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## Interview with Comic Illustrator & Writer Legend: Jim Valentino

By Song River

*“I find that extremely exciting and look forward to seeing what the generation who is currently growing up with this new medium does with it. How it informs their storytelling and artistic vision.” - Jim Valentino*

Song River: Storytelling has been the life blood that connects the human race. The comic book industry has breathed longer than modern technological feats of radio, T.V. and the world-wide web. Illustrations that tell a story have been around since humankind first picked up a ‘pencil’ and scribbled imagery to express a thoughts on cave walls.

*Jim, as a child, were you a collector/reader of comic books? Did you know this was the avenue of expression you wanted to take as an adult ?*

Jim: Yes, to both. I started drawing when I was about 2. My father, who read comics in WWII saw that I drew in a very cartoony style right from the first, so he started buying me comic books. They were like a religious experience for me. I never wanted anything else, but to make comics.

*Song: You stated the a couple works you have created touch as possible auto biographical relays in nature, what are those two, and why did you decide they needed to be put in comic book format?*

Jim: Well, I started doing small press, underground comix--inspired by the works of Robert Crumb, Vaughn Bode, Justin Green and others. You have to understand that I was born in 1952--this means I was ten years old during the height of the Silver  
*Continued on Page 2*

## INTERVIEW WITH COSPLAYER: AMY WILDER

Interviewed by Michael Bradley

*Today we are interviewing Amy Wilder, an extraordinary young lady involved in Steampunk Cosplay, the con scene, and professional modeling.*

*Q. Amy, thanks so much for this chance to get to know you better. I first noticed you on a Steampunk site and reposted your picture on my blog with about forty other pictures. Immediately, people popped out of the woodwork to let me know it was you in the picture, so you have some fans out there. What got you involved in Steampunk cosplay and how long have you been doing it?*



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A. I guess you could say I was always a fan of steampunk style, though I didn't hear the word till my first DragonCon in 2008... I thought it was just a cool way people dressed at cons, and for photoshoots. I discovered steampunk culture, and fell absolutely in love with it when I wandered into AnachroCon in Atlanta in 2013, and I've been immersed and obsessed ever since.

*Q. I was impressed that after working at Hooters for just a few years, you were selected as a candidate for their calendar and you made*

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## To proclaim... in the name of CarniMETAL

Interviewed by Song River



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Photo credits: SicPic Photography

Prophet to say the least, “You’ve come along way baby.” You and I, here and now are music legends in our own minds (LOL). We’ve both been in the business to some degree on opposing sides- you the entertainer and me the writer/photographer- for a long time. I am sure we have stories to tell. We both had our time at the Whiskey-A-Go-Go, things we smile back and remember, times maybe we’d change... and then say...nah. Music-it’s the heart beat and soul of the world. Without her, death is imminent.

*Song: Recall your earlier days, back when the ideas were ideal in your mind. What did this world look like to you? Sound like? Feel like? Taste like?*

PROPHET: When I was growing up, my family moved every 1 to 3 years so I got to see a lot of cool things and experience other cultures. We lived all over California, on 2 islands in Hawaii (Maui and Oahu), Holland, Kansas, Missouri and Arizona. I grew up a very proud American who loves God, my Family and my Country. I always wanted to become a pro soccer player -- that is until I started singing and performing onstage while I was still in high school.

For some reason the death of Elvis Presley had a deep and profound effect on me. It changed my life and my plans forever. After he died, I read every book and magazine about him that I could get my hands on, I bought every album of his that I could find and started singing in my bedroom pretty much every night to his records.

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## Ghost Ranch Films

By Jenn Czep



Photo credits: Jenn Czep

Northern New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment. It is a place of serenity, with an almost alien landscape like nothing else in the United States. With wide open spaces, amazing weather, and only a short stint from California, is it any wonder that this stunning land has been host to dozens of films, television programs, photo shoots, and commercials over the history of the American film industry.

Ghost Ranch, in Abiquiu, New Mexico is one of the most notable locations for films as well known as 3:10 to Yuma, Cowboys and Aliens, and the latest in the Indiana Jones franchise, The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull. It has also been the place to go over the years for stars such as John Wayne and artist Georgia O’Keefe.

The original purpose of Ghost Ranch though is more akin to the premise of City Slickers. For many years the location was a Dude Ranch. A place for the sophisticates of the big cities to experience the thrill and

*Continued on Page 9*



Age in 1962, as DC was in a renaissance and Marvel was just beginning. I was 20 as underground comix were starting in 1972, so both came at a pivotal juncture in my life and both influenced my sensibilities. A large part of undergrounds were auto biographical in nature, certainly a lot of the works that I admired--Schizophrenia by Bode, Binky Brown by Green, pretty much everything by Crumb. I told a lot of my "war stories"--crazy things I'd done or happened to me, verbally for many years at parties and such, so when I got to a point where I was making comix these were the stories I told.

*Song: How hard was it to tell some of these tales?*

Jim: Some more than others. The funny ones or the ones where I was making fun of myself were easy. Some of the more personal, more confessional one, very difficult. The thing is I felt that if you really want to reach people you have to give them more than the superficial, immature fare of most comics and delve into the shared experience, that which makes us fallible humans. It's the stories that are the most difficult to tell that carry the most weight and, thus have the most meaning.

*Song: Were there any repercussions from those who may have been shadowed as telling of their part in your life in the medium you choose?*

Jim: No, none. To be fair very few people I've known in my life know that I actually went on to create comics. I take this as either a reflection of the invisibility of comics in our society or the fact that people either didn't remember me or didn't care enough to see what happened. I always figured I'd be pretty easy to look up if someone wanted to. Either way it's kind of a drag, but there ya go.

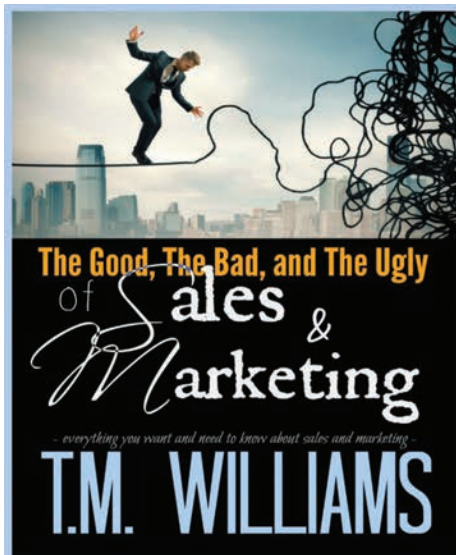
*Song: Researching all that you have been involved in and with since the early '70's, Jim is there anything in the industry you haven't touched?*

Jim: Um, geez...printing! I've never actually run a printing press! I've done everything else--retail, distribution, writing, drawing, editing, publishing, stapling, mentoring--I think that printing is all that's left that I haven't done.

*Song: What comics have you been involved in creating from all points have been your favorites, and why? Which have been your least favorites?*

Jim: I don't want to go into least favorites--every book is someone's favorite and god knows I've done a bunch. Favorites would have to include normalman (always lower case, do not correct!), Guardians of the Galaxy, Valentino (hate the title), I enjoyed

*Continued to Page 4*



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doing the Sonic the Hedgehog books I did in the mid-late '90s, they were fun. I think the best work I did was A Touch of Silver, though. It was very difficult to write and I experimented a lot with my artistic approach, changing styles to accommodate the emotional context of each issue. I would have to cite that as my favorite work, the one I'm most proud of.

"When I was a kid comics were ubiquitous they were in every supermarket, every train station and Rx (drug store)."- Jim Valentino

*Continued on Page 4*



Photo credits: SicPic Photography

I joined choir at my high school and one day, the guy sitting next to me in the bass section told the choir director that "he needed to listen to 'Flannery' sing cause he sounds like Elvis." The choir director (in the middle of class) called me down to the front and asked me if I knew the song, "Blue Christmas"? I told him that I did so he said "I'm going to play it and I want you to sing along." After 2 or 3 measures, he stopped and asked me to see him after class. His name was Donald Bowers and he told me how much I sounded like Elvis and asked me to sing "Blue Christmas" as a duet with one of the girls at the upcoming school Christmas concert. I had never sung for anyone outside of family and friends who would come over to the house.

**"After doing Elvis, I went straight into Rock N Roll/Heavy Metal 'cause I loved singing to powerful music."- St. Madness**

Me and a young lady from our choir did the duet for about 200 people who were in the auditorium that night. I actually signed my first autographs after that performance. When springtime came around, our choir director had me cut my hair a bit and dress up like young Elvis and I did a sort of imitation of The King, and my life instantly changed. The Spring Concert was on a Friday night that year, and when I went to school on Monday people would see me and say, "Hey Elvis!" I suddenly had more friends and girlfriends. I also realized, 'soccer never got me laid,' so I stopped playing all sports and went full bore into music. After a year or so of doing Elvis, I knew if I was going to stay in music I needed to have my own band and write my own songs. Since that day, I have given my life to music and have had an amazing ride. After doing Elvis, I went straight into Rock N Roll/Heavy Metal 'cause I loved singing to powerful music.

That is what it "Sounded", "Tasted" and "Felt" like to me m/

*Song: You came into the 90's, and Nirvana filled the air; 80's hairband music were brushing their locks, hardcore metal from the 70's was still the devil's music... and somewhere Black Sabbath '68, Anthrax '80, Metallica '80, Motorhead '75- never gave up. Who were your metal demi-gods?*

PROPHET: Alice Cooper, Judas Priest, Kiss, Black Sabbath, Motorhead, Pantera, Slayer, Van Halen, Ted Nugent, Scorpions, Venom, Metallica, Megadeth, Led Zepplin, King Diamond - to name a few.

SONG: *What was it about metal that drew and kept you?*

PROPHET: THE POWER!!! m/

*Song: Do you really consider yourself to be 'shock metal?' If so, how do you define it?*

PROPHET: Yes I would consider us 'Shock Metal' for sure, but what we call what we do is "CARNIMETAL". We are basically "Carnies" (or Carnival people) who happen to play Metal Music. We go from town to town, put up our show, and entertain people. You can't be a "Shock Metal" band unless you "SHOCK" people, so we almost always have crazy stuff going on during our concerts.

"The music of ST. MADNESS is about, being human and the Good and very Bad choices that we as humans make throughout our lifetimes." - St. Madness

*Song: As I listen to your best-of, dual disc CD release in 2013, 'Carnimetal' I hear one of the most beautifully passionate melodic works of art from over your years of creation, and guess what Patrick? I am not a metal head! I now find myself popping in your Cd quite often though my friend. I am drawn to the measures of old school metal, but with a sound that allows a message via head banging occur, St. Madness has kept the rotation fresh, and wanton for the 21st century metal junkie fix. My fifteen year old steals it from me often. How do you compare your style and vision to some of the current 'metal' newcomers (metal has a huge umbrella)?*

PROPHET: First of all THANK YOU for your very kind words. That is an excellent question and YES, metal has an enormous umbrella. I really have no idea if we are better or worse than all the other bands out there that are making Metal but it is important to us that people know what our songs are about. I write lyrics with hooks etc cause I want people to enjoy singing along with the songs. There is nothing cooler for me when we do a concert than to hear the crowd singing along. Many artists have no interest in relaying a message to its following, which is great for them.

The music of ST. MADNESS is about "being human and the Good and very Bad choices that we as humans make throughout our lifetimes."

Our logo has a scull on one side with a halo over its head, and another scull on the other side with devil horns. This symbolizes that humans are capable of doing great good and horrific evil - the choice is all ours.

I am the lyricist for the band and have been since day one, so I look out into the world and process it inside and then reflect what I see going on through my lyrics. Some of our songs are about complete fantasy, but others are totally serious and it's up to the listener to figure out which is which. I am (as a lyricist) a man on a mission. Our musical message speaks to different people in different ways. Hopefully our music touches people in a good way one way or another.

*Song: I was talking with a musician friend the other day, and they mentioned how it doesn't seem the kids now-a-days have their own music. Their own set of rebellion that makes a clear distinction from their parents. What do you think? Do you have any favorite old/new metal bands? What is it about them that you like? Any you would like to play with?*

PROPHET: There are so many bad ass new and old bands out there. I really love what's going on in the Metal World at this time 'cause it's a mix of everything.

Again, what we do is really different in the sense that we are not "rock stars," we are only interested in being "entertainers." Our job is to serve the fans of Metal the music that they love, and it is our job to do our best to ensure that the audience has a good time. Being in show business is being in the "Service Industry."

We are willing to share the stage with any band if they want to share the stage with us. I am not going to name bands here because it's better to ask the young people to name the new bands that they prefer. I have my favorite older bands, and I named a few at the beginning of this interview.

In ST. MADNESS we just do what we do and have a great time doing it. I consider it an honor to be up onstage performing for people and to me the stage is a very sacred place.

*Song: The wheel of time turns for all of us Patrick, but we still are passionate for what we believe in, and enjoy. You paint your face, dress the part, call it shock rock, and take it to the world. What have you really been trying to tell your public, or yourself, all these years?*

PROPHET: I have been warning our fans through my lyrics that evil still exists in our world and it isn't a joke. Excess of anything good or bad is bad. My message is, "Be your own best friend and take care of yourself. Allow yourself to enjoy life. Don't let anyone destroy your dreams - you have the right to make a choice to be happy so count your blessings and GO FOR IT!!!

