



The

WOD:

The Voice of the Pop Culture Community

Fan Conventions • Pop Culture • Books • Comics • Cosplay • Indie • Gaming • Science

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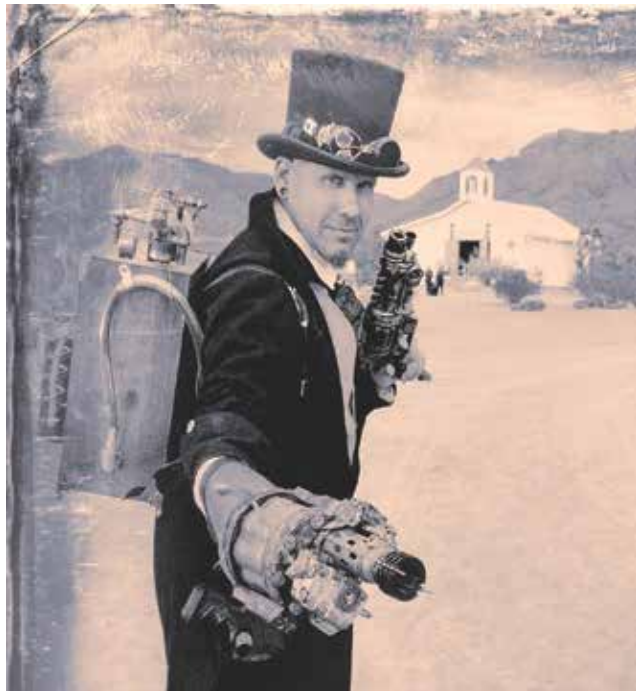


Photo Credits: Mike Syfritt

## Interview with Cosplayer Mike Syfritt

Interviewed by PJ Hultstrand

We talked to Mike Syfritt on KWOD Radio on November 14th. Mike is an active cosplayer, and a part of two cosplay groups, AZA (Arizona Avengers) and JLAz (Justice League of Arizona). He participates in comicons, charity events, and movie premieres on a regular basis.

Mike is an adept prop builder so most of his costumes start with these. He went to the recent Tuscon ComiCon as Doc Ock from the Spider Man franchise, thrilling and frightening fans of all ages.

PJ: How did you get started in cosplay?

Mike: I like making stuff and was enticed to make a costume for San Diego Comicon. Vash the Stampede for the Anime 'Trigun' was my first.

PJ: What is your favorite character you have dressed as?

Mike: My 2 most current characters, Professor Hugo Strange and Doc Ock

PJ: How often do you cosplay?

Mike: As much as I can. I'm part of 2 group that cosplay for charity and special events as well as any convention I go to.

PJ: To what events do you go out to as your character(s)?

Mike: I'm part of the AZA(Arizona Avengers) and the JLAz(Justice League Arizona) Both of these groups cosplay on a regular bases for Comicons, charity events and Movie Premieres. I try to make it to as many as I can.

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## THE WOD TREBUCHET (Weapon of Destruction) THE ZOMBIE TOSS

Q & A with the Architect - Donald Jacques

What is The WOD trebuchet?

A trebuchet is a machine to throw 5-10 pound projectiles, traditionally to destroy castle walls, but these days to destroy pumpkins. We use it to destroy zombie heads! When fully assembled it stands 11' tall on a 4' by 8' base. The throwing arm is 16 feet long with a counterweight box capable of holding 700 pounds, though we have only used up to 300. She will launch a five pound ball nearly 150', and an eight pounder nearly 140'.

What is the real reason you built this monster machine?

After hearing about the annual Pumpkin' Chunkin' contest down in Tucson this past fall, it occurred to me that a catapult or trebuchet might be an interesting advertising/marketing tool for the WOD. So the staff discussed it, and we kicked some ideas around and it was decided to move forward. Of course like any idea, it morphed a bit over the months. Originally, we

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## LepreCon 2014 Sword of Charity to Benefit Phoenix Children's Hospital

by Michael Fett - Charity Auction Coordinator



Photo credits: Michael Fett

If you were at DarkCon and DevCon the weekend of February 10th-12th, you may have seen a guy walking around with a large sword with artwork on it wondering what is that thing. Better yet, you were so impressed with the craftsmanship of the sword you stopped that man to get a closeup look at the sword and to find out more about it. Well I was that guy walking around with that sword over the course of that weekend. The sword you saw is the LepreCon 2014 Charity Auction Artwork Sword that will be auctioned off at LepreCon in May 2014 to benefit Phoenix Children's Hospital.

The idea of the LepreCon 2014 Charity Auction Artwork Sword actually came to me after I spent the weekend in the dealers' room at Phoenix ComiCon last year. I saw a sword going from artist to artist with each of them including their custom drawing and it finally made its way to local artist, Andy Carreon's table whom I was sharing a table in the dealers' room with at the time. Andy was drawing on the sword and I asked him what the sword was for. Andy explained it is a yearly thing the artists do at Phoenix ComiCon every year in which they all donate their artwork on the sword for charity. The sword at Phoenix ComiCon is

consistently their number one money making item for charity every year.

I thought to myself that this was cool. Why not try something like this for a smaller con charity auction? I researched who designed the sword, Travis Hanson, and made it, Randy O. Knight of Dolfwerks, so I would be able to contact them about the possibility of making a sword for LepreCon. I spoke with Randy and he explained how it was made and if I could come with a hilt design for him we could discuss more later. Randy made the suggestion though the the design needed to be something other than a phoenix for the hilt because this was already being used by Phoenix ComiCon.

I looked around at some of my favorite local artists who I like commissioning on a regular basis from their designs. It was a close call between two artists whose sword designs I really love, but the deciding factor really came down to, this was for an auction that will benefit an organization for children. So I picked local artist, Jolene Houser, to work with on the design of the hilt. Jolene Houser is the owner of Vivifica Studios, <http://www.vivificastudios.com/>. I explained to Jolene what the item was going to be for and she jumped at the chance. It was now up for us to come up with a design that could work well.

My immediate thought came to either an eagle or griffin. I left the choice up to Jolene to decide whichever one she wanted to go with, with only one instruction, to make sure it would be a sword that Aries the Ram would be proud

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## Amazing Arizona ComiCon Review

by Jacob Thomas



In brightest day and in blackest night - no convention shall escape my sight!

Okay, that was a bit weird, but that's okay. I'm a fellow geek with a dash of nerd, so either way, that line best known from Green Lantern universe, it's here to stay. Moving forward!

Amazing Arizona ComiCon 2014 has now come to a close and yet so much can be said about this year's convention. History was made, big name talents taking their time with the fans, exhibitor hall and artists alike, expanded by 40% from AACC 2013; the list goes on.

Beginning with the Justice League of America, Aquaman, Batman: Earth One, Infinite Crisis, Forever Evil, Brightest Day, try to guess where I am going with this. Geoff Johns was in attendance this year signing autographs and providing sketches alike to his very eagerly waiting fans lining up all the way outside the convention itself. Geoff Johns has always been a Public Relations dream. This honorable man tends to take a step outside of his shell and walk along the convention floor greeting fans and often

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PJ: What is the favorite character of your fans?

Mike: Doc Ock was a huge success at Tucson comicon. I never made it more than 5 feet before having to stop for another picture with families and kids. The kids are the best with their wonderful range of emotion. The babies love the colors and are not even fazed. The 2 year old are usually scared and the older ones know who I am and are scared or excited.

PJ: Is there any character you created that just didn't work and why?

Mike: His name is "The Question" Is a great character and the costume is great too. However he is an obscure character in the DC universe and not as well received as my newer stuff.

PJ: Any characters that you would like to try that you haven't yet?

Mike: I am currently working on 4 more costumes that I hope to finish by PCC



hopefully those will be well received.

PJ: How do you produce your costume - making yourself, pulling together from other pieces, or do you have someone who sews them for you?

Mike: I'm a prop builder so most of my costumes start with that. I can sew but don't really like to so I try and put the costume together as much as I can without sewing anything. If something has to be sewn like the orange color on Doc Ock then I will bring it to fellow cosplay friends that do that part.

PJ: What conventions do you go to during the year?

Mike: For the most part it has been local comicons but I started going to more out of state cons last year. I have been to SDCC twice and Wondercon once. This year I plan to go to Dragoncon to show off my best costumes.

PJ: You are a man in cosplay - do you find this is a tough hobby to get into as a man?

Mike: As a man I have to make costumes that are well known and movie quality to get noticed. But it really doesn't matter to me because I do this for fun.

PJ: Do you feel there is not enough men in cosplay or enough people taking notice of the men in cosplay?

Mike: That is a touch question. Unless you have spectacular costume or tight abs it is harder to get noticed as a guy but I think there are just as many men as there are women.



PJ: Any advice to other men or females wanting to get into cosplay?

Mike: If you are creative and like to make things then cosplay is a great avenue for that. Don't be afraid to just get out there and do it! If you just like dressing up but can't make anything yourself then there are a great number of cosplayers out there that also make costume for others to help pay for theirs. I'm one of those. So help us help you!

PJ: Anyone you would like to thank or mention here for their contribution to your efforts?

Mike: I would first like to thank my wife Hannah for humoring my obsession and being with me. The AZA and JLAz for letting me be a part. Grant Brummet, Rob Kashikoi, David Apeji, Ryan Leasure and Ken Kendal for their amazing photography skills. All my Cosplay firends for inspiring me to do this. Last but not least Johnna Buttrick for her sewing skills and helping me with my last couple costumes.

PJ: Where can people find you online?

Mike: I have 2 pages for my cosplay and skills on Facebook. Please checkout facebook.com/gaslightjoker also facebook.com/madpropps

You can hear the much more extensive and complete interview with Mike Syfritt, by Patti Hultstrand at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/kwodradio/2013/11/15/mike-syfritt-a-man-in-arizonas-cosplay>

WOD

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Photo Credits: Mike Syfritt

**The DREAD Fleet is now seeking new members who are experienced combat fencers.**

We have weekly fighter practice, occasional Fleet sponsored feast/tournaments, private "miniments" on practice days and we participate in tournaments sponsored by Arizona medieval groups.

Our fencing master will determine your abilities and qualify you.

Or, if you have always wanted to learn to rapier fence, this is your chance! Our fencing master will teach you everything you will need to know to become a competent addition to the Fleet!

Either way, email us at [info@thedreadfleet.com](mailto:info@thedreadfleet.com). Leave your information and we will be in touch with you! Please visit us at [www.thedreadfleet.com](http://www.thedreadfleet.com)



to hold. Jolene contacted me in short order with the hilt design. Jolene ultimately decided the griffin was the way to go with this sword. After seeing Jolene's design I knew she nailed it.



The griffin hilt looked cool. It captured the fantasy element that people love about them. The design was also playful, which was something kids would love and a true extension of Jolene herself.

I forwarded the design to Randy, who also thought it was a cool idea and said it was a go. He worked on the sword over a few months period and keeping us updated as he kept going along. I thought the sword looked good in the pictures, but had no clue how it would look in person. I kept Patti Hultstrand, Leprecon Publicity Director, informed on the progress, but even she had some reserve on it being unable to tell the actual detail and size.

Finally, Randy contacted me and I picked it up. In Randy's own words, "My wife thinks this is the best sword I ever made". After I picked it up I realized the sword was huge, just look at it in the hands of artist Steve "The Dude" Rude, <http://www.steverudeart.com/>, or Duncan Macleod from AZ Tardis, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AZTARDIS/>, who posed with it at Dark Con. The sword measures just over 48" in length. Randy really outdid himself with the craftsmanship on this sword.

Later that day, I met up with Leprecon 2014 chairman, Don Jacques and Patti Hultstrand to show them the finished sword and they were very impressed. It was now time to devise a plan to get all the artists we could to donate their artwork on this sword for charity. It was agreed I would contact a few big name artists in town, meet up with a few at DarkCon, and a few at DevCon who I knew would be there.

The first artist I contacted about donating their artwork on the sword was Jolene Houser herself, who I agreed to meet up with at DevCon that weekend. After that I contacted artist, Steve "The Dude" Rude, a legendary artist who has worked on Nexus for years. Steve agreed to donate his artwork to the sword as well. After that I contacted local fan favorite, April Reyna, who is always fun to be around because she makes you laugh, who also agreed to meet up with me at DarkCon.



First stop was to meet up with artist, Steve Rude who invited me over to his studios. Steve gave me a tour of his studio, including showing me some artwork that really influenced him as an artist, which included Disney's Snow White and some stuff from Doug Wildey, Jonny Quest's creator. After a small talk and tour, Steve took the sword and drew Nexus

on it for us, the character he is most famous for. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had meeting an artist whose work I loved since I was a kid and became the centerpiece of the sword.

After this, I took the sword to DarkCon, in which I met up with local artist, April Reyna of Reyna Art. April donated a sketch of Mark of the Pterren. Big Chris Wood of Big Chris Art was next



on our list. Big Chris drew Adrian Paul on the sword for us. Why Adrian Paul you might ask? Adrian was the media guest at this year's DarkCon.

The sword was then taken over to Adrian Paul himself and he signed it just below Big Chris's artwork. Adrian's signature was thanks to a donation by local artist, Renee Merideth. Adrian then posed with the sword for a picture that he donated to us so that we could use it for our action. I can now officially say I have a sword that was once used by Adrian Paul, aka The Highlander.

After that, I met up with Jolene Houser at DevCon, who finally got to see the sword for the very first time in person. Even she was amazed by the craftsmanship. Jolene was so amazed in fact that Randy Knight is now designing a sword for her personally. Jolene posed with the sword for the flyer we have on the creation of this sword. Jolene donated the Aries the Ram sketch on the sword.



A few booths down from Jolene was local artist, Chad Stafford, <http://www.artbychad.com/>. Chad ended up donating to us a sketch of Dr. Chu, a cross between the 10th Doctor of Doctor Who and Pikachu of Pokémon fame.

Who and what is next for the sword? Well the sword made an appearance at Amazing Arizona ComiCon in January, where we got some big names as well as an appearance at the LepreCon 2014 Room Party that Saturday night during Amazing Arizona ComiCon. We have also been contacted by a few other big name artists who want to donate their artwork to the sword as well. Until their art is on the sword I will be keeping quiet on who those names are.

Either way, it has been fun giving you the updated report on the sword. We are really looking forward to seeing how much this item goes for at the LepreCon 2014 Charity Auction.

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discussing projects both today and of the days of yore. If you had a fantastic ride like I did with The New 52 Geoff Johns, his footsteps worth following for all you aspiring comic book writers.

Jimmy "Jay/JayCompany Comics," equally delighted convention goers with a more pop culture hit with The Walking Dead. Several tiers of programming were put in place this year to increase fan satisfaction. The guest list this year included Danai Gurira (Michonne), and the head honcho creator, Robert Kirkman. Both greeted fans with several chances for autographs and photographs alike including an extensive Q&A Panel.

For writers and artists alike, the Image Documentary provided an extraordinarily insightful look into today's industry as a whole. For each screening, if you were not waiting for some time before the next screening, good luck finding your own seat. No doubt, Marc Silvestri and Rob Liefeld both took to this panel with insightful knowledge as 75% of today's comic book market is dwarfed by independent titles. A more in-depth analysis can be found in the Comic Shops & The Indie Market report inside The WOD Newspaper & Webzine.

Cosplayers are never short in numbers every year at Amazing Arizona ComiCon. Cosplay icons like Jessica Nigri and Monika Lee both graced us with their presence, as well promoting their own works.



History has been made!

On Saturday, the Guinness Book of World Records Challenge was under way. Jimmy Jay, the director of the convention, was directly responsible for orchestrating the event with the help from Jesse James, of Jesse James Comics. In April 2011, 60 comic creators had set two world records for comics at the Kapow! Comic Book Convention. The first record was the fastest time to create a comic book and that record stood at 11 hours, 19 minutes and 38 seconds. The second record to be set was for having the most contributors to a comic book with 60 contributors. In the same year, that very record was beaten in Argentina with 81 contributors.

The record has been beaten right here in Arizona with 101 artists and 25 writers in under 11 hours.

Even more enjoyable is that I, myself, was one of the writers in this very project. Other names, from both sides of me included Rob Liefeld, Tom Hutchison, Raven Gregory, Eric Esquivel, Kyle Higgins, Marc Silvestri and more! To be included on a team filled with such big talent was truly quite an honor.

The majority of the proceeds from the sales of this world record-breaking comic book went towards The Hero Initiative.

Am looking forward to another exciting year at Amazing Arizona ComiCon next year.

WOD

# The Missing Episodes of Dr. Who

by Greg Bakun



Photo credits: BBC

**Doctor Who: The Enemy of the World**  
\$9.99 (6 episodes)

**Doctor Who: The Web of Fear**  
\$9.99 (6 episodes)

Released by BBC Home Entertainment on iTunes October 10, 2013; 4:3 Mono black & white

I have been living in a hazy world the last couple of days. I'll tell you a secret. For the last few days I have been able to watch the lost Doctor Who stories The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear whenever and wherever I want. What? You have been able to do the same thing too? That's right. We have all been able to do so in what is one of the greatest moves BBC Worldwide has ever done.

We have entered a new era in how we get to see these missing episodes of Doctor Who. To me, I put my advertising industry hat on and I feel like suddenly the Doctor Who brand is more cohesive than it ever has been before now when it released these stories to us. It's taken us a long time to get to this point but we are really benefitting from the fruits of the planning it took to get us there.

So, what do we know? After months of speculation it was announced Thursday evening (October 10th) in the US that nine (yes, nine!) episodes of Doctor Who have been recovered in a relay station in Nigeria. I don't think I have to tell anyone who visits this site regularly how the topic of missing episodes is one of my favourite topics of all British television. It is tragic and mysterious. Obviously tragic because these pieces of art had been destroyed but mysterious because some of this stuff is still out there. Getting the announcement is great but because we now live in the 21st century, these episodes were available for download at the very moment we got the announcement. Let me say that again. These episodes were available to us to purchase and watch at - that - very - moment! How far have we come!

Even up to the last recovery of 2011, things were very different. In December of 2011, we fans were treated to news that 2 episodes of Doctor Who had been recovered: Air Lock and The Underwater Menace Episode 2. I think Air Lock was found in July of that year and The Underwater Menace found in October. By the time it was announced at the December 12th Missing Believed Wiped conference, no work (to my knowledge) had been carried out on the restoration of the episodes. At least when The Underwater Menace Episode 2 was shown at that event, it was from an unrestored print. On December 12th prior to the announcement, "prominent" fans started tweeting about an announcement of episode recoveries that day disguised in "cute" word alliterations. I hate showboating. To me this wasn't to wet the fans appetite but to let us fans know that they were in the know before we were. Just to remind us. Air Lock was eventually released on The Aztecs Special Edition DVD where it looks quite nice. The Underwater Menace Episode 2 is yet to be released. There is supposed to be a DVD release for it next year.

Cut to 2013 and a new age. Yes, there were rumours and rumblings about The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear being released in November (along with Marco Polo), yes I have been hearing about a large haul of episodes being found as far back as May of 2012. All I know that right now I own The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear to watch whenever I want and boy have I watched them..... a lot!

From the stand point of the BBC, the difference

between the find in 2011 and 2013 comes down to strategy. As I have mentioned before, I work in Advertising. Understanding and watching Organizations/Brands is something I do. Although it took a while for them to get here, the BBC provided us the news and purchase of these episodes as one voice. They had a plan to announce and release these episodes in one swift movement. In past recoveries, this would be the process when missing episodes would be returned: announce the episode return (probably fairly close to when it was actually discovered and wait for an undetermined amount of time. Hopefully in the meantime I could find someone in video trading circles who might have a copy I can get to watch. Now we live in the future. Last Thursday, an announcement was made and simultaneously something miraculously had happened. There was no waiting. Available for immediate purchase from iTunes ([www.itunes.com/DoctorWho](http://www.itunes.com/DoctorWho)) there was the two stories. Already cleaned up, artwork, trailers, provisional DVD artwork and release dates. The BBC had their crap together! It was a proper launch. They were being smart and taking advantage of technology and capitalize on striking while the iron was hot. It is so simple but had never been done before!

