



Photo Credit Matthew Yenkala

Cool Kids Heat Up at Bubble Bobble Rave Scene

by Matthew Yenkala

Yes, Virginia, there's still a rave scene.

While one could argue that its furthest roots lie in the psychedelic 60s countercultural "happenings" (which gave birth to bands such as Pink Floyd and The Velvet Underground, as well as some of the earliest electronic music), the modern Rave culture can be definitively traced to England in the mid-80s. Of course, it was very quickly imported all over the world, including and especially stateside. (Here, it quickly fused with the late 80s/early 90s "Club Kid" scene which was already rising in parallel, perhaps most infamously documented in the film "Party Monster" and its source book, "Disco Bloodbath").

But regardless of year, venue or origin, the recipe

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Preview of the 2013 Phoenix Film Festival

By Hal C F Astell



Photo Credit U.S. Dramatic

Twelve months pass so quickly! April means the return of the Phoenix Film Festival to the Cine Capri at Harkins Scottsdale 101. This year will be the 13th annual event and it aims to reach more than the 23,000 film fans who enjoyed such great selections last year as Kurt Kuenne's outstanding Shuffle, which won for both Best Picture and Best Director in 2012.

This year's festival opens on Thursday, 4th April with the Arizona premiere of The Spectacular Now, a Sundance favourite starring Miles Teller from Footloose and Shailene Woodley from The Descendants. Director James Ponsoldt will introduce the film in person and stay on hand for a question and answer session afterwards.

Beyond the movies themselves, which you'll get to see before they even start theatrical runs, let alone make it to DVD or Netflix, these Q&As are the best reason to attend this or any film festival. You'll never get a better chance to get close to filmmakers from all levels, from college kids just starting out on the

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Interview with New Arizona Author, T.M. Williams

Interviewed by PJ Hultstrand

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - Will be a participant at LepreCon 39, 2013:

I'm originally from Los Angeles and have lived in Arizona for 8 years. I am the proud mom of a 4 year old boy named Jackson. My husband, Larry, and I love listening to Coast to Coast AM, the radio show that talks about ancient aliens, ghosts, etc. I was first introduced to the ancient alien theory about 10 years ago when my husband gave me the book Rule by Secrecy. I've been sort of obsessed ever since.

I've said a few times that I'm not a sci-fi geek but friends continuously point out that I went to the Star Trek convention dressed in the medical uniform and threw a tribble to Brent Spinner. (true story) We spend our nights watching reruns of Next Generation and have seen Star Wars dozens of times. I read several books a week and always lean towards paranormal, young adult, fantasy, dystopia, and suspense. I don't know if I would call myself a sci-fi geek, but I'm definitely a sci-fi lover.

I think you can see that in my writing as Bohemian Grove isn't overly science-fiction besides that it's based on the ancient alien theory.

This interview is available in its entirety on KWOD Radio:

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/kwodradio/2013/03/13/tm-williams-is-the-accidental-writer-with-this-sf-thriller>

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PJ: What compelled you to write your first book?

T.M.: It happened by accident. Which is why I've been sort of pegged as the accidental writer. I was taking a bath listening to a song (Counting Crows, Colorblind) and this idea of a lady sitting at her dining room table, drinking a glass of wine, and contemplating. I immediately wrote that thought down that night and 4 months later I had my first book, Bohemian Grove.

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Endless White Rabbits at the Endless Wonderland Party - Find more on Page 13

FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR'S DESK

by PJ Hultstrand

Back when I was in Jr. High in Mesa, Arizona, I was turned onto writing from my English teacher who had shown an interest in the short story science-fiction thriller I wrote for extra credit. From her persuasion, I entered the story into a library sci-fi literary magazine and was accepted for publishing.

Now you would think that would be the end of the story here, because obviously I had found my love for writing from that small opportunity in that sci-fi magazine. While I had gone to college, worked on the college newspaper, and got a minor in journalism, I had also developed more than a love for writing. I had also secretly wanted to be a publisher and/or an editor of a science-fiction/fantasy publication.

It has taken many years of graphic design experience and writing to finally get both secret wishes realized. Over the last six years, I have been helping other writers make their dreams come true by helping to get into print over sixty books, either as their publisher or through my publishing services. And the secret desire to become the editor of a science-fiction/fantasy publication has now been realized when I had accepted the position of Managing Editor for the 22-year old ConNotations NewsZine and had seen the failing newspaper come back to life. Now, in 2013, I have taken this experience to a brand new convention and fan newspaper, The WOD, which will be distributed throughout the country and into other nations.

I am just turning fifty this year and am sure to find new goals and passions to carry me through many more years. To stop creating and reinventing myself would mean certain death of my soul. To say you have just one passion in life, to me, is selling yourself short.

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10. Because we all like the smell of real ink on paper – gives us a warm fuzzy feeling of comfort.
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**FIND THE ADVERTISING RATES, SIZES AND
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The WOD News Staff

Managing Editor: PJ Hultstrand

Business Manager & Web Administrator: Donald Jacques

Distribution Manager: Matthew Yenkala

Columnists: Matthew Yenkala, PJ Hultstrand, Michael Bradley, Michael D'Ambrosio, Hal C F Astell

Book Reviewers: Jeffrey Lu, Jean Goddin, Hop David, Michael Bradley

Staff Writers: Donald Jacques, Tasha McEntire

Photography: Allon-y Video+Photo - Tasha McEntire, Chet Shupe

Layout & Design: Patti Hultstrand

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

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Submission Info: Writers and artists are encouraged to submit work for publication. While we cannot pay you for your efforts your work will be seen by fans across the Southwest and the country. You will retain the copyright to your work for future publication. To submit your work or for more information please write to: the WOD Magazine 6020 N. 77 Place, Scottsdale, AZ 85250 or contact us via Email at thewod_editor@yahoo.com

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CONVENTION REVIEWS:

MYSTICON CONVENTION REVIEW -- By Michael D'Ambrosio

My first appearance at MystiCon in Roanoke, Virginia will always be a memorable one. With Peter Davison (Dr. Who) and Orson Scott Card for their headline guests, you can't go wrong. The hotel limit was reached early Saturday and, for the first time for this ever-growing convention, people were turned away.

The MystiCon programming tracks were well planned with a variety of topics. Kudos to Barbara DeBary-Kesner who obviously worked very hard to create a unique program compared to other conventions. The film programming was especially impressive with a number of experienced film makers on hand to discuss the trade. I had the opportunity to talk with Johnny Johnson, a very talented young producer, at length over his accomplishments which are well over a hundred now. The panels and shows were well attended and the people who came were passionate about the convention. An active audience makes a panel so much better.

The musical acts starting with Devo Spice (Weird Al of the rapper world), The Gothsicles (two wild and crazy guys from Chicago) and the very popular Bella Morte featuring Andy Deane. There were so many other things that I didn't get to see including plays and other musicians. The hotel, The Holiday Inn at Tanglewood, treated everyone great. Despite being overwhelmed by the dramatic increase in number, the staff worked hard to keep us happy. Congratulations to Carla Brindle, Leslie Cotter, Carl Kesner and the whole MystiCon staff for a great job. I recommend checking out MystiCon in 2014 if you have the opportunity. Visit their website at www.mysticon-va.com.

CONNOOGA CONVENTION REVIEW -- By Michael D'Ambrosio

When Connooga started in 2008, it was "contained" at the facilities of the Choo-Choo Hotel in Chattanooga and drew over 700 fans. This weekend (March 2-4), it eclipsed an attendance of over twenty-five hundred (possibly three thousand) and has "exploded" to include the Chattanooga Convention Center. This year they featured several guests from The Walking Dead including Larry Mainland, Sonya Thompson, Alex Wayne and Savanna Wehunt. In addition there was a variety of filmmakers, artists, authors, vendors, actors and musicians. One thing that stands out with Connooga over the years is the atmosphere. Everyone is relaxed and sociable including the guests. You can't help but make friends. Big kudos and thanks to Todd and the entire Connooga staff for a job well done. It was a pleasure coming to Connooga from Philadelphia.

The Convention Center is a mere six city blocks from the Choo-Choo and shuttles are provided for those who prefer the ride to the walk. The area is full of quaint little restaurants and coffee shops although the Choo-Choo Hotel has the Garden Restaurant which does a great job handling the crowd with affordable buffets as well for both breakfast and dinner. If you like to mingle at the room parties, you'll definitely want to stay at the Choo-Choo Hotel. The Marriott and the Staybridge are at either side of the center and the Days Inn is right across from one end. Connooga has arranged for special rates with all of them.

The literary programming tracks are handled by the king of multi-tasking, Robby Hilliard. Robby has done wonders since taking over the program and has brought in a diverse number of creative writers and a vast number of topics. With the wheels turning toward next year, he already has several new ideas brewing. If you aspire to write or are currently writing, whether it be a novel, a movie or both, you can gain a wealth of knowledge from Robby's group. Their experience is unrivaled as many fans were amazed at the information they shared.

The convention center is ideally laid out to accommodate Connooga with plenty of room for growth. They provide modestly priced food and drink and were more than accommodating to all of us at the convention. Next year's convention is expected to be moved back into February and should be posted soon at <http://Connooga.com>.

You'll probably notice many of the authors and guests, many who travel quite a distance, have already committed to returning next year which is an indication of the conventions popularity. I could write many more pages for this review but I recommend you check the site for yourself. Plan on spending more than just a weekend and get a taste of big city life without the headaches in Chattanooga.

CONVENTION LISTINGS:

LEPRECON 39 - MAY 9-12th, 2013 - Warriors of the Rainbow

Mesa Marriott at 200 North Centennial Way, Mesa, AZ - 1-800-835-9873
Artist Guest: Raymond Swanland; Art Industry Guest: Jon Schindehette; Author Guest: Jack McDevitt; Local Artist Guest: Shelby Robertson; Music Guest: Nancy Louise Freeman. <http://www.leprecon.org/lep39/>

LEPRECON 39 FILM FESTIVAL - Presented by Brick Cave Films and

Apocalypse Later Entry Form - Festival Dates, May 9-12, 2013
MAIL ENTRIES TO: Leprecon 39 Film Festival c/o Brick Cave Books

PO Box 4411, Mesa, AZ 85211-4411; E-mail us at info@brickcavemedia.com

COPPERCON REVOLUTION! August 8-11, 2013;

Location: Windemere Hotel-5750 East Main St., Mesa, Arizona 85205

Ph: (480)985-3600; Toll Free: (800) 888-3561

Media Guest of Honor: Mike Grell; Artist Guest: Trina Robbins; Artist Guest: Steve Leialoha

LONESTARCON 3, the 71st World Science Fiction Convention

SAN ANTONIO, Texas LoneStarCon 3, the 71st World Science Fiction Convention ("Worldcon"), is pleased to announce the start of the process to select the host sites for the 2015 Worldcon and the 2014 North American Science Fiction Convention ("NASFiC").

Three bids have been formally filed for the 2015 Worldcon, which will be the 73rd occasion of this convention. In alphabetical order, these are as follows:

- Helsinki in 2015 - a bid for Helsinki, Finland. The convention would be held from August 6 to 10, 2015, with the main facilities being the Helsinki Exhibition and Conference Centre and the Holiday Inn Helsinki Exhibition & Convention Centre. Learn more at www.helsinkiin2015.org.

- Orlando in 2015 - a bid for Orlando, Florida. The convention would be held from September 2 to 6, 2015, at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort and Convention Center. Learn more at www.orlandoin2015.org.

- Spokane in 2015 - a bid for Spokane, Washington. The convention would be held from August 19 to 23, 2015, with the main facilities being the Spokane Convention Center, the Doubletree Spokane, the Red Lion at the Park, and Red Lion River Inn. Learn more at www.spokanein2015.org.

Two bids have been filed for the 2014 NASFiC. This convention is held in North America in any year when the Worldcon travels outside the continent. A NASFiC will be held in 2014 since the 2014 Worldcon will take place in London, UK. In alphabetical order, the NASFiC bids are as follows:

- Detroit in 2014 - a bid for Detroit, Michigan. The convention would be held from July 17 to 20, 2014, at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center. Learn more at detroitin2014.org.

- Phoenix in 2014 - a bid for Phoenix, Arizona. The convention would be held from July 30 to August 3, 2014, at the Tempe Mission Palms Hotel and Conference Center. Learn more at phoenixin2014.org.

HOW TO TAKE PART

All Adult and Young Adult Attending and Supporting members of LoneStarCon 3 are eligible to take part in the site selection process.

Ballots may be submitted by postal mail or in-person at the convention. Postal ballots must be received by August 18, 2013. Voting at the convention will continue until 6 p.m. on Saturday, August 31, 2013. All ballots must be accompanied by an Advance Membership (Voting) fee, set at \$40 for the Worldcon election and \$35 for the NASFiC election. In each case, the fee will automatically be converted to a Supporting Membership in the winning convention.

Full information on the site selection process will be published on the LoneStarCon 3 website at www.lonestarcon3.org/wsfs/wsfs-site.shtml over the coming weeks. A printed ballot will also be included in LoneStarCon 3's Progress Report 4, which will be published in mid-April.

For further information about the site selection process, write to siteselection@LoneStarCon3.org.

PHOENIX COMICON

Phoenix Comicon is the signature pop culture event of the southwest. Comicon is presenting guests and programming for hobbyists by attracting the top segments of the comics, anime, sci-fi, film, tv, and gaming industries. Phoenix Comicon 2013 is expected to draw over 30,000 attendees to its May 24-27, 2013 convention held at the Phoenix Convention Center and Hyatt Regency in Downtown Phoenix.

BRICK CAVE BOOK BROWSE on Sunday, April 28, 2013

from 11a-4p at Lo-Fi Coffee in DT Mesa, <http://www.loficoffee.com/>.

The Book Browse is an informal, small book gathering, where writers bring their books, invite their friends, have some coffee and spend time talking shop, or selling a few books. Our first event, in December, saw a great response, we were busy from start to finish. We are excited to expand the event as we work towards our first full Book Media Conference this coming November (<http://www.inkzilla.org>) by hosting a Book Browse every two months.

WOD

road to glory, shining with pride and ambition, to internationally renowned names that you may well recognise.

Special guests already announced this year include actor/director D B Sweeney, singer/actress Natalie Imbruglia and actress/writer Melora Walters. More announcements will follow over the next couple of weeks, but there are always many more names in attendance than just the special guests. Many writers, producers and directors attend to support their films, whether to give Q&As or not, and they're always approachable.

While it's always fun to meet screen favourites in person, that's outweighed for me by the experience of watching something wonderful that I've never previously heard of, only to bump into the actor, the writer or the director on the way out of the theatre and get to chat with them about it outside afterwards. This is where the real magic of film festivals lies: in discovery and a closer connection to movies than you can get anywhere else.

Friday is when things get really busy and they stay that way all weekend. I counted 116 films screening this year, 36 of them features, not including those shown under the banner of the International Horror and Sci-Fi Film Festival, which became a part of the Phoenix Film Festival in 2011. I've only seen one of those features thus far, the quirky Serbian comedy *Loveless Zoritsa*, which would liven up any evening, but I have my eyes on a number of the others.

Stuck in Love and *The Brass Teapot* both look intriguing. *The East*, starring Ellen Page, Alexander Skarsgård and co-writer Brit Marling, looks fascinating. *Down and Dangerous* was funded through

Kickstarter and is building a real buzz. Favor stars Jeffrey Combs, so I'm sold right there. Both of these are having their world premieres at the Phoenix Film Festival. *.357*, the new movie from Arizona director and festival regular Brian Skiba can't be ignored, especially as it features Fred 'The Hammer' Williamson and William Katt. Top of my list for this year though is *Unfinished Song*, starring Christopher Eccleston, Vanessa Redgrave and Terence Stamp.