*Song: What is it you want to leave this time slot?*

PROPHET: Track 2 of disc # 1 - is the song, "METAL TO THE DEATH AND BEYOND or better known as MDB" - This is a song that talks about giving my entire life to Metal Music how I don't really regret a thing.

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Track 15 of disc # 1 - is "BLOOD, GUTS AND GLORY" - This (lyrically) is a song in tribute to anyone and everyone who has ever given their lives to being in a Metal band.

Both of these compositions kinda go together (message wise).

*Song: Lastly, you and your wife have worked together and have shared something you are connected with for a long time... has music been that scarlet thread that has held your marriage together through all the ups and downs of this industry, and for that matter in this journey?*

PROPHET: Marge and I have lived together for 19 years and we have fought about almost everything, but we have made the choice to stay together no matter what. The music business is a tough place to be in and it isn't for pussies. Marge and I strengthen each other and love each other way beyond just the flesh. We are soul mates, and we have a deep spiritual connection. We have been there for (and with) each other through the thick and thin and we still love being together. We fight sometimes yes, but I can't picture my life without her. She is a tough manager who we all refer to as "BOSS LADY."

She is my angel from Heaven.

*Song: Thank you Prophet very much for your music passion, your take on entertaining the masses, and your originality that is uniquely yours.*

PROPHET: Thank you for allowing me this time to share a bit about ST. MADNESS with you!!!

**LONG LIVE THE FANS OF METAL MUSIC!!!**



Photo credit: Mary B Harrer

*Song: Name off for us some of the companies you've either worked with, or co-founded.*

Jim: Image is the only company I've ever co-founded. I founded Shadowline, Inc. and have worked for nearly all publishers, except DC in any significant amount--but, then Paul Levitz didn't think I was "accomplished" (his word) enough, I guess his editor's thought likewise. Company's I've done work for include First Comics, Aardvark-Vanaheim, Last Gasp, Kitchen Sink, Warp Graphics, Malibu, Slave Labor and a bunch more I'm probably forgetting and, oh yeah, a little outfit called Marvel.

*Song: Why in your opinion have comics become an intrinsic part of society?*

Jim: Oh, I don't think they have at all. I think the movies and the television shows that have been based on comics have become an intrinsic part of a certain segment of society that enjoys action and fantasy films but I doubt that most people are aware that comics are still being made or care. The proof is born out by the discrepancies in numbers. A great selling comic can barely reach 6 digits--that's a MONSTER. If a movie reaches into the low 9 digits it's a failure. We want to think these things have risen our industry and our profile, but the numbers don't lie and they tell us that just ain't so. Ours is a much smaller and much more modest scale. Comic book stores are a destination point, a consumer has to be aware of their existence, most people are not. That's just a fact (ask any citizen with no connection to comics). It is also a fact that many entire states, let alone cities, do not have a comic book specialty store. When I was a kid comics were ubiquitous they were in every super-market, every train station and Rx (drug store), that is no longer the case.

*Song: Do you feel comics bridge all barriers? Economically, socially, religiously, gender?*

Jim: They can, yes, as evidenced by the attendees of any convention these days. But, we should be mindful that this is a fairly new phenomena brought about mostly by comic based movies and television shows and the rise in popularity of Manga and Anime. Traditionally, comics (and, especially, super-hero comics, which dominated the medium for decades) have appealed to middle class white males, which is why that demographic is so prevalent on the creative side. It is the reason there are so many white male creators. Thankfully, that's changing and we've been seeing more diverse creators coming into the field--from women, to gays to persons from every background conceivable.

*Song: How do you feel about the direction of modern conventions?*

Jim: Conventions have split into separate entities--there are the cos-players, the "media" autograph seekers and the comics people, they're the main segments (gamers, movie goers, et. al. are a much smaller presence).

While this is great for the promoter of the shows, it's not so great for publishers, retailers and most creators as these different segments rarely cross and the percentages are shrinking on the comics side.

So, for me, for example, it is no longer cost effective to attend comic-cons. Travel, lodging, meals, time away from work. Every appearance,



even those I was being comped for, were losing me money. More, they just weren't fun anymore. I'm not the only pro to feel this way, there is an ever growing contingent of us. So is it good, bad or indifferent? I would suggest that all depends on who you are, what you do and what you need from a convention.

*Song: Has the advent of web-comics changed the comic strip and/or comic book in hard-copy?*

Jim: Not that I'm aware of, no. That said, the availability of comics on the web has actually increased sales of hard copies! My sense is that it's easier to sample a comic that you may have heard of digitally, it's far less expensive and requires less effort. Readers are finding their way to series they may have otherwise passed up and that's increasing hard copy sales across the board.

*Song: How has film/movies affected the comic industry?*

Jim: Not as much as everyone wants to believe. The simple fact of the matter, as I believe I stated earlier, is that most people are unaware that comics are being made, have no interest in hunting them down and, worse, have no idea where to find them if they actually did want to read one! No one wants to hear this, of course, but there it is.

*Song: We are seeing many crossovers in the arts, even now we see the union of comic illustrators working with the music industry. How do you feel about multiple creative genres colliding in manifesting themselves into a market?*

Jim: I think it's great. There are a lot of actors, musicians, even politicians that are or were comic book fans. More of them (actors and such) are intrigued by the movies than the comics, think I--after all, the movies pay big bucks, comics not so much. Cross pollination between creative individuals is always a good thing. Artists have been influenced and inspired by music all along, it's nice to see the other arts inspired by comics.

*Song: As I understand it, illustrating and storyline seem to go together automatically for you. We have books, great books written without illustrations, what is about the joining of pictures with words that is so appealing to so many people?*

Jim: That I really cannot answer. Comics are a dual hemisphere experience, so the people who "get it" are those who use both the right and left side of their brain simultaneously. A lot of people don't, so they find the comic page difficult to

follow. Most folks I know who read comics also read prose books and enjoy paintings and illustration. The combination of the two is magical for some, myself included.

*Song: Do we need heroes? Do you find the need for heroes in comics to be a western civilization mantra only?*

Jim: Heroes are cross cultural and as old as time. Start with Gilgamesh and work your way up through the ages. Every culture has them, they always have. I'm not qualified to answer why that is--perhaps they speak to a higher ideal, what we could be as opposed to what we are. Perhaps they're a metaphor, although I'm uncertain for what. Or, as some pundits would have us believe, perhaps they're only misplaced juvenile power fantasies born of sexual impotence. Your guess is as good as mine.

*Song: To the illustrator- what is their most important tool?*

Jim: Their imagination. Also their eyes. As far as drawing or painting goes, there are many, many tools that perform different functions and give an artist different effects, so there's no one specific tool, other than what one brings to the board.

*Song: To the writer of comics- what is their most important tool?*

Jim: Pretty much the same thing, their imagination first and foremost. Their ability to listen to the cadence of conversation, to plot and pace, to find the unique turn of the phrase that is simultaneously unique and familiar.

*Song: How do you as both illustrator and writer hone your skills?*

Jim: There's an old joke about Carnegie Hall in here--really, there is only one way to hone your skills and that's practice. As my old friend Harlan Ellison says "A writer writes" and, we'd have to add, "an artist draws" there's no other way around it, no magic word or secret handshake. As Robert Crumb said, "It's mostly hard work."

*Song: Obviously comics go through a metamorphosis so to speak, made evident recently in Guardians of the Galaxy. Would you go through its history time line briefly, and please elaborate at the time where you came in to its creation.*

Jim: The Guardians were created by Arnold Drake and Gene Colan who did them as a one-off in Marvel Super-Heroes #18. They were abandoned for seven years until the late, great Steve Gerber resurrected them in Marvel Two-In-One #5, featured them in the Defenders, which he was writing at the time and ultimately got them their first short lived series in Marvel Presents. Their last appearance was, fittingly in Marvel Two-In-One in 1980. A decade later I wrote and drew them in their first title book, Guardians of the Galaxy. I only followed them sporadically after I left the series, so I can't really speak to any changes they may or may not have gone through--and I haven't seen the movie.

*Song: Has there ever been a comic you wished you never created? If so, why?*

Jim: Created? Oh, no. I like some more than others I'll admit, but no regrets. In fact I have no regrets for my entire professional career, I've made mistakes and done things I wish I hadn't, but hopefully I've learned and grown from those experiences. At least I believe I have. I think it's far healthier to own your mistakes and take whatever lessons you can from them so you don't repeat

it all the way through. How was that experience and was it exciting to be chosen from thousands of Hooters Girls nationwide?

A. Oh yes! That was my very first publication, and being one of just over 200 girls picked was amazing. I even had my own shot glasses, it was so cool. During my time at Hooters, I was also the regional "Hooters Girl of the Quarter" and a state finalist in their swimsuit pageant. I worked hard there, and gained a ton of modeling experience, but it was time to move on to bigger things. :)

Q. You created your own Hooters Girl Superhero. What gave you that idea? That must have been a lot of fun?

A. Oh goodness, that one WAS fun. Working at Hooters, I always joked that getting into uniform and doing that job made us superheroes, but one day while helping a friend buy fabric for one of her cosplays, I found a few yards of neon orange fabric on sale, and the rest was silly history.

Q. You have two sides to you in pictures. In your regular photos you're the sweet girl next door with dreamy doe eyes and a pet cat. In your modeling photos you transform into a sultry bikini supermodel with a bold look. Do you feel different modeling or cosplaying than just being at home? Do you take on the persona you are playing?

A. I think I always feel like me... but there's something about an awesome costume or outfit, and hair and makeup to the max that can bring out the sexy bombshell in anyone. I have tons of fun playing different roles and being different people in front of the camera... but behind all that, I still make faces and talk about my cat. :P

Q. Recently at San Diego Comic Con some haters criticized you for a skimpy outfit not being "Steampunk." I know many came to your defense. Women wear less at the beach or at nightclubs but there are haters out there for cosplayers. How do you react to this type of controversy?

A. I think that cosplay and steampunk, just like anything else, attracts all kinds of people, and I'm never going to be everyone's cup of tea. The outfit in question actually went over very well in person at SDCC, as I was able to explain the cheeky joke behind it. I just ask that everybody try to be a little kinder to each other and remember why we're here. We didn't get into steampunk to tell other people how to have fun, we got into steampunk to dress up in cool costumes, share our fantastical devices and mad ideas, and shoot each other with modded nerf guns. ;)



Q. You work a lot with Thomas Willeford, one of the top Steampunk crafters. Are you two friends? How did you come to meet him and model his Steampunk outfits?

A. Thomas is one of my all-time favorite people. I had been a fan of his work since I tried on a corset at my first DragonCon, his work is actually what first got me interested in steampunk. It wasn't till years later that I got up the guts to introduce myself, and ask if I could model for him. But now I am one of his main spokes-models, an occasional apprentice in his shop, and consider him one of my dearest friends. Without his advice and support, I don't think I would have taken my love of dressing up a step further and started modeling seriously.

Q. You are tall but maintain a zero size and a curvy figure. Do you have a strict exercise regimen and diet, or some other secrets to share?

A. I have a workout regimen I stick to pretty faithfully including weights, body weight exercise, and tons of cardio. I like to think I'm strong enough to defend the innocent from petty villains, and fast enough to outrun a zombie horde... As for diet, I cook my own food when possible, and try to use fresh ingredients, but I eat what I want.

Q. You are very young now, but like with athletes, models work long hours, have tough demands and a limited career length. What are some of your long term goals, or are you taking it day by day and enjoying the current ride first?

A. Though I love modeling, my real hope is to finally get a workspace of my own set up and start designing. I actually studied fashion design and sculpture in college... I have a lot of ideas.

Q. You had a man sculpt you from scratch and recreate one of your Steampunk poses. Who was that artist again? That must have been very exciting?

A. Yes! Madsculptor! I was so honored when he chose to sculpt me, and he did such an incredible job! It is really an amazing experience watching your own visage come to life before your eyes. In fact, recently my likeness was also reproduced by famous pin-up artist Armando Huerta... As an artist myself, knowing I inspired someone else's art will always be a big deal to me, and a huge honor.

Q. As a southern girl from Georgia, do you have that Georgia Peach accent? Does it get lighter when you travel and stronger when you go back?

A. Nope! Actually, growing up with a dad in the Army, I have lived in every corner of the US, and been exposed to all manner of accents. I've been known to pick up the accents of people I am having

conversations with... But no accent whatsoever to call my own.

Q. You go to quite a few pop culture events and conventions. As these have gained popularity, do you feel the security is adequate? As an attractive young woman have you had issues with some of the inappropriate comments and touching that other cosplayers have experienced?

A. I will be honest, I have never been harassed at a con... Maybe an enthusiastic suitor here and there, but always harmless and quite respectful. Of course I know that a skimpy, skin-baring cosplay is likely to draw more comments of the "misguided compliment" variety, but I've never felt offended or unsafe. In fact, I was THRILLED with the level of respect and politeness, (and the fantastic security that missed nothing) I encountered at SDCC, which I'd been warned would be a madhouse. The only times I've ever felt truly harassed at cons are when I have had to leave the con space in costume, I think sometimes the general public takes not understanding why I dress up as a license to be extremely disrespectful.

Q. You have a fantastic look, so I am not surprised you were "found" by photographers. Still, who was the first person to ask you to get involved in pictures?

