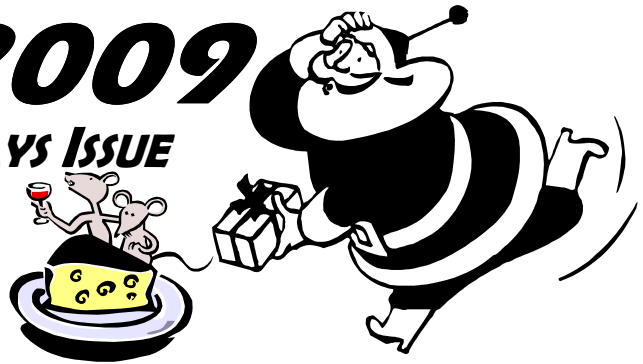


# SITHFACTS 2009

## ANNUAL DECEMBER HOLIDAYS ISSUE



### WORLD FANTASY AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The 2009 World Fantasy Award winners were announced November 1 at the World Fantasy Convention in San José, California.

Lifetime Achievements: Ellen Asher and Jane Yolen. Novel (tie): *The Shadow Year* by Jeffrey Ford and *Tender Morsels* by Margo Lanagan. Novella: "If Angels Fight" by Richard Bowes. Short Story: "26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss" by Kij Johnson.

Anthology: *Paper Cities: An Anthology of Urban Fantasy* edited by Ekaterina Sedia. Collection: *The Drowned Life* by Jeffrey Ford. Artist: Shaun Tan.

Special Award, Professional: Kelly Link & Gavin J. Grant (for Small Beer Press and Big Mouth House). Special Award, Non-Professional: Michael Walsh (for Howard Waldrop collections from Old Earth Books).

### END SORTA NEAR FOR SOOKIE

If you like the books from *A Southern Vampire Mystery* – which HBO turned into *True Blood* – then make sure you enjoy the next four, because they may be the last ones Charlaine Harris writes, reported Sci Fi Wire in late October. Harris was out promoting her short-story compilation *A Touch of Dead*, featuring stories about heroine Sookie Stackhouse, when she revealed that the end is sorta, kinda nearish.

"I've signed a contract to write three more after the one that's coming out in May, and they may be the last three," Harris told CNN. "Probably by then I will have lived with Sookie long enough."

Harris said she doesn't want to keep the books going if Sookie's stories start feeling played out. "I hope I have enough sense to walk away before that happens."

The series is at eight novels now and will finish with 12 if Harris gives Sookie a rest when she finishes her contract. That's a good run for any series, although there'll probably never be enough for Sookie fans.

### HOLDSTOCK PASSES AWAY

Robert Holdstock, 61, died in a London hospital early November 29, after almost two weeks in intensive care battling a severe E. coli infection. He was hospital-

ized after collapsing on November 18 and put on life-support, with multiple-organ breakdown, including his liver, kidneys, and heart. The E. coli infection was discovered the next day.

He is best known as the author of the *Mythago Cycle* and the *Merlin Codex* series. His latest novel *Avilion*, the direct sequel to *Mythago Wood*, was published in July 2009. Holdstock's works have won him four BSFA Awards and two World Fantasy Awards, as well as many nominations.

Born in Hythe, Kent, Holdstock held jobs as a banana boatman, construction worker, and slate miner. He earned a Bachelor of Science from University College of North Wales, Bangor, with honors in applied Zoology, and a Master of Science in Medical Zoology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. From 1971 to 1974, he conducted research at the Medical Research Council in London, while writing part-time. He became a full-time writer in 1976.

Holdstock is survived by partner Sarah Biggs.

### UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **Tonight:** Comedic holiday film shorts, plus the 5th ASFS Dessert Cook-Off. Prizes! Bribes! Coffee!
- **January 15, 2010:** One week late due to the holiday. Rebecca "Randi" Tinkham of the NM History Museum talks on "Entropy and Agony: Preserving Your Collectibles & Costumes" with visual aids.
- **February 12:** Program is unknown at press time, but we're hoping for an author visit & reading. Plus the Valentine's issue of *ASFACTS* (Deadline Sun, Feb 7).
- **March 12:** The Annual Club Auction with Bob Vardeman as your auctioneer. Start looking for stuff to donate to the cause. And save up your pennies...
- **April 16:** A week late due to the Williamson Lecture-ship (Ian Tregillis) in Portales. Program is not confirmed. Also, *ASFACTS* for spring (deadline Sun 4/11).
- **May 14:** A visit from Susan Krinard, author of more than a dozen fantasy, romance & paranormal books!

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## GRR MARTIN'S PILOT FINISHES FILMING

Filming on the *Game of Thrones* pilot, adapted from the George RR Martin fantasy novel, wrapped around November 18, according to Visual Effects producer Julia Frey on Sci-Fi Wire. The three weeks of shooting took place in three different countries and involved a cast of two dozen and more than 100 extras.

Cast members include Lena Headey as Cersei Lannister, a woman of royal blood, Peter Dinklage as Cersei's brother Tyrion, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau as Cersei's twin, Jaime, Sean Bean as aristocrat Ned Stark, Jennifer Ehle as his wife, Catelyn Stark, and Mark Addy as King Robert.

HBO is reportedly expected to give its decision on a green light around March.

## DR. HORRIBLE SEQUEL WORK COULD START SOON

Ever since Sci Fi Wire first reported in January that Joss Whedon and company were planning a sequel to *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, fans have been awaiting news. And now there is some, courtesy of MTV.com in mid-November.

First, star Nathan Fillion told the site that the project has a name – which he won't divulge – and that Whedon's already written a couple of songs.

Now, Whedon's brother and co-writer Zack Whedon tells MTV that the sequel will get seriously underway once Joss' just-canceled Fox series *Dollhouse* wraps for the season.

"They finish up *Dollhouse* in the winter – at least what they've scheduled to shoot thus far – so hopefully when that's done, we'll all be able to get together more frequently and grind it out," he explained. "There are a couple of songs written. It's very promising. We're all very excited about where it goes."

He also confirmed that the sequel will feature Dr. Horrible (Neil Patrick Harris) and Captain Hammer (Fillion).

"Yeah, you have to see them in the sequel," he

laughed. "We will expand the world a little bit into other areas you have not seen... and it will be hilarious."

The entire *Dr. Horrible* creative team – Joss, Zack, brother Jed Whedon and Jed's wife, Mau-



rissa Tancharoen – are back for the sequel.

But wait, say fans: Will Penny be back? Bad Horse? Moist?

## SF BOOK GROUP READS ON

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, December 21, at Page One to discuss *Ill Wind* by Rachel Caine. This 2003 Roc novel introduces the world of Caine's weather, fire and earth wardens, and has spawned several sequels.

The group then focuses on *The Philosopher's Apprentice* by James Morrow (Harper Softcover reprint 2009) on January 18.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on the selected novels. For more information, contact Yvonne at [piebald@juno.com](mailto:piebald@juno.com) or Craig at 266-8905.

## FOUNDER OF COMIC-CON DIES

By George Gene Gustines, *New York Times*

Sheldon Dorf, who turned his passion for comic books and newspaper strips into a vocation by founding one of the world's biggest annual comic-book conventions, died in San Diego Nov. 3 of complications from diabetes. He was 76 years old.

Dorf started Comic-Con International in San Diego in 1970, having organized a similar show in Detroit in the '60s.

Generating interest was a challenge at first. After a test run with fewer than 100 attendees, the first official Comic-Con drew around 300, but it quickly expanded. The convention, which now includes previews of science-fiction films, television series and video games, has become an important fixture on Hollywood's promotional calendar. Last year 126,000 people attended the four-day event at the San Diego Convention Center, according to David Glanzer, Comic-Con's director of marketing and public relations. "This convention made a major difference in the economy of San Diego," said Mark Evanier, a comic-book historian who has attended the show annually since it began. It proved, he said, "what a convention could do for the local economy and to revitalize a city."

Shel, as Dorf was known to his friends, was born in Detroit on July 5, 1933, and discovered his love of comics early. "When we were kids, we'd go to the drugstore and try to get there the day the comic shipment arrived," his brother said.

Dorf was also an avid reader of newspaper comic strips and would send fan letters to cartoonists, including

Chester Gould, who created *Dick Tracy*, and Milton Caniff, who created *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon*. The boys' father once took them to Gould's home in Woodstock, Ill., brother Michael Dorf recalled, adding, "This was the days before celebrity security."