You can't see them all but you can see a surprising number of them, especially if you aim at the many blocks of short films on offer, which are organised by category and provide a wild variety of surprises. There are enough categories to meet anyone's tastes: live action or animated, American or international, films by high school or college students or by established names that may surprise. How about a short film directed by Shia LaBeouf from *Transformers*, for example? You'll find that in the Prime Shorts selection.

Those into local film are spoiled for choice: the Arizona Shorts selection is always a highlight of the festival, featuring the winners of the various IFP challenges that have gone on throughout the previous year, along with other local films chosen from submissions. There's also a ninety minute dedicated block of IFP short films which looks as good as it's ever been. I've seen seven of the eight selections and they're all well worth seeing again, especially *La Lucha* and *The Memory Ride*, both of which I've raved about at *Apocalypse Later*.

If you're bewildered by the amount of choice on offer, don't panic. Most features screen twice, as does each block of short films, so if you miss the first showing or a particular screening sells out, you will

get another chance. For the many films in competition, you may get a third opportunity; the festival continues on in the evenings from Monday to Thursday with reshowings of all the winners, which are announced at an ever-lively special event on Sunday night.

A full festival pass is the best way to spend the event in style, immersing yourself for three days of pictures, then winding down with the award winners over the second week. Depending on how much you want to spend, you can rack up the perks, from being seated first to getting into the parties and special events. However if you just want to experience the best films of the event, showing up after the weekend with cheaper flex passes or even individual tickets will allow you to see the winning films or those highlighted by the festival programmers.

The Phoenix Film Festival closes on Thursday night with a screening of *Stuck in Love*, from debut director Josh Boone. This indie comedy stars Jennifer Connelly and Greg Kinnear and won't begin its theatrical run until June. As one of the films I most want to see at the festival, it looks like a great way to close everything out.

And then it'll be a short twelve months before it's time for the 2014 Phoenix Film Festival!

Hal C F Astell writes film reviews at Apocalypse Later, from the 1900s to the 2010s, with a focus on what most critics don't review. For the Frankenweenie feature, visit Roger Ebert. For the original 1984 short version Tim Burton made at Disney, not to mention the odd stuff he was doing before that in his spare time, visit Apocalypse Later.

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

WOD

EXPLORING THE BOOK LIFESTYLE

Brick
Cave
Bookcast

<http://brickcavebookcast.com/>



Host: Jenn Czep

Host: Brent Heffron

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Da Vinci Gaming Day at Arizona Science Center
Saturday, April 13; Noon - 5pm

Take advantage of special group rate pricing and enjoy gaming too!

The Science Center is giving the Endless their lunchroom to use for gaming. We'll have classic favorites like *Carcassonne*, *Pandemic* and *Dominion*, but also fun games you may not know like *Magnifico*, *Fresco*, *Pastiche*, and *Princes of Florence*.

Contact Cinder McDonald at sandyliioness@gmail.com or check out the Facebook Event page. Tickets are \$16 if you want to do the da Vinci special exhibit, \$7 if you want just the Gaming Day and general admission. (\$12/\$6 for children 3-17)

Tickets must be purchased through The Endless no later than Wednesday, April 10.

Yuri's Night

The first Yuri's Night occurred on 12 April 1961. That was the day Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit Earth. In honor of this achievement, join NSS for an evening of entertainment, education, and socializing. Held in conjunction with the Space Access Conference, NSS will host a trivia contest followed by an update on planetary exploration from Dr. Dave Williams of ASU.

Where: InnPlace Hotel Phoenix North, 10220 North Metro Parkway East, Phoenix AZ 85051 (Metrocenter Mall complex)

Doors open at 7 PM.



for a rave has changed very little: take a large space with enough room for hundreds (or thousands) to congregate; stir in hyperactive DJ's spinning loud, pulsing, electronic beats (ranging from slow and ambient to 140 beats per minute (BPM) or more); mix in colored, swirling lights and the occasional special effect such as fog or smoke; fill with crowds of (mostly) teens and twentysomethings looking for a place to dance, express themselves, and meet kindred spirits; and enjoy.

The earliest raves were *true* underground events (in some cases literally), not only skirting but taunting the fine edge of legality and propriety in every possible sense. Curmudgeonly rave "purists" still maintain that those were the "REAL" raves, and that anything that's NOT completely illicit is nothing but a sellout cash-cow; but like most curmudgeons, no one really pays those people too much attention.

These days, there are still the odd "Desert Parties", which are often dangerous and quickly shut down. (Substitute "Wilderness" or whatever fits your geographic region if you're not in the desert.) But traditional raves themselves are still thriving, and rave culture has entered, and affected, mainstream popular culture at large.

Granted, they are not what they were at the beginning; but like anything that stands the test of time, it's a case of "evolve or die". What they may have lost in becoming more visible and commercialized, they have gained in a general acceptance and tolerance for something that was once dismissed as a passing fad. (Though that can be said of most of pop culture.)

As part of the evolutionary--and marketing--process, raves (or "parties" as they are usually called by their followers), are often given a theme to distinguish them from the other raves. (Another thing it has in common with the "Party Monster" scene, which frequently used such hooks.)

In Arizona, some of those theme nights have in turn become staples of the culture, hotly anticipated by Valley ravers (or Kandy Kids, for the colorful "Kandy" they wear--beads, bracelets, etc; at least, that's the story we're going with) and even pulling

from throughout the southwest. And local promoter Clix of Clixbagoftricks is behind two of the biggest Arizona parties--Lingerieve, which happens in late summer, and Bubble Bobble, now in its fifth year, which kicks off the springtime. And BB5 was by all accounts a smashing success, topping out at around 1500 attendees.

Living up to its name, Bubble Bobble falls under the subcategory of "Foam Party", which is pretty much what you'd expect: at a certain point in the evening, massive generators spew soapy foam all over the floor and the attendees (most of whom are prepared for it, dressed in swimwear or other equally minimal clothing), creating wet, frolicsome fun for all.

Part of the fun for ravers is not knowing where the event will be held until the day of the event, when it's announced via text and social media (before the modern communications era, it was word of mouth and phone calls, and I'm sure there's a wacky comedy and/or horror flick to be made about a group of early 90s, pre-cell-phone ravers who took a wrong turn). In this case, though, the attendance was no doubt bolstered by the venue being solidly locked in long enough in advance to be printed on the flyers. The Arizona Event Center, at Country Club & Southern just off the 60 freeway, is a repurposed ex-department store (a Home Depot I think) which has recently opened, and is beautifully suited to such an event. The venue offers not only an easily accessible location but plenty of well-lit parking--both commodities often in short supply at such events. Additionally, a sectioned-off bar enabled those over 21 to drink their beverage of choice, another rare luxury (even if those old enough to legally drink only comprise perhaps a third of the total attendees).

The hollowed-out venue has several distinct areas, which allowed the different D.J.'s--Breeze, Klubfiller, Krikett, Chris Smooth, Flapjack and HK--to spin their various styles without too much sonic bleedthrough. They ranged from the various forms of Hardcore to classic House music and Psychedelic trance. Outsiders may not be able to tell much difference between the styles, but to those immersed in the scene, the right DJ playing spinning their chosen beats well can make all the difference between a good rave and a great one--and in some cases, whether they even attend at all. Indeed, some of the D.J.s are so well known and have such strong followings that their fans will travel not only from all corners of Arizona but beyond--there were several folks at BB5 from California and elsewhere.

And while there has been a chemical component to rave culture since its inception, with ravers having



a longstanding reputation for partaking in various mind/mood-altering substances (particularly ecstasy), modern promoters address this concern by hiring professional security, in some cases including off-duty police, to check all attendees as they enter and keep an eye on the proceedings. (Not to mention that the legitimate raves are fully bonded and insured.) It's unlikely there ever has been or ever will be a rave where drugs are entirely absent, but the promoters know if they don't follow CYA ("Cover Your Ass") to the extreme, it's end-game--and no one wants to take the blame for ALL the parties being stopped.

But on the whole ravers are a relatively peaceful group; they are mostly concerned with having a good time, and--aesthetically and spiritually if not always intellectually--they are the modern inheritors of the "peace, love & understanding" ethos of the hippie culture. Indeed, the phrase "PLUR"--for "Peace, Love, Unity, Respect"--is both a mantra for ravers as well as a weapon hurled at offenders who fail to live up to those stated values. (Because like every scene, there are always a few bad seeds who care less about the community and are only in it for themselves--but considering the sheer number of those who attend a rave such as BB5, the troublemakers are few and far between, and the scene as a whole is remarkably self-policing.)



Clix, a longtime Phoenix resident and one of the most successful rave promoters in the southwest, was one of the triumvirate behind BB5, along with Mike Saga and 1Vibe. Reached for comment after the event, he said, "Five years strong and we showed Phoenix that we've still got it, and have no intention of slowing down. This year's Bubble Bobble was one of the most amazing and fun-filled shows to date, so it's going to be hard to top, but that won't keep us from trying. Our parties have managed to make Phoenix something of a Mecca for the harder genres of dance music, which have been left sadly under-represented in the United States. To keep the energy going you can look forward to our future shows such as 'It's A Hardcore Life', 'Imagination Land', 'Lingerieve', and 'Kandie Land'."

And as long as the Kandy Kids keep coming, we can be rest easy knowing it will remain a happy hardcore world after all.

PLUR,
Matthew "Matteo" Yenkala
More information: www.clixbagoftricks.com

WOD

VALLEY GOTH SCENE UNITES TO HONOR FALLEN PILLAR

By Matthew Yenkala



Every community, subculture or scene has its pillars--those individuals without whom that community will never be the same. The tragedy of losing such a person is magnified when he or she transcends one single community and connects with many others. Sadly, one such figure who loomed large over not only the local Goth/Industrial/Darkwave scene but the wider Valley music community, and who touched many others, has recently left us, far too soon.

Thom Gabaldon, also known as D.J. Darksouldealer, passed away Thursday, March 7th, just after midnight, following a short, intense battle with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. The cancer had been detected in his spine last October and, after apparently being successfully removed, returned swiftly and spread to his brain.

His passing was peaceful and in his last few days his room, first at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix and then at Hospice of the Valley, was constantly filled with a rotating array of the many, many friends Thom had made in his two-plus decades of local visibility and infamy--many of whom stayed to the very end.

Originally hailing from Des Moines, Iowa, Thom made the Valley his home circa 1990. He was quickly ensconced at the "Mother" ZIA Records location on Indian School Road in Phoenix. There, for pretty much the next decade, he could usually be found behind the counter or on the sales floor, surrounded by his true love--music of all kinds--as well as movies, probably his second love. He was always happy to chat about music, make a recommendation (or occasional withering critique), and not-so-patiently explain exactly why ZIA's can't use yet ANOTHER copy of The Breeders' "Last Splash" CD. He even appeared in a semi-famous TV commercial for ZIA around the year 2000.

When he wasn't SELLING music, he was still constantly immersed in it--he hardly missed ANY concert, major or minor, national headliner or struggling local act; he was writing about it for the NEW TIMES as well as various blogs; he was spinning it at various clubs around the valley; and eventually, he was making his own (via his dark ambient music project DREAMCELL).

In the wake of Thom's passing there has

been an immense outpouring of shock, grief and loss from those who knew him and even those who didn't, so there was no question that some kind of memorial was called for--and that music would be a central part of it. It was just a case of venue, and approach. As Thom was not close to his family (they politely declined involvement), nor was he especially religious (in any traditional sense, anyway), it was left to Thom's good friend Aleksandr Aeternum to shape the event, name it (Refuge, after a Hurricane Katrina benefit Thom organized some years ago) and find a home for it.

The latter problem was quickly solved as The Rogue Bar in Scottsdale was more than happy to play host. A longtime staple of many Gothic/Industrial events in the past decade, and a venue Thom frequented, it was the perfect spot. As far talent, Aleksandr didn't have to look very far: several local bands that Thom favored, and who felt they owed him a debt of gratitude, were happy to jump on the bill.

The night kicked off to the ethereal tones of longtime Valley staple Reliquary, before moving through several other acts including Audra (from the famed Projekt recording



label), Ashengrace, The Captives (this author's favorite, though all the bands were great, and all offered something different from the others) and D.J.s She, Squalor and Self-Destrukt. And thanks to Aleksandr, some of Thom's DREAMCELL work finally had its live debut.

Throughout the evening well over 100 of Thom's friends and fans gathered, swapped stories and anecdotes about him, and took comfort in one another's company, which went some way to ameliorating the (physical) absence of the man of the hour. Many glasses were raised and many drinks consumed in his memory. It also marked perhaps the biggest gathering in at least a decade of the now-widely-scattered "Old School" Phoenix Goth scene, which used to haunt such legendary venues as The Nile and others long forgotten.

There was no cover charge; instead, attendees were encouraged to donate what they could, with all funds to be split between St. Joseph's Hospital and Hospice of the

Valley (both of whom took Thom on as a charity case, as he did not have insurance or resources to cover his expenses, and St. Joe's in particular covering treatments and surgeries that tallied at several hundred thousand dollars).

During Thom's final months it had been Aeternum (a "scene" name, as he prefers anonymity in regards to his daily life) who, at Thom's request, looked after him and saw to it that his medical and legal needs were met, and all appropriate arrangements were made. Thus, though it was a night of catharsis and closure for all who loved Thom, for Aeternum, it was also about paying back a deep personal debt: When he was a young "kinderbat" just entering the scene, it was Thom who took him under his wing, Thom who helped him get established, and Thom who protected and defended him from the sharks who are sadly present in every social swimming pool--all with no agenda other than helping a young misfit find his place.

Says Aeternum, "The event was a lively memorial to Thom's spirited dedication to music and his friends. He was deeply in love with the sonic stylings of all the bands

warily around one another, and there was always an element of contentiousness to our interaction. But gradually mutual respect and even something like fondness started to creep in, as it became clear to each of us that even if we didn't always agree or have the same taste--or even when we DID appreciate the same thing, it wasn't always in the same way or for the same reasons--we each knew our stuff; it was a clash of equals. The ice finally broke when we spotted each other randomly at a strip mall in the West Valley and had a shouted mock-argument across a crowded parking lot, which ended with him saying "I fear no West Side Goth!" and me responding, "Who are YOU calling Goth?" We eventually truly bonded at a number of live events and in many any online exchange, when we realized that we were both too alike, and too different, NOT to be friends. He was a sparring partner and kindred spirit, and I will always miss him. But I am truly and eternally grateful that shortly before his time here was up, we each had the opportunity to communicate to the other exactly what our friendship meant. I wish that could be the case with all of those I care about who have passed on, and to me it shows the value of overlooking the trivial and appreciating people while they are here.

As the great drummer Buddy Rich once said, "It seems to me that you should give flowers to the living."

(For those who were unable to attend the Rogue bar event, there is a second, more extended tribute to Thom, organized by his longtime friend Dawn O'Doul. Thom was a great lover of Pandas--in fact, he would often work, driving his cab 120 hours a week for 5 or six weeks, so that he could then take off to spend a month or two in proximity to the Panda preserve at the San Diego zoo. In honor of this, friends of Thom have been leaving stuffed Pandas, pictures of Thom, and other relevant items by the giant Panda sculpture in Margaret T. Hance park in downtown Phoenix, and will be doing so until May 7th, the second month anniversary since his passing--or until the park rangers decide they don't want it there anymore, whichever comes first.)

