

Science Fiction/San Francisco

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email: SFinSF@gmail.com

Editors: Jean Martin, Chris Garcia

Copy Editor: David Moyce

TOC

News and Notes	Chris Garcia	2
Letters of Comment	Jean Martin	3
Editorial.....	Chris Garcia	6
Dreams of the City	Column by España Sheriff.....	7
The Legion of Sarah Jane	Jean Martin.....	8
Unearned Praise for “Transformers” Film	Al “Rackstraw” Megas	10
Faith of the Heroes: Religion in the ‘Verse.....	Mike Smithwick..... Photo by Jo Anslow.....	12
BASFA Minutes		15
Bay Area Fannish Calendar	David Moyce.....	18

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News and Notes

By Christopher J. Garcia

Editor

Hank Reinhart, a popular Southern Fan, passed away this year. He'd been around for ages and I knew the name from various zines I'd read from that part of the world. Another good one's gone, as they say.

TAFF is coming to a close. If you don't get your ballots out soon, you'll miss your chance to vote for some guy named Chris or some lass named Linda!

FurCon is rolling towards the big day. We're about three months away and things are starting to take on real form. I've been working on the Science Track and it's been rough, but I think it's going to end up with a real good program. If you're going to Further Confusion and you're a science type, drop me a note and we'll get you on some panels.

The WrestleFest in SF a few weeks back was a giant bust, but these things happen. I'd still say it did better financially than Con-X-Treme.

I'm very pleased to say that Seanan McGuire (no relation to Christian) won Best Performer in the Pegasus Awards, announced at the Ohio Valley Filk. She's been a BayCon Toastmaster and a wonderful all-around person and I've personally enjoyed her stuff anytime I've heard it.

There's a little bit of action on eFanzines.com and it's all good. I'm really enjoying Felicity Walker's *Ish*, a zine that

is produced on the eve of V-Con by a few Canadians. Speaking of Canadians, there's a third issue of the *WCSFAzine*. It's the West Coast of Canada's answer to the up-coming *BASFA Times*. This ones got some really fun stuff.

Ain't no party like a comic shop party 'cause a comic shop party don't stop! Halloween had a bunch of great events (I was handing out candy in Los Gatos and it was riotously crowded with more than 300 kids in the hour and a half I was there), and one such event was a party at Illusive Comics & Games in Santa Clara. Games going on, some drinks and a generally fun atmosphere prevailed. They also had the greatest pumpkin known to make, an awesome three pumpkin deal that also had stick arms and legs with lime joints. It was nuts. I also played this dice/card game like Yahtzee that I believe I will become addicted to if I ever own it.

Anna Davour is a physicist I believe. She's also Scandinavian and a nice sort of person. I found her stuff from eAPA a few years ago. Her first zine posted to eFanzines was *Of Physicists and Fen*, a fine little piece that sorta compared fannish cons with physics conventions (we have better costumes, they have better panels), and now she's back with *Physicality of Words on Paper*. It's a good read. I hope we see more from Anna (and maybe she can run for next year's TAFF slot).

Earthquake was fun. Very little damage but it did scare the hell out of me.

Plan on finding more fun in the pages of

The Drink Tank. By the time you read this, the Corset Issue should be just about completed. Let me say that I owe a lot to Jack Avery for the design elements and even more to the good folks I've worked with over the last year or so. Some great stuff. The Third Annual Giant Sized Annual is going to be one of the first co-editing gigs I'll be doing for 2008. Derek McCaw, editor-in-chief of FanboyPlanet.com, has come on board for the issue and will be helping drive the issue that will be released on January 31st (the same date as Issue 1 in 2005). The theme is Media and Fans, so: comics, movies, TV, you name it. I've got some good stuff lined up and I'm betting Derek will get some great material out of the FanboyPlanet crew.

No word on a 2010 Westercon bid. Mine fell through (the concept is good, the facilities that would make it work are expensive) and I haven't heard of anyone else. I haven't even heard of anyone thinking about bidding for NASFiC in 2010.

National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) has begun and I'm well into my big novel that's really a non-fiction book written about fictional events. I'll post it to Scribd.com and various other places. The concept: A documentary got made about a guy who writes zines and it turns out that the guy, the documentary and the article about it are all fakes...or are they? I admit it, I stole a lot of the idea from *House of Leaves*, but some of it is just plain old-fashion hoaxing.

Letters Of Comment

Lloyd Penney writes:

Dear Jean and David, and oh yeah, that Chris Guy...

Gots me SF/SF 52, and gots me the time to loc it. Well, stranger things have happened, and have been written, and I'm working on it... Happy birthday, Chris! Don't look a day over 35, man...

Once again, looks like SiliCon is a great place to be... must gotta get me there sometime. Party with you guys, and hugs for Jean and España, and any Morels who might be in the neighborhood. Tell Kevin and Andy that just strutting around in a UtiliKilt is presence enough. Hey, Chris, if you get to Loscon and see Rob Sawyer, tell him I said hello! Ought to freak him just a little bit.

Jean Martin responds: SiliCon is becoming better and better every year. It's now on my "must go to" list of conventions. UtiliKilts are always welcome. Well, kilts of any type really!

I think the Montreal Worldcon will be a good one. They are friendly and accepting, and they are looking for assistance wherever you'd like to give it. We'll be there early, and staying late, almost guaranteed. Things are already moving with the convention, and the next two years are going to be very busy.

Hmmm...I've always wanted to go to Montreal. That might be a good excuse for me to go.

The idea of Chris Garcia with no beard and short hair is an intriguing one. Anyone want

to Photoshop up something like this?

I'd pay for something like that. I have no idea what Chris would look like without all that hair! Does anyone have any pictures of Chris before the beard and long hair?

The job is doing great as I start my fifth week. Laidback, easy, good folks, munchies, a few laughs here and there, lots of natural light, helping with catch-up, getting kudos on the job I'm doing. Good place to be!

And yes, I HAVE seen today's *Bizarro!* Lloyd, where prohibited!

Nope, I'm not a Klingon, but I was asked to join this Klingon organization. Never did much with it, except piss off the organizers with the name they wish they'd thought of...

I like Earl's zine, and it certainly deserved the rocket it got. I still think that a similar survey today would serve an invaluable service to the genre as a whole. It seems to be in more trouble today than it was in the past, and mostly because SF is more mainstream than it was, so many SFnal ideas are in everyday entertainment and even modern life, and other ideas contained in SF and fantasy are seen as childish. Is SF dying? Some authors have called it a genre of the 20th century, and may not have a place for readers today.

Trends come in cycles or they evolve into something else entirely. It is true, though, that SF is more mainstream...but the SF that we fen know and love is still around.

What it needs is a shot in the arm with something original that revitalizes the

genre. The same way that Harry Potter did for children's books. Unfortunately, publishing and the movie and TV worlds have become big businesses that focus on sure things rather than give new and risky ideas a chance. But there is still hope. Talent always rises to the surface and word-of-mouth propagates quality work.

Hey, Chris! Shot a movie on the weekend! It's called *Papoonda*, and it should be a hoot once it's done. This is my first live action on-screen role, and I play a historian and explorer. Check out http://virb.com/chip_production for more details, and I'll let you know when it finally sees reality!

Congratulations! Sounds interesting... I'll check it out.

The SiliCon report...such a failure of journalist integrity that no one got pictures of the massively out-of-proportion ladies. Ah, 'tis a sad day... Found out that Toronto has a zombie march every year now, and it took place only a few weeks ago.

Great calendar as always, and every fannish city on the continent needs a publication like this one! We'd never be bored, and we'd always know what was going on. I hope you're looking at www.CartoonBrew.com for animation events in Southern California.

Enough for now... must get to work. I am at work right now, so please no revealing what that e-mail is. Thought I'd get this to you asap, and I'll send it home, too. Take it easy, have fun, and see you next issue.

John Purcell writes:

Chris and Jean, we meet again. I think people are beginning to talk...

Especially talking about how good your zippy, twice-a-month zine is. It never fails to be entertaining and full of fun material. So now that I am done ego-stroking you two, it is time for a few comments about your latest issue.

Jean responds: Thanks... ego-stroking is always good!

October is not the real convention month in these parts, but there's action enough if one is willing to roam a bit afield. Once *Askance* is posted next week, you will see what I mean in the regional convention listing. The big event currently running is the Texas Renaissance Festival, which is being held every weekend until the end of November. So there is still time for us to get down there — it's only a 40 minute drive from home — and it is still my goal to write up the visit for *SF/SF*, complete with photos. The whole family is looking forward to it.

Have fun and do send us that writeup you've been promising!

Ah, I see Jean sort of agrees with me about the 2007 Hugo Award design. Basically, I like the idea of making each year's base design unique, but *Ultraman* was too big. I don't think there would have been as much of a ruckus if he was half as tall, maybe about the same height as Mount Fuji on the base. As it was done, the emphasis of the award was focused on *Ultraman*, not on the fact that this was a Hugo Award; it looks more like an *Ultraman* Award. That's the way I interpret the design, and maybe others are too.

Ha-ha... yes, it does look like an Ultraman award.

