and TV. One will be a two hour chunk of Japanese television goodness, often celebrating the anniversary of an important show. The next will be a bizarre movie, with short supporting material to fill out the slot. You won't ever be shortchanged on material at one of Foster's shows.

When the Royale closed, he realised that he'd caught the presentation bug and didn't want to stop putting his programs together, even without a venue to present them in. His fans felt likewise, so one provided his front room as a new theater and the rest brought pizza.



Damon brought his material and introduced it to a hardcore, if small, audience. When the opportunity arose to move the show to FilmBar, he leapt at it and it's blazed the trail for other strange monthly film series there since.

I haven't missed many shows, so there's a lot of great material from which to struggle in an attempt to pick my favourites. Certainly, seeing the awesome hopping vampire comedy, Mr Vampire, on the big screen is one. October's show will return to that franchise with a screening of Mr Vampire 3. There was the Korean caveman movie called Tyranno's Claw, which avoided dialogue in favour of grunts. The Golden Bat was a glorious sixties superhero movie with Sonny Chiba. Thunder of Gigantic Serpent was as awesome as its name suggests, featuring a young girl and her enormous snake.

As you can guess from those examples, I tend to prefer the film months to the TV months, but I've found that many of the wildly paced Japanese television shows profiled have become old friends too. Foster has covered all the key titles, including Ultraman and Kamen Rider, but it's the lesser known titles that I've enjoyed the most. You may not have heard of shows like Space Sheriff Gavan and its sequel, Space Sheriff Sharivan, but they're just as enjoyable, if not more so, than the better known titles.

To me, half of the joy is in the familiar, the outrageous rubber suit designs, the gloriously implausible Japanese logic and the delightfully cute Japanese girls playing mini-skirted alien villains. The other half is in the discovery, as Foster introduces us to yet another show we never even knew existed, with just the right amount of detail to provide us with its background.

I'm looking forward to next month's anniversary show, which promises to deliver on both fronts. In addition to Kamen Rider, a regular at Tokusatsu Theater shows, Foster will be introducing us to Aztec Kaiser and Goggle V. I hope that to celebrate his second anniversary, the fans fill the FilmBar theatre to show their gratitude for two years worth of material that's nigh on impossible to see anywhere else. See you there!

Picture credits: Tokusatsu Theater and Hal Astell

*Hal C F Astell writes reviews of films from the 1900s to the 2010s at Apocalypse Later, with a focus on what most critics don't cover. He is the author of two books, Huh? An A-Z of Why Classic American Bad Movies Were Made and Velvet Glove Cast in Iron: The Films of Tura Satana. Both are available at Amazon.*







## The Salty Battery

Science Columnist: Sean Ellis

'Who Killed the Electric Car?' asks a 2006 documentary film, proposing a sort of "crime" that most of us probably didn't even know had been committed. The culprit, according to the film, was equal parts Big-Oil conspiracy, and old-fashioned, change-resistant, consumerist, American sensibilities.

First off, let me just say that reports of the electric car's demise were greatly exaggerated. The movie focused on just one model, General Motors' EV1, which was manufactured between 1996 and 1999. For various reasons explored in the film, the EV1 never really caught on. So complete was its failure that nearly all of the EV1 units that had been manufactured--over a thousand of them--were recovered by GM and destroyed. There are of course other electric cars being manufactured today, but the strange tragedy of the EV1 highlights a problem that just won't go away. I'm talking about batteries.

There are a lot of different types of



batteries, but they all function on the same basic principle. Electrically charged atoms--called ions--want to form stable molecular bonds with oppositely charged ions, just like the north and south poles of magnets want to stick together. Batteries usually consist of some kind of reactive chemical--an acid or alkali metal--that has either a positive or negative electrical charge. (If you want to go all Chemistry 101 here, the charge is determined by the number of electrons; if there are more electrons than protons in the atom, it has a negative charge, and wants to plug that extra electron into an element with a positive charge). Batteries provide current when those ions attempt to move around and form those connections.

It might be convenient to think of a rechargeable battery the same way we think of a gas tank--when it runs out of charge, we plug it in and fill it up with electricity--but that's a little misleading. It's really much more akin to winding an old fashioned clock. The clock has a spring that stores the potential energy--

our energy as we twist the winding key--and as that spring uncoils, it pushes the clockwork gears until all of the energy stored in spring-tension form is gone. We can wind the clock up again, and store more energy in the spring, but every time we do that, the metal in the spring gets a little weaker.

A fully charged battery has a lot of stored ions. When an electrical circuit is closed, those ions seek out oppositely charged particles in the neighboring part of the battery cell and it's that transfer of polarized charges that results in current. The ions aren't leaving the battery; rather, they're just kind of bumping the electrons in the copper wire that forms the circuit, much the same way that energy passes through the balls in the middle of a Newton's Cradle toy.

When enough of those ions have found a new home in the reactive material, the battery has no more energy left to give. Charging the battery up reverses the



process by forcing the ions out of the reactive material, where they'd prefer to be, and back into their agitated and reactive state. Since the ions really don't want to go back, this process requires time and a lot of energy, may create quite a bit of heat (which is energy lost) and depending on the type of battery, may release some potentially hazardous gases. The process will also permanently destabilize the battery components over time, which is why even rechargeable batteries wear out eventually. Commercially available rapid charging devices, which can have your electric car ready to drive in about half an hour, will wear the batteries out even faster. That means unlike a gas-powered car, which can run for years with only minor preventative maintenance, the average electric car will have to have its battery--the most important and expensive part of the car--replaced as often as once a year.

There's another weighty problem that limits the effectiveness of electric cars: batteries are heavy.

A twelve-volt car battery weighs about forty pounds, and all it really does is store electrical power for getting the engine to

start, or running a few accessories when the engine is off. Leave the lights on when the car isn't running, and your battery will be dead in a few hours. An electric car needs a lot more battery power, so the car has to carry around a lot of battery weight, which in turn requires even more power to keep the thing moving. It's a vicious circle.

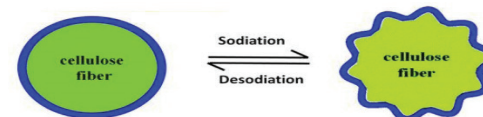
The first EV1 units to roll off the assembly line weighed in at about 3,000 pounds, lighter than a gas-powered vehicle, true, but most of that was battery weight, and those batteries gave the car a range of only about 60 miles, which made it somewhat useful as a commuter vehicle, but didn't allow the kind of freedom to drive that Americans have come to know and love. Later battery advancements for the second generation EV1 increased that range to about 160 miles, and cut almost half a ton off the weight, but that still doesn't come close to matching the range of the average car with a full tank of gas. And whereas you can top off a gas tank in just a few minutes and get back on the road, recharging an electric car requires plugging-in and waiting. The Gen 2 battery needed to charge from 1-3 hours to reach operational status.

Fortunately, the growing demand for portable consumer electronics has resulted in a new Renaissance of battery technology. We still use the old disposable zinc-acid type battery for a few things, but we are now seeing rechargeable batteries--utilizing exotic alkali metals like cadmium and lithium--that are lighter, recharge faster, and last longer. All of these advances will not only keep the electric car alive, but very probably make it the preferred transportation alternative in years to come.

It was just such a battery innovation that got me thinking about this subject. In June, scientist at the University of Maryland announced that they had created a battery out of tin, sodium, and wood.

Yes, you read that correctly--a battery made of wood and salt.

