

LET'S PLAY...

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Chris For TAFF

PRINTZINE

Let's talk Mileage. You see, I love to travel...by car. I can never seem to get the courage up to fly much anymore. It takes something really special to make me get on a plane. I've flown a few times in the last five years, which was me breaking my flying fast that started in May of 2000. Each trip was a big deal.

The first was to Anaheim for Disneyland with my Mom's boyfriend and his kids. It was a good time and I love Disneyland, so I made the trip. The second time was about 3 months later going to San Diego for Conjecture. I needed to make a fast trip, so driving was right out. I had a blast, but the flight was annoying and I didn't want to do it again...until that December when I went to Philadelphia for Philcon. I flew into Philly in December, and the big draw there was Philly Steaks and staying across the street from Reading Market. That's enough for me to fly!

Then there was a big lay-off. All those happened in 2002 and I didn't fly again until 2005. I wanted to go to Norwescon and get to meet some folks who I would be meeting again at the NASFiC that year. I flew in for that one too, bringing Genevieve and Evelyn with me. They toured the city and I went to the con and joined them there later. I think it was a decent con but the entire thing was a blast. I saw otters.

After that, I didn't fly again until December 29th, 2006. I needed to go to LA and say hello to some old friends. I decided to fly because I wanted to be in and out in a hurry. I flew in, went to Universal Studios, attended a LASFS meeting, ate at Big Boy's, went to Hollywood and hung out at the Hollywood Roosevelt and generally had a very good time. That was probably the easiest of the flights and I was so sleepy (I left at 6am) that I hardly noticed that I was flying.

The last flight I took was from San Jose to Austin. This was the flight from Hell. I had five different flights cancell on me. I had to go and fly Southwest down to LA instead of flying non-stop on American. It was terrible and the flight was pretty rocky too. Luckily, CorFlu was so great, I didn't mind, and the flight home was OK.

So I often think about flying and how much I'll need to do. Next year will probably feature at least three flights. I need to go to LA for a fast visit and that will probably require a flight. I will have to fly to Denver for WorldCon and that'll be interesting since I've only been to Denver once. And if I can manage to pull out a TAFF win, I'll probably have to fly out there...unless I can find a really fast boat...or that Harry Harrison tunnel is finished!



Art by Lee and JJ McFadden

Most Haunted vs. My Desire to Write Something for Plokta

By Chris Garcia

I'm a guy who loves to write and it's a Friday night. It's 9pm in beautiful Santa Clara, California. We are known for being the headquarters of Intel, the company that made the processors that are running the computer that I'm typing on and for the fact that Synchronized Swimming has been dominated by performers who come from the International Swim Centre where I would do cannonballs when I was a kid. San Jose is the city next door. It's a city of nearly a million folks and most folks, even in other parts of the US, believe it's a suburb of Los Angeles, some 300 miles south. We've got the San Sharks of the National Hockey League and the headquarters for Adobe, the company that makes the software I've pirated to be able to do my zines.

Wait...forget about that pirating thing. I was preserving it as part of my role as a Computer Historian. That's the official line on that one.

Anyhow, San Jose is also the home to the Winchester Mystery House. The story is famous: a psychic told Rifle fortune widow Sarah Winchester to go to the West Coast and never stop building her house. She did it, choosing San Jose and built for more than 30 years. That's dedication. The place is awesome. I spent many an afternoon there as a kid taking tours with my Pops and would even go there when I was waiting for movies to start at the theatres next to the 128 room Monster House. It's supposed to be haunted with the ghosts of the Indians slain by the Winchester Repeating Rifle. I'm sorry, they're not Indians; they're our National Noble Savages. My mistake. Anyhow, there's also at least one ghost of a



worker who is seen to be maintaining the house and another of Sarah Winchester herself. That's the basic set-up. I know people who have seen ghosts there and in the theatres next to the house, which were all a part of the land. I wrote all that up a couple of years back in an early issue of *The Drink Tank* (which I'm going to redo someday...)

Most Haunted is, without question, the weirdest television concept ever. It's so simple: a bunch of TV types go to a supposedly haunted location and investigate in the most dramatic TV way possible. There's no science, there's hardly even any pseudo-science. There are psychics and a bald guy named Stuart who always seems to be the one the ghosts attack in various ways. It's highly entertaining and only slightly mind-rotting.

On October 19th, two days before my 33rd birthday, the Most Haunted crew came to San Jose to film a Most Haunted Live episode at the Winchester Mystery House. I was so happy because I've watched the show since it started airing in the US a few years ago. In fact, it was the show that my Ex and I would watch together while snuggled up on the couch. We'd watch it until she inevitably got angry with me for something or another and kicked me out. There's a very good reason why she's my ex. I decided to head over to the house and try and see what I could see. There wasn't much, the close was all closed up, but I did see the team gathered in the place and that was exciting. I went home and I decided it was time to start writing an article for *Plokta*.

Now *Plokta*, you know, is a fanzine that I appreciate highly. It's pretty. When I want to get some started on reading fanzines, I point them to issues of *The Drink Tank*. If that hasn't scared them off in

a perfect example of trial by fire, I lend them my issues of *Plokta*. It's beautiful and full of fun little things. They've got a cabal that powered the zine to two consecutive Best Fanzine Hugos and has made it terribly popular around the UK and the US and Canada and Australia and just about anywhere else they've gotten a hold of it. That's the sign of a good zine. I'd had a piece in an issue a year or so ago and I thought it was high time I got back to them with more of my strange thoughts.