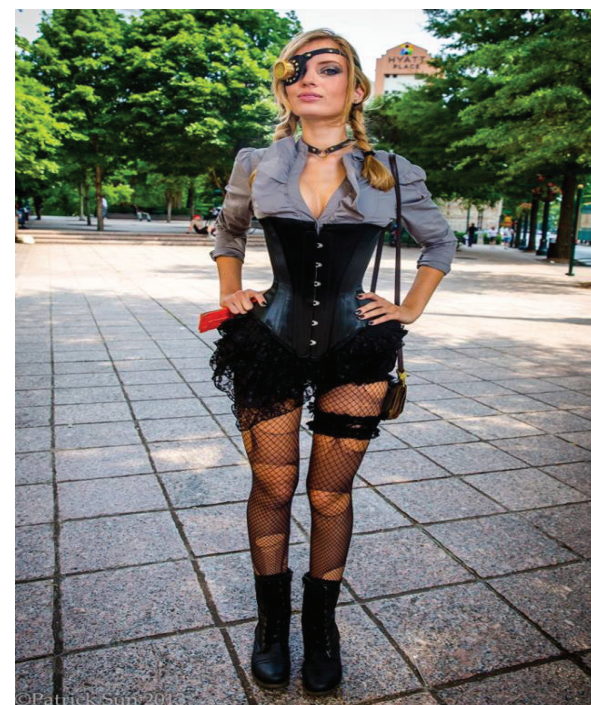
A. The first modeling I ever did was at Savannah College of Art & Design for a fellow student majoring in photography. Corey Crowley (now Vampman Studios) approached me in the lunch hall simply because I was tall. I did tons of photoshoots for him, I gained a ton of confidence through that, and learned a lot about modeling, and how to act in front of a camera. I don't know if I would have ever pursued modeling had I not done those fun shoots.

Q. What would you suggest for others interested in getting into cosplay and into modeling?

A. Just do it, and do your best! Make contacts, attend events, and most importantly, HAVE FUN.

Q. With all the travel you are faced with, what keeps you centered and so happy? You always seem so positive.

A. I guess that one is a weird answer, staying positive IS what keeps me so positive. We all have hard times, and get stressed or discouraged... We all have "everything is terrible, I'm terrible, and my goals and dreams will never work" moments... But I always try to look forward, see the silver linings, and hope for the best. Dwelling on something negative will never make it better, but reaching past, grabbing something positive, and running with it? That is what keeps a person going.



Interview with Amy Wilder - Continued on Page 7

# WODDA GAMES: The Wayward Manor

By Gaming Columnist - Emma Lysyk

Halloween is my favorite time of year. One of my favorite kid-friendly spooky games to play right now is The Wayward Manor, released to Steam by The Odd Gentlemen.

Written and narrated by Neil Gaiman himself, it's a wonderful problem solving game where you play a ghost who is trying to help the manor rid itself of some pretty pesky characters. There's the dimwitted thief, snooty French maid named Dagmara, the stick-in-the-mud butler, the trouble making teen, the annoying gluttonous twins, the tacky wife, the drunkard rude dad, and prideful grandpa. The only one we seem to like is little Miss Polly.

You, the ghost, feed off of scaring people. The more they are afraid, the more power you get to control the room. Things like scaring Dagmara with a



rat as it runs across her path. Then you get to finish off the room with a finale that looks like something out of Poltergeist.

I wasn't sure at first how to control the game, so I think it could have withstood a more inclusive tutorial that told me what to click on. (Hint: It's anything that's glows green.)



Overall, the game is lighthearted and fun. The art and animation is a perfect mix of vintage cartoons and 3D graphics. The story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and no cut scenes to distract me from when I just want to play my dang game. There are bad guys to compete against, good guys I want to protect, and I genuinely feel something for each of the characters. I get loud explosions and fire, too.

Admittedly, there were some issues with the first release. With the direct download, I got stuck in the first room. The pesky thief was going through ransacking the attic. Lacking plates or anything to hold his attention, all I could do is throw bottles at the wall and send a dressform back and forth. A restart of the game produced no fix.

I then re-downloaded the game through Steam, which seemed to fix most of my issues. That was, until the last chapter. I almost have everyone out, and then that pesky bad guy started chasing me (no spoilers). I get Grandpa to run through the tiki statue room ahead of Mr. Badguy, shooting firebolts back and forth... Yet couldn't progress. He just wouldn't

leave the stupid room and I couldn't find a way to get him to move from his hidey hole. Frustrated, I turned off the computer and went to bed.

Luckily, the update I got a week after release fixed all of the bugs I was having. Finally, I could enjoy the game in peace and quiet. I even managed to evict everyone.

Despite the initial bugs, this is an enjoyable game with easy gameplay and clever riddles. While not as in depth as you would expect from one of Mr. Gaiman's books, it was greatly improved with his touch. Definitely a great family friendly game to have around. I'd give it a 3.5/5.

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Emily "Emma" Lysyk

Em2a Studios

Owner/Graphic Artist · March 1, 2006 to present · Phoenix, Arizona

Graphic Arts firm and creation studio. I do illustration, websites, online and offline marketing materials, photography, jewelry, commission work, painting, various crafts, chai tasting, and I teach all of the above.

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*Q. Who would you like to give shout outs to? Great photographers, friends, supporters and others who have helped you on your path?*

A. Oh God... Everybody... can I say everybody? Every photographer who thought I was good enough to shoot with, every friend who encouraged me. Every designer who had me wear their work, every con organizer who hosted me. Every nice comment, every "like", every photo share... Every person who recognizes me at a con, or doesn't, but comes to introduce themselves anyway... You all keep me going! Thank you! <3

*Q. Where can people contact you for photoshoots and other events?*

A. The best way to contact me is to e-mail me at AmyWILDERness@yahoo.com , or message me on my Facebook fanpage at www.facebook.com/ AmyWILDERness. :)

*Q. Where can fans follow you online?*

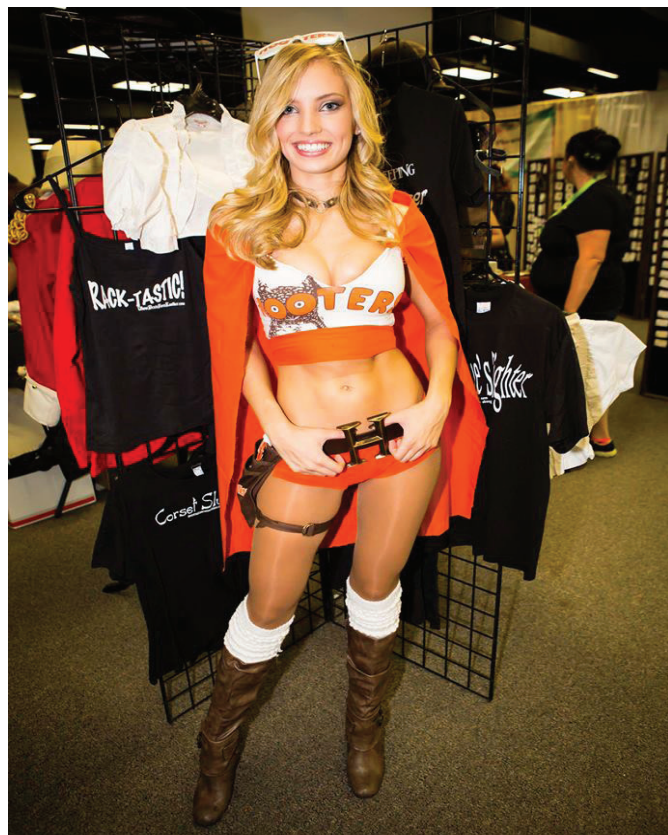
A. I am on Facebook, Tumblr and Instagram. You can follow me @amywilderness. :)

*Q. What else would you like to add?*

A. Thank you for interviewing me! Hope the read is enjoyable and that I didn't sound too silly. :)

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



them. After all, there are so many more yet to make!

*Song: Is this a good time in history for this industry? Is it unique unto itself?*

Jim: It's a good time for the industry, yes. It's a good time for creators in the industry. Creators have more options and more venues than ever in the history of the medium. This includes web comics as well as printed matter. There is a wide diversity of story and art, genre and non-genre for all ages and demographics. Creators do not have only two clients to choose from anymore, but a plethora of publishers and publishing options (again, including the web). Is it unique? Well, yes and no. There is nothing unique about a lot of publishers vying for shelf space and attention, but the advent of digital has made it unique in the fact that for the first time since comics were created there is a viable in medium for them. I find that extremely exciting and look forward to seeing what the generation who is currently growing up with this new medium does with it. How it informs their storytelling and artistic vision.

*Song: The comic book world knows Jim Valentino, but if we were to ask you family and close friends who you are... what do you think they'd say?*

Jim: Oh, you'd have to ask them--and whatever they say, don't tell me! I don't want to know! I guess it would all depend on who you ask, wouldn't it? My kids seem to think I'm not too horribly bad and I get along with several old girlfriends and my ex-wife. That's a question no one should answer!

*Song: What project, or projects are you currently working on, or would like to work on?*

Jim: Let's see, we're finishing up Five Weapons, which is sad, but Jimmie Robinson is already forming ideas and sketches for his next project, which he won't tell me about, but looks awesome, so that's good! DrumHellar is also coming to a close, but I understand that Joshua Williamson and Riley Rossmo are planning a new book together for 2015, so that's great! We're rolling along with Rat Queens, Peter Panzerfaust and The Superannuated Man and we're starting Mike Oeming and Taki Soma's new project, Sinergy (sex as a supernatural resource!). There are always new projects being tossed about--so it's a matter of squeezing things in. I'll only do five books a month maximum because to do more would stretch me too thin and I try to give everyone in Shadowline all the help the need. I'm always very excited to see new projects come to fruition and even more to see them take off. I've got the coolest job on the planet!

*Song: Lastly, just this past August 2014, Wake Up and Draw took place and it is tied in with Hero Imitative, What is your part in this project?*

Jim: The Hero Initiative was founded by Jim McLaughlin who asked me to be on the initial Board of Directors, an invitation I could not decline. Currently I'm on the disbursement committee with Howard Chaykin, Walter Simonson, George Perez, Denny O'Neill and several other individuals of that stature. Our job is to vote on who gets the money--and there has been a lot given out to a lot of very

worthy recipients. For those who don't know, the Hero Initiative raises funds to help indigent cartoonists out of financial jams. I'm extremely proud to serve on this worthy cause with people I admire and respect enormously. For more information about what we do and why we do it and to see how you can help, please go to <http://heroinitiative.org> it's better than pouring ice water over your head!

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/jim>.

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## NOVEMBER 2014 HOROSCOPE

EVALUATED BY THE  
MAGICAL MAGICIAN -  
OLIVER WENDELL ENALAN!

Written by John Paul Ried  
on this dimensional plane

OK - the secret is out. I am Professor Oliver Wendell Enalan on other dimensional realities and simply mild-mannered John Paul Ried on this prime material plane. After recovering from the wild and recklessly enjoyed Halloween Holiday, it is time to be thankful for everything that we have! The Planet Mercury will be at its farthest distance from the Sun this month and will affect many signs. Lunar perigee (distance) from the Earth will also climax on November 27th.

### SCORPIO THE SCORPION

- After the wild, crazy and uncontrolled activities of last month Scorpions, you will be relieved and relaxed in November. Take the opportunity to enjoy the chillier weather and go inside to chill. Catch up on your reading with a new, bestselling book. Or get some DVD or blue ray movies and spend some quality time introducing classic Star Trek to the younger generations of your family. You may have seen the Star Wars or Godfather sagas a zillion times but your children and grandchildren have not. If all else fails, cheer on your favorite football team with your family and hope the evil Dallas Cowboys do not win another Thanksgiving Day special. Find that perfect weekend evening and cuddle up with someone you care about even if it is your youngest grandchild instead of your lover. Pass around the food and chow down.

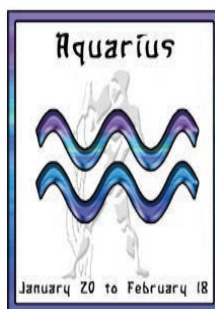


**SAGITTARIUS THE CENTAUR ARCHER** - After last month's relationships roller coaster, this month will be smooth and delightful. Many of your friends, co-workers and family members will eagerly seek out your company, advice, and illuminable presence. You thrive on family gatherings and this is the perfect opportunity to make amends

or reinvigorate almost forgotten relationships. Making up is not weakness or giving in because you will appear more reasonable than the 'ones really causing the trouble.' This is strength and you will appear strong. Investments have been improving lately so take some money and spend it on those you love. If you are single, you also will be able to impress that special someone you have had an eye on for some time.

### CAPRICORN THE GOAT

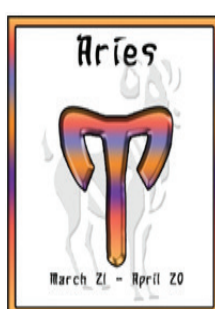
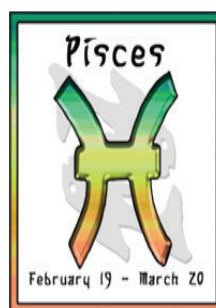
- With the planet Mercury moving its farthest from the sun this month, your energy will be astonishing. Now is the time to take charge of family plans, especially if you are married. Your spouse will be thrilled to see you so eager to help and manage more appointments and tasks than usual. You will be a marvelous example for your children as well as they see you reduce complicated arrangements to simple step by step jobs they can help you with. This month is also a good time to clean out the garage, attic, or basement as you may have many relatives and friends visiting you for Thanksgiving. Make sure your entertainment gizmos (TV, DVD/Blue Ray, and Wifi) are all working and watch everyone thank you endlessly.