Actually, the wooden component is an incredibly thin layer of cellulose--one-thousandth the thickness of a piece of paper--completely enveloped in tin. Sodium--which is chemically one-half of table salt--is the medium for holding the charge. While lithium is more efficient at storing ions than sodium, it is also harder to come by--read: expensive--and perhaps even more troubling, hard to dispose of safely. Sodium, in its elemental form, can be pretty hazardous stuff too--it can make more than just your blood pressure explode--but we have it in abundance, which makes it a very affordable alternative to lithium for building high capacity



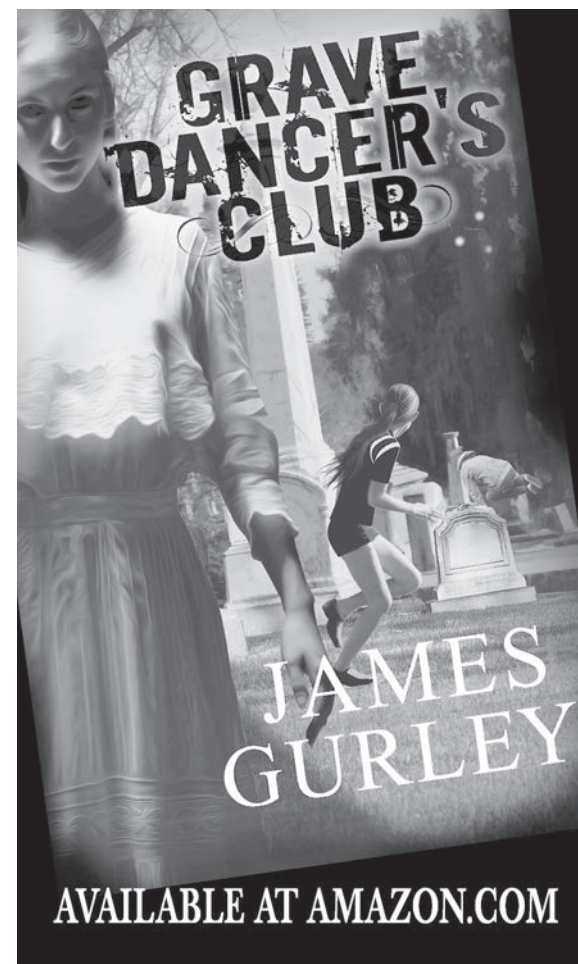
batteries--the kind we need for electric cars. The wood and sodium battery also seems more durable than lithium-ion batteries, not only in terms of how many times it can be recharged, but also in withstanding temperature extremes and physical shock.

What's encouraging about this news is that it shows how scientists and innovators are actively addressing issues that have for too long held us in a state of inertia when it comes to technological advancement. We've held back from cutting our ties to what are basically Steam-era technologies because the practical considerations just seemed too daunting. 'Electric cars are too slow, they don't go far enough, they take too long to recharge...' 'Rechargeable batteries? They're expensive, they wear out, and then what are you supposed to do with them? You can't just throw them in the trash...' 'Solar power isn't practical because there's no effective way to store power for use when the sun isn't shining...'

Will the wood-sodium battery change all that? It's too soon to say for sure, but it's definitely another step in the right direction.

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, and adventure sports.

WOD





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

By Michael Bradley

Tony paused, staring at the light stick in his hand as he illuminated the large screen in front. Where am I? He looked behind him at the amphitheater filled with his graduate students. His TA, Monica Salazar, stood operating the computer panel. She gave him a look of concern.

Tony remembered now, he was explaining the latest problems experienced with neural retrograde physiology. It was easier to modify children than to remove the troublesome thoughts and memories from an adult. The class murmured as he continued to remain silent.

“That is all class. Remember, the hurdle we face for peaceful coexistence is no longer in our next generation. Our children will be better than us. We must rise to the challenge to make ourselves better as well. Go ahead now, we are stopping early.” Tony put down the light stick and hurried from the auditorium. Monica followed close behind.

“Professor Perez, are you alright?”

He remembered her too, but not young like this. Yes, she had been his brilliant assistant, but now she was his lab manager. She had just told him twenty years from now to think about his index finger. Why?

“Yes, I’m fine. I figured it out, the block, the problem!” Tony Perez rushed to his office and started clicking away on his screen.

Monica looked on in awe as she saw him display the formula, the chemical compounds and the surgical

procedures to isolate conflict and expiate them from the adult mind. “Professor, that looks like it will work. You have made peace on Earth possible in our life times.” She forgot decorum and jumped up and down, then lunged onto him, giving him a crushing hug.

“Monica, easy now, people will talk.” Her hug was so fierce she scooted his chair against the desk, crimping his finger between them. He held it up, his index finger was bleeding. My index finger?

Monica saw blood on the tip of his finger. “Oh, I am so sorry, let me get the first aid kit.”

Tony smiled, “No need Monica. You know, this is the only time I ever hurt this finger?”

She looked at him puzzled.

Tony explained, “I think I understand my index finger now.”

“Those are some deep thoughts Tony, you understand your finger?” The Earth President laughed at the control wheel of his private plane. “You crack me up Tony. This vacation in Maine is going to do us both a world of good.”

Tony was back in the co-pilot chair on the sleek jet, flying over New York City, the World Headquarters, with his friend. Tony’s mind reeled. It was just eighteen years ago, back in my office, or was it?

“So Tony, now that we have world peace and are colonizing space, what do you have planned? I mean, it must be kind of a let down, solving world peace and all.” The Earth President laughed. “I mean if I did something like that in my first term, I don’t know

what I would run on next. Maybe it’s different for you brainy types.”

“Yeah...maybe...” Tony tried to get some perspective. He looked at his index finger. It had a tiny scar barely visible.

The President looked over, smiling, “I thought you said you had that finger figured out?”

Tony turned, “Yeah, it’s just...”

“It’s just what?” The rescue responder was shaking him.

Tony looked at himself, he was in the same clothing, but it was torn and tattered. “Who am I? What happened?”

“He’s a bit confused, let’s get him into the rescue pod and over to the Peace Center. The Peacekeepers will fix him up in no time.”

Tony protested. “Wait! My name is Tony Perez, I am a friend of the Earth President.”

The crew laughed. “Yeah, and I’m Moon President, that guy there is Mars President. Come on fella, you ain’t the inventor of world peace and you sure ain’t with the President. His plane crashed yesterday and he’s dead.”

Tony felt tears drip down his face. “Dead? I was just there a minute ago?”

He felt a hard shelled case click and hiss as it was sealed over him. Outside he heard one more comment before the sleep gas took him.

“Yeah, this guy is definitely brain scrambled.”

WOD



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## MOVING PICTURES: LOST & FOUND

By Matthew Yenkala

It's pretty fairly established at this point that I love movies, and I have since early childhood. Of course, most everyone would say the same; at least, very few would say they hate movies. But most people don't make them a central part of their lives--to the point of, for example, buying and operating their own movie theater for a few years, as I did from late 2007 through mid-2009. (I'm not bragging--I was simply in the right place at the right time and had the resources to seize an opportunity to do something I loved. I wish everyone could be so lucky.)

The odyssey of how Chandler Cinemas began and ended is a tale unto itself, which I may share at another time. I only bring it up now because it points to the topic of this month's column.

In that all too brief time, I got to indulge in something I'd long wanted to do: show movies I and others loved, and provide a home, and forum, for others who loved movies as much as I did. A place for people to come together, interact, discuss, and experience the thrill, the rush, the excitement of seeing something on the big screen--an experience that I'd hardly be the first in pointing out has been largely lost in this era of constant content and instant everything.

"The death of the cinematic moviegoing experience in the video age" is hardly a new a topic; it's been discussed to death since the advent of home video and cable TV in the late 70s. And of course, there is more than one way to look at it.