Jean's comments about the current television science fiction and fantasy programming are interesting, and I haven't seen any of them yet. My schedule has been busy as usual with school work and family events, so if I remember to set the VCR, I'll tape various episodes to see what the new *Bionic Woman* show is like, as well as *Heroes*, *Moonlight* and *Journeyman*. They all sound interesting, but it all depends on the writing, acting, and production values. I mean, look what Sci Fi Channel has done to the updated *Flash Gordon*: it's abysmal.

With that out of the way, I would like to remind Chris to bring the following 10 things back with him from his TAFF Trip:

1. A hangover.
2. Toblerone, or some other European type of real chocolate.
3. A good bottle of Scotch or Irish Whiskey.
4. Real Guinness Stout, not some American knock-off brand.
5. One of Dave Langford's Fan Hugos; surely he won't miss one of them...
6. A small clod of dirt from Karl Marx's grave site, sealed in a Ziploc baggie.
7. His beard — Chris' beard, that is — sealed in a Ziploc baggie.
8. A Graham Charnock fart, sealed in a Ziploc baggie.
9. Some of James Bacon's fan-writings, accompanied with illoes by Harry Bell.
10. Enough notes for a TAFF trip report to fill two month's worth or ten issues of *Drink Tank*, whichever comes first.

What else in this issue?

Oh, yes. A Vintacon report. Now there's

a convention that I'd love to attend. It sounds like a fun time was had by all, and was filled with a lot of spirit. Makes me a bit jealous, but I'll survive. Too bad Chris wasn't able to bring some samples home; that would have been fine.

Cool pictures and write-up of the tour of the Computer History Museum. I didn't know that they had an Enigma machine there; the story behind that contraption and how the British laid their hands on one is fascinating, and History Channel every once in a great while runs a documentary about it. Very interesting material.

The Enigma machine does have quite a fascinating history. I've seen the documentary as well as two movies about how the code was broken: Enigma with Kate Winslet and Breaking the Code with Derek Jacobi. Enigma is more of a thriller, while Breaking the Code is more of a drama.

SiliCon also looks like it was a lot of fun. If I ever manage to make it out to the Bay Area, it certainly sounds like there would be some convention going on. That picture of Johanna manning the bar at Pancho's Crosstime Cantina made me think that the party was catered by Vintacon, or at least partly stocked by folks who brought stuff back from it. Ah, España, you shouldn't mix drinks; that's a patented formula for a hangover. At least you recovered relatively quickly.

Johanna is quite the connoisseur when it comes to alcohol. Nothing cheap or ordinary in her bars! She even livened up my 40th birthday party earlier this year with some interesting, foreign liqueur that she brought with her. She definitely puts on a good party. Too bad I don't drink!

And the renfest article reminds me about

our renfest nearby. Excellent pictures, always a hallmark of *SF/SF*. Those events are always a lot of fun to wander and participate in. Like I said before, I am looking forward to going; it's been a few years since we attended the TexRenFest.

Thanks... I love photos so I always make sure to submit lots of them. A picture is worth a thousand words and all that.

Many thanks for the issue, and I look forward to your next fine effort. Take care, y'all.



Sci fi author and scientist **Rudy Rucker** will exhibit some of his paintings this weekend at Live Worms Gallery, 1345 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, (415) 307-1222. There's an opening night reception Friday at 7 p.m.

Rudy and guest Kage Baker plan to do a reading at the gallery on Saturday from 4 to 6 p.m. Rudy's book *Postsingular* is available for free download online at www.rudyrucker.com/postsingular/.

Left: *Saucer Dogs*, acrylic, 20" x 16", Sept 2000

Above: *Under My Bed*, oil, 30" x 20", May 2001

Images courtesy Rudy Rucker, www.rudyrucker.com

Editorial

By Christopher J. Garcia
Editor

What fun it is to laugh and sing a sleighing song tonight!

Well, everyone else has decided that Christmas starts right after Halloween, so why can't this fanzine? Huh? That's right, there is NO good reason why it can't.

The Fannish versions of the Winter Holidays tend to be pretty extreme. I've known fans who went all-out to decorate their homes, cubes, cars, whathaveyou, with twinkling lights and shiny bulbs and trees like magic. I had a friend who used to deck the halls in Hanukkah lights that outshone anyone on the block's Christmas offerings. (But I have yet to see Kwanzaa, Tet or Ramadan decorations to rival those.) Others completely ignore the holidays and work, or just enjoy the movies and go out for Chinese food or some such. These folks vigorously ignore the holidays for reasons of faith, or sincere belief in the separation of Church and State. There was one guy who worked at my museum who came in on all the holidays because he wouldn't support the idea that we should get religious holidays off work.

Now, I will celebrate pretty simply. My aunt comes down from Canyonville, Oregon and my uncle comes up from Perris, California a few days before the actual holiday, and we do an early

Christmas. I then have Christmas itself to spend with friends or go to the movies and eat Chinese food. Celebrating the roots of all my mingled faiths! I usually write a lot on Christmas: I got a full issue of *The Drink Tank* done that morning last year.

Thanksgiving gets overlooked. I go down to Perris (which is near Riverside in the middle of a Ghod-forsaken desert) and we go to the movies on Wednesday, shop, eat turkey, and then on Friday I high-tail it out of there and go to LosCon. Once again, fandom saves me from my crazy family! That's the big thing coming up for me. LosCon is a fun time and it makes the holiday that much better.

I did my Christmas shopping at LosCon in 2001. I got my aunt Susie a lovely Theresa Mather print that she loved. I got my Uncle Wayne something, like a copy of some audio book (which is weird since he's a librarian), and my Mom earrings (or maybe it was a necklace). The next year I shopped at Philcon. The year after that: the Mall. I was in Oregon, and didn't have much chance to get to any of the cons.

The beauty of the holidays is that we get to look back on the year and say "Wow, what a terrible mess," or "Hey, things worked out pretty well," or even "Where am I?" I usually end up in that middle section and that's certainly the case for this year.

So, why am I writing about Christmas

this early in the cycle? Well, it keeps my mind off of TAFF.

The culmination of the last two years of my fannish life will be announced in a few days. I've been waiting since June of 2006 to find out if I could possibly win the TransAtlantic Fan Fund, and now I'll finally know. Last year was rough because the whole process got ended, but this year we're streaking to an actual finish.

I'm nervous because folks seem to be saying that turnout so far has been low (go and print a ballot from taff.org.uk and mail it in with a few bucks!) and I'm hoping that we get a strong surge at the end and the numbers end up really strong. Suzle and Bug have done a great job as administrators and I'm very happy with the way things have gone so far.

I want to win this year, but looking at the list, I'm not sure it's possible. I've said that Christian McGuire has the best chance because he's well-known, a great guy, and he's chaired a WorldCon. That's enough for one guy, I think. Chris Barnes is a well-liked fan and a nice guy, as is Linda Deneroff, though she's not a guy. I've had folks tell me I'm the front-runner, but I'm still not sure. I guess I'll have to chew off the rest of my nails and wait like everyone else to hear who wins!

Dreams of the City

A Column by España Sheriff

Robots have definitely come a long way in the last few decades. For years writers imagined future worlds where robots would do everything. When that future failed to materialize most people added robotics to the pile of cool-but-useless-really sf/fnal ideas. But it seems as though the robots may finally be coming into their own with many locomotion and autonomy issues being resolved successfully.

Recently a news story popped up about how the makers of the cute and helpful little household cleaning robots Roomba and Scooba had just unveiled the iRobot Warrior X700. Unbeknownst to most Roomba purchasers, iRobot has contracts with the military and has already developed a number of government and industrial robots that do everything from bomb disposal to surveillance. But the Warrior X700 is special. Although it can do all sorts of things, it is possibly unique in its capability of being an autonomous (rather than remote controlled) robot that can be outfitted with weaponry. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the makers of the nifty lil' vacuum cleaner that can navigate corners have delivered our first bona fide killbot. Practically the next day, a story made the news about a robot cannon killing nine and wounding fourteen soldiers in South Africa.

Naturally not all robots are dangerous. Aside from benign devices like the Roomba or toys like Aibo, the Martian rovers are certainly a testament to what machines can do for us. But there is something chilling and yet fascinating about machines that carry destructive capabilities — like looking at a large predator that would gladly kill and eat you, except without the inherent empathy for a fellow creature. So mechanized killing machines capture the imagination and draw the mind's eye. The nineties saw the rise of a number of Robot Wars, robot competitions where clever tech geeks would pit their creations against one another, safely confining the violence to machine-on-machine events.

San Francisco's Survival Research Laboratories is the anarchic, awesome and primitive predecessor to those safer, cleaner events. Started in 1978 and still going strong, SRL is the brainchild of Mark Pauline, welder and visual artist, and a group of engineers and technicians who are completely insane but also brilliant. The insanity is not just skin-deep, either. Pauline lost most of the fingers of his right hand while experimenting with rocket fuel and subsequently had some toes attached to allow him the use of that hand. So he could play with more rocket fuel, natch. And brilliant because the SRL shows are actually pretty safe,

at least for the audience, in spite of the outward appearance to the contrary.

Being at an SRL show is rather like infiltrating a world run by SkyNet and patrolled by ED-209s. The machines are patently dangerous and intentionally so — user friendly is not the point. And they're loud. The one thing you must absolutely have if you want to see them do their thing is earplugs.