I am a PC guy. No, I don't mean politically correct but I work on a Windows Platform. I don't like downloading media to watch. I want a physical disc with proper artwork. I hate iTunes. All of that is immediately negated when recently returned Doctor Who is involved. If the episodes were only available by putting my arm up a cow's rectum to pull them out, I would happily do it. A good friend of mine hates iTunes. He owns nothing Apple but he put iTunes on a spare computer to purchase, download and watch these episodes. It's that important. Why?

Philip Morris is a hero to Doctor Who and British television enthusiasts. I am very careful about how I use that word as it has a lot of weight to it. In the realm of Doctor Who and British television, he is a hero. He was in a position to actually physically look into vaults and TV stations in Africa to find these stories. To my knowledge, this is not a BBC funded venture. He is doing this search and negotiates with the BBC to return the material. What does it cost? How does it work? I don't know and I don't care. It is none of my business. I do believe two points. I believe the fans buying these releases on BOTH iTunes and the



eventual DVD release will help fund more searches/recoveries. The second point is I believe there are more episodes coming back. A lot more. It is in our best interest to support like we have never supported before. The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear were being remastered in secrecy. For all we know Marco Polo is being done right now. We need to support this new way of episode distribution. We need to tell the BBC we love this and that what they are doing is worth it.

Obviously, not everyone can afford both or may not like iTunes and refuses to use it. I have heard people wonder why these couldn't be made available on Amazon or Netflix. I don't know. All I know is that I wanted to see these episodes. I bought these two previously missing stories for \$9.99 each. It's incredible! I will say one more thing about it. I don't want to hear anyone mention to me that they own the episodes but didn't pay for them. I just don't want to hear about it. If you want to watch these, you pay for them! Our money speaks for us and I truly believe without a shadow of doubt, if you want to see more episodes returned and made available, support this range.

I do call it a range. This is how strongly I believe that we are at the start of something wonderful. The BBC have set it up nicely. As more missing episodes become available, they will be put up on iTunes with a DVD set for later. Is it double dipping? Yes. Am I bothered by it? Absolutely not. Even the covers



have changed. It mirrors what we saw for the UK Spearhead from Space Blu Ray release. The covers no longer have the roundels on the top but now have a solid classic series logo with artwork more prominent. The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear follow suit with this look. My guess is that it will also mirror the UK Spearhead from Space by being a reversible cover feature the current template for those who would like all the covers to match.

Did I mention I own copies of The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear? I did? Maybe I didn't mention how excited I am about it? Oh, I did. Here are some brief observations about these stories.

## The Enemy of the World:

I noticed while watching the episodes my head kept shaking in disbelief from left to right. I was watching The Enemy of the World. The story is very grown up. From the very start, it is violent. There are deaths and explosions. This story feels very different from anything else from season 5 and more importantly, it feels very different from Episode 3.

Episode 3 was the only surviving episode from the story before the whole thing was found. It's funny but Episode 3 seems to set out to deceive us on how good the story actually is compared to that episode. There are pretty neat looking sets that are used in all episodes except Episode 3. Episode 3 plays out like some kind of poorman's James Bond while the rest of the story gives the Bond films a fair run for its money on a BBC budget.

Barry Lett's direction is quite good for the first two episodes but it appears to wane a little bit after the Episode 2. There becomes a lot to ask for as the scripts progress. It becomes a little fantastical. Some of Lett's decisions are actually somewhat odd plus the incidental music is very abrupt and almost intrusive. I kind of feel that was intentional.

I don't want to give too much away as there are some wonderful visual surprises in it that one can only enjoy from watching the episodes. That is one of the things that annoyed me greatly about the trailer that came with the story on iTunes. It gave so much away. Part of the fun is seeing those "moments" that I have only seen in telesnaps and I am patiently waiting through the episodes to see them. Stuff like the Doctor and Salamander face to face in the TARDIS or the Salamander's ultimate fate. Let us enjoy these. I am actually still pretty annoyed by that trailer.

The Enemy of the World is like no other Doctor Who story. I am trying to be very careful saying that as I don't want to be accused of throwing that out only because I haven't seen it before. The story has no monsters, it is very dark and even Troughton plays it darker. And I don't mean as the Salamander. If you have heard in the past that this story isn't very good, think again. I think a lot of people will start seeing this as a favorite story. It's a triumph for the series.

## The Web of Fear:



If you talk to people from the UK who were around in the 1960s to talk about their favorite/scariest memories of Doctor Who as a child, inevitably the

answer tends to be about the Yeti in the London Underground. It was always frustrating because it sounded like one of the greatest adventures we couldn't see. The first episode of this story (which previously existed) is a masterpiece and it was always disheartening when getting to the end of the episode because I knew nothing else existed for this highly regarded story. Jon Pertwee was right in his famous quote in which an alien menace at home was much scarier than one on another planet. As he said, "There's nothing scarier than coming home and finding a Yeti on your loo in Tooting Bec."

After watching the entirety of The Web of Fear, I can confirm there is no scene of a Yeti sitting on a loo or any part of the story taking place in Tooting Bec. What I can confirm is that this is a masterpiece. The Web of Fear does not disappoint.

I have seen some people's comments about the story online and a couple of mentioned how the story is a lot of running around. Absolutely it is. There is no argument there. Though, one of the greatest strengths of The Web of Fear is the question of who is infiltrating the small group of people trapped in the Underground; which one of them is the Great Intelligence. Episode by episode the shadow of doubt would be placed on someone else. This includes someone who is now very familiar to us but The Web of Fear was his first story. Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart. The next time we would see him would be in The Invasion where he would become a Brigadier. Episode 4 is the earliest existing episode with footage of him in his first story. It is very surreal. I have only seen telesnaps of him but now, we have almost everything.

Unfortunately, when I say almost everything that means we are still missing an episode of the story. Episode 3 is still missing. This is a shame as this is the first encounter between The Doctor and Lethbridge-Stewart. It is presented as part of the iTunes download as a reconstruction. I am a fan of reconstructions, more so than animation, but I really wasn't enamored by this. I thought the quality of the images were poor. I have my own sets of Telesnaps that look better than that. It's fine that it is included as it is needed to complete the story but hopefully there is a miracle between now and February and the episode is recovered.

The look and pacing of the episodes are great. The Web of Fear is a very drab looking story due to it's bleak location. This sounds silly but the story really is black and white. There is almost no in-between and that is what makes the story so visually striking. The images of the Yeti with their glowing eyes walking down the Underground tunnels is something I never thought I would see. It lived up to my imagination of what that would look like. Director Douglas Camfield does a great job of only allowing us to see what is in shot. If Jamie is hiding from a Yeti walking past him on a platform, he will then move to the right and there will be another Yeti waiting there which roars when we see it. There were a couple of times when I jumped. Fantastic stuff. This story couldn't be any more different from The Enemy of the World. They both are so different yet so wonderful. They both pushed the right buttons for me. I can't believe how lucky we are. The two stories, back to back, shows us exactly how flexible the format is for Doctor Who and why this series is so unique.

Of course because it is a download from iTunes, we are not able to see the full benefit of the restoration. The prints and picture look great but when the DVDs come out, we will get to see it a little better plus with VIDfire applied to the episodes to give the episodes the look of video. In the UK The Enemy of the World is scheduled for release November 25th and The Web of Fear is scheduled for February 24th 2014. There has been no announcement yet from BBC Home Entertainment in regards to when the DVDs will be released over here. Just a friendly reminder, they are currently available on iTunes [www.itunes.com/DoctorWho](http://www.itunes.com/DoctorWho)

As of writing this, the two stories are still in the top 10 TV Seasons for iTunes. On Friday it was ranked #2 and #4 (The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear respectively). We live in amazing times. The work Philip Morris is doing is not just walking into a television archive to see what they have on their shelves. It is him risking his life entering into countries that are at war or unrest. It is visiting countries that immediately hate him for what he looks like. This is dangerous work that we can never take for granted.

I just want to say, I have been following this story for over a year. I believe there is a lot more to come. I just want to say that while following the story, I did a lot of research and spoke to a lot of people. Over the last few months because of following this story I became closer friends with people I already know, I got reacquainted with people I lost touch with and I made completely new friends all because of what Philip Morris is doing to bring us back our favourite show's history. Perhaps I have more to thank him for than just The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear. I can't wait to see what Philip Morris has in store for us next.

<http://www.from-the-archive.co.uk/> credit his website

# FOUND



The Enemy of the World: Episodes 1-6      The Web of Fear Episodes 1,2,4,5,6

WOD



were negotiating with a local halloween park to have our "Zombie Toss" machine and team at their park over Halloween. Sadly, they chose to stop participating - read stop answering messages - so we ended up visiting a few friends over Halloween. If you happened to see us during the night, it WAS an unusually sight, with bloody bags of zombie heads hanging from the structure as we drove around the valley.

### What's the difference between a trebuchet and a catapult?

Think of a catapult as like a hand throwing a ball, straight forward and fast launching, but rather simplistic in action. A catapult throws well, and can reach respectable distances. A trebuchet is like a sling shot. Honestly, a catapult snaps your projectile on its way, often so fast you don't know it left. All the action is over in a noisy few seconds. A trebuchet, on the other hand, uses a sexy, slower, long, drawn out fluid motion you can watch to fling your projectile down range. A catapult makes its brief slapping sound as the arm hits its release point, but a well built trebuchet is a silent powerhouse, whose long swing fills you with awe at its visible power as you watch the projectile leave the trough, travel through its arc and out to the target, as the throwing arm then swings back and forth heavily.

### Why a trebuchet?

Simple: it's sexier. Also more flexible. A trebuchet uses gravity rather than torsion springs to launch the projectile. It is much easier to control, and, in my opinion, far more flexible in its range and the size of projectiles one can launch. We now can decide how high, how far, and to a small degree, we can even aim our projectiles when launched.

### Heard you made this very portable? Why?

As it is intended to be an advertising tool to be used year-round, portability was important in order to first, store it compactly, and secondly so that transportation, setup, and take-down would be simplified from transporting an eleven foot tall and sixteen foot long behemoth on a trailer. This in itself is problematic in that we would have had to purchase and store the matching trailer - no small challenge when our team members live in apartments!

### And how does this differ from other machines designed by others?

First, our trebuchet is a bolt-together assemblage of primarily wood parts. Second, we constructed a metal sling, rather than the more traditional plastic, cloth, or leather one. Third, the trough our projectile rides during launch is made such that it is adjustable (approximately 15 degrees on the horizontal) so that we can "fine tune our aim down range. And fourth, the trebuchet, when assembled, rests on casters, that allow it to roll back and forth during the launching swing. This enhances the visual effect of the launch.

### How do you get this to locations?

Because the trebuchet is modular, the pieces fit in and on my van. The base and counterweight box go on top, and the beams and posts all fit inside. While getting the packing, and loading to go smoothly took a while, it goes quickly now. And there's even room for a passenger!

### What changes have you recently made to punk The WOD?

We've added two side lights on the posts, and a power source. Plus we put the WOD's web address on the arm.

### What are your planned changes for the future?

More "Steampunking" in the near future.

### Where do you prefer to shoot this monster off at?

Anywhere we can get an area as long as a football field: parks, parking lots, ... even football fields.

### How would a vendor get a hold of you to use The WOD as a promotional tool?

See [www.thewod.net](http://www.thewod.net), or email us at [editor@thewod.net](mailto:editor@thewod.net)

WOD

**FIND THE AD RATES, SIZES AND SUBMISSION info FOR THE WOD NEWSPAPER AT: <http://www.thewod.net/Advertising.php>**



**ARIZONA  
ARTIST ALLEY**  
*ARTIST COLUMNIST -  
Alfred Trujillo*

**Have Hi-jacked Alfred's Column**

This month I have hi-jacked Alfred's column to share with you the REAL story of a self-employed artist. First of all, contrary to what some people say, he is NOT

unemployed. Far from it. He works harder and more often than anyone with a "typical" day job. As most of you know, Alfred Trujillo is a comic book artist. He draws. And draws, and draws, and draws. He draws in the car on the way to the store, at the coffee shop, restaurants, events, and conventions. He is drawing RIGHT NOW. He draws covers for comic books, interiors for all sorts of books, advertisements, pets, families, logos, and so on and so forth. And when he isn't drawing, he's drawing. OK fine, he does some other things too. But now that we have established that he draws, I can tell you about some of the other things he does as a professional in the comic book industry.

Running your own business is 3 full time jobs plus some part time jobs. Networking is very important. Without actively communicating to industry pros and fans he wouldn't have things to draw or people to draw for. He spends countless hours emailing with clients. This is important. No clients, no commissions. So remember that if you or a loved one is in this field.

Alfred also has to keep up with advertising. This is done through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. He also has to keep his Deviant Art, website, and online store current. And just to go above and beyond, he isn't afraid to try new things. Alfred recently starred in a few episodes for Project Superwoman. Look for these next spring.

He has also done photography and modeling. His shiny head dons the variant cover for Vigilante Project #3 (coming soon). He can also be seen in Dungeons and Dragons magazine drawn by Mark Winters. Let us not forget the graphic design work he does periodically. Recently he has taken up watercolor painting. This is in addition to the digital colors he frequently does. As you know from his regular column here in The WOD, Alfred is a writer. He created his own series Project: Shadows that he writes AND draws.

Conventions! We can't forget about conventions! As the popularity of comics rise, so do the conventions he frequents. Anyone that wants to make it in this business these days has to go to cons. These can last from 1-5 days and there is a convention somewhere on any given weekend. Contrary to what you might think, these are not easy. Ordering merchandise, packing, organizing, display set up, travel, even getting into a show in the first place! So very much to do.



These just some of the many, many, many things Alfred does. These are just some of the things one can expect to do as a comic book artist. You don't have to do ALL of these things, but you will probably need to do some of

them in order to make it. He accomplishes all of this while raising his children, and none of this Disneyland Dad stuff. He actively participates in his boys' lives as much as possible. From homework to haircuts, play grounds to pajamas, Alfred is with his kids every step of the way. He even has a print that he made with his son. It sells quite well. Fighting for father's rights is also on his agenda. This is a subject near and dear to him and he works diligently to help other fathers in his own position to protect and care for their own children.

Let's not forget his band. Alfred is an amazing song writer and guitarist, but with such a hectic schedule he's had to limit his musical talents to occasional charity events and playing guitar for his kids. And last, but not least, keeping a clean shave on his head.

As his wife, I get the luxury of having him with me pretty much ALL the time. This works for me. As sexy as he is, I feel privileged to spend as much time with him as possible.

[alfredtrujillo.com](http://alfredtrujillo.com)

[facebook.com/alfred183](https://facebook.com/alfred183)

**Alfred Trujillo will be at LepreCon 2014  
as the Local Artist Guest  
and Cara Nicole  
will be their Cosplay Guest of Honor**



**May 8 - 11th, 2014  
at Mesa Marriott Hotel**

**COSPLAY CORNER**

*Cosplay Columnist - Cara Nicole/Az Powergirl*



**WHAT'S YOUR NEXT COSPLAY?**

This is the never ending question. As much as we all "love" our current cosplay or cosplays, we all want to do more and take it to the next level. Some say that marijuana leads to harder drugs. I say that Party City leads to more extreme cosplays. Once the adrenaline kicks in and the cameras flash uncontrollably, it's only just begun. Children stop in their tracks mesmerized by their favorite hero in their presence. Media questions your motives as well as well as your craftsmanship. And so begins...

My first "official" cosplay was Powergirl (before that they were just called Halloween costumes). I enjoyed my alter ego for many months until the Green Lantern movie was about to premier. Sure Powergirl is in the DC universe but why not kick things up a notch? I wanted to be Star Sapphire. I wasn't very impressed with her old costume, and felt uncomfortable with her new attire around children, so what's a gal to do? I decided to take creative license and design my own cannon(esque) Star Sapphire costume.

With my limited abilities and financial resources I utilized the contents of my garage, a wig shop, and a local craft store. I ordered boots and gloves from my friendly neighborhood websites and was on my way to becoming the infamous violet lantern herself. Ok it wasn't my best cosplay. However, I created it, I made it, and it was MINE. Sure I had my tried and true PG, but this was new. And it's always about the NOW isn't it? It didn't end there either. Captain America was around the corner and I needed a Marvel cosplay. Still on a shoestring budget I scoured the thrift shops. Between a second hand dress, a curtain, and some craft foam, I was now the Scarlet Witch.

I'd love to stake claim to every bit of these costumes as my own 100% personal work, but they weren't. And they still aren't. This goes back to the old adage "it takes a village to...something...something". Every step of the way I am given the opportunity to learn from others, as are you. From ideas to creation, we are not alone. There are others out there just like you, willing to share their craft, and contribute to the delinquency of other costuming addicts. The internet is typically where these deviants compile information regarding makeshift supersuits, cowls,



masks, body painting, armor, corsets, and so on and so forth. And once you become financially destitute, and over run with every persona known in pop culture, Steam Punk will rear its gear-laden head.

Harley Quinn now wears a bustle, Batman is now from Gotham by Gaslight, and (just for kicks and giggles) we now have SteamPunky Brewster (look it up and know your pop culture history). Character creation is limited only to ones imagination. With their glue guns in their holsters and spray paint at the ready, these gear toting maniacs lurk in dark places, searching for scraps, awaiting the finality of yet another "perfect" cosplay.

But it's never "perfect" is it?

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**ALFRED TRUJILLO**

**Cara Nicole**

# COMIC BOOKS: SEX AND VIOLENCE IN COMIC BOOKS

by Joseph Nieves

In 1954, psychiatrist Frederic Wertham published his infamous book, "The Seduction of Innocence", in which he posited that comic books were a negative influence that led young people to delinquency. One of his biggest concerns was that the perceived homosexual subtext of Batman and Robin would destroy children's idea of the family unit. That same year Wertham was asked to testify as an expert witness during a public hearing of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. In response to his testimony, comic book publishers, fearing government censorship, devised the notorious Comics Code Authority, which banned outright depictions of sex, drug use, graphic violence, and supernatural creatures. Wertham, with one ride at the witness stand, had effectively cleaned up the comic book industry, making the four color newsprint safe for young, impressionable minds.

Well, it's probably for the best that Wertham didn't live to see Image Comics' sluggish superhero deconstruction title, Sex.

Written by industry veteran, Joe Casey, with illustrations by Polish artist, Piotr Kowalski, the story centers around Simon Cooke, an unabashed Batman analogue who has retired from crime fighting and returning to his city after a lengthy sabbatical, is looking to retake the helm of his multibillion dollar corporation. The problem is Cooke is not actually a competent businessman, nor does he have any idea what he wants from his new civilian life. Advising him along the way is his old friend and legal counselor, Warren Azoff, whose principle recommendation is sexual release with at least one other person. As the story progresses, a term used very liberally here, and the sprawling cast of characters is rolled out it becomes clear that the only person not getting his rocks off is the listless Cooke.

This is one of the more interesting elements of the book. Virtually every character is depicted at one point or another engaging in some sort of sexual act. In this, there is no subtlety. Cooke, however, is the only character who never expresses any sort of sexual desire. Even when he resolves himself to go to a, uh, "girl on girl" show at a surprisingly posh and popular bordello, he only stares awkwardly at the women as if he's uncertain what is expected of him. As all of his erotic endeavors end anticlimactically, we begin to wonder if Cooke, in his apparently pious charge as "The Armored Saint," has ever had sex.

Unfortunately, despite having a few intriguing ideas, the book suffers tremendously from its dawdling pace and its gratuity. It is currently seven issues in and none of the key players have been very well defined or have any clear motivation. Cooke has literally been moping about not knowing what to do with himself for seven straight issues. Neither his reason for becoming a costumed crime fighter, nor his reason for retiring have been explored. His lawyer's only ambition is getting his friend laid, which he goes to outlandish lengths to achieve.

In the background, several of The Armored Saint's former nemeses are ratcheting up their obscure enterprises towards some nebulous point and purpose, and coldly murdering the occasional prostitute for no reason. And a dishwasher with vague ties to the hero emeritus has taken it upon himself to carry on the fight by attacking the villains' bank accounts with a stolen tablet. Make sense?

