

SOUTHERN
FANDOM
CONFEDERATION
UPDATE



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OCTOBER 2009

Musings of a Faned

It's been a busy month, what with Dragon*Con and FenCon, plus planning for the NASFiC and my usual fannish stuff. I've decided to try something new in the **SFCU** – reviews. I was reading Chris Garcia's editorial in **Science Fiction/San Francisco**, and realized that he was right – there's a paucity of reviews in fanzines these days. So I decided to do the only rational thing I could – start working on the problem, and encourage my friends to help. Oh, and I fired off a letter of comment to **SF/SF** challenging Chris to become a part of the solution – for every review he sends me, I'll send him a LoC (he's got enough zines that I'm in no real danger of doubling up – **SF/SF**, **The Drink Tank**, **Claims Department**, **Journey Planet**, and **Exhibition Hall**, all of which I read on www.efanzines.com). Also, at FenCon, I ran into Brad Foster, and while talking about fanzine art, realized that he was right – I hadn't used all of the work he'd sent me. So this issue's cover boasts one of his drawings, which fit remarkably well with the font I chose for the cover. It's a small cover illo, but then, this zine has a really big title, and I like to make it flashy. There are other fanartists from Texas I'd like to start featuring, too, and I need to email them. Since this issue has lots of content that isn't from me, it will also feature our inaugural Table of Contents. Hope y'all enjoy this one!

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All contents copyright their creators. This zine is free, either by direct email or www.efanzines.com. A letter of comment or other contribution will get you on my mailing list, as long as I remember to put you there. If I forget, bother me a second time, or however long it takes to add you. I haven't been printing this one, which leaves me free to use as many pages as I wish, and do things like color. It also lets me use all the contributions I can muster, so fire away!

Calendar of Events:

October 2-4:

Archon (St. Louis, MO – Collinsville Gateway Center. Eric Flint, Tom Kidd, Peter Mayhew, Carla Ulbrich, Brad Denton, Tom & Bobbi Meserole. The Archon crew are back with a solid line-up of guests. Their website reports that all programming has been moved to the Gateway Center, on account of their hotel's decision not to allow room parties.)

Roundcon (Columbia, SC – Holiday Inn Express. Roundcon is SC's longest running gaming convention, and at one point appeared to have cancelled for 2009. Thankfully, they merely delayed the event, and are back in action.)

GMX (Nashville, TN – Radison Hotel Opryland. GMX stands for "Geek Media Expo". They've got an eclectic mix of geek appeal, from old TV actors to pro wrestlers to starlets to a TV executive.)

Animation Supercon (Miami, FL – Doubletree Miami Mart Convention Center. Cast reunions of Futurama and Pinky & The Brain.)

Atlanta HorrorFest (Atlanta, GA – Lenny's Bar and The Plaza Theater. Film festival, bands, and a zombie walk on Sunday.)

Realms Con (Corpus Christi, TX – Holiday Inn Emerald Beach. A nice selection of the usual voice actors we see around the South, plus several models, artists, and bands. Honestly, I just get tired of typing the same dozen or so names when no one is listed as guest of honor at an anime convention. They've got the usual Southern A-list.)

October 3:

JaxCon (Jacksonville, NC – Jacksonville Commons Recreation Center. All door fees and half of the charity auction will go to Wounded Warrior Battalion East. Gaming and comics for a good cause.)

October 8-10:

Pirate Fest (Tybee Island, GA – Looks like another pirate festival which takes over a town. Their website is rather cumbersome, so I'll leave it at that.)

October 9-11:

Tsubasacon (Huntington, WV – Big Sandy Superstore Arena, Riverfront Ballroom and Conference Center. Darrel Guilbeau, Leah Clark.)

Spooky Empire (Orlando, FL – Wyndham Orlando Resort. Shannen Dorherty, George Romero, John Landis, Derek Mears, Fairuza Balk, Linda Blair.)

EXPcon (St. Augustine, FL – It's definitely happening, but their website is down, and I can't quite figure out the really general information from the forums. <http://www.expcon.org/forums/>)

Pirate Festival (Fort Myers Beach, FL – Shipwreck Hotel and a large portion of Fort Myers Beach.)

Southern Front (Raleigh, NC – North Raleigh Hilton. Historical miniatures wargaming.)

October 16-18:

Capclave (Rockville, MD – Harry Turtledove, Sheila Williams, Rob Balder. The crew of WSFA has put together another great convention, with a heavy slant

towards the literary end of the spectrum. To back that up, they've rebooted the WSFA Press to publish a collection of Harry Turtledove short fiction, titled *Reincarnations*. This is a limited edition, available through their website or at the con.)

Escapism Film Festival (Durham, NC – Carolina Theatre. Treats of this festival include the original 1978 theatrical cut of *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Black Hole*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Escape to Witch Mountain*, *Back to the Future*, *Flash Gordon*, *The Goonies*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *The Last Unicorn*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Return to Oz*, and *Superman*.)

October 17-18:

Comic & Horror Show (Nashville, TN – Tennessee State Fairgrounds. Chris Claremont is their Guest of Honor.)

October 22-25:

Spooky Movie (Washington, DC – AFI Silver Theatre and Cinema Arts Theatre. A truly massive slate of original, independent, unrated horror films.)

Pirates Fest (Key Largo, FL – Another pirate festival taking over a town, this one is sponsored by Captain Morgan.)