In any case, it was a night Thom himself would have certainly approved of, though he would have likely been terribly embarrassed by it (misanthropic as he seemed on the surface, his true heart of gold was not as hidden as he might have wanted everyone to believe). But wherever he's got to now, I suspect he's still smiling devilishly at the final donation amount of \$666.66.

*Rest in peace, Thom.
Your friend & brother,
Matthew "Matteo" Yenkala*

For more information:
<https://www.facebook.com/thom.gabaldon>

WOD

PJ: Have you always wanted to be a writer?

T.M.: No, it never even occurred to me. But, since that night I started writing Bohemian Grove I haven't been able to stop. I spend every possible hour I can writing. Having a 4 year old and businesses meant that those hours are limited - but it's not uncommon that I'm up until the early hours of the morning writing. I've never been so consumed by something before. I've actually fallen in love with writing.

PJ: Tell us a little bit about your book/s. What are their titles; which is your favorite if you have more than one, and briefly let us know what they are about. Pay particular attention to your most recent book and/or your first book:

T.M.: Bohemian Grove is a science fiction book that's part of a planned trilogy and I'm about halfway through the 2nd book, Sun Gate. It's based on a woman named Carter Robinson who finds out that she's an Anunnaki descendant protected by a secret society. Another organization, the Vaticates, are meant to protect religion and faith and therefore want to see an end to the Anunnaki. She becomes a pivotal point in either bringing the two together or completely eliminating one or both groups positions. There's a pretty intense love story mixed in there and lots of real science.

Undead Winter is a recent e-book novella that was released last month on Amazon as a kindle exclusive. I woke up in the middle of the night from this really bad nightmare I just couldn't shake so I turned it into a story. I had so many people asking me to turn it into a longer story so I did. It was less than 10,000 words at the time. The demand became so much to turn it into a full length novel that I recently decided to do so. As of now, I did double the size of the story turning it into a novella which is now published on Amazon. The plan is to still turn it into a full length after I've completed the Sun Gate project.

Undead Winter is a zombie apocalypse story but since it started off as my nightmare, which was my perspective, it blossomed into this book about the perspectives of different people facing certain horrors and their desperate thoughts. The undead aren't your typical moaning groaning slow walking dead people - they're calculating, savage, primal humans missing morals and ethics. It's pretty fun and pretty dark. I enjoy hearing the reactions of people who read Undead Winter because they're usually pretty shocked.

Undead Winter is much better writing than Bohemian Grove, but I love my story and characters in Bohemian Grove more. They're both my babies in their own way. Bohemian Grove sets the scene for the rest of the trilogy and although some pretty intense things happened in the first book, I save the really good stuff for the 2nd and 3rd installments.

PJ: Are you currently working on any writing projects our readers should watch for release soon?

T.M.: The Sun Gate is scheduled to be released by the end of the year, as is Undead Winter. I've also recently contracted with award winning international film director to co-write a screenplay for his next independent film. We start that project next month.

PJ: What type of music, if any, do you listen to while you write?

T.M.: Music is my muse. It gave birth to the writer in me when I listened to Counting Crows that night. Music is almost the pen in my hand (or the keys on the keyboard) and completely shapes what I write. I love indie music; Birdy, Lana Del Rey, Lykke Li, Agnes Obel.. I love sexy music.

PJ: What inspires you and motivates you to write the very most?

T.M.: Always music... or in the case of Undead Winter, a nightmare. I recently had another nightmare that I wrote down and started getting some great feedback on that as well. But that project will have to wait in line.

So either music or nightmares seems to be my trend.

PJ: What one thing are you the most proud of in your life?

T.M.: My son. It's cliché but so true.

PJ: What about your family? Do you have children, married, siblings, parents? Has your family been supportive of your writing?

T.M.: The main characters of your stories - do you find that you put a little of yourself into each of them or do you create them to be completely different from you?

I really try not to. I've had quite a few people tell me that Carter is me, but I disagree. I'm sure there are some similarities but I purposely try to create characters that aren't me. However, my friends are a different story. There are definitely people I know in my characters. Especially my more colorful friends.

PJ: Is there an established writer you admire and emulate in your own writing? Do you have a writing mentor?

T.M.: I have favorite authors. Dean Koontz, Dan Brown, Jennifer Armentrout, Richelle Mead... I love so many but these are ones where I pretty much read every book they write and am always on their pre-order list for their next book.

PJ: Now that you are a published author, does it feel differently than you had imagined?

T.M.: I think I'm still in denial as everything happened so fast. I've only been doing this for 14 months and I've been swept off my feet. I am floored by the experience, especially knowing that this is a process that takes years and years for most people. I'm beyond fortunate to have everything happen so quickly but because it has, it doesn't feel real yet. It's been a completely surreal experience. I'm humbled to see so many people invested in seeing something I have created come to life and I'm humbled by my friends who have been just as excited as me about this venture. I'm definitely one of the happiest people alive.

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Monetizing Space: A Primer

By Donald Jacques

*Space ...
It ain't your father's business.*

A friend recently asked me how to monetize space. I had just spent the past half hour speaking about financing settlement in space. At first I was taken aback, thinking the two were the same thing. But upon reflection I realized they were quite different.

Financing space settlement is about convincing donors that the project is worthy. Worthy projects do not always generate a monetary return on investment. Monetizing is about Making Money with the project, actually generating a recurring, and growing income from the project. This represents a substantial difference. A farmer monetizes his land by producing crops for sale at market. He earns money to replant and bring the new crop to market the next year to earn more. A retail shop "monetizes" both their product line and sales skills to make money; a plumber monetizes their knowledge and skills to earn money.

The problem with monetizing space is that first we're not out there, and second, products and services in space are virtually non-existent. Or are they?

There are a few websites offering to sell real estate on the moon. They offer packages, for which you can pay to receive documents purporting to provide proof of ownership of the land you buy. Of course, if you can't get there, how can you enforce your land-owner rights; how can you develop the land; and under whose jurisdiction would you litigate any disputes? There are also websites that offer meteor rocks and the occasional moon rock. Are these people monetizing space? Not really.

But these examples are small when compared with the idea of generating continuous revenue, or money from activities in space. DirectTV and Dish Network are two companies whose revenue is dependent on their satellites in space, beaming TV signals into our homes. It is this type of activity -

mass market sales - that is meant by monetizing space.

Space tourism, as offered by Virgin Galactic and XCor, are two examples of companies who have invested heavily in the hope of capitalizing on the idea of monetizing space. As more people buy tickets to experience both the view of the curvature of the Earth, and weightlessness, the hope is that a steady stream of tourists will develop and assure a long and prosperous run for these companies.

But there are some issues to business in space. One, it's obscenely expensive. Second, it's dangerous. Setting those two things aside, a space-based business will operate just like any other business on earth. At least for many tasks this is true: accounting, payroll, shipping and receiving, even the executive tasks will likely not change appreciatively.

On Earth, the single greatest expense of business often is shipping. A local shop with local customers can in many cases do quite well without a serious shipping expense. Even the farmer I mentioned above, keeps shipping costs to a minimum in order to survive.

Now, take a manufacturer who ships single items all over the world. The shipping costs explode. Those can be reduced to a large degree (like Walmart and other big box stores) by building a warehouse system that receives huge quantities and ships large blocks of various items to several stores in one operating area. While this reduces the per piece shipping expense, that cost of distribution is substantial.

Let's take a look at an orbital manufacturer. Let's say Joe's Salvage has a small ship that captures space junk, extracts useable components and sells them. Joe is using fuel to gather his parts, time to disassemble them, and now must get those useable parts to his customers.

If Joe's customers are on Earth, most will still be, he must "ship" those parts back to Earth. Currently, there are only two services capable of carrying

products back to earth from space, and they are booked solid for a year out. Hmmm. That means Joe needs a transport ship for this purpose.

Well, the lowest cost transport ship runs in the neighborhood of \$60 million to lift into orbit, in order to fill it up and throw it back. That means unless he can find a way to get access to that vehicle, he will be bankrupt before he begins. The reality is, that unless someone pays the "uplift" cost, he cannot afford the "down" cost. There must be an uplift before he can send anything back.

But what if he didn't send any thing down? He'd avoid the uplift, and down,

and also the retrieval and shipping costs! Suppose he used these parts to repair, or heaven forbid, upgrade existing satellites. Now his only shipping expense is bound up in fuel for his own orbital transport. And that fuel could well be far less expensive as a component of a launch rather than needing the whole transport.

By negotiating with customers to salvage their unused satellites, and target those parts to "their" newer equipment, he can provide a service that all can gain from -- a model for monetizing space.

WOD

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lunabotic's Mining Competition Presentation

They are a group of students at Arizona State University, sponsored by the School of Earth and Space Exploration, competing in the NASA Lunabotics Mining Competition in May at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Where: HSGP, 627 W. Rio Salado Parkway Mesa, AZ 85201

When: Saturday, June 22, 2013

Doors open at 10AM and the presentation starts at 11AM

Asteroids, Ion Propulsion and NASA's Dawn Mission to Vesta and Ceres

Presentation by Professor David Williams of ASU. Speaking to the HSGP, Dr. Dave Williams, an active member in the NSS, will present a summary of what we are learning about our solar system.

Where: HSGP, 627 W. Rio Salado Parkway Mesa, AZ 85201

When: Sunday, June 23, 2013

Doors open at 9AM and the presentation starts at 10AM

3D Printing - Revolutionizing Your Future

By Jeremy Briddle

Since the Industrial Revolution caused cranks shafts to turn, manufacturing has been the exclusive province of companies and factories; organizations with enough money and employees to build a single product. But that creates a problem: items must be mass-produced in order for the company to recoup its expenses. If the product is a flop, that company loses big. But with the proliferation of technology comes a new realm of micro-production that brings manufacturing to your desktop. 3D printing is an infant technology that is catching greater attention for the things ordinary people can make on their own. No factory necessary.

A 3D printer is like a monstrous hybrid of a hot glue gun and an inkjet printer. Instead of ink the print head extrudes a molten, quick-drying plastic. The head moves left and right, forward and back while laying down a thin film of plastic onto a platform. Its movements are precisely controlled by a computer. When the first level of plastic is printed the platform lowers a bit and the head extrudes a second layer on top of the first. It does this over and over again. Layers fuse together and after several minutes or a couple hours a three dimensional object has been created to the specifications of the 3D file loaded to the printer. These 3D files can be downloaded from the internet. They can be created from scratch using free computer software or by using a simple smartphone app like 123D Catch.

At Xerocraft Hackerspace in Tucson, many avenues of production using 3D printing are being tested. The source of the innovation is The Ultimaker. Bought as a kit online and built by Xerocraft members, The Ultimaker 3D printer, though sometimes buggy, creates some astonishing things. It prints replacement parts, statuettes, busts; almost anything you can imagine. For purchase, the Ultimaker prints out custom novelty keychains designed using SketchUp, Google's free CAD software. When a part of the Ultimaker, itself wears out a digital file of the replacement is downloaded and printed by the same 3D printer that the part will soon be integrated into.

The simple utility of 3D printers is already evident. Do you have a toy that's missing some crucial part? Maybe it's impossible to find or too expensive to replace. Just print out another. Create a rough draft of your new invention as a proof of concept. Tweak and revise it to your heart's desire easily with cheap plastic.

You can design your print in a host of free software packages that are becoming easier and easier to use. You don't even

have to design it yourself. Want your own Venus de Milo? Download it from Thingiverse.com and you're halfway there.

Customized 3D prints can add that extra level of detail and authenticity to convention costumes. If it's a popular character, there's probably already a 3D file of it online. And if you don't like the way it looks you can customize it in software before printing.

The applications of 3D printing are virtually limitless. Almost any simple object built by human hands (and even many not-so-simple ones like Matryushka dolls) can also be fabricated in an Ultimaker or a competing product. Highly detailed, metal-extruding 3D printers are still priced in the six figure range but the costs continue to drop as the reach of the technology spreads. The Ultimaker costs about \$1400, which is still prohibitive for most individuals. It's prone to some failed prints but these are issues that will be surmounted as time goes on. In modern technology the consumer-level 3D printer is brand new and there is still much exploring to do. But it's sure to have a long life that will bring with it a revolution in the world of production. These devices will become smaller, faster, cheaper and print at a level of detail unlike anything we see now. The 3D printer of the future will also be able to produce objects of different colors and materials.

Think of the effects of this technology on the manufacturing of goods and products made locally. Instead of "Made in the USA" you may soon see, "Made in your neighborhood". Products made and sold within the community not only stimulate the local economy but reduce the cost since no gas guzzling trucks were needed to ship them from other states. Instead of sending off for trinkets from China, your desktop is your assembly line. Anything you make can then be easily shared with the world simply by uploading the file to the internet.

The possibilities stretch beyond inorganic plastics and metal. The ability to print pharmaceutical drugs is also on the horizon. Nearly all drugs are made of the same handful of molecules. A printer loaded with the necessary ingredients and "recipe" for the drug the user wants made is a possibility that is currently being researched. This would revolutionize the world of drug testing and manufacturing. Instead of poor countries spending massive amounts of money for antiviral medication they could simply download the recipe and make the life-saving drugs themselves.

Scientists are also experimenting with 3D printers to extrude living human cells. The hope is to one day print out entire human organs tailored at a cellular level specifically for the recipient. Organ donor lists would be a welcome thing of the past.

Like any tool, though a 3D printer is only as benevolent as the person who uses it. There is also a darker side to this technology. Organizations like Defense Distributed freely release files that allow anyone to literally print out a firearm. Though the failure rate of the Wiki-Weapon had been high until now, they recently had success with an updated print of an AK assault rifle that shot over 600 rounds without breaking.

For good and for ill, 3D printing is here, it's growing more popular by the day and it's not going anywhere. It will surely continue to open many new legal and ethical quandaries. Many will explore the depths of 3D printing and not all of them will have the best of intentions. But like the Industrial Revolution, the promise of new realms of artistic expression, invention and breakthrough is too captivating to leave be.

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ThingaMaJig Gaming Event

Photos By Tasha McIntire



25TH ANNIVERSARY - RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

By Matthew Yenkala

Chances are, if you're reading this, there's not much I can say about the Arizona Renaissance Festival, or Ren Faire Culture in general, that you don't already know. Because, really, what is there left to be said? Much like Comicon, it's gone from being a fringe-geek staple to a mainstream institution. Nevertheless, I shall endeavor to sail a glass-bottom boat over those well-trodden waters.

I remember seeing the commercials for its first season, in 1989--and I also remember the abuse and ridicule that was heaped upon it. NOT, as you might suspect, from the mundane, vanilla, "normal" people I knew who were likely to consider the whole notion a silly, stupid waste of time--but rather, from the caped-and-cloaked, sword-carrying, fake-English-accent spewing "S.C.A." types who were then part of my social circle. (For those who may not know, the Society for Creative Anachronism--S.C.A.--is a many-decades-old, worldwide organization, one of several, which purports to being dedicated to keeping the Middle Ages alive.)

To some of those S.C.A. folks--not all, but a very vocal (and often obnoxious) minority--THEY were the true carriers of Ye Olde Worlde Flame. These middling Ren Faire upstarts were amateurs, phonies, carnival barkers selling their beloved ideal of what it was like to live Back Then to Middle-American Ma & Pa Kettle for a few shiny pennies, and in the process somehow betraying the "purist" ideals of the Wednesday-night-reenactors. Humph. All of which is rather quaint and silly when you consider that neither group would pass even the remotest test of truth in regards to the "accuracy" of their depiction of the Middle Ages, which is pretty much a hodgepodge of crafts, cultures and styles that are, geographically, culturally and temporally, all over the map. (Sort of like those nostalgia radio stations that want you to believe that Devo, Culture Club and Poison may as well have co-existed on the pop charts, since they aer all "80s", when in fact they each represented very different periods and sensibilities within that diverse decade.) Oh sure, they may get some SPECIFIC things right, but despite some of their grandest delusions, neither of them should be viewed as a history lesson.