Oh, and another of Cooke's former rogues, now the madame of the aforementioned posh brothel, discovers she needs glasses.

It really seems like Joe Casey isn't sure what it is he wants to say with this book. There's an ambiguous connection between superheroics and sexual repression as Casey's languid protagonist spends much of his time ruminating on his effectiveness as a hero in between episodes of sensual ineptitude. Indeed, Saturn City is as bad as it has ever been, and nothing Cooke has done seems to have made any difference. He is a man held stagnant, unable to transition from one phase of his life into another. Did any of it matter? Will he ever get his groove back?

Perhaps Casey is asking himself the same questions about his career as a comic writer.

Piotr Kowalski's visuals are stellar. He perfectly captures the vibrant yet gritty aesthetic of 80's comics, aided by an old-school four-color approach from colorist Brad Simpson. Saturn City is at once retro and futuristic, and drawn with impeccable detail. Sadly, this only makes the book feel even more like a throwback to more intricate masterworks from Frank Miller and Alan Moore, and the comparison only highlights the book's deficits.

Joe Casey's been writing comics for fifteen years. He's written some of the Big Two's top titles, including runs on X-Men and Superman. More recently he's found success, and fortune, with a

completely different demographic as co-creator of the hit kids' cartoons, Ben 10 and Generator Rex on the Cartoon Network. Now, in the letters column of the first issue of Sex, Casey has declared his desire to "take back the 'alternative comix' tag... for our own perverse pleasure." The result has been a plodding, gratuitous, and misogynistic exercise in which equivocation is offered in place of complexity. Well done, Joe.

Joseph Nieves co-hosts the podcast, "What Are We Doing Here?" for Brick Cave Audio. He is also a full time student at Westminster College in Mesa majoring in Transnational Studies and Creative Writing.

WOD

## EDITORIAL: CONS - JEKYLL AND HYDE?

By Donald Jacques

I attended two days of Phoenix ComicCon in 2013 with mixed feelings. It was my first visit to the con, and while there was a great many people (they say over 55 thousand!) it felt more like sheeple in a cattle car. But to watch the folks moving about with expressions of delight, fear, trepidation, confusion, and occasionally rapture I wondered ... Could it be too big?

As an old fart, I remember the years I used to attend COMDEX, the exhibition held in Vegas before it evolved into the CES. COMDEX grew until it spanned (as I remember) more than five convention facilities, six hotels, and the badges hung about the necks of attendees along the full length of the strip. The attendance reached 200,000 attendees in 2000 with people booking rooms in hotels as far as 45 miles away. For all intents and purposes, this was the place to be to know what the burgeoning digital world was up to.

But times change, and the internet exploded, and COMDEX imploded, and CES grew out of the ashes. Today, we have ComiCon, with versions spawning in many cities around the country. We also have the opportunity to enjoy many of the smaller conventions such as Amazing Arizona ComiCon, DarkCon, LepreCon, TusCon, CopperCon and many others.

There is much to appreciate from the larger conventions, such as the resources to bring lots of popular guests, and host workshops on diverse topics related to the theme. There is the rush of the people filling the halls; the energy of people moving through the vendors area, and oh-oh, the costumes!! Then there was that Sunday afternoon thing with the fire alarm, we were all pushed outside for nearly an hour. Ungh!

That Sunday thing reminded me why I also like the smaller cons. They may not have the bigger guests, but those guests are none the less more intriguing because we get to spend more time with the guests! A lot fewer people, but that means more space in the halls to talk

and catch up with friends. There are costumes, and the time to find out how they made them. Why, I even had the chance to have a two hour breakfast with the author guest of honor last year! Woo-hoo! Try THAT one at a ComiCon!

Now comes the question what is too large? Or too small?

Many would say that a con that only gets a couple hundred bodies would be boring. Hmmm. really? So being crammed into the halls, pressed against the walls trying to get from one room to the one next door, and it took twenty minutes - is better? Why? Just because there's bazillions of people? Cmooonnn.

Seriously, I believe that though we all come away from a convention with different experiences, it is the memories of what was learned or experienced, and shared - that we remember and appreciate the most. While at ComiCon I met briefly with an actress from B5. We shared a brief hello, an accolade and thank you, and then it was time to go. Sure she signed a pic for me, and it has a place in my album, but the memory has no "meat". I didn't really learn anything about her, nor did she about me. There wasn't any REAL memory - other than the signed pic. I came away disappointed. Did I really want a one-on-one for an hour? Not really. But being another fan-boy in the line was not my idea of an impression - nor memory either, of us that we would wish to keep.

I wonder how ComiCon is going to survive the growing pains it is feeling now. Just as I wonder how the smaller cons in the valley are going to survive against the juggernaut. But you know ... I really believe that both have their place. ComiCon will either be bound by the limits of the convention center and ultimately plateau for a couple years then begin a slow decline, or like COMDEX of old, expand to other sites in the area to relieve the press of people. The smaller cons will meet the needs of an ever shifting eclectic fan base, targeting ever tighter their focus to remain relevant in an increasingly faster techno-media-web society. Hmm. The more things change, ... the more they stay the same.

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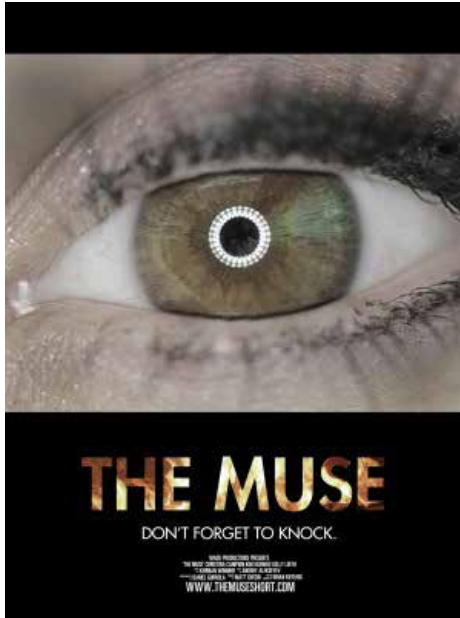
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The 24-Yr old Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror & Convention Newszine  
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## ASU FILM STUDENT INTERVIEW: MATT CHESIN



by PJ Hultstrand

On October 17,18, and 19th, WOD Media had hosted their first Horror Film Festival at Squash Blossom Restaurant in Phoenix. While we were showing mainly tried movies like “The Dead Zone” and some new independent films like “American Mary”, we had several film makers contact us about running their short horror films at our festival. One such request came from Matt Chesin, a 22-year old Producer and Cinematographer, who is also a senior at Arizona State University in Film & Media Production School of Film, Dance & Theater.

The short film we showed was “The Muse” and this was produced by Matt Chesin, making him responsible for location and creating the production team. Working closely with his assigned director, Brian Kieffline, who is also an ASU student, “The Muse” started filming in 2012. This film was shown at the Phoenix Film Festival, as well as the Jerome Film & Music Festival earlier this year.

“The Muse” is about a young girl down on her luck who lands a new job. Wanting to fit in, she takes a bet with her new co-workers. Locked in a vault, she experiences the mysteries of an old children’s hospital. Befriended by a young ghost, they attempt to set her free before being murdered by a vengeful nurse who haunts the premises. The film somewhat reminded me of the short story by Ray Bradbury, “All Summer in a Day”. “The Muse” like Bradbury’s work had a main character who was put into a small, dark place and forgotten they were there by those who had forced them into that solitary confinement. Check out the official website for the film, [www.TheMuseShort.com](http://www.TheMuseShort.com).

After the showing of his film, I sat down with Matt to talk to him about his aspirations in film and about this film in particular. Matt Chesin is a Scottsdale, Arizona boy who is looking to set out on a career in motion pictures. But first, he is working on live concert production and will be staying in Arizona for awhile before taking on Hollywood. Being a senior in college, he is now working on his thesis in film directing, a short film

called “Focus” which is a story about the powers of the camera. This film will have a paranormal bent and his film teacher, Christopher Bradley wrote the script, and an honors college student, Jeff Lynn, created the story concept.



The two of us also talked about the film industry technology changes to digital where Matt went on to say, “it is nice to shoot digital, it is affordable, cost effective and more acceptable.” He loves the ability to do instant play backs of choice scenes in order to make sure the shot came out as expected. If they need to reshoot, then doing so can be done immediately, until it comes out the way they want. At a recent Phoenix Film Festival, he had screened another Arizona short film where he won Best Direction.

I asked Matt whether he was going on to technical school after graduating from ASU and he said, “I’m getting my Bachelor’s degree now and am not really interested in technical school because I want to get started in my film career”. We wish Matt Chesin the best of luck in his career, and are looking forward to the completion of his thesis film, “Focus” when it debuts in May 2014. You can find out more about Matt’s college experience and the films he has been involved in on his website, <http://mattchesin.com/>.

WOD



## CASFS BOOK SOCIAL FOR 2014

Meetings are 7PM, the third Tuesday of the month at Samurai Comics, 1051 East Camelback Road, Phoenix. - Contact is Randall Whitlock.

### March - Written in Red - Anne Bishop

Blood prophet Meg Corbyn, who can see the future when her skin is cut, escapes enslavement by her Controller and teams up with a shape-shifter who employs her as a Human Liaison.

### April - Out of the Dark - David Weber

A master sergeant prowling the back country of the Balkans and a firearms instructor and former Marine find themselves at the center of a growing network of resistance against an invading force of alien, carnivorous Shongari intent on annihilating the human race.

### May - Hexed - Kevin Hearne

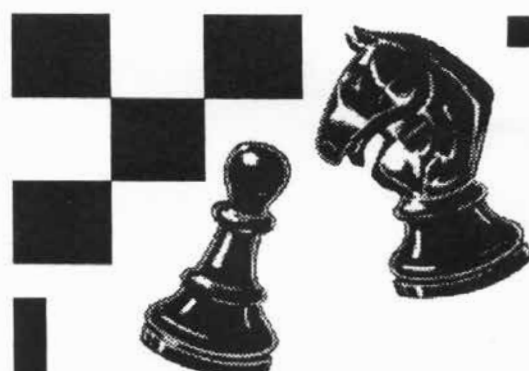
With the help of his magical sword, his neighbor’s rocket-propelled grenade launcher and his vampire attorney, Atticus O’Sullivan, the last of the Druids, must stop a fallen angel from feasting on local high school students and a coven of witches linked to the German side of World War II.

### June - The Last Dragonslayer - Jasper Fforde

Fifteen-year-old Jennifer Strange runs an agency for underemployed magicians in a world where magic is fading away, but when visions of the death of the world’s last dragon begin, all signs point to Jennifer--and Big Magic”-- Provided by publisher.

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# THE INDIE MARKET AND COMIC BOOK SHOPS

by Jacob Thomas

There is absolutely no doubt that you can be rest assured the age old myth “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” can be laid to rest as thorough research provides clues as to why this is.

In the last decade, several big budget movies and comic book titles have been produced under even larger names such as Marvel and DC Entertainment and comics respectively. Yet, in the last decade, what started as underground has now evolved into a populace mention worthy next to said big names, if not bigger for some titles.

Through thorough research, I came across this seemingly rapidly growing populace when I visited Jesse James of Jesse James Comics at 43rd Ave & Bell Rd in Phoenix, Arizona. When asked about his view on how comic shops have taken notice to today’s indie market, immediately jilted into a world of insight bringing to light just really how far the indie community has come out the wood-works.

Marvel and DC Entertainment, in the last decade, have put out several large budget movies and television shows including comic book titles that not only make us fan-boys and girls excited for the comic book future in itself as not only as a business but as a well enjoyed creative visual medium. And often sensed within the movies, television shows and even comic book titles, the bar for the very creators who work on these projects seem pretty high. So does that affect indie creators negatively or positively as they attempt to strike it big with either their very own indie projects or straight into the big leagues? Jesse James delights us with an answer.

“I think the biggest thing to realize is that only 15% that view comic book movies are comic book fans. Yea, only 85% of the market never picked up a comic book before, most likely never came into a comic book store before. Does it affect indie creators negatively? No, absolutely it doesn’t. It gives more people the chance to create books themselves through Kickstarter or vast majority of publishers who are looking for great writers and artists.”

From a shop owner’s perspective, such as Jesse James Comics, indie today now makes up for 1/3 of the comic book industry as a whole.

“If you take actual numbers of how many independent comic books come out every month, Marvel and DC are dwarfed with the numbers.”

Let’s not forget we are also locked in a world now nearly constructed by the digital revolution. Digital Comics are also included in these numbers as well, considering Digital outlets like ComiXology and various others. Yet again, the number of indie creators continues to rise without the use of Digital Sales included into their marketing strategy.

Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, DeviantArt and countless other Social Media outlets are being utilized to their fullest extent to not only grow the viewership of their posts and comic titles but to create a brand out of their very own name. But does Social help or hinder a new indie creator?

## Social Media versus Likeness:

Jesse reveals an insightful perspective. “Indie creators are just regular people. You can say ‘I like him, I like what he posts so I’m gonna buy his book now but it’s also reversed, you have guys that are political and they say stuff and alienate their fans and fans will drop them. So is Facebook a good jumping point for an Indie Creator? Yes! Social Media allows them to grow.”

When asked how shops, not publishers, have utilized this to their advantage, further blown away by the numbers.

Today, a shops inventory is primarily filled with 75% of independent comic titles and/or publishers. Image Comics being ranked at the top. It seems the culture you build as a comic shop owner is ideal to success not only in standard sales but increasing sales in unknown and semi known talent. However, not one shop is the same as explained by James, indicating success in the indie market inside a shop is a case by case scenario.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel for indie creators it seems. Jesse explains at the end of the day there’s a fine line between a community store and being a comic book store that’s there for a community and that’s what Jesse believes creates the success for new and independent writers and artists.

So are there any other steps comic shops have taken to help ensure the success of new and veteran indie writers and artists? James advised events are usually held at his own store and others to ensure this success. These events vary from Kickstarter Parties, advice and support for Kickstarter projects and more.

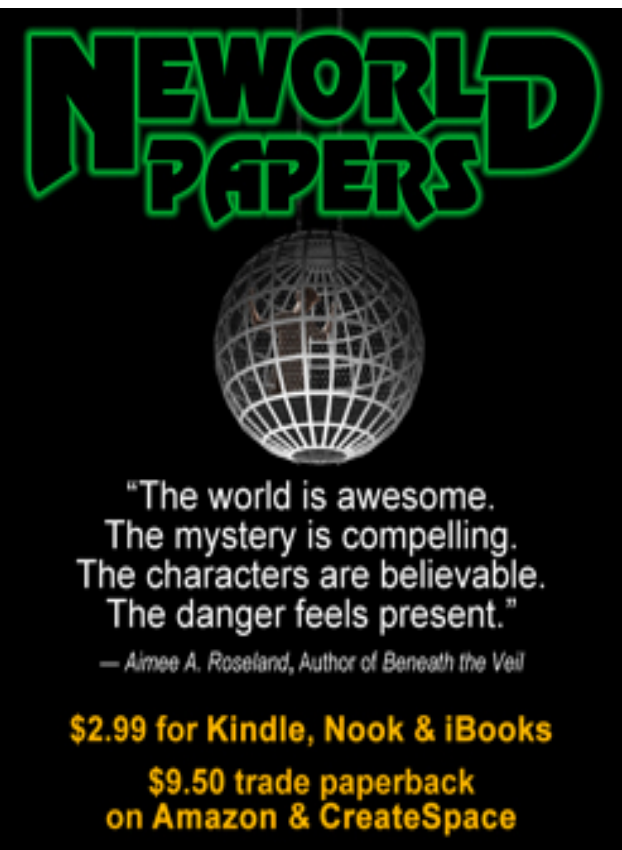
Conclusively, indie writers and artists are on the rise dominating today’s comic industry and becoming the #1 seller in nearly every comic shop across the world. Robert Kirkman’s “The Walking Dead” is a formidable example with issue #100 being the top grossing comic book in the last decade.

“It’s commitment, word and producing at the end”

Jesse James Comics opened its doors in 2009 at a current 7500 sq ft and continuing to expand. James began collecting comic books in 1982.

*Jacob Thomas is the owner of 3rd Level Comics and writer of various geek and nerd outlets such as 3rdlevelcomics.com and PureGeekery.com. Thomas promotes and advertises indie creators of all kinds. For more info, email jacob@3rdlevelcomics.com.*

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## LOCAL AUTHOR BOOK REVIEW

### SEAL TEAM 666

by Weston Ochse  
Thomas Dunne  
(St. Martin's Press),  
ISBN: 9781250007353,  
hb, 310 pages



Winner of the Bram Stoker Award for First Novel in 2005 for Scarecrow Gods, Ochse shows off his writing skills here also. Stories about super-secret weapons in the U.S. arsenal are fun to write and to read about; just like Christopher Farnsworth's The President's Vampire series that uses a vampire as the government's secret weapon, this one concerns another unusual top-secret weapon: a SEAL team that fights the supernatural. The character development is outstanding and the plot for this series opener is deliciously intricate, so it's no surprise that this has already been optioned for the film rights. Moviefone (tentatively) says Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson will star in it, probably as the team leader, but they'll need someone younger for the main character: we can only hope for Chris Pine or Josh Duhamel. SEAL Team 666 has been in existence for over 200 years and they have a long history of being in the middle of the action fighting the weird and unusual. This story starts out with suits of sewn-together, human-flesh tattoos (guarded by small, orange, really mean homunculi) that have been traced to the Far East. The team has lost a member and gets a new guy that has a secret in his past that may end up being helpful if he can stay alive long enough to get past New Guy (FNG - you figure it out!) status. Peppered with military acronyms and



language that give the story a lot of realism, Ochse's background in military intelligence can also be felt in the camaraderie that the team members feel for each other, the way that information gets parsed out to the team and a plethora of hi-tech gadgets. The one flaw is that the action is nonstop and anyone who's been in the military knows that action is interspersed with periods of inaction, but who wants to read about SEALs sitting around waiting for action? - nobody! The teaser that you get on the last two pages was enough to make me search out the sequel, so I'm also ready for a film version and maybe even a graphic novel. There is lots of high-imagery violence and gore, but it is a well-drawn hair away from being in-your-face graphic. There is no sex and little profanity, so this would be appropriate for all grownups or older teens who like military fiction, high-adventure or the supernatural.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

WOD



## MY FIRST PHILCON

by Michael L. Brachman, Ph.D.

I attended my first SciFi convention to try and stir up some interest in Rome's Revolution. The convention is called PhilCon because it originated in Philadelphia before migrating to its current home at the Crowne Plaza in Cherry Hill, NJ. It is sponsored by the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and takes place in November every year. The first one was held in 1936 so by my calculations, that makes it 77 years and counting.

So what was it like? Did I accomplish my goals? Let's start with what was it like. I had seen science fiction conventions portrayed on TV and in movies as a bunch of costumed people running around acting silly. While there were some costumes, very few people acted silly. I met some members of the PSFS that I knew and some that I did not know. They had an art show, a gaming suite, a Con Suite with some drinks and food and numerous lectures and events.

I met some valuable contacts and have made it my goal to be a participant in some of the panels or workshops next year. I also gained some valuable insights into the psyche of the science fiction Fan. I now realize there is a difference between a fan of science fiction and a science fiction Fan. Fans are similar to tailgaters at a sporting event. The hoopla surrounding the game is sufficient for some people and they aren't even interested in going to see the game. Others enjoy the tailgating but also love the sport itself. There are some people (like me) who never paid attention to tailgating and only cared about

the game. I guess this makes me a fan of science fiction and not a Fan.

What about my other goal? Did I garner attention for the Rome's Revolution series? I don't think very much. I think the way to gain attention is to have a vendor booth, selling books and participating in events. Everything else is just noise and my message got lost in the noise.

All in all, I'm glad I went and I will go back next year but I also learned who I am and where I fit in Fandom which isn't much at all.