I have only been to one SRL show, 1995's *Crime Wave*, but the amalgam of anarchy, industrial mayhem, lawlessness and robo-science made a definite impression. The crew was obviously mad to be doing what they were doing but just as obviously focused and professional. Like barnstormers of old they were gleefully misappropriating and misapplying the technology under their control for frivolous and dangerous purposes. And just like barnstormers, the show was exhilarating and the audience enraptured.

It's hard to explain how the sight of these machines engaged in what the SRL website describes as “a unique set of ritualized interactions between machines, robots, and special effects devices” is different from Monster Trucks, but the feeling of things being almost out of control and the lack of humans involved in the activities makes things quite interesting. Flamethrowers, jet engines, buzzsaws and all

manner of devices both remote controlled and autonomous fill the area, all simultaneously engaged in acts that are definitely violent but frighteningly purposeful.

Even before 2001, large machines and explosive devices were generally not welcome in urban environments. So due to the difficulty in getting a permit for this type of event, most of the shows are guerilla affairs, with times and locations announced at the last minute, and the end of the show often as not presaged by the arrival of the police and/or the fire marshal — and on a few occasions, the arrest of Pauline himself. In fact, after the show I saw, he was cited with 13 misdemeanors and infractions.

Crime Wave took place right under the Bay Bridge, probably less than a block from where I now work. In the words of the press release, the show revolved around “the many humorous aspects of violent human interaction,” which meant that in addition to the pure machine violence there were animal carcasses and dummies being subjected to the tender mercies of the robots, adding an even more alarming appearance to the proceedings.

Although it’s kind of hard to imagine SRL getting away with a similar show today, they are apparently still going strong and just put on a show in Amsterdam where unfortunately Todd Blair was injured. There are some fundraisers planned for the near future to help with the medical bills, including one on November 9th.

toddblair.wordpress.com/schedule-of-events/
www.srl.org

The Legion of Sarah Jane

By Jean Martin
Editor

Starting this past October, I started doing things that I haven’t done in a while with renewed enthusiasm. Among the top things on my list was the Legion of Rassilon. With so many new *Doctor Who* and spinoff episodes, it’s been an exciting and busy time for the revived franchise.

Friday nights aren’t usually bad going South, but last October 26th there was an accident that held up traffic. I was already running late and that made me even later for the 7:00 p.m. start of the meeting at Carls Jr. on North 1st Street.

I got there and they were already showing the first episode of *The Sarah Jane Adventures* to be screened that evening. Luckily, I only missed the first five minutes, and I was able to figure out the plot as it went along.

The Sarah Jane Adventures is the latest *Doctor Who* spinoff. While *Torchwood* is geared toward an adult audience and features more sex and violence, *Sarah Jane* is dedicated toward children and young adults and is wholesome entertainment. I don’t normally watch children’s programming. I’m very picky when it comes to this genre. They have to be really good for me to like them. Recently I’ve enjoyed the children’s

anime series *Avatar*, and I do admit to liking *High School Musical* (the original and the sequel). But *Sarah Jane*, I would say hands down, is probably the best children’s show in a long while. The show is very well written, intelligent, original and action-packed. It touches on a lot of interesting themes from science, archaeology, mythology, and history to the paranormal. It also explores more down-to-earth topics like family, friendships and school issues.

The main character is Sarah Jane Smith, one of the Doctor’s previous companions. She was also featured during the second season of the new series in the nostalgic episode “School Reunion.” Elisabeth Sladen does a great job with the title character, who is dealing with life after the Doctor — someone around whom her world revolved, and who showed her the wonders of time and space. Now she’s back on Planet Earth trying to make a meaningful life for herself. She’s also trying to make close connections with new people.

The other characters include Maria, Luke and Clyde, who are around 14 years old. The show portrays them as intelligent, virtuous and courageous children who help Sarah Jane save the world and themselves from aliens. The show isn’t dumbed down for kids. It glorifies their resourceful thinking and infectious initiative. It’s quite refreshing. And none of them are

into clothes, shopping or becoming a celebrity, unlike most children's shows nowadays.

There were two parts to this episode, "Eye of the Gorgon," and I thought it was a fantastic blend of Greek mythology with alien invasions. The antagonists were nuns in an abbey, in traditional black and white habits, and there was a sub-plot with an old lady in a rest home who has Alzheimer's. This character was expertly played by Phyllida Law, Emma Thompson's mum, and she gave the show a bittersweet touch. The location used for the nun's abbey was Cardiff Castle, which I recognized right away as I was just there this past Spring.

Anyway, everyone clapped after the episode finished. It's great watching these shows with a group of people, and it was quite a packed room. There were at least two dozen people in attendance in the private viewing area, which had a large projection screen. Some had been at SiliCon a few weeks earlier, and even in the *SF/SF* party room, so it was good to reconnect with them. Among these were Merv and his wife Judith, who did the raffle during the break. I bought ten tickets, and won two prizes! The first was a copy of the second episode, "Revenge of the Slitheen," which was great because I hadn't seen it yet. Other than "Eye of the Gorgon," I'd only seen the pilot, "Invasion of the Bane," so far. The "Gorgon" episode is the third, and not

having seen the second, there were some plot points and characters I didn't understand at first. My second prize was a Peter Davison goody bag, which included an autographed trading card. I was surprised that no one picked that up before I did. (You can pick your prizes from what's available on the prize table.) I suppose the rest of the audience had been long-time members and had probably collected a lot of stuff like this already. Peter Davison was the first Doctor I ever saw and he was my favorite until



Paul McGann, Christopher Eccleston and David Tennant came on the scene. There were a lot of other prizes too, so it was good that a lot of other people won as well.

Unfortunately, I didn't bring my camera with me to take pictures that evening. It's a rare occurrence, but it does happen! Sometimes, though, it's great to just be a spectator and participant, and not always looking for the right angle and the best shot. It's difficult experiencing something in full from the limited screen of a camera's viewfinder.

Ken Patterson, from KTEH, also showed a hilarious clip from a *Family Guy* episode that referenced both *Star Wars* and *Doctor Who*. I don't watch that show so it was cool to be able to see that. Ken also requested volunteers to man the phones for an upcoming KTEH pledge drive. A *Doctor Who* episode will be shown that night. I've always wanted to do this so I signed up. KTEH is my favorite TV station, and I remember seeing the Legion of Rassilon answering the phones a few times in the past. I never thought I'd be part of that group and doing something like this all those years ago!

The next episode shown was the two-parter "Warriors of Kudlak." It revolved around a laser tag arcade that became a recruiting center for aliens to find human children to fight their war. The laser tag scenes gave me the chills. It was very exciting and an adrenaline rush. Most of the episode was modern and cutting edge, except for some parts. I won't say more because I don't want to spoil the story for anyone. I can say, though, that the plot is reminiscent of the book *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card.

Anyway, there are two more two-part episodes left. I'm looking forward to attending future Legion of Rassilon meetings to view them all and hang out with fellow Whovians. Oh, and to win more cool prizes!

Unearned Praise for 'Transformers' Film

By Al "Rackstraw" Megas
Contributing Writer

Hailing the DVD release of the live-action *Transformers*, one press quote referred to it as "the most original movie of the year."

Interesting choice of praise. Is it more "original" than, say...

Independence Day?

The plot isn't a direct lift but the similarities are too many not to notice. Both have the world at war with an alien menace but are mostly concerned with goings-on in America. Both have a mix of government, military, and civilian personnel whose storylines start separately and then converge. In both, it's army guys that figure out what spot on the enemy to shoot at while a super-genius computer nerd (or multiple) engages in virus warfare. In ID4, they had an early warning from the moon courtesy of SETI. In *Transformers*, it's a Martian lander that gave some of the first inklings. Lastly, discovery of the technology under what would become the Hoover Dam bears a close resemblance to the "freak show" hidden in Area 51.

Spiderman?

This trilogy may come in second place for most rips taken. In both *Spiderman* and *Transformers*, a nerdy heartthrob is introduced in a school scene on what turns out to be a life-

changing day. Both characters are preoccupied with getting a nice car on a limited budget to impress girls. Both contend with jocks as bullies, have unenviable last names, and have admired particular girls for over a decade before being noticed back. Sam and Peter nonetheless seem predestined to win their respective loves in spite of all the handicaps. *Transformers'* re-application of the franchise's old tagline, "More than meets the eye," is also a little like the use of the *Spiderman* cartoon theme in the movies.

Star Trek: First Contact?

Transformers starts with exposition about a life-giving cube over which robots start a war. The cube later turns up on Earth. The eighth *Trek* film starts with the revelation that a life-assimilating cube, full of cyborgs, is coming to Earth to start a war. Also, the little Decepticon that turns into a boom box spouts the line "Oh, shit." (I thought that was supposed to be the movie's version of Soundwave but haven't found anything on the net to corroborate. Anyone know?) Funny thing to hear from a character that presumably doesn't shit, but it's still not the first time. Data leveled a like swear in *Star Trek 7*.

Batman?

Just in case the famous bat symbol on a searchlight didn't already make little enough sense, Bumblebee copies the trick by shining a beam skyward and projecting an Autobot

insignia on a cloud. Granted he'd be more likely to succeed in getting a discernible picture than police in the 1930s... but what's the point? The characters he's summoning are in outer space, not sitting by a window at Wayne Manor. Also, why are these symbols all over the cars in their vehicle form?

Herbie?