It was the start of a long friendship with Gould. Dorf's ability to befriend his idols served him well in getting the comic-book convention off the ground, a task he began when his family moved to San Diego.

"Shel said he was naturally very shy, but he seemed to have a preternatural ability to talk to anyone," said Mike Towry, who met Dorf in 1969 because of an advertisement in a pennysaver about the sale of comic books.

Dorf asked Towry, then 14, and two friends if they would be interested in participating in a comic convention. "Of course we said yes," Towry recalled.

Helping to seal the deal was Dorf's ability to deliver comic-industry giants to his audience. He telephoned Jack Kirby, perhaps the industry's most influential artist, who had recently moved to Irvine, Calif., and had him speak to the boys. Later they visited him in person.

When Kirby created the *New Gods*, a race of good and evil beings on parallel worlds – one led by the wise Highfather and the other by the despot Darkseid – for DC Comics in 1971, he used the boys as models for the San Diego Five-String Mob, a rock band that was also a team of assassins for the fearsome Darkseid. He also used Dorf as the basis for Himon, an inventor among the New Gods. Dorf also served as the model for Thud Shelley, a football player in the *Steve Canyon* newspaper strip. Dorf was that strip's letterer for 14 years.

The growth of Comic-Con eventually caused Dorf to part ways with it. He described its mushrooming as "an ordeal" in a 2006 interview with *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. But the convention's current organizers admire his foresight at publicly celebrating the creators of comics and his early recognition of the validity of their work as art.

"It's interesting to look at this with 2009 eyes," Glanzer said, "but in 1970 that wasn't the case."

Dorf is survived by his brother.

## KING WORKS ON *SHINING* SEQUEL

Over Thanksgiving, news broke that horrormeister Stephen King has been talking about writing a sequel to *The Shining*, which he says might be called *Doctor Sleep*.

Here's how the Filmofilia Web site reported it:

"The second novel would center on Danny Torrance, the young boy from the original story with the gift of being able to communicate clairvoyantly with ghosts, and who is now an appropriately aged 40-year-old. All these years after being tormented by the spiritual inhabi-

tants of the Overlook Hotel and his father's alcoholism/homicidal rage, Danny is now working at a hospice using his supernatural powers for palliative purposes. King even offered a tentative title: *Doctor Sleep*."

King talked about the possible book at a Toronto appearance to promote his new book, *Under the Dome*.

*The Shining*, which was released in 1977, was famously adapted into a Stanley Kubrick film in 1980, starring Jack Nicholson, Danny Lloyd and Shelley Duvall. King himself later adapted the book in 1997 as a "more faithful" TV miniseries directed by Mick Garris for ABC.

## CHUCK RETURNS WITH BANG

*Entertainment Weekly* reported in early December that *Chuck* has an official return date to NBC in January. The eagerly awaited action comedy will begin airing its 19-episode third season on Sunday, Jan. 10, with two back-to-back episodes. It then moves to its regular Monday time slot the next day, Jan. 11.

"Chuck has new powers this year," executive producer Josh Schwartz told EW. "He can do anything he wants – *except* get Sarah."

Reacting to the teasing news, writer Michael Au-siello commented, "Damn you, new powers!!!"

## DOLLHOUSE CANCELED BUT JOSS PROMISED "SIGNIFICANT" ENDING

Fox canceled Joss Whedon's low-rated *Dollhouse* in mid-November, reports Sci Fi Wire, but the show will wrap up with a "significant" series finale.

*Variety's* Michael Schneider tweeted: "Official word from Fox: 'We will air all 13 episodes and this gives Joss the opportunity to end in a significant way.'"

The news comes as no surprise, given that the show has seen its ratings bump along at a very low level since it came back for a surprising second season.

The good news (for fans, anyway) is that the show will be allowed to complete its 13-episode second-season production order, which includes episodes featuring guest stars Summer Glau and Ray Wise:

"After some dismal performance in the fall, despite the ratings bumps *Dollhouse* got from DVR viewing, Fox benched the show for the November sweep after four episodes."

The show returned on Fox on Dec. 4.



## **LOST'S FINAL SEASON TO MOSTLY ANSWER EVERYTHING**

*Lost* begins its final season in early 2010, but you may have noticed there hasn't been any preview footage airing on ABC. You'd think the network would want to tout the long-awaited conclusion. Actually, show runner Damon Lindelof insisted that they not reveal any footage of the final season, he told Sci Fi Wire.

"I think even a single scene from the show would basically tip what it is we're doing this year, and what it is we're doing this year is different than what we've done in other years," Lindelof said in a group interview on Nov. 16 in Los Angeles, where he was promoting the *Star Trek* DVD. "That is the marketing strategy that we are trying to impose upon our masters. I can't unequivocally say that we will be able to hold the embargo all the way up until the actual premiere, but it's pretty cool that we're not showing anything as late as November, so we'll see. I think once the show actually starts, once we're back on, then we'll start showing people what we're up to."

Season five of *Lost* ended with Juliet (Elizabeth Mitchell) detonating a bomb at the Swan Station. Jack thought blowing up the station would prevent the events that caused the Oceanic plane crash. But the detonation in 1977 affects the present and continuity of *Lost* as a whole. Lindelof said the final episodes will be *Lost* storytelling in top form.

"We're kind of returning back to the same kind of storytelling that put us on the map in the first place and resolving some of these mysteries," Lindelof said. "I think this had got to be a record for how much patience people have, but the idea that we're actually getting to answer some of these questions creates this incredible nostalgia, especially when you're doing it through the characters and the actors who were there in the very beginning, so it's pretty cool, theoretically."

Lindelof intends to answer every mystery the show intentionally created. For the mysteries that fans have created themselves, the show can't help you. "I think that there are some *Lost* mysteries that we're not even aware are mysteries," Lindelof said. "That's the thing. People ask us questions and I'm like, 'What are you talking about?' 'What happened to Scott? Are we ever going to find out who murdered Scott?' It's like, 'Ethan murdered him.' They're like, 'Well, but did he?' I'm like, 'YES! Yes, he did.' So for the mysteries that we acknowledge as mysteries, they will be answered."

Then there are some "mysteries" that are really just fans reading way too much into things. "I think that there are some mysteries, like why is the island an island, that aren't mysteries to me," Lindelof said. "That's what it is. There are things like the midi-chlorian issue, which is

essentially was anyone really saying, 'How does the Force work?' We just sort of accepted that it worked."

## **ADDAMS FAMILY HITS STAGE**

Nathan Lane told *Entertainment Weekly* in late November that the accent he uses for Gomez Addams, the lusty patriarch in the new musical *The Addams Family* is "somewhere between Antonio Banderas and Billy Crystal doing Fernando Lamas." The musical currently is playing in Chicago through Jan. 10, and then will open on Broadway on April 8.

The production puts a *Meet the Parents* spin on the spooky family, as daughter Wednesday (Krysta Rodriguez) brings her boyfriend and his parents home to meet the clan, including mom Morticia (Bebe Neuwirth).

At least one Addams is welcoming. "Gomez embraces everybody," says Lane. "It's a total joy to be him on stage for three hours."

## **FRAGGLES TO BIG SCREEN**

Exciting times for Jim Henson fans! First came the news that Jason Segel (*How I Met Your Mother* and *I Love You, Man*) is penning a new Muppets movie. And now director Cory Edwards (*Hoodwinked*) told *Entertainment Weekly* in early December that he is overseeing a big-screen revamp of the Henson-created *Fraggle Rock*, the much-beloved '80s TV show about tiny Muppet-esque creatures.

"We've got a script we're very excited about, but it's been a very tricky balance," reveals Edwards. "We have to appeal to 10-year-olds as well as the nostalgic 30- and 40-year-olds."

Older fans need not worry about an excess of CGI jiggery-pokery. "This is old-school Muppet tricks," reassures Edwards. "I think it's more important to the fans than it would have been to Jim. He loved any tool of creation. But yeah, we're going to do puppets."

## **ABC TRIMS *V*, FLASHFORWARD**

It's sort of official, reports Sci-Fi Wire: The relatively low ratings for ABC's *V* and *FlashForward* hurt the shows, but not enough for the network to pull the plug entirely. ABC is cutting its final order for each show by one episode, the Futon Critic site reported:

"Newcomers *V* and *FlashForward* are set to film 12 and 24 total hours, respectively, both one episode shy of numbers reported earlier this fall. Come 2010 then the Alphabet will have eight new episodes of *V* (returning March 30) while *FlashForward* (returning March 4) will offer up 14 fresh installments."