*Michael Brachman's career as a science fiction writer began with a slight detour into romantic fiction with the novel 'Future Past', currently only available in e-book format. His first science fiction series, 'Rome's Revolution' was originally written as three separate books under the title VIRUS 5. In 2011, Brachman combined them into a single 167,000-word omnibus entitled 'Rome's Revolution' and simultaneously published it in paperback and for all e-book readers. This was followed by a fast-paced sequel entitled 'The Ark Lords' which was released in 2012. A riveting conclusion, entitled 'Rome's Evolution' was released in the summer of 2013. He is hard at work on a new series with the first book expected early in 2014.*

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## WOD-DA CLASSIFIEDS

### MEDIA KIT FOR AUTHORS CLASS

Local Arizona Publisher of over 60 books is holding a class on March 1st in Phoenix from 1-2:30pm. FREE and open to the public. Contact Patti for more information or to get on the email list at [phultstrand@yahoo.com](mailto:phultstrand@yahoo.com) or call her at 480-559-4134 to get started on your book marketing.

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### BOOK PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

Trusted Arizona small publisher will be sharing her experience in book production and marketing for print and eBooks. Patti Hultstrand has helped to publish over 60 books since 2009. She will be teaching Book Production, Marketing, and the Media Kit. Get on the invite list for upcoming classes at [phultstrand@yahoo.com](mailto:phultstrand@yahoo.com) or contact her at [www.facebook.com/pjhultstrand](http://www.facebook.com/pjhultstrand).

### ARIZONA BOOK AUTHOR SIGNINGS

Diana Gabaldon signs Written In My Own Heart's Blood, the next Jaime & Claire book. Poisoned Pen sponsoring event at Arizona Biltmore, March 26, 2014, 7:30pm.

Christopher Moore at the Crescent Ballroom downtown (see Changing Hands bookstore website for preorders and directions.) April 24 at 6pm. Signing The Serpent of Venice, sequel to Fool.

Kevin Hearne is at the Poisoned Pen bookstore on June 17, 2014 at 7pm.

Diana Gabaldon at Changing Hands bookstore on June 25 at 7pm signing Written in My Own Heart's Blood.

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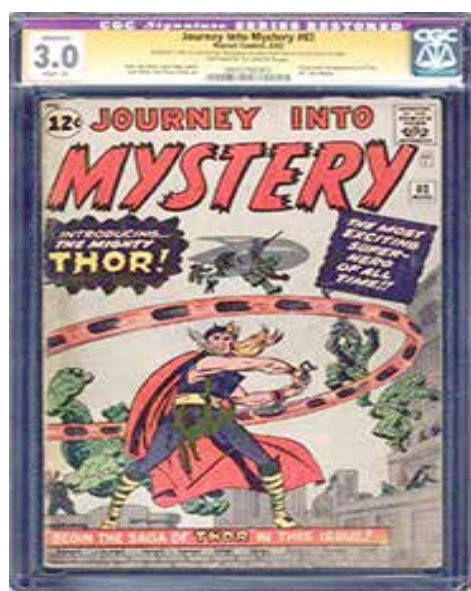
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# COMIC BOOK RESTORATION #1

By Michael Fett

You have a favorite comic character and you make the decision to get this comic character's first full appearance. You do the research on the comic's value in various grades and decide to get a comic in a certain grade or above. After days, months, or possibly even years of searching you come across the right comic that satisfies all your needs at the right price and purchase it. As a precautionary measure since you spent a nice sum on the comic you send it to Certified Guaranty Company for encapsulation and grade. After a few months wait the comic comes back graded with the grade you were expecting, but you notice it is a purple label on the comic instead of the standard blue label. What is this purple label?

The purple label means the comic was restored. You are now mad because you thought the comic was all original, but wondered what you should of looked out for and how to protect yourself in the future. There are many methods people use from amateurs to professionals to restore comics including color touch; trimming, cleaning with solvents, deacidification, swipe, staple replacement, and tear repair are just some of the methods used. There are some methods used by amateurs and professionals that are



not considered restoration as well such as dry cleaning and pressing. The reason these are not considered methods of restoration because there are no methods in which you can detect if a comic has been pressed and dry clean.

There are methods you can use to detect restoration in comics. A small investment in a portable black light could save you hundreds if not thousands of dollars. Color touch up by amateurs is easy to detect because it bleeds through or you can see the unevenness of it on the cover, but if you are unsure take the comic into a dark room and use a black light the color touch will glow or look different than the rest of the areas. Tear repairs you can use the black light method as well the glue should glow and or you will see a different sheen around those areas of the comic than the rest of the cover. Trimming can be a little more difficult to detect and you may what to ask a local shop owner in the area with experience to tell you if the comic was trimmed. Trimming is a destructive process and the most common one used. Cleaning look for residue left behind for what was used and use the

black light some solvents will glow in the dark if used. If you are unsure completely what to look for or are uncomfortable you might still buy a restored comic then make an agreement with the seller.

An agreement can be made with a lot of sellers before you buy the book. The most common one is signed agreement that the buyer will buy the comic from the seller and submit to an independent grading company within a certain amount of time, in this case CGC since they are the only trusted grading company for comics. Once the comic comes back from CGC if it comes back with a blue label the buyer keeps the comic if it comes back with the purple label then the seller has to eat the cost of the grading, accept return of the comic, and refund the buyer's money. If the seller is unwilling to go into an agreement with you then do not buy the comic from them. No legitimate seller wants to sell a restored comic to somebody unless they are up front about the comic being restored.

Which type of comics should you want this type of agreement on? Any comic with great value, around \$200 or more, from the 1970's and back you will want to get checked. Comic shops and people did not really start checking for restoration until the early 80's. So you now know what to check for now, but you are still stuck with that restored comic wondering what you should do with it.

What can you do with a restored comic? Well if your unhappy with it contact the seller maybe they will refund you in return for the comic back. Take a look at the notes in the label and see if it says extensive, moderate, and slight along with the letter next to it indicating a for amateur or p for professional. This will tell you the amount of restoration done and the skill level of the person who worked on the comic. This is the method I use myself for professional work done at Extensive = 20-25% of apparent grade guide value, Moderate = 30-35% of apparent grade guide value, Slight = 40-45% of apparent grade guide value. The only time this chart does not work is for Mega Keys like Detective Comics #27 and Action Comics #1 put those in auction and see what you get because they can be all over the place. If it's marked amateur you may be stuck with the comic unfortunately, unless you get a big enough name who worked on the comic and they are still alive, like Stan Lee, to sign it. Take it to the con where CGC is at have them crack the case and follow you when you get the comic signed and resubmit it then for signature verification. It may make that comic desirable to somebody no guarantees though. Whatever you do, do not remove a restored comic from a case of its graded.

I see it happen all the time a comic comes back restored and the buyer removes the comic from the case because they are disappointed. The buyer then puts it back up on eBay or tries to sell it to a shop to recoup their money. All the buyer just did was start the circle of life over again for the next vulnerable victim. It is one of my biggest pet peeves in comics and too many people get taken advantage of this way. There is a market out there for restored comics, especially from the golden age, and it is getting to be more accepted as each year goes by. There are plenty of comics worth getting restored if they have a value of \$1,000 or more and are pre 1963 and back, but that is a story for another article.

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by  
Kenneth Weene

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## CONVENTION NEWS: ATOMICON

by Michael D'Ambrosio

Over the last nine years, I've attended maAtomaCon in Charleston, SC launched its first show on the weekend of November 8th and it was a great success. Kudos to Janet Iannantuono, her family and staff for an excellent job in getting the convention off to a flying start. The guest of honor was the award winning Jack McDevitt and a host of other very talented writers. I had the opportunity to spend time with John Hartness, Stuart Jaffe, Nicole Kurtz, Christina Janke, Eric Bakutis, Tally Johnson, Alexandra Christian, Winfield Strock, AJ Hartley and Leona Wisoker. It's rare that scheduling works out for the writers to congregate in the evening for a little fun and relaxation over drinks. The panels included topics about writing, screenwriting, costuming, films, science, and fandom.

The hotel she selected, The Inn Place (formerly the Airport Sheraton), offered a really good rate at \$79 and their staff was even better. Food and drink

at the restaurant were very good and reasonably priced as well. The layout for the convention was ideal with the authors positioned in the hall for ample space in the dealers' room. The programming tracks were well-organized and very well thought out. Each panel was well-attended and the fans I spoke with were quite pleased. The hotel provided free shuttle service for any locations within a three mile radius which included the airport. Amtrak's station is also right behind the hotel. With many of the town's attractions a mere two miles away, this is an ideal location for a convention and one that I highly recommend. There are outlets, shopping malls and restaurants all within walking distance of the hotel as well. Check out the website at <http://atomacon.org> for a look at what you can expect at a well-run convention.

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# BATMAN: 75TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2014



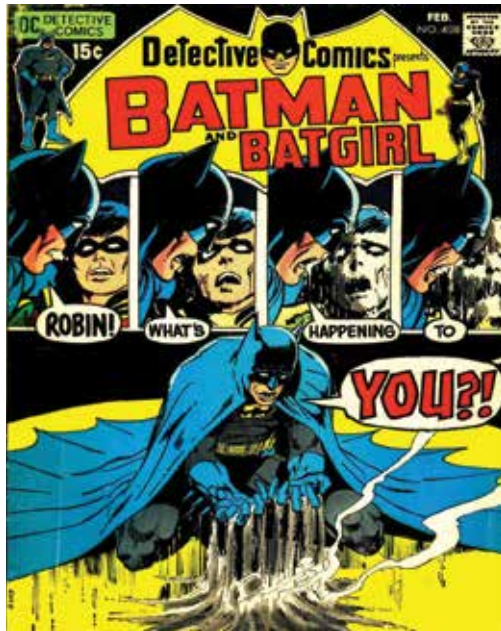
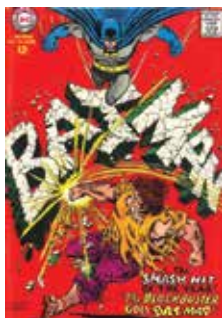
by Michael Fett

If you asked someone to identify the three most recognizable symbols in the world a poll almost 20 years ago would have said the Christian cross, Mickey Mouse, and the Superman S logo on his chest and sometimes his cape. It has been almost 20 years since that poll was taken. If that poll was taken today I think the three most recognizable symbols would be the Christian cross, Winnie the Pooh's head, and the Batman logo.

I am not just saying this as a Batman, but what I have observed from the comic, media, and retail industry. Superman may have been king 25 years ago on his 50th anniversary, but times have changed since then with Batman hitting his 75th Anniversary this year. Superman was the king of comics, media, and retail products back then. Superman had a very successful period leading up to his 50th Anniversary.

A very successful theatrical animated shorts series, a radio show, theatrical serials, 5 films, a tv series, and multiple cartoon shows underneath his belt. Batman while having some success like two theatrical serials, a tv series, and few animated shows unfortunately had his share of negative publicity to go with him as well that nearly caused his character to be canceled from comics multiple times.

Batman like many superheroes of his time was a very violent character. Batman carried a gun, popped out of the shadows, and put fear into his victim's hearts, but Batman was not beyond killing his enemies. If you saw Bob Kane's inspirations on creating Batman, *The Mask of Zorro* (1920) and *The Bat Whispers* (1930), then you might understand just how dark he

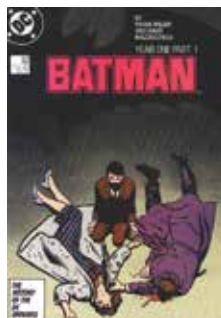


wanted Batman to be. It was not until the editors at National Publications stepped in and asked for changes to his character did the violence go down and he became a character kids could follow.

Batman was forced to take a child sidekick by the name of Dick Grayson, but better known to us as Robin or Nightwing. Robin took the comics by storm he brought a lighter side to Batman and at times more comedic. Robin even started the whole sidekick frenzy, but that was not enough the editors wanted villains to return and Batman to stop killing them.

In *Batman #1*, that is what Bob Kane and Bill Finger did they delivered us a character by the name of the Joker. The Joker was originally meant to be killed off, but they changed their minds and decided to bring him back. A psychopath with enough jokes up his sleeve to keep the dynamic duo on the run, Batman had found his villain. The Joker led to a stable of other supervillains being created throughout the years including Penguin, Scarecrow, Riddler, Mad Hatter, and more. A winning combination for any successful title, but only Marvel's Spider-Man seems to have a stable of supervillians that rival him on the level as Batman's villains do.

You think with all this success Batman would be more popular than Superman in the 40's, but he simply was not. Superman had it all merchandising, fan clubs, radio show, and more.



The moment Superman lost his popularity as most popular superhero D.C. Comics sued Fawcett Comics over Captain Marvel aka Shazam causing Fawcett Comics to shelve their character. Batman only had two theatrical serials to his name and a few occasional guest appearances on the Superman radio show. In fact Batman's darkest hour was getting ready to hit him.

In 1954, Fredric Wertham published a book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which warned that comic books were a negative form of popular literature and a serious cause of juvenile delinquency. Wertham specifically called out Batman and Robin as gay partners as well as portrayal of women in comics. Catwoman was forced to take an extended leave absence from comics and Batman's sales began to fall.

In the early 1960's, the editors at D.C. Comics were getting ready to cancel Batman's titles. Batman was about ready to be retired and his place in comic history forgotten. You might be saying there is no way Batman's logo could be more known than Superman's logo, but this is where Batman's luck is about to change.

Batman had an unlikely ally. Everything about this ally even screams Bruce Wayne. Batman's ally was Hugh Hefner a fan of the character since he was a kid. Hefner the founder of Playboy magazine was living life large. Hefner was such a fan of the comics he even threw Batman themed parties at the Playboy Club that involved showing the old serials. At one of these parties an executive for ABC Studios was there and so impressed with what was going on he demanded a series be made off the cheesiness he saw going on at this party.

That led to the eventual *Batman 66* TV series that took the nation by storm. The show was a who's who in the industry of the day. You couldn't get past an episode without seeing someone like Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., or even Dick Clark pop his head out the window. The waiting list was so long to get onto that show it was ridiculous. The sales of the comics were skyrocketing and Batman was saved.

Even after the show was cancelled possibly the best team, Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil, that ever worked on Batman took it into a new direction that kept the fans coming for years back into a darker side of Batman. Batman had his fans that would continue to read him even during his slow times leading to the mid 1980's.

Superman was king by this time with 4 movies starring Christopher Reeve, but that was about to change unlike Superman Batman has the ability to



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be taken to levels where most characters can't. 1986 came and a limited title written by Frank Miller came called the Dark Knight Returns regarded as many as the best Batman story ever written. It was dark, gruesome, and featured a side of Batman not seen since his inception.

The following year Robin was killed in the Death in the Family storyline by the Joker and Batgirl would be paralyzed by the Joker the year after that. The fans could not get enough of this title and Warner Brothers knew they had a hit on their hands and had to do a film while the title with this hot.

In the summer of 89, Batman with Michael Keaton was released it was the polar opposite of the tv series and became the highest grossing film of all time up to that point. I remember that film was in my local theater for over 6 months and you had to stand in line almost two hours before the show to guarantee yourself a ticket.

Warner followed the popularity of the film with 6 more movies and animated series that led to DC Animation that is still going strong today. This is where Batman popularity outshines Superman's. Batman has not left our airwaves in some form since the 1960's tv show. The franchise has had 7 animated series since then including the two JLA series as well as 15 animated movies that feature him as the most predominant character.

This does not include the fabulous storylines that Batman has had since then too. The Long Halloween was the story used for the Dark Knight film, Batman Year One for Batman Begins, and No Man's Land for Dark Knight Rises. If that was not enough



the writers for Arrow are borrowing heavily from Batman's Universe.

In my book, Batman is currently waiting on the Game of Thrones for someone to overtake him as the most popular superhero character. The last time the highest graded Detective Comics #27, Batman's first appearance, went on the market it overtook Action Comics #1, Superman's first appearance, as the most valuable comic in the world. Of course that issue of Action Comics #1 did overtake Batman a few years later when it was auctioned off again, but it's only a matter of time before that Detective Comics #27 is auctioned off again.

Superman, Batman is your kryptonite and he has beaten you as the most recognized superhero in the world. It only took Batman 75 years to do it.

In honor of Batman's 75th Anniversary, D.C. Comics decided to celebrate it a little bit early this year with Detective Comics #27 Vol. 2. The comic is a bit expensive at 7.99, but it does feature an all-star crew from past and present including mystery author Brad Meltzer, local Arizona writer John Layman, artist Jason Fabok, artist Neal Adams, and more. I own 4 copies of this issue myself: the Greg Capullo cover, Jason Fabok cover, and Jim Lee Cover.

D.C. Comics also has three animated features with Batman ready to come out later this year.

WOD

## HOLY BAT SOCKS BATMAN

By Jacob Thomas

Holy Bat Socks Batman! Warner Bros. Home Entertainment will give the life-long fans of their favorite Caped Crusader the chance to finally own Batman television series, debuting in 1966, on both DVD and Blu-Ray later this year.

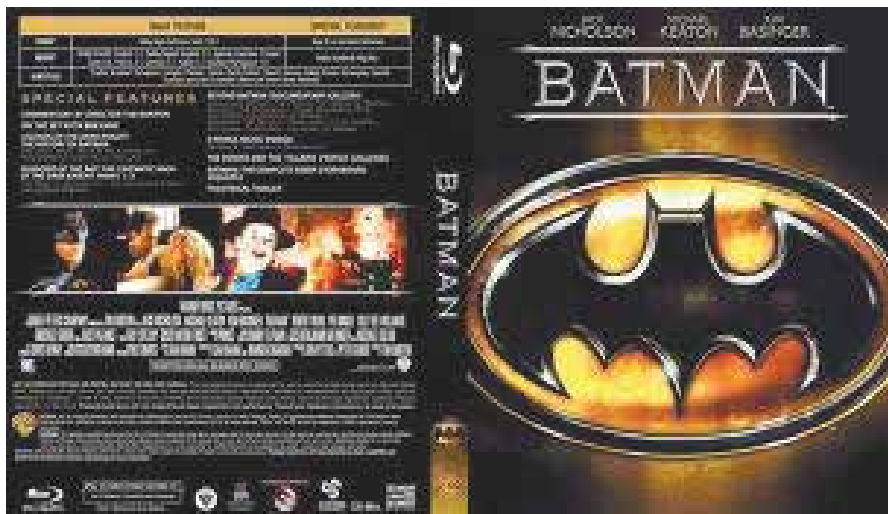
The 1966 television show starring Adam West as Batman and his trusty side-kick Burt Ward as Robin, has spurred a score of cartoons and full length films since its debut on January 12th, 1966 finishing off with 120 episodes in total.

For years, Fox and Warner Bros. Home Entertainment have bickered about the rights and release of the full original box set causing a massive delay in timing of release. However, both DC Entertainment and Warner Bros. Entertainment are going through a quiet shift revolving around 2014 being the 75th Anniversary of the ever more popular superhero. With that quiet shift comes newly, yet to be released, both digital and hard-copy comics along with the set of toys inspired by the celebration of the anniversary.

This week, DC Comics Batman: Detective Comics Issue #27 is to be released leading up to Batman: Eternal #1 in April. Both are meant to have a profound effective look into the dark knight ahead of the characters anniversary in May. This also is in support of Batman's first appearance in the comic world inside Detective Comics #27 released in 1939. Batman: Detective Comics #28 will provide an insight into Batman: Eternal plot structure in February, but until then we will just have to wait and see. Eternal will be written by John Layman, James Tynion IV and Scott Snyder.

The year of the Bat(man) is here folks. And Batman is Eternal!

WOD



## 50th Anniversary Celebration

of Dr. Who on Sat. Nov. 23rd



Pictured: Winner of the Costume Contest, Annika van Neck and judge, Diana Given.



Pictured: A Full Room at the Squash Blossom for the 50th Anniversary of Dr. Who



*We would like to thank Land of the Nerds for their Trivia Contest and to everyone who came out to our 50th Anniversary Celebration of Dr. Who*

Pictured: Winner of the Land of the Nerds Trivia Contest, Annika van Neck.