On the one hand, it's absurd to say that the cinematic experience is gone: movies make more (and cost more) money than they ever have. Millions of people line up every week, especially during the summer and holiday tentpole seasons, to join with fellow moviegoers and experience that week's big rush on the big screen. Studios are now planning their release schedules years in advance, and are doing more "market research" and "focus group" testing than ever. So in that sense, the movie business is healthier than it's ever been (even though George Lucas and Steven Spielberg have recently predicted the implosion of Hollywood's current model--based on pumping out a constant stream of big-budget, front-loaded popcorn blockbusters--and expressed their belief that an age of \$50 movie tickets and content skipping theatres entirely is not far off. Time will tell.)

Regardless, it's come at a price: disposability. There are still great movies being made, even some that could be called "special", but there's very little to set any of them apart as being special, because--no matter how highly anticipated a movie may be, no matter how well or poorly it does at the box office--they are all marketed the same way, and after the opening weekend, they are forgotten--it's on to what's

coming out next week. (And this applies to me as much as to anyone else; I'm one of those who's in line at the movies, every single week--often more than once a week---with friends and strangers, waiting for that thrill-ride-rush, and then waiting for next week's releases.)

Again, this is nothing new. Filmmaking is a business, and as I've pointed out before, for better or worse, Hollywood filmmaking is largely an assembly line cranking out product. And people are buying that product. But it would be nice if once in a while there were more than commercial considerations involved--and if all the attention didn't just go to the big boys. But that's a secondary point.

You see, while I don't like aging myself, I'm just old enough to remember a time before home video and cable TV were commonplace, and the concept of streaming content online was not even a gleam in Al Gore's eye. As a lover of content--movies, TV shows, music, books--I've embraced those things as they've come along. I love that I can go into my DVD library (or even reach back to my VHS tapes and laserdiscs) and watch virtually any movie I want, often with the option of tons of nifty bonus content. I love the fact that if I don't have something, it's usually just a few clicks away. I wouldn't trade that for anything. It's great. But it's not the same. Something has been lost, and it's not just attention spans.

And this is especially true for purveyors of more offbeat, unusual films--local, indie, art-y and foreign films, or weird little culty things like Cannibal--The Musical, Repo! The Genetic Opera, Hobo With A Shotgun, The Room, or FDR: American Badass. Nowadays, of course, you can go to Netflix, or Amazon, or iTunes, and cue up any one of those movies, right in between Bridesmaids and episodes of The Big Bang Theory, and watch them in your living room or on your laptop. You can even read and respond to other viewers' comments and reviews.

But once upon a time, you had to seek out stuff like that, be it Eraserhead, Reefer Madness, Todd Browning's Freaks, Night of the Living Dead, Heavy Metal, Pink Floyd's The Wall, or even the ubiquitous Rocky Horror Picture Show. If you made the effort, you would find them at sometimes seedy and rundown, single screen theatres or duplexes, in older parts of town, often near colleges. But you knew that the other people there were kindred spirits--they weren't there because of the Hollywood PR machine; they were there because, like you, they wanted something a little different. And the inherent community of such an experience fostered real discussion-- I'm taking



real-world, person-to-person discussion, not fanboys sniping at and trolling each other on geek movie sites.

That's what I tried to encourage at my theatre. And that's why I absolutely welcome any effort to create that forum now. Which is why I'm thrilled that even though my own theatre is gone, several others in the Phoenix area are carrying that torch. There's Victor Moreno's Cult Classics, who every month at Tempe Cinemas shows movies that may not be "culty" in that that they were mainstream hits when released (Ghostbusters, The Princess Bride) but have become "generational" classics. There's the Film Bar downtown, where the Midnite Movie Mamacita (aka Andrea Beesley, who worked with me at Chandler Cinemas) shows a mixture of generational classics and more obscure, "Grindhouse" style-films. And then there's the new kid on the block, Scott McDee's "Cinegeeks", set to debut in August with FDR: American Badass at the Silver Cinemas Super Saver theatre on Bell Road in Phoenix (see related article in this newspaper edition).

Personally, I think there's room for all of them, and then some. Moviegoing should be a shared experience--even a participatory one. That's why there are some movies that no matter how much I love them, I only watch when I have someone who's never seen them to share them with. I want to experience them through fresh eyes. And some movies just don't have the impact on a TV screen, however big, or even, gods forbid, a laptop. TV is TV. Movies are meant to be larger than life.

And who knows, maybe one of these days...I'll own another movie theater. Maybe I'll even be able to show movies that I've made. When that day comes, you're all invited to share the experience with me.

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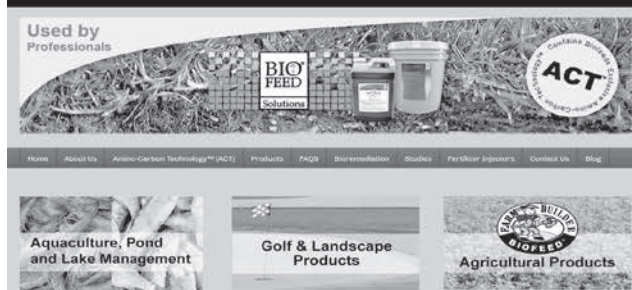


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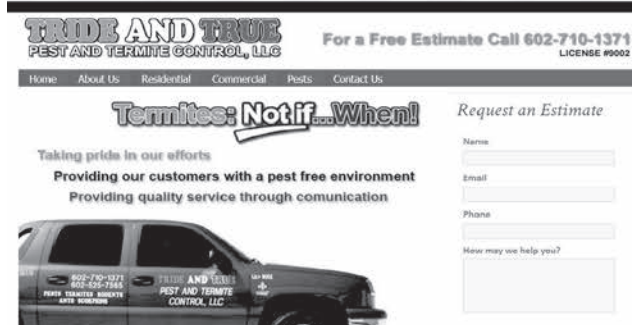
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# GAMING COLUMN: SURVIVAL HORROR

by RAVAGER

Hunted by wild canines with a voracious appetite for human flesh, a few remaining members of an elite special forces team is forced to enter a seemingly abandoned mansion to stay alive. Unable to tread near windows in fear of the four-legged demons bursting through, and with only a handful of ammunition left to spare, the team must carefully sneak through the confines of the facility only to discover worse terrors lurking within. It's not long before they encounter a gruesome scene in which a decapitated man is laying on a pool of his own blood, while another man with chalky skin and faded, pale eyes is hovering near the corpse, devouring his remains. This is true survival horror, this was once Resident Evil.

In the days since the first Resident Evil title launched on the original Sony Playstation console, new titles of Survival Horror are constantly innovated and released. However, some of these so-called horror titles are only aesthetically pleasing in the sense of horror and do not contribute much in the idea of survival. The evolution of the Resident Evil series is a great example of this. Tight corridors, dark lighting, disturbing sounds, eerie scenery, cryptic plot twists and unpredictable

characters all contribute to the mood setting and immersion of the player into the protagonist's perspective. The real sense of survival stems from an unexplainable, primordial sense of fear brought on by paranoia and the thought of death looming at every turn.

The second Resident Evil attempted to improve upon every facet of the original, with a very important twist for a taste of things to come in later iterations of the series. It made the playable character far too "over-powered". Sure, constantly being hunted by a ruthless juggernaut with a knack for crushing skulls with his bare hands offers some thrills -- but giving the hero a near infinite supply of ammunition and an arsenal of powerful firearms right from the beginning takes away much in the sense of fear. To turn the tables from being hunted to becoming the hunter is a drastic change that should only rarely occur in a survival horror game. Unfortunately, Resident Evil 5 and 6 later introduced a second protagonist for an entire playthrough, thus changing its' category from survival horror to a 3rd person shooter.

