

ConNotations

Volume 19, Issue 2
April / May
2009
FREE

The Bi-Monthly Science Fiction, Fantasy & Convention Newszine of the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society

A Conversation with James Alan Gardner by Chris Paige

James Alan Gardner is the author of seven novels and a short story collection, *Gravity Wells*. *Asimov's Science Fiction* published his "The Ray Gun: A Love Story" in February, 2008. Each novel is a stand-alone, but there are recurring characters. The titles are *Expendable*, *Ascending*, *Commitment Hour*, *Vigilant*, *Hunted*, *Trapped*, and *Radiant*; they are an eclectic mix of character development, adrenaline-pumping adventure, comedy, a bit of horror, and speculative imagination grounded in hard science. In a space-faring future, humanity is the new kid on the interstellar block. Each species does pretty much whatever it likes; including meddling with other species, but the League of Peoples monitors the goings-on.

If you Google Gardner, you will find a web page and some posted interviews detailing, among other things, how being a Canadian affects his writing.

...
Chris Paige: The ground premise for your novels is that every member of Earth's space Explorer corps is smart, competent, and well-equipped, but also deformed in some embarrassing way. The reason given is that group morale plummets when a *handsome* person dies, but not when an



© James Alan Gardner

ugly or ridiculous person dies. So they're 'expendable.' Your main character, Festina Ramos, makes the point that even fellow Explorers have this reaction to the death of one of their own: "That's what being 'Expendable' means." Did you base this premise on actual documented studies?

James Alan Gardner: Over the years, I've read studies leaning in this direction. For example, "ugly" people get

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03/14/09

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Managing Editor: Stephanie Bannon
Assistant to the Editor: Gary Swaty
Graphics Editor: Craig L. Dyer
Film & Video Editors: Len Berger &
Craig L. Dyer
Promotions Directors: Len Berger,
Richard Bolinski, Craig L. Dyer
Advertising: Catherine Book
Proof Readers: Catherine Book, Bob
LaPierre & Gary Swaty
Reporters: Craig L. Dyer, Jeffrey Lu
Staff Writers: Pam Allen, Nadine
Armstrong, Stephanie L. Bannon, Catherine
Book, Shane Bryner, Craig L. Dyer, M.L.
Fringe, Michael Griffin, Bob LaPierre,
Jeffrey Lu, Christina Paige, Shane
Shellenbarger, Gary Swaty, Tom Tuerff,
Lee Whiteside, Randall Whitlock

Contributors:
Layout & Design: Stephanie L. Bannon
Keeper of the Mailing List: Craig L. Dyer
Labeling Crew for Volume 19 Issue 1:
Mark Boniece, Michael & Theresa Contos,
Craig L. Dyer, Mike Griffin, Jeffrey Lu,
Sue Martin, Walter Sanville, Nyki and
Bella Roberston, Gary Swaty, Robin Webb,
Randall Whitlock

CN Mascots: [The Four CopperCon Kittens](#)

About ConNotations: *ConNotations* is the
fan published newszine of the Central
Arizona Speculative Fiction Society
(CASFS) an IRS-recognized 501(c)3 non-
profit organization. Circulation is
estimated at 7,000 readers for this issue,
including CASFS members and attendees
of recent CASFS conventions.

Subscriptions: The newszine is currently
sent free of charge to anyone who has
attended a CASFS sponsored convention in
the last calendar year and to all CASFS
members. Subscriptions are available. Cost
for a six issue subscription is: USA: \$20/
bulk. Corporate subscriptions are available,
email for rates.

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Publication: Publications dates are February,
April, June, August, October & December.
Publication date of this issue is 03/25/2009;
mailing date is 03/31/2009

Advertising: *ConNotations* reaches approx.
7,000 science fiction, fantasy, gaming and horror
fans throughout the Phoenix metro area, the
Southwest and nationwide. Our ad rates are:
\$175/Back cover, \$120/full page; \$80/two-thirds
page; \$60/half page; \$40/one-third page; \$30/
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Contact Information: ConNotations and its
contributors can be contacted by mail at PO Box
62613, Phoenix, AZ 85082-2613 or via email at
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ConNotations
ISSN: 1082-7765
PUBLISHED: Six times a year
BY: Central Arizona Speculative
Fiction Society, PO Box 62613,
Phoenix, AZ 85082
ISSUE NUMBER: Volume 19 Issue 2
SUBSCRIPTION: \$20 for 6 ISSUES

SF Tube Talk

TV News & Previews

By Lee Whiteside

We're getting into the home stretch of the broadcast season and entering a dry spell for the cable networks. We've got the scoop on the upcoming season (or series) finales as well as some news on what's coming up this summer on the cable networks.