# REVIEW RABBIT HOLE AT STAGE 55

By Hal C F Astell



Pictured: Michael Hanelin and Colleen Hartnett

Director: Stacie Stocker

Actors: Colleen Hartnett, Shellie Ulrich, Michael Hanelin, Jane Fendelman and Michael Coleman

This is something completely new for me, so my apologies to director Stacie Stocker in advance. I don't believe I've ever reviewed a play before, though I have been involved with the odd production here and there so I know a little about how the cogs move. I've worked lights and sound effects and I've wrangled children, though I should emphasise that nothing I've been involved with has even remotely approached professional. My crowning achievement on stage was as the delivery man in a village production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which gave me a single line. I learned that I'm no actor; I'm much better in pantomime where the requirements are merely that I can stand up in front of an audience and make an idiot out of myself. That I can do! I have at least seen a few plays mounted by people who actually know what they're doing, most recently the Desert Rose Theatre production of *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* in Mesa and *A Christmas Carol* at Glendale's Theater Works. I've never seen anything like this though.

*Rabbit Hole* is a modern play which won writer David Lindsay-Abaire the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It was premiered in New York in 2006 and picked up one Tony from five nominations. Clearly it's a substantial work, though I hadn't realised that when I showed up at Stage 55 in downtown Phoenix to see



the first dress rehearsal without having done a single bit of research beforehand. All I knew was that this was an opportunity to see a host of actors that I knew well from film doing their thing on stage for a change. I soon discovered that there's another connection between them; every member of the cast and crew is either a graduate of the local Meisner acting program run by Kevin Phipps, director of *Malediction* and the upcoming *Grief*, or are due to graduate from it next year. In fact, the spark for this production was lit when two members of the cast, Colleen Hartnett and Michael Hanelin, performed a scene from it as part of their graduation. It seemed like a good idea to perform the whole play to an audience.

And I'm very happy they did. As perhaps my introduction to modern drama, it's a particularly powerful one. I noticed quite a lot. For a start, the cast perform as if the audience wasn't there, so that we're voyeurs into a household unable to see us back. There are no soliloquys or outright breaking of the fourth wall and only a rare scene, such as the one that prompted the first audience tears on the last night, has the actor even looking in the direction of the audience. The cast is a small one, only reaching five players in a two hour play, but each gets their shot and each of them takes it. It was fascinating

to see the focus shift between the characters and for the actors to grasp the opportunities given them with both hands. There's also a clever growth to the play, as the key information we have to work with is dished out with patience, each scene literally adding a new revelation or major plot progression to the piece. Initially we have nothing; just a couple of young ladies talking to each other.

They're a pair of sisters, Izzy and Becca and, while it's Izzy who's more obvious in this scene, the play itself is much more about Becca. The transition comes when we realise why Izzy's news, delivered in a roundabout fashion, is so awkward. She's pregnant, unexpectedly but happily, but she can't just come out and say so as the subject is a touchy one. It's taken her nine weeks to get around to it, for Becca apparently doesn't have her own child any more; while we're learning this, she's folding little Danny's clothes up to give to Goodwill. The second scene explains that he's dead and has been for eight months. Later scenes answer all the little questions about how, while the play itself focuses around an attempt at an answer to the big question of why. It was a tragic accident that wasn't anybody's fault, but that doesn't stop Danny's parents from beating themselves up over it, as they've been doing since the very moment it happened. The fact that Howie, Danny's dad, works in risk management, is a supreme irony.

Colleen Hartnett is a revelation as Becca, who is really the central character of the piece. Everything we see unfolds at her house and she's rarely not in it, as she doesn't have the luxury of escaping it to work. Danny, of course, is there throughout too; while we don't see him, it's clear that Becca does continually, through a thousand memories and the unbreakable bond of a mother's love. Other characters do steal the focus from them on occasion, but even then Becca's usually in the scene as well. That happens first with Izzy, who dominates the beginning. Shellie Ulrich is the cast member I knew the least, having only reviewed her in *The Neighbors*, an IFP challenge film from earlier this year directed by another Meisner graduate, Tommy Schaeffer. Ulrich is sassy and full of life as Izzy, the wild child of the family; she leads us safely into this story of heartbreak with well timed humour. Of course, that's not merely to benefit us, it's also to soften the blow to Becca as she finally gets round to children.

Becca is very sensitive, understandably so. She's a strong woman but one who probably doesn't believe that, as she struggles daily with the omnipresent ghost of her son, half trying to find a way to move on from the moment at which her son died and her life effectively stopped. Every actor delivered here, but Hartnett had the most crucial role because, if she hadn't delivered, the play would have lost its impact completely and nobody else would have been able to save it; Becca is very much the grounding for the entire play, the character in which all the others are rooted. It's therefore good news that Hartnett was astounding in a performance that makes me look forward even more to her central role in *Grief*, due in January. She's a bundle of contradictions, all fleshed out believably. She's calm but reactionary, caring but absorbed in her own loss, a loving soul who's finding it difficult to love. Like the rest of the cast, she was powerful at the dress rehearsal but better still during the Saturday night show.

Unsurprisingly to anyone who's been reading my monthly reviews of *Running Wild* films, her husband Howie is played by Michael Hanelin. As a frequent screen couple, they've hardly had a great time of it. In a succession of films they've hinted at getting together, maybe got together, failed to get together. Here they're married, as they were in *The Men Who Robbed the Bank*, but their relationship is broken even further. Because of how Howie grieves ('you're not in a worse place, you're in a different place,' Becca tells him), Hanelin is notably subdued for most of the first half of the play. He plays a solo scene silently and without much movement; in

dialogue he's quieter than everyone else, as if Howie wants to fade into the background. Yet, he gets his moment to erupt soon before the intermission and he erupts magnificently; not wanting to hurt Becca but unable to hold his tongue any longer. Hartnett responds just as magnificently and this astounding scene makes the play.

In between the respective moments for Izzy



and Howie to dominate, we're introduced to Nat and Jason, the other two cast members. Becca's mother Nat is played with gusto by Jane Fendelman, stealing her first scene ruthlessly and unashamedly with a meandering diatribe about the curse of the Kennedys. It begins with Aristotle Onassis, as great stories often do; he groped my aunt once and she's just made it out of hospital, but the two incidents weren't related. That's the sort of story that Nat tells, always with a hidden reason, because she's the sort of mother who steals scenes even in private. That she's clearly tipsy to boot merely gives Fendelman even more opportunity to nail the part. As Jason, the high school student who was the inadvertent agent for Danny's death, Michael Coleman is too old for the part, but otherwise spot on. He stepped up most from the rehearsal and called tears right out of the audience in a powerful recitation of a letter. His pauses are perfect and pauses are frickin' tough.

There's a lot here to delve into as the characters attempt to overcome their loss, most obviously in the way religion and science help different people differently, and that makes it all the sadder that *Rabbit Hole* ran for only three nights at Stage 55. The rehearsal was powerful, but the last night's production was a clear step up for all involved, as they settled more substantially into the skin of their characters. The show was a major success, every seat filled and every audience member affected, but I wonder if this troupe would have got better yet during another week of performances. As Meisner trained actors, I'd have expected that stage work would be a gimme for them, but they continue to make films instead. I'm happy for that, as I can return to them any time, relive the moments captured on screen and watch the progressions, but stage is a fleeting medium, as highlighted to me with two performances over five nights. I hope I get an opportunity to experience some of those fleeting stage moments again.

PS: any stereotypically starving actor should beg to get into the cast of a *Rabbit Hole* production; you'll never want for food, even if you only get to eat on stage. I left each performance hungry.

*Hal C F Astell writes reviews of films from the 1900s to the 2010s at Apocalypse Later, with a focus on what most critics don't cover. He is the author of two books, Huh? An A-Z of Why Classic American Bad Movies Were Made and Velvet Glove Cast in Iron: The Films of Tura Satana. Both are available at Amazon.*

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

WOD

# PRESS RELEASES FROM PHOENIX COMICON

## PATRICK ROTHFUSS TO JOIN PHXCC 2014

Patrick Rothfuss is an American fantasy writer best known for the series *The Kingkiller Chronicle*.

Marketing Director Jillian Squires says that, "We are very please to welcome Patrick Rothfuss and his fans to Phoenix Comicon 2014."

In 2007, Rothfuss published *The Name of the Wind*, which is the first part of the projected three-part *The Kingkiller Chronicle* series. The second part of the series, *The Wise Man's Fear* was published in 2011. *The Name of the Wind* was name one of the "Best Books of the Year" for Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror in 2007 by Publishers Weekly. Rothfuss has also been a #1 *The New York Times* Best Seller as well.

In addition to writing, Rothfuss has also been a college lecturer at his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The third part of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, *The Doors of Stone* is currently in progress now.

## MARK BAGLEY TO JOIN PHXCC 2014

Mark Bagley is an American comic book artist known for his work with popular Marvel Comics and DC Comics titles.

"We are very excited to welcome Mark Bagley and his years of comic book artist experience to Phoenix Comicon 2014," says Convention Director Matt Sorberg.

Bagley got his start in the comics industry in 1983 after finishing first place at the Marvel Try-out Book competition. After some work with Marvel, he was assigned to the new teenage superhero series, *New Warriors* in 1990. From there, Bagley became penciller for *Spider-Man's* flagship title, *The Amazing Spider-Man*. He would go on to be considered the definitive *Spider-Man* artist of the mid-1990's.

In 2000, Bagley was assigned to *Ultimate Spider-Man* and would enjoy the longest continuous run of any creative team on a mainstream Marvel superhero comic. This would help him earn recognition in *Wizard Magazine's* top ten artists of the 00's. In 2008, Bagley signed an exclusive deal with DC Comics and worked on notable titles *Batman* and *Justice League of America*. Bagley is currently back at Marvel Comics and has taken over penciling duties on *Fantastic Four*.

## DON ROSA TO JOIN PHXCC 2014

Don Rosa is an American comic book writer and illustrator known for his stories about Scrooge McDuck, Donald Duck and other Disney characters..

"We are super happy to welcome Don Rosa to Phoenix Comicon 2014," says Marketing Director Jillian Squires.

Rosa's career started in 1969 while still college when he won an award as "best political cartoonist in the nation in a college paper." After working for various newspapers for a number of years, he discovered a Gladstone Publishing comic book in 1986. It was the first American comic book that contained Disney characters since the 1970s. Always interested in Disney characters, Rosa drew his first Donald Duck story, *Son of the Sun*. *Son of the Sun*, Rosa's first professional comic story was nominated for a Harvey Award for "Best Story of the Year."

In 1991, Rosa started creating *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck*, a 12 chapter story about his favorite character. The series was a success, and in 1995 he won an Eisner Award for best continuing series. Rosa is currently happily retired.

## MARK SHEPPARD TO JOIN PHXCC 2014

Mark Sheppard is is an English actor and musician best known for his roles in the TV series' *Supernatural*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Firefly*..

"We are very excited to welcome Mark Sheppard and his extensive acting experience to Phoenix Comicon 2014," says Convention Director Matt Sorberg.

Sheppard became a professional musician at age 15 and enjoyed many years as a recording and touring artist. He recorded albums for many groups throughout Europe and eventually moved to the United States. After some Stage work, Sheppard began his career in Television. His notable roles

include the demon Crowley on *Supernatural*, lawyer Romo Lampkin on the *Battlestar Galactica* reboot, Interpol investigator James Sterling on *Leverage* and small-time crime lord Badger on Joss Whedon's *Firefly*.

For film work, Sheppard has appeared in notable movies, *In the Name of the Father*, *Unstoppable* and *Megalodon*. Currently, you will still continue to see Sheppard on *Supernatural*. His latest movie, *Sons of Liberty* is currently in post-production as well.

Mike Baron, Dennis Calero, Katie Cook, Gene Ha, Michael Golden, Konstantin Komardin, Tony Moore, James O'Barr, Wendy and Richard Pini, Chris Roberson and Renee Witterstaetter to Join PHXCC 2014 Phoenix Comicon is proud to announce that comic book artists and writers Mike Baron, Dennis Calero, Katie Cook, Gene Ha, Michael Golden, Konstantin Komardin, Tony Moore, James O'Barr, Wendy and Richard Pini, Chris Roberson and Renee Witterstaetter will be attending Comicon 2014.

Marketing Director Jillian Squires says that, "It is a goal to continue bringing new comics guests year-after-year and we are very happy with this group for Phoenix Comicon 2014."

Mike Baron is the creator of comic books *Badger* and *Nexus*. Published in 1981, *Nexus*, a superhero and science fiction genre comic book earned Baron two Eisner Awards and with penciler Steve Rude, six total Eisner Awards for their work on *Nexus*. Baron had also responsible for *The Badger*, *Ginger Fox*, *Spyke*, *Feud*, and many other comic book titles.

Dennis Calero is an American comic book artist and illustrator, known for his work on titles *X-Factor*, *Legion of Superheroes* and *Kolchak*. During his time working on Marvel Comics' *X-Factor*, the title was nominated for the Harvey Award for Best New Series in 2006. In 2009 Dennis Calero received an honorable mention from the Society of Illustrators West for his work on *X-Men Noir*. Recently, Calero also begun illustrating a webcomic, *The Little Green God of Agony* for author Stephen King in the 2011 anthology, *A Book of Horrors*.

Katie Cook is an American comic artist and writer who is best know for her writing for *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. Cook has worked on licensed properties for DC and Marvel Comics and is also known for her webcomic, *Gronk*. She acted as writer behind issues \$1-4 of the bestselling *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* comic.

Gene Ha is an American comics artist and writer best known for his work on books such as *Top 10* and *Top 10: The Forty-Niners*. In 1999, Ha began illustrating *Top Ten* and would draw the series; twelve issues, which ran until 2001. In 1994, he was awarded the Russ Manning Most Promising Newcomer Award and has also won four Eisner Awards in 2000, 2001, 2006 and 2008.

Michael Golden is an American comic book artist and writer best known for his work on Marvel Comics' *The Micronauts*. While his career started in 1977 working for DC Comics on titles *Mister Miracle* and *Batman Family*, Golden's is widely known for his work with Marvel Comics in 1978's *Micronauts*. Other notable titles he has work on at Marvel include *Doctor Strange*, *Howard the Duck* and *Marvel Fanfare*. In the 2000s, Golden would return to DC Comics and draw covers for *Superman: The Man of Steel*, *Vigilante* and others.

Tony Moore is an American comic book artist, whose work consists of notable horror and science fiction such as *Fear Agent*, *The Exterminators* and *The Walking Dead*. For his work on the first six issues of *The Walking Dead*, Moore was nominated for two Eisner Awards in 2004 and 2005.



Konstantin Komardin is an award-winning Russian sequential artist, graphic artist and animator known for his story, *Siberian Dreams*. His other works includes comics *Agent Z*, *Sit-o-city*, *Gate of Alice*, and *Mechanics of Senses*. He has also published *Veles*, *Hacker*, *Max Cooler*, *Moulin Rouge* and *Timof* for BD magazines. In 2003, Konstantin was awarded the Grand Prize for *The Site of Polis* at the Moscow Comics Festival.

James O'Barr is an American graphic artist best known for the graphic novel series, *The Crow*. O'Barr started working on *The Crow* in 1981 and after several years, the first book in the series was finally released in 1993. The book was adapted into the successful film of the same name in 1994. O'Barr was the second American to be awarded the "Storyteller Award" by the International Comic Festival. Fans will be able to see O'Barr's new graphic novel, *Sundown*, which will be delivered through the digital medium of the iPhone and iPad.

Wendy and Richard Pini are a husband-and-wife team responsible for creating the well-known *Elfquest* series of comics, graphic novels and prose works. After Wendy and Richard married in 1972, she started a career as an illustrator, while he took a position at Boston's Charles Hayden Planetarium. In 1978, Wendy launched *Elfquest* with Richard as co-writer and editor. *Elfquest* won the 1979 Ed Aprill Award for Best Independent Comic. In addition to *Elfquest*, Wendy Pini also created two graphic novels based on the TV series *Beauty and the Beast* and has adapted the *Masque of the Red Death* into both a graphic novel and web comic in 2007.

Chris Roberson is a science fiction author known in the comics world for his miniseries, *Cinderella: From Fabletown With Love*, which was released in 2009. Roberson has been a three-time finalist for the World Fantasy Award and twice for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. He won the Sidewise Award for Alternate History Long Form in 2009 for *The Dragon's Nine Sons*.

Renee Witterstaetter is a writer, editor and publisher known for her work on DC Comics' titles *Silver Surfer* and *Conan the Barbarian* as well as *Conan Saga* for Marvel Comics. She is also the author of "Dying for Action: The Life and Films of Jackie Chan," "The Art of the Barbarian" and "Nick Cardy: The Artist at War." Witterstaetter is currently the President of Little Eva Ink Publishing and Little Eva Ink Toys.

Phoenix Comicon is proud to announce actor John Rhys-Davies will be joining us for Comicon 2014.

John Rhys-Davies is perhaps best known for his rolls as the dwarf Gimli in the *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and as Sallah in *Indiana Jones*.

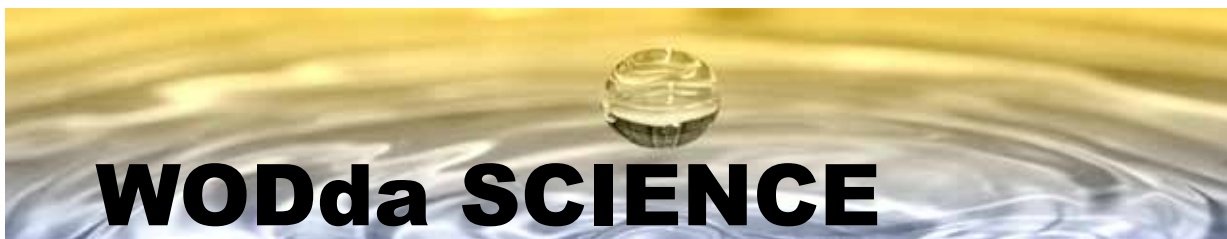
"John Rhys-Davies is an actor who has lent his talents to several very iconic film series. We are all very excited to have him joining us for 2014." Says Convention Director Matt Sorberg.

He has also worked on *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Sliders*, *The Untouchables*, *The Living Daylights* and more. John has also lent his distinctive voice to many characters in video games and animated features including *Wing Commander*, *Justice League*, *Gargoyles*, and more.

Phoenix Comicon is the signature pop culture experience 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. Entering its twelfth year, Phoenix Comicon is expected to draw over 65,000 attendees to its June 5-8, 2014 convention held at the Phoenix Convention Center and Hyatt Regency in Downtown Phoenix.

For more information, please go to <http://www.phoenixcomicon.com>.

WOD



## Doc Savage and the Peril of Scientific Illiteracy

Science Columnist: Sean Ellis

On Saturday, October 19, with the deadline for this column approaching and not a single word written, I decided to take a break and indulge in a bit of creative diversion by attending the sixteenth annual Doc Con--a convention of collectors and creators brought together by their shared love of the old Doc Savage pulp adventures. The Doc Savage character, created in 1933 by Lester Dent (writing under the pseudonym Kenneth Robeson) was not only the star of a long running series of pulp magazines, comic books, radio shows and even a (very forgettable) movie, but also the inspiration for dozens of imitators, some of whom you are probably more familiar with. For younger folks, who might be less aware of this character, imagine Bruce Wayne without the Batman disguise, but just as dedicated to his cause of fighting evil and righting wrongs. Now throw in a dash of James Bond and Indiana Jones--and wrap it up in a young Schwarzenegger body (with a ripped shirt and a funky Eddie Munster hair-do) and you've got the iconic Doc Savage. But what, you may be wondering, does this have to do with science?

Doc Savage is one of those superlative heroes who is an expert at everything he does--and Doc does a lot--but among his many vocations, Doc is a scientist, researcher, and inventor. He is both Bond and Q, inventing his own gadgets to defeat the evildoers who, more often than not, are also using science, but for very bad things.

I was at Doc Con to participate in a panel of authors and artists (also present were Phoenix-based Scott Vaughn, creator of the Warbirds of Mars webcomic; and Santa Fe resident David Wood, author of the Dane Maddock adventure novels) and although my reason for being there had more to do with fiction than science, a question that was raised really got me thinking about what it is that made the Doc Savage character so appealing. Obviously, there is the exotic nature of the stories--expeditions to far-flung unexplored locales are just plain sexy, even if they don't hold up very well under the harsh scrutiny of satellite imagery. But I think there's something else...a thread that connects Doc Savage to both the characters that he has inspired, and earlier influences like Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. I'm talking about the intellectual hero.