*Lost*, meanwhile, will return February 2, with 18

new episodes for its sixth and final season.

## BUBONICON 42 HOLDS ROOM RATES

Co-chairs Kristen Dorland and Craig Chrissinger have been able to work with the Albuquerque Grand Airport Hotel to hold 2010 sleeping room rates at the same prices as this year! Of course, Bubonicon 42's special guests have been known for several months. The 2010 convention takes place August 27-29 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel (renovations are scheduled to be completed by next June) on Yale Blvd SE, south of Gibson.

The Sheraton room rate for 2010 will be \$97 a night (single/double occupancy), with reservations needed by Monday, August 16. We made our room count 2004-2009, so please help us hit our goal of 125 room nights on Friday and Saturday of the con (Thursday & Sunday are considered if we're borderline).

Peter David, novelist, comic book scripter and screenwriter, will be our Guest of Honor. Guest Artist is Sarah Clemens, fantasy and bookcover artist and medical illustrator. And Colorado author Mario Acevedo (*X-Rated Bloodsuckers*, etc) will serve as Toastmaster.

Memberships for Bubonicon 42 will be going up just slightly. At present, a membership for the 2010 con is \$31 through Feb. 7. They go to \$35 Feb. 8-May 15, and \$38 May 16-August 9. They may be purchased from the "NMSF Conference" at club meetings or at PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176.

Again, a "youth" is defined as ages 14-17, and youth memberships are \$20 for the weekend. Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult, and should not be running around the hotel (especially on different floors) without a parent/guardian nearby. Also, no unaccompanied children will be permitted in the Art Show due to possible mature content.

The con committee especially would like to hear your panel discussion ideas, fan program proposals, programming suggestions and volunteer options by the beginning of March. Adam Brown or Scott Phillips most likely will be presenting another late-night random block of films, and an Authors Afternoon Tea is possible if the coordinator is willing...

We also are looking for volunteers to help out with programming events and in running the convention. Our volunteer "gofers" receive swag before the con, and are in a drawing for prizes during the Bubonicon weekend.

Updates on the con will appear in ASFACTS issues, on fliers, or at the official website: [www.bubonicon.com](http://www.bubonicon.com). Suggestions, questions and volunteers: Call 459-8734 or 266-8905, email [kristn33@yahoo.com](mailto:kristn33@yahoo.com) or [cwcraig@nmia.com](mailto:cwcraig@nmia.com), or send mail to the PO Box.



## WORLD FANTASY CON... SORTA

### A Con Report by Robert E. Vardeman

The day before I left for World Fantasy Convention, it snowed in Albuquerque, which is only two months early! The morning I left it was 27 degrees and close to a record low. On the Saturday of the convention, my son called and said it snowed almost an inch the day before. It was looking as if global warming is really taking its toll on Albuquerque. San Jose was wonderful as far as weather, but I was not hesitant about returning home. I have coats.

I had swapped out my plane ticket late in the day October 29 for one earlier since my son wasn't able to come to the convention this year (work, the bane of the working class). There was no reason to wait for him to get out of his last class after all. This new flight plan gave me a four-hour layover in Phoenix but I found a nice quiet lounge with an electrical plug for my computer and finished the first chapter in a new Western. On into San Jose, which has a strangely retro airport being completely refurbished—maybe even built from scratch. Taxi to the hotel, bar full of writers. I was ready!

The dealers room was packed with tons of books, which is what I like about WFC. Not so many geegaws and movie memorabilia dealers – books! I keep wondering when I will see a newfangled dealer that will allow you to download e-books right there from the table. A lot of giveaways were on CDs but that is different because it requires a computer rather than a handheld device to read. I touched base with Bob Brown and later with Greg Ketter, who are both doing well. Over the course of the next few days I signed a dozen or so books in their stock for other dealers.

I had dinner with Mike Stackpole in what proved to be a string of long strategy sessions on writing, e-books and different kinds of promotion that would excite both the writer and the fan. A cup of corn chowder and other tasty treats from a sandwich shop near the hotel. Speciality was the name of this place and it seemed to, well, specialize, in 3 bean salsa (great), corn chowder (equally so), clam chowder (didn't try) and decent sandwiches. At various times we pulled up a table with William Wu to discuss Chinese Internet goings-on and that Hong Kong is a burgeoning market for things sfnal. Good seeing Bill after a lot of years.

Lots of people, lots of fun, too many pastries for breakfast – back to the oatmeal for me, not to mention gruel for the rest of my meals. Hey, conventions are intended to be a break where we can live it up and pretend to be, if not normal, then extraordinary.

The one panel I sat through in its entirety, mostly because I was stunned into paralysis, was the google settlement discussion. I knew writers were getting ripped off but did not realize the full extent until now. It gets complicated but it comes down to "we want what you have –

resistance is futile.” If any publication of a story is not listed in a writer’s “opt out” then the story is fair game for google. Their rules. This procedure is contrary to law but if you’ve got the gold, you rule. Microsoft and Yahoo’s legal objections seem to be that they don’t have their hand in writers’ pockets, too. Throughout the con much talk of e-books and production of same.

The only other panel I wanted to attend was “Weird West.” Late getting out of bed, I missed all but 10 min of it. Mostly it seems as if weird west is a subset of steampunk at this time. Everyone seemed to be praying to their individual gods, of course including Chthulu, for the demise of paranormal romances. How many androgynous vampire love stories can there be for the tweeners?

Hmm, I also wanted to hit the forgotten authors panel but forgot about it. I’d talked a bit about A. Merritt with Bob Brown the day before and he said that A. Merritt had published the complete *Ship of Ishtar* back in the ‘40s. A new complete edition is available from Planet Stories. The other printings (Avon, etc) had all been abridged. I might have to sit down with my Avon and the new and compare.

Extracurricular activities: In addition to sitting around spinning lies, listening to other writers and plotting to take over the universe, there were opportunities for things outside the convention.

Most of you know about my fascination with geocaching. On Sunday afternoon, Alice Henderson suggested that we go find a geocache near the hotel. It took me a few minutes to fire up the laptop, connect to the geocaching website and locate several caches nearby. Most of them were subscription-only but there was one that looked promising and was part of the solar system series of caches spread around San Jose. The one I got the coordinates for was, appropriately, Sol. Not too far away was the technology museum with its *Star Trek* display. (I’ve seen the *Star Trek* Experience in Las Vegas and about all of the attraction on this \$25 admission price was Kirk’s command chair. Not even if they have allowed me to wear Shatner’s toupee would this have been worth that much money, however. Besides, the geocaching was free.)

With coordinates inputted into Alice’s Magellan, which was the same model I had for years but which turned wonky on me a couple years ago probably from being left in the sun too many times, we headed out. The “we” consisted of Alice, John Skip, Nathan Long, Jason P. and me. I got us within about 20 feet of the cache, and the non-cachers went off to make rude comments about a piece of public art that looked like a huge pile of dog crap, in color, appearance and probably in texture. By huge I mean 10 feet high and probably 25 feet around. It’s nice to see that San Jose public art is no better than Albuquerque public art.

Nathan pointed out the meaning of the clue and Alice found the micro-cache. Signing the log was a bit of a problem because the log was already full – and tiny. But

the intrepid geocachers had triumphed!

I didn’t have much chance to see the sights of San Jose, passing on the Rosicrucian Museum because I didn’t learn to walk through walls the first time I saw it. I did see the rose tattoo, interesting architecture scattered throughout the city center, and Gordon Garb took us to a truly fine Afghan restaurant Sunday evening. I only wish I hadn’t eaten so much at lunch so that I could have really scarfed up that plate of scrumptious food. For 35% of what I would’ve paid for rubber chicken at the banquet, I got real food.

I’ve got to get to the manuscripts now, of which I have 13 waiting in the queue, as well as work on a Western. In other words, back to work-today existence...

## ~~TURN DOWN YOUR LIGHTS~~ ~~(WHERE APPLICABLE)~~

by Ian Tregillis, October 30 2009

Since I spend the vast majority of my time either working at my day job or writing, and since I’ll have even less free time as the holidays approach, it seemed like a good idea to take on a brand new, time-intensive project at home.

It involves robots.

Well, puppets, if we must be technical about it. But they’re puppets OF robots. So that’s pretty close, right?

I’m talking about my old friends Crow T. Robot, Tom Servo, Gypsy and Cambot.