October 23-25:

Rising Star 18 (Bluefield, WV – Harris-Jefferson Student Center, Bluefield State College. Ed Trotta, Cheralyn Lambeth, Abingdon Historical Combat, White Plectrum. Unfortunately, they don't have bios up for their guests, so I'm picking a few I recognize and/or suspect might have something to do with folks who read this.)

Necronomicon 28 (St. Petersburg, FL – Hilton Bayfront St. Petersburg. Catherine Asaro, Patricia Briggs, Richard Lee Byers. These guys have been at it for a while, and from all I hear, do a great job down in Florida.)

CharCon (Charleston, WV – Charleston Civic Center. Larry Elmore. Gaming convention.)

Infinite Bits (Miami, FL – Doubletree Miami Mart Hotel and Convention Center. Doug Walker, Billy Mitchell, Walter Day. Video game convention.)

Star Wars Fan Days III (Plano, TX – Plano Center. Stephen Sansweet, Dave Filoni, Don Bies, Anthony Daniels, Ray Park, Dave Prowse, Jeremy Bulloch, Peter Mayhew)

October 30-November 1:

Hurricane Who (Orlando, FL – Ramada Orlando Celebration Resort. Gareth David-Lloyd, Russell Romanella, Tony Lee, Louise Jameson, Colin Spaul.)

HallowCon (Chattanooga, TN – Country Hearth Inn. Christina Barber, Cheryel Hutton, Allen Gilbreath, Robert E. Brown, Joe Dickerson.)

November 6-8:

Nekocon 12 (Hampton, VA)

MACE (High Point, NC)

Weekend in the Realms (Atlanta, GA)

November 12-15:**Euro Quest VII** (Timonium, MD)**November 13-15:****Paranormal Conference** (Blowing Rock, NC)**Game Con** (North Little Rock, AR)**November 14:****OutLantaCon** (Atlanta, GA)**November 20-22:****Anime USA** (Arlington, VA)**ZonaCon** (Orlando, FL)**November 27-29:****Darkover Grand Council** (Timonium, MD)**Reviews:*****Haze*, by L.E. Modesitt, Jr.** (Tor, June 2009)

Warren Buff

While science fiction is typically characterized as “the fiction of ideas”, there exists no singularly superior formula for exploring those ideas. Many of the classic novels inserted scientific and philosophical ideas into roaring adventure stories, while the novels of the 60s and 70s often dressed them in stunning language which eclipsed their plots, and the era of cyberpunk saw the rise of a wit which undermined the thrill of adventure and the euphoria of language. Modesitt has taken off in a different direction altogether, and has managed to hang a long discussion of philosophy on a plot that is ultimately far less important than the ideas in question.

Not that there’s any lack of a plot – the novel alternates chapters between the story of Roget, its protagonist’s, current mission (a recon mission on a potentially hostile planet) and a previous mission (undercover, investigating a home-grown rebellion). The connection between the two, plot-wise, is tenuous at best, with the back-story only providing the origins of Roget’s flashbacks and his acquisition of a work of art – a copy of a painting featuring a dachshund on a sofa. If the story were told with strict linearity, there would be almost no reason to include the two episodes in one volume.

The connection is quite real, however, and many of the elements Roget questions in the society of Dubiety are remarkably similar to those of his own that he defended in his previous adventure in a Mormon-dominated community. In both episodes, Roget is confronted with the questions of the proper role of government and economics in regulating human impact on the environment and of how society can best deal with its discontents. And all of this is set within a story whose present half contains barely no action amidst the dialogue, slowly

advancing on its anticlimax while its past half reaches its climax far too early, only to engage in a little more action which bears little relation to the plot – though it does advance the themes.

There is a great deal here for the literary fan, however. Modesitt has loaded his novel with references, both to notable science fiction works and to T.S. Eliot. While Modesitt goes for the easier references to “The Wasteland” and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, he also proves the depth of his familiarity with important references to “The Journey of the Magi” and “Little Gidding”. Eliot is a fitting source for reference in a work such as this, and the references to “The Wasteland” hint at a Grail narrative – particularly since the references to Eliot begin in the upside-down world of the Chapel Perilous – a madhouse. In light of the novel as a Grail story, Roget’s progress through the philosophy discussion and his subsequent self-examination create a much more satisfying plot, even with several of Roget’s big questions on the nature of identity left somewhat unresolved. Roget is a grail knight, and like all grail knights he must simply uncover the right questions. He is able to do so, and is rewarded in arriving where he started and knowing the place as for the first time rather than returning to an alien people who clutch alien gods.

This may prove too heady for a casual reader, though, and the story’s anticlimax (at least on the level of the clash of interplanetary civilizations) could disappoint. Roget is a hero who does very little in the present story other than discovering himself, though he is much more active in the past half of the tale. The philosophical discussions may also prove disappointing, as Modesitt does not make it entirely clear what stance he takes – Roget makes his decisions, but they don’t fully resolve the opinions that have been presented. Dubiety represents a utopian vision, with a name befitting a utopia – and *Haze* remains an appropriate title for a novel whose central philosophical questions remain so difficult to resolve.