"Bumblebee's a Camaro!" It was a frequent outcry from purists who wanted to see the (relatively) little yellow guy as he was meant to be: a VW bug! The change was due to GM sponsoring the movie, necessitating all the Autobots' makes. Good thing, though, or *The Bumblebee Show* (as the movie might as well be named) would have looked a lot like the *Herbie* movies.

Short Circuit?

Clever stuff, that business with Bumblebee using the radio to communicate. However, the robot Number 5 from *Short Circuit* learned to speak by watching TV and so its interaction was peppered with media influence for a while.

Jurassic Park 2?

Was this meant as an homage? There was that cute bit in JP2 where the T-Rex, set loose in San Diego, was discovered by a young child who didn't know better than to be afraid of a dinosaur in the backyard. In *Transformers*, a

little girl is similarly unfazed when an Autobot lands in the swimming pool at her house. Another element of the JP scene, in which the dino eats the family dog, sort of turns up not long after when a transformer expresses a dislike for Sam's chihuahua.

Tank Girl?

When, at freaking last, some non-Bumblebee Autobots grace us with an appearance in their own movie, they aren't quite the tight-knit regiment we might have expected. They're unassuming, clumsy brutes who argue about protocol and romp around wrecking suburban yards. When their antics alternately scare and embarrass the protagonist, they remind me of the Rippers — those mutant kangaroo dudes from *Tank Girl*.

Galaxy Quest?

Like the JP2 comparison above, the scene in question here worked better in the first movie to have done something like it. *Galaxy Quest* had a bit with a teenaged computer nerd delayed in coming to the rescue during a life-or-death situation because his mother forces him to take out some garbage. The *Transformers* scene in which Sam hastily promises to finish some chores to distract his father from noticing the Autobots is very reminiscent.

The Matrix?

Morpheus took advantage of being in a VR program to make the war history he tells more interesting. Optimus Prime evidently doesn't have to be plugged in. He uses the same storytelling technique with holograms projected out of his eyes. As for influences from elsewhere in the trilogy, between the two freeway chases, I'll take the one from *Reloaded* any day. Also during the climactic conflict, Sam briefly gets

caught in a crater in the middle of the street. It looked a lot like Agent Smith's last stand.

Superman/Superman Returns?

"They can be a great people, Kal-El. They wish to be. They only lack the light to show the way. For this reason above all, their capacity for good, I have sent them you." -Jor-El.

"They're a young species. They've much to learn. But I've seen good in them." -Optimus Prime.

Men In Black?

A loveable, beyond-top-secret government agency, the MIB, took credit for a lot of modern technology (velcro, microwaves, etc.) and got funding by patenting alien gear. In *Transformers*, it's a much-detested black ops organization that made the technology possible by reverse engineering the robot they found, "M.B.E.1." A similar premise was also used in an episode of *Voyager* wherein it's stated that the modern age was made possible by a visitor from the distant future.

TMNT?

This last one's more for the coincidence file. The new Turtles movie had a distracting amount of CGI movement going on (of course, it was all CGI) and employed *Matrix* alumnus Laurence Fishburne, a strong voice actor, to narrate a paragraph towards the beginning. The new *Transformers* movie has arguably too much CGI and employed *Matrix* alumnus Hugo Weaving, a strong voice actor, to deliver... oh, not more than ten lines, I'd say. Furthermore, as the biggest, baddest Decepticon, Hugo's voice is distorted almost beyond recognizability. One wonders what the point was.

BUT... at least with all these kinda, maybe, could say they're rip-offs, *at least*

Michael Bay managed not to repeat himself, right? Maybe, except for...

Armageddon!

Besides the ham-handed (though humble) reference by the camera phone kid, there's another reminder of the earlier man-versus-space movie. Even though he'd probably cooperate with the black ops people and save the Earth anyway, Sam takes a time out to demand a few favors from the government, first. Bruce Willis's crew did the same thing in *Armageddon*, apparently unsatisfied with the job perk of everyone on the planet getting to go on living.

For all this, I bet there are some that I've missed. Comment and point them out, if you please.

Of course, there is one source this movie's meant to take inspiration from. Do fans feel the movie adequately reflected the spirit of...*Transformers*?

Join our crew:
We are looking for writers to cover local events, conventions, fan groups and the fannish scene in general. Contact Jean Martin and Chris Garcia at SFinSF@gmail.com

Faith of the Heroes: Religion in the ‘Verse

By Mike Smithwick
Contributing Writer

It has been said that once a year, the writers of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* would ask Gene Roddenberry if they could do a Christmas episode. And each time Gene would turn them down, saying that in *Star Trek*, mankind had moved beyond a need for religion. In Roddenberry’s humanistic and rational universe, man had proved that he needed no God. And whenever religion was referenced it was portrayed as merely the byproduct of a backwards and primitive culture.

Religion and science fiction have had an uneasy relationship. Roddenberry has been quoted as saying that “for most people, religion is nothing more than a substitute for a malfunctioning brain.” An attitude that seems increasingly common in this modern age.

Lazy authors avoid conflicts with their beliefs. Those with an agenda play down the positive elements of anything they might disagree with. Brilliant ones are not afraid to include those that might contradict their own deeply held beliefs. Fortunately, thanks to some of those brilliant writers, it is increasingly acceptable to speak of spirituality on a less than superficial plane. *Deep Space Nine* depicted the religion of the Bajorans as their source of strength needed to overthrow the Cardassian rule. In Arthur C. Clarke’s *Rendezvous with Rama*, a lead character

was a devout Catholic and his religion was a key motivator in his efforts to save the mysterious Rama probe. And *Battlestar Galactica*’s deeply spiritual content brings a maturity to religious discussions that is rarely seen in Hollywood.

For a man who has called himself a “very hard-line, angry atheist,” Joss Whedon treats religion in the *Firefly* universe with a refreshing, honest and sympathetic departure from the world of Jean-Luc Picard.

A great strength of *Firefly* is the cultural montage it presents. From the bilingual nature of its profanity, to its busy and cluttered street scenes, the ‘Verse constantly serves up a stew that is rich with diverse visual and cultural imagery. And as such, one would and should expect religion and its many facets to have some significant role in the story.

But Joss delivers much more than that. From the very first episode, religion is seen as an integral part of the lives of several characters, serving as motivator in one, a source of solace in another, an object of scorn in a third, and of confusion in a fourth.

In the very opening scenes of the series we see Malcolm Reynolds preparing for the final stages of the Battle of Serenity. He pulls out a crucifix from under his shirt, and closes his eyes while he kisses it. This is an act of a devout man, not a man of the humanistic rational worlds that are much more typical of science fiction shows.



Joss Whedon at the premiere of *Serenity*.

Photo by Jo Anslow, 2005 (used pursuant to Creative Commons [Attribution ShareAlike 2.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) (cc-by-sa-2.0) - some rights reserved)

Joss has admitted that he was fascinated by devotion and as a result makes his key character an object of that fascination.

Somehow Mal would eventually lose his faith. Not his belief in God, but merely that God was worthy of his devotion. His bitterness is clear. One can speculate that had the series continued we might have learned what took Mal from one point to the other.

Then there's Book, the character that Joss admitted he would most like to have as a friend. For a science fiction show, it is surprising that perhaps the most beloved and mysterious character also happens to be a Christian minister. And what is equally surprising is that his faith seems to be a very traditional one, not a New-Agey watered-down variant. Precious little is known about Book, save for some shadowy references to a disturbing past. But just as Mal fell away from God at some point, Book came to God. And in one sense both men are on similar yet opposing journeys. Mal, having been betrayed by his God, only wants to put faith in himself, his ship and his crew. Meanwhile Book, clearly having been betrayed by something in his past, now sees God as the only one worthy of faith.

When we first meet Book in the pilot episode, "Serenity," he's anxious to leave the sheltered confines of the abbey and see what the real world has become. But that has its drawbacks, and Book wonders if he's ready. In many ways the pilot is as much about his turbulent journey into reality as it is about our own revelation of the nature of Joss's universe. For we see it as he does: brutal, unforgiving and full of compromises. Likewise, believers of all

sorts daily face similar issues: when do you break the law? Stretch the truth? How far do you go to survive and when does luck end and faith take over?

Truly devout characters are uncommon in television. But in *Firefly*, both Book and Mal rise above mere curiosities as they are faced with frequent challenges to their beliefs.

Once again, in the pilot episode, Book comes face to face with a companion. A licensed one at that! At first it seems that Joss is setting us up for a typical Hollywood-style cheap shot at

Book needed Christianity; the Mudders needed Jaynianity.

Christian "prudishness." Yet instead of a tawdry laugh, Joss surprised us with a deeper response from the Shepherd, who looked at Inara less as a companion, but as much an outsider as he is. And as a result, they form a quick bond. When Book comes to the realization that he might actually be unprepared to face Mal's world, we are treated to one of the most profound scenes in the entire series: the preacher tearfully kneeling before the prostitute in an act of confession. And she in turn places her hand on his head in an act of blessing.

For "an angry atheist," Joss Whedon created a Christian character who exemplifies how Christians should carry themselves in this

world.