I’ve been a devoted fan of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* since its very earliest days on a UHF station (KTMA 23!) in the Twin Cities, where I grew up. Well, no, that’s not true. I watched it back in the KTMA days, but I became a devoted fan after it hopped to the Comedy Channel (which I think became Comedy Central a year or two later). If only I’d started taping MST3K from the very beginning. Or taped it consistently, once I did start... Sigh.

I did manage to get about a 100 episodes on tape over the years, thanks in large part to those wonderful Turkey Day marathons they used to run. My collection consists mostly of Joel episodes, since the transition from Joel Hodgson to Mike Nelson occurred right around the time it got harder for me to consistently tape the show. I do have a smattering of Mike episodes, and they’re all great. But to me, the Golden Years of MST3K will always be seasons 2-5. (*Fugitive Alien*, anyone? *Mighty Jack*? *Godzilla*? *Gamera*? *Mr. B. Natural*?)

Mike had been the head writer for MST3K long before he took over for Joel, so much of the humor remained the same immediately after the transition because the mix in the writers’ room hadn’t changed a great deal. But if you knew the show well enough, you could see a certain kind of quirkiness missing after Joel’s departure. I was very sad to see him go. The next blow, in my not-at-all humble opinion, was Frank Conniff’s departure

(though they did give TV's Frank a great sendoff). I'm not sure if I have *Samson vs. the Vampire Women*, but I've SEEN Frank's last episode (except *SoulTaker* #1001, of course, where Joel and Frank both make surprise reappearances). I just don't know how or where. I haven't found the episode yet, and I'm not hopeful.

The Dr. Forrester/Mrs. Forrester interplay just never worked for me personally. And when Trace Beaulieu left – taking with him both Dr. Forrester and the original the voice of Crow – well... Bill Corbett did a fine job when he took over Crow, and he made me laugh in his role as Observer, but the chemistry of the original show was forever lost. (Well, I suppose the original “original” chemistry was gone when Josh Weinstein left at the end of season 1.) By the end of the SciFi days, I think the indomitable Kevin Murphy (Tom Servo and, later, Professor Bobo) was the only original on-camera cast member remaining.

I would have been delighted if the show could have continued for another 10 years past the decade of life it did get. But, like I said, in my mind, seasons 2-5 will always be the Golden Years. Though, with projects like *RiffTrax* and *Cinematic Titanic*, maybe the show has found a second life after all. And hooray for that! (Both *RiffTrax* and *CT* are well worth your time, if you like *MST3K*.)

*MST3K* is something guaranteed to cheer me up when I'm feeling under the weather. It's very dear to me (and countless others, I'm sure). I have so many fond memories of watching this show with friends. In college, I was lucky to find a good group of people who were also fans. Around the same time, the good folks at Best Brains did a couple of screenings at the U of MN (and elsewhere, I'm sure), both of which were a huge blast (especially when the cast showed up for a Q & A after one of the showings). I also attended a couple of “live” showings of *MST3K* back in the day, once in 1992 and again, I think, in 1994.

One of my greatest regrets in life is that I never went on a tour of the Best Brains studios. And I wasn't living more than 20 minutes away during most of the years when they were giving tours. Oh, to have had my photograph taken with Crow T. Robot! I really do regret that.

That collection of *MST3K* episodes is probably one of my most prized possessions. There have been quite a few moves through four different states during the intervening years, and *MST3K* has always come with me. Purely for sentimental reasons, I guess. But my house doesn't feature a climate-controlled vault suitable for storing such a treasure. Heck, I've never lived anywhere with a climate-controlled vault. For the past few years, I've become more and more aware of the fact that the tapes won't last forever. Especially not given the way they've been stored for most of those years. (Nor will VCRs be around forever.)

I've wanted to do a format conversion on the collec-

tion for quite some time, but never got around to starting it until last weekend. I was feeling a little blue, so I cheered myself up with some retail therapy by buying a DVD burner. Since then, I've been slooowly working through my collection of episodes, making DVD copies of my VHS tapes. It's going to take 5 or 6 weeks to do them all, but I'm having fun in the meantime.

If only I had the time to watch each episode in its entirety during the conversion – instead I'm usually up in my office, working on the current novel, and running downstairs every couple of hours to swap out tapes and DVDs.

I suppose a more hardcore fan really would watch each episode during the conversion in order to keep from unnecessarily burning the old commercials onto the new DVD copies. (On second thought, I don't know that I could ever sit through yet another showing of *Manos: The Hands of Fate* or *Monster A-Go-Go*. I've seen both more than enough for one lifetime, thank you. Even Joel and the bots can't take away all the pain of watching those train wrecks. *Manos* has such a reputation as one of the worst films in history – largely if not entirely due to *MST3K* – that it's often the one people request when they want to borrow or watch a tape.) But the commercials are half the fun! They make the episodes an even stronger exercise in nostalgia, which I happen to enjoy. (But I do tend to be more sentimental than is good for me.)

*Mr. B* is THE classic *MST3K* short. *Monster a Go-Go* is by FAR the worst movie they ever did – way worse than *Manos*. The *Go-Go* episode is better, though, because it includes the short *Circus on Ice*, which is one of my faves (and which I just watched the other day).

As for the *MST3K* version of the Mexican *Santa Claus* (did ASFS really watch it a couple of years ago?), my favorite line is: “This weird enough for you, kids? How does this make you feel about Santa?” Wow, I cannot believe that Craig owns the original version of the movie. Dude, seriously.

#### Some Observations:

Wow. 1992 was a long time ago.

I had a terrible cable TV connection in 1993. Probably because I was using a coaxial cable I'd made myself. If only I'd had the foresight to make a trip to Radio Shack. If only I'd appreciated the great weight of posterity that would someday rest on these tapes.

Wow. The early '90s looked a LOT like the late '80s. I don't remember it like that at all, but 17-year-old commercials don't lie. Do they?

Hairstyles and clothes didn't entirely break free of the influence of the '80s until '92/'93, if one can judge these things accurately on the basis of a single Pringles commercial.

Ditto cars – still boxy in 1992. Again, I don't remember it that way, but there's the 1992 VW Golf looking, well, like a '80s car.

You couldn't swing a dead cat in 1993 without hitting a spokesperson for AT&T, or Sprint or MCI. Choos-

ing the right landline telephone service provider for your telecommunication needs was a BIG DEAL in 1993. Like, huge. Finding the best rates for long distance and collect calls was the single most important issue on the national consciousness in the early '90s.

*Mrs. Doubtfire* is simultaneously older and yet newer than I remembered. I've never felt any desire to see it, and even today the commercials still don't change that.

I remember a flap – back in the Usenet days – when people complained about Comedy Central's voiceover announcements (voiced by Penn Jillett) during the *MST3K* closing credits. The complaint was that it made it hard to get a clean recording of the *MST3K* "love theme." I even distinctly remember one episode (haven't found it yet as I work through my collection) wherein Penn actually referred to this directly while he was doing the voiceover.

And yet, I'm finding that – so far – many of my taped episodes have "pristine" closing credits. I wonder if those are episodes that weren't taped during their premiere broadcast, but during Turkey Day marathons? I remember those voiceovers so clearly. Or...do I?

Crow T. Robot is just as awesome as I remember. Ditto Tom Servo. And Joel. And Mike. And the Mads.

However, when I finished burning off the complete set of Season 1 episodes, I noted that those early episodes are a little slower than later seasons, definitely. I'm not sure when Mike joined the writing staff, but the show did get a lot funnier when he came along.

I do indeed have three (alas, only 3) KTMA episodes on tape. I am saving those for last on the DVD project because I'm wary of their quality. They're copies of copies of copies, and pretty poor – my DVD burner may not be able to read them. But if that fails, there are other options for getting them on DVD. This whole project has become a production!

**Update, 4 December 2009:** I finished the last successful transfer last night! The stats:

- 102 episodes burned to DVD:
- All but two of the Joel episodes, including complete seasons 1-4, and complete first half of season 5 except 510 and 511 (Joel's last was 512).
- 18 Mike episodes, randomly scattered through



seasons 5 (9 eps), 6 (5 eps), 8 (1 ep) 9 (1 ep), 10 (2 eps).

■ 5 failed transfers owing to very low quality recordings, including my 3 KTMA episodes (season 0).