The difference, of course, is that the Ren Faire folk understood and embraced this. It's all about creating the EXPERIENCE you would expect from the Middle Ages and having fun with it (since gods know, the Middle Ages themselves, with their plagues, crusades, witch hunts and lack of all the modern niceties, were anything but fun), and setting a tone that's part "Princess Bride" and part "Monty Python & The Holy Grail". And after 25 years, they've gotten very, very good at it.

The Festival, which runs for approximately 8 weeks in February and

March and is situated on a dedicated piece of land southeast of Apache Junction, typically draws up to 20 thousand attendees per weekend, many of whom return year after year, and even multiple times within the SAME year. It's not cheap--tickets alone are over 20 bucks, nevermind the gas it takes to get out there; and once you're in the gates, there are temptations galore--food (the infamous giant turkey legs), drink (yes, including booze), clothes, weapons, jewelry, hand-crafted trinkets, and so much more. Plus there are the many shows, which are free to attend, but at which it's something less than polite NOT to tip the performers.

That said, it's possible to attend on a budget and still have an enjoyably immersive time. There's plenty to see and do for everyone, including rides and a petting zoo for the little ones, and the Faire Folk who work the Festival to add color to the events. These dedicated persons, somewhere between cosplayers, actors and lifestyle carnies, really get into their roles--and, from what I've heard, can throw a HELL of a party (especially after closing on the last night of the season--one of these times, I'm going to worm an invitation to that one!) Some travel



to Faires in other parts of the country when Arizona's season is up, others are local and work their mundane jobs for 10 months so they can live it up for 2; either way, I'm sure it's a hard life, but it's in their blood.

For me, though, the primary draw is to see some of the shows, and every year they never fail to entertain. Three acts, in particular, stand out for me. First up is Hey Nunnie Nunnie, two musically inclined comediennes who very clearly grew up shaped (and possibly a bit bruised) by the Catholic faith and have found their catharsis through poking gentle fun at it via the characters of authoritative Mother Redempta and slightly daffy Sister Philomena. One or two of their jokes may be a bit "on the edge" (my favorite new joke: "What do you call a Nun in a wheelchair? Virgin Mobile!"; my favorite joke they no longer do: "You can hug a Nun, you just can't get into the habit!"). But on the whole

they are genuinely witty, the songs are truly infectious ("Cheerful Giver" is running through my head as I write this), and they manage to connect to their audiences regardless of faith (or lack thereof). During a previous season I attended a show in which there was an ACTUAL Mother Superior in the audience--and she seemed to both enjoy the show AND enjoy the slight edge of nervousness her presence gave Redempta and Philomena. But like the pros they are, they triumphed. I never expect anything less.

Next up is probably the most famous (and longest running) of the shows--Ded Bob. The originator of the Ded Bob show has licensed the act to a series of successors, all of whom stick with a script that hasn't changed much since I first saw it in 1993 (beyond the obligatory pop culture references and one or two moments for ad lib). Show after show, year after year, Ded Bob is the same shtick, and year after year, show after show, every performance is standing room only. But this is definitely a case of "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". The conceit is simple: human puppeteer "Sludge", fully masked, operates and

voices "Ded Bob", a midget-sized skeleton with a bad attitude and a withering sense of humor. Bob proceeds to pick out three "rule breakers" from the audience (one male and two females, who usually tend to be of the "comely lass" variety) and dubs them "Bob Zombies". Once they are introduced, he spins a simple tale of misdeeds and lost love, and then has the Zombies collect tips from the audience for him. Simple, perfect, brilliant. I'd be in shock if the show were to ever change.

But the absolute best, in my estimation, are the Tortuga Twins--three clearly unrelated "brothers" (Scaramouche, Raphael and Domingo) doing a "Three Amigos" riff in yellow pirate shirts and black tights. They have at least half a dozen distinct shows, each with a similar structure but different storylines, and the three actors are SO in tune with one another, know their characters SO well, and are SO good at audience



interaction, it's become the standard by which I judge all others. It's also the one show that seems to have a genuine edge of danger and unpredictability to it--these three, especially frontman Scaramouche, often push the envelope, and occasionally even cross the line. And yet they have apparently never gone too far over it, as they are in their 19th year, and have just signed a multi-year contract which will keep them there for the foreseeable future.

This season they debuted a new storyline, a surreal twist on the story of Homer's Helen of Troy (somehow managing to give ENTIRELY the wrong credit for it--an irony that would not be lost on Lord Oxford). It was a bit less "edgy" than their other performances such as "Swordfighting and Stupidity" and their "Arrrr-Rated Pirate Show", but it was no less clever, or less fun to watch. I hope they keep it in the roster. And a word has to be said: while all of the Ren Faire shows are Audience Participation shows, these three are MASTERS at that fine art. Given my druthers, I'd make it a law that every aspiring comedian, improv artist, MC or host of ANY stripe be forced to watch and study these guys at work. Their ability to think on their feet, roll with the random, and supply a witty (and always relevant) comeback is unparalleled in my experience (and I've been to ROCKY HORROR productions all over the country). May they remain sharp and svelte enough to keep pushing the envelope for years to come.



Please find rest of this article on website; www.thewod.net

The WOD EVENTS

THE DREAD FLEET EVENTS: RELAY FOR LIFE

April 20th
Red Mountain High School
7301 East Brown Road, Mesa, Arizona
All Ages

The theme for this charitable event is "The Movies"! Join the crew, join the cause, walk something other than the plank!

PHOENIX COMICON

May 24th - 27th
Phoenix Convention Center
100 North 3rd Street, Phoenix, Arizona
All Ages

Are you plotting your course for Phoenix Comic Con? Well, the Dread Fleet is! Welcomed into port for another year, the DREAD Fleet offers an even more excitement to awe audiences. 2013's hour-long stage performance scripted by J.J.M. Czep (Captain Blackstrap) showcasing the stunt prowess of choreographer Casey Plute as Captain Red Cap. Pirate aligned belly dance troupe bint Hazine (Daughters of Treasure) promise to make an appearance this year, adding sultry moves to the show and maybe even some butt kicking of their own. Special appearance by Captains Maxmillion de Xavier and Theodoric Brandywine cannot be forgotten. Join the crew, every evening at the Phoenix Comic Con!

Images and video from 2012 show can be found at www.theDREADfleet.com

MUD WRESTLING V PRELIMINARIES

June 7th, 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm
Revolver Records
Roosevelt Road, Phoenix, Arizona
18+ Only

Another wild and dirty night with the pirates, wenches, dancers and derby girls! The DREAD Fleet is bringing the fan favorite Pirate Mud Wrestling to a more Metro Phoenix centered location this time around. This is our fifth year getting down and dirty! It is early in the game and this time The DREAD Fleet is seeking volunteers from the public to battle it out in the pit. Ladies, and gentlemen, if this is on your bucket list contact The DREAD Fleet.

MUD WRESTLING V MAIN EVENT

July 27th, 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm
Revolver Records; 18+ Only
Roosevelt Road, Phoenix, Arizona
\$10 pre-sale / \$15 door

Another wild and dirty night with the pirates, wenches, dancers and derby girls! The DREAD Fleet is bringing the fan favorite Pirate Mud Wrestling to a more Metro Phoenix centered location this time around. This is our fifth year getting down and dirty with the Arizona Roller Derby, Arizona Roller Girls, bint Hazine and rumor has it there will be a few Fireland Faeries sliding in.

TALK LIKE A PIRATE DAY VI

September 21st, 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm
Westgate City Center
6770 N. Sunrise Blvd., Glendale, AZ
21+ Bars; All Ages Outdoors
\$10 pre-sale/ \$15 door

Can you believe it? Year six of the great Arizona Talk Like a Pirate Day! Prepare for even more adventure than ever before as The DREAD Fleet brings back Moon and her mermaids, belly dancers from bint Hazine and other local dance troupes, drummers and wandering musicians, sword fights and this year pirate merchants, and Irish dances. Westgate offers a beautiful outdoor center for the festival activities and several pirate friendly bars. Adventure, dancing, wenches, mermaids, and rum; all for a great cause as we raise some booty for The Bergamot Institute!

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

DREADFUL DEATHS

October, 4th & October 11th
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

A performance for the history books! The DREAD Fleet presents some of the most DREADful Deaths throughout history. A great opening to the Halloween season that includes some education with the decapitation.

HOWL-O-WEEN

October 25th - 26th
6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
Phoenix Zoo, Phoenix, Arizona
All Ages

We are here to scare again this year! Enjoy another performance by undead pirates, be spooked by mates who wander free from Davey Jones, and grab some sugary treats and booty from the dead man's chest. For images from last year's Howl-o-Ween check out www.theDREADfleet.com

PIRATE FALL FEAST

November 2nd; All Ages
7:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Time: TBA; Location: TBA

The DREAD Fleet invite you to their secret pirate port for an evening of fine faire, entertainments, dancing, music, games, and of course a live steel tournament with a fine lot of treasure to the winner!

For more information and tickets:
www.eventbrite.com/dreadfeast

Kinky & Geeky in Arizona - for those who combine geeky interests with alternative lifestyles including but not limited to Poly, GLBTQIA, and BDSM. Our munch is the 4th Wednesday of the month at Nello's in Tempe at 7pm, our game night is 2nd Friday at the Denny's on I17 & Dunlap from 6pm onwards. There are other parties and events throughout the year. Find us on Fetlife.

AUTHOR EVENTS

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www.poisonedpen.com

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WRITING WORKSHOPS:

East Valley Writing Workshop
Wednesdays, 6:00 PM
at Village Inn in Mesa, AZ

East Valley Writing Workshop
Every Sunday 1:00 PM at Shadow Mountain Village - Main Clubhouse in Scottsdale, AZ

Publishing, Networking, and Marketing Meetup -- Starting in September on the THIRD Saturday, monthly at Shadow Mountain Village - Main Clubhouse - 2pm - 4pm
8780 E Mckellips Road, Scottsdale, AZ

Spring Writer's Circle Crafting the Query--with Vijaya Schartz

Website: <http://azauthors.com>
Date and Time: April 20, 2013; 9:30 am--Noon; Cost: Free
Cholla Library - on Metro Parkway (the inner loop of Metrocenter Mall) just south of Peoria Avenue and west of the I-17 freeway. Phone: 623-847-9343
Description: Writing Query Letters--Vijaya Schartz--Speaker

The CASFS Book Social

The meetings are now 7PM third Tuesday of the month at Samurai Comics, 1051 East Camelback Road, Phoenix. - Randall Whitlock
Email books@casfs.org

GAMING & COMIC BOOK EVENTS:

HOTACE COMICS & COLLECTIBLES is having many events throughout the year include sword fighting, Magic tournaments, Spiderman and other characters visit the store, Laughing Moon girls signings, Author Book signings, comicbook workshops etc check our website at www.hotacecomics.com for our events listings.

GAME DAZE:

ALL EVENTS CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT: <http://www.gamedaze.com/GameDaze-Whats-Happening.aspx>
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7700 W. Arrowhead Towne Center #2256
Glendale, AZ 85308
CHANDLER FASHION CENTER
3111 W Chandler Blvd #2416
Chandler, AZ 85226
PARADISE VALLEY MALL

4550 E. Cactus Road #302
Phoenix, AZ 85032
SUPERSTITION SPRINGS CENTER
6555 E. Southern Ave. #2026
Mesa, AZ 85206
TUCSON MALL
4500 N. Oracle Road #166
Tucson, AZ 85705
PARK PLACE MALL
5870 E Broadway Blvd # 258
Tucson, AZ 85711

POP CULTURE PARADISE

707 S. Forest Ave. #A, on ASU Campus
Tempe, AZ 85281 (480) 557-6640
Calendar: morethancomics@yahoo.com
or get calendar online at <http://www.popculture-comics.com/>

EMPIRE GAMES

1766 S Greenfield Rd #102, Mesa, AZ
85206 - 480-813-1525
<http://www.empiregamesaz.com/pmwiki.php?n=Main.Calendar>

DRAWN TO COMICS

Marvel vs Capcom 1st Fridays 6pm
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3rd Saturday, 6pm-8pm
Check FaceBook for other events

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GAMER'S INN

Check website for upcoming events

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Federation Commander. 2nd Saturdays, noon
RPGA. 1st Sundays
Monday Night Magic Standard Format. Mon, 7pm.
Boardgames & Demo Nite. Mondays & Thursdays, 6pm.
Magic Drafts. Tues, 7pm
War Machine. Wednesdays, 4pm
Hammerhead 40K Club Meeting. Wed & Thurs, noon
Hammerhead Club 40k tournament. 1st Wed, noon
Magic The Gathering League. Wed, 6pm
Friday Night Magic. Fridays, 7pm

SAMURAI COMICS

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

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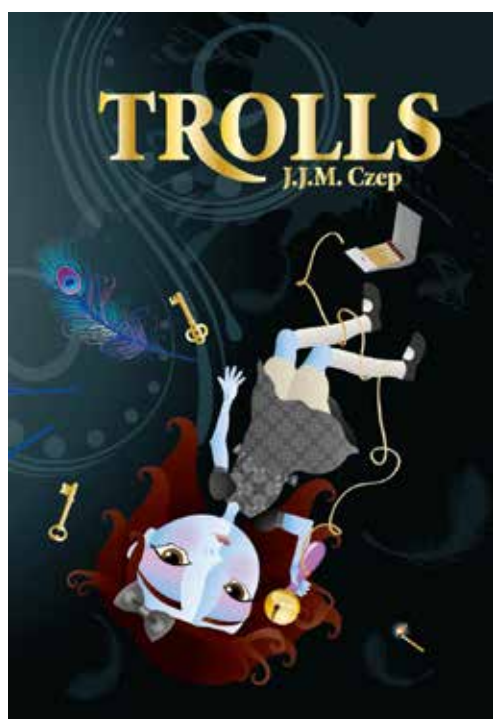
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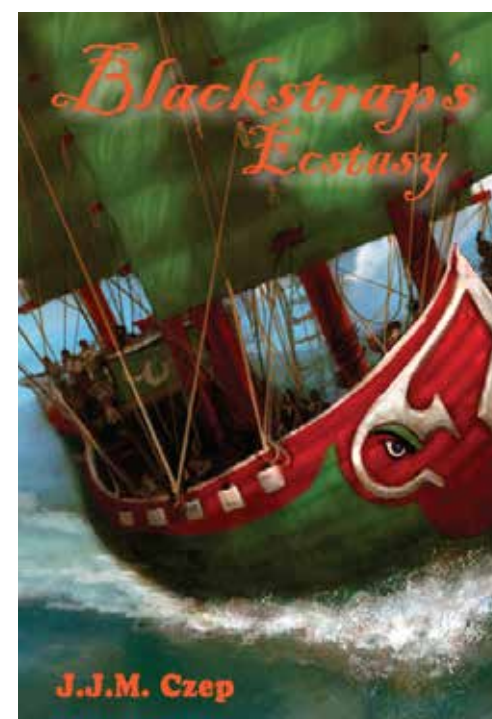


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January Jackson & Friends: The Premiere
By Zonie Felder

Behold how lust and passion can quickly cloud judgment-and how wrong choices will forever change a friendship. These lifelong friends will soon learn that beauty is truly only skin deep as the true ugliness of their souls is revealed by the most horrific of acts and emotions.