We often forget, when reading a mystery story or watching a procedural television show, that--in many cases--the specific expertise, which makes it possible for the detectives to crack the case, is rooted in science. Whether it's Doc Savage using his scientific knowledge and all-too plausible sounding gadgets to defeat the evil villain, or the CSI team matching fibers from a murder victim's body to the exact make and model of the car used to transport the remains to the dump site, these stories appeal to us because we have a sense of wonder about scientific things.

This sense of wonder does not, sadly, very often lead to an appreciation for real science. Research conducted by Jon Miller of Michigan State University, found that only about 28% of American adults could be called "scientifically literate" and it's even worse (believe it or not) in other modern countries. "A slightly higher proportion of American



adults qualify as scientifically literate than European or Japanese adults, but the truth is that no major industrial nation in the world today has a sufficient number of scientifically literate adults," Miller said. "We should take no pride in a finding that 70 percent of Americans cannot read and understand the science section of the New York Times" (from "Science Literacy: How do Americans stack up?" Science Daily, Feb 27, 2007).

That is not to say that our collective sense of wonder is completely dead. Our fascination with fictional "science detectives" sometimes carries over into real life, and a few of us actually consider real scientists and researchers to be heroes. Consider, as just one example, the longevity of the series Mythbusters, which is just about the only remaining educational/scientific program in the line-up of the ostensibly science-based Discovery television network.

The problem with declining science literacy is that we are losing our ability to understand the scientific rationale for very important decisions. For example, many people are unable to understand how carbon dioxide--the stuff that all animals breathe out, and which plants "breathe in" and need for photosynthesis--can be considered a pollutant? Wouldn't more carbon dioxide be good for the plants? Isn't that what we learned in grade school?

Exactly. And the problem is that for too many people (i.e. voters, consumers, etc.) their comprehension of science ends with grade school. To understand and make informed decisions about issues like climate change, we need a deeper background in chemistry, physics and ecology. That doesn't mean we have to be expert scientists, but we need to recognize that a complex problem cannot be explained in a thirty second sound bite.

Moreover, many of us have no frame of reference for understanding scientific-sounding claims that are often used to promote a variety of products, many of which are the modern equivalent of "snake-oil." A knowledge of how science and research is (or at least should be) conducted, should make us wary of any claim that includes the words "scientifically proven" or "studies show." But because we have consistently deemphasized scientific education and even demonized intellectualism as "elitist" we now have a society that is extremely gullible.

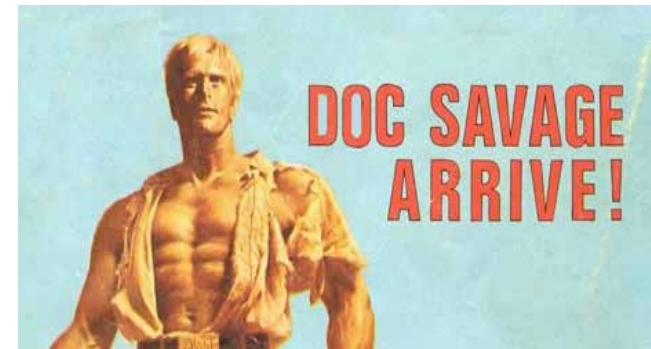
It doesn't have to be this way.

A hero isn't just someone that we admire from afar. Rather, it is someone we aspire to be. It is never too late to stop learning, but it is certainly more difficult to do when we are grown up and weighed down by the responsibilities of the real



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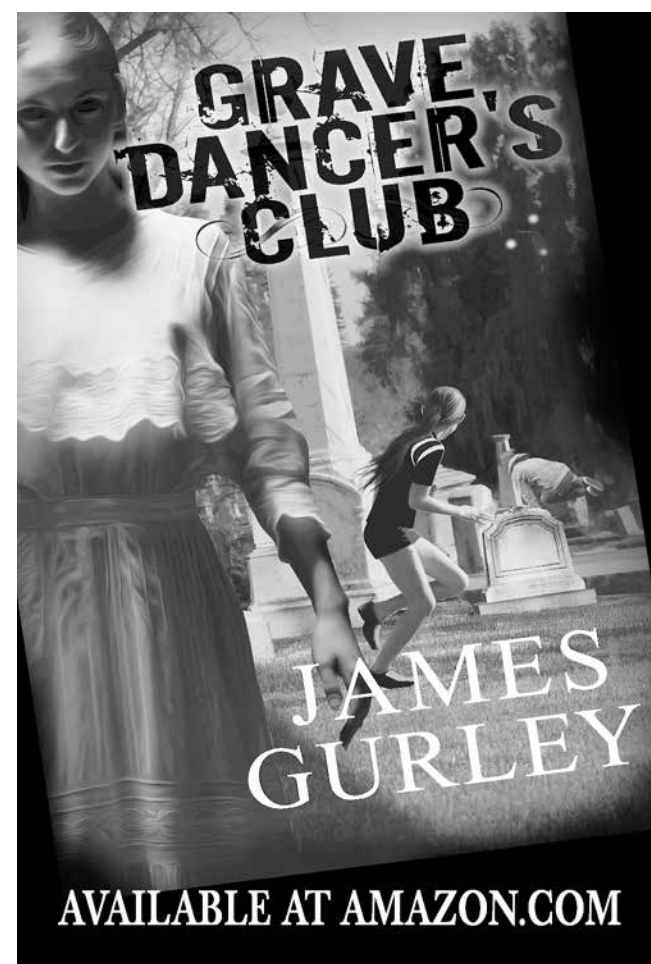
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world. It certainly makes more sense to advocate for better science education in the school system, and this cannot--let me emphasize this--CANNOT be achieved by placing more pressure on educators through high stakes standardized testing that only measures the ability of students to memorize information. Doing that will only kill whatever sense of wonder our kids have about the natural world.

While it's true that a society of scientifically literate citizens might increase the likelihood of the emergence of evil genius super-villains, I prefer to believe that it would also mean that we would have a nation of intellectual heroes ready to take them down.

Sean Ellis is the author of several thriller and adventure novels. He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Policy from Oregon State University. Sean is also a member of the International Thriller Writers organization. He currently resides in Arizona, where he divides his time between writing, adventure sports, and trying to figure out how to save the world. Visit Sean on the web at <http://seanellisthrillers.webs.com>



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# “LEGAL” TIME TRAVEL

By Michael Brachman, Ph.D.

Patti Hultstrand, Managing Editor for The WOD, loves time travel and she's not shy about admitting it. I, on the other hand, hate it because of the problems it creates. Everyone has heard of the grandfather paradox. You go back in time, kill your grandfather before your father was conceived so you were never born, so you could never travel back in time and kill your grandfather. The only way to circumnavigate such paradoxes is to invoke the multi-verse theory meaning you came from a different timeline and the new timeline you spawn has nothing to do with your existence. The other approach would be that of Doctor Who calling it “Wibbly-Wobbly, Timey-Wimey” means there are just some things that must happen and the timeline is always self-correcting.

In my opinion, traditional time travel in the spirit of H. G. Wells is just not possible. You can argue with me and say that it is. OK. Let's say that some day, 50 years from now or 100 years from now or even in a thousand years, people invent true time travel. Wouldn't there be people from the future, maybe even the far future, wandering around our time? Where are they? While the absence of proof is not the same as proof of absence, I think it speaks for itself. Traveling into the past is just not possible. But that doesn't mean some forms of time travel are not possible. In fact, there are many forms of time travel that are perfectly “legal” and do not cause any paradoxes whatsoever.

Let's start with the most simplistic form: you go to bed at night, close your eyes and poof, it's eight hours later. Not really time travel? Well, imagine if, instead of falling asleep, you were frozen solid and you weren't thawed out until 14 centuries later. Still legal, right? This is the basis of my novel, Rome's Revolution which allows my hero, Rei Bierak, a 20-something male from our time to interact with the good citizens of the 35th century. What? You don't think it's possible? You don't think it could happen? It already did! Some Russian scientists were able to take tissue from a plant that had been frozen for over 30,000 years and get it to grow, thus resurrecting a species 300 centuries old. The plant is still growing and fertile and producing white flowers and seeds. However, the most fascinating fact we have so far is the strange habits of the common wood frog in Canada which, according to reports, freezes solid in the winter and thaws out again in the spring. According to the scientists who studied this frog, its metabolism slows to a crawl, and its body temperature drops to between 21° and 30° Fahrenheit (-6° and -1° Celsius) and its heart and brain simply cease to function. There are numerous other examples of insects and turtles that also freeze solid and thaw again. Sperm and egg banks have been freezing living human reproductive cells for two decades.

So traveling into the future is a piece of cake. You just need a good freezer. But that's not all. Another form of “legal” time travel is observational time travel. Saying it another way: seeing things from the past. You cannot interact with them and thus you cannot change the timeline so it is perfectly legal. What? You don't think it's possible? You don't think this could happen? It already did! The Hubble Space Telescope had an instrument called the Ultra Deep Field imager but it was later upgraded to the eXtreme Deep Field (XDF) imager. This device is able to capture and focus on photons that were emitted only 50 million years after the Big Bang. The pictures are staggering. The youngest galaxy found in the XDF images existed just 450 million years after the universe's birth in the Big Bang. How is that not observational time travel? In my novel, Rome's Revolution, the good citizens of the 35th century have discovered a faster-than-light (FTL) stardrive and they use it to outrun light rays, turn around and look back; effectively letting them look into the past. This allows them to discover the underlying reason as to why certain stars have disappeared. The fact that these events happened 14 years in the past is not problem because they invent a “lens-less” camera to spy on events in the past by traveling faster than light.

Say you believe in reincarnation. You have knowledge of your past life. There's nothing wrong with that. Say that you could send your consciousness into the past, a la Quantum Leap. As long as you don't interact with the past, observation only, no paradoxes are created.

You want more? OK, I yield. Let's say that time travel really is invented in 50 years. It is my claim that to prevent paradoxes, nobody can travel into their own past. That doesn't mean they couldn't travel into their future and then return again even as far back as the instant they left. Say that you get your hands on one of these devices, straight out of The Time Machine. You could go forward for hundreds of years, tool around for a while and then come back. This would be perfectly legal because you haven't changed your timeline. You come back to the present and by its very definition, your knowledge of the future changes the timeline moving forward but who cares? The path you forged was just one possible timeline. Nothing says you couldn't go forward again and find a completely different timeline. You'd better gather up the stock tips, though, just in case.

So to tie it all back together, that's why we don't see time travelers from the future wandering around in our time. Because time travel hasn't been invented yet. But when it is, boy, I'd hate to be a resident of a “possible” future. Seriously. Imagine if time travel is really invented and a person from

the past comes forward in time to your time and gathers knowledge then returns to “their” present. Since, by definition, they have changed the timeline, you, your loved ones and everyone around you must cease to exist. There may be another copy of you in the new timeline, maybe not, but regardless, you disappear. In my opinion, if time travel is ever invented, the people of the future would have to adopt a policy such that once discovered, they are duty-bound to kill a person from the past instantly so they cannot return to their own time thus preserving the timeline.

I think this might make a great science fiction story. If I wrote it, I'd call it “All Pastees must die!” I have no proof that I will write this story. We'll just have to muddle along into the future and see.

*Michael Brachman has a Ph.D. in Sensory Science with a minor in Computer Science. Although he has been writing for 40 years, Rome's Revolution is his first science fiction series, depicting the enduring love between a man from the 21st century and a woman from the 35th century. Between the two of them, they fend off various threats to mankind. The science behind the science fiction is meticulously researched. It is so realistic, you will believe that these stories are true, they just haven't happened yet. Michael has two children and lives in Cherry Hill, NJ with his beautiful and talented wife Denise.*

Websites: Rome's Revolution - <http://www.RomesRevolution.com>

The Ark Lords - <http://www.TheArkLords.com>

Rome's Evolution - <http://www.RomesEvolution.com>

All three books are available from in paperback and for all e-book readers

Wiki: Rome's Revolution: The Science Behind the Science Fiction - <http://romesrevolution.wikidot.com>

Blog: Tales of the Vuduri - [http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5874161.Michael\\_Brachman/blog](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5874161.Michael_Brachman/blog)

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Twitter: @mlbphd1

WOD

## PRESS FROM PHX CC

**JANUARY 3, 2014**

Adam Beechen is an American comic book writer best known for writing Countdown to Adventure.

Beechen has written scripts for various cartoons, such as Teen Titans, Rugrats, The Batman and Pink Panther and Pals. For comics, Beechen has wrote several Rugrats and Rocket Power comic strips for Nickelodeon Magazine and scripts for Teen Titans Go! And Justice League Unlimited for DC Comics.

Paige Braddock is a comic book artist and creator best known for the long-standing comic, “Jane's World.” In 2006, “Jane's World” received an Eisner Award nomination for best humor book. Now distributed by Universal Press Syndicate, daily installments of “Jane's World” appear on GoComics website. There are currently 10 volumes of “Jane's World” in print. Paige also co-created the graphic novel series The Martian Confederacy. Currently, Braddock is the Creative Director at Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates.

Joe Corroney is an illustrator who is best known for providing Lucasfilm Ltd. With official Star Wars artwork for related books, games, trading cards and magazines since 1996. He has also developed his creator owned comic book series, Death Avenger. Currently, he is creating new Star Wars artwork for Lucasfilm and Star Wars Insider.

Phil Hester is an American comic book artist, penciller and writer best known his work on The Wretch and Green Arrow. His pencilling credits also include Swamp Thing, Brave New World, Flinch, Ultimate Marvel Team-Up, Clerks: The Lost Scene and Aliens: Purge. For his work on The Wretch, Hester was nominated for an Eisner Award for Best New Series in 1997. Hester is currently writing the new adventures of Golden Age hero The Black Terror.

Brian and Kristy Miller are best known for their work on Hi-Fi Color for Comics and Master Digital Color. Brian is a comic book colorist, founder of Hi-Fi colour design. Kristy is the VP of Development at Hi-Fi colour design. Both Brian and Kristy are co-authors of Hi-Fi Color for Comics and Master Digital Color from Impact Books.

Todd Nauck is an American comic book artist and writer best known for his work on Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man, Young Justice and his own creation, Wildguard. While working for DC Comics, Nauck helped launch the Young Justice series and drew 53 issues of the 55 issue run of the series. Nauck's art was featured in the eighth season finale of the reality television show Extreme Makeover: Home Edition in 2011.

Brian Pulido is a creator, writer and producer of comic books and films and is best known for his work on comics Lady Death and A Nightmare on Elm Street. For his film work, Pulido created, produced and wrote the story for ADV Films' animated feature, Lady Death: The Movie. He wrote, produced and directed the short horror film, There's Something Out There. He also wrote and directed the film The Graves, which was released in 2009. His current comics work for Texas Chain Saw Massacre was nominated as Best Screen-to-Comic Adaptation on the TV Scream Awards from Avatar Press.

Andy Runton is the creator of the graphic novel series, Owly. First published in 2005, the reflection on wildlife series, Owly would helo Runton win the Ignatz Award for Promising New Tablet, also in 2005. His work was also nominated for “Best Publication for a Younger Audience” in Esiner Awards in 2006, which he would win.

WOD

# MOVIE REVIEW: The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Reviewed by Michael Bradley

The sequel to the hugely successful first Hunger Games movie was much anticipated and I looked forward to seeing it as everyone was telling me how it was better than the first one. It is so rare for a sequel to exceed the original that I was skeptical. I enjoyed the movie, but unfortunately, I did not find it an improvement, as it abandoned the original themes and seemed more of a set up for future movies than a stand alone film.

Katniss Everdeen, played by the awesome Jennifer Lawrence and Peeta Mellark, played by Josh Hutcherson, become targets of the oppressive government after their victory in the 74th Hunger Games sparks a rebellion in the Districts of Panem. In order to survive, Katniss is supposed to continue to pretend to be in love with Peeta even though her real boyfriend, Gale Hawthorne is played by hunky heart throb Liam Hemsworth.

Spoiler alert - I can't really explain what is wrong and right with the movie without going into some plot details. What made the first movie great was the concept that you got to know the competitors and you were tense to see who survived and who would die. The hunger game itself was the core of the movie with heroes and villains. In the



sequel, the hunger games are abbreviated. The game itself is more important than the characters.

As a twist to kill off the victors, the Hunger Games for this movie select former victors to be the participants. As most of them are older, you lose the pathos of kids competing and having to kill each other. At the same time, you don't learn enough about any of the competitors to care that much what happens to them. Each is presented as a caricature, the electric engineer, the hiders, the swimmer, etc. There is little or no dimension to any of them. They also form into two large groups which further pulls you away from caring about individuals. The deaths themselves are brief and more from the contrivance of the game than from each other.

Katniss is the heroine of the first movie but they betray her importance in the end of the sequel. She finds she is a figurehead for the revolution who has been kept in the dark because she was not trusted to make a tough decision to leave others behind. Her real boyfriend is part of the conspiracy as are many of her most trusted friends and advisors. Making Katniss the

dupe instead of the heroine really left the movie feeling flat. At the end, she is being whisked away against her will while important characters are left behind. Nothing is resolved, merely setting up a third film. It could easily have said "to be continued" at the end credits.

Worse still is the strange love triangle between Katniss, Peeta and Gale. At the beginning we have Peeta, still pining away with unrequited love. Katniss and Gale struggle with whether to run away and be together. That is why it is so strange when during the games, Katniss seems to genuinely fall in love with Peeta while Gale is secretly planning to rescue Katniss as part of the revolution. Why does Gale try to get her to run away with him if he is plotting already? Why does Katniss fall for Peeta after ignoring him for a year when he lives fifty feet from her and was just as noble in the first games? The love triangle actually feels forced, even for an actress with Jennifer Lawrence's talents.

If you like the Hunger Games series, as I do, you have to see the second movie. It is not as good as the first, it is a set-up for the third movie, but as a fan you won't care much. If you are not a Hunger Games fan, then you will find it disjointed, confusing, and in the end it has more strings and unfinished plot lines than it does at the beginning.

WOD

# MOVIE REVIEW: A Winter's Tale

Reviewed by Donald Jacques



This film opens in New York of 1895, with a young man cornered in an alley by a gang with deadly designs for him. He escapes their clutches in a surprising twist that is the forerunner of several turns and revelations that had the audience gasping in surprise. Our man-of-the-street Peter Lake is a thief. Despite the gang's nefarious intentions, he chooses to embark

on one last gig before leaving town. He enters the home of young Beverly Penn, daughter of a publishing magnate.

While the two are taken with each other, there is the challenge that she is diagnosed with consumption, and expected to not live much longer. The film is more than a love story, as elements of the good vs evil come into play in ingeniously down to earth ways to surprise and delight the viewer. The film presents very small, and sometimes subtle hints, clues, and surprises to the unwary. The acting is respectable, as we are drawn to engage with the characters. The story, while slow moving in parts is not plodding, but ... encouraging. As you leave the theater, expect to overhear many conversations about the film, and likely a tear upon your cheek.

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**Congratulations to Chadd Nelson, winner of the LepreCon 2014 Costume Contest held at the Squash Blossom Horror Film Fest. Chadd receives a membership to Lep 2014 and a free night stay during Leprecon at MARRIOTT MESA HOTEL.**

Chadd has been seen at other events this year in this fine tuned costume of The Joker. He says he had to grow his hair long enough to do this cosplay costume right. We gave Chadd extra points for "Going Green" with his hair. His makeup and costume takes hours to prepare. We appreciate his effort to come out to the Horror Fest 2014 in his full costume.