Another great example of a Science-Fiction Survival Horror done right would be the first two entries in the popular Dead Space series. However, the third entry in the series makes



the same mistake by introducing a secondary playable character, changing it to an action shooter entirely. The declining sales of the Resident Evil saga should have been a clear warning to the creators of Dead Space. To reinvent survival horror, one has to add the key component of survival into it. Almost any Stephen King impersonator can conjure the essential foundations of a good horror novel, but being able to implement it with a profound sense of danger and overwhelming feeling of helplessness is another story entirely.

Backtracking to the earlier days of historical folklore, the Fatal Frame trilogy seduces the player into the unknown. In the metaphysical world of

dreams, emotions, ghosts, and sacred rituals, the player quickly realizes that they are vulnerable to their curiosity as much as they are to an untimely death from a vengeful spirit. The first time the viewer encounters the shivering, shadowy figure of a young girl with her face hidden beneath her hair climbing out of a strange wooden box slowly crawling out, it all becomes terribly clear -- the player should never have opened that storage box. Tension is the thread of horror that connects one moment of terror to another. As any avid survival horror fan would tell you, "think on your feet or you will lose your head -- literally."

WOD

## MOVIE REVIEW: R.I.P.D.

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

**Reviewer Rating: 3 stubs**

Rated PG-13/96 mins/Action/Comedy

Director: Robert Schwentke

Writers: David Dobkin, Phil Hay, Matt Manfredi, based on the Dark Horse Comic by Peter M. Lenkov

The advertising for this movie practically writes itself: "You put your Ghostbusters in my Men In Black!" "No, you put your Men In Black in my Ghostbusters!" "Wait, maybe these two great tastes, taste great together!"

In other words, there's nothing new here except the mixture.

But surprisingly, it's not a terrible mixture. With those two movies as counterpoints, along with more than a little bit of Evil Dead and a touch of the forgotten 1980 Chevy Chase/Benji classic, Oh! Heavenly Dog, R.I.P.D. manages to feel comfortably familiar, but still moderately entertaining. (Apparently, this was based on a Dark Horse comic, albeit one I've never heard of. Never having read it, I can make no comparison

to its source material.)

So it goes like this: Boston cop Nick (Ryan Reynolds), suffering a crisis of conscience after doing something he shouldn't have, gets killed in the line of duty, and is sent to a sort of purgatory, where he's given the option of eternal judgment, or redeeming himself by going back to earth as part of the "Rest In Peace Department"--dead cops who monitor those bad souls who manage to slip through the afterlife's bureaucratic cracks, and haunt the earth with their own nefarious agendas. He's paired up with crusty cowboy Roy (Jeff Bridges), a veteran officer with an ornery, independent streak who certainly doesn't want a rookie partner.

From that point, it rarely strays from formula. All of the ensuing buddy-cop clichés are straight out of the book. So are most of the supernatural gags. And a "twist" involving Nick's earthly partner (Kevin Bacon) is so blatantly obvious, you guess it the second he appears on screen.

But none of that detracts. And the movie does have a few genuinely witty moments. Bridges' character seems to

be an amalgam of past roles, including the Dude and Rooster Cogburn, but it works because it's so weird (not least in his bizarre ankle fetish). He has a real chemistry with both Reynolds and heavenly administrator Proctor (Mary Louise-Parker). Reynolds plays Nick with an earnestness that almost seems out of place. The usually solid Kevin Bacon seems a bit more low-key here, but at least he resists the temptation to do a Mark Wahlberg impression. And the conceit of the two dead officers being perceived by the living as completely incongruous avatars--an old Chinese man for Reynolds, a tall, hot, blonde model for Bridges--is actually pretty funny. It's too bad they didn't do more with that.

The Apocalyptic ending is pretty much what you expect, although it takes its place along with all the other recent massive-urban-destruction movies (Pacific Rim, Man of Steel and last year's Avengers). But the movie saves its one real surprise for the dénouement, involving Reynolds' relationship with his widowed wife. I admit, I expected a different outcome, and was pleasantly surprised to be wrong.

I predict a moderate but passionate cult



following once it's out on DVD. And why not? Strictly on its own merits, it's an entertaining and amusing movie. It's not great, but it doesn't ask for much, it provides a few real laughs, and despite its derivative nature, it's true to itself and can be enjoyed on its own terms. It's just a shame they couldn't find more ways to exploit such an inherently interesting premise, because given its budget and projected business, it's unlikely to get a sequel. Which is almost, but not quite, a shame.

WOD



MOVIE REVIEW: PACIFIC RIM

Reviewed by Bob Nelson

Ok, Pacific Rim: I loved it, and hated it because it was only two something hours long.

I hated the exposition in the beginning, because I wanted to see every single battle in the Kaiju War. I hated the drift sequences because I wanted more of them, and more to them. I hated the minimal supporting Jaeger sequences because I wanted to see them all both kick some butt. I wanted to see each and every one of the dozens of Jaegers that had been created. The movie was glorious, unapologetic.

Say what you will about Charlie Hunnam, he did a great job. He was never the star of the show, anyway-Gypsy Danger is. It's very mindful of it's Japanese roots that way- this is as much Gypsy's story as Raleigh's. In short, I was feeling mixed emotions about it after seeing it, until I realized I was upset because I didn't get to SEE IT ALL! Del Toro created this world and he was not funded to make a 16-hour epic movie. When you are left wanting more, THAT is good film making.

The real sleeper here, for all the giant monster/mech movie wonderfullness, was Rinko Kikuchi. She was warm and engaging in her role as Mako, a very believable character. This was her first major role in a major movie for American audiences, and I really think she'll find a place for herself in Hollywood.

Bob Nelson: As the CEO of Brick Cave Media, Bob was the director of the full length movie Sacrifice in 2011. Learn more at <http://www.brickcavefilms.com>



Reviewed by PJ Hultstrand

The Jaegers-versus-kaiju epic movie, Pacific Rim opens officially, Friday, the 12th, but I went with some friends to see it tonight in IMAX 3D. Now understand, I am not going to throw around the Japanese jargon like geeks caught in the headlights of a game show where the clock is ticking. I will say this for this movie, it is everything that Transformers was not and it kicked the ass of every Godzilla movie I have every seen and the ones I have not. It knocked them all out of the park!

The audience was given a chance to connect and feel for the characters, even the minor characters. Even the stupid Bull Dog was used in a heart felt goodbye to a team member we all knew was probably going to die. Honestly though, I would have put my money on

his father dieing in place of the son.

The screenplay writer, Travis Beacham, came up with the duel driven robots as a way to make this a story, not just about the robots verses the monsters, like so many giant monster movies in the past, but about the characters. I think he did an awesome job of centering the plot around the conflicts between the characters and how they had to overcome past baggage in order to succeed. In the end, it was the two characters with the most to overcome that saved the day. Mako was a scrappy lady who can dish up any man in hand-to-hand combat, and those who know me well, know how much I rooted for her and laughed my head off when she won the match.

But, as much as we can say that Raleigh and Mako, as love interests, saved the day; this movie had the same

group effort success of Independence Day, from 1996. We mourned the loss of the characters we grew to care something for, and we whooped and patted those survivors on the back for coming out of this epic monster movie of gargantuan proportion, in one piece. And if you stayed long enough into the credits you may find that one character may have survived after all.

The fight scenes between monsters and robots were the most awesome pieces of work I have ever seen. The colors used to help the viewers pick out the monsters from their heroes, the robots, were well done. Even though there seemed to be an awful lot of raining going on when the monsters and robots were going in to battle. There were times when I wanted to reach out and clean off the water drops from the glasses of the geek scientist, Dr. Newton Geiszler. And seriously, NEWTON? Was the screenwriter being funny? Probably.