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Feature Editorial: Is Bin Laden Alive?

by Michael Bradley

Is Osama Bin Laden alive? Having been in the military and in high levels of government, I tend to discount conspiracy theories. Not because people don't want to conspire and keep secrets, just that they tend to be very bad at it. The more people you have in a conspiracy, the more they want to talk about it, or brag, or let slip the information. Even the logistics involved is difficult. High level people might plan a conspiracy, but teams of low level people tend to be needed for the actual work.

However, there is a point of conjecture that I can't seem to shake. I am surprised others have not posited this before, in fact, the lack of this theory seems to add weight to it. In the disclosures of Seal Team Six, the movie Zero Dark Thirty, the official press releases and statements, they all say Osama Bin Laden was shot, killed, his body flown away, and dumped in the ocean. Photos were taken but not released so as "not to inflame the Muslim world."

Really? I remember the dead bodies of Uday and Qusay Hussein all over the place after their death. Saddam Hussein had a very public trial and hanging. Libyan President Muammar al-Ghadaffi was killed and his pictures blasted all over the internet. Those pictures were used to satisfy the world they were really dead. How did those not inflame the Muslim world? Why did the Benghazi attacks occur and the other embassy demonstrations if not for the killing of Bin Laden? Does anyone think releasing pictures of his body would have hurt? What about the sudden nighttime dumping of his remains in the ocean in some respect to his beliefs?

I have a much more believable

explanation. Osama Bin Laden was wounded and taken alive. There are no death pictures - yet. There was a wealth of information in the compound in Pakistan and even more inside Bin Laden's head. Why not release to the world that he is dead, claim the body was dumped in the ocean, and say you don't want to release the pictures? That way, they can show Bin Laden the newspapers and TV accounts of his death. They can question him at their leisure; after all, no one is looking for him anymore or worried what he might say. After they get what they can they can shoot him, take the pictures, and then finally "decide it has been long enough" to release the pictures.

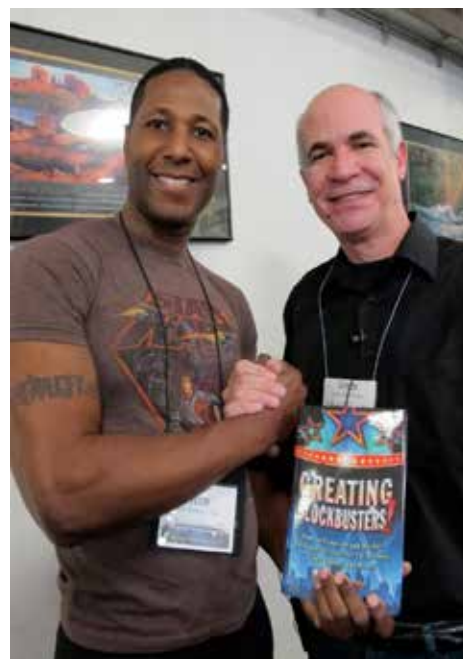
The reason this conspiracy works is that I would have definitely thought of it if I sent in an insertion team to a compound lightly guarded. The only people involved would be some White House folks, the CIA and Seal Team Six. In fact, a helicopter could easily have flown to the aircraft carrier with a body bag and dumped it in the ocean. There was controversy at the time over statements of whether or not one or more of his wives were killed or captured. Maybe one of them was in the bag, or maybe they are alive and talking right now.

It's just speculation on my part and will never be proven one way or another. The only part of the whole story that everyone tells from the same script is the death of Bin Laden. Like viewers of an accident scene, everyone sees things differently and relates them in different terms. Talking points that agree so precisely make me think of an "official line." In this case, I hope my theory is correct and that Bin Laden spills out information before he is really shot.


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PREVIEW OF THE 2013 HORROR FILM FESTIVAL

By Hal C F Astell



The first film festival I ever attended was the 2007 International Horror & Sci-Fi Film Festival and I've been hooked on the things ever since. It's all your fault, Brian Pulido, for starting the event and being so welcoming to someone who didn't have a clue what he was getting into. Many thanks!

While it used to be held separately and it continues to maintain its own identity, the International Horror & Sci-Fi Film Festival rolled into the scheduling of its sister event, the Phoenix Film Festival, in 2011 and it's back for its ninth year this April at the Cine Capri at Harkins Scottsdale 101. The Phoenix Film Festival opens on Thursday, 4th April and its darker half kicks off on the Friday morning with a mostly dedicated theatre this year to ensure maximum horror/sci-fi viewing pleasure.

The team behind the wild and wacky, dark and delightful, terrible and terrifying selections has remained consistent for years and they all remain enthusiastic year on year.

Festival director Andrea Beesley, better known as the Midnite Movie Mamacita, is responsible for landing the special guests and programming the showcase features, of which there are eight this year.

Five are new movies, including *The Ghastly Love of Johnny X*, which she's looking forward to most. It looks like a riot of a picture, a 50s style sci-fi comedy musical romp that she describes as 'a lot of fun'. To nail the authenticity, it was shot on the last of Kodak's black and white film stock. Many of the cast and crew will be in attendance; director Paul Bunnell, composer Ego Plum and actor Aaron Ball will give away posters during a post-screening Q&A on Friday, 4th April. Star Will Keenan, who plays the title character, will be there for the second screening on Wednesday, 10th.

Other new features include *Errors of the Human Body*, *Kiss of the Damned* and the Chinese action thriller, *The Four*. Especially worthy of mention is the wickedly fascinating filmed stage performance, *Play Dead*, centred around stage magician Todd Robbins, who co-wrote with Teller of Penn & Teller fame. Teller, the half of that act who never speaks on stage, will presumably speak at the festival when he introduces the film and performs a Q&A. Who knows what he might get up to there!

The other three pictures Beesley programmed are classics that span the genres to which the festival is dedicated. On the sci-fi side is the 1969 giant monster gem,

Gamera vs Giron, which was awesome fun when I saw it at FilmBar during one of Damon Foster's recent Tokusatsu Theater presentations. Representing horror is the first *Saw* movie which in 2004 began the highest grossing horror franchise ever, not to mention the entire torture porn genre. In attendance will be its executive producer, Peter Block, who is now the president and general manager of FEARnet, one of the festival sponsors.

The third classic spans genres all on its own. It's the underrated 1988 John Carpenter sci-fi action thriller, *They Live*. Beesley isn't the only one looking forward to this. So's Danny Marianino, who programs the horror side of the festival with his partner in crime, Brandon Kinchen. When I asked him what he was looking forward to most, he said, 'I am really excited for *They Live*. It's my favorite movie. And at the Phoenix Film Festival I plan to chew bubble gum and kick ass.'

I'm a huge fan of *They Live* too, which seems more timely with each year that passes; it will seem eerily familiar to new viewers, given the Occupy movement, pepper spraying cops and corporate personhood. Beyond seeing it on the big screen for the first time, I'm also looking forward to meeting Meg Foster again, as she'll be at the festival to introduce the film, answer questions and sign autographs. Not only is she one of the stars of the film, she's one of the most genuine people in show

business. My better half and I cherished every moment we spent with her at the last DarkCon.

Marianino and Kinchen, who run *ICanSmellYourBrains.com*, got three slots for horror features this year, one up on 2012. Similarly, sci-fi programmer and acclaimed author Michael Stackpole got to choose three sci-fi features instead of two, including *Space Milkshake*, a hilarious comedy with George Takei, Amanda Tapping and Billy Boyd trying to be Simon Pegg. Tapping will be at Phoenix Comicon this year; it would be hilarious if a lot of folk talk to her about *Space Milkshake* instead of her more established TV work.

In addition to features, there are plenty of shorts to choose from. The quality of genre short films has grown notably over the last few years, especially on the sci-fi side. There are two sets of sci-fi shorts programmed, sourced from a few different countries and I'm especially looking forward to these, as I haven't seen any of them yet.

I have seen a few of the horror shorts, enough to agree with Marianino when he says, 'the shorts get better and better and this year's ensemble is phenomenal. If you come to the Phoenix Film Festival and skip the horror shorts, you are really missing out.' *Midnight Daisy* is worth the price of admission alone, but *The Root of the Problem* is great fun and I'm hearing a lot of praise about *Killer Kart*. Even if only one set of horror shorts is programmed, it's



a must.

As with most Phoenix Film Festival selections, most of the features and blocks of shorts are screened twice, so if you can't get in to the first showing, you'll get a second shot. The showcase features especially take over the Phoenix Film Festival late at night and run through the second week.

You can't buy a pass just for the International Horror & Sci-Fi Film Festival but a full Phoenix Film Festival pass will allow you to see most of it. If you want to focus only on the major events, you could pick up a few flex passes, but get in line early to ensure you get a seat, especially for *They Live*. I think everyone I know will be waiting with you. See you there!

Hal C F Astell writes film reviews at Apocalypse Later; from the 1900s to the 2010s, with a focus on what most critics don't review. For the Frankenweenie feature, visit Roger Ebert. For the original 1984 short version Tim Burton made at Disney, not to mention the odd stuff he was doing before that in his spare time, visit Apocalypse Later.

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MOVING PICTURES: WHY MOVIES MATTER

By Matthew Yenkala

Hello there, you.

Allow myself to introduce...myself. I am Matthew Yenkala, fondly known to the scene kids as "Matteo", and I'd like to welcome you to my new column for THE WOD, Moving Pictures—where I will discuss and review movies (in addition to my other contributions in the wider range of popular culture, nightlife, arts & entertainment).

I was recently asked, "Why do movies matter so much to you?" And in answering that question, I discovered the entire *raison d'être* for this column—and the name I've chosen for it.

I love stories. I'm a born story teller, and story listener. I believe that stories are life, and that life's lessons and truths can be contained in them. In this I am hardly saying something new; our entire history, our many cultures and religions and mythologies, are all bound up in the stories we tell to convey our perceptions of life, the universe and everything from one generation to the next.

I'm also a sensualist; I love to FEEL things, and I love things that MAKE me feel. To that end, I am, among other things, an overall media/entertainment junkie. I love books. I love music. I love comics. I love live productions (concerts, plays, comedy shows). And yes, there is plenty of television I've loved, as well.

But I love movies the most because they combine the best elements of all those things—and they are forever. Movies, at the very least, should entertain. And some movies, that's all they need to do. And that's fine.

But movies have the capacity to do so much more. They can educate; inform; enlighten. Cause you to see things from different perspectives. Inspire you to think, and to feel, and perhaps even to take action.

And I want to feel. When I see a movie, I want it to take me someplace I haven't been, tell me things I didn't know--or show me places I have been, things I DO know, from a different perspective. Or occasionally, as in the case of a beloved book adapted for the screen, solidify (or clarify) what my own vision of it was. And sometimes, just provide me with something familiar—cinematic comfort food.

Movies can do all of that.

Of course, with books you have the freedom of imagination, which is wonderful and essential and I would never, ever deny that. I certainly don't

think that once a good cinematic version of a great book exists that the book needs to disappear. Far from it. I have an entire shelf of Tolkien books going back to when I was 12 years old that would argue otherwise. (Of course, I also dreamt that I'd be the one to make those movies, someday...)

But even so, movies can capture, encapsulate, distill the essence of something—and idea, an experience, a lesson, or just simply a story—and present it in a form which ANYONE can understand. They can convey words, feelings, ideas, concepts, perceptions which break language and cultural barriers.

Does it involve art? Yes. Craft? Yes. Skill? Yes. Intelligence? Yes. Talent, taste? Well...sometimes. Passion? Hopefully. At its best, no matter the level of all those other elements...it should be something the filmmaker, the storyteller, is passionate about.

Is there a seamy underbelly to the business? Of course there is. I'm friends with many people in the industry. I've seen and heard of some pretty shady

things. I'm under no delusions about the nature of this beast.

But in spite of, perhaps even partially because of, all that, art, beauty and truth can still come through at times, and it can still be moving. And fun.

And THAT'S what I love. I love being moved. And entertained. And if both happen at the same time—well, that's a bonus.

So when the chance came to write this column, I jumped at it, because it combines movies with my other love—writing, or rather, sharing my thoughts, feelings and opinions. And because I have my own stories to

tell, my own moving pictures to create, there's no better launching pad than right here, right now.

I hope you enjoy the ride.

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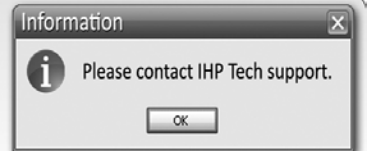
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DOODLING IN 3 DIMENSIONS

By Donald Jacques



Technology is a wonderful thing! I have admired over the years the inspiring creations of those with artistic and/or crafty talents. First, it was small hand tools that afforded greater control of the artisan, from the hammer and chisel, to discrete wood carving tools, and the simple knitting needles, that were expanded on to create sewing machines.

Over the years we have seen glues that allow hemming of garments to be done in less time; we've seen tubes of colored paste-like material for drawing on cloth rather than the painfully slow stitching it used to take. Today, we

have silkscreen and iron-ons that afford even the most creatively-challenged individuals to show off creations that ooh, and awe their friends. But three-dimensional works were reserved for sculptors. But no more!

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device (<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1351910088/3doodler-the-worlds-first-3d-printing-pen>) that offers the operator the opportunity to doodle in three-dimensions! Let your imagination rise off the desktop and into the hands of those you would share it with!

Ahem. Yeah ... right. I hate hype, but I gotta say, that as a product, the 3Doodler offers a lot of promise. The photos on their Kickstarter page show just a few of the possibilities that someone with a little patience, and "digital-dexterity" can come up with. The 3Doodler is an interesting idea, and using the basis of 3D printing tech, appears to deliver a potentially fun new way for creating.

WOD

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MOVIE REVIEW: THE HOST

Reviewer Rating: 3 stubs

Rated PG-13/125 mins/Science Fiction
Director & Writer: Andrew Niccol (based on the novel by Stephanie Meyer)

I mention the following in keeping with the rules of my reviews: I plan to always admit both my biases (if any) and my familiarity, or lack thereof, with a movie's source material (where applicable) upfront, so that my review can be understood in proper context.

I do my utmost to go into every movie I see with few-to-no expectations, and as little baggage as possible, for the simple reason--to paraphrase Arizona's own Gin Blossoms--that if you don't expect too much, you might not get let down. I also strive to judge each movie on its own terms. Sometimes, this is easier said than done. For example, I'm admitting way in advance that this summer's upcoming SUPERMAN reboot, MAN OF STEEL, has a huge uphill battle before it proves itself to me. Not only am I generationally attached to the Donner/Reeve films (which inspired Singer, Raimi and Nolan's superhero franchises), but I'm simply not a fan of director Zack Snyder, who in his recent career has miraculously managed to keep failing upward. But I must admit, the trailers look kinda cool, so I'm going to empty my head of expectations and try to look at it with fresh eyes. And maybe I won't be let down.

Another example is TWILIGHT author Stephanie Meyer, who wrote the novel upon which THE HOST is based. It suffices to say that I'm not a huge fan. But even so, THE HOST was a somewhat unexpectedly pleasant surprise. Directed, and with a screenplay adapted by, GATTACA director (and TERMINAL/TRUMAN SHOW writer) Andrew Niccol, it is a (for now) self-contained story, as opposed to the TWILIGHT juggernaut's cumbersome, pseudo-intricate mythology; so even

though it still comes somewhat tainted by association with the word processor that created Sparkly Mormon Vampires and hunky but wooden werewolves stuck in teenage-girl-fantasy love triangles; and the core idea is an old sci-fi trope that's been used by everything from INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS to virtually every sci-fi TV show-- it's still an immediately more appealing prospect than Meyer's other cinematic progeny.