But Most Haunted was on.

You see, I had a TV on a Lazy Susan that can turn from my bed towards my computer area. I sat down with a pile of notes about my experience with the 2007 Hugo statue. I had a series of humorous observations ready and I sat down to start typing them into a single, perfectly timed article about the Conflict over UltraHugo. I sat down and I faced the computer. I faced the computer and sat silent, sat still.

The sounds of a completely pointless séance had enthralled me. It wasn't just that there was a lot of non-sense while folks were pushing, but nothing was moving at all. It was the first time I was 100% certain that no one was faking a Ouija Board movement because there was no conversion of potential to kinetic energy.

And it was gripping.

Yvonne, or whatever the name of that chick is, spoke in varying tones, trying to coax/hoax/roast/toast/boast/host the spirits out onto the board and nothing happened. I couldn't watch, but I could hear it all. I could tell that the TV was dull as all get-out, but I couldn't turn. I was hyp-mo-tized by the open Microsoft Word window in front of me.

Yes, I use Microsoft, and yes, I'm the kind of bastard that Bill Gates was complaining about in that famous letter to hobbyists. He got not a dime off of me for this software.

Anyhoo, I sat there and when it went to commercial, I had to turn my head and see the host in the unfinished ballroom in front of the two windows with the Shakespeare quotes on them. I know that room. I know that point of the tour. I know that they have no idea why Sarah Winchester chose these particular passages, though they both reflect a sense of being trapped. I could tell the entire speech they do in that room. I could recite it word for word (all the docents are on scripts) and it ran through my head while I stared at the TV. When they went to break, I turned back to my Microsoft Word window, still

blank.

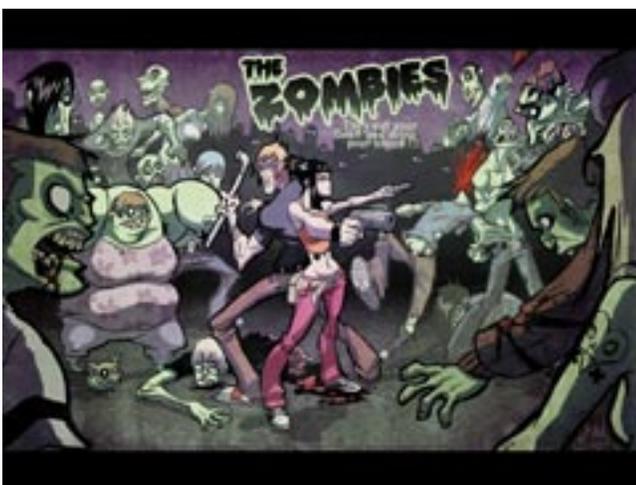
And I slid my cursor over to the Start Menu and pulled up the Most Haunted Live website and started reading comments and secondary feeds. I stared at them the same way a dog might stare at a contrary quantum physicist explaining Schroedinger's Cat as a complete load of crap who happened to have a steak on his head. I couldn't decipher it at all. It was all gibberish to me. It meant nothing, but I had to read. I had to make the stupid comments a part of my permanent shared experiences file.

There's a creepy vibe to the whole house- Chip from Leda, Ohio

Why do I remember that the guy lived in Leda, Ohio? It's been hours since I saw that and now I can't get it out of my head. What was Chip looking for? Did he suddenly get a shudder from watching the show and then have to turn off the TV? Or did he stayed glued to the TV when he was supposed to be writing something for someone somewhere else? Or maybe he was just a sock puppet for the Travel Channel. I really wish I could write Chip and ask him what was going on.

Wow, a guy who goes over the stuff that people send in to their website looks exactly like that Frank Kelly Freas alien dude setting on his elbows on the cover of Astounding. It's uncanny. He also kinda looks like Baron Von Rashke, but I know what he's up to these days.

It's 10pm. I've not written a word for Plokta and it's bedtime so I can get up and watch Evelyn tomorrow morning. I'll come up with that Plokta article some other time, but the likely scenario is that I'll turn this electronic beast off and turn my full attention to Most Haunted Live and try and figure out what the hell they're doing to my favourite House!



“Paint the sky with stars”

OK, that's all for this, the last regular Print-Zine! I'm not sure what I'm going to do once the TAFF race is over, but it'll probably be called Print-Zine. I encourage you to vote in the TAFF race this year and you've only got a few more weeks. The race is so good this year that I'm proud just to be a part of it. The best part is that no matter who wins, you're getting a great TAFF delegate. Even if it's me!

I've decided that I need to do more for TAFF, especially if I win, but even if I don't. I know I'll be helping with the TAFF Auction at LosCon (Christian is in charge, I'll be his helper) and then I'll be doing something for BayCon no matter what. If I win, well then the terror starts. What do I do then? Get ready for the trip, come up with a way to raise funds to replenish those I'll use, think of how I'll do the trip report. If I lose, then what do I do? Figure out how to raise money so whoever wins doesn't have to do so much to replenish the funds they use, maybe come up with a new slogan for the next race, maybe figure out something to do with PrintZine after that's been said and done.

In other words...more of the same!