**AQUARIUS THE WATER BEARER** - If you were single last month, then chances are that you now have a new romantic partner this month. Here is the golden opportunity to reveal your domestic talents to your new paramour and impress them with your organizational skills. If you are married, step forward and follow through on exciting plans for the Thanksgiving Holiday! Instead of going out this year, why not try a home cooked Thanksgiving feast for once? Everyone in your family will be eager to help you. Invest some time and money also for that new TV to watch your favorite Football games and share your sports expertise with your guests. Your dating partner or your spouse will be very impressed with your sports savvy and might actually learn more from you than expected.

### PISCES THE FISH

- Family gatherings are your forte Pisces but you may have to travel this time. While travelling to Grandma's and/or Grandpa's for Thanksgiving may be a serious time commitment, you and your loved ones will relish and remember these times together for the rest of your lives. Are you single? Then THIS is the time to present your romantic interest to the rest of your family because your magnetism will enhance those around you to play nice. You should also start planning your holiday shopping and try to beat the rush while you are moving about. Smile, relax and seek adventure because your health and vitality are unmatched this month! Seek out some Gemini friends for holiday gift ideas! They may even drive you to the Mall.



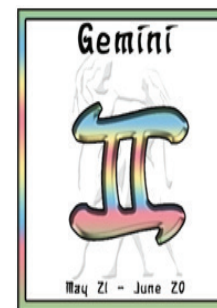
**ARIES THE RAM** - Let's admit it Aries, family gatherings, picnics, and huddling around the TV to watch football are NOT what you enjoy most. You may just have to grin and bear it this month but at least no one will be competing with you. You have an amazing ability to cut through all of the distractions and offer sound and economical solutions for your friends who may have been having relationship problems. While it is usually better to stay out of things when people are quarrelling, your perspective may hold the answers for everyone around you to make up and feel joyful again. One friend or relative in particular has a very good thing or person staring them right in the face and they may not realize it. Shake that friend and help them realize what an incredible opportunity or person is in front of them. Have they not considered marriage or at least dating before? They will thank you for meddling both now and later.

### TAURUS THE BULL

- While the beginning of the Holiday season usually upsets and disorients you, there is a surprising cosmic energy emanating from the planet Mercury's elongation from the Sun this month. If you get yourself organized by sitting down with your spouse or love interest and asking them, "What would you like to do for Thanksgiving?" they will be excited and relieved that their input does matter to you. There is nothing wrong



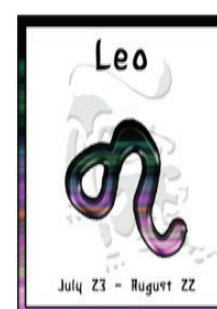
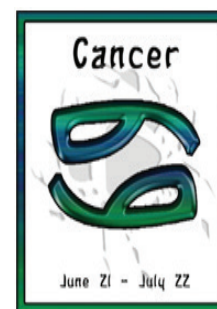
with helping children perform a Thanksgiving play by dressing up as Pilgrims and Indians with them. Remember to be flexible and patient and ALL of your relatives and friends will be impressed with how reasonable, practical, and fun you can be. Try not to be overbearing this month by giving orders and proclaiming how things should be when you can get what you want by appearing to let others guide you.



**GEMINI THE TWINS** - After a recent financial windfall, now would be the perfect opportunity to get a jumpstart on all of your Holiday shopping. Your Pisces friends are slaving to go to the mall and purchase their gifts for their relatives and friends and you should drive the car for them. The excitement of going to the malls and specialty stores are infectious so bring your spouse or romantic partner along as well. You may find out about a favorite rock band performing in your area at the Ticketmaster booth and score some AWESOME entertainment for you and your friends. Your personal energy and health will be excellent this month so take advantage of it. Whether you are travelling to the Grandparents or In-Laws for Thanksgiving or bravely trying home cooking, the festive atmosphere will encourage you to make events and food fun and delicious.

### CANCER THE CRAB

- Now that you have gotten your finances in order last month Cancer, it is time to have a little fun! Perhaps a trip to the Caribbean, Europe or even the Far East might be a terrific way to clear your head and do something really special for the holidays. If you have children, perhaps a trip to either Florida or California for some spectacular Disney fun would fulfill their fantasies and give you and your spouse some unexpected enjoyment. If you are single or unmarried, a romantic trip to Italy or France would excite your partner and fulfill some of your fantasies as well as their own. Staying home this month is OK too but cosmic forces should encourage you to explore new ideas and environments. Make some reservations and satisfy your wanderlust.



**LEO THE LION** - After dancing and prancing about in your Halloween costume last month, staying at home with the family now would be the perfect way to relax and bond. Now that the holidays are approaching, you should take a break and conserve your physical and emotional energies. Your romantic partner would be delighted to just cuddle up with you on the sofa to watch TV and might even distract you from the football game. Acclimatize your house or apartment for the perfect temperature to just relax and enjoy life. Your children will be happily relaxing with you so getting out that old Monopoly Game might bring your whole family hours of fun. Staying home for Thanksgiving would be perfect for you but if you do get dragged somewhere, remember to be compassionate and loving.

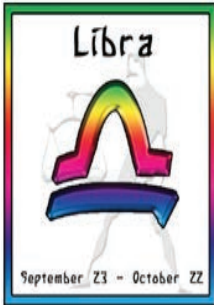
### VIRGO THE VIRGIN

- It is time to re-evaluate your many career projects and focus on what is really important - your relationships. Virgo's this month have amazing and overpowering attractiveness and everyone around you will cheerfully dance to your tune. Try not to take advantage of this too much. Your finances have been dicey lately and it is important to save as much as possible with the Holiday shopping



sprees beckoning your attention. Resist the temptation to join the Pisces and Gemini's who may be already spending their funds in the malls on whatever suits them. If you are married and have children, focus on your loved ones this month. If you are single, get a very special gift for your partner and start talking about your futures together. It is time to commit and be committed. Be sure to overindulge with the marvelous food all around you without guilt.

**LIBRA THE SCALES** - Diplomacy and power plays are all around you this month Libra, and it is important to pick your battles carefully. Who or what may seem to be fighting for justice may only have selfish motivations behind them. Do not jump in too quickly or blindly. Your finances will be stronger this month so try not to spend too much money on just one or two items. Everyone is acting festive around you so try to relax and enjoy yourself a little. Many small events at your job may seem unimportant now but keep your eyes and awareness open because forewarned is forearmed. If you are single, accept an unexpected Thanksgiving invitation and gorge on all of the excellent home cooked food. If you have a spouse and children, plan to enjoy the Thanksgiving Day parades or perhaps some Football with those you care about. Just remember your manners and try not to be too obnoxious when making jokes because you might unexpectedly insult or upset someone around you.



*John Paul Ried grew up in Upper Montclair New Jersey and has recently lived in seven different states. His career includes college teaching, public school teaching K-12 in Special Education, Fundraising for two non-profit organizations and part time chess teaching in public schools. Mr. Ried currently lives in Phoenix Arizona with his very demanding cat named Enalan. Mr. Ried is also Chairman and CEO of the Phoenix Arizona Fantasy Gaming Association and the International Fantasy Gaming Association.*

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Ghost Ranch - Continued from Page 1



wilds of the West, for a fee of course. Over the years, the ranch has changed hands from the Presbyterian Church, to locals with a desire to keep the magic alive by inviting artists, writers, paleontologists, and archaeologists to the space to do their work.

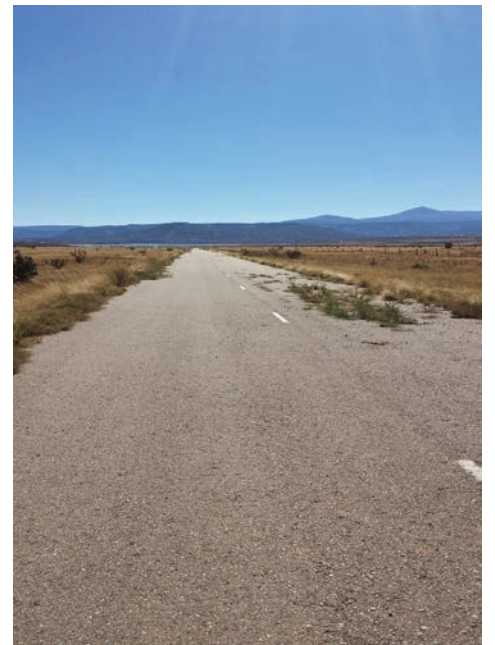
The most famous, though fictional, archaeologist to visit Ghost Ranch, the amazing Indiana Jones. In the latest Dr. Jones adventure the opening scenes show a road in the desert. It may ruin the magic, but I stood on that road, all half mile of it. The road that leads to nowhere was built by the crew of the Crystal Skull to have the look and feel of a 1950's era highway. When you know you have a hit on your hands, building a road is no big deal, nor is asking the maintenance workers of Ghost Ranch to drive their heavy vehicles a few circuits to spend a little fuel and rough up the fresh paving.

Other movie landmarks left behind by crews include a single cabin and corral from City Slickers, a snake pit - the snakes have returned to their trailers too, no worries, and a lone post once used to reenact the brutal punishment of being skinned alive for another classic western.

All of these amazing sites as well as the familiar natural backdrops to classic films and modern blockbusters can be discovered on the Ghost Ranch movie tour. It was absolutely worth the trip, along with the real life adventures that can be had in as brief as a week's stay on this eclectic camping and conference site.

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*Jenn Czep is the author of Blackstrap's Ecstasy and Trolls. She is also a belly dance instructor, a pirate, a tarot card reader, and a cracker jack mechanic. <https://www.facebook.com/easalle>*



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Swirling silks, bright colors, beads and Middle Eastern music usually brings to mind images of bazaars, (or your favorite pit stop for hummus.) Clockwork, steam-powered machinery and greasy gears typically seem out of place. Yet bellydancing, steampunk and the Wild West created a book series as well as the dynamic team of Erin Lausten and her manager Eliza Busha.

In the beginning, both Eliza and Erin attended a regular bellydance practice, a few friends dancing and playing music together. It was great fun, not to mention good exercise. One restless evening Eliza searched through craigslist and stumbled upon an ad looking for bellydancers to perform at a Phoenix Comicon ball. The organizer who placed the ad was organizing a Steampunk Ball. They wanted the ambiance which came with bellydancing and tarot readings in the Victorian Era. Right away Eliza knew she had to be a part of this and brought it up at the next practice to see if anyone else would join. At first only Erin and a couple of other dancers were interested. But as both Eliza and Erin became more excited and outrageous in planning this performance the rest joined in. Instead of a couple of bellydancers, it became a performance troupe with several dancers and a full band!

The performance was a hit! Our dancers even encouraged quite a few corseted and waist-coat wearing attendees to let their hair down and shimmy on the dance floor. The whole experience was a heady mix of stress and euphoria. Eliza

and Erin could not stop talking about it and moreover could not wait to do something like it again. Soon!

After speaking to everyone involved our girls put together a small group of flirty, fun and engaging dancers who took the name Shahrinaz. Now they just needed an event to put on the next extravaganza. As Eliza searched for the right venue, the gals began a different type of practice to stretch the imagination and learn better technique so they could break the rules properly. They also found other opportunities to dance together and create the magic which Shahrinaz became known for.

Eliza searched the internet, steampunk forums and gathered information when she stumbled upon a call for extras. There was a filming in Phoenix which sounded like fun. It would also give her and a couple of the others the opportunity to explore this fun new world of Steampunk. She made contact promising herself and some gals from the troupe to help fill the marketplace. Shortly after this connection Shahrinaz posted a video of a recent performance. Now the girls were “promoted” from random steampunks in a crowd of extras to The Bellydancers in the scene. While it was difficult not to become distracted by the great leads and fantastically cheeky dialogue, the dancers definitely added a bright splash of color on the set. Fun! Eliza and Erin also learned quite a bit about how different people “steampunk”. The bonus



of course, was making great friends during this fantastic experience.

Onward to the Inaugural opening of Wild Wild West Con in Tucson! Shahrinaz secured a performance slot for each day of the convention. The combination of the Wild West, the Victorian Era and Oriental Dance made Erin’s mind whirl with the possibilities.

Once again donning the hat of sketch writer and director, Erin created a vaudeville style act. The show incorporated the fun, sultry and unique talents of this group. They even convinced an experienced commedia dell’arte actor to join them. The Marvelous McHurdyGurdy Travelling Show was born. Erin, overcome with inspiration, wrote a short story which Eliza added to the playbill handed out at the convention. Once again the performance rocked the barn. The performers also made sure the audience participated. An added bonus was sharing this experience with their new friends in the local film community.

Dusty roads, a snake oil salesman, mining towns, clockwork dolls, marionettes and a sultry sideshow dancer became more than a short story and show in several parts. They became the universe of Erin’s Cibola Series.

More to the point this began an adrenaline filled ride where two acquaintances became friends and collaborators.