So as THE HOST begins, the Earth is at peace--but it's a false peace enforced by the fact that the vast majority of humankind has been possessed by glowing, wispy space aliens (known as Souls) who inhabit our bodies, a process which--apparently--destroys the host's personality, though it does give them super-neat glowing white eyes (which makes distinguishing a Soul from a Human easy for all concerned).

Except that some hosts fight back. One such is Melanie (HANNA's Saoirse Ronan), who in the opening moments is inhabited by a peaceful, gentle Soul known as Wanderer. (Ronan plays both characters, expressing Wanderer through dialogue, facial expressions and body language and Melanie through a disconnected voiceover.) In Melanie, it's refreshing to see that Meyer can actually create a female hero with some pluck who ISN'T just a victim of circumstance and hormones. (Well, mostly. Stand by.)

Spurred by Melanie's need to protect her younger brother Jamie (Chandler Canterbury) and her lover Jared (Max Irons), Wanderer refuses to cooperate with the interrogators, or Seekers, and escapes into the desert, where her "Crazy Old Uncle" Jeb (William Hurt) and a small band of unpossessed humans is fomenting a resistance against the invaders.

Cue the playing out of the standard "She's one of them, we've got to kill her!"/"No, there's something different about

her, let's give her a chance" scenario that gets her inside their defenses, where slowly begins the "we're not so different after all" dance--during which, of course, she ends up in a love triangle. (What it says about Ms. Meyer, that her female protagonists always seem to end up the object of desire/contention of multiple brooding males, I shall leave to the professionals; I'm an armchair shrink at best.) Actually, Meyer one-ups herself this time by making it a four-sided triangle--the disembodied Melanie, still in love with Jared, and Wanderer, who develops her own feelings for resistance fighter Ian (Jake Abel). I won't spoil the resolution, but plenty of awkward wackiness ensues.

But one Seeker (Diane Kruger) is, for her own reasons, obsessed with Melanie/Wanderer, and Will Stop At Nothing to find her, even defying her fellow Souls, to pursue, capture and incarcerate the renegade Wanderer into the desert, which provides a few nice car chases and some decently impressive action scenes and also moves us closer to what passes for the film's central message: possession is wrong!

As Wanderer begins to question her own and her people's entire mode of existence, and the story builds towards its inevitable climax, THE HOST actually manages to achieve a level of tension and emotional catharsis that five TWILIGHT films somehow managed to miss--although leave it to Meyer to craft a pivotal scene in which All Depends Upon Who Kisses Who. (Though for all I know, not having read the novel, that scene was Niccol's creation.)

There is even a somewhat jarring narrative tag set several months after what could have been a perfectly serviceable, if clichéd, dénouement, which while resolving itself in pat fashion, nevertheless at least teases the prospect of yanking the rug out from under the audience's expectations. Given the source material, it's amazing the film achieves even that much ballsiness.

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala



For which I give all credit to Niccol's direction and Ronan's performance.

Speaking of whom, it has to be said that she does a damned impressive job in a role that could have easily been mishandled. The male leads are both stiff as a board, but Hurt, not *quite* phoning it in, is reliably solid, and anchors the film with a dignity and gravitas again lacking from TWILIGHT. And Kruger's Seeker actually manages to be a credibly menacing screen villain.

The film's visuals work nicely, my favorite aspect of this being in the design: the Seeker vehicles are a sleek, eye-catching silver, and appropriate for the Dystopian nature of the Soul civilization, all the Seekers are dressed uniformly in spotless white suits--just don't stare at them in that desert sunlight, because you might go blind. Also, fans of 1984's REPO MAN will note a fun (though probably unintentional) homage to that film when the human survivors go foraging at their local Store.

In the end, THE HOST won't make you forget that there have been better iterations of its main concept. But I've seen much worse sci-fi films in recent years, and it certainly succeeds over its vampy/wolffy brethren by simply knowing its own limitations and making the most of its modest ambitions. Given its lineage, that's much more than this reviewer could have ever expected.

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MOVIE REVIEW: THE INCREDIBLE BURT WONDERSTONE

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Reviewer Rating: 3 stubs

Rated PG-13/100 mins/Comedy

Director: Don Scardino Writers:
Jonathan M. Goldstein & John Francis
Daley

From the outset, *THE INCREDIBLE BURT WONDERSTONE* seems to be a riff on *BLADES OF GLORY*: the oddball pairing of two disparate competitors in the same slightly-off-center arena (in this case, the world of glitzy, glossy Las Vegas magic shows). The film's advertising sets it up that way, leading audiences to expect Steve Carrell's pampered, preening prima donna Burt Wonderstone and Jim Carrey's "gritty street magician" Steve Gray to overcome their differences, hug it out and save the day in a rousing climax. Refreshingly, the movie goes in a slightly different direction. Oh, it hits most of those beats. But they don't play out quite as predictably as might have been expected.

Wonderstone is at a career impasse: he's headlined a sold-out show in Vegas for a decade, ably assisted by his long-suffering best friend/foil/fop, Anton Marvelton (Steve Buscemi) and a succession of female assistants whom he invariably calls by the same (wrong) name, "Brenda". But

when audiences decline and his credibility is threatened by the "gritty" Steve Gray's gimmicky Jackass-brand of "street magic", Anton gets fed up and walks, as does the current "Brenda" (Olivia Wilde), leaving Wonderstone at a loss. His show canceled, his formerly platinum name now worth almost nothing, he's forced to take any gig he can get, leading him to an old folks' home where—conveniently—his original inspiration to get into magic, Rance Holloway (Alan Arkin) happens to be a resident. There Wonderstone must recover and rediscover his mojo before Carrey's Gray permanently takes his place on the Vegas strip.

From there, it all plays out as might be expected. (It's all formula, but consider the next paragraph spoilery.) Wonderstone regains his humility, Anton comes back into the fold, and thanks to a convenient plot twist, "Brenda" (the character's actual name is Jane) shows up just in time to be romanced by Wonderstone, while the arrogant, vapid Steve Gray's ultimate trick backfires comically on himself.

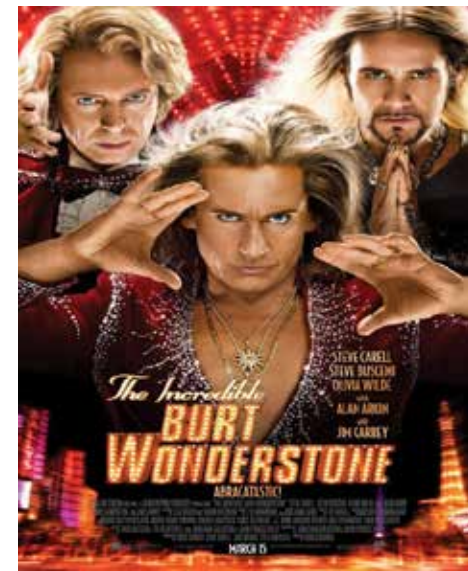
In the end, there's really not much here you haven't seen, but some of the twists are nice, the cast is excellent, and the magic—supervised by the legendary David Copperfield—is fun to watch. (Apparently director Scardino insisted on as many of the sleight-of-hand tricks being traditionally staged as possible

rather than relying on CGI.)

The real fun in this movie is seeing the top-notch cast play off of each other. A particular standout is a scene at a child's birthday party where Carrell and Carrey go head to head, trying to top each other to win the favor of the boy's father, who happens to be opening a new casino and showroom and is using the party as a soft audition. The scene's final punchline is... well, it involves a puppy. That's all I'll say.

Throughout the film, Carrell successfully transitions Wonderstone from unlikable to sympathetic; Buscemi and Arkin are their usual brilliant selves; and Wilde just gets better in every movie she's in, regardless of the quality or nature of the material. But the real magic here is Carrey, who is utterly convincing as the fairly reprehensible Steve Gray—a supporting role that all but steals the show.

(It's truly sad that, like Rodney Dangerfield, it seems Carrey don't get no respect; his performance as Truman was heartbreaking, and the snubbing of his portrayal of Andy Kaufman remains a black mark on the Academy, matched only recently by the exclusion of Ben Affleck's direction on *ARGO*. It's as if, after realizing his own industry seemed to want to punish him for being TOO talented and not limiting himself to the



broad farces with which he established himself, he just gave up. Hopefully his turn in *WONDERSTONE* and the upcoming *KICK ASS 2* will bring him back into the spotlight and afford him some acting opportunities that will bring him the critical credibility he's long deserved and been unfairly denied.)

In any case, Wonderstone's magic show is a fun ride and well worth taking. Oh, and don't leave when the credits start rolling. There's a very funny sequence showing how the film's climactic trick was achieved. But be warned, you may never want to attend a REAL magic show again....

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: G.I. JOE RETALIATION

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Reviewer Rating: 3 1/2 stubs

Rated PG-13/110 mins/Science

Fiction-Action

Director: John M. Chu Writers: Rhett
Reese, John M. Wernick

While I suppose I'm generationally the right age to have grown up with G.I. Joe, I'll be honest: by the time Hasbro's multiplatform juggernaut was underway, I was already onto more typical teen pursuits (both hormonal and intellectual). So while I was plenty aware of it, I've never had any particular interest in, or youthful attachment to, the property. I didn't even see the first film, 2009's *THE RISE OF COBRA*, in the theater, and the DVD sat unwatched on my shelf until shortly before writing this review of its sequel, *RETALIATION*.

I usually dislike jumping into an ongoing story with little prior knowledge, but in this case that lack of knowledge did no harm whatsoever. The filmmakers wisely made a film that can (mostly) stand on its own, and as such, I was able to go in cold, unburdened by weighty continuity and franchise expectations, and judge the movie entirely on its own merits. And on those merits, I have to say it was a lot of fun to watch.

The movie doesn't waste much time

setting things up. While on a secret mission in foreign territory, the G.I. Joes, a crack black ops military squad, are framed and subsequently wiped out on the orders of the US President (Jonathan Pryce). Only three of them manage to survive: Roadblock (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson), Flint (D.J. Cotrona) and Lady Jaye (Adrienne Palicki), who set out to discover who betrayed them and why. Ultimately, it turns out to have been—shock, horror!—their old nemesis Cobra Commander (Luke Bracey) and his assorted allies. Vowing to exact revenge for their fallen compatriots, the Ro(adblo)ck leads them to the only man who can help, the original G.I. Joe himself, appropriately played by—who else?—Bruce Willis.

You know...I could spend time talking about the Maguffin (a briefcase that contains nuclear warheads or something), the fight scenes (especially an excellent highwire-in-the-mountains battle with some Ninjas or something), or how, absolutely stunning in a red dress, Palicki has to con the "President" for...something or other. I could single out the visuals, the martial arts choreography (Ray Park's Snake Eyes and Byung-hun Lee's Storm Shadow are both spectacular), or even the not-bad 3D. But really, in a movie like this, what's the point? It's a popcorn flick; you know what you're getting.

Yeah, there is some stuff about honor and duty and betrayal and patriotism, conveying a little bit of emotional grist, but it's hardly jingoistic. Really, this is a Guy's "Let's Blow Shit Up" fantasy all the way. And on that level, it delivers. You (mostly) know who the good guys and bad guys are, and other than the escaping Cobra Commander (gotta make that third film, after all), everyone gets what they deserve. (I found the final battle between Johnson and gung-ho ex-Joe Firefly, played by Ray Stevenson, to be particularly satisfying.)

I WILL say that Dwayne Johnson has come a long way, acting-wise, from *THE SCORPION KING*; that Channing Tatum is appealing in his few minutes of screen time (apparently it would have been even fewer prior to the post-MAGIC MIKE reshoots that scuttlebutt says is the REAL culprit behind the studio's decision to push this film from last Summer to this Spring), and that Jonathan Pryce is his usual brilliant self as both (SPOILER ALERT) the captive President and the shape-shifting (or whatever) Zartan, who took his place in the Oval Office. Willis, of course, is Willis, and exactly what you expect (and thus he doesn't disappoint); and watching Palicki actually makes me Wonder what this Woman might have been capable of, given the chance to further portray a certain superheroine on the small screen. (See what I did there?)



I believe there's a place for most everything in the film world, from thoughtful art films, scrappy indies, period epics and thud-and-blunder spectacle like G.I. Joe. It's not Hitchcock, Lynch, Lean or even Spielberg but...so what? It's simple, unpretentious, testosterone-driven, shut-your-brain-off fun. And in the end, there's nothing wrong with that.

Oh, and I did watch the first film after seeing this one. Not bad, but I liked this one better. But hopefully they can resurrect SOME of the characters from the first film for the next one. Put Rachel Nicholls and Adrienne Palicki on screen together, and I'll be first in line for the midnight premiere.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Reviewer Rating: 3 1/2 stubs

Rated PG/130 mins/Fantasy
Director: Sam Raimi Writers:
Mitchell Kapner, David Lindsay-
Abaire & Mitchell Kapner (based on
the works of L. Frank Baum)

L. Frank Baum's classic OZ stories have been transformed memorably and magically to the screen exactly once, in the famous 1939 MGM musical that is, for most, their first and only excursion into this remarkable fantasy world. But that hasn't stopped any number of others from trying crack the Oz code again, from Gregory Maguire's "Wicked Years" novels (and their glitzier spinoff, the "Wicked" musical), Steve Ahlquist's twisted "OZ Squad" comics, and any number of other extrapolations over virtually every media platform, extending back the better part of the last century. Disney themselves, who bought the rights to most of Baum's original OZ books during Walt's heyday, attempted this once before, with 1985's RETURN TO OZ—a visually striking and thematically faithful adaptation of the first two books after THE WIZARD, which also gave Fairuza Balk her first starring role, filling Judy Garland's famous ruby slippers as Dorothy. But it melted at the box office faster than a wicked witch in a bathtub.

Flash forward to 2013. Following the success of the Burton/Depp ALICE IN

WONDERLAND, the Mouse apparently sees value in another attempted reboot. And why not? With the OZ stories now in the public domain, and director Sam Raimi's proven commercial track record in tow, what do they have to lose by trying, other than the approximately 200-million-dollar budget?

But rather than adapt one of the existing books, they opted to tell an untold tale—how the Wizard came to OZ. Oh, sure, there are bits and bobs of background in the book and the MGM film (the style of which the Disney people had to find a way to emulate without duplicating, since it is NOT in the public domain).

So—Kansas carnival magician/ladies' man/con artist Oscar Zoroaster Diggs (OZ—get it?) is whisked off from his colorless existence to a magical, vibrant land when his hot air balloon collides with a great big twister. He's greeted by a lovely witch (Mila Kunis) as the prophesied savior of Oz. Buther sister-witch, played by Rachel Weisz, quickly spirits our Wizard off to kill the "Wicked" Witch (Michelle Johnson) who's plaguing the land.

Of course, all is not as it seems. Very soon OZ is embroiled in political machinations and a veritable peoples' uprising—even if the people happen to be very small, very old, and very unfit to do much except sing songs and sew scarecrow heads.

The film plays out predictably, and more-or-less puts everyone where they

need to be at the beginning of the original "WIZARD OF OZ" story, while leaving the door wide open for plenty of further exploits in Oz before Dorothy Gale's house drops down on the Wicked Witch of the East.