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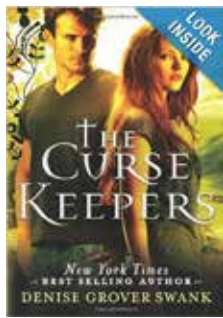
## OTHER BOOK REVIEWS

### THE CURSE KEEPERS (2013)

By Denise Grover Swank  
47North, ISBN: 9781477808627,  
trade pb. 306 pages

This is a nice mixture of Native American mythology and urban fantasy. The first American colony of Roanoke was cursed by two men, one native and one colonist, causing it to disappear as part of the spell keeping the evil Native American spirits away from earth. But the descendants' of each man are chosen to keep or break the curse and when Ellie meets Collin and breaks the curse, they have only seven days to jointly save the world. Ellie and Collin hate each other on first sight but that could be passion - they won't know until they either save the world or die trying. Several artifacts must be recovered as part of the ritual to close the gates and watching these two hardheaded, untrusting people learn to work together is sometimes painful. Very cool mixture of native beliefs, curses and supernatural powers barely held in check. The backstory has lots of tension and the possibility for betrayal or for love and nicely sets the characters up for the sequel. It will be interesting to see how the author maintains the tension and the trust or lack of trust. I'll be reading it as soon as it comes out even if it is directed to teens.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

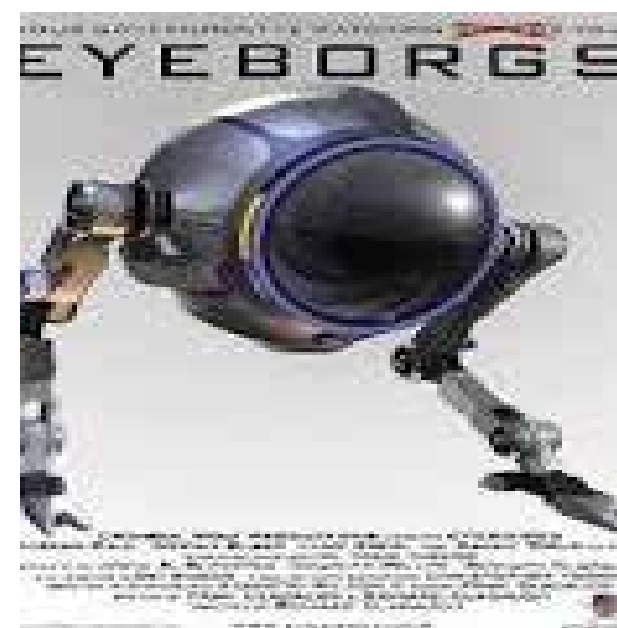


### LINKED (2013)

by Imogen Howson  
Simon & Schuster,  
ISBN: 9781442446564,  
hb, 359 pages

This is another great teen book. Part coming of age story and part space adventure, Ellie sees things that aren't there and has the bruises to prove it - but it doesn't make her less of a freak to her schoolmates or to her parents. When she meets the person through whose eyes she has been living and finds the exact same face staring back at her, she doesn't know what to do; but she can't send this girl who looks just like her back to the pain-filled place she came from. When her parents turn her in for aiding a criminal, her only option is to get off planet, but her twin hides a secret the government won't let get out and she has put everyone on the ship in danger. Great world-building and the character development for both girls and all the secondary characters was very well-done. It's left open for a sequel and it seems like we are just now getting to the good part as the twist at the end was spectacular and I did not see that one coming.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)



### REBORN (2014)

By C.C. Spivey  
Helm Publishing

This book starts off strong, fully captivating this reader into the tale. Spivey crafted solid characters and put them into believable situations. The story of Mayan starts off when she is bought by one slave owner called The Deacon. Yes, this story is set in the early 19th century American south, where African chattel slavery was very much legal. Well The Deacon is a sociopath who wants nothing more than to have his way with Mayan. After about three months he did this, raping Mayan. Some time later, when a huge slave nicknamed Tiny tells The Deacon he wants to marry Mayan, he goes berserk and kills all the slaves but Mayan and two others and kills his wife as well. All of which is described in graphic detail, so this book is not for the squeamish.

Mayan and the two others do escape but the posse closes in on them and they surround the cave Mayan is in. This is when Tytarion, the ancient vampire, shows up. He kills the whole posse except for The Deacon, whom he spares as he senses Mayan's presence close by. He rescues Mayan and, well, this is where the story takes off.

Spivey puts an interesting twist on the vampire mythos. Moonba, the eldest of all vampires, was made into one through a pact with a demon. This cursed his line and made for a rather spectacular method of reproduction, at least as regarded creating full blooded male vampires. Yes, in Spivey's mythos there are considerably more male vampires than females. Why? Well, to come out and say it here would detract from the story.

Mayan and Tytarion are well fleshed out characters. I felt the passion between them. I could sense the irritation of Tytarion as he had Mayan taught how to speak and dress like a lady. Mayan pushing back and establishing herself as very much her own person was most welcome. I am pleased when an author has strong female and male



characters.

For me, this story started to unravel with the surname situation. The tale is told that Moonba and Kwauma got on a slave ship headed to America. When it arrived, they killed the crew and set the slaves free in America. They then went off, found a house and waited for the elderly occupants to die before taking it. They chose to honor the two mortals by taking their surname, Gaylord, for themselves. This event could have been no later than the 17th Century, as prior to that there were no sizable English settlements in North America. This would be fine, were it not for the glaring historical errors that comes next.

Zion, Tytarion's father, tells Mayan that he was born shortly after Jesus' crucifixion. That would be about 33 AD/CE. When Tytarion, later on, tells Mayan the story of his mother, he says that his father met her in the court of Akhenaten and Nefertiti when he went to visit Cairo and the pyramids of Giza. Well, the problem with this is Akhenaten ruled around 1350 BCE, hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. Secondly, Cairo wasn't there, it wasn't founded until about 970 AD. Further, Zion then introduces himself to Nefertiti as 'Zion Gaylord,' a surname he could not have had at that point as Moonba and Kwauma would not yet have made their trip to America to get that name. This sets us up for the paradox of Zion meeting his wife before he was born. Since there is no time travel in this novel, it isn't easily explained away.

In the last third of the novel, I started noting improper word choices and broken sentences. In some cases the typos were enough to briefly jar me out of the story. It is like the end was rushed and not proofread.

REBORN is a good story. The cover art by Patti Hultstrand is awesome. The portrayal of 19th century attitudes and race relations is spot on. Fix the continuity errors and proofread the last third of the novel and it will shine. Spivey has the makings of a great storyteller.

-- Reviewed by: **Ronald C. Tobin**  
author of *A Ruby for Victor*

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## DarkCon Highlights



# WOD Bookshelf

## HOUNDED: THE IRON DRUID

by Kevin Hearne

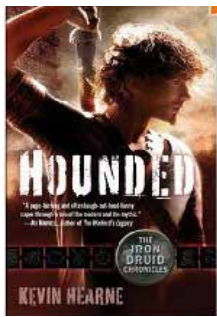
This is the first audio book I think I have experienced since the read-along stories I had as a child. I am still trying to work audio books into my life but having a quality story and an equally appropriate reader chosen is a great way to start.

Hounded is the first in the Iron Druid series by Kevin Hearne and I will say I was impressed with Hearne's style. The idea of the ancient immortal living in the modern world has been done many times, but when done well like in Hounded, it is a fun ride. That Hearne set the story in many Arizona locations that I have visited was an added joy. If you are an Arizonan, or visit, it would be worth it to drop in to some of the locations mentioned.

I really enjoyed the personalities Hearne offered to the mythical gods and creatures in the story. The motives of the characters followed the cannon of the mythos surrounding them and it made for a fun way to learn more about these beings. As a fan of the pantheons chosen by Hearne it is always refreshing to find an author who has done his research on the subject he is twisting into fiction.

Even readers who are not keen on who's who in mythology will appreciate the adventure and the wit woven in this first book and I look forward to more in the series.

-- Reviewed by J.J.M. Czep  
Author of *Blackstrap's Ecstasy and Troll*



entanglement of partnered police detectives.

This is Ethan Moe's first full novel, though the author bio does boast of more award winning reads in short fiction. I am curious to read some of Moe's other works to better understand his style.

-- Reviewed by J.J.M. Czep  
Author of *Blackstrap's Ecstasy and Troll*

## STORM WARRIOR (2013)

By Dani Harper  
Montlake Romance,  
ISBN: 9781477805947,  
trade pb, 287 pages.

This is not just another paranormal/shapeshifter romance. This one has some substance and a hero and heroine who are smart, mentally stable (sometimes too much so!) and who deserve a happy-ever-after. Before the Fae cursed him, he was a Welshman, captured and made a very successful Roman gladiator; but Rhys has since been their plaything for 2,000 years acting as a Grim, a hound who heralds death. They aren't ready to give him up when veterinarian, Morgan, breaks his curse by freely offering him food and shelter. Freed from his hound shape and returned to human form, he is temporarily incarcerated when Morgan can't figure out how a naked man replaced her beloved black mastiff and calls the police. But the bond has been forged, and Morgan and Rhys have several battles, both physical and emotional, to win before the end and the Fae are known to cheat. Secondary characters are fun, especially Leo, Ranyon and Fred. This is the first in The Grim series, so we can hope to see more of our new friends in the upcoming volumes. Storm Bound, volume two is the story of Aidan, a blacksmith also under a Fae curse.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
Adult Services Lead Librarian,  
Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)



## RIDER

By Ethan Moe  
Published by:  
Strange Angel Press

An ancient order of witches who use sexual rituals, terrifying possessions by man-eating entities, and a plot that twists around the biblical story of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ. Rider is a fairly fast paced, supernatural jaunt, with a fair amount of sex, violence, and curse words (not just of the magical sort).

The witches of Moe's universe are of an ancient order that trace back to Mary Magdalene, though not all of them are female they do all use sex in their spell casting, especially when it comes to binding the Riders. The hosts of the Riders might see this as a silver lining to their possession. As far as I could tell, these very attractive young witches take the task of binding very seriously. If you are not shy about reading sexually explicit scenes and not bothered by a lot of eff-bombs, Rider is a quick supernatural story that slips into a bit of intrigue here and there. There is also a hint at a the possible romantic



## THE ALCHEMIST OF SOULS (2012)

By Anne Lyle  
ISBN: 978-0-85766-214-9,  
pb, 518 pages.

Marr is best known for her Young Adult novels and this feels more like that level than an adult novel but I still liked it. I can't tell if it is more like Stephen King's The Gunslinger or more like Philip Jose Farmer's Riverworld because there is a little of both in there. Stranded on



an alien world and unable to stay dead (mostly) this group of killers work to bring good into a world where the natives don't like them, the leader of the vampire-like native species gives them their blood in order to keep an alliance and the unknown-to-them human who brought them there has his own agenda. It's a fast read and a good ending; although it seems to be a stand-alone with no sequel needed. I picked this up because I like her YA novels and wanted to see how she handles an adult one - I'll be reading more of her writing - YA or adult.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

## MISERERE: AN AUTUMN TALE (2011)

By Teresa Frohock  
ISBN: 978-1-59780-289-5,  
trade pb, 280 pages.

Nightshade Books is another small press that has some great authors. I found this book mentioned on Tor.com's blog Under the Radar, where they discuss great books that the editors thought were underappreciated. I had read this one when it first came out and felt that by their mentioning it, it demanded I re-read and re-appreciate it. Set in the year 5873 in an alternate medieval Europe (Woerld), themes of family, love and sacrifice are juxtaposed with demons, exorcism and the opening of the Gates of Hell. When a portal from their world to ours is opened to bring through a sacrifice, exorcist Lucian rescues a confused young Earth girl who may have his same gift, and tries to discover what happened. Lucian finds his fight is personal as his betrayed lover may be on his side; but his sister, Catarina, definitely is not. The world-building is complex and the characters' motives are realistic and well-developed. The action is enhanced and supported by the tight and focused philosophical digressions concerning heaven, hell, demons, family and what constitutes betrayal and forgiveness. I was sorry to hear the second one has no publisher yet, as I was looking forward to reading more adventures set in this world.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

## CELTIC MOON (2013)

By Jan DeLima  
Ace Fantasy, ISBN: 9780425266205,  
pb, 281 pages w/11 pages of glossary.

Sophie and her son Joshua have been on the run since before his birth, but when Joshua starts showing signs of the same traits as his shape-shifter father, Sophie calls Dylan to see if the change could be life-threatening. The Alpha, Dylan, wants his family back and will do anything to make that happen, but tense shifter politics could scare



her away. Thankfully, Sophie is no longer the naïve, scared girl she was when they first met and hunky, teen Joshua is no pushover either. Neither one will take any chances with this meeting; they're ready to run if it becomes necessary. Secondary characters are well-developed and the politics are critical to the plot resolution. Sophie's Native American heritage blends well with the Celtic mythology and gives depth to what might otherwise just be another shape-shifter romance. This is the first in the Celtic Wolves series.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

## STAR CORPSMAN - BLOODSTAR

By Ian Douglas

Star Corpsman - Bloodstar is the first in a series of novels detailing the exploits and bravery of a navy corpsman attached to the 1st Marine Division in a distant future. The author is a former naval corpsman himself and has written numerous prior science fiction series with a military and Marine Corps-style format. I was interested right away while reading the book, drawn in by the first person narrative of the main character, Navy Corpsman Elliot Carlisle in year 2245.

The book moves along at a good pace, mixing in science fiction elements and action with character development in good doses. At times it gets heavy in both astronomical science and in medical science. It adds to the story, but there are some spots describing astronomical gravitation, planetary orbits and designations that you simply skip at some point out of irrelevance. Nonetheless, it provides a gripping first person account of future warfare.

The universe portrayed by Ian Douglas is one in which humans have just now found they are not alone and in fact are worried that others will find them. An alien race is advancing slowly toward Earth and is known to be 'predarians', or wondering predator barbarians, stripping planets for their resources and moving on like locusts. To stop them, the Marine recon units move in to the Bloodworld, a planet that is a hellish planet inhabited by religious zealot colonists. The book is heavy with commentary on religion, ethics and technology, which might put off those who disagree with the author.

I also think that if you are not into military style science fiction, for instance, Starship Troopers or video games with starship battles, you might not enjoy the book as much. Personally, I like both military tales and science fiction and so this story was right up my alley. It was nice to finally read a novel well written, entertaining and well-paced. This is the first time in quite a while I can give an unqualified recommendation to definitely take the time to read this book. I look forward to the future installments of the series.

-- Reviewed by Michael Bradley  
Author of *The Travelers' Club and The Ghost Ship, Fire & Ash, Twisted History, and Twisted Nightmares.*



## THE SUMMER PRINCE (2013)

By Alaya Dawn Johnson

Arthur A. Levine Books, ISBN: 9780545417792, hb, 289 pages

This reads like a teen book; but it isn't. The action is quick, the emotion is high and the characters feel that every action of theirs affects the world. In this case, it mostly does. The main character is June, a street artist in a dystopian Brazil, where tech trade is limited by the Council. Her counterpart is the new Summer King, Enki, also an artist and a hidden revolutionary. But the Summer King always dies at the start of winter so their revolution has to be something to remember. It was hard to get into the character as I kept remembering the other character, June, from the book Legend by Marie Lu and it was confusing until I got into this book and could tell the characters apart. I liked it and it did bring something new to the Summer King mythos, but it still should have been a teen book.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**



## FORGE OF DARKNESS (Book One of the Kharkanas Trilogy)

by Steven Erikson

Steven Erikson is the #1 New York Times Bestselling author of the Malazan Book of the Fallen. This new series, the Kharkanas Trilogy, is published by Tor Books and comes with an impressive cover on the hardcover edition. As I started to read it, my hopes were high, given the proceeding information. As I finished the first twenty-three pages I was really excited by the vivid story telling and awesome prose.

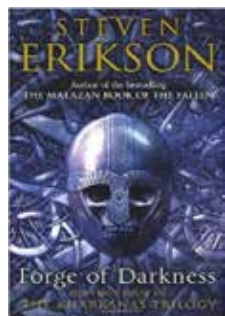
Then things went south quickly. The writing and the prose continued to be top rate, but the story devolves into one scene after another introducing characters from different areas of the fantasy map included in the front of the book. I should have been tipped off that having several maps, genealogies and lists of characters in the front of the book, instead of at the back as an Appendix, was a grand clue to the confusing nature of the novel.

You are quickly plunged into learning over thirty locations and fifteen separate factions of characters. There are 83, yes 83, major characters introduced, sometimes along with deep back stories, lineages and former allies and enemies. Names like Hish Tulla, Sukul Ankhadu, Silchas Ruin, Nerys Drukorlat, Vatha Urusander, Hallyd Bahann and Kagamandra Tulus are examples of these characters monikers.

Book one - in hardcover no less, rambles in very fine print single-spaced for 662 pages not including the charts, name lists, lists of major and minor houses and so forth. Trying to bull my way through reading this was like trying to watch every episode of the Game of Thrones and read the books then take a quiz on everything that happened. I was literally reading and re-reading sections, bookmarking the front references and trying to figure out who was who and where as I tried to understand the narrative.

The first group and location lasted for twenty-three pages and really was interesting. Unfortunately, after that, people and scenes lasted shorter and shorter, sometimes a few paragraphs, sometimes a few pages, each setting up more and more intrigue and subplots until your head threatens to explode. It was more like reading an uncondensed history of the monarchs of Europe throughout the entire Middle Ages than a fantasy adventure worthy of a trilogy which could easily top 2,000 pages in hard cover and up to 5,000 in paperback.

I love complex and intriguing tales, but the Forge of Darkness tries to do way too much too soon. Only with a brain download like Neo gets in The Matrix could one absorb and follow this storyline without developing a headache. As a result, unless you wish to set aside several months to 'study' this book, which



is only the first of three to tell the story, I would strongly suggest you look for a more readable fantasy novel.

-- Reviewed by **Michael Bradley**

**Author of The Travelers' Club and The Ghost Ship, Fire & Ash, Twisted History, and Twisted Nightmares**

**Web Blog: <http://mbtimetraveler.com>**

## THE PHOENIX KEY

By Lauren K. Hickey

The Phoenix Key is indie-published by fifteen year old author Lauren K. Hickey through Author House. The story has interesting concepts of humans and elves and that have fought a war in the distant past but have lost contact. Dragons live between the two and act as paired friends to the elves. Through an attack on a human caravan, a teenage human comes to find and meet the elves and one their dragons. After a brief stay, they take him back to his human homeland.

This meeting of young teenagers who get along as well as fellow high school students in our modern day and use the same language as now is contrasted with the adults who naturally want to start a war again. The dragons are concerned that both the causes and solutions to the early war are locked behind a strange door that only the Phoenix Key will open. As expected, the new young friends together hold the secret to opening the door.

Unfortunately, though this young writer shows obvious promise, the book is poorly written. As an example, each time a new person is encountered, there is an awkward hello back and forth, followed by a paragraph describing the person by height, weight and other characteristics like a police description. The conversation is modern and the pace is very slow. There does not seem to be much character development as the teenagers, hard to distinguish by their actions or speech, wander about in a linear fashion from start to finish.

This novel is a good example of how a good story by a new author could really benefit from professional editing. The cover of the book equally suffers, looking like a hand drawn school picture for the refrigerator with an uncomplimentary background that makes the small black lettering barely discernible.

Given the age of the author I was somewhat hesitant to point out all these flaws as they clearly show talent and should be encouraged to continue their dream of being an author. Still, there is no way I can recommend this novel to others. Let this one pass by and let's hope more support is given to this new author in future publications.

-- Reviewed by **Michael Bradley**

**Author of The Travelers' Club and The Ghost Ship, Fire & Ash, Twisted History, and Twisted Nightmares**

**Web Blog: <http://mbtimetraveler.com>**

## RAPTURE'S EDGE (2013)

By J.T. Geissinger

Montlake Romance, ISBN: 9781611099133, trade pb, 425 pages.

Third in the Night Prowler series, this is the story of Eliana and one of the guardians, Demetrios. We met them in the previous book but their story is fully developed here. Eliana is the Princess in every story, coddled and protected until her father (the crazy evil mastermind behind the group trying to exterminate the other Ikati) is killed by another



of the guardians. She's now a high-end art thief who temporarily can't shift because she's been shot trying to feed her crazy brother's need for money to fund his continuing quest to control the world. But that stunt gets her in the news and Demetrios comes looking for her, just ahead of The Hunt, hired killers sent to make a "naked woman in an art gallery after hours" story go away - permanently. Lots of action and the characters are well developed. It reminds me of the first few Dragon shifter stories by Shana Abe and I loved those, so I love these also.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

**Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)**

## NIGHT FIGHTERS

By Rob Smith

Night Fighters is an unusual story that defies traditional genres. It is set in World War II and involves the true story of night fighters during the battles over England and France between the RAF and the Luftwaffe. However, the night fighters in this story include vampires. The vampires are not traditional ones as we know them from other supernatural tales, but more sunlight afflicted creatures with supernatural sight and abilities at night. Recruited for a special squadron, they face conflict with their normal human squadron mates.