Eliza Busha [elizadfp@gmail.com](mailto:elizadfp@gmail.com)

Photos used by permission of Shannon Shea - photographer



## Erin Lausten

Author of Action Packed and Fantastical Tales

**Viator Legacy:** *Unexpected Unforeseen*

**Cibola:** *Cibola’s Promise (novella) Cibola’s Revenge*

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## TO READ OR NOT TO READ

By Michael D'Ambrosio

Last month in my article Science-Fiction: Then and Now, I talked about how I started reading sci-fi at an early age. With all the mid-term elections coming up in politics, there is a lot of grandstanding about cutting costs in education and how it affects our children. I sat on my porch and looked across the block at my old grade school, thinking about all the stories I read in grade school and why. Every one of those books took me somewhere special and the characters in them were like friends. I shared their battles and crises as if they were my own and in the end we were victorious. Before I continue, please understand that I'm not making a point for or against increased funding in education, but a point to encourage parents and guardians to help their children become better regardless of what funding is provided to the school system or how much they elect to spend on them.

Let's slide back to last month's article for reference sake. As a six-year old, I was the oldest of six children. My dad worked a full-time job and two part-time jobs. When he was home, he slept, so I rarely saw him. My mom obviously had her hands full with the younger siblings and her time with me was limited. Besides, being a boy, I really didn't want mom trying to mold me into the perfect son. Many weekends, my sister and I spent with my grandparents to give my parents a break. I guess they felt four was easier than six to care for, although it seemed a little late for that conclusion. The time frame for this was 1967 and, being six, I was bored to death around the screaming brats.

One day, I poked my nose into my grandfather's book rack and was curious to see what he read about. Being the conductor on a trolley for the PTC didn't encourage me to believe he had exciting things to read or talk about. As I looked through the books and encyclopedias, I was amazed to learn of the world that I had yet to see and what it could someday be. I read about strange animals in the encyclopedia and leaders of great empires. I read Popular Science about robotics and cloning. I also read some of the great science-fiction authors of the day and was amazed at how much they seemed to know about the future. Of course, I didn't know what was fiction and what was real, but it didn't matter.

My imagination ran wild with ideas of my own. How much of this could happen in my lifetime? Would I ever get to visit London or Moscow? Now this was exciting stuff. I never thought grandpa was the type who cared to dream of the future or to understand the past. I felt as though I could travel the world and even the universe through his books.

As a child, we all had unlimited imagination because of exactly that: we were children. Let's flash forward to today. Often families require that both the mother and father work. Many families have a single parent with neighbors or strangers watching over the children while they work. Regardless of the situation, children are often deprived of the attention they need from their parents. Is that a bad thing? Maybe not so much. So where do we go wrong?

Let's look around and see what we, as parents, guardians or babysitters do with our children today. We have X-box, Wii, Warcraft, cable TV and a host of other games & gadgets to keep our kids occupied while we're busy with daily tasks. I am amazed that parents have resorted to such expensive means to entertain their children as most of the items mentioned aren't cheap.

So, for the sake of conversation, we manage to occupy a child with The Worlds of Warcraft or Grand Theft Auto (yes, parents do that). The child learns to play the game and becomes good at it because it's interesting and challenging. First grade arrives and the child attends his or her first class with limited or no skills and the expectation is for the school to teach the child everything they need to know.

When I entered first grade, I already had reading skills which helped me immeasurably. I could comprehend much faster and do my homework at a much faster rate, which bode well for playing outside longer. I don't believe it was because I was incredibly smart, but more about being prepared at home before starting to school. This greatly reduces the pressure on a student to learn and provides more time to work on more difficult assignments. Even more so, I did it myself.

Books are much more affordable than X-box or Wii or any of the other big sellers of gaming systems. I hope to encourage all of us as adults to present our young children with the opportunity to read before grade school and more so

once they enter the school system. There are so many entertaining stories in fantasy, sci-fi, history and other genres that it would be difficult not to find something to interest every child. They can't use what they don't know about so we need to take them to the book store or department and browse through the many genres for the one that attracts them first. Once they realize the world that opens up before them, most will want to read on and on. Of course there will be some that resist but I think it's worth the effort before we plant them in front of the TV set for the rest of their lives.

For those parents who already have X-box and the other neat gadgets, you can still take your child to a bookstore and help them find a story they like. They don't have to give up on the games and gadgets, just take some time to read.

For new parents: read to your child. When he or she reaches five, then you can introduce them to books they can read on their own. I don't recommend encyclopedias or Popular Science as I once read, unless your child has a burning passion for that kind of material but let them look at the covers and read the jacket stories.

Remember, teaching is everyone's responsibility and we all play a part in a child's learning process. Thanks for joining me. I hope this article can be of benefit to all of you.

-- Michael D'Ambrosio, author of *The Space Adventures Series*, *The Fractured Time Series*, *Night Creeps*, and *Princess Pain*. You can find Michael in the dealers' room or in panels at many sci-fi conventions throughout the US. <http://www.fracturedtime.com>

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Upcoming Signings / Events at The Poisoned Pen

**November 8th - Jenn McKinlay - On Borrowed Time - 2pm**

**November 12th - F Paul Wilson - Fear City - 7pm**

**November 15th - Weston Ochse - Reign of Evil - 2pm**

**November 17th - John Connolly - The Wolf in Winter**

**Writer's Workshop with Anne Perry - November 23rd-3pm**

**December 2nd - Gini Koch - Universal Alien - 7pm**

**December 3rd - Lisa Scottoline - Betrayed - 7pm**

**December 12th - 25th Birthday Bash - 5 - 8pm**

**December 27th - David Freed - Voodoo Ridge - 2pm**

**Livestream Events: <http://new.livestream.com/poisonedpen>**

**December 6th -10:30am-Coffee and Crime Discussion Group**

**Young adult workshop - January 25th - 11am**

**Discussions for all months - Check website for book title**

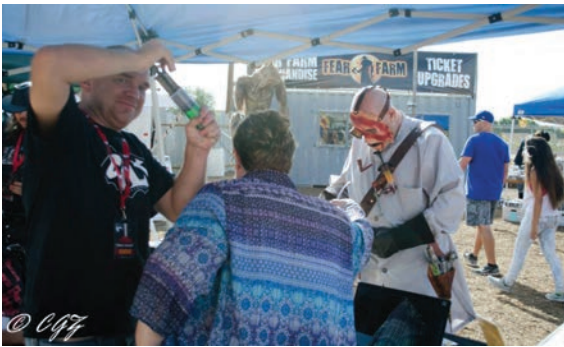
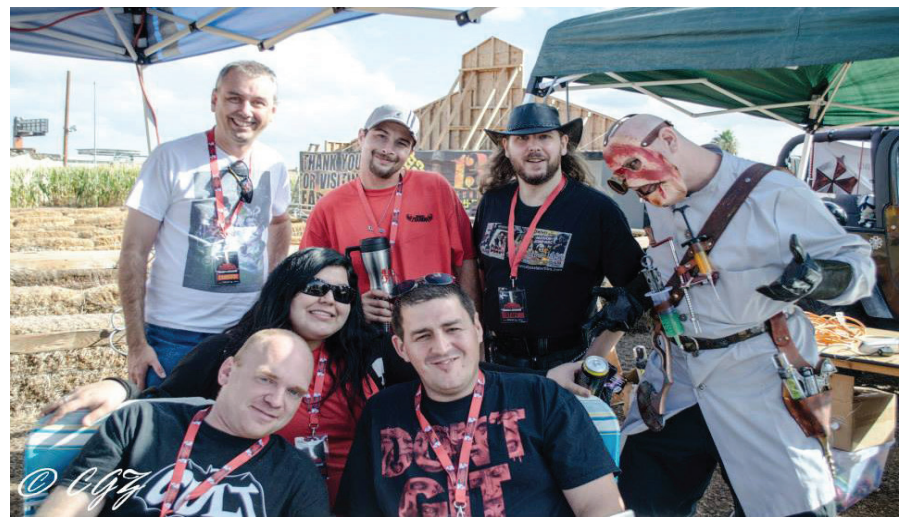
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# HIGHLIGHTS FROM FEARCON

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# HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMIC & MEDIA EXPO

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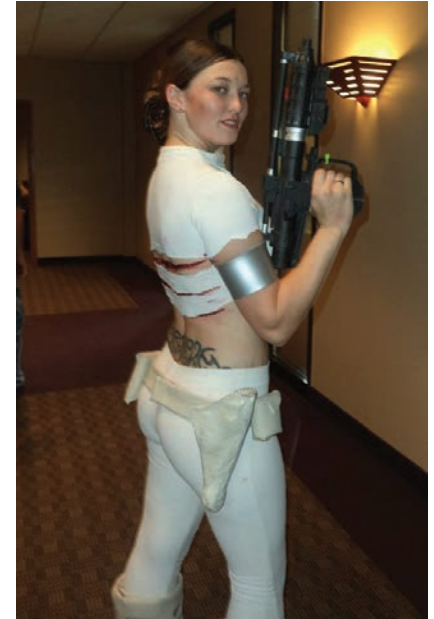


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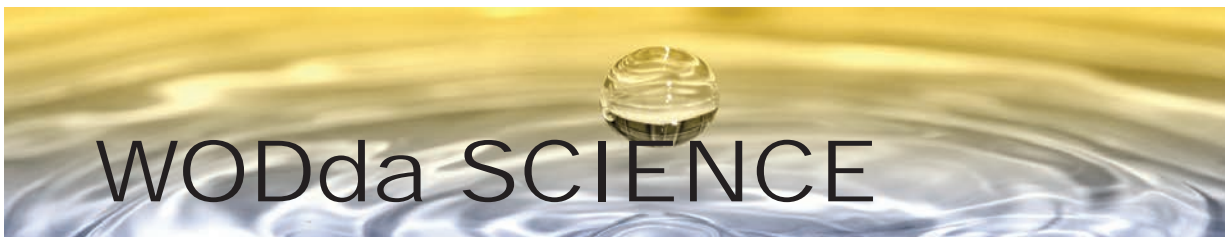
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# CHALLENGING SPACE TRAVEL

Science Columnist: Donald Jacques

This month has presented lessons showing us how challenging space travel can be. With the Orbital Sciences Cygnus launch failure and explosion and then in the same week, Virgin Galactic's Space Ship 2 broke up and exploded, killing one and injuring another.

Mars One plans to send people on a one way trip to Mars. An analysis by a team of MIT students of the Mars One concept offers a bleak picture of the outcome. "An Independent Assessment of the Technical Feasibility of the Mars One Mission Plan" supported by grants from NASA and the Josephine de Karman Fellowship Trust. The Mars One Concept is unsustainable because of the current state of technology and its "aggressive expansion approach" of quickly adding more and more people rather than keeping the settlement at a fixed size for a period of time. The paper acknowledges that the study was based on "the best available information" and the team is willing to update their analysis if more information becomes available.

And yet these events capped a very productive month for space exploration.

Sierra Nevada Corporation filed with U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to stop production on the Boeing and SpaceX taxi developments. NASA at first told Boeing and SpaceX to pause, then reversed the order, calling for the two companies to resume their production, in order to assure that manned flights to the ISS can resume on schedule.

Dava Newman, professor of aeronautics and astronautics at MIT, is being vetted for the NASA Deputy Administrator position, a decision may be coming soon.

China launched and returned their first lunar round trip. The vehicle was launched to circle the moon and return to the earth as a test run for a future manned trip.

The Bigelow Expandable Activity Module (BEAM) is expected to head to space inside SpaceX's Dragon cargo spacecraft in 2015, according to a senior representative for the company Bigelow Aerospace, which is building the module. Once BEAM gets to the space station, the robotic Canadarm2 will install it on the Tranquility node's aft port to test out.

Swiss researchers have created a method of

producing hydrogen fuel from sunlight and water at 12.3 percent conversion efficiency, a record using earth-abundant materials instead of expensive rare metals. The EPFL researchers used a pair of solar cells made with a mineral called perovskite and low-cost electrodes to create an electrolyzer that separates the water molecules.

Lockheed Martin research team has been working quietly on a nuclear energy concept they believe has the potential to meet, if not eventually decrease, the world's insatiable demand for power. Dubbed the compact fusion reactor (CFR), the device is conceptually safer, cleaner and more powerful than much larger, current nuclear systems that rely on fission, the process of splitting atoms to release energy. Crucially, by being "compact," Lockheed believes its scalable concept will also be small and practical enough for applications ranging from interplanetary spacecraft and commercial ships to city power stations.

The trip to Mars is over 6 months. Cramming a host of people in a ship for that much time is problematic to say the least. But there are signs that a form of suspended animation may be on the horizon. NASA is funding continuing research into this method of letting the crew sleep part of the way there. Less supplies, less air, one way to help get the crew there with more supplies for the settlement.

And for those who are awake, there will be much entertainment. NASA has been experimenting with virtual reality for years now, considering

The NeXt Space Show with AI & Jo For Space News and Commentary Every Sunday Night; 7pm PT (Az Time) <http://bit.ly/1vpHrnl>



applications from flying planes to remotely controlling a robot. But when Oculus hit the scene two years ago, virtual reality suddenly became attractive for many more purposes. You can now watch a movie, play video games and visit remote locations from within a headset. It can be used to teleport the wearer to a new location-an ability that would be incredibly useful to astronauts cooped up on a spaceship or foreign planet.