NBC is struggling with the ratings for all of their shows with the genre shows being no exception. **Heroes** has been well under prior seasons ratings but NBC has tentatively given the go-ahead for a fourth season in large part due to the strong adult demographics the show still draws. **Chuck** has held steady for the most part and **Medium** has done the best of the three shows on Monday night.

Knight Rider has ended and, as of press time, **Kings** is about to debut with no real sense of how the viewing public will respond to it. Coming up on **Heroes** is the culmination of the *Fugitives* arc where we'll see how the Heroes manage to survive being hunted, find out who Rebel is, and also set up the next arc, titled *Redemption*. Upcoming episodes include *Turn and Face the Stranger* where we will learn more about The Hunter's dislike of those with powers. *1961* where we will find out more about the beginnings of The Company seeing teenage and early 20's versions of many of the older characters (Bob Bishop, Angela, Chanda Suresh, Linderman, and possibly others). Next is *I Am Sylar* which promises to bring to a head the current issues with Sylar and in the season finale, Sylar and Claire will have a conversation about immortality and possibly a big showdown with the President's life in the balance. On **Chuck**, things are progressing with Chuck's life as he realizes that it has changed and it likely isn't changing back, and that if he's going to survive, he needs to be a better spy. More will happen with regards to Fulcrum with **Arnold Vosloo** playing a badass Fulcrum agent and we'll also see **Tricia Helfer**, who plays a hot agent that seduces Captain Awesome, **Chevy Chase** as Ted Roark, a technology mogul, and **Scott Bakula** as Chuck's father. **Medium** will see Allison DuBois hand off her power to someone else so that **Patricia Arquette** can take a break for an episode. Joining the show as her replacement will be **Jeffrey Tambor**, who will take on a case

Over on FOX, **Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles** will finish out its season (and likely the series) in early April with the episodes *Adam Raised a Cain* and *Born to Run* (interesting to see them use two **Bruce Springsteen** titles for the last two episodes). No real specifics on the episodes other than that the producers have indicated there will be some closure to the series. **Joss Whedon's Dollhouse** debuted to OK numbers, but nothing to make FOX be

overly happy about. It is likely the series will finish its run but unless FOX is really in need it is not likely to get a renewal. The first episode in April, *Echoes*, will give viewers a large amount of background on Echo including learning how she became involved with the Dollhouse to begin with. By the end of the season we will find out who Alpha is and will be given some clues as to his identity. Whether the series will get a chance to continue will be up to FOX. After a month or so break, **Fringe** will be returning on Tuesday nights in April on FOX, ramping up the ongoing storylines and likely revealing who the Observer is. Fox did cut the shows order to 20 episodes from 22 and indications are they will see how it does when it comes back before deciding to continue it or not. Not much specific is known about the final episodes aside from one bit of leaked info that one of the characters will become pregnant by the end of the season (and it may not be a female character!).

ABC has ended **Life on Mars**, but did give the producers enough notice that the finale, airing on April 1st, may give an answer as to what is happening with Sam Tyler. ABC has debuted the new take on **Cupid**, airing in the last hour of prime time on Tuesday night. As with the previous series form **Rob Thomas**, Trevor Pierce (**Bobby Cannavale**) is someone who may or may not be the Roman god of love, Cupid, sent to earth to bring 100 couples together before he is allowed to return to Mt. Olympus. Trevor is under the care of psychiatrist and self-help author Dr. Claire McCrae (**Sarah Paulson**) who is also helping to unite lonely people with their soul mates. It is not promising that ABC cut the series order from 13 to 7 episodes, so don't get too attached to this one. As for **Lost**, it will continue to baffle and surprise viewers with all sorts of revelations as it runs up to the series finale.