The pilot was not the only episode to deal with spiritual matters. In "Safe," for example, Joss treats us to an entirely different take on Christianity. After being kidnapped by some very religious hillfolk in search of a doctor, Simon defends the God of Book, recognizing the stark differences between two belief systems that initially flowed from the same well. As River is about to be burned at the stake for witchcraft (based on a misreading of a single verse from Exodus), he shouts: "If she dies tonight it won't be God's will that killed her. It will be you! Your lunacy and ignorance!" The writer here is making the remarkable implication that it might actually be possible for intelligent people to also believe in God. A true rarity in science fiction going back to the *Star Trek* model.

A couple of episodes later, Christianity is compared against an entirely different religion in "Jaynestown." At first the main and secondary stories seem to have little, if anything, in common. The crew finds a town that Jayne had briefly visited years before, only to discover that the townsfolk, called Mudders, have erected a statue to him for some unknown reason. Meanwhile back on Serenity, Book and River find themselves in discussions on the nature of faith versus reason.

But a deeper look reveals that the devotion to Jayne that had grown over the years, based merely on a single perceived act of unselfishness, became a grand myth so important to the town that Jayne's "second coming" sends many into spasms of near religious ecstasy. Eventually one of the "faithful" sacrifices his own life for that of their "savior."

Back onboard the ship, Book finds River tearing pages out of his Bible. “The Bible’s broken...doesn’t make sense...” she says. Book tries to clarify the nature of belief over what *makes sense*. “It’s not about making sense...it’s about faith. You don’t fix faith, River. It fixes you.” And in a wonderful visual metaphor for the entire struggle between religion and reason, we see Book and River in quite literally an act of tug-of-war with the pages she has just ripped out.

These stories dovetail neatly together at the end as Jayne and Mal are talking. The former is wondering why someone would be willing to take a bullet for *him*, of all people. Mal responds, “It ain’t about you, Jayne. It’s about what they need.” To which Jayne adds, “Don’t make no sense.” And so just as Book’s spirituality made no sense to River, the Mudders’ adoration for Jayne made no sense to him. But as Mal said, “It’s about what they need.” And he never questioned it, or ridiculed it. Just accepted it.

Book needed Christianity; the Mudders needed Jaynianity. Inara needed Buddhism. Mal needed his boat. Kaylee needed an ugly orange layercake dress and strawberries. And they all needed something to believe in.

While belief is a very strong theme in the entire series, it is even more so in the movie. Up until the time of the Big Damn Movie, Mal’s motivation was summed up in two words: keep flying.

But it wasn’t until seeing just how desperate the Alliance was to retrieve River that he finally rediscovered something a little bigger than either himself or his crew to believe in. Early on when they first reunite at Haven, Book

tells Mal that belief is the only thing that will help him through his troubles. Once again Mal brushes aside any notion of God’s willingness to help him.

Upon returning to Haven after The Operative’s brutal attack, Book repeats his entreaties. With his dying breath he urges Mal to “just believe. Whatever you have to.” Things now take a curious turn as we learn that The Operative is not just a hardened murderer, but is also himself a believer of some sort. As Book explained, The Operative is one who “believes hard!”

And it was The Operative’s unswerving and emotionless belief in the Alliance, in making a better world, in a strict edifice of honor that was his key motivator. Strangely, the abstraction called “love,” Simon’s motivation to help his sister and something that violated reason, had scarcely any role to play in The Operative’s belief system — except perhaps in the threat that it posed to what he believed. For love made no sense to him, and we fear what we don’t understand.

Both The Operative and Mal moved with belief. Belief is the force that pulls you from the front and pushes you from behind to get you to a place you might not even know you were headed towards.

Many terrible things in the world have been done in the name of one form of belief or another. So at first, contrary to what Book appears to be saying, one might assume that belief isn’t enough.

We have to wait until the film’s conclusion to finally see the difference between The Operative’s belief, “hard” as it was, and

that of both Book and Mal. Next to the newly restored Serenity, The Operative comes to say goodbye. We see that his belief structure has crumbled around him. Having himself learned that his Alliance, his force for a “better world,” his god of sorts was not infallible after all, he had nothing more to believe in. “I’m no longer their man,” he states matter-of-factly. And in referring to himself, he tells Mal, “There is nothing left to see.”

These three men all had a religious belief that pulled them from the front and pushed them from behind. While The Operative believed in a fallible system that eventually let him down, Book chose the infallible. And Mal? Well, he firmly straddles something in-between, wondering which is which.

In Carl Sagan’s book, *Contact*, SETI scientist Ellie Arroway stands astride reason in her search for proof of extraterrestrials while constantly being opposed by the New Age preacher Palmer Joss at every turn. Eventually they both come to the conclusion that their quests, starting at opposite extremes, have taken them toward the same goal: to touch the infinite. In *Firefly*, Mal’s goal is a little more constrained but no less meaningful to him: Not only to keep flying, but to at least have a *reason* to keep flying.

Religion can be a driver in a lifelong search for purpose. Mal is constantly asking, “How should we live? In freedom or tyranny? In comfort or effort? In love or hate?” These are many of the questions the religions of *Firefly* attempt to address. Have they been answered? Not really. But whatever journey we are on, the end result will hopefully be Serenity.

BASFA Minutes: Meetings 899-900

Meeting 899

October 22, 2007

Trey Haddad, President
Chris Garcia, Vice-President
Dave Gallaher, Treasurer
Galen Tripp, Sergeant at Arms
Barbara Johnson-Haddad, Secretary

Began 8:05 - with Chris missing the delicious Daleks made especially for him [that the rest of us proceeded to eat; nom nom nom!].

24 people attended.

We established a party jar.

Secretary's report: the minutes of meeting 898 were accepted as 'what?'

The Treasurer reported he left his information at home & he got the muzak turned down.

There was no VP - but the virtual VP report is that there's a new Drink Tank out and he wants submissions for the BASFA Times.

The President had nothing fannish to report & said 'Hi Cheryl!'

The Site Selection Committee reported that we'll be back at Coco's next week.

Announcements:

[evil] Kevin announced that Smashwolf is deeply invested in Odd Ball in Santa Cruz & he needs help desperately; he also announced that he brought a semi-corrected proof copy for Costume Con 26 to be perused.

Cheryl announced 'hello, I'm here', but only briefly because she'll be in Boston the next three Mondays & announced that Art Widner's 90th birthday is soon and she had a birthday card for him for us to sign.

Dave C would have liked to announce that the Cramps are playing at the Fillmore - but since they are NOT, that the Tiger Lilies are playing, Tuesday Oct 30, 7:30 at the Swedish American Hall on Market; there was a follow-on that the Tubes are playing on Oct 26 at the Brookdale Lodge.

[tall] Kevin announced that there are a stack of fanzines on the back table so feel free to take them.

Reviews:

Joe reviewed his free fall last week as great but the landing sucked [he cracked his acetabulum - the bone leading up to his hip joint].

[tall] Kevin reviewed Osaka as full of underground warrens - a maze of twisty passages, almost all alike & worth full price; reviewed onomokiyaki [sp?] as pretty good, actually & reviewed various British programs he's been watching as diverse - that 'Mastermind' is really, really hard and they

play for a crystal cup & 'Have I got New for You' is topical political humor.

Cheryl reviewed FinnCon and Finland as good fun - 5,000 anime fans and a few hundred science fiction fans having fun & reviewed Eurocon in Denmark as an entertaining thing - that most attendees do not speak a common language but have English as a 2nd or 3rd language, so the convention's business was done in English; plus that England is even colder and wetter than usual.

Joni reviewed the rental cars she has been having to use as that the minivan was the best of the lot.

Glen reviewed the Japanese as the kindest people in the entire world, but that when he lost his laptop in Kyoto it was recovered completely intact [including all papers and money therein] & all concerned refused rewards, so they are just the BEST people; he also rated the Japanese train system as awesome.

Dave C reviewed 'Broken Government' by John Dean as dry but good reading, worth full price.

Adrienne reviewed 'Elizabeth the Golden Age' as great costumes, good production values, but it had a horrible, pathetic script that was both boring and a terrible re-writing of history - not recommended; and she reviewed the 'Most Haunted' live broadcast as fun until stinky Comcast switched away from it to put the

Shopping Channel on there at midnight [before the broadcast was over].

Mike reviewed 'SR2 Gallery, Pop Om Art Show' as worth full price because it was free & reviewed paperback book protectors [obtained at www.hardbacker.com] as very useful and worth full price.

Stellan reviewed his blinky/flashy shirt as fun, they can be obtained at sites like thinkgeek.com and well worth being a free sponsor hand-out at the Wearable Computer Conference he attended & reviewed the Smithsonian Halsey Air & Space annex as enormous, very impressive and worth free entry.

Trey reviewed 'Rendition' as very realistic, with fine acting, but it left him feeling depressed and it was worth matinee to him.

Then we auctioned off snacks for \$3.00; books for \$0.25; \$0.25; \$0.25; \$1.00; \$0.25; a SiliCon program book for \$0.25; Vampire Chardonnay for \$5.00; a zippered Costco bag with stuff for \$0.25; a poster and books for \$0.25 & a poster and books for \$0.25.

We adjourned at 9:52.

And the rumor of the week was that 'Daleks taste just like chicken.'

Meeting 900

October 29, 2007

Trey Haddad, President

Chris Garcia, Vice-President
Dave Gallaher, Treasurer
Galen Tripp, Sergeant at Arms
Barbara Johnson-Haddad, Secretary

Began 8:03 - with relief.

30 people attended.

We established a party jar.