***What Ever Happened To the Caped Crusader?*, by Neil Gaiman & Andy Kubert** (DC Comics, 2009)
Christopher Hensley

The premise is simple enough: the funeral of Batman. Batman’s body lies in repose as those that were his friends, his enemies and maybe his lovers come to pay their respects to the Caped Crusader. Of course nothing is ever that simple.

First, let me address the obvious comparison to Alan Moore’s *What Ever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?* Moore’s final Superman story is a story about the death of a character that forever exists in the gleaming future of the 1950’s. Gaiman’s, on the other hand, is a reflection on the nature of heroes and the dark past of a modern world that is Batman’s Gotham. Throughout opportunities are taken to show the humanity of Batman’s rogue gallery, who are as much broken people as villains. It contrasts this with Batman, who even in his death, must come to terms with his own humanity inside of the cowl.

That is the biggest question of *What Ever Happened*. Where does the man begin and the avenging deity end. In their turns, all of the attendees tell their own stories about the life, and death, of Batman. Each of his old nemeses and allies sees a different man behind the cowl, but stands in awe of the symbol which transcends it. The end result is to leave us with all of the unanswerable questions about the very nature of Batman. Can a truly sane man dress up as a bat and fight crime, never stunned by the madness that swirls around him? How can some one serve justice and the law, while at the same time hiding in shadows playing vigilante? Ultimately, you can only come to terms with them.

It would be a crime to talk about the story without the city it is set. Gotham is beautifully rendered in muted tones and shrouded in smoke. Her scenery and array of characters are drawn from across the mythos of Batman. The cheese of the old sixties TV series is seamlessly mixed in with the classically dark Batman iconography and even the nineties cartoon show. Together it shows that Gotham city is all of these things, and so is the Batman.

This book will not revolutionize comics, nor will it convert those who are not fans of the Dark Knight. It is written for those who grew up with Batman, be he the worlds greatest detective, a crusader who stared down fiendish death traps with a pun, or as a conflicted man in a world of broken people.

***The Book of Swords* by Hank Reinhardt** (Baen, August 2009)
Christopher Hensley

Hank Reinhardt's *The Book of Swords* is not a reference book, or a scholarly treatise on the Art of the Sword. The meandering narrations on the history of the blade and the personal anecdotes would send most scholarly authors into fits of conniption. More correct would be to call *The Book of Swords* Reinhardt's personal musings on swords, personal combat and life. A conversational tone combined with the Hank's enthusiasm makes it a book that draws the reader in while conveying Reinhardt's no-nonsense philosophy and practical knowledge of weapons.

The early chapters cover the metallurgy and the history of sword design leading up to the discovery of steel. Reinhardt takes what should be the driest part of the book and makes the reader care about it. Not only does he make the subject matter interesting, he shows the composition and design of blades to be essential to the understanding of how people fought with them and died with them.

The largest share of *The Book of Swords* is dedicated to historical swords and their uses. Reinhardt draws from sources as diverse as Nordic sagas and his own personal experience to draw a picture of each sword and how it was used. On each subject he refers not just to the modern scholarship, but clearly spells out his own personal opinions without presenting them as self-evident truths.

Weaved together it forms a text which illustrates the uses and importance of each weapon by invoking the by-gone warriors who depended upon it.

The last two chapters are the shortest, and also the most profound. They are nominally about the actual use of swords. While the down-to-earth advice is certainly a practical practitioner's primer on the Art of fighting, it is more than that. These chapters represent Hank's philosophy on life. It reads as Hank Reinhardt's speech on how to be a man in the modern world, and how pragmatism doesn't mean sacrificing honor, which can best be summed up by his own words: "In a swordplay contest I would suggest that you deceive, deceive and deceive. But never cheat. That is merely contemptible. That is one of the major differences between swordplay and sword fighting."

Hank Reinhardt never claims to be an expert on the subject, just a student. He points out that no one alive today is an expert on sword fighting. They have never cut through Europe with a Viking horde, nor has anyone alive today had to defend their freedom with swords and spears. I recommend this book for anybody that wants to learn about swords and sword fighting not from a master, but a student. I also recommend *The Book of Swords* as a cure for those who romanticize the glory days of the sword, and for those who disdain the blade as an anachronism of our disgracefully violent past.

***Discarded Faces* by Steve Cross** (Sheldon A. Kaplan & Associates, September 2002)
Richard Alligood

The story is based on a world colonized by Earth, which is no longer in contact with this daughter colony. Several (hundred) years later, the planet, "Fifth Earth," suffered a plague of epic proportions causing a loss of technology and knowledge. At the point of the story, the various countries and peoples have worked back to approximately a 21st century technological level (beam weapons and high rise, semi-self contained apartment complexes soaring 70+ stories with stores, pharmacies, medical clinics, security, etc.). The government is a repressive, militaristic, xenophobic, homophobic, racially superior regime which censors the media, school curriculum, etc. and is fighting a war with a neighboring country to keep everyone focused away from the government. The main character, Peb, is a high school age lesbian (or 'muncher' in the story's terminology) who has to hide her true self from everyone while acting out the government's and state sanctioned religion's required behavior. The youth culture is based around everyone belonging to a gang with gang specific clothing, etc. Some gangs are good and keep children out of trouble while other gangs assault and torment and deal drugs, etc.