Now that said, I did have a few problems, because nothing can be perfect, even if you live for giant robots and huge monsters, totally killing each other.

I personally felt that the 3D work on this one was not up to par. Even when the people were standing still, I had a problem getting them to focus. Now, it could be that I am farsighted and the 3D effects were making the people and objects too close to me, but this is the first time I felt like running to the back of the theater in hopes of getting a clearer picture.

I don't think the director, Guillermo del Toro, had 3D in mind when he kept changing visual points of view of the camera. This constant refocus in 3D was very distracting to the story for me.

The other thing I really didn't like was the posters they sent home with us. It was in cartoon style when I would have really loved a poster like the picture I used for this review. Now, that would have been rad. But, free is Free.

Pacific Rim is well worth your time and money investment to see. By all means though, you REALLY must see this in the theater in order to get the full effect of these monsters stomping through the cities and destroying the buildings. And wait until you see what the robot's human operators decide to use to slap a monster upside the head. You may laugh like I did.

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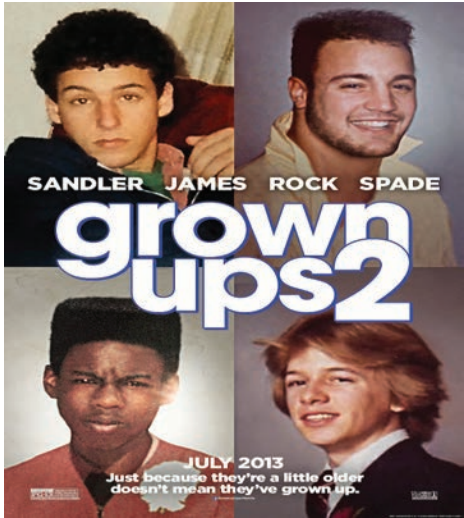
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MOVIE REVIEW: GROWN UPS 2



**Reviewer Rating:** 1/2 stub

Rated PG-13/101 mins/Comedy  
 Director: Dennis Dugan

Writers: Adam Sandler, Fred Wolf, Tim Herlihy

The night that Grown Ups 2 opened, I had a reunion with the group of friends I spent most of the 90s with, but who had since drifted apart. It had been a long time since we’d seen each other, and I toyed with the idea of saying, “Hey guys, let’s go see Grown Ups 2!” After all, the

film--the sequel to 2010’s Grown Ups--featured three of the bright lights from early 90s Saturday Night Live. That’s the era in which this particular group of friends and I bonded. We quoted these guys’ SNL lines all the time. So it seemed like a perfect fit to make the suggestion--a dual reconnection with my earlier days.

Boy, was I wrong.

There are bad movies, and there are bad movies, and then there’s Grown Ups 2. I’ve honestly been wracking my brain to try to find something good to say about it, and I keep coming up dry. It’s bad in so many ways, on so many levels, that it may be the worst movie I’ve ever seen. It is absolutely empty, shallow, heartless, gutless, nutless, phone-it-in, lazy comedy at its most extreme.

For those who may have missed the first one...childhood friends played by Adam Sandler, David Spade, Chris Rock, Rob Schneider, and Kevin James (recruited as a suitably hefty but otherwise inadequate stand-in for the late, great Chris Farley) reconnect in their childhood hometown. Cue the wacky antics, exploits and shenanigans,

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

including the inevitable heartwarming “family” moments with the wives and kids, the run-in with the old high school rival, etc, and the ultimate resolution--“Hey, it’s been so great to visit, so let’s move back home!” It was utterly sophomoric, absolutely predictable, and completely forgettable, but it was fun to see these guys riffing off each other again, because you can tell they so clearly loved each other and missed working together.

But whatever marginal redeeming value the original film had on that level is thoroughly absent here. Within the first three minutes, which feature a runaway moose, a shower-piss gag, and “naughty” use of Sandler’s wife’s lingerie, you know you’re in for a ride of the very worst possible kind--and it’s all downhill. I can’t think of one gag, one joke, one line that elicited so much as a genuine chuckle from me. And I’m no snob, either. It just wasn’t funny. At a certain point, it just became a game of “Spot the SNL cameos.” (In the process, finally answering Stewie’s eternal question: Will they ever find a suitable vehicle for Ellen Cleghorne?) Everyone from Jon Lovitz to Cheri Oteri drops in

for a scene or two. (I was surprised not to see Julia Sweeney in it. Then again, she probably has more taste than that.) The movie looks like it was probably a lot of fun to make, but it’s sheer agony to watch. You can tell that this was just one giant paycheck for all concerned. What bothers me most, of course, is that I expect more from these guys. (Well, maybe not David Spade.) In their day, these were some of the funniest guys on earth, and I still think that of Chris Rock. And Sandler’s co-writers, Fred Wolf and Tim Herlihy, have produced some genuinely classic material. So WTF happened here? More to the point: what does it say when Rob Schneider sits out a paycheck? I just hope to gods there’s no Grown Ups 3.

In any case, I sure am glad I didn’t end up suggesting to my friends that we check the movie out. I want to keep them. We had such a great time reconnecting, we’re going to do it again in a few months. I have the feeling that had we gone to see the movie at my suggestion, I wouldn’t be invited to the next reunion.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: RED 2

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala



**Reviewer Rating:** 4 stubs

Rated PG-13/116 mins/Action/Thriller  
 Director: Dean Parisot  
 Writers: Jon Hoeber & Erich Hoeber, based on the DC Comic created by Warren Ellis & Cully Hamner

I walked out of 2010’s Red having gotten pretty much what I expected: a decent action flick with possibly the single greatest cast ever assembled for what was, ultimately, a paycheck movie. It was a very good paycheck movie, but the situations, action and plot were fairly generic. Nevertheless, to watch such a stunning array of high-caliber talent in one film was well worth the price of admission, particularly actors you just

don’t expect to see together—Bruce Willis, John Malkovich, Morgan Freeman, Richard Dreyfuss, Helen Mirren, and Brian Cox (not to mention the always great Karl Urban, Mary Louise Parker, and a brilliant cameo from the late, great Ernest Borgnine, in one of his final roles). I enjoyed the film, but it didn’t really stick with me.

So it was with the absolute expectation “more of the same” that I subjected myself to Red 2. With most of the cast from the first film returning for the sequel, along with newcomers Anthony Hopkins and Catherine Zeta-Jones (solid enough replacements for Freeman and Dreyfuss), I figured, worst case, at the very least it’d be another chance to see these diverse performers play off one another again.

Boy, was I wrong—in the best possible way. My expectations were not only met, they were exceeded. In spades. Red 2 not only improves on the original on every level, it could very easily—with a few tweaks—stand on its own as an excellent espionage thriller rather than a sequel based on an obscure comic book.

As good as it is, the story doesn’t bear much comment. Willis is Frank, a retired agent who’s spent a lifetime infiltrating, destroying and killing the enemy—all in the name of his country. Now wallowing in suburbia with lovely girlfriend Sarah (Parker), his new and uneasy tranquility is (hilariously) shattered by the “death”

of best friend/fellow agent Marvin (Malkovich). From there, it’s a race against time and the elements as Frank and his posse are marked for death by their own government, implicated in a black op they were involved in 35 years before—one that none of them remember being a part of. The movie takes us from Tokyo to London, Moscow, Paris and Iran, as our heroes try to clear their names and find out who’s really behind the scandal they are being scapegoated for.