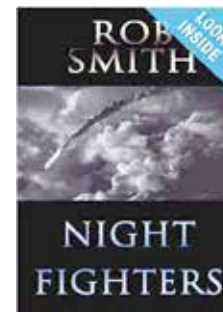
The Nazis also have a squadron that has at least one vampire in it as well called "the Vulture" that is the primary antagonist in the story. However, the story takes on a more normal wartime story profile, dealing with the war, camaraderie, conflict, petty officers and love interests. Not alternative history, not supernatural very much, and not a true wartime story, this is an unusual read.

Still, the author, who is an RAF pilot who served in Afghanistan, tells an interesting and compelling enough story that I enjoyed reading the book. Unfortunately, the pacing is uneven and there are no surprises in the story, as it plays out exactly as you would expect once you learn the basic conflicts. The story is well written and definitely original. It is not supernatural enough for vampire lovers and probably not enough conflict for younger readers. I would recommend it to readers of historical fiction and those who enjoy wartime tales, especially those during the Battle of Britain.

I look forward to the sequel Rob Smith is writing called Remote. If you don't mind a slower paced, traditional love and war story, you will enjoy reading Night Fighters.

-- Reviewed by **Michael Bradley**

**Author of The Travelers' Club and The Ghost Ship, Fire & Ash, Twisted History, and Twisted Nightmares; Web Blog: <http://mbtimetraveler.com>**

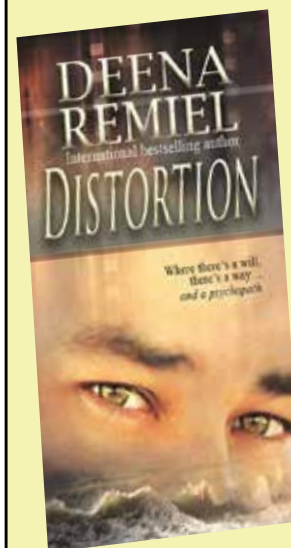


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## DISTORTION by Deena Remiel

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### IRONSKIN (2012)

By Tina Connolly  
Tom Doherty, hb, 302 pages  
ISBN: 980765330698,



This was an excellent Steampunk-in-Faerie retelling of Jane Eyre. Jane is Jane Eliot, victim of a Fae bomb attack which left half her face radiating RAGE until she learns to hold it in by covering it up with an iron mask. No one wants to hire an Ironskin, so when Mr. Rochart wants a governess for his young daughter Dorie, she applies and gets hired. Jane (of course) travels to a crumbling alternate-English mansion near a Fae-haunted wood. Dorie's curse is that she is a telekinetic - not because of a bomb, but because she was born half-Fae and the story behind that was awesomely handled. The story from there wanders a little away from the regular Jane Eyre story, but this is a great variation and I hope you love it as much as I did. This is another author for my favorites list.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### THREE PARTS DEAD (2012)

by Max Gladstone  
Tom Doherty, hb, 333 pages  
ISBN: 980765333100



Immediately after graduation, Tara is literally bounced out of necromancer school, which is a problem because the Hidden School is in the clouds and the fall is only nonfatal because she was a very good student. But now finding a job after punching out her jerk of a professor is more than difficult. When the current reigning God, Kos Everburning, dies in Alt Coulomb, the prestigious necromantic firm of Kelethes, Albrecht, and Ao hire her (on probation) to assist in the investigation. The story has the dark flavor of P.C. Hodgell's, Godstalker Chronicles but with a different religion at the base. The characters are unique (there are good and evil gargoyles and a chain-smoking priestly acolyte), the magic is original, the mystery plot twists are unusual and the story is so much better for it. The second one, Two Serpents Rise, is out already so I had to reread this one before starting the new one, because I love these characters and can't wait to find out more.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### ACROSS A STAR-SWEPT SEA (2013)

by Diana Peterfreund  
Balzer & Bray,  
ISBN: 9800620615,  
hb, 449 pages



Written in the style of The Scarlet Pimpernel (my favorite book), this adaptation continues the story started in 2012's For Darkness Shows the Stars (which was an adaptation of Sense and Sensibility). Although these are YA books, they were still great and adults will love them too. The joy is in how the author adapts the story to a post-apocalyptic society, with the associated class distinctions. The hi-tech gadgets were very well integrated into the story so that you felt they were necessary to the plot. And the names cracked me up - Persis Blake is the 16-year-old heroine who masquerades as a gorgeous, empty-headed, Aristo fluff while secretly she is the feared Wild Poppy, rescuer of the oppressed; Justen Helo, the hunky, pampered, young scientist is trying to help his own people, but his discoveries are used for evil by his uncle. When the star-crossed lovers find each other, the sparks fly. It didn't even matter that I knew how it was going to end, I devoured this one in less than a day.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### A DANCE OF CLOAKS (2013)

by David Dalgluish  
Orbit books,  
ISBN: 9780316242394,  
trade pb, 448 pages.

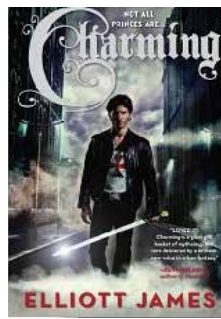


It was nice that the author mentioned his influences of Martin, Weeks and Rowling, because those come through loud and clear; but the story stands on its own and as the first in a six-part series, you expect the complexity and intricacy required to support a story of that length. And it's there! A son tries to live up to his father's unrealistic expectations; but when he fails, he has to decide which direction his future should go: as follower, competitor or executioner. A large cast of supporting characters, each with their own story, competes for your attention and sometimes takes over from the main story; but they all lead back to our main character: 13-year-old, Aaron Felhorn, who recreates himself as Haern when his old life falls apart. Five more books to go to find out how it ends. The first three are already out, so that's good news.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### CHARMING (2013)

by Elliott James  
Orbit Books,  
ISBN: 9780316253390,  
trade pb, 366 pages.

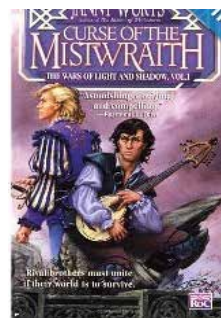


On a twist of the Prince Charming story, John Charming trained from birth to be a Knight Templar, fighting evil in all its forms: be it werewolf, vampire or whatever. His blood having been tainted from his mother being bitten by a werewolf when she was pregnant, leaves the Knights Templar more than a little untrusting of his loyalty. So he's on the run from them and only his not-quite-werewolf-sharp senses and strength keep him ahead. But an unusual girl walks into his bar and all bets are off. With a main character similar to Atticus O'Sullivan from the Kevin Hearne Iron Druid novels, the snark and the attitude never let up even when lives are at stake. This is set up to be a series and there are several short stories in ebook form you can read until the next novel comes out.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### CURSE OF THE MISTWRAITH

by Janny Wurtz  
Voyager,  
ISBN: 9780586210697,  
pb, 848 pages



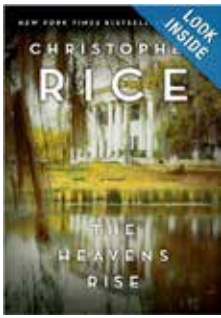
This is another book reviewed in Tor.com's Under the Radar, which always reminds me of great books I have read. This epic fantasy series opener, originally published in 1994, starts the story of two charismatic royal brothers who, through a curse from another dimension, are set on a course of mutual destruction, not only of themselves, but of the world they are living in. This is after this curse has destroyed all the worlds behind them in their travels as they flee - always just a hair and sometimes less - ahead of the Curse of the Mistwraith. The atmosphere is similar to Ian Irvine's View from the Mirror series, with some of the darkness of Glen Cook's Black Company series, this is just different enough to keep me reading these huge books as soon as they get published. With portals similar to StarGates and a cool magic system, you think you know where the story is going, but Wurtz surprises you in every volume with that story's new direction,

while steadily moving the larger story arc along. The history and mythology that grounds the series is both broad and deep, interesting and for such a long series, strangely underivative. Comprising 11 volumes upon completion, with nine currently in publication, this is epic fantasy at its most EPIC.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### THE HEAVENS RISE

by Christopher Rice  
Gallery Books  
(Simon & Schuster)  
ISBN: 9781476716084,  
317 pages

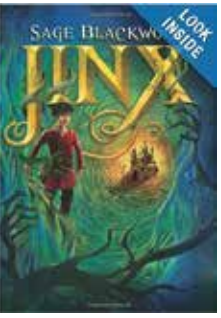


I didn't know Christopher Rice was Anne Rice's son. But who cares, he is a great writer and this book was pretty great. Two kids get covered in parasites that give them powers to control other people: one who wants revenge and one who just wants to protect their loved ones. It sounds like the plot of several other stories; but this one has great characters that you care about. Yes they are teen stereotypes: the gay outsider and third wheel, the hugely muscled jock who loves the beautiful popular rich girl; but somehow you really care. The story goes places you expect but in ways you don't expect and that was a really nice surprise. This is a really quick read and the ending was awesome, but you can't skip any pages or you won't get the full experience.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### JINX

by Sage Blackwood  
Harper,  
ISBN: 9780062129901,  
hb, 360 pages

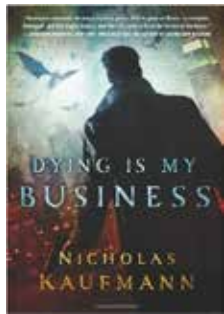


Yes, this is a fantasy book for children, but it is sufficiently sophisticated that adults might like it too. Taken to the forest of Urwald to be abandoned by his stepfather, Jinx is rescued by the wizard, Simon Magus, from certain death at the hand or paw of trolls, werewolves or the evil Bonemaster. Jinx finds his new life as a servant much more fulfilling, even if it only means his stomach is filled more often. But Jinx has a gift; he can see colorful clouds over each person that he learns may indicate their emotions. Simon doesn't believe that Jinx can really see emotions, but when Sophie, Simon's sometimes-wife, notices that Jinx can't read, she forces Simon to take Jinx as his paid (one penny per year) apprentice and teach him reading and some magic and Jinx's gift proves useful. Just when you start to think you know where the story is going, Simon's nemesis, Bonemaster, enters the story along with two other children, Elfwyn and Reven. Both children are cursed and they travel through the Urwald with Jinx to find answers to their problems. The secondary adult characters of Sophie, Bonemaster and Dame Glammer are the adults that bring the most philosophical questions for the children to answer: is death the worst thing that can happen, is taking someone's magic to save their life bad, is stealing information to share it with the world bad or good? These are questions that even adults have trouble with and while this is a children's book, the answers are not easy to discover and the children and the adults grow as they search for direction. The history and culture of the area is important in that it sets the stage for some of the problems that Jinx and Simon have to overcome. This is Blackwood's first fantasy novel and was selected as a Best Book of 2013 by Kirkus, Booklist, School Library Journal, and Amazon.com. The sequel, Jinx's Magic, is due out in January of 2014.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
Adult Services Lead Librarian, Prescott Public Library - [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### DYING IS MY BUSINESS

by Nicholas Kaufman  
Orbit books,  
St. Martin's Griffin,  
ISBN: 9781250036100,  
369 pages

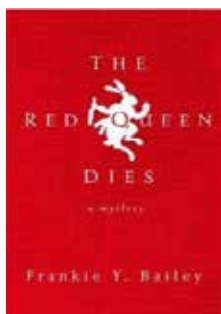


With gargoyles on the front cover, how could I not love this book? It starts out with our amnesiac hitman/go-to-guy coming back from the dead, immediately and fully healed from the bullet wounds that killed him, and once again finding his killer sucked dry of life essence by whatever force brings him back. It starts out similar to the (absolutely awesome) Amber series by Roger Zelazney with an amnesiac, but still snarky, protagonist; but immediately veers off into its own thing with gargoyles, crime syndicates, cool magic, a great mythology not from this earth, his nine previous deaths and recoveries - and GARGOYLES. When his current target offers to save him and help him recover his memories, he thinks he can change his life - but bad decisions have a way of living on and his do - with a vengeance. The author has been nominated for the Bram Stoker Award, usually a good indication that I'm going to love the book, but I kept thinking he would have trouble wrapping this storyline up in one volume and the closer I got to the end the more I thought that. Then, two pages from the end, you get the most awesome twist, and you are thrilled that there is going to be another one because you are totally, absolutely on the edge of your seat. Don't read ahead, it will spoil the whole story!

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**  
- [www.prescottlibrary.info](http://www.prescottlibrary.info)

### THE RED QUEEN DIES

by Frankie Y. Bailey  
Minotaur Books  
(Thomas Dunne),  
ISBN: 9780312641757,  
hb, 290 pages.



Set in an Albany, NY of 2019, the mystery starts with three murdered women who, initially, have nothing in common.

Police Detective Hannah McCabe gets pressure to solve the case quickly when the third woman is Tony-Award-winning actress and tentative author, Vivian Jessup, also known as the Red Queen for her parts in various Alice-themed plays. Bailey doesn't use as much future tech as you find in J.D. Robb's Eve Dallas series, but the mystery makes up for that. The police know that something has to connect these three women, but finding that needle in a haystack and then using it to sew together a tight case, creates some interesting wrinkles. Making this more difficult is a new drug on the street that erases traumatic memories so that star witnesses no longer remember what they were witness to; although this is not used to its fullest extent, it does create some interesting obstacles in solving cases. If you like this interesting take on law enforcement tools, try Seth Patrick's Reviver where the police use necromancers to get testimony from the dead. Character development is good and the plot keeps getting more involved as you learn more about the case. There are a number of unresolved non-plot-related loose ends at the end of the book, but since the blurb at the beginning states this is a new series, I expect we'll see more of this character and I am looking forward to that.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

### LAST TO RISE (2013)

by Francis Knight  
Orbit Books  
(Hachette Book Group),  
ISBN: 9780316217743,  
Trade pb, 346 pages



This is the third in the series about pain-mage Rojan Dizon and the vertical city of Mahala. The city is under siege by the invading Storad, the few remaining and mostly-untrained mages are unable to supply enough Glow to keep the city in working order, and Dijon's brother, Archdeacon Perak, is lost as to how to save the city as it seems only a miracle will do the job. But that is Rojan's stock-in-trade and the miracle that he pulls off is both massive and heartbreaking at the same time. This is another of those books where it seems no one wins at the end; but getting there was a total rush. The whole series has been very dark and grim with only a few glimpses of the lighter side of Mahala, but as with Janine Cross's dark and more adult-themed Dragon Venom series and its tormented main character, life is not always a box of chocolates and the hell the main character goes through shows his or her character off to its best or worst as they strive to overcome what seems insurmountable. I can't wait to see what Mrs. Knight will write for us next.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

### ANDROMEDA'S FALL

by William C. Dietz  
Ace Books, 340 pages  
ISBN: 98025256251, hb,



It's difficult to not measure every military-in-space story with a female protagonist against the Honor Harrington series by David Weber, but the Andromeda McKee stories set in Dietz's Legion of the Damned universe are pretty awesome for character development and military accuracy within the bounds of it being science fiction. Lady Cat Carletto barely escapes with her life when her sister stages a violent and bloody coup and takes over the empire. No place is safe - but the military might be big enough to hide her for a time, while she tries stay alive long enough to plan her own coup. Becoming the smart and tough Andromeda McKee is a start and learning to kill quickly and well is the next step; fortunately she learns fast and makes some friends along the way. I liked this enough to get the second one, Andromeda's Choice which is already available and I'll be reading the rest of the series as soon as I can grab them.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

### THE GARDEN OF STONES (2013)

by Mark T. Barnes  
47North, ISBN: 9781611098938, Trade pb, 484 pages



With an additional seven pages of combined glossary/listing of characters at the end and at almost 500 pages this is a hefty debut novel for the first volume of the Echoes of Empire series and it is nominated for one of Australia's premier speculative fiction awards, the Aurealis Awards ([www.aurealisawards.com/](http://www.aurealisawards.com/)). Flavored with the middle-eastern ambiance of character titles and names, the extensive mythology, history and convoluted family ties ground this story firmly in the lists of unique post-apocalyptic fantasy, while not forcing you to slog through pages of backstory at one time. The writing is tight and the characters are fun to watch as they squirm through the hellish decisions the author forces them to make: save their friends

or their family, but never both. I almost felt like I could have been reading the story of Tolkien's Sauron before he became evil; what is the dividing line between the end justifying the means and absolute evil? Power corrupts and the kinds of incredible power shown here will kill family, friends and enemies as they try to keep it. Indris and his not-so-merry band of soldier-poets, witches and nonhumans are the main characters, but the back-stabbing, triple-crossing, magic-wielding, empire-building families can't be ignored - as everyone has their favorite faction and centuries-long feuds make the story interesting. With the historical memory of every feud and wrong done to or by the family right in front of the Awakened through the mind of every ancestor who lives in their heads, it's hard to not let the past rule their lives and it's not surprising how many of them are borderline insane. It's a great justification for some of the plot points that I might have thought were iffy without that knowledge controlling the character's motivations. I liked that not everyone was human and the different races were well-delineated in their lifespans, actions and beliefs. And of course, the twist on the last page was awesome and sets Indris up in the next volume for some very nasty surprises. There is some sex, lots of adult concepts and violence so this may not be appropriate for younger teens.

-- Reviewed by: **Normalene Zeeman**

### WITHOUT A SUMMER

by Marie Robinette Kowal



When was this book written? This was my first question as I read Marie Robinette's Without a Summer. The language and style of the romantic novel draws the reader into the voice of writers like Austin and others of the regency era. Her mastery of the style in brilliant and flawless! In the first few pages I was convinced that I was enjoying some lost work of a bygone time.

If that is not enough magic to spin, Kowal adds a fantasy flare to her telling. The glamourist main characters are expertly woven into this period focused piece. The magical and fantasy element is subtle and believable with enough explanation for the reader to follow and still allow for a bit of mystery.

Kowal's understanding of the Austen era ethics, politics, and events is impressive. She is able to pull the reader in, with a few well placed mentions of key moments or locations. I have in the past read novels where the writer bludgeons the reader with historical facts and trivia, leaving me bored and uninterested in the story. Without a Summer is far from that.

The romance through this story is subtle and hinted at in the way the style would allow. There is also an air of mystery woven artfully through the adventure that also kept me intersted, as a typically non-romance reader.

If you are a fan of Jane Austen, regency era novels, or subtle romance, Without a Summer should top your reading list. It should not be ignored by fantasy lovers, or readers of cozy mysteries.

-- Reviewed by **J.J.M. Czep**

Author of *Blackstrap's Ecstasy and Troll*

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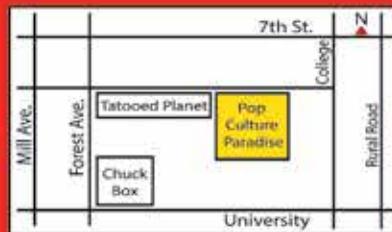
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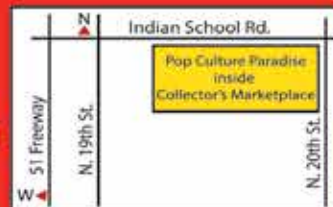
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 -- Reviewed by Jenn Czep author of "Blackstrap's Ecstasy" and "Trolls"

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**March 14 -Brandon Sanderson-Words of Radiance- 7pm**  
**April 26th - Shona Patel - 2pm**  
**May 1st - Daniel Palmer - 7pm**  
**May 9th - Charlaine Harris - 7pm**  
**May 27th - Clive Cussler/Graham Brown - 7pm**  
**June 10th - Diana Gabaldon - Written in my Own Heart's Blood - 7pm**  
**June 17th - Kevin Hearne - Shattered - 7pm**

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