Donald Jacques was born in 1957 as an Air Force brat. He has lived in ten states over the years, enjoying 8 kids, and 6 grand kids. He spent 16 years as a computer programmer, has served as a past president of Phoenix Moon Society, chair of LepreCon 2014, is the designer and builder of the Black Scorpion Trebuchet, and the author of "The Homestead Project: 12 Steps to a Permanent Lunar Settlement" and three other fiction books.

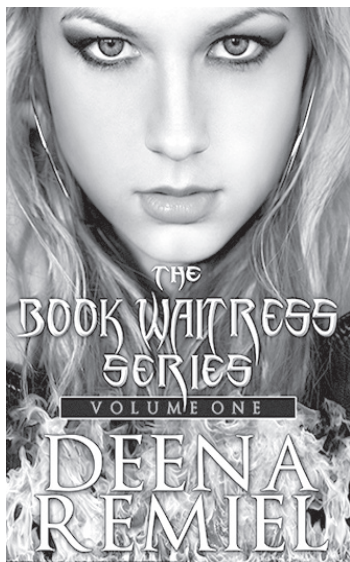
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of the Interviews  
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## COMIC & MEDIA EXPO - INTERVIEWS

Photo Credit: CowGirl Zen Photography



DANTE BASCO: From the Lost Boys leader, Rufio in the movie “Hook...” Song River chats with dancer, film/TV actor, poet, and voice actor - Dante Basco.

“To limit ourselves. Why, when it is open?” - Dante Basco

Dante is an avid dancer, it would seem as he spoke about his early years of dancing that his pupil’s followed that intense passion alongside his memory recall. “My brothers and I,” Dante shared, “began break dancing in the Bay area.” Quickly taking those dance moves to the performing arts school in Orange County dancing, then auditioning his way into the movies.

Dante has always admired the work of John Travolta. “John Travolta can really dance, and I am fan of Grease, Saturday Night Fever, because when he danced it was real. It is believable.”

From the film, “Hook” to Newline’s: “Take the Lead” where Dante played opposite to Antonio Banderas, popping over to Disney’s “Jake Long” and “Prince Zuko” in Nickelodeon’s hit Avatar: The Last Airbender, Dante is not lacking for creative outlets. When I asked him about the differences in getting into character for film/tv as opposed to voice acting Dante said, “To be truthful the scene in acting, dancing, poetry is trying to find truth as it resonates in the performance. You scratch the truth and it’s going to come out.” Aside from acting, dancing and voice acting, Dante is also a poet.

Dante is one of the founders for DPL (Da Poetry Lounge) out in L.A. Formed back in the early ‘90’s the venue and meet ups give everyone who wants to get involved a place to express multiple topics. In DPL’s own words, “the ultimate goal of DPL is to create, a communal space for people to be heard.”

And being a story teller, and scratching the truth... is what Dante Basco is all about.

To follow Dante Basco: <http://dantebasco.wordpress.com/>

<https://twitter.com/dantebasco> <http://rufiozuko.tumblr.com/>

More information on DPL: <http://dapoetrylounge.com/>

JANET VARNEY: Maybe there is something to the creative side of ones imagination that comes from being an only child of a split home. Perhaps this is why, (actress, podcaster, comedian, writer, producer, voice actor, etc, etc, etc...), Janet Varney’s website depicts her as the white girl paper doll in diverse creative fashion.

Recently, at the Comic & Media Expo 2014 Janet chatted about her earlier years as a child born in Tucson, studied for two and half years at NAU, before making that trek towards San Francisco and completing her degree at S.F. State.

While at S.F. State Janet was pursuing in the beginning, or contemplating may be a better choice of words, on becoming an interior designer, as her vocation at that time was in this field, but with all the theater classes in her suitcase of dreams, along with the fact that an interior design degree fell under, “Home Ec,” Janet shuddered slightly as she recalled this shocking title for interior design, she decided that her calling truly lead her to keeping us in stitches in another fashion.

Janet may be best known for her long successful run as the co-host to TBS “Dinner and a Movie”, along with being the character, Korra, from the Avatar series, “The Legend of Korra”, however there is much more to the diversity of her creative mind than may meet the first impression wave.

Janet shared, “This is why I think we (creatives) are so fortunate, here we are involved in several different types of creativity. From script to voice over, learning all the tech elements \*of film/acting, really helped me imagine it happening when doing voice over.”

Add to Janet’s extensive list all her podcast works, including “JV Club,” her involvement in forming the SF Sketchfest, one of the largest comedy festivals now entering its fifteenth year. Janet’s easy going personality, warm friendly demeanor, and passionate enthusiasm for all she is involved with sets everyone shes around at ease. In truth she’s a leader, and those in the room don’t mind giving her the reigns.

To find out more about Janet Varney visit her website: <http://janetvarney.com/>

More information on SF Sketchfest: <http://sfsketchfest.com/x/>



# KEEPING THE BEAT: Interview with Brandon Goehner of The Counterfeit Party

Interviewed by Song River



A brief chat with lead vox Brandon Goehner of The Counterfeit Party reveals an intuitive counterpoint that holds his cards close, and his words even closer. Perhaps, a rebel without a cause, and a dandy spinning lyrical yarns across the rock that blends the roll of The Counterfeit Party.



*Song River: Is bigger always better?*

Brandon Goehner: We're going to have to go with less is more.

*Song: What is good old rock n roll? What are its elements? How do you define it for yourselves as a band?*

Brandon: Simple chord structures, catchy words with a great tempo... That's all you really need.

Too many to list, but if you listen closely, you'll hear our influences shine through the mix.

*Song: Are you a good time Friday night band, or a Saturday night dance floor band?*

Brandon: We are down to rock anytime, just say when!

*Song: The name of your band, The Counterfeit Party, explain its meaning.*

Brandon: As early as the 1800s those known for looting, burglary, grave robbery, bootlegging etc... were obviously an outcast of society; counterfeiters. They were also referred to as the counterfeit party. It sounded rather intriguing for a name, so we ran with it.

*Song: Are you a cover band, as well as original band?*

Brandon: Original, however, we like to throw in a few cover songs in our set.

*Song: How has your first EP been received?*

Brandon: We may need to print another batch... that must be a good thing.

*Song: When do you plan on heading back into the studio?*



Brandon: We are already writing and recording for the full length album which will be released early 2015.

*Song: Tell us more about, "The Best Party Anywhere," that was adopted as the official theme song to the Largest Music Festival in Motorcycling at the Legendary Sturgis Buffalo Chip.*

Brandon: We provided the Sturgis Buffalo Chip with it's official theme song, "The Best Party Anywhere!"

Sturgis hosts the annual motorcycle rally every year. It truly is "The Largest Music Festival In Motorcycling".

We've been very privileged and it's helped us reach a more national audience.

*Song: Where do you feel The Counterfeit Party fits into today's music line-up? There are times your rock has a country twang feeling to it, are you open to a bit of diversity within your rock makeup?*

Brandon: We believe combining all our influences, rock & roll, blues with a little country - it's what gives us our sound.

A little bit of everything goes a long way.

*Song: Jeans, Khakis, dress slacks, or surfer shorts with wing tips?*

Brandon: No comment. Too personal.

For more information:

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/thecounterfeitparty>

Website: <http://www.thecounterfeitparty.net/>

Contact: email [info@thecounterfeitparty.com](mailto:info@thecounterfeitparty.com) and Team Trinity are two recent ones. Why, why get involved using your talents?

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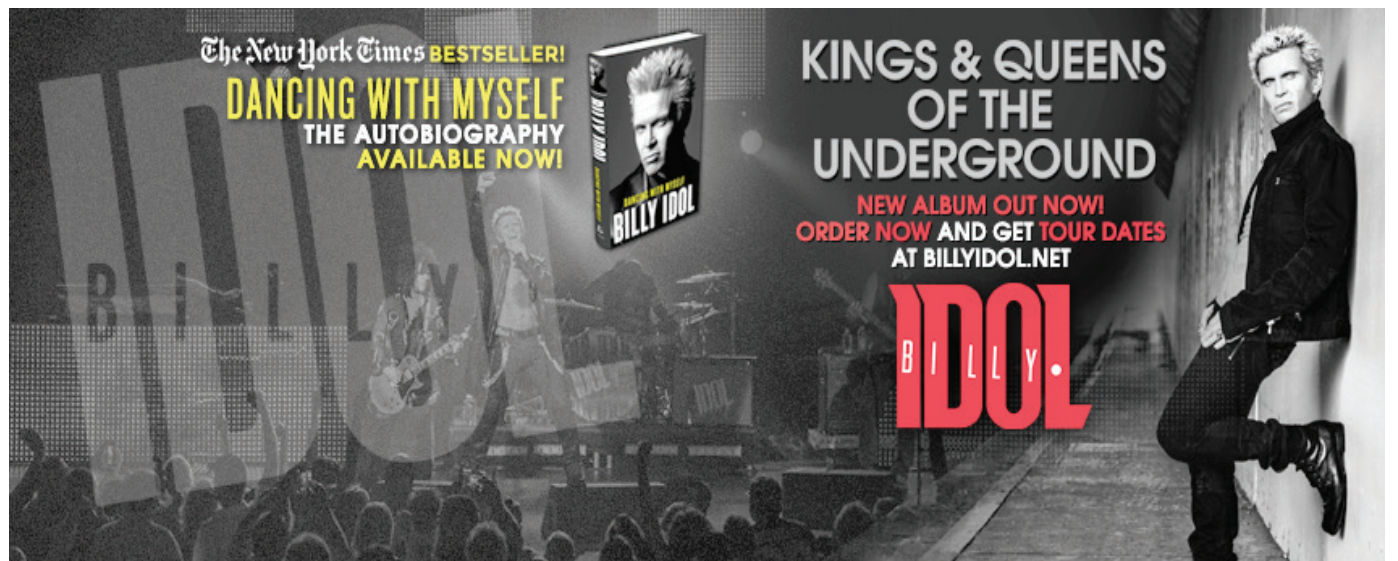
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# KEEPING THE BEAT: Dancing With Myself Book Review by Billy Idol

## CD Music Review of Kings and Queens of the Underground

Reviewed by Allyson Jaynes



Time waits for no one and it won't for even a sneering punk, one who has lived between the light and dark, as Billy Idol shares in his book, *Dancing With Myself*, and delivers in his voice on his latest album *Kings and Queens of the Underground*. The iconic MTV deviant and cross bearing boy of the '80's perhaps has been one of the most underrated black leathered/bleach bombed talents of this era. You see if you grew up during this time, the time of wicked decadence, video dalliances, thrusting measures of blurred promiscuity cut on lines of coke and needles of pain relief, then perhaps you might relate to where Billy was, is, and has become.

In both instances, Billy Idol's biography, and his long awaited (over 9 years) album, all tell a completely cut measure of time. Long standing fans of Billy will get the book, and the album... self-absorbed bastards probably will shrug and be too young to get any of it. Their loss.

I grew up with Billy, not literally, even though I had brief encounters in crossing his whiplash smile during his earlier years, from Gen X to his taking of the name Billy Idol. Whether it was a local rag running his latest canceling of a concert due to being 'ill,' or his interview in great detail spread out in *Rolling Stone* January 1985 (the first time my young eyes ever read about 'fisting' and I had to look up what the heck it was) like the rest of the music world I was bleaching my hair, wearing leather, and practicing my sneer.

Why a biography, and why now? Who cares, but I find as many reach their older years they find themselves reflecting back, and giving birth to the tales of their world in a profession, or in the case of Billy, which reads more like a confession, as a way of making peace within. Many reviews will be, and have been written giving sordid details of all the funk'n that was taking place, and how various artists wrapped their arms in tubes, slept with the dogs and gnawed one too many bones, but as I sat down one afternoon and read his biography, *Dancing With Myself*, all of the articles and interviews spun about

him came back to mind, and I decided then what I was going to take away from this book.

What I found to be the most telling bits of *Dancing With Myself* wasn't Billy's sexcapades, but rather his love of reading certain books, and his emotional endearments he spoke of. His heart certainly belongs to his parents (Billy's father had passed away), his family, and his children. Quite often we only see the visual side of a persona projected on stage, and don't realize that this being we 'idolize' actually has depth. That I do suppose is one of the greatest things about being able to write your own account, and not end up dead and having a bad film or book take "eye witness" accounts to piece something to sell the masses... no *Dancing With Myself* is Billy in his own words, and worthwhile on many levels to read and own.

As for his long awaiting album release, *Kings and Queens of the Underground*, I must admit at first I was bending myself backwards coming in with preconceived notions of earlier raucous Idol, along with searing riffs of Stevens strings... so I had to listen to it a few times until I realized this album in many ways is Billy's book in lyrical format. Of course not as detailed in debauchery, but a glimpse into Billy's soul, and friendship even

with Steve Stevens. Hey, we all have ghosts, we all have skeletons in our closets... it comes down to this for William Broad ... as it does for all of us... who gives a shit, it's only rock n roll... and damn baby we are still playing it. It's Billy Idol, dark lyrics, happy songs, and a little sappy reminiscing.

And I am still dancing with myself...

*Dancing With Myself* by Billy Idol;  
Published by Simon and Schuster.

*Kings and Queens of the Underground*  
Produced by Trevor Horn.