One aspect of Red 2 that impresses is how it reflects the current geopolitical climate, so much that the specific event that triggers the story is the release of a Wikileaks document—a clever integration of the modern world into what is otherwise a pretty old-fashioned spy/action movie. But there is a frightening aspect to this as well: seeing government and military figures at the highest levels frame, blackmail, torture and kill one another, be they friend or foe, ally or countryman, with complete impunity and no accountability (or conscience) whatsoever, is nothing short of chilling. One gets the uncomfortable impression that far from being a mere Hollywood contrivance, the inner workings of the real-world organizations on which these are based may be every bit as sinister as those shown in the film—if not more so. Such weighty considerations aside, the cast does some of their best work ever. Willis and Malkovich play off each other like they really have been partners for

decades. Parker is a complete delight—how have I not really noticed her before?—while Mirren truly makes you believe that yes, she can kill someone as casually as having afternoon tea. And Catherine Zeta-Jones is positively smoldering as Willis’s ex-lover/worst frenemy. Even smaller roles, such as an informant called “The Frog” (Harry Potter’s David Thewlis) and Glenn Beck lookalike Neal McDonough as a ruthless US agent, make an impression. And for the second time this year (after G.I. Joe), Byung-hun Lee (as assassin Han) shows himself to be nothing less than an irresistible force of nature. This guy needs to be a leading man in an American film, pronto. He’s astounding. But my personal highlight was seeing Royal Shakespeare Company veterans Cox and Hopkins share the screen—Cox having been the first actor to have ever portrayed Hannibal Lecter, in 1986’s Manhunter, but who declined to reprise the role for the followup film, opening the door for Hopkins’ Oscar-winning portrayal in 1991’s Silence of the Lambs. You can tell that these actors bring their personal history to their interaction, and it’s all the richer—and more fun—for it. And that’s the bottom line: Red 2 is just plain fun to watch. That it’s also smart is a bonus. Not bad for a paycheck sequel.

WOD



# INTERVIEW WITH CINEGEEKS CELLULOID BADASS



Former Rocky Horror showrunner and Valley UberGeek Scott McDee is pleased as Saki to tell the WOD all about his new project, CineGeeks, which aims to bring fun and obscure films to the big screen in the Phoenix area, starting 8pm August 10th with *FDR: American Badass*, at the Super Saver Cinema on Bell Road. We caught up with Scott in mid-July and, after poking and prodding him a bit, got him to spill the beans on what CineGeeks is all about...

WOD: Tell us a bit about yourself.

McDEE: I've lived in the Phoenix area most of my life, I love movies, and I'm a total geek. (Hence the name "CineGeeks".) That should tell you everything you need to know.

WOD: What's your background in terms of doing something like this?

McDEE: I've been involved in Rocky Horror screenings since high school and I took over the local shadowcast a few years ago. After giving it a new name—Midnight Mayhem—and finding a great home for it at AMC, and hosting an international Rocky Horror convention right here the Valley, not to mention being part of a few other Rocky-style showings like *Clue* and *Hedwig & The Angry Inch*, I kind of hit the wall with fishnets and lipstick, so I retired from actively running it. I'll always love it, but it was time to move on.

WOD: So the next move for you, then, was to start showing *OTHER* cult classics.

McDEE: Right. Rocky and a few other movies still get a lot of attention. But I wanted to give some love to some movies that are maybe less well known—either newer movies that are a bit quirky, or older movies that people have forgotten about. Or maybe not forgotten about, but that you just don't get a chance to see on the big screen anymore.

WOD: Ten years ago, no one was doing anything like this in the Valley. Now, there are at least three separate "revival" type film programs out here, plus occasional showings at Harkins and AMC of movies like *Raiders*, *E.T.* or *Back to the Future*. What's going to set CineGeeks apart?



McDEE: I think it'll be in both the movies we show and how we present them. We're really hoping to make it a fun and interactive experience. I know that the other cult film programs aim for that also and I think that's great. But I guess we just plan to have a little bit more of an "attitude"...kind of a sense of danger. But I'm glad there's so much of this happening now. I totally wish all those other guys well, and don't see any reason we can't all coexist and be successful. It's a big valley.

WOD: So, tell us about your inaugural film, *FDR: AMERICAN BADASS*.

McDEE: Well, I need to say upfront that it's a goddamned classic. I guess you could compare it to something like *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, except this is so much cooler because it totally doesn't take itself seriously. You have Barry Bostwick—Brad Majors from Rocky Horror—as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And it turns out that World War II was really a fight against werewolves. So it's *FDR* versus Werewolf Hitler and Werewolf Hirohito. And it's just hilarious. It's low budget. It's silly, and you can tell they had a lot of fun making it.

WOD: It sounds pretty crazy. How did you hear about it?

McDEE: Well, anytime one of the original Rocky Horror actors sneezes, it becomes news in the Rocky fan community. So knowing Barry Bostwick was in it got everyone's attention. Plus, a member of the L.A. Rocky scene who's also a professional actor, Jesse Merlin, got cast in the film as Werewolf Hitler. So we were all dying to see it, because our friend was in it—one of "us" became successful, you know? The filmmaker, Ross Patterson—

who also made another so-awful-it's-great film, *Poolboy*, which I hope to show in the future—has become a friend to me and many other folks in the Rocky fan community. So really, it was just a matter of contacting him and working it out. We showed it at my Rocky convention last year, and it was a huge hit there. I've been wanting to show it again for a public audience ever since, so picking it as the opening film for CineGeeks was a no-brainer. And it's got such a great cast...I won't spoil who he plays, but Kevin Sorbo has a fantastic cameo.

And *FDR*'s two sidekicks are played by Ray Wise, who was in *RoboCop*, and starred in *Twin Peaks* as Laura Palmer's father, and a bunch of other stuff, and Bruce Magill, who played D-Day in *Animal House*—and just a few months after this, went on to be in Spielberg's *Lincoln*. Talk about a contrast! A buddy of mine is just tickled that in this film you get to see Brad Majors side by side with D-Day and Leland Palmer. That's Geek Nirvana. And I think that really sums up what CineGeeks is about. Showing you stuff you're just not going to see anywhere else—or showing you stuff in a way you won't see anywhere else.

WOD: Are you going to do Rocky-style shadowcasts?

McDEE: That's not a major part of the plan, no. There may be exceptions, so I won't rule it out; we may have a couple of things like that down the road. But not right away. However—and there's always a however—I do totally encourage people to come in costume, dress up, participate, shout at the screen, whatever. In fact, I'm hoping my friend Justin will show up in his *FDR* costume, with his tricked-out, heavily armed wheelchair and all. But mostly we just want to show cool movies and have fun with them. It's not church. It's a party and we're there to have fun.

WOD: And what about the theatre? Is this a first for them?

McDEE: I think so. I know others have approached them in the past about doing various things there, but for one reason or another it didn't work out. But the manager, Mark, is totally "one of us". He gets it, and he's been great to work with. He's excited and looking forward to it. Hopefully, this will open

some doors for other cool stuff to happen there in the future.

WOD: Other than *Poolboy*, do you have anything else lined up for future screenings?

McDEE: We have a tentative schedule through the end of 2013, but I don't want to give anything away for obvious reasons. But it all depends on how well opening night does. If the freaks come out for *FDR*, we'll definitely be back for more.

WOD: Sounds like you're ready for a sellout.

McDEE: Let's not start sucking each other off yet, but I'm hoping.

WOD: How can people find out more, or buy tickets?

McDEE: We're working on a website, but for now, people can look us up at [Facebook.com/CineGeeks](https://www.facebook.com/CineGeeks), or email [McDee@midnightmayhem.org](mailto:McDee@midnightmayhem.org). And please spread the word!