On The CW, we're into the home stretch for both **Smallville** and **Supernatural**, both of which have been renewed by The CW for another season. Also, **Reaper** has returned for its second season on Tuesday nights. Coming up on **Smallville** is *Eternal*, which focuses on the origins of Davis Bloome/Doomsday, showing how Davis got tied up in the events of the original meteor shower. We'll see a young Davis and a young Lex in the flashbacks. In *Stiletto*, Lois creates a new superheroine, Stiletto, hoping to bring the red/blue Blur out of hiding. *Beast* sees Chloe harboring Davis Bloome and having nightmares as a result and Davis takes Oliver prisoner in the Talon basement. *Injustice* sees the formation of an Injustice Gang led by Tess with Plastique, Leech, Fallout and Voltage. Clark also discovers that Oliver has Lex's Kryptonite ring. This all leads into the season finale which promises the big showdown with Doomsday, possibly a return in some form of the Legion, and reportedly the deaths of two characters,

one of who is a long time Smallville veteran. Reports are that all of the regulars in season eight will be returning for season nine. Coming up on **Supernatural** is *The Monster at the End of This Book* where the demon Lilith hijacks the body of a dental hygienist to wreak havoc on the Winchesters. In *Jump The Shark*, the series hopefully doesn't do what the title implies. The plot point that likely inspired the title is that Sam and Dean discover they have a brother, Adam, of whom their father never told them about. Needless to say, Adam's life gets turned upside down when he meets his brothers. In the final batch of episodes, Dean and Bobby stage an intervention for Sam, who has become addicted to demon blood and it ends up in a big fight between Sam and Dean. **Reaper** has returned to the CW and while there's not much episode specific information available, we will meet The Devil's son Morgan (played by **Armie Hammer**) who is jealous of the attention Sam is getting from his father. **Reaper** executive producer **Michele Fazekas** has promised that they will divulge Sam's origins by the end of the season.

The networks do have a number of genre shows in development and by mid-May we may see some of them picked up for the fall season. In the works are a new take on "V" for ABC. It looks to be a fairly straight updating of the show making it more contemporary for an

audience that has experienced 9/11.

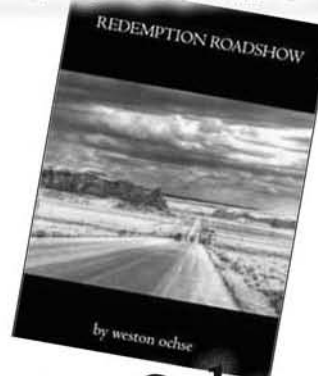

Morena Baccarin has been cast as the alien leader Anna. **Robert J. Sawyer's Flash Forward** novel is in the works for a series for ABC with **Brannon Braga** and **David S. Goyer** producing. It chronicles the chaos that ensues after everyone in the world blacks out for two minutes, 17 seconds and has a mysterious vision of the future that changes their lives forever. Cast includes **John Cho**, **Joseph Fiennes** and **Christine Woods**. Another attempt is being made to turn *The Witches of Eastwick* into a weekly series. **David Nutter** is executive producing and directing the pilot and **Jaime Ray Newman**, **Rebecca Romjin**, **Lindsay Price**, and **Veronica Cartwright** star. ABC is also adapting the recent British sitcom *No Heroics* about a group of b-list superheroes who hang out in a bar.

FOX is making an adaptation of the DC Comics property **Human Target**, about Christopher Chance, a mysterious freelancer who takes on a different identity each week to help those in danger. **Mark Valley** stars as Christopher Chance, with **Chi McBride** as Winston. **McG** and **Jon Steinberg** are executive producers. FOX is still considering **Virtuality** from **Ron Moore** and **Michael Taylor** about Earth's first space mission to a distant solar system and how the lives of the crew are affected by the virtual reality environment they use to

(Cont'd on page 4)

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SF Tube Talk (Cont'd from page 3)

escape from the boredom of space flight. Also still a possibility for FOX is **Boldly Going Nowhere**, a sitcom about life on an intergalactic spaceship and its crew.

NBC only has one genre project with **Day One** from **Heroes** producer **Jesse Alexander** which chronicles life of the survivors after a devastating global event cripples society. The CW has one genre project with **The Vampire Diaries** about a tragic young heroine who is the object of passion for two vampire brothers - one good, one evil - who are at war for her soul and for the souls of her friends and family. Created by **Kevin Williamson** and **Julie Plec** with **Nina Dobrev** and **Steven R. McQueen** as the leads. Finally, CBS has nothing in