■ The original videotape quality varies widely, from very clear to very poor. A substantial fraction of

the DVD transfers exhibit major audio/visual desynchronization, which happens regardless of the quality of the original recording. Probably 20% or more of the transfers suffers from this problem to one extent or another. This is apparently a well-known software/firmware problem that happens when the audio and visual components are transmitted separately, because the audio compresses more easily than the video, so they can get out of synch. Rats.

I haven't systematically cataloged which DVDs have problems. That will have to wait for another time. But, if I can find a solution to the audio desynch problem, I'll probably go ahead and try this again, at least with the worst transfers. At the same time I might be able to get the KTMA episodes to transfer. (The KTMA episodes are very grainy, but the videotape itself is surprisingly watchable, considering the episodes are copies of copies of copies...)

## REVENGE OF THE COLON: CASSUTT EXAMINES SCI-FI TITLES

by Michael Cassutt, posted Nov. 4, 2009

At a recent retreat for the staff of Sci Fi Wire—memory is vague, but it was at some luxurious, exclusive resort where time is usually spent figuring out how to spend that Goldman Sachs bonus—we columnists received our marching orders, in this case to concentrate on the titles of sci-fi, fantasy and horror projects. Hence the recent "65 of sci-fi's most amusing 'one letter off' titles" and this month's contribution from sci-fi writer Cassutt.

Okay, I'm kidding. The similarity of subject is entirely coincidental.

But still important. The title is the audience's first contact with your book, movie, television series, game, even your blog. Successful titles range from made-up words (*Neuromancer*, *Cryptonomicon*) to well-known words in new contexts (*Dune*, *Matrix*, *Terminator*, *Avatar*) to mash-ups (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *FlashForward*) to whole phrases from other words or usage (*Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*). Your title can be a number (2012).

There is an art to this, and also a business. *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* come to mind, both short, evocative, unforgettable, and also pre-emptive ... although titles can't be copyrighted, they can be legally protected in other ways. Which means that you are unlikely to be able to use, say, "star" and "trek", in that order, without drawing considerable legal attention.

In fact, given the proliferation of space-related works in film, television and comic books in the past 30 years, it's become more difficult to create any new sci-fi title that uses "star" or "space."

So the difficulty is acknowledged. Lately, however, sci-fi titles have been taking some odd forms. I've always grudgingly accepted the use of numerals in sequel titles -

*Terminator 2*, *Star Trek III*. (I await some illumination on the rationale for choosing Roman over Arabic, or vice versa.)

But now titles are going completely crazy. Take this summer's *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*.

My first response on hearing this was, Why not call it *Transformers II?* ( Or 2?) Better yet, why not *Transformers II: Revenge of the Fallen?*

Now, while I have a soft spot in my fingertips for the dash, I'm not judgmental about punctuation. Nevertheless, I am put off by these increasingly unwieldy titles. I fear they might collapse under their own typographical weight.

Use of the colon in sci-fi/fantasy titles goes back 40-plus years, to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, where it made sense, and then to *Colossus: The Forbin Project*, where it didn't. (*Colossus* was a fine title, though it may have suggested a mythological fantasy rather than a giant mainframe computer run amok. Trust me, no one on this earth knew or cared what Forbin's project was.)

Since then we have had many, many additions to existing franchises, such as *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (which manages to combine Roman numerals and the colon) and *Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back*.

You had *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. (As if *Terminator 2* alone would somehow fail to lure you to the theater.) *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*. *Blade: Trinity*. A veritable flood of wonky, colon-warped titles, culminating in oddities like *Alien v. Predator: Requiem* and my favorite, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*.

Have we reached a turning point? Are sci-fi titles going to be increasingly long, twisted, over-punctuated?

And if so, is that necessarily bad?

Years ago I read a pretty good—not great—SF novel by F.M. Busby titled *Rissa Kerguelen*. Say what? The title was the lead character's name, just like *Donnie Darko* or maybe even *Anna Karenina*. *Rissa* was the story of a young woman raised in a repressive future society who, through intelligence and luck, escapes Earth and builds a space empire based on piracy and other fun stuff, all the while engaged in a torturous romance with handsome Bran Tregare, never forgetting the evil done to her by the Hulzein clan ...

It struck me then—and time has not diminished the feeling—that *Rissa* would be one terrific SF series. It's got elements of *Trek* ... its theme is revenge ... and the lead is a woman!

Why didn't it? Well, *Rissa* never became a best-seller, to begin with. Frankly, it's not that well written, though I think we all know that has rarely been a factor in keeping a good story from being mined for film or television.

No, what kept this promising book under the radar for 30 years—and still keeps it there—is the dang title. Even the publishing history confuses things. In its original 1976 appearance, *Rissa Kerguelen* was actually split into two books, part two being *The Long View* (bland, ge-

neric). For paperback reprint, *Rissa* became a single large volume titled *Saga of Rissa*—words better suited to a series of novels, like *Anne of Green Gables*.

There was a third iteration, with *Saga of Rissa* split into three smaller volumes, *Young Rissa* and *Rissa and Tregare*, along with *The Long View*.

Busby published several other novels in the same storyline, with titles like *Star Rebel* (not bad, this one) and *Rebel's Quest*.

When, with Busby's permission, I began talking up *Rissa*, I simply called it *The Hulzein Saga*, knowing that it was only a small improvement. ("What's a Hulzein?") The shorthand phrase I began to use was this: "Think of it as *Lace in Space*." (*Lace* was a notorious miniseries of years past, starring Phoebe Cates as a young woman bent on destroying those who wronged her as a child ...)

But, in all honesty, the project needed to be known as *The Hulzein Saga: Young Rissa*.

The title needed a colon.

Why is this important? There's artistic satisfaction, of course. But the real driver is ease of marketing. The amount of money spent to market a new sci-fi title—to produce those print ads, commercials, trailers and viral web dealies—is usually equal to the production costs. In television, those costs might be greater than what it costs to actually make the series.

Long, colon-encrusted titles are more difficult to sell. They don't fit on the sides of buses. They are smaller on billboards.

And they don't allow for easy abbreviation, for tagging or listing on Hulu or elsewhere. *Alien vs. Predator: Requiem* became *AvP: R*. *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* became known as *TSCC*—fun for everyone who knows what they stand for, but what about the millions of potential viewers who don't?

I don't expect my protests to hamper this trend ... All I can do is try to figure out a way to trademark the colon.

*(Editor's Note: Michael Cassutt, novelist and screenwriter, was Guest of Honor at Bubonicon 42. This was his last column for Sci-Fi Wire, as they recently canceled all columnist features. It is reprinted by permission of Michael Cassutt.)*

## BOOK REVIEW ROUND-UP

*The Gathering Storm* by Robert Jordan & Brandon Sanderson, 2009 Tor Books, (hardcover) 766 pages.

Review by Caci Gallop

I began reading the *Wheel of Time* series when I was



in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Each year I anxiously awaited the release of the next book in the series. This epic fantasy series has a habit of twisting and turning its way into the reader's heart. The last book to be released was the eleventh book in the series *A Knife of Dreams* which debuted in 2005. At this point most of the fans knew that the author, Robert Jordan, was ill and that *A Knife of Dreams* might be his last book in the *Wheel of Time*, even though the story hadn't been ended. Following his unfortunate, if not unexpected, death in September of 2007, many fans were disappointed thinking that they would never be able to read the conclusion to one of the most well-known and well-loved fantasy series that had been on going since its first debut in 1990.

A few months after Robert Jordan's death rumors began to surface that he'd instructed that someone finish his work. Supposedly he'd left copious notes and recordings along with strict detail on the ending of the story itself. This final book was to be titled, *A Memory of Light*. The blogosphere erupted in excited buzzing and eagerly anticipated the arrival of this last book in the series. Soon it was announced that Brandon Sanderson was to shoulder this task and write the ending, the last book, for *Wheel of Time*. Like all good fans, the criticisms began to develop. Would Sanderson be the author needed to finish this epic? Would Sanderson lend the correct words while writing for this much beloved series?

Brandon Sanderson in his foreword of *The Gathering Storm* tells how he was contacted by the late Robert Jordan's wife and publisher and asked to write. He also wrote that he was not Robert Jordan and to expect the transition to be seamless and unnoticeable was foolhardy. The words in *The Gathering Storm* were his he explained, guided by Robert Jordan's instructions and ideas. But once he began writing it, he could not contain the story to one novel, even exceedingly large novels as Robert Jordan was wont to write, and so it will be three novels.