This book attempts to cover several cultural issues at once – an oppressive dictatorial government with thought police, homosexuality, revolution, gang issues, rape, racial discrimination, freedom of religion, etc. and doesn't spend enough time on any specific subject – some of the subjects are so lightly touched

upon, I wondered why they were there beyond trying to make the reader more sympathetic to the main characters. The majority of the book brushes at a revolution coming with some basic revolutionary prep (distributing literature with real news instead of the censored media, and so forth). Near the end, the characters participate in a fight to distract the government from the real uprising of the army. At this point, someone is wounded and the next chapter starts in the medical center with the coup mostly accomplished. As for racial discrimination, which was also touched upon, it took this reader at least a third of the book before comprehending the author was talking about racial profiling (including skin color, etc) instead of general cultural differences and dislikes. Wrap this all up in a package written at a juvenile/young adult level, yet not really discussing any specifics of why these things are bad and it was an uninspired read. At the same time, I did manage to get through the entire book without having to stop and the writing isn't so bad I was amused by how bad it is (most of the time – a few phrases are horrible). I'd give the book two out of five stars.

Rebel Yells: News & Notes from all over

Yow! We've got an active letter column this month. First, we heard from Mike Moon:

Warren,
Congraulations on your hard work and another fine SFC update!

Those newsletters are both entertaining & informative and I am flattered you chose my Faerie illustration for the cover!

But gosh - they take a while on my dial up internet connection- this most recent one took 13 minutes!

Thanks & take care-
Mike & the catgirls

Catgirl Island
Mike's illustrations, photography & stories
<http://www.catgirlisland.net/>

The Mew: The Catgirl Critics' Media Mewsings
reviews & interviews
<http://mewsings.wordpress.com/>

Thanks for checking in, Mike! I'm always glad to hear from you, and I've certainly pulled more than my fair share of illos from your work. Thanks for that.

Next, we heard from Steve Francis, with an important announcement:

DOWN UNDER FAN FUND 2010

Nominations are now open for the 2010 Down Under Fan Fund a.k.a. **DUFF**. Prospective candidates will have until January 31st 2010 to file the documents required to have one's name placed in nomination and added to the ballot. The ballots will be published and distributed in early February, 2010. The voting period will run from February 10th thru March 31st, 2010.

Candidates should file the following documents:

A brief letter stating one's intent to run for DUFF 2010.

Five letters of nomination, three from North America and two from Australia or New Zealand. E-mailed letters are acceptable.

A 100 word or less platform statement specifying the candidate's reasons for running and qualifications for becoming the 2010 DUFF delegate.

An entry fee of \$25.00USD (which will be added to the current DUFF account).

The duties of the winning candidate will be as follows:

Travel to Australia and attend Aussiecon 4, the 68th World Science Fiction Convention on September 2-6, 2010 in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Visit and get to know as many Australian Science Fiction fans as time will permit.

Become the DUFF administrator for the term running from Aussiecon 4 thru the 51st Australian National Convention (NatCon) to be held in 2012.

Raise funds and maintain an account to be used by the next southbound delegate(s) in 2012.

Publish a trip report covering the time of one's travels in Australia and attendance at the convention.

Please send all documents and fees to the current DUFF administrators:

Steve and Sue Francis

PO Box 58009

Louisville KY 40268-0009

sjf1138@aol.com

sfsue@aol.com

Okay, folks, the South has a long tradition of sending our fans to Australia, so I'm counting on some of y'all to step up. No, don't even think of looking my way. The NASFiC is eating too much vacation time to consider a proper fan fund trip. Did I mention that this race is for a trip to a WORLDCON?

And while we're on the subject of fan funds, here's Chris Garcia with another important announcement:

For Immediate Release

2010 TAFF Race: Nominations Open

The 2010 TAFF race (Eastward: North America to Europe) is now open for nominations. The winning delegate will attend the 2010 Eastercon, Odyssey, in London over the Easter weekend, 2-5 April, 2010. (Odyssey's website is [http://www.odyssey2010.org/.](http://www.odyssey2010.org/))

To stand as a candidate, you must provide:

Five nominations from known fans, three of whom must be resident in North America and two resident in Europe. All of these should send a signed nomination via postal mail – or, if sending the nomination by e-mail, include a phone number for verification

A written platform, not exceeding 101 words

A \$20 bond (US or Canadian dollars)

A pledge you will take the trip if you win

All nominations, platforms, pledges and / or bonds must arrive with either the North American or European administrator (see below) by midnight GMT on Sunday, 4 October, 2009. Provided at least two candidates meet these requirements, the distribution of ballots will begin immediately thereafter. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the administrators. If you plan to run, please alert them as soon as possible.

Chris Garcia (TAFF Administrator, North America)

garcia [at] computerhistory [dot] org

962 West Weddell Dr. #15

Sunnyvale

CA 94089

USA

Steve Green (TAFF Administrator, Europe)

stevegreen [at] livejournal [dot] com

33 Scott Road

Solihull

B92 7LQ

UK

WHAT IS TAFF? The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 to underwrite cultural exchanges for well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the Big Pond. Since then, TAFF has sent North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. It exists solely through the support of fandom. Delegates are selected by interested fans from all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of at least US \$3 or UK £2. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, make TAFF possible.

More information about TAFF's history, customs, and practices may be found at the unofficial site maintained by Dave Langford at <http://taff.org.uk/>.

And that deadline is this weekend, y'all! I've heard that at least two names will be on the ballot for this race, so it should be good stuff. Run, nominate, and most importantly, vote! Your votes are what keep TAFF and DUFF going, after all.