Billy Idol Website: <http://billyidol.net/>

WOD



# An Accidental Process: Interview with Comic Artist and Writer - Benjamin Glendenning

Interviewed by *Song River*



Some of the busiest and most talented people are often those working the hardest in the background doing so much to help others. Benjamin Glendenning is one of the most giving and talented comic illustrators today. His passion began sometime around three years old when he found a pencil placed to paper could create a batmobile in his unique signature style! From that point, and with his father's comic book passions, his destiny unfolded... Why SkullJammer?

*Song: Is there a feeling of power behind taking a blank sheet, an idea from the mind, and bringing a character to life?*

Benjamin: I'm not sure I would classify it as a sense of "power" more like a sense of Freedom, with two older brothers and living in the middle of farmland Michigan, comics and art became my vehicle to escape and have fun on my own terms.

*Song: How difficult is creating for you? Do you find it comes easy, and natural? Has it always?*

Benjamin: I think I got lucky as a kid, I had people ask the simple questions "have you made your own characters?" and "Are you going to draw a comic book?" believe it or not those simple questions to a kid opens the floodgates of possibilities. For me those simple questions at key moments made me come to the epiphany that I can indeed create my own worlds, and to some degree served as a direct challenge for me to do so. I've never had to wait for an idea, in fact it's just the opposite, I have a stockpile of ideas I hope to one day bring to life.

*Song: Some artists only replicate what has already been done, that is their passion. Do you enjoy creating new characters?*

Benjamin: I do love creating new characters, but I also love to write and the world of serialized comic book writing is a perfect place to write stories that change and evolve characters, and that can be even more gratifying than creating all new ones.

*Song: Do you have a favorite that is an established character to draw?*

Benjamin: Hmm... I have a lot of favorites, I guess it depends on my mood. One that I started drawing VERY early on was Etrigan the Demon, My dad had the first issue and Jack Kirby art just blew me away as a kid.

*Song: You are also a writer I understand. What comes first usually the character or the writing?*

Benjamin: In the early days I had an accidental process, I would doodle on anything and at all times (school detention record to prove it) and through the freedom of visual experimentation I would kind of create stories and ideas about the weird things I doodled and then piece those together into stories. As I matured however I became fascinated with larger concepts and particular styles of storytelling and I would then create characters to fit those styles and concepts.

*Song: Your list of projects is extensive, it isn't something your boast about though. Do you prefer as a writer/artist to stay 'freelance' in your work or would you like to be assigned to a particular comic company and produce?*

Benjamin: Ooooh this is a tough one. Let me start by saying I don't boast because it's not in my nature and I want my work to speak for itself. For the second part of this question, it's complicated, I love comics and I love the industry but it's one of those things where it's easy to lose yourself to greed/fame and for me it's all about creating things that are new and different and that I personally want to read, but being all about the art also leads to being very poor and not putting food on the table and so I strive to have a balance without losing my passion for the art. I would LOVE to work for DC or Marvel or draw TMNT for IDW (wink wink) on a contract for a period of time, and hopefully that happens eventually, in the meantime I'm going to continue to create and have fun.

"I guess it's just the way I was raised, my parents are the most generous people in existence and I strive to be like them. With the HERO Initiative it just makes sense..." - Benjamin Glendenning

*Song: List some of the projects you've been involved with or created yourself.*

Benjamin: Well I started self-publishing comics back in high school, the first of which was called Skulljammer, other books I self-published over the years are R.I.F.T Rats , Doctor Dedhed, Superworld Presents and Tin Star Tex. Along the way I have contributed on many comics such as Image comics Shadowhawk, Hack/Slash and Dynamo five. And on many comics with my friend Tim Seeley such as the Toxic Avenger and other Tromatic tales, Loaded Bible and Colt Noble. Along with the HERO Initiative I have also contributed many covers to some of my favorite properties like Weapon X: Wolverine, Fantastic Four, the New Avengers, Uncanny X-men and the Walking Dead. In 2007 I fell into doing trading card art on the Marvel Masterpiece series and have since worked on Hundreds of well-known properties like Adventure Time, Lady Death, the Walking Dead, Guardians of the Galaxy, Greatest American Hero, Josie and the pussycats, Voltron and I even participated on the birth of some new properties like Zombies versus Cheerleaders (Which I also drew the comic that spun off from the cards).

*Song: Who have been some your writer/artist heroes?*

Benjamin: Tom Grummett (Superboy), Stan Sakai (Usagi Yojimbo), Dan Aykroyd (Ghostbusters), Keith Giffen (Lobo, Legion of Super-heroes), Mike Parobeck (Justice Society of America) and the most influential would have to be Joe Staton (Green Lantern corps), Jack Kirby (Fourth world, Mister Miracle, the Demon) and Dan Jurgens (Booster Gold, Superman)

*Song: Do you prefer participating in larger events (comic cons), or smaller events (in stores, etc)?*

Benjamin: I kinda dig both, smaller events tend to be celebrating geekdom with fellow fans whereas larger events seem to be the opportunity to introduce our world to potential fans thirsty to discover new things. Both are fun in my book.

*Song: Many people aren't aware of all the fund raising projects you're involved with. Wake Up and Draw, and Team Trinity are two recent ones. Why, why get involved using your talents?*

Benjamin: I guess it's just the way I was raised, my parents are the most generous people in existence and I strive to be like them. With the HERO Initiative it just makes sense, I want to grow old making comics but comic Artist/creators even in today's market see

**Part of the Jungle Marketing Survival Guides**

To be successful at promoting ones writing, you must understand a single truth to the human condition; people are lazy. Especially when you haven't paid them extra to make any further effort. If you don't make it as easy as possible to publicize you or to promote your work, you will have less success in dealings with radio, print, television or any media, really.

In my dealings with authors and publicists through my Blog Talk Radio station, KWOD, and in my capacity as the Managing Editor of The WOD Newspaper and WebZine, a niche newspaper, I have witnessed a total lack of understanding what a media kit is and what components are needed to be included. Even in my capacity as the host blog site for over a hundred authors, showcasing their works, I have seen the need for an organized media kit. It is undoubtedly, the single most important tool in your arsenal.

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little to nothing for their efforts, I give today so that maybe Karma will bless me with a long career that can be sustainable financially. As for Trinity, well she is a super sweet kid that's had it rough and is she is just super tough, I want to be half as tough as she is, And since the only thing I'm passably good at is art, well then I'm going to use that to help.

*Song: What draws you to helping others?*

Benjamin: Ah I see what you did there "draws"... The only thing I'm passably good at is art and I have a blast drawing (it's not work if you love it) and again I strive to be as generous as my parents.

*Song: Jim Valentino is involved with the Hero Initiative, and you just participated in Wake Up and Draw in August. What got you involved in this project?*

Benjamin: I had heard of the HERO Initiative from its inception, I thought it sounded great but I do like to thoroughly research the charities I contribute to. In the mid 2000's I had met Josh Medors through my friend Tim Seeley, Josh had just been diagnosed with Spinal cancer and the HERO Initiative was immediately helping, and then I heard about Gene Colan's HERO story and I actively looked into the organization and discovered that my friends Brian Pulido (Lady Death creator/writer), Michael Malve (Owner of Atomic Comics at the time, owner of Captured Planet media) and Jim Valentino (shadowhawk, Guardians of the Galaxy) were all board members, I then sought out Mike Malve to see if I could contribute and he immediately put me onto the Project 100 covers and since then I have befriended Jim McLaughlin and all the HI guys. About 3 years ago I heard about the first "Wake up & Draw" from my friend Tim Seeley and I jumped on it.

*Song: Why are you a part of it, and what are you looking to do with the Arizona division of this in 2015?*

Benjamin: Well the "Wake up & Draw" event is not only a great way to raise funds for the HERO



Initiative but with Kirby4Heroes (the Kirby family) involved it's a great way for industry guys to pay homage to one of the all-time greats, Jack Kirby, as well as spread awareness of Jack Kirby's contribution to the foundation of the Comic book industry. The HERO Initiative would like to take August 28th (Jack Kirby's b-day) and turn it into a nationwide event celebrated much like Free Comic Book Day. Arizona has the cream of the crop comic talent, an incredibly generous and supportive community which gives me high hopes that we can be the center of something very special.

*Song: What is your favorite music to listen to while creating?*

Benjamin: I listen to a lot of different things, but Metal is my preferred choice of tunes m/

*Song: Have any of your kids picked up the drawing/writing bug?*

Benjamin: I only have one Daughter, and while she hasn't expressed an interest in comics, she still is in the arts, she has devoted herself to Special effects make-up and Make-up effects for film... she's my little Tom Savini.

*Song: How has this passion become a joint family gathering?*

Benjamin: My wife and Daughter help me very much, especially with conventions (this guy is not much of a multi-tasker) but also all of my colleagues like Jeff

Pina, Val Brazier, Joseph Baker, Tony Parker, John Derrick West and all of my con-going, comic-making friends are to me, an extension of family...a big ole' nerdy family ;)

*Song: Finally, where do you want to take what you love to do? Goals for 2015 and beyond?*

Benjamin: Like anyone, I would like for my comics and works to get into more people's hands, I create stuff I would like to read and art I want to see, I just want to entertain and kick-start people's imaginations. And the same goes for my charitable contributions, I would love to make a larger difference in a positive way.

WOD



JOIN PJ HULTSTRAND, T.M. WILLIAMS, AND DEBBIE SWECKER  
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# WOD Bookshelf



## SIX GUNS STRAIGHT FROM HELL 2

Edited by David B. Riley

When I was younger, I used to play a fun fantasy role playing game called Deadlands. Deadlands was set in the Wild American West from 1820-1890 where you fought and competed with Vampires, Ghosts, Magicians, Werewolves and other Supernatural "Varmints," who would threaten unsuspecting frontier human communities. This anthology reminded me so strongly of the Deadlands game, I am convinced most of the contributors must have also previously played it. The eight contributing authors are: Joel Jenkins, Dakota Brown, Vivian Caethe, J.A. Campbell, Sam Knight, Jason Andrew, Kenneth W. Cain, Kit Volker, and David Boop.

Like all story collections, I always feel an abrupt shift after I have just gotten into the characters and suddenly the story ends. Then I have to switch gears and read the next tale with different characters and plot while trying to mentally get past the previous one. These nine yarns however, are really fun and exciting to read while relaxing in bed or even in the bathroom. While I would be lying if I claimed these stories were "a tour de force rivaling Harry Potter with scope, vision and popular appeal," I still had a 'rip roarin, darn tootin and shootin' time enjoying them. You should too. Now let's take each one in turn and let me make some comments.

The first yarn, Blood for the Jaguar by Joel Jenkins, reprises a popular character presumably from the 1st anthology (this is the second one after all) and he makes good use of multiculturalism employing Native American and even Central American myths for his plot. Grade: B

The next tale, The Life, by Dakota Brown, has a sympathetic female vampire earning acceptance among her human counterparts and they help her confront other vampires. I have heard of staking claims out on the frontier but this story really 'branches' out. Grade: B+

This story entitled, The Feast of Hungry Ghosts, by Vivian Caethe,

certainly takes a bite out of Chinese mythology and provides an ethnic dynamic often overlooked in American Wild West tales. Having a Chinese Taoist priestess team up with a Pinkerton detective with supernatural experience is an interesting combination and this chapter ended too soon. Grade: A-

Brown and the Lost Dutchman Mine by J.A. Campbell had me guessing at first and this ghost story really satisfies. I do not want to spoil anything but this doggerel was certainly my favorite of the collection with a very interesting tale spin. Grade: A Honors

This story entitled Uncle Benjamin's Triple 'T' Tonic by Sam Knight was a tale of revenge and justice but was too predictable to hit the bull's eye. The chapter tries to do too much and the young boy main character is hard to empathize with. Grade: C+

Jason Andrew's story, A Dream of a Country Cottage, is a splendid story involving Civil War Ghosts and haunted cemeteries. These dramatic genres always please me and Heller is an engaging character. This chapter almost tied for favorite of the anthology. Grade: A

The seventh tale, Hired Hand by Kenneth W. Cain, is the evil fungus creeping around the western town and turning people into Zombies story. The hero has to shoot everyone dead including his favorite lady. This is a very therapeutic yarn and any Zombie fan would cheer the fungus on. Grade: B

Kit Volker's chapter, Another One, has an African American Deputy Marshal chasing vampires and bounties. Here is the classic cliffhanger story that screams "finish me," with another book. Hope we see more of this story later. Grade: A-

The last chapter, The Tale of Uji the Griot, is well designed with an African storyteller travelling about the American West collecting myths and stories. His experiences with a Native American woman and their adventures together entangle them with shape changing coyotes and werewolves. Grade: B+

All of these 'Deadlands,' American West tales are great fun and pack a western punch. Hope to see more of these anthologies and also hope to see these chapters expanded into books. Pick up a copy and enjoy the ride into the west.