*The Gathering Storm* is the twelfth book in the *Wheel of Time* series and it puts you immediately back into the world of Rand Al'Thor, Mat Cauthon, Perrin Aybara, Egwene Al'Vere along with so many other characters weaving their threads in the pattern, as though there was not a four-year pause between the books. Each character is preparing themselves, and those who follow them, for the Last Battle. The relationships with the Dragon Reborn are tense and it seems as though his madness is deepening despite cleansing *saidin*. Everyone is unknowingly working against each other in an attempt to work toward the same goal, keeping the Dark One sealed in his tomb in the Blight. The White Tower is still divided and the Seanchan are conquering systematically The Dark One's weakened prison allows his touch to affect the world and the Last Battle draws close. This is causing food to spoil in an instant all across the land from Arad Doman to the Spine of the World, while the unnatural winter leads into an even more unnatural spring. There are some major characters noticeably absent from the story, but who I'm sure will be making appearances in the next installments.

I had a difficult time putting this book down and was excited to be back in the *Wheel of Time*'s world. If you've ever been a fan of the *Wheel of Time* series, this most re-

cent release will not disappoint. After receiving this book on a Sunday and finishing it seven days later, my opinion on whether Sanderson was the right author for the job is "yes." A full resounding, shout it from the rooftops, YES.

***Small Miracles* by Edward M. Lerner, Tor Books 2009, (Hardcover) 352 pages. Review by Becky Davis**

I have enjoyed Lerner's contributions to *Analog SF and Fact* magazine for several years, so the opportunity to read a full novel of his was better than receiving any Halloween or Christmas chocolate. *Small Miracles* does not disappoint.

Near future, 2016. Brent Cleary is a smart, easy-going engineer-turned-salesman to help his company, Garner Nanotech, located in "sunny" Utica, N.Y., sell new nanobot-enhanced jumpsuits to security, fire and military groups both in and out of local/national governments. GN wants a big Army contract, but to get close to a contract, the company elects to test out a nanosuit (which will protect the wearer from impacts, fire, various flying missiles, traumatic injury, etc.) with an upstate (Angelton) New York police dept.

During a ride-along in the bad part of town, Brent sees kids trying to siphon off gasoline from an exposed gas pipeline nearby. Before he can yell, "Beat it!" the pipeline goes blooey, throwing Cleary, in his nanosuit, into a brick wall. His body is flooded with medical nanobots, and 650 Angelton citizens are dead. Brent spends six months in the hospital and physical rehab – but he is changed.

His best friend of 10 years, Kim O'Donnell, watches as Cleary gradually distances himself from former friends and favorite activities to wrap himself in a cyberworld called VirtualLife; and the Internet, once he procures a set of VR eyeglasses (faster than any hand-held device). Brent, too, wonders as his senses of compassion, humor and human connectedness decline while his intellect and ability to make significant scientific intuitive leaps rises past experts in departments around him. The Army is talking to Dan Garner, the ("big picture guy") president of Garner Nanotech, as are the venture capitalists that want the company to go public. Pressure builds.

A new entity in Brent's brain, One, eventually announces its identity to Brent. How did it get there? The medical nanobots that save Brent's life are not supposed to pass the blood-brain barrier. They are supposed to self-destruct after performing medical triage on the body. Kim O'Donnell is not convinced because of Brent's continued changing behavior. She consults with the GN house physician, Dr. Aaron Sanders, about her suspicions concerning Brent's changed behavior and aptitudes.

Sanders is the best character of the whole book. A cross between Patch Adams and *ER*'s Dr. Doug Ross. After talks with the bio-engineering department and one with Brent, Sanders is also skeptical of Brent's "wellness."

A petri dish experiment is performed to confirm that bots cannot live in cerebral glutamate fluids. Only, they do, and they forge enhanced connections between dendrites and axons in cerebral nerve cells. And then the dishes and the experimental data are destroyed by "persons unknown." The "odd events" meter rises also because certain homeless folk in Utica are showing up in hospitals with

head injuries and lumbar punctures into their spinal fluid.

One has given Brent a plan. Create more like One, so One/Brent won't be so alone. Brent decides to target GN's security officers because they understand trauma, loss and life-is-a-bitch. Soon, there is Two/Charles Walczak, Three/Alan Watts, and others. They are the "Enhanced." But One has greater plans, even as Brent begins to assess himself as being a monster. Security and certain Systems Programming people in GN are the essential nodes which will help One gain control of the physical sources of culturing more nanobots and then (envisions One) of injecting more host humans to learn to interface with One/Brent.

With this premise, the novel gallops forward to a fairly predictable Armageddon of intrigue, murder, racing vehicles, and exploding buildings.

I have liked Learner for his *Analog* stories, as I said. There is also reason to like him because of his blog: "SF and Nonsense: Thoughts (and occasionally fuming) about the state of science, fiction, and science fiction." Two snippets here to entice you: "This year, for the holidays, I'd like a Higgs boson." "Finally, from the ever amusing folks at the *Onion*: the antidote to Twitter – Noveller."

For the hard science skeptics among ASFS readers, here is his biography to help you to decide to like his work.

**Biography:** For over thirty years, Edward M. Lerner worked in the aerospace and information technology industries while writing science fiction part time. He held positions at numerous companies such as Bell Labs, Hughes Aircraft, Honeywell, and Northrop Grumman, from engineer to senior vice president (when they twisted his arm). In February 2004, after receiving a book deal for *Moonstruck*, he decided to write science fiction full time. (Source: *Creative Destruction* 2006.)

***Truancy Origins* by Isamu Fukui, Tor Teen 2009, 384 pages. Review by Danielle Pollock**

In his debut novel, *Truancy*, 15-year-old author Fukui introduced the dystopian future society of Education City, where an oppressive bureaucracy uses a cruel public education system to program children into obedient adult citizens.

In this prequel, Fukui explores the pasts of two of the major characters from the previous volume. The story begins fifteen years in the past, when the Mayor of Education City is ordered by mysterious superiors to take in and raise twin infant boys.

The mayor, surprisingly, shows genuine affection for his adopted sons, but that doesn't stop the boys from growing disillusioned with their father's government and its experiments on the student population. At the age of 15, both rebel and leave home.

One of the boys, Zen, decides to use his considerable financial resources and uncanny martial arts skills to found and lead the violent student rebellion known as the Truancy. His brother Umasi, for reasons of his own, attempts to stop him. The resulting conflict leads to the inevitable bloody showdown pitting students against authorities and brother against brother in a battle to the death.

Unfortunately, this is not a good entry point for readers new to the series, especially as the author has chosen not to take much time for things like world building and

character development, instead spending page after page on explosions, battles, and really cool sword fights. Much like its predecessor, this book reads as though it wants to be a big-budget action movie when it grows up.

Still, the young author does have talent, and the series is likely to have considerable appeal to junior high and high school readers. There are enough unanswered questions to intrigue the audience into checking out the forthcoming final volume in the trilogy, *Truancy City*.

***Unclean Spirits* by M.L.N Hanover, Pocket Books 2008, 357 pages. Review by Caci Gallop**

*Unclean Spirits* is the first book written by M.L.N Hanover, a new name in the scene of urban fantasy. With some digging, it's fairly easy to discover that M.L.N Hanover is a pen name for established author, Daniel Abraham. Abraham revealed some time ago that he choose that particular pen name for two reasons; the first being that potential readers generally assume that when an author uses initials that the author is a then a woman. Second the name Hanover would place the books directly between two extremely well known urban fantasy authors on the shelf, Hamilton and Harrison, awarding the books more face time with potential readers. Despite the origins of the author's name, *Unclean Spirits* is a rock thrown into the proverbial bucket of urban fantasy and it's making a big splash.

The story starts out by throwing you into Eric Heller's dying scene, strange happenings and good build up keep you going through the introduction. Chapter 1 promptly drops you into Denver and the mind of a young woman, Jayné Heller (her first name is pronounced zhanay) who has arrived on scene with the purpose of settling her uncle, Eric Heller's, estate.

Jayné's uncle has left every bit of his wealth and property to Jayné. As his heir, not only did Jayné inherit the responsibility of settling his estate, but also a corpse, seemingly undiscovered, in her uncle's apartment. Thus begins the violent push into a world of magic, demons and wizards when the corpse wakes up and begins speaking to her. Not to mention the four attackers who break in minute's later unearthing Jayné innate, and completely unknown, ability to kick some supernatural butt.

Jayné starts piecing together who and what her uncle really was, and more importantly what he was really doing with his life, and she with hers. She begins this undertaking by working with the un-dead corpse from the apartment, an ex-priest, her uncle's assistant and toss in a few extremely well connected lawyers.