And, as usual, we heard from Joy V. Smith:

Warren,

Thanks for the con listings, and I enjoyed the thoughts about Lovecraft's stories. And thanks to Dr. Thompson for the Forrest J. Ackerman tribute. (I have to confess that I don't get the Prince Sirki reference.)

Appreciatively,

Joy V. Smith

Joy

(My blog includes helpful house hints & seasonal storm coverage)

<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

Always glad to hear from you, and to run Jeff's work. I'll confess that I didn't get that reference, either.

And it seems like we've got a busy issue for announcements! Next, we heard from Kevin Standlee, with news of the SFSFC SMOFcon scholarship:

Press Release 2009-1

SFSFC CONTINUES SMOFCON SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2009

SAN FRANCISCO SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTIONS, INC.

A California Non-Profit Corporation

PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale CA 94088-1363 USA

info@sfsfc.org; <http://www.sfsfc.org/>

For release: September 7, 2009

SFSFC Offers SMOFCon Scholarship for 2009

San Francisco Science Fiction Conventions, Inc. (SFSFC) has voted to offer a scholarship of \$500 to help convention runners in training attend the SMOFCon convention-runners convention in Austin TX this year over the weekend of December 4-6, 2009.

SMOFCon is an annual convention about organizing science fiction conventions. Subject matter ranges from managing small conventions up to the unique challenges of World Science Fiction Conventions. The convention is held in a different city each year. The 2009 SMOFCon will be in Austin TX at the Hilton Garden Inn Austin Downtown. More information about this year's SMOFCon is available on their web site <http://www.alamo-sf.org/smofcon27/index.html>.

The scholarship is open to anyone involved in running science fiction conventions, regardless of their place of residence. However, applicants must be able to demonstrate that their attendance at SMOFCon will benefit San Francisco Bay Area conventions. Applications will be judged by the scholarship administrators, who for 2009 are once again the three directors of SFSFC who have chaired Worldcons: David W. Clark, Kevin Standlee, and Tom Whitmore.

An application form is available on the SFSFC web site at http://sfsfc.org/?page_id=93 or by writing to SFSFC at PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale CA 94088-1363. SFSFC must receive (postmark date does not count) applications by October 15, 2009. Application forms will also be available at the Westercon 64 information table at SiliCon 2009 in San Jose, October 2-4.

This is the sixth year that SFSFC has issued a scholarship to allow a promising convention runner to attend SMOFCon.

The name "SMOF" stands for "Secret Masters Of Fandom," and is a humorous reference to the people who organize and manage science fiction conventions. Another term sometimes used for such people is "conrunner."

SFSFC is the parent non-profit corporation of the 2009 World Fantasy Convention, Westercon 64, and was the parent non-profit corporation of ConJosè, the 2002 World Science Fiction Convention, ConFrancisco, the 1993 Worldcon, and several other conventions.

Contact:

SFSFC Inc.: Kevin Standlee info@sfsfc.org
SMOFCon 27: <http://www.alamo-sf.org/smofcon27/index.html>

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While it'll take some thought to demonstrate that someone from the South would be able to do good things for Bay Area conventions by attending SMOFcon, I'm sure someone out there will have a good idea. Probably someone from San Francisco. I'm looking forward to this year's SMOFcon – in Austin, Texas!

And yet another announcement! This time, from Steve Francis (again):

Aussiecon 4 Dealers Room
September 2 thru 6, 2010

The Aussiecon 4 Dealers Room is now accepting dealer applications for reserving tables. If you wish a copy of the Dealers Room application form and/or the letter describing the operation of the room, please write to Steve Francis at PO Box 58009, Louisville KY 40268-0009. Requests for this information may also be made by e-mailing me at sjf1138@aol.com. This letter is being sent out to potential US dealers who might wish to consider dealing at Aussiecon 4.

The cost of dealer tables is \$200AUD (\$175USD) each with a maximum of 5 tables per dealer. Services such as electrical power, phone lines or WiFi will be in addition to the basic price of the table(s). Move in and setup will take place on Wednesday, September 1st and continue until the opening hour on Thursday at Noon. All dealers must be prepared to have all of their merchandise removed from the room by 7:00PM, Monday, September 6th. All other questions should be answered in the dealers room letter.

Steve Francis
Dealers Room Manager
Aussiecon 4

Alright, crew, if you're having trouble getting the message, Steve Francis wants you to go to Australia for Worldcon! Get to it!

And more than the usual from Lloyd Penney, who's making up for lost time with a double-issue LoC.:

1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2

September 5, 2009

Dear Warren:

Whoops, fell behind again. I have here with me Volume 1, Issues 8 and 9 of the SFC Update, and I'd better get to it.

8...Either Chris Garcia is hyperactive, or there are several of him, getting all these zines done. Years ago, we used to kid about Harry Warner's dungeon, with naughty fans being kidnapped to work under his home, and keep up with locating all those fanzines, and producing all those apazines. Having a job with a minimal workload also helps.

Another European Worldcon bid would be good, and there's another Japanese bid for 2017. I have never been able to get to a British Worldcon, but we did go to the Dutch Worldcon in 1990, and had ourselves a great time. The newest city to be considered for a Worldcon site is Reno, and we look forward to going. I suspect another European bid will probably go to Glasgow because it's a known quantity, much the same way the Texas bid went for San Antonio.