Secretary's report: the minutes of meeting 899 were accepted as 'hey, what'd I miss?'

There was no Treasurer or Treasurer's report.

VP report is that there's a new Drink Tank and SF/SF out and he's still working on the BASFA Times & his corset issue.

The President had nothing fannish to report.

The Site Selection Committee reported by proxy that we'll be at Coco's for the next THREE weeks.

Announcements:

[evil] Kevin announced that Sandra Childress & Jim Briggs were at the epicenter of the Witch fire but that their house and vineyard survived; there were follow-ons: that Chris's friend 'M' lost one of her houses; that Jan Tate and John Rogers did lose their house.

Glen announced that on Hallowe'en will be 'Plan 98.5 from Outer Space.'

Lynn announced that she lost her old day job, got

a new day job and will be doing a professional job of MCing at Laughtrack Live in Stockton on Nov 17.

Adrienne announced that a friend of hers has opened a shop in Citrus Heights called 'The Gilded Bat' & offers books and various other things [and there were some follow-ons, including that some of the owners have offered wares at conventions before, so they are neat fannish folk].

[tall] Kevin announced that ConStruction will be at the Holiday Inn on North 1st Street, Nov 9-11 & the evening of the 9th will have a dessert social, while the SJ Visitor's Bureau will host a brunch on Sunday morning; \$25 until Wednesday - and \$35 at the door; check the www.sfsfc.org website.

Chris announced that the Vintage Computer Festival is Saturday & Sunday from 10am till 6pm & will have him running a vintage film festival therein at the Computer History museum for \$15 ['and will feature folks in their vintage clothing that has been unchanged since the 60s'].

Reviews:

Joe reviewed 'Odyssey 5' on replay on the SciFi channel as surprisingly good, is on Friday nights & that HDTV makes 'Stargate Atlantis' watchable.

Glen reviewed an ad for 'Survivor China' as 'so why aren't they working in the factories?'

Carole reviewed the Ohio Valley Filk Festival as she and Bill had fun there.

Andy reviewed a half-day trip to Yaoicon at the San Mateo Marriott as they were shoehorned into the hotel again & it was a strange little world - that they closed Registration at 5pm, all in all worth the \$35 paid.

[evil] Kevin reviewed the Cedar Mountain Winery as they were the first ones there in costume & the wine was yummy as usual & they got some perks [since they were in costume] & it was worth full price [free] & he reviewed the Almaden Research Center's haunted house as it took 3 days to assemble & was then open for 2 1/2 hours & will be torn down tomorrow - as always worth full price [even if he had to be a pirate].

Harold reviewed 'The Kingdom' as loud - with lots of explosions and plot holes, worth bargain matinee & reviewed 'Michael Clayton' as fantasy - lawyers with consciences, also worth bargain matinee; reviewed 'Gone Baby Gone' as he defied anyone to find a hero in that movie, it was not cheerful at all; & reviewed Meteor Crater as a spectacular hole in the ground & reviewed the Verde Canyon Railroad as it covers 40 miles in 4 hours & worth the \$80 he paid.

I reviewed 'Bioshock' - a completely gorgeous and glorious game for the Xbox 360 - and completely worth buying an Xbox 360 to play it on.

Bill reviewed Skybus Airlines as they have



young staff that works cheap, the seats aren't too cramped and everything costs extra - worth the price for discount tickets.

[tall] Kevin reviewed more Japan - as they started in Osaka and traveled by rail to the far end of Honshu, going thru Tokyo [doing 400 miles in 2 hours], that the Tokyo station is a vast, huge warren & the rail trip is just amazing.

Adrienne reviewed new calendars as she found one that was worth full price now - the 'Haunted Realm.'

Chris reviewed an anthology, 'Dangerous Games' as very interesting & reviewed YouTube

as his friend ['or is it your pusher', Andy asked] & he reviewed that 'Captain Carrot' has returned - and is absolutely genius - and the comic that will save all comics.

Then we birthday auctioned off me [Barbara] to Trey for \$26.00 & auctioned off a bag of F&SF magazines for \$4.00; a bag of books for \$5.00 & more books for \$0.25; \$0.25; \$1.00; \$0.50; \$2.00; \$7.00; \$1.50; \$1.50; a CD for \$2.50; & a bottle of Vampire Merlot for \$6.50.

We adjourned at 10:04.

And the rumor of the week was that '25 cents for Chris.'

Bay Area Fannish Calendar

Life is complicated; putting on an event is even more so. Please check before attending, as events are sometimes cancelled or times and locations changed.

New listings are in red.

Ongoing events are toward the back.

Wednesday, November 7

Luna Philosophie: Viewpoints

Yahoo Brickhouse

500 3rd Street

San Francisco

colab.arc.nasa.gov/node/75

6-8 p.m.

Free, reservations recommended

Creon Levit of the NASA Advanced

Supercomputing Division will discuss

Viewpoints, a new open-source, cross-platform graphical data-mining tool. Luna Philosophie is a regular series of scientific talks sponsored by NASA CoLab.

Wednesday, November 7

Author: Steve Erickson

The Booksmith

1644 Haight Street

San Francisco

www.booksmith.com

7 p.m.

Free

Thursday, November 8

Return of Thrillville's Shatfest: Incubus (1965)

Cerrito Speakeasy Theater

10070 San Pablo Avenue

El Cerrito

www.thrillville.net

9:15 p.m.

\$8

Thrillville salutes William Shatner with a screening of his 1965 devil-worshipping cult classic in Esperanto. Special appearance by the Devil-ettes.

Thursday, November 8

Crazy Rays: Science Fiction and the Avant Garde

Roxie Cinema

3117 16th Street

San Francisco

www.sfcinematheque.org

7 p.m.: Anne McGuire

9:30 p.m.: Craig Baldwin and Ximena Cuevas

Presented by the SF Cinematheque, a series of riffs on the intersection of science fiction and experimental cinema, curated by Ed Halter.

Thursday-Sunday, November 8-11

San Francisco International Animation Festival

Embarcadero Cinema

One Embarcadero Center

San Francisco

See schedule at the San Francisco Film Society's website: www.sffs.org.

November 8-17

Shocktoberfest: Maker of Monsters

The Hypnodrome

575 10th Street

San Francisco

www.thrillpeddlers.com

Thurs, Fri & Sat at 8 p.m.

\$20

A series of shocking one-act plays drawn from or inspired by the Theatre du Grand Guignol.

Friday-Sunday, November 9-11

Rudy Rucker Exhibition

Live Worms Gallery

1345 Grant Avenue

San Francisco

www.rudyrucker.com/blog

Free

Opening night party on Friday November 9th from 7-11 p.m. Rudy and guest Kage Baker will be doing readings on Saturday from 4-6 p.m.

Saturday, November 10

BeefBowl Anime

Albany Library

1247 Marin Avenue

Albany

12:15-4:15 p.m.

Free
See the screening list at beefbowl.org.

Saturday, November 10

Author: John Levitt
Borderlands Books
866 Valencia Street
San Francisco
www.borderlands-books.com
3 p.m.
Free

Saturday, November 10

Other Magazine Presents
Writers With Drinks
The Make Out Room
3225 22nd Street
San Francisco
www.writerswithdrinks.com
7:30 p.m.
\$3-\$5 sliding scale
With Kage Baker, Jessy Randall, Inga Muscio,
James Calder, Ellery Urquhart, and Samhita
Mukhopadhyay.

Saturday, November 10

Warp 11
Last Day Saloon
120 Fifth Street
Santa Rosa
www.warp11.com
9:30 p.m.

Send your items for inclusion in our
calendar section to:
SFinSF@gmail.com

Sacramento's Star Trek-themed rock band
performs immediately following the "101.7 FM
The Fox" Comedy Night. Ages 21+.

Saturday and Sunday, November 10-11

JTAF 5
Fort Mason Center
Marina & Buchanan Streets
San Francisco
www.project760.net/jtaf/
\$35
The 5th Japan Town Anime Festival (which will
apparently be the last, according to the group's
web site) relocates this year from Japan Center
to Fort Mason Center.

Saturday and Sunday, November 10-11

ConStruction 2007
Holiday Inn
1740 North First Street
San Jose
www.sfsfc.org/construction.php
\$35
A conference about organizing science fiction,
fantasy, horror, anime, and related conventions
with a focus on Northern California and the SF
Bay Area.

Saturday and Sunday, November 10-11

Carnival of Stars
Centennial Hall
22292 Foothill Blvd.
Hayward
www.carnivalofstars.com
\$12
A belly dance and comic book convention, with
dance workshops, cartoonists Hal Robins, Mark

Bode and others, famous belly dancers, crafts,
food.

Sunday, November 11

Second Annual Mob of Waldos
Ferry Building Plaza
Foot of Market Street
San Francisco
12 noon
Free
All those interested in re-creating the most
difficult *Where's Waldo?* puzzle ever are invited
to show up at the Ferry Building at noon
dressed in a red- and white-striped shirt and
blue pants.

Sunday, November 11

Bad Movie Night: Electric Dreams (1984)
The Dark Room Theatre
2263 Mission Street
San Francisco
www.darkroomsf.com
8 p.m.
\$5
The Dark Room's resident sharp wits skewer
another bad flick.