While it IS an "original" story, there are plenty of affectionate homages to Baum and MGM. But by and large, they were creating from whole cloth, using Baum's books and the MGM film as a template and jumping off point. Theoretically, not being bound to "an original story" should have been remarkably freeing, creatively speaking, but of course, that's not how the real world works. There is more than a hint of lazy storytelling, since the last half-to-third of the film is basically and OZian retelling of Raimi's own Army of Darkness, and ultimately the film never comes close to catching that MGM magic.

Which isn't to say the movie is devoid of charms. While Franco sleepwalks through the role of OZ and the usually appealing Kunis feels completely miscast, the supporting cast is extremely effective. This includes Zach Braff as flying monkey/manservant Finley, the always reliable Tony Cox is solid as a munchkin rebel leader, and Joey King as a little China Doll girl, who will absolutely break your heart. Raimi-stable mainstay Bruce Campbell gets a very fun cameo. And Weisz is truly wicked indeed, chewing up the scenery with great aplomb. One hopes she will get center stage in any followup. The film is visually stunning, and is



particularly effective in 3D (and I say that as someone who's not generally thrilled with 3D), and I think I even caught a previously unfamiliar chord or two in Danny Elfman's score. (Way to go, Danny!)

Despite its flaws, on the surface at least, the film is a lot of fun, and definitely worth seeing in on the big screen with good sound, ideally in 3D.

Even so, speaking as a fan of the original books, I can only hope that someday, HBO or Showtime will do a "Game of Thrones"-style, serialized adaptation of Maguire's "Wicked Years" series (with not a trace of influence from the musical they inspired). That's the one OZ derivative I am fairly certain Baum himself would have loved.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: THE CALL

Reviewer Rating: 3 stubs

Rated R/94 mins/Thriller
Director: Brad Anderson
Writers: Richard D'Ovidio, Nicole
D'Ovidio & Jon Bokenkamp

THE CALL gets off to a brisk start. Halle Berry is Jordan Turner, a 911 operator in L.A., working out of "The Hive", where she and hundreds of other headsetted helpers dispatch first responders to all variety of dire situations. But when she allows herself to get a little too involved in one particular call—a strict no-no—it goes disastrously wrong, resulting in the death of a young girl. She blames herself and so do her superiors, who demote her to a training position.

But when circumstances conspire to demonstrate that the prior call may have been part of a serial killer's larger pattern, she's back on the headset, propping up Abigail Breslin's Casey, a naïve, privileged Valley Girl who was selected as the killer's next target.

Casey is riding in the killer's trunk, with a cell phone her abductor failed to notice. For the better part of an hour, the suspense and tension, as Jordan tries to calm Casey down and get her to think her way out of the trunk and away from the killer, is genuinely edge-of-your-seat-gripping.

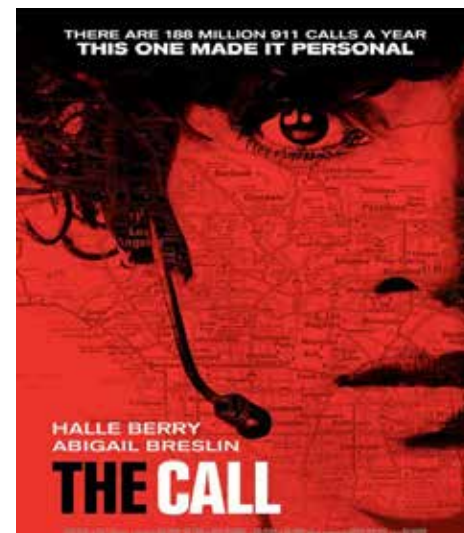
Unfortunately, the film takes a sharp turn at the beginning of act three. Despite all her efforts to pinpoint the killer, the authorities reach a dead end in tracking the car, so Jordan leaves the desk and goes out in the field. Of course, she finds the hidden trapdoor that they missed, and, having deduced the killer's motive and modus operandi, sets out to confront him. No spoilers here, but suffice it to say that while the film's final scene is genuinely shocking on first view, its lingers like a bad taste—because it makes absolutely no sense.

Even so, when THE CALL WORKS, it works well indeed, despite its problematic denouement. Brad

Anderson's direction manages to keep it from being an extended Law & Order episode. Berry is at her best when she underplays a role, as she does during most of this film, and Breslin is convincing right up until the very end. In a crop of generic procedural thrillers, THE CALL stands tall.

WOD

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala



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MOVIE REVIEW: OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN

Review Rating: 3 and a half stubs

Rated R/120 mins/Action/Political Thriller

Director: Antoine Fuqua Writers: Creighton Rothenberger, Katrin Benedikt

Gerard Butler plays ex-special-forces trained Secret Service agent Mike Banning, forced into a desk job after failing to save the life of the First Lady (Ashley Judd). 18 months later he's in the right place at the right time when a group of North Korean terrorists launch an all-out attack against Washington D.C., targeting the White House (codename: Olympus), the President (Aaron Eckhart) and his senior staff.

With all the President's men out of action, Banning swiftly becomes the man inside, fighting terrorists, trying

to rescue the President's son (Finley Jacobsen), and contending with the conflicting directions from Acting President (Morgan Freeman) and Robert Forster's pompous, hard-nosed military bureaucrat.

Director Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") manages to balance the action and the tension, and mostly keeps things believable despite the implausible premise. The cast (which also includes the long-suffering Dylan McDermott in a pivotal role and the truly impressive Rick Yune as terrorist leader Kang) acquits itself solidly, except for Eckhart's President, who comes across as unconvincingly weak, and Butler himself, who seems just *slightly* miscast (though given he also produced, another actor in the role would have been unlikely). He's relatively devoid of passion or wit, and his one-liners just don't play.

The visual effects are excellent and the cinematography is competent if unimaginative, though in my screening a number of scenes seemed a bit darker than they needed to be. The music score is unmemorable. And the movie earns its R-rating with some pretty brutal violence and plenty of F-bombs.

The most striking thing about OLYMPUS, however, which will hit anyone familiar with the classics of the genre almost instantly, is that it is basically a thinly redressed DIE HARD--and with a few tweaks it could *easily* have been "Die Hard In The White House". Indeed, given the lackluster performance of the last couple DIE HARD flicks (especially the most recent), one almost wishes it had been. On the other hand, if it performs well, Butler may well have his own new franchise on his hands. In that case, prepare for the increasingly

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala



diminishing returns of the inevitable sequels.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: SPRING BREAKERS

Reviewed by Matthew Yenkala

Reviewers Rating: 4 stubs

Rated R/94 mins/Teen Comedy/Crime Drama

Director & Writer: Harmony Korine

The title, the poster art, and the release date (right in the middle of March), all serve to foster the impression that this film is a throwback to the heyday of boozy, naughty "Spring Break" comedies of the 80s, with titles "Fraternity Vacation", "Malibu Bikini Shop", and "Hot Dog...The Movie" and little redeeming value of any kind except perhaps to horny teenage boys and Mr. Skin. These movies follow a fairly well-trodden path: a group of misfit guys (or girls), tired of the rigid strictures of boring school and home life, adventure off, seeking Ultimate Hedonistic Fulfillment on their spring break, usually at some idealized, mythical beach, almost invariably in Florida. Throw in plenty of gratuitous female nudity, wild party shots of drunken kids carrying on, and a thinly-drawn "villain" of one kind or another whose sole purpose is to End Everyone's Fun, and voila...you've just created something that will live forever in late-night cable reruns.

Right out of the gate, the first few minutes of director/writer Harmony Korine's SPRING BREAKERS not only don't dispel this notion, they proclaim it bolder than it's ever been proclaimed before. The booze flows plentifully and the boobs are bouncier than anything you EVER saw in the

80s. And yet... the images are displayed in a surreal, slow-motion blur, and set against a score that gives your first hint that this may not turn out to be the movie you think it is (similar to what CABIN IN THE WOODS achieved last year).

We're quickly introduced to Faith (Selena Gomez), Brit (Ashley Benson), Candy (Vanessa Hudgens) and Cotty (Rachel Korine), four college friends desperate to make it to the Spring Break Mecca of the Sunshine State that they'll do just about anything (once they're done doing each other) to get there.

Actually, back up. Bieber-bait Gomez is the exception—she's the Good Girl Who Thinks She Might Be A Bad Girl, because she secretly smokes and isn't all that thrilled by her rock-n-roll-Jesus church. She's set up as the movie's conscience, and is left out of the happenings when her girlfriends steal a car and violently rob a restaurant in order to fund their trip. By this time, you KNOW the movie is not what it appears.

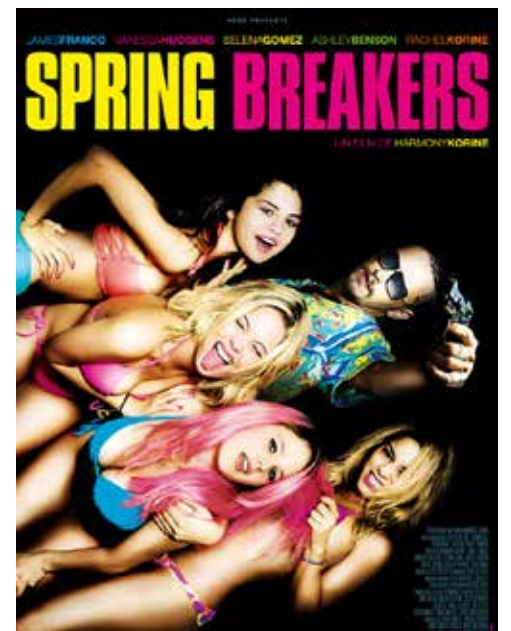
But the deed done, the foursome hits the road, hits the beach, and hits the party scene, hardcore, immersing themselves in the kind of hedonism that most can only dream about, and which makes those 80s teen movies seem more like the Disney fare that bred Gomez and Hudgens. This s**t's for real, yo. Booze, boobs, coke—and not the carbonated kind—infuse the wild times, fueled by a soundtrack of hip-hop, dubstep and techno.

Then the inevitable Dark Turn hits, with the girls getting into a sticky mess that only a superhero could extract them from. And that superhero turns out to be none other than a cornrolled, silver-teethed James Franco, Spidey's buddy no longer. He's a badass white boy rapper raised on the wrong side of the hood, a hip hop Scarface flush with guns, money and street cred galore, and claiming to be from another planet—hence his nom de plume, Alien.

Gomez's Faith is sufficiently freaked out by these events, and by Alien's extremely creepy and manipulative attempt to seduce her, that she tearfully bids goodbye to her girlfriends and hops the next bus home, convinced that something bad is going to happen. And there goes the movie's conscience. The other girls are prepared to go with Alien all the way down, and they do—in every possible way.

The rest of the film is an orgy of brutal violence and eroticism, a paean to the questionable values of the street culture and its concomitant rampant materialism (and the allure of same), and an absolutely fascinating character study of how much (or little) it takes for human nature to turn on itself—Lord of the Flies for the Skrillex generation. By the time it reaches its inevitable-in-retrospect conclusion, you're definitely in a different place than you were at the beginning the film.

The film owes a huge stylistic and cinematic debt to the early 90s—



you definitely catch a whiff of True Romance and The Doom Generation, and there's one exceptionally Lynchian moment early in the film of a succession of abandoned college rooms.

The performances of the girls are extremely naturalistic and believable, but it's Franco who deserves all praise here. Honestly, if you didn't know who it was, you'd be forgiven for thinking he was someone they just found. He disappears into the role so completely that I will never underestimate him again.

I'm still pondering what the takeaway from this film was meant to be, if anything. But I can say that it IS a triumph of style AND substance—yes, they can and do coexist. And if you can handle the journey, it's one worth taking.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: ZERO DARK THIRTY

Reviewed by Michael Bradley

Zero Dark Thirty is the story of the ten year manhunt for Osama Bin Laden, ending with his death in 2011. You would assume such a topic would result in large audiences. At first it was difficult to find this film despite its powerful list of producers, director and cast. It was showing only one time at a Scottsdale theater. We arrived to find it sold out. Two weeks later it showed on more screens but the theater we went to had less than ten people including my wife and me. With the low turnout, you would think it was a bad film, but it was actually quite good. So what happened?

The movie sparked severe political controversy. First, it depicts graphic scenes of Americans "torturing" Al Qaeda members, which upset those on the right, including Senator John McCain. I put the word "torturing" in quotes, because as a former military man, we were trained to endure the same things in survival schools. Lack of sleep, unsanitary conditions, confinement in small spaces and water boarding are all practiced on our own troops. We were trained to survive three

days, after which our intel would be worth very little. People with top secret information are not left in areas where they will be captured. My wife found the scenes were torture, but as a military man I viewed them as interrogation.

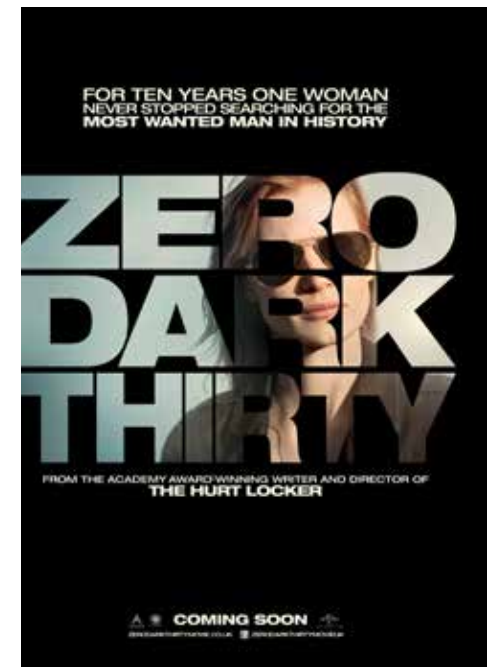
The second controversy is that the movie shows that it was this "torture" that in fact led to good intel and the ultimate death of Osama Bin Laden. This upset those on the left, including prominent Democrat Senators who had criticized President Bush and said these methods were ineffective. The movie also makes the Obama administration look weak on the issue.

The third controversy is that in the beginning, it shows the strikes on the twin towers, including the actual recording of a flight attendant killed as the plane crashes and the now famous video of the man jumping from the top of the burning building. Families of the victims were outraged. Finally, and perhaps the greatest pressure, came from those in the military and Congressional Oversight Committees who believed the Obama administration

leaked secret intelligence to the movie producers in order to help with the film and thus the election.

Although it was an early favorite at the Oscars, garnering five nominations, it ended up only receiving a tie Oscar for sound editing of all things. Having said all that, the movie itself is very well done. The main character is based on fact; a young female CIA analyst played by Jessica Chastain called "Maya" in the movie. It is somewhat scary how few people were working on finding Bin Laden, and that one stubborn analyst was the whole key. Other notable performances are by Jason Clarke as the CIA veteran and Joel Edgerton as the man who leads the final Seal Team 6 into the compound.

The movie kept my wife on the edge of her seat. It is compelling, unexpected, excellently acted, directed and filmed. The only thing that took me out of the moment was the miscast of James Gandolfini as the CIA Director. He is too much Tony Soprano still for me to suspend disbelief in that role. Whether the movie is completely true, which no



movie really is after all, it is definitely worth seeing. Just know you need to see it soon or wait for the DVD release, because the controversy has buried this fine film to limited release.

WOD

MOVIE REVIEW: JACK THE GIANT SLAYER

Reviewed by John Grigg

I love what was done by the creators of this film, in updating the classic fairy tale of Jack and the Beanstalk. They greatly expanded the story, to include a whole tribe of giants, various fun characters, massive battles between humans and hordes of the monstrous humanoids, and a magic crown that is the key to victory.