My loc...no, we still haven't found daytime employment. My evening employment, as you saw on my Facebook page, has moved from one building to another, but still no changes in the job itself. The hunt continues ever onwards.

9...guess I broke my streak, hm? I'll bet you're at Dragoncon right now. One of my correspondents is telling me about the amazing amount of Steampunk programming there, and the hundreds of people in their steamy fineries. Congratulations on the NASFiC, and Eric Flint is a guest of honour at our local convention this coming April.

I'd love to get to a convention like Capclave, especially to see Lee Gilliland and the folks down there. If you say my streak is still going, bonus. The fanzine lounge seemed quite successful, people enjoyed their stay there, and we did about \$200 in sales. I think I am out of 2009 WOOFs, but I still have fanzines to hand out in exchange for a donation to your favorite fan fund. CUFF is the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, which gets a Western Canadian fan to an Eastern Canadian Convention (Canadian national convention) and vice-versa. NAFF is the National Australian Fan Fund, which is much like CUFF, in that it gets an Australian fan to the Australian national convention. GUFF is the Get-Up and Over Fan Fund, or Going Under Fan Fund, which gets fans from Australia and New Zealand up to a European regional convention. FFANZ is the Fan Fund of Australia and New Zealand, which sends fans between those two countries.

We should always remember Forry Ackerman; he's influenced the way we do our fanac more than anyone else has. I've met him several times, the last was at L.A.con IV in 2006, and I am pleased that I got an autograph, and got to shake his hand. It's a shame he's gone, but one reason for me to go the LA Worldcon that year was to see him one last time. He will not die, as long as we remember him.

All done, and off it goes. Many thanks for more interesting zines to read, and I'm greedy enough to want more. See you then.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*Chris Garcia is hyperactive – have you ever tried to party with that man? When he's in a conversation, you can see the next awesome comment waiting to explode out of him. The only other folks I've partied with at cons who can match his energy are James Bacon, Paul Cornell, and Chris Ross (one of our locals in North Carolina). While Glasgow is an option for the 2014 bid, I suspect they'll go with London if they can make it work. There's so much excitement about that possibility that I really hope they can pull it off. There was magnificent steampunk finery at Dragon*Con. Also, on the subject of steampunk finery, I've found a great hatter! Check out Dream Hats at www.dreamhats.com – they do custom work, but also can order simpler stuff at great prices. I got a great deal on a top hat from them at FenCon. Thanks for the explanation of the Fan Funds. It fits in well with our running so many announcements regarding them this ish. As for Forry, I'm ashamed to say that I never got to meet him, but I still consider him one of the greats. I wrote a memorial to him for Chris's tribute issue of **The Drink Tank**, and I still think my comment there stands: he's one of the few you can memorialize with the epitaph from Christopher Wren's tomb – "Reader, if you seek his memorial, look around you." Thanks again for the LoCs!*

And now, Rich Dengrove:

Dear Warren,

Dragoncon must have everyone. A fellow skeptic, and astrophysicist, a William Bridgman, is going there to promote his skepticism. More and more, I am wondering about skepticism, though. I am getting ready to conclude everything is true in its way, and everything is false in its way. The thing is to find out which way it is. Of course, Mr. Bridgman would disagree.

I can understand why you are dubious about Victorian writing. Many Victorian authors wrote to impress, often more than to communicate. Strange as it seems, others were fairly clear. I know Robert Chambers of King in Yellow fame had a very clear style. Come to think of it, some eccentrics from the 17th and 18th Century had a very clear style too.

Warren, you're nothing like the real Lord Chesterfield. He said he only laughed three times in his life and he regretted it each time.

About Forrest J. Ackerman, I remember his Famous Monsters of Filmland was known for its awful puns. My brother once told me that one article was entitled "Cyclops' Lollipops."

That's it.

Yours,
Rich Dengrove

Ah, Rich, your skepticism has become so advanced as to become its own annihilation! Nietzsche would probably have something interesting to say about that. It reminds me of his views on mercy (he said that mercy is justice, self-annihilated). Yeah, Lord Chesterfield (the fourth Earl of Chesterfield, for whom the beer is named), was a real cheery guy. Glad I'm not that giddy.

WAHF: J.R. Fisher, Toni Weisskopf, Jeffrey Thompson, Tom Feller.

DR. LUCIFUR: NASHVILLE TV's TASTEFUL TRANSYLVANIAN

by Jeff Thompson

“He was a very elegant gentleman who had been the president of Transylvania for the past two hundred years. He spent a lot of time looking down his nose at people.” This is how Nashville broadcaster Ken Bramming (1926-1997) fondly remembered his horrific alter-ego, Dr. Lucifur, Nashville’s first TV horror-movie host. Bramming, the sonorous-voiced television and radio personality, hosted *Shock Theater* on Nashville’s WSIX-TV 8 (now WKRN-TV 2, then and now an ABC affiliate) from November 1958 until April 1967. The show originally aired on Friday nights at 10:15 PM CST—“That was in the days of the 15-minute newscast,” Bramming remarked—and later moved to Saturday nights at 10:30. “We knew we’d get a young audience on those nights,” Bramming said. “We were aiming for the 10- to 14-year-olds, but their parents ended up watching the show with them and liking it as much as the kids!”

In the early months, *Shock Theater* opened with Modest Moussorgsky’s “Night on Bald Mountain” as its theme song and with Ken Bramming’s live, “straight-voice” (non-character-voice) announcement of that night’s movie. *Shock Theater*’s cinematic fare ranged from the classic Universal monster movies to the Sherlock Holmes and Mr. Moto mysteries to a few science-fiction titles. Bramming himself selected and prepared every film.

In the summer of 1959, seven months after *Shock Theater*’s debut, Bramming decided to liven up the show by adding a ghoulish on-camera host—played by himself. Bramming created the character of Dr. Lucifur from an amalgam of “Bela Lugosi’s Dracula, some of John Carradine’s characters, and some Vincent Price things.” Bramming’s Lucifur, who always appeared in black-and-white even if the night’s film was in color, was a striking figure. The dapper Transylvanian sported silver hair, a black eyepatch over his right eye, a Ming moustache, and a cigarette holder. He dressed elegantly in white tie and black tails and a flowing black cape, and he spoke with a Transylvanian accent. The “Night on Bald Mountain” theme soon was replaced by “Blues for Lucifur,” a jazzy electric-guitar melody composed and performed by Nashville musician Norm Cole. As the theme played, a wavy circle—“We called it the Mystic Circle,” Bramming explained—appeared on the TV screen and framed Dr. Lucifur, who walked into a pool of light near a lamppost. Fog swirled around the devilish doctor as he greeted the viewers and urged them to come with him on “these journeys into the worlds

of mystery, the supernatural, fantasy, and the world beyond.” At the conclusion of the film, Dr. Lucifur reappeared, invited the viewers back next week, and (with “a wild laugh”) said, “Good night—and pleasant dreams!”

This atmospheric “intro and outro” featuring Bramming as Lucifur was on film; therefore, Bramming was free to appear as himself or as other characters in the five *live* breaks in the course of that night’s film. Dr. Lucifur rarely appeared on-camera in those five breaks although his rich voice was heard whenever the camera suddenly became Lucifur’s “eyes” and showed subjective shots of other people talking to “him” (the camera). Those people—or sometimes creatures!—who interacted with Lucifur and each other ranged from a demented grandmother and a comical beatnik to a wacky poet and a reanimated mummy. While Ken Bramming played Dr. Lucifur off-camera or a man-on-the-street interviewer on-camera, his several assistants portrayed *Shock Theater*’s other recurring characters.

“My top assistant,” Bramming recalled, “was Corky Savely, a mad genius who was still in high school at the time. He would dress up as a character named Granny Gruesome, who one night showed the viewers how to knit a sports car out of 1500 pounds of steel wool. Corky also dressed as Frantic Freddy the Hipster or Cyril Songbird the Poet—that one we stole directly from Ernie Kovacs!—and Corky would dress up like a mummy whenever we showed a mummy movie. Other characters were played by Herschell Martin and Richard Dixon, and Norm Fraser played the ‘infamous’ Baron Von Sloucho. We did crazy things, and the show had no time limit. Sometimes, our breaks in the movie lasted ten minutes!”

Except for Corky Savely’s mummy appearances and a few other tie-ins, Bramming and company’s live, ad-libbed routines during the movies were completely unrelated to the films. “We did take-offs of popular songs like ‘Monster Mash’ and ‘Tom Dooley,’ and we spoofed many TV commercials and TV series. We did a take-off of *The Loretta Young Show* called *The Forever Young Show*. Miss Forever Young’s famous doors were stuck, and she couldn’t get them open to make her entrance. We even did a take-off of *Batman* when the TV show was popular—only we had [Nashville restaurateur] Mario Ferrari dressed as Batman and speaking Italian!”

An instance when Bramming appeared on-camera as Dr. Lucifur during the comical breaks in the movie occurred in the autumn of 1960. At the same time that New York TV horror-movie host Zacherley was running for President of the United States, Dr. Lucifur ran for re-election to the presidency of Transylvania. Having held the office for the past two centuries, the arrogant aristocrat figured that he was a shoo-in for re-election. However, in a last-minute upset, Lucifur’s opponent Granny Gruesome was elected instead!

These and many other zany stunts catapulted WSIX-TV’s *Shock Theater* through the ratings belfry. “Between 1958 and 1962,” Bramming revealed, “we were rated number one in Nashville in that Friday- or Saturday-night timeslot. We beat the *Tonight* show on NBC and whatever was on CBS. *Shock Theater* was a family show. The movies weren’t really scary, and there was never any blood and gore in the movies or in our segments. I insisted on that. We were there to *have fun*. I never received any bad mail from parents. Instead, I got letters from parents telling me how much they liked watching the show with their kids. There were things for the adults to like, such as the jazz background music of our segments. I used nice things that the adults and I dug by

people like [guitarist] Wes Montgomery, the Paul Smith Trio, and the Dave Brubeck Quartet.”

Ken Bramming and his campy compatriots accomplished their live routines with a minimum of sets and props. Dr. Lucifer’s lamppost regularly reappeared as a set dressing for Bramming’s man-on-the-street interviews with Frantic Freddy, Mrs. Moshe Gumora, the Poor Slob, and other characters. “We often used fog for background,” Bramming continued. “The crew at WSIX made a dry-ice fog machine for us. When we did a take-off on ‘Tom Dooley,’ we went into the next studio, where the wrestling ring was, and used one corner of the ring for Tom Dooley’s gallows. But our best set was the Purple Grotto, a purple, cave-like flat with a door in it. The door had bloody handprints on it. One night, the whole Purple Grotto flat fell forward in the middle of our skit! We were live, so there was nothing we could do. That reminds me of another blooper. I often would do live commercials as myself, and one of our sponsors was a man named Fred Mabiuis, who installed glass shower enclosures. I was standing next to a four-sided shower enclosure [and] doing a commercial for it when the thing fell over and shattered into a million pieces. I looked at the camera and said, ‘Now, friends, if Fred Mabiuis had installed it, that wouldn’t have happened.’ We quickly went back to the movie after that because the crew was breaking up!

“Television was brand-new,” Bramming continued, “and we did some funny things.” Sadly, because all of Bramming’s skits were performed live, no films or tapes of them exist. The only footage of Bramming as Lucifer is the black-and-white, filmed “intro and outro.”

By 1967, *Shock Theater*’s ratings were still good, but both Ken Bramming and WSIX-TV felt that the Saturday-night show had run its course. Bramming left WSIX and took a radio-announcing job, but Dr. Lucifer and the Mystic Circle were back on the air in Music City just a year-and-a-half later. Between October 1968 and November 1969, Bramming, as Dr. Lucifer, hosted a weekend horror movie on WMCV-TV 17, an independent station. When Channel 17 threw a Halloween party for children in October 1968, Ken Bramming and Corky Savely were on hand as Dr. Lucifer and the mummy. This was Dr. Lucifer’s third personal appearance: during the WSIX days, Bramming had appeared in costume at two Nashville department stores. “And the kids climbed all over me!” Bramming laughed.

After his Lucifer years, Ken Bramming re-connected with his horror roots when he served as the pre-recorded announcer for *Creature Feature*, a Saturday-night horror movie telecast on WSM-TV 4 (NBC) in the early 1970s. The host of *Creature Feature* was Sir Cecil Creape (Russ McCown, who went on to play the Phantom of the Opry on The Nashville Network). Bramming’s unmistakable voice at the beginning of *Creature Feature* provided a link between the two horror hosts as did Sir Cecil’s occasional mentioning of his friend Dr. Lucifer, thereby acknowledging that Nashville’s horror hosts existed in the same universe. Bramming even made one on-camera appearance as Lucifer in an episode of *Creature Feature*, which each week was scripted by WSM weatherman Pat Sajak, years before he too became a noted TV host.

Dr. Lucifer’s latter-day *radio* incarnations in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s included his voicing a safe-driving public-service announcement for the Tennessee Department of Safety (“Don’t spill your blood on the highway!”) and his annual resurrection on Halloween to host a broadcast of Orson Welles’s 1938 *War of the Worlds*

radio drama on WAMB-AM 1200, Nashville's big-band/easy-listening station. Bramming was the mid-day announcer and program director at WAMB from 1979 until 1997.

The first annual World Horror Convention was held in Nashville in 1991, and both Ken Bramming and Russ McCown were there. The horror hosts appeared together in a panel discussion about their years as Dr. Lucifur and Sir Cecil Creape, and each man re-created his character's distinctive laugh for the delighted audience. The horror-hosts panel was a once-in-a-lifetime event, for McCown died several years later—and Bramming, a lifelong smoker, succumbed to lung cancer in mid-1997. In the late 1990s and continuing to the present, Dr. Gangrene (Larry Underwood), Nashville's next great horror host, began keeping Lucifur and Creape alive by mentioning them on his award-winning horror-movie show, *Chiller Cinema*, later renamed *Creature Feature*, and on his Internet website.

Despite the passing of Ken Bramming, the immortal Dr. Lucifur lived again on Nashville television on Thanksgiving night 2003 and 2004. In 2003, WKRN-TV 2 celebrated its 50th anniversary with a documentary, an all-day Thanksgiving cornucopia of classic TV shows, and a new edition of *Shock Theater*. That night at 10:30, Dr. Lucifur once again strolled up to the lamppost and welcomed viewers before Channel 2 showed *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*. On Thanksgiving night 2004, Dr. Lucifur's "intro and outro" began and ended a telecast of *House on Haunted Hill*.

In October 2006, the independent documentary film *American Scary* premiered at the Hollywood Film Festival. *American Scary* traced the rich history of mid-century TV horror hosts, from Zacherley, Ghoulardi, and Vampira to Dr. Lucifur, Sir Cecil Creape, and Dr. Gangrene, and it revealed how the horror-host legacy lives on today through public-access television, video and DVD, and Internet websites. Although his innovative live skits now exist only in the fond memories of long-ago viewers, Dr. Lucifur, Nashville TV's tasteful Transylvanian, will live forever.

Dr. Jeff Thompson teaches English at Tennessee State University in Nashville and announces on WAMB-AM 1200, Nashville's big-band/easy-listening radio station. He is the author of *The Television Horrors of Dan Curtis: Dark Shadows, The Night Stalker, and Other Productions, 1966-2006* (McFarland, 2009). For more information about Dr. Lucifur, Sir Cecil Creape, and Dr. Gangrene, please see www.drgangrene.com, www.americanscary.com, or www.horrorhosts.com.