Particularly impressive throughout the book was the way all the characters were written, with real true human emotions instead of the canned non-emotional responses that are displayed of some author's side characters, even in intense situations. Especially Jayné, she's very human, and responds very appropriately as a woman, even while being written by a man. Jayné is thoroughly unaware of how sexy, smart and strong she's capable of being, but instead struggles with what most women do, low self-confidence.

By the end of the book we find that Jayné's only scratched the surface of the world she's been thrust into and is now deeply into something about which she knows next to nothing.

***Darker Angels* by M.L.N Hanover, Pocket Books 2009, 360 pages. Review by Caci Gallop**

*Darker Angels* is the continuation of the *Black Sun's Daughter* series that began with *Unclean Spirits*. The book is a nonstop action-packed urban fantasy thriller that was difficult to put down. *Darker Angels* is a quick read at 360 pages with a gripping story and compelling characters.

*Darker Angels* begins six months after *Unclean Spirits* ends. Jayné and her team are in Athens, Greece doing a full inventory and audit of all her uncle's properties around the world, never staying in one place too long and generally exhausting themselves trying to learn everything they can about the supernatural world they have been exposed to.

When a former client of Eric Heller, Jayné's uncle, calls his old cell phone offering a job to prevent a supernatural spirit rider from taking over an innocent teenager's body, this prompts the team to quickly take flight to New Orleans on Jayné's hope of learning more about her uncle from someone who's hired him in the past. Unfortunately this foray into New Orleans voodoo proves to be more difficult than first imagined, creating breaks in the group's cohesiveness and putting pressure on Jayné to be a good leader.

As a bonus, readers get a good clear picture of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina without having to travel there. While also being exposed to the affect it's had not only on its inhabitants but on its culture. Oh and a quick lesson in voodoo, its practice and practitioners thrown in for good measure.

If you enjoyed *Unclean Spirits*, then you will enjoy this next installment, *Darker Angels*, as we begin to see how Jayné grows into her newfound powers.

***Mistress of Molecules* by Gerald M. Weinberg, CreateSpace 2009, 358 pages. Available from Amazon and geraldmweinberg.com. Review by Duke McMullan**

At Bubonicon back in August, Jerry gave a talk about his experiences in the Mercury Space Program. Now he has written a science-fiction novel.

It is late in the 22nd century, and humans have spread colonies over much of the galaxy. This is not done with human technologies, but with means supplied by a species called (or at least spelled) Zgaarid. The limited availability of their very advanced technologies to humans (humans do not control or understand these technologies) has suppressed human creativity and motivation. GMW's back-cover blurb for *Mistress of Molecules* describes this as "gentle slavery."

First main character: Libra, the clandestine chemist. Her planet is heavy with industrial pollution, and run by a coalition of corporations and a Roman Catholic-like church, complete with a Pope. The population effectively is enslaved, and requires a scarce chemical (controlled by the church & industry) to survive. Libra (the Mistress of the title) is Doing Things to mitigate that problem – chemical terrorism.

Second main character: Andre, raised on an agrarian world, dominated by The Holy Church of Yahweh's Tender Touch, a group basing their teaching on small selections from a wide variety of old Earth religions: Hindu, Zoroas-

trian, Judaic, Buddhist and, principally, Muslim. A very strict and literalist church. (Sounds kind of like Baha's gone bad.) Andre is brilliant, catches a break on a forbidden access code to The Teacher (a teaching machine, probably an AI), and finds an unexpected friend who he names Francis, after the saint.

Then, while traveling, Andre gets an even bigger break (he's brilliant, remember) by saving a shipful of Zgaarid (and himself in the process), and is created a Zgaarid Ancestor. This involves implants allowing him to access a HUGE amount of Zgaarid knowledge. Now he's *really* smart.

These two meet, get the Serious Hots for each other, consummate that, and team up to free Precursor (Libra's world) from industrial domination. After considerable difficulties, they are largely successful.

Somehow, to me, Jerry's storytelling doesn't quite convince. However, it's subtle enough that I really can't point out *Why*. Overall, I did quite enjoy the book. I'd be interested in hearing others' opinions.

And I sure wish our local bird spiders would behave like that.

One more thing: If you read this book, after getting about three-quarters of the way through, get a bottle of Pepto-Bismol or the generic equivalent. The pink stuff.

Learn the ingredients. Then finish the book.

***Dare to Struggle: The History and Society of Greece* by Richard M. Berthold, iUniverse 2009, (softcover) 268 pages.**

**Review by Patricia Mathews**

Bubonicon's own Richard Berthold has turned his lectures on ancient Greece into an historical overview that starts in prehistory, explains the clean slate left by the Dorians, and continues until the Roman Empire absorbs what's left of a once-great civilization. He explains what made it great, and that its greatest glory politically was also its greatest weakness. His chronology is clear and his opinions make sense.

It's not as lively as Thomas Cahill's *To Sail the Wine-Dark Sea*. Part of it is that Cahill is a popularizer and Berthold, by training and long habit, is a scholar. He spares us the footnotes. At the end of each chapter he adds "Suggested reading" with his personal opinion of each reference, and he includes certain historical novels among his suggestions. For example, he thinks Mary Renault's *The Persian Boy* misrepresents Alexander. I don't doubt it. But does anyone think the infatuated, Persian-born, court-trained Bagoas is the most reliable narrator?

Also, Cahill is a writer, who shines and sparkles on the printed page. Berthold is a teacher, who shines and sparkles in front of an audience of students. Translating his lectures into print loses something. For instance, one of his chapters is essentially one of the lectures he gave at Bubonicon, on which I still have the notes. The chapter calls the lecture to mind rather than the memory of the lecture feeding into the chapter, if that makes any sense. Rather like reading the review after having seen the movie instead of before.

However, is it worth your \$20? Yes, totally, if you're at all interested in Ancient Greece. And as stated at his No-

member signing at Kelly's Brewpub, why not add to Berthold's beer money fund?

## **ASFS MEETING REPORTS —** **SEPTEMBER: CON/CLUB BIZ**

Thirty-three people were on hand to hear how Bubonicon 41 did, discuss the club's need to find a new meeting location, and listen to con reports on the Montreal Worldcon and Atlanta's Dragoncon.

**Bubonicon 41:** Kristen Dorland and Craig Chrissinger reported that Bubonicon 41 had record attendance with 637 people (an increase of 100 over 2008), but that the current economic situation's influence could be seen in bids at Auctions and in the Art Show. Bottom line, the 2009 convention made a small profit, which will be used to purchase a new DVD player, cargo straps for art flats, and possibly a 2nd digital projector.

The Art Show sold 42.8% of all entered pieces and had total sales of \$7,149 (down from 2008, but very respectful). The Friday Charity Auction only raised \$551, which was way down from 2008 and 2007. Thus, only \$600 total was split equally between the Williamson Library Collection and the Roadrunner Food Bank. Sunday's Auction raised a total of \$772 for the convention, slower than the last two years. However, *FROOMB* went for a respectful \$72.00 to Kevin Hewett.

Green Slimes went to *The Spirit* and *Twilight* for movies, ABC for canceling *Pushing Daisies*, SyFy for their unnecessary name change, *Skin Trade: Anita Blake #17* by Laurell K. Hamilton, and a Wolverine plush toy that looks like "an angry Chihuahua."

**ASFS Location Debate:** A search since the August meeting came down to two potential locations - the Center for Peace and Justice on Harvard near UNM and the Vista Norte Room of the Albuquerque Grand Airport Hotel. Other potential locations were either too expensive or not available to outside groups.

A seemingly long and bordering on cantankerous debate boiled down to finances versus parking. A few people wondered about trying the Center for a few months, but the majority wanted a more permanent decision. The vote was 9 votes for the Center, 19 for the Hotel.

As a result, dues were unanimously raised to \$2.50 a meeting for individuals/\$25.00 annually, and \$3.50 monthly for a household/\$35.00 annually.

**Montreal Worldcon:** Serge Mailloux, Kevin Hewett and Randi Tinkham talked about their experiences at the Worldcon in Montreal back in early August.

Randi said the pocket program was designed "for Godzilla" as it was on ledger-sized paper. The con did have 10-15 minutes between panels because of the endless corridor - "It could take you that long to walk!"