The casting was excellent, with Ewan McGregor shining as a dashing leader of men, in a role that was much more appealing to me, than when he played a young Obi-One Kenobi. Ian McShane was wonderful as the goodhearted king, who dearly loves his daughter, but realizes his greatest allegiance must be to his kingdom. And the two young leads, playing Jack and Princess Isabelle, the king's daughter, were terrific casting choices, though unknowns, at least to me. Nicholas Hoult, who played Jack, nailed the role by being so endearing in his peasant vulnerability, and yet at the same time, very determined to do the right thing. I look forward to seeing him in more films. And whoever did the motion-capture acting for the leader of the giants, who had two heads, did a very fine job. The way the two heads relate, is one of the small pleasures of this film. As for the villain and his chief flunky, they were goofy, but quite effective, in a Princess Bride way.

The special effects were generally terrific. I sort of wish the fx had been done old school (pre-CGI), but still, I enjoyed how well the little humans interacted with the giants, especially in the battle scenes, which were slightly reminiscent of The Lord of the Rings. The oversized monsters were depicted by CGI in a sort of gritty way that was not exactly photo-realistic, but this worked to the filmmaker's advantage, because the big creatures are supposed to be crude somewhat unformed in their appearance.

The plot and dialogue were superior to what I would generally expect from a film like this one, and in that sense reminded me of Princess Bride, or Enchanted. As I wrote earlier, the writers greatly fleshed out the original story, in terms of both characters and the scale. This would have certainly been a hard movie to make fifty years ago! The basic elements of the classic tale are there, but in this version an evil traitorous lord hounds Jack, in his quest to become king, and a strongwilled princess (is there any other kind?) gets rescued, but turns out to be more than the typical damsel in distress. Ewan McGregor's knightly character goes up the beanstalk with Jack, leading a platoon of the king's toughest soldiers. The giants are a big gang or tribe, rather

than just a married couple, like in the classic fairy tale, and we get to get a glimpse of their barbaric culture, and how they in their own way, enjoy good cooking! The original story did not have an army of giants descending on Earth and laying siege to a human castle, and this was one of my favorite scenes in the film. The movie has a cool back history of how a magical device was forged to deal with the original giant incursion.

I would not say this film had any real weaknesses. It worked well in terms of casting, plot, dialogue, acting, special effects and tone. The human villains were somewhat cartoonish, though Stanley Tucci was great in the way he chewed the scenery. But ironically, the CGI two headed giant was actually a bit more three dimensional! But that is a small quibble. Oh, and there is the question of where were the female giants? But hey, perhaps they had gotten sick and tired of having to deal with



their idiotic males! Overall, this is a movie that is memorable, and I believe will be remembered and loved, decades from now.

This is a fun well-crafted film that I definitely recommend for all ages. I realize professional critics have been split down the middle in looking at this movie, but it worked for me. I give it four stars out of a possible five.

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WOD Bookshelf

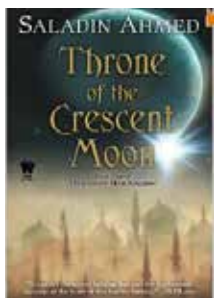
THE EMPEROR'S KNIFE by William Mazarkis
Nightshade Books, 978-159780387, hardback, 352 pages, November 29, 2011



Emperor Beyon, his brother Prince Sarmin, and Sarmin's fiancée Mesema fight the Pattern Master, an evil Mage trying to take over their world. Intricate alternate Middle Eastern world-building with lots of action and some very well-developed characters, like the Vizier, create a refreshing change from the ordinary. The title takes its name from an assassin "The Emperor's Knife." The Pattern Master mixes evil wizard with M.C. Escher, which makes him wildly unpredictable and the ways the three try to fight him are ingenious. As the first in a new series, there are lots of unanswered questions, but I'm looking forward to the sequel which came out in November 2012, Knife Sworn.

*Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman
Adult Services Lead Librarian
Prescott Public Library
www.prescottlibrary.info*

THRONE OF THE CRESCENT MOON by Ahmed, Saladin, DAW, 978-07407117, hardback, 288 pages, February 7, 2012



Reminiscent of the Arabian Nights Tales and the never-ending battle between good and evil, a world-weary Wise Man, a young passionate Dervish and an even younger desert girl blessed with the lion shape, fight an ancient evil to save their city, Dhamsawaat, home to djenn, ghuls, holy warriors and heretics. Who is the mysterious, Robin Hood-like, Falcon Prince? Should our heroes support the Khalif whose taxes are ever-rising or help the people who may find no other savior? Excellent world-building and empathetic characters make this a must-read for fans of epic adventure

tales. The feel of the desert comes through strongly and infuses the story with the heat and wind so you can almost feel them against your skin. This is a stand-alone novel but there is room for more adventure.

*Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman
Adult Services Lead Librarian
Prescott Public Library
www.prescottlibrary.info*

SOULLESS. By Gail Carriger

This is an extremely impressive book. Gail Carriger is the author of fourteen novels. Soulless is the first of five in "The Parasol Protectorate" series. The others are Changeless, Blameless, Heartless and Timeless. I am not spoiling anything here, as much of this information is on the back cover for all to read. The novel starts with Alexia Tarabotti, a Victorian Era fashionista that has been born without a soul. Those with too much soul find themselves as werewolves, vampires or other creatures. Those with the right amount are human, those few with none are Soulless.



Alexia is a strong willed and sharp tongued spinster whose Italian father is dead and she now lives with her mother's new husband and her half-sisters. Her forward ways and tendency to learn too much about science and everything in general frustrate her family. Most do not know of her "special condition." The plot thickens as someone starts to kill off vampires and werewolves and she finds herself at the center of the mystery.

The novel includes so much detail on attire, manners, and romance, that some would consider this a "woman's novel." It was the subject of our monthly Steampunk readers club and most warned me I might not like it as "a man." They were very wrong. The writing style is delightful, charming, witty and humorous. Alexia Tarabotti is a much fleshed out, strong female lead character and really carries the entire story. She is so interesting and sarcastically witty that you really don't care if there is a plot or not. You are simply interested in what she will do

or say next.

There is a great plot though, which involves intrigue, mystery, danger and romance. I highly recommend this book for your reading pleasure if you like strong female leads, humor, period pieces, adventure, or Steampunk.

-- Reviewed by Michael Bradley

THE JANUS AFFAIR: A Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences Novel
By Pip Ballantine and Tee Morris

This is the sixth collaboration between the authors Pip Ballantine and Tee Morris and the second in the Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences series. The first, Phoenix Rising, won them the 2011 Airship Award for best Steampunk novel of the year. The sequel continues to follow the adventures of Miss Eliza Braun, a rambunctious wild agent for the Ministry and Mister Wellington Books, the staid and proper gentleman with knowledge of science.



The book starts off a bit shaky if you have not read the first as the characters are not reintroduced. However, this quickly fades as you start to understand the relationship between the two and some of their past history as you go. It is a great adventure, mostly in urban London in the Victorian Era with a large degree of Steampunk technology thrown in the mix.

Someone is making prominent suffragettes disappear with a strange vortex machine and Eliza and Wellington must battle all sorts of enemies, including office politics and English social morays in order to get to the bottom of the mystery. I was especially impressed with the intricacies of detail in the London area and the characters, which make you feel as if you are there in that world.

I would definitely recommend you read this series if you are into adventure or Steampunk. I had the good fortune to communicate with Pip and Tee and they are both wonderful people as well as very entertaining spinners of yarns. I think the book works better having a male and female writer working together, as both the male and female leads in the book are written strongly and with the proper perspectives. I look forward to the next book in this delightful series.

--- Reviewed by Michael Bradley

THE INEXPLICABLES

By Cherie Priest



I am a big fan of Cherie Priest as a person and as a writer. I first met her some years back at a Phoenix ComicCon when we chanced to sit down next to each other at two of the few chairs at the event. We had a very nice talk and were both headed to the same panel, her as a panelist, I as an audience member. She had just written Boneshaker. Through the years, I have talked with her online and in person on several occasions. Cherie Priest has several books that she had written in other genres. Boneshaker was kind of a project that she did not expect to do well, but it really launched her career on its skyward path.

So it was that her agent, editor and publisher wanted her to do more Steampunk style novels. They were not necessarily meant to be a series, but ended up that way, with tie-ins between each, dubbed "The Clockwork Century Books." They take place in America where Texas is still an independent republic and the Civil War has dragged on for years. A yellow gas released in Seattle is turned into a drug that keeps the troops fighting, but causes addiction and eventually an undead zombie-like state.

The Inexplicables is the last book currently planned in this series. It follows Boneshaker, Dreadnought, and Ganymede as the fourth. Boneshaker takes place mainly in the blighted city of Seattle. It is a claustrophobic and totally unique setting combining Steampunk, Civil War era Seattle and The Walking Dead into one milieu. Dreadnought is in the open, with the main character traveling across country by train, headed to Seattle. Ganymede is set in New Orleans for the most part and centers on espionage and a secret weapon. The Inexplicables returns us to the original scene in blighted Seattle.

I wish I could say this fourth book is as good as the others, but I can't. It starts out great, following Rector Sherman, an orphan of the blight, addicted to the "sap" made from the yellow gas, going into the city of Seattle to find the body of his dead friend he helped into Seattle in the first book. He is haunted by his ghost and seeks death or redemption for his guilt. However, the addiction and the hunt for the ghost are virtually forgotten half way through the book.

The title itself, The Inexplicables, implies there will be a bunch of blight

created Inexplicables running around. But there are only two, a small creature and a large one, and they play only a side role in the novel. It was almost as if the first half of the book and the second half are from two different stories. It does bring back characters from the other books and serves as a travelogue and update of sorts to cap off the series, but it left me and other readers disappointed it did not live up to her earlier stories.

I would recommend strongly you read Boneshaker which is heavy on science fiction and confined spaces, and that you read Dreadnought, which has strong characters and great descriptors. If you are a big Cherie Priest fan, you should go ahead and read this final clockwork offering, but otherwise I would recommend you pass on it.

--- Reviewed by Michael Bradley

THROUGH THE THIRD EYE

by Lynn Boston, aka Bob Frank

I want to start by stating, I am blown away by the amount of research that must have gone into this book. Lynn Boston's Through the Third Eye is not only a fine example of the conspiracy, thriller genre; it is a leap into history and a twist on how the soul is perceived.



Lead characters Clay and Shali are freelance, parapsychologist, soul seekers with a mission; to find the secrets of the universe. By delving into the past lives of presumably average people, they discover some incredible figures from humanity's history, including some religious figures whose lives might not have been written correctly into the history books.

Lynn's understanding of reincarnation, soul pods, the Akashic Records, and the human condition leaves me wondering who he might have been in a past life. I admit, while I did enjoy the journey and adventure of following main characters, Clay and Shali as they globe trotted in search of the mysteries of the universe; my biggest thrill - learning the history of so many notable characters.

I do wish Lynn had taken even more care in detailing the exotic scenes visited by the characters, and their souls. It is a hard choice to make between plot and description, but as I read the quick bursts of detail followed by an almost shuffling the characters to move along, I feel it would have been beneficial to add the details and maybe expand this book into two. The ending too was a bit

strange, but it left me no less interested in reading the next volume.

If you have an interest in history, theosophy, and wild conspiracy, you will enjoy this romp through time and around the world. And, keep in mind, this is only the beginning of the adventures that await Clay and Shali.

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

ROSE OF STORMGAARD

by Ken St. Andre

Romp through the dungeons of Trollworld with Rose and her allies, then add your own adventure! Ken St. Andre's Rose of Stormgaard takes the reader through an underworld adventure with a rather rakish lot of travelers, but the story is just the beginning. Ken also invites readers to join in by adding some of the basic components to the tabletop game of Tunnels and Trolls in the last pages of the book.

Rose and her friends are dumped into a world of trolls, dwarves, wizards, and mythic monsters. Ken has no trouble describing the fine points of dealing with troublesome henchmen and beasts, making it easy to work with these creatures if you do decide to work this line into your gaming, though,



even a non-gamer can appreciate the journey. While there is a fair amount of words spent in describing for play the characters and minions, it is not so much to detract from the story itself.

I really enjoyed Ken's approach to dialogue in this novel, in that he strays from what might be more traditional speech of the dark ages setting. He favors almost a gamer's tongue, and some tongue in cheek quotes as well.

There are a few moments in the story that get a little racy, but nothing that would embarrass most fantasy readers. My mom side says; parents scan the pages before passing to anyone under tween.

The end pages of the book contain a description of the monsters encountered by Rose and her lot, a map of the dungeon they are tossed into, and a

character sheet to create your own adventurer if you want to try your hand at surviving the pit. A warning if you do, I would heed some of the lessons offered by Rose and her companions if you hope to have a chance.

As for Rose, I am not going to give away if she, or her band, make it out of the dungeon alive. I will say that Ken does a fair job of creating a group of characters that work well together and uses the strengths of each one to move the team and the story along.

Keep a lookout for the paperback, Rose of Stormgaard by Ken St. Andre is printed by Trollhalla Press and more information on Trollworld and the tabletop game, Tunnels and Trolls can also be found at www.trollhalla.com.

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

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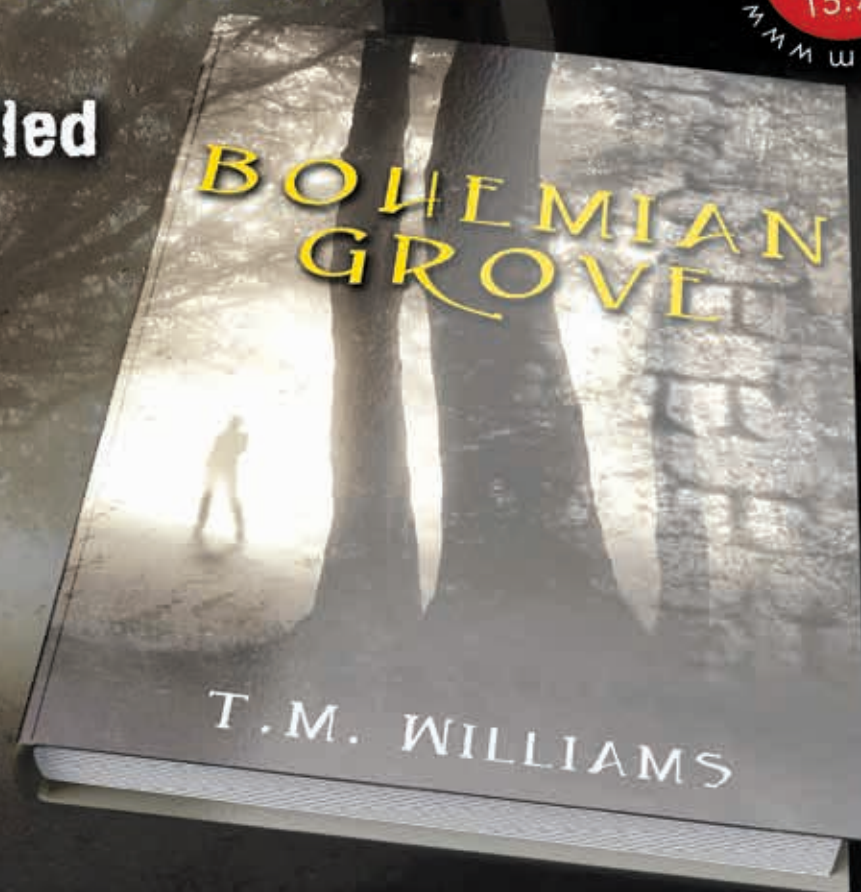
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