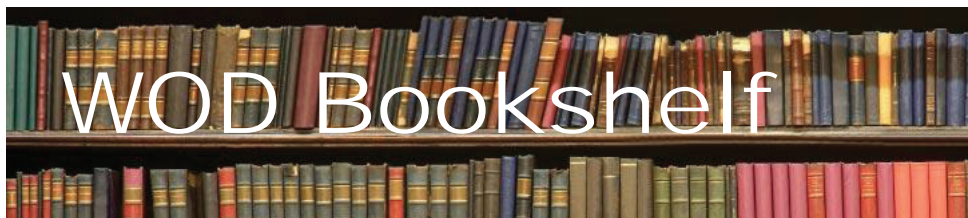
WOD: We wish you much luck and success and hope to catch up with you down the road!

McDEE: Danke. And come to the show, dammit! CineGeeks opening night is August 10th at Bell Road Super Saver Cinemas in Phoenix.

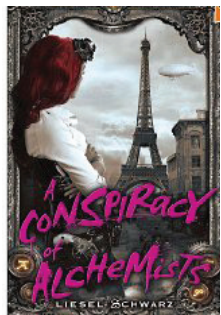
WOD







## ACONSPIRACYOFALCHEMISTS by Liesel Shwarz



A Conspiracy of Alchemists combines paranormal romance with more familiar steampunk faire. The protagonist is Eleanor "Elle" Chance, an airship freight pilot

picking up some side work in Paris. The story is told primarily from her feminine point of view with reveals on the thoughts of Hugh Marsh, the other main character. The writing is light and easy. I found the story progress slow at first, finding a good pace in the middle. At the end, the climax lasts so long that it becomes anti-climactic at points.

The romance is light-hearted and without many challenges. The main story is easy enough to understand, but by the end you start to question certain elements. For instance, Elle is taken to various places for no apparent reason. The original reasons fall through, but no secret one is revealed. At the end there is a terrible conflagration and crisis that can only be solved by using a tuning fork. While the entire Earth is about to be destroyed, the rescuers talk about it for a long time and then never use the tuning fork. Earlier, when a character is missing and could be killed at any time, days are spent casually looking for them without any feeling of haste.

There is also a strange balance that has to be maintained between light and shadow that just never seems to make sense. If you like supernatural romance, that part works well, but it is G rated without any steaminess. If you like steampunk novels, this will be a quick and probably enjoyable read. The weaknesses lie in the science fiction elements and the villains. The science fiction portion is not well fleshed out. The villains are entirely evil and dastardly with no real distinctions other than their appearance.

The end of the book of sets up the reader to know that more are to come. I believe this is now considered the

first in a trilogy. I hope the second explains the science fiction portions better and has more developed antagonists.

-- Reviewed by Michael Bradley  
Author of

## AFTEREARTH: THE OFFICIAL NOVEL By Peter David

The novelization of the movie, After Earth, is adapted by Peter David, based on the screenplay by Garry Whitta and M. Night Shyamalan. Will Smith, who stars in the movie version with his real life son Jayden, is credited with the original story. The novel version appears in mass market paperback format and is available at most book stores and other outlets. Unfortunately, despite the stellar list of names working on this project, it does not translate into a good story, even though it is well written.

The premise is a classic trope of the strict military father over-committed to his work and distant from his family. His oldest child, a daughter, is his favorite and she is killed defending her younger brother. The father, General Cypher Raige is the "OG" or "original ghost." There are creatures that are dropped on their planet by an enemy race that can track fear. Cypher is the first of eight to be able to conquer his fear and become a "ghost" or invisible to these predators. Kitai tries to become a super cadet to prove himself and replace his sister, but fails by trying too hard.

In an attempt to restore his marriage and get to know his son, Cypher takes his son Kitai with him on a business trip which goes terrible, leaving them stranded on Earth. Earth was abandoned by humans 1,000 years ago and everything has developed to kill humans. Here is where it starts to fail. Why was Earth abandoned if it is in great condition now? Why did life evolve to kill humans when humans left millennia ago? Why are only Cypher and Kitai alive in the crash? Why are the predators sent to



kill human, the Ursa, changing over time? Why do their enemies want them dead?

None of those questions are ever answered. Neither is how humans with faster-than-light technology still use hand held batons with blades that pop out. There are no twists at all in this book and no character arc. Kitai basically proves himself a worthy soldier and then his father is proud. It is as if the children of The Great Santini just obeyed their father and everyone was happy. The story is obviously a metaphor for Will Smith and his son, the famous father with the young son trying to prove himself. The flaw is that there are no surprises; it is simply action and conclusion.

In good science fiction, especially something that occurs 1,000 years after leaving Earth, we would expect some interesting twists. I kept expecting the Ursa to have some secret meaning, but they don't. The distant, strict, un-approachable father is not wrong and needs to reach out. The boy just has to keep proving himself. Really?

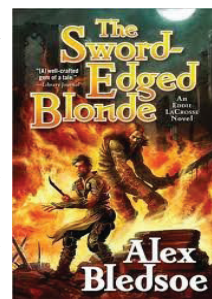
The story is so light on content that even in small paperback it could only fill 265 pages, and that includes half of it in flash backs. The movie story could probably be told in eighty.

The upside is that due to its short length, the publishers added three more short stories based on the overall story line. These short stories are masterful and present a reader what they are expecting - a story, a character arc, and a twist before the ending. If you are interested in seeing After Earth, the movie, wait for video. I would recommend skipping the book.

-- Reviewed by Michael Bradley  
Author of

## THE SWORD EDGED BLONDE (2007) By Alex Bledsoe

Eddie LaCrosse, a discredited baron's son who is currently working as a sword-for-hire, gets asked by his old friend, the King, to find out what really happened when his wife was found in a locked room with the corpse of a child that may be their son. After a few zigs and zags, he figures it out; but as we make the journey with him, the tale

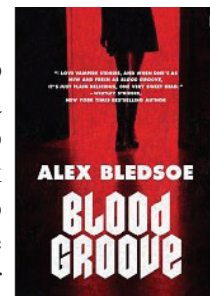


is intriguing with stolen children, lost goddesses, and lots of adventure. The great secondary characters make for an interesting story with depth and breadth. Number two is Burn Me Deadly; three is Dark Jenny; and four is Wake of the Bloody Angel.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

## BLOOD GROOVE (2009)

By Alex Bledsoe

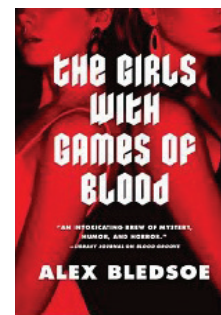


Baron Rudolfo Vladimir Zginski, a vampire, wakes up after 60 years stuck in a box and tries to make sense of the 1970's, but after his initial frenzy of vampire-creating, he discovers there is a new drug that is killing vampires. He has to decide how he fixes that without becoming one of the really-dead. I liked the weird (sorry - quirky just doesn't do it justice!) mix of characters and how they deal with becoming vampires and the unsettling thought of immortality. While this same story has been done before in many vampire stories both in film and print, this one has a good take on the story behind the story.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

## THE GIRLS WITH GAMES OF BLOOD (2010)

By Alex Bledsoe

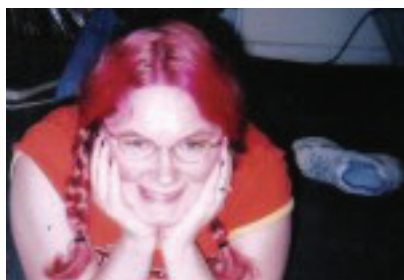


In this "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane" sequel to Blood Groove, two sisters who live to torture each other, meet the vampire and his team of misfits. One sister can live off of the spiritual energy she gets when she plays music but when the other finds out she is back in town, trouble starts and our vampire hero must get involved to protect himself. The interaction between the original group and these new characters is fun to watch and Rudy's attempt to go unnoticed in the modern world is both tragic and hilarious.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman



# COMICPALOOZA 3: CONVENTION REVIEW



*Reviewed by Amanda Oviatt*

Over the past few months, I've done a lot of writing about Comicpalooza, Houston. Comicpalooza Houston is an example of a comic book convention. My favorite convention to go to, however, is one I have attended every year since 2004: Owl Con.