Kevin remarked that the Dealers Room was small, with mostly books and small press sellers. Apparently Customs issues killed the Art Show and Dealers Room. He said the Art Show at Bubonicon this year was probably 80% the size of Worldcon's.

Randi agreed, "The Art Show was small, but it was very well done. One woman did artwork with dryer lint."

Randi also worked the Masquerade. "Judging took longer than the presentations, but they showed cartoons. The MC did introductions in French and English. There was a Klingon Batman, a Victorian Wonder Woman, and a very non-sparkly vampire."

Serge reported, "Any panel with Neil Gaiman was very popular. Also well attended was a panel with Charles Stross and an economist. I was slicing lemons for a party sponsored by Tor's Patrick Nielsen Hayden, and once it got really going, we got closed down and moved."

Kevin added, "There were party problems. The SFWA Suite was closed down and moved to one of the smaller con suite rooms!"

On programming, Kevin noted, "Neil Gaiman had an entourage of 10 bodyguards or associates at all times." ("And an official photographer," Randi added.) "The average age of attendees was 10 years younger than Denver, so more like the upper 40's instead of 50's. Gaiman brought in more younger attendees. I thoroughly enjoyed this Worldcon."

Serge summed up, "I had a good time, especially seeing old friends and meeting new ones."

And Randi finished, "A good con, and I was happy to see the high quality of costuming."

**Atlanta Dragoncon:** Patricia Rogers attended Labor Day weekend and said she had a good time. "There was steampunk and more steampunk," she commented. "Some hall costumes were better than what was in the Masquerade." She said that William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy and Patrick Stewart were there at various times.

"I really enjoyed Malcolm McDowell's presentation on *Clockwork Orange* and other films," Patricia said. "I also enjoyed Terry Gilliam's presentation on his next film. The parade in downtown Atlanta was fun."

She reported that the Dealers Room and Art Show were big, with lots of "good stuff." Also, that there was lots of well-done costuming as "they take it seriously."

Attendance at Dragoncon was 40,000, supposedly. "There were tremendous amounts of people in the autographing room," Patricia remarked. "It was fun."

## **OCTOBER: GAME SHOW FUN**

It was a night of fun & games, and also a little spookiness, as 27 people gathered for the first time in the Hotel's Vista Norte Room for SF Catch Phrase plus the (scary) Annual Club Officer Elections.

In the elections, Kathy K. Kubica was re-elected as moderator, Jessica Coyle was chosen as alternator, and Craig Chrissinger & Kevin Hewett were re-elected as co-executive secretaries. For December's Dessert Cook-Off,



“coffee” was chosen as the challenge ingredient.

Roslee Orndorff hosted the game, which involved two teams trying to get their halves of the room to guess Horror and SF words/phrases in a random time period. The two teams were the “Albuquerque Ravens,” consisting of Kevin Hewett, Patricia Rogers and Nate Joy; and the “Duke City Trolls,” consisting of Kathy K. Kubica, Duke McMullan and Amy Mathis.

As always with the ASFS group, unexpected jokes popped up. The two most memorable were Randi Tinkham commenting, “Wes Craven’s *Nightmare Before Christmas*” (wrong director) and Serge Mailloux completing the clue of “*Dr. Jekyll*” with “*And Mr. Ed.*”

Ultimately, the Albuquerque Ravens won.

## NOVEMBER: STEAMPUNK TALK!

Serge Mailloux gave a talk on “Steampunk in Cinema” to 38 people in attendance, starting off with the observation that the Beatles were science-fiction fans. “They wanted to make a *Lord of the Rings* movie, and Paul’s band, Wings, came from H.G. Wells’ *Things To Come.*” He also pointed out that H.G. Wells is pictured on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

For Serge, the appeal of Steampunk is that “it takes everyday things and reminds us of their wonders - submarines, airplanes, cars and computers.” He said the two major influences of SP are Wells and Jules Verne, and pointed out that SP is an inaccurate term. It is not so much about steam, but about electricity - which represents the Future. It also does not feature punks, but rather scientists and other dapper characters in “tales of science and technology ahead of their times.”

And he divides Steampunk Cinema into four eras:

The First Era is “PreHistory,” and examples include the rarely seen *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* from 1907 and 1916, 1902’s *From the Earth to the Moon*, 1929’s *Mysterious Island*, 1931’s *Frankenstein*, *The Island of Lost Souls* in 1932, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1941.

The Second Era is “The Golden Age,” and begins with Disney’s *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Other Golden Age examples are *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne*, *From the Earth to the Moon*, 1959’s *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (with Gertrude the Duck), 1960’s *The Time Machine*, Vincent Price’s *Master of the World*, and *First Men in the Moon*. It also showed up on TV on *Lost in Space* and *The Wild Wild West*. The Golden Age ended in 1969 with *Captain Nemo and the Underwater City*.

The Third Era is “The Middle Ages,” starting with 1973’s *Frankenstein: The True Story*. Other examples are Disney’s *The Island at the Top of the World*, *At the Earth’s Core*, 1977’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, TV’s *Wild Wild West Revisited*, *Time After Time*, TV’s *Q.E.D.*, *Back to the Future Part III*, TV show *The Adventures of Brisco County Jr.*, TV’s *Legend*, two miniseries of *20,000 Leagues* in 1997, and 1999’s *Wild Wild West* movie.

Serge said the Fourth Era began in 1999 with Alan Moore’s graphic novel, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (turned into a movie in 2003). Other examples are

TV’s *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne* in 2000, TV’s *Jack of All Trades* (“History-be-damned mishmash”), the 2001 anime film *Steamboy*, *Van Helsing*, *The Prestige* (“with Tesla in it”), *The Golden Compass*, TV movie *Journey to the Center of the Earth* in 2008 with Rick Schroeder & Peter Fonda, and 2008’s *Doctor Who* Christmas Special.

In a special category, Serge pointed to various versions of Wells’ *War of the Worlds*. Even Alfred Hitchcock wanted to do a version before George Pal’s 1953 movie. An independent version, hard to find, was released just before the Tom Cruise/Steven Spielberg production - set in a historical setting. And Wells’ work also spawned Jeff Wayne’s musical, created in 1978, with Roger Dean steampunk cover art. It was finally staged in 2006.

Looking at Steampunk now and in the future, Serge is not sure of its prospects. *The Girl Genius* graphic novels just won a Hugo, and filming has started on *Larklight*, based on a Philip Reeve’s YA novel. Serge concluded the evening by showing a SP-oriented animated film short, *A Gentlemen’s Duel*, with giant robots in a Victorian setting.

## EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE

Man, it has been unseasonably cold as of late, and I’m fighting an incredibly stubborn head cold! I wish both would clear out for the holiday season at least. Happy Holidays to all, and I hope everyone have a nice time. 2009 is almost done, so I think the #1 Wish at the Top of Our Lists is that the economy improve in the New Year.

October’s Milehicon 41 was a lot of fun, though slightly smaller and quieter than usual. Jessica and I enjoyed seeing Denver-based friends (old and new), and visiting Who Else Books, and the drive up with Kevin Hewett. Nancy Kress and Brandon Sanderson were very nice and very gracious. Carrie Vaughn’s “Midnight with Carrie” radio-style show was entertaining, as was the *Survivor*-style panel to pick a block of “perfect” genre viewing. Jess and I enjoyed visiting the Molly Brown House and Sol Tribe Tattoo after the con. We hope to return to Colorado late April/early May to visit touristy spots, the Denver museums, Who Else Books (helping out for a day), and friends & authors.

The January issue of *Fangoria* (#289) just came out with my article on *Legion*. Not the cover story, but nice coverage. Now if I can just get paid at least partially...

Recommendations: I enjoyed *The Blind Side* (good drama), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (wonderful), and *The Young Victoria* (nice costume drama with Emily Blunt) at the box office. 2012 is loud & proud with disaster spfx, and not much else. On the small screen, I’ve liked *V* so far, am really enjoying *Big Bang Theory*, *How I Met Your Mother* and *Community* this season, and am happy with the returns of *Better Off Ted*, *Scrubs*, *The Office* & *30 Rock*. Reading-wise, I enjoyed Rachel Caine’s *Ill Wind*, the first 3 volumes of Jeff Smith’s *Bone* saga., and Charles Stross’ *Saturn’s Children*.

Many Thanks to Bob V, Ian T, Michael C, Caci G, Becky D, Danielle P, Patricia M & Duke Mc for submissions! More needed for the Valentine’s issue. Hint, hint!

Have fun, stay warm, see ya in February. -Craig C.