Monday, November 12

Battlestar Galactica: Razor (2007)
Cinearts Santana Row 6
3088 Olsen Drive
San Jose
Cinemark Theater San Mateo Downtown
320 East 2nd Avenue
San Mateo
Mountain View Cinemas 16
1500 N. Shoreline Blvd

Mountain View
San Rafael Northgate 15
7000 Northgate Drive
San Rafael
Walnut Creek 14
1201 Locust Street
Walnut Creek
7 and 10 p.m.
Free advance screening of a new *Battlestar Galactica* TV movie. Pre-register at www.battlestarevent.com.

Tuesday, November 13

Author: Rudy Rucker
The Booksmith
1644 Haight Street
San Francisco
www.booksmith.com
7 p.m.
Free

Tuesday, November 13

Café Scientifique: Migraine, Stress and Peanut M&Ms
International Building
SRI
Middlefield Road at Ringwood
Menlo Park
www.cafescisv.org
6-7:30 p.m.
Free
A discussion with neurologist and geneticist Steve Peroutka.

Tuesday, November 13

Star Trek: The Menagerie
Bay Street 16, Emeryville

Deer Valley Stadium 16, Antioch
Eastridge 15, San Jose
Fairfield Stadium 16, Fairfield
Hacienda Crossings Stadium 20, Dublin
Natomas Marketplace Stadium 16, Sacramento
Saratoga 14, San Jose
[www.fathomevents.com//details.aspx?eventid=685](http://www.fathomevents.com/details.aspx?eventid=685)
7:30 p.m.

A special one-time theatrical screening of the Hugo award-winning episode “The Menagerie,” part of the nationwide promotion for the digitally re-mastered *Star Trek: The Original Series* DVD Collection.

Wednesday, November 14

Ask a Scientist: Synesthesia
Axis Cafe
1201 8th Street
San Francisco
www.askascientistsf.com
7 p.m.

Free
How does violin music smell? UC Berkeley’s Lynn Robertson will tell us about the current research on this intriguing condition.

Wednesday, November 14

The Eyes of Laura Mars (1978)
Castro Theatre
429 Castro Street
San Francisco
www.castrotheatre.com
\$9
Part of the Castro’s “Filmed in Discovision” series.

Thursday, November 15

Serenity (2005)
Parkway Speakeasy Theater
1834 Park Blvd.
Oakland
www.parkway-speakeasy.com
9:15 p.m.
\$6

Saturday, November 17

SF in SF: Karen Joy Fowler and Molly Gloss
Preview Room
Variety Children’s Charity
582 Market Street
San Francisco
www.sfinsf.org
7 p.m.
Free
SF in SF is a regular series of sci fi author readings with discussion and book signing after, and a clever name. Cash bar opens at 6:30.

Sunday, November 18

Bad Movie Night: Hackers (1995)
The Dark Room Theatre
2263 Mission Street
San Francisco
www.darkroomsf.com
8 p.m.
\$5
The Dark Room’s resident sharp wits skewer another bad flick.

Sunday, November 18

The Banquet (2006)
Castro Theatre
429 Castro Street

San Francisco

www.eastraordinary-cinema.com

7 p.m.

\$9

Bay Area premiere of the award-winning Hong Kong film, "a loose adaptation of *Hamlet* with a kung-fu twist." Also screening are three North American premieres from Hong Kong: *Invisible Target*, *Confession of Pain* and *Flashpoint*. Part of the 10th Annual San Francisco Asian Film Festival.

November 23-December 23

Dickens Christmas Fair

Exhibition Hall

The Cow Palace

Daly City

www.dickensfair.com

11 a.m.-7 p.m.

\$22

An appallingly exciting experience of no ordinary cleverness. Victorian London opens for business the Friday after Thanksgiving and continues weekends through Dec. 23 with gifts, food, costumes, dance parties, etc.

Sunday, November 25

Bad Movie Night: The Net (1995)

The Dark Room Theatre

2263 Mission Street

San Francisco

www.darkroomsf.com

8 p.m.

\$5

The Dark Room's resident sharp wits skewer another bad flick.

Tuesday, November 27

Medieval Christmas Songs

Society for Creative Anachronism Event

Round Table Pizza

3567 Geary Boulevard

San Francisco

www.cloondara.org

7 p.m.

Lady Jehanne de Wodeford will teach period Christmas carols at the Shire of Cloondara's November Arts and Science Session.

Friday, November 30

Blade Runner: The Final Cut (2007)

Embarcadero Cinema

One Embarcadero Center

San Francisco

bladerunnerthemovie.warnerbros.com

The new version slated for release on DVD in December gets an early big screen preview at selected theaters around the country.

Friday-Sunday, November 30-December 2

An Ardenwood Christmas

Ardenwood Historic Farm

34600 Ardenwood Blvd.

Fremont

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

\$8

Celebrate the holidays in Victorian style: Visit the decorated Patterson House, sing Christmas carols, meet Father Christmas.

Saturday, December 1

Super Toy, Comic & Record Show

Santa Clara County Fairgrounds

344 Tully Road

San Jose

www.timetunneltoys.com

11 a.m.-4 p.m.

\$5 (early bird 9 a.m. \$15)

Tue 4 Dec 2007,

Saturday, December 1

Bay Area Games Day

Los Altos Public Library

13 S. San Antonio Road

Los Altos

games.groups.yahoo.com/group/gamesday/

10 a.m.-11 p.m.

\$1

Regular event featuring German-style strategy boardgames like Settlers of Catan, Avalon Hill-type multiplayer games, lots of card games, and historical board wargames.

Saturday, December 1

Santa Arrives by Helicopter

Hiller Aviation Museum

601 Skyway Road

San Carlos

www.hiller.org

10 a.m.-noon

Free

Tuesday, December 4

Author: James Gurney

The Booksmith

1644 Haight Street

San Francisco

www.booksmith.com

7 p.m.

Free

Sunday, December 9*Sac-Con*

Scottish Rite Center

6151 H Street

Sacramento

www.sacramentocomics.com

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

\$6

Regular comic, toy and anime show, featuring game tournaments, cosplay contest, more.

Sunday, December 9*Ask a Scientist's Holiday Puzzle Party*

The Bazaar Café

5927 California Street

San Francisco

www.askscientistsf.com

7 p.m.

Free

Start the holiday season with a rollicking math and logic puzzle competition.

Tuesday, December 11*Author: Lemony Snicket*

The Booksmith

1644 Haight Street

San Francisco

www.booksmith.com

Time TBA

Free

Wednesday, December 12*Ask a Scientist: The Dark Side of the Universe*

Axis Cafe

1201 8th Street

San Francisco

www.askscientistsf.com

7 p.m.

Free

Stanford physics professor Patricia Burchat talks about dark matter and dark energy.

Thursday, December 13*Crazy Rays: Science Fiction and the Avant Garde*

Roxie Cinema

3117 16th Street

San Francisco

www.sfcinematheque.org

7 p.m.: James Fotopoulos and Leah Gilliam

9:30 p.m.: Victor Faccinto and James June

Schneider

Presented by the SF Cinematheque, a series of riffs on the intersection of science fiction and experimental cinema, curated by Ed Halter.

Monday, December 31*New Year's Eve Ball with**Paul Price's Society Orchestra*

St. Mark's Hall

600 Colorado Avenue

Palo Alto

www.paulpriceorchestra.com/NYE07.html

8:30 p.m.

\$25

Ring in the new year dancing to authentic arrangements of vintage music. Modern or vintage evening wear (any era: Regency, Victorian, Edwardian, Jazz Age, Swing era, etc.).

Friday-Sunday, January 4-6*Kingdom of the West's Twelfth Night Coronation Society for Creative Anachronism Event*

Doubletree Hotel

2050 Gateway Place

San Jose

www.thewestermark.org/12thnight.html

\$20 in advance (by November 15), \$25 at the door

Saturday, January 5*Victorian Twelfth Night Ball*

PEERS Event

Masonic Lodge

100 North Ellsworth

San Mateo

www.peers.org

\$15 in advance (by December 29), \$20 at the door.

A.k.a. The Dickens Fair Reunion Ball. Dance Lesson at 7 p.m., dancing begins at 8.

Tuesday, January 8*Café Scientifique: Climate Change and Global Security*

International Building

SRI

Middlefield Road at Ringwood

Menlo Park

www.cafescisv.org

6-7:30 p.m.

Free

A talk by consultant and futurist Peter Schwartz.

Tuesday, January 8*Author: Todd McCaffrey*

The Booksmith

1644 Haight Street

San Francisco

www.booksmith.com

Time TBA

Free

Thursday, January 10

Thrillville's Bat-Tastic Bat-Show: Batman (1966)

Parkway Speakeasy Theater

1834 Park Blvd.

Oakland

www.thrillville.net

9:15 p.m.

\$8

The fabulously freaky feature film version of the 60s TV series, starring Adam West and Burt Ward. Special appearance by Kitten on the Keys.

Friday-Sunday, January 11-13

Sac-Anime

Scottish Rite Center

6151 H Street

Sacramento

www.sacanime.com

\$20

Anime convention featuring viewing room, manga contest, game tournaments, dealers' room, more.

Wednesday, January 16

Ask a Scientist: Where Did Language Come From?

Axis Cafe

1201 8th Street

San Francisco

www.askascientistsf.com

7 p.m.

Free

A talk by Terrence Deacon, Professor of Biological Anthropology and Linguistics at UC Berkeley.