Owl Con is a role-playing convention held at Rice University, sponsored by Fast Warp, a student club. The Convention is named such because the mascot of Rice is "Sammy the Owl," and has been running since 1980. The whole event is about role-playing games: live-action role play (LARP), table-top gaming, board, card games. Celebrity guests that attend Owl Con are there to run their games, not to give speeches, answer questions in panels, or sign autographs for \$40 each. In the decade that I have attended Owl Con, I've had a lot of positive experiences, met some new people, and played some fantastic games. But, when I look back over the years, one experience in particular stands to mind. This game sticks out as one of my top 5 RPG experiences, Ever.

At Owl Con 2011, I was exhausted. My husband, some friends, and I ran a Live Action Role Playing (LARP) game we designed off of the Exalted world, and we had run ourselves ragged with the set up and prop building. To those unfamiliar with LARPing, it is essentially a large group of people playing improvisational theater, with a few people running the story, 'directors' of sorts. Unlike video gaming or tabletop role-playing, it involves a lot of running around, thinking on one's feet, and can be quite mentally and physically draining. Our Exalted LARP was part of a full day of LARPing, we ran in the



morning, and we played two LARPs in the other slots of the day. Instead of lugging the props home, most of the prop weapons we designed we decided to give out as prizes to our players.

The Exalted world has giant weapons that deal nasty amounts of damage. Thus, to enhance the play of the game, we built giant prop weapons.

Live-Action role play is not necessarily my thing. I play LARPs on occasion, but I really prefer tabletop RPGs. Every Con I attend, I make a point each year to play at least ONE game I've never played before. This has led to some really good games

(like our initial discovery of Exalted) and some really bad ones (in 2012, I played a Sci-Fi game based off a world created by the game runner; it was 2 hours in before the GameMaster finished explaining the game.) At the beginning of Owl Con 2011, I saw the one game I "had to play."

I don't remember the way the game was marketed, what the Game Master called it, or even how he described it. What I saw in the flyer was the words "ROCK Band" and "Table-Top Role Playing game." Now, I've played Rock Band. I play rock band a lot when I need to remind myself of my awesome rock star skills. So, I don't even think I really read the description. I signed up because I knew one thing...

I had to play this game.

When I got to the game, the Game Master (GM), a man named John Kadolph, explained that the game is set within the The Chronicles of Amber universe. In the Amber universe, people from Royal families can travel from their home world to other, parallel realities called 'Shadows.' In this particular game, our royal characters were a bunch of bored teenagers who formed a Rock band. Every so often, our band would get bored, and we'd go on tour in a shadow reality. Oh, and we had some sort of Rock band instruments/awesome magic powers that would allow us to travel within each shadow realm and

communicate at large distances with one another. We had a full band present. I took the drummer, a heavy, fighter type. I don't ordinarily play fighters, but I play drums primarily on Rock band, so I felt that this might be fun.

It was time to go on tour, again. And this time, we were touring a Galaxy. A Galaxy Far, far away. . .

We were going to the world of Star Wars. Our plan was to go in a time \*after\* the Rebellion success, so that we would not have to worry about fighting. Our first scheduled stop was Chalmun's Cantina. (Known to the layperson as "that Cantina in the Original Star Wars film where Han Shot First"). Things happened, shots fired, the Band quit, so we played the gig.

Essentially, we played along through the tale of Star Wars: Episode IV, A New Hope. We had a blast. Between the player characters, we worked to avoid spoiling the future to the non-player characters. We giggled when our favorite Star Wars moments happened. We used our magic powers to mentally \*slap\* people who tried to tell Luke the Identity of his father, or sister. We even had a chance to have our own squadron in the epic space battle.

All throughout the game, we had three separate 'concerts' where we played a variety of Rock Band songs. We had a blast. The game was beyond fun, and an amazing experience. Even though the plot of the game was really just "Star Wars" all over again, he really prepared the game, made it feel like our characters, who all 'knew what was coming' were making a valid contribution to the Rebellion. I even got to convince Han Solo that Leia might have a thing for him, and that there was no future with Luke. I remember the funny look on John's face when, pretending to be Han Solo, I said, "Listen, that princess needs to be rescued. There might be more than treasure in it for you." "You think that a princess and a scruffy guy like me... but no, she likes Luke."

"Trust me, a girl knows this stuff. There is no future with her and Luke. And she was eyeballing you."

In our version, that is why Han Solo returned to save the day at the end of episode IV.

What made this game even more fun is that his son was one of our LARP prizewinners, and still has the giant club we gave him as a prize, and we have been told that our LARP was his son's favorite event of that particular convention.

From mutual awesome game experiences, we have met one of the coolest people we know, and every convention that we can, we look for John.

I think what made this RPG experience particularly memorable was the preparedness of the Game Master. Although the game combined bits and pieces of a lot of awesome Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Video Game elements, the blending could have been a bad blend, with a choppy or forced feeling. It was John's preparedness that made the game amazing. he had a PowerPoint presentation ready to show off when/where in the story we were located. He had miniatures for both characters and the Star Wars ships. He provided not only detailed character sheets describing the Amber world, but card packets to help us semi-LARP out our magic. (While I don't like full-on Live Action role play, a blend with Tabletop and LARP can be fun, if done right).

Well prepared GMs like John can make a game amazing. In a way, the well-prepared game master is very much like a well-prepared teacher: they find a way to engage the whole audience, use a multitude of methods to make sure that everyone feels like they are the Rock Star/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.*

*Article originally published online at <http://landofnerds.com/>*

WOD

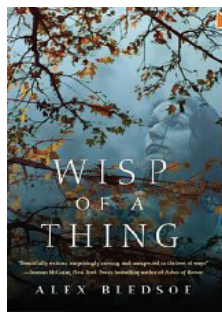
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*Book Reviews Continued from Page 22*

## WISP OF A THING (2013)

*By Alex Bledsoe*

If you loved The Hum and the Shiver, you waited for this one as much as I did. This time the struggle between the First Sons and First Daughters breaks out with more action. Tension is high as Stoney Hicks plays his sex games with a stranger and brings the attention of the outside world at a time when internal tensions are already ready to explode. Bliss Overbay's sister had been cursed to become only a "Wisp of a Thing" by Rockhouse Hicks. Her humanity is quickly and quietly slipping away as no one wants to take on Rockhouse who always retaliates with a mean twist that sometimes escalates to deadly force that can never be traced back to him. Only the intervention of a stranger who's in Needsville looking for a song to salve his own wounded heart, and with some help from a local non-Tufa who is



also unhappy with Stoney's games, might possibly be enough to save her and restore the balance between Sons and Daughters. We do see Bronwyn Hart, but her part is small (though critical) and we finally learn a lot more about the Tufa. I loved this book and want more - right now!

I finished this in about 5 hours because I couldn't put it down but it took this long to write the review because I couldn't figure out how to say everything wonderful without going on and on and on and ...

-- Reviewed by: *Normalene Zeeman*

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WOD



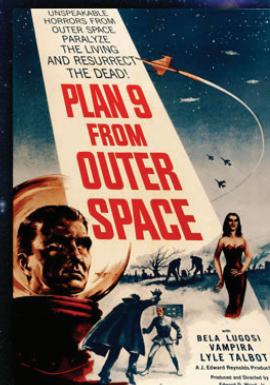
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