-- Reviewed by John Paul Ried

## THE ANGEL STONE (2013)

By Juliet Dark

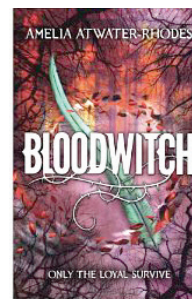


Finally we have some resolution. Callie McFay, professor of mythology at Fairwick College has been fighting the Nephilim (elvish-human descendants who want to take over the world, starting with Fairwick) with the help of her fey friends. I wasn't sure how the time travel would work, with Gabaldon and Harkness being the works to live up to, but Dark does a credible job of making Callie's trip back to Scotland to find the Angel Stone, the only thing that can defeat the Nephilim, not only plot-important but character-development important. The trip gives Callie essential clues that she needs to work out the resolution and we meet William (Bill and Liam's earlier incarnations) and Callie falls for him just as hard as she did his other two selves. We also meet someone else who is critical to the resolution of the story, but I won't give it away, as it is too much fun to find out that secret gem. The romance was good, the plot was fun and the world building was exemplary. Dark has always been one of my favorite authors and to find out that she is actually Carol Goodman, who has won several literary awards for novels written under her own name, just makes me glad that there is more of her work to read.

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

## BLOODWITCH (2014)

By Amelia Atwater-Rhodes



Atwater-Rhodes writes the best shapeshifter stories. Her wonderful young adult Den of Shadows series and Kiesha'ra series have intricately-plotted stories and powerfully-motivated characters. In this novel set in what seems to be the same world as the above series', we meet quetzal shifter Vance, who lives with vampires and is a pampered guest, or so he thinks. When he finds out that he is a very powerful but untrained bloodwitch, his gilded prison starts to become more visible. How far can he go to justify a warm bed and a hot meal if it means captivity and torture at the hands of immoral vampires? The rebels and other factions are on the edge of survival as practically nothing can defeat a vampire, but one of the things that can, might be a bloodwitch. This is the start of a new series so we have more to look forward to.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman  
Adult Services Lead Librarian,  
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## MAGIC BREAKS (2014)

By Llona Andrews

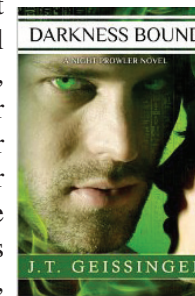


The seventh Kate Daniels novel is out in hardback (even though the previous six debuted in paperback) and has shot up to the top of the New York Times bestseller list. This must make the husband-and-wife writing team and their publisher, Ace Books, very happy. In this book, Kate and her husband Curran, the Beast Lord, are very close to their final confrontation with Kate's god-like father, Roland. First they have to rescue their friends from Roland's commander, Hugh, a scarily-talented, psychopathic sorcerer, who thinks Kate should have been his. We meet all our old friends, some more grown up than before, such as Derek and Julie and some new friends who are critical in getting us to the next book. I loves these stories and they are on my list of books that I reread when I have too long to wait for the next new one to come out. The end of this one should set us up for the final confrontation; but, Roland seems to be losing his more-than-terrifying aspect as we find out more about him, and I may not want him dead as much as I thought I did.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

## DARKNESS BOUND (2014)

By J.T. Geissinger



This fifth Night Prowler novel takes us to Brazil, final stand for the Ikati. Caesar is preparing for the last battle between his forces and Queen Jenna, Leander and the Ikati. Human journalist Jacqueline is caught in the middle as hunky Ikati enforcer, Hawk Luna tries to use her to say good things about the shapechangers, but it backfires when she is injured. As the romance grows between Jack and Hawk, we learn about the current situation with the Expurgati, who want to exterminate all nonhumans and psychopathic Ikati, Caesar, who wants to rule the world. While I didn't find the romance as believable in this one, sex takes up as much space as in any of the others and it is just as hot. This one reminded me more of the dragon shifters in Shana Abe's series than any of the others, but we see more of Queen Jenna, who can shift into a dragon, so that may be why. This one ended on a really solid upbeat note, but the back of the book says there will be more - yay!

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

**THE ENCELADUS CRISIS (2014)**

By Michael J. Martinez

Book two of the Daedalus series, picks up in different periods for each half of the story. For Shailla Jain in 2134 A.D., it has only been a few months; for Thomas Weatherby in 1798 A.D., it has been over 20 years. Again there seems to be no way for the universes to touch, but greedy businessmen will always find a way and Harry Yu is definitely one of those. The surprise is who's working with him as it wasn't anyone I expected it to be. This time the meeting of the universes takes place in ancient Egypt for Weatherby and simultaneously on the future moons of Saturn, Titan and Enceladus, for Jain and just as much is at stake. I love the blending of the stories and they are different enough that you stay interested until the end. The third one, The Venusian Gambit, should give us even more to look forward to.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

**THE WITCH WITH NO NAME (2014)**

By Kim Harrison

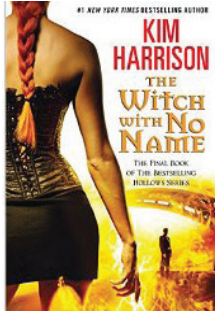
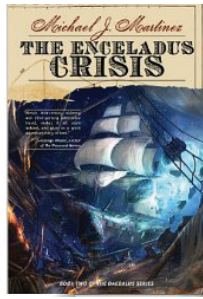
The thirteenth and final book in the Hollows series is here and it packs a punch. The Ever After is shrinking, soon to disappear, leaving the demons nowhere to go; the elves no longer listen to Trent because of his relationship with demon/witch Rachel; Trent's high-elven, ex-wife, Ellasbeth, will do almost anything to get custody of her child; and Rachel's relationship with the Goddess is in flux. The many times I wanted to slap Rachel for whining about how much Trent has lost by their relationship was annoying, but Trent never gives up on her and so I couldn't either. As attempt after attempt to save the whole world only makes things worse, you wonder what solution will work. The one they finally come up with is a doozy, but if everyone works together they just might be able to pull it off. The epilogue was a nice touch and satisfyingly finished it off for me. Now that I know how it ends, I can go back and re-read them all and remember how they got there.

-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

**HEIR OF FIRE (2014)**

By Sarah J. Maas

Third in the Throne of Glass young adult series, this one sets us up for the final book. It was nice to step back and read stories about Celaena's



early years in last year's The Assassin's Blade, but now I'm ready for the story to get moving. Captain Chaol sends her to Wendlyn trying to save her life; but she needs information about the Wyrdekeys that only Queen Maeve of the Fae can give her, so her purpose there is twofold. Maeve requires she be trained by Fae Prince Rowan before she will reveal the secrets, as Celaena's powers are uncontrolled and her ability to shift is unreliable. Meanwhile across the ocean, Captain Chaol and Prince Dorian are trying to hide Dorian's increasing powers with tonics from a cute healer and Dorian's father, the King's new allies, the iron witches, have new and terrifying mounts that make their old brooms look pitiful. At 569 pages, when we finally meet Queen Aelin Ashryver Galathynius in full control of her power and ready to kick some Adarlan butt, we are so ready for it - but that will be in the next book!

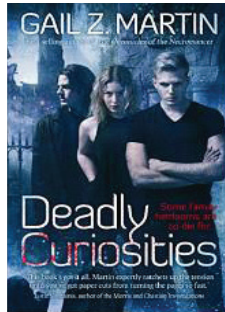
-- Reviewed by: Normalene Zeeman

**DEADLY CURIOSITIES (2014)**

By Gail Z. Martin

A new urban fantasy series by Martin, set in an alternate Charleston, South Carolina where magic, vampires, demons and various other spooky beings bedevil Cassidy Kincaide's antique shop and "bad juju" mitigation vault. With the help of a martial arts-trained assistant, a vampire and a voodoo priestess/college professor, they try to recover haunted items and cleanse them or store them. The plot was great, but it took a while for it to grab me. I liked Cassidy and the vampire, Sorren, was very interesting - but it take some time for Sorren to show up and his backstory is dribbled out so slowly, that as a major player, he is sorely wasted. Cassidy is a psychometrist, which is very handy in her line of work. Her assistant, Teag, is a weaver, which gives him mad skills in not only magic weaving but in data weaving, very helpful for researching the obscure past of some of the items they must deal with. Charleston has lots of history and many hauntings, so business is always good, even when they are dealing with very bad stuff. While this book ends well, it leaves room for many sequels so we'll see more of Sorren, Teag and Cassidy.

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



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**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 at [book@casfs.org](mailto:book@casfs.org).

**NOVEMBER 18 - THIRD TUESDAY**  
 by Lev Grossman.  
**Synopsis:** Like everyone else, precocious high school senior Quentin Coldwater assumes that magic isn't real, until he finds himself admitted to a very secretive and exclusive college of magic in upstate New York. There he indulges in joys of college-friendship, love, sex, and booze- and receives a rigorous education in modern sorcery. But magic doesn't bring the happiness and adventure Quentin thought it would. After graduation, he and his friends stumble upon a secret that sets them on a remarkable journey that may just fulfill Quentin's yearning. But their journey turns out to be darker and more dangerous than they'd imagined.

**DECEMBER 16 - THIRD TUESDAY -**  
**A Hard Day's Knight by Simon Green.**  
**Synopsis:** John Taylor, P.I., has come into possession of the legendary Excalibur. To find out why, he'll have to consult the Last Defenders of Camelot, a group of knights who dwell in a place more frightening than the Nightside ? London. John has been there in years-and there are good reasons for that.



# How to Develop a Character That Lasts

By Brandon Mullan



Manufacturing an idea that sticks is no easy feat but there is one creative property that has stood the test of time and had the most success maintaining an audience across a variety of mediums and that is characters. Due to how simple, fun, and harmless it is to find a bit of ourselves in Homer Simpson, Mickey Mouse, Harry Potter, The Rock or Tarzan, characters are the glue that stick to our attention and create engagement.

There are two main ingredients to every unforgettable character. The first is credibility. Some of the character's attributes have to resonate with an audience to the point they believe the character or that some of the character's elements could exist. A talking sponge that lives on a wall can be accepted as long as it has a believable backstory as to why it can talk and how it got there.

The second vital trait to a character is relatability. There needs to be some common ground between the character and the spectator. This similarity can be a motive, a decision making process, a physical characteristic, a possession, or the character's reaction to a problem. A viewer has to be able to find a bit of themselves in the character.

With credibility and relatability in mind, we can let our creativity run wild. An effective and organized way to develop your character is to take out a blank sheet of paper and start answering as many questions about your character as possible. You ready?!

Who or what is your character? Is it a sponge, an iron, an unidentified monster? Where do they live? What do they look like? It doesn't matter if you physically design your character before or after establishing their personality as long as what you're trying to convey is received.

What does your character do? Do they go on adventures? Do they solve problems? Do they search for dinosaur bones?

And what good character doesn't have a sidekick? Who or what is your character's sidekick and why are they paired together? And don't think we don't need an enemy! Who is your character's enemy? Give us the backstory!

Next, let's give your character some emotional energy. What's their natural emotional state? What's something that makes them happy, sad, and angry? What's their emotional range? When they're mad, how mad are they? How easily do they slip from emotion to emotion? Do they ever have conflicting emotions? Why? When?

What's their social psychology like? Are they shy? Are they gregarious? How do they act in society? How do they act by themselves? Is it different? Why? What's the story there?

And let us not forget those all-important details, nuances, and idiosyncrasies that will make your character liked, disliked, remembered or feared. Do they blink funny, sneeze in a weird way, or pronounce certain syllables with an accent? Let us have it!

As your character matures, they'll need their first scene. Give them a setting, a motive, a decision to make, a problem or conflict to respond to, and demonstrate their growth within the scene and you have your character in their first story!

Congratulations, your character has been brought to life! Watch out!

*Brandon Mullan is a writer and founder of Socially Acceptable, a brand that promotes the fictional characters Larry Chovaka and Fifi Furfurfester. Socially Acceptable's next book will be "The Life of Larry Chovaka...So Far", a graphic novel about the life of Larry Chovaka, a weatherman and mad scientist.*

[www.sociallyacceptablecharacters.com](http://www.sociallyacceptablecharacters.com)

[Brandon@sociallyacceptable.org](mailto:Brandon@sociallyacceptable.org) New T.V.

WOD



## PopCulture Series:

### The Flash TV Show

Reviewed by Tim Shafer

Tuesday evenings just quickly became my favorite night to watch television. Why? Two words: Barry- Allen. The CW premiered the long anticipated series, The Flash. From the moment it started to the moment it ended, I giggled like a child because I was finally watching the superhero show I've been wanting for decades.

Grant Gustin (Barry Allen), did a fantastic job portraying the habitually late CSI member. He was funny, clumsy, and endearing. Even if you never caught the episodes he did on Arrow, you still get the same origin story. Only better.

All of the elements combined together like chemicals and a bolt of supercharged lightning to create a quick paced show that looks to be able to stand the test of time. First of all, John Wesley Shipp (he played the Flash in the '90s) plays Henry Allen, Barry's father; which is a brilliant casting choice. The special effects were the right blend that helped me be sucked into the story. There were many questions left unanswered to keep me coming back: Who is Harrison Wells? Is Eddie really Professor Zoom? Are Barry and Iris going to get married? Only time will tell.

Some people might have thought that the premier was a bit rushed in some aspects, but honestly, it covered the basics and gave us some great teasers of things to come. The Grodd cage being ripped apart at Star Labs, the mysterious newspaper before the credits talking about the Flash "vanishing in crisis" and lest we forget, the "yellow lightning ball" that killed his mother. All of these point to some really awesome story-lines in the Flash universe.

All in all, from the writing, to the acting, to the effects, to the future of the show. This guy will be watching it every Tuesday. Or online. Or both.

Rating: FIVE WODS OUT OF FIVE!

WOD

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