January 24-28

Further Confusion

Doubletree Hotel

2050 Gateway Place

San Jose

www.furtherconfusion.org

\$40 in advance (through December 30)

10th Anniversary Edition of the Bay Area's major Furry con is themed "The Fur East."

Panels, art show, dealer's room, costume contests, more.

Saturday, February 2

Le Mardi Gras des Vampires

PEERS Event

Masonic Lodge

100 North Ellsworth

San Mateo

www.peers.org

\$15 in advance (by January 26), \$20 at the door.

New Orleans' most amusing host, M. Lestat de Lioncourt, invites you to a joyous Mardi Gras Ball. Dance lesson at 7 p.m., dancing begins at 8.

Thursday, February 14

Thrillville's Giant Valentine's Show:

Konga (1961) and Reptilicus (1961)

Cerrito Speakeasy Theater

10070 San Pablo Avenue

El Cerrito

www.thrillville.net

7:30 p.m.

\$10

Featuring Mr. Lobo and the Queen of Trash in person.

Friday-Sunday, February 15-17

DunDraCon

San Ramon Marriott

2600 Bishop Drive

San Ramon

www.dundracon.com

Annual gaming convention returns to San Ramon.

Friday-Monday, February 15-18

Pantheacon

Doubletree Hotel

2050 Gateway Place

San Jose

www.ancientways.com

\$65 in advance (until January 15), \$75 at the door

Annual Pagan gathering with workshops, rituals, drumming, dancing, and crafts.

Friday-Sunday, February 22-24

WonderCon

Moscone Center South

747 Howard Street

San Francisco

www.comic-con.org/wc/

Comics and media con that seems to get bigger every year. Panels, dealers, summer movie previews, costume contest, more.

Saturday, March 1

Pride and Prejudice Ball

PEERS Event
www.peers.org
Details to follow.

Friday-Sunday, March 7-9

Consonance

Crowne Plaza Silicon Valley
777 Bellew Drive
Milpitas

\$50 at the door (\$45 until February 22)

www.consonance.org

The Bay Area's annual filk convention returns.

Sunday, March 9

Sac-Con

Scottish Rite Center

6151 H Street

Sacramento

www.sacramentocomics.com

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

\$6

Regular comic, toy and anime show, featuring
game tournaments, cosplay contest, more.

Saturday, April 5

The Royal Debutante Ball

PEERS Event

www.peers.org

Details to follow.

Friday-Monday, April 25-28

CostumeCon 26

Doubletree Hotel

2050 Gateway Place

San Jose

www.cc26.info

\$85 in advance (through December 31, 2007)

CostumeCon will be coming to Silicon Valley
in 2008. Details to follow.

Saturday, May 3

Chicago Speakeasy Ball

PEERS Event

www.peers.org

Details to follow.

Friday-Monday, May 23-26

BayCon

Hyatt Regency Santa Clara

5101 Great America Parkway

Santa Clara

www.baycon.org/2008

\$50 in advance

Northern California's largest annual general
SF convention is on the move again. Diverse
panels, dealer's room, art show, masquerade,
anime room, hall costumes, gaming, much
more.

Friday-Monday, May 23-26

FanimeCon

San Jose Convention Center

435 South Market Street

San Jose

www.fanime.com

The Bay Area's largest annual anime
convention returns. Dealer's room, panels,
costume contest, J-pop concert, more.

Saturday, June 7

Gone with the Wind Ball

PEERS Event

www.peers.org

Details to follow.

Saturday, July 5

The Emerald City Ball

PEERS Event

www.peers.org

Details to follow.

Ongoing:

Daily

San Francisco Ghost Hunt Walking Tour

Begins: Queen Anne Hotel

1590 Sutter at Octavia

San Francisco

www.sfgghosthunt.com

7 p.m. – 10 p.m.

\$20

Sundays

Sakramento Anime Society

Rancho Cordova Library

9845 Folsom Boulevard

Rancho Cordova

3-7 p.m.

Meets every Sunday to watch old and new
anime and anime music videos, play collectible
card games, practice artwork and make AMVs.

Mondays

Bay Area Science Fiction Association

Currently looking for a new regular meeting
location. Check the website for details.

www.basfa.org

8 p.m.

Free

Mondays

Dukefish

Jake's of Sunnyvale
174 E. Fremont Avenue
Sunnyvale
8 p.m.

Dukefish is a bunch of people who get together to play board games and, sometimes, bridge every week.

Mondays and Wednesdays

Silicon Valley Boardgamers

Mountain View Community Center
201 S. Rengstorff Avenue
Mountain View
www.davekohr.users.sonic.net/svb/
6:30 p.m.
\$2

Group meets regularly to play mostly German-style strategy boardgames such as Settlers of Catan; also multiplayer Avalon Hill-style, historical wargames, and others.

Wednesdays

Bay Area Role-Playing Society

Go-Getter's Pizza
1489 Beach Park Boulevard
Foster City
www.BayRPS.com
6 p.m.-10 p.m.

Hosts a weekly game night. For club and game night details email GM@BayRPS.com.

Wednesdays

East Bay Strategy Games Club

EndGame
921 Washington

Oakland

www.michaeldashow.com/eastbaystrategy/home.html
7:30 p.m.-11 p.m.
Free

Fridays

SF Games

Muddy's Coffeehouse
1304 Valencia Street
San Francisco
vax.hanford.org/dk/games
7 p.m. to midnight
Free

SF Games is a collective name for a bunch of people who get together and play board games and card games every week. Also has a regular cards night at Atlas Café, 20th and Alabama Streets, Tuesday nights from 6:30-10:00.

Fridays-Mondays

Haunted Haight Walking Tour

Meets at Coffee To The People
1206 Masonic Avenue
San Francisco
www.hauntedhaight.com
7 p.m.-9 p.m.
\$20
Reservations required.

Fridays and Saturdays

Vampire Walking Tour

Meets corner of California and Taylor
San Francisco
www.sfvampiretour.com
8 p.m.
\$20

Led by Mina Harker. Tour is cancelled if there is heavy rain.

Saturdays

Rocky Horror Picture Show

Parkway Speakeasy Theater
1834 Park Blvd.
Oakland
www.parkway-speakeasy.com
Midnight
\$7

Barely Legal Productions presents the classic midnight movie every Saturday night. No one under 17 admitted.

Biweekly

PenSFA Party

The Peninsula Science Fantasy Association meets every two weeks for a party at the home of one of their members. They also host parties at local conventions. Email commander@pensfa.org for information on attending.
PenSFA standard party rules: bring something edible or drinkable to share, or pay the host \$2. Don't smoke in the house without checking with the host first. Normal start time is 8 p.m. but may vary depending on the host.

Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers' Group

Borderlands Books
866 Valencia Street
San Francisco
Meets the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 6 pm. Contact Jade Livingston at sfscifi@yahoo.com for more information.

Monthly

Dorkbot-SF

Free, donations welcome

www.dorkbot.org/dorkbotsf/

Dorkbot hosts regular forums for artists, designers, engineers, students, and other people doing strange things with electricity.

Fantastic Frontiers

www.freewebs.com/fantasticfrontiers/

Social club for Sacramento County sci fi/fantasy fans usually meets the second Saturday of the month. Check website for meeting times and locations.

Foothill Anime

Building 5015, Foothill College

Los Altos Hills

Free

Monthly event where people can get together to watch anime and meet like minded others. Usually meets the first Sunday of every month at noon.

Legion of Rassilon

Carl's Junior

2551 N. First Street

San Jose

www.legionofrassilon.org

7:30 p.m.

Free

Doctor Who fan group usually meets the fourth Friday of the month: Episodes of *Doctor Who*, news, discussion of recent movies, and a raffle.

No-Name Anime

Saratoga Library

13650 Saratoga Avenue

Saratoga

www.nnanime.com

Free

Anime screenings usually take place on the second Saturday of the month.

SF Browncoats

Cafe Murano

1777 Steiner Street

San Francisco

www.sfbrowncoats.com

Noon

Free

SF Firefly/Serenity fans usually meet up on the second Saturday of the month.

SF/SF Meetup

Mysterious Future Bookstore

531 Fifth Street

Santa Rosa

scifi.meetup.com/348/

Regular meetup for North Bay fans on the second Sunday of the month.

Silicon Gulch Browncoats

Various locations (see website for details)

www.silicongulchbrowncoats.org

Noon - 2 p.m.

Free

Silicon Valley fans of *Firefly/Serenity* meet up on the first Saturday of the month.

Tangential Conjectures: The Science Fiction Book Club

Books Inc.

301 Castro Street

Mountain View

650-428-1234

7:30 p.m.

Free

Generally meets the third Thursday of the month.

USS Augusta Ada

Round Table Pizza

3567 Geary Blvd.

San Francisco

trek.starshine.org

1 p.m.

Free

Augusta Ada is both a chapter of Starfleet International and a Linux and *BSD user group. Usually meets the fourth Saturday of every month.

USS Defiance

Round Table Pizza

1566 Howe Ave.

Sacramento

www.ussdefiance.org

7 p.m.

Free

Star Trek fan group meets the third Friday of the month.

Veritech Fighter Command ONE-THREE

Round Table Pizza

4403 Elkhorn Blvd

Sacramento

916-338-2300

Anime/cosplay group usually meets the last Saturday of the month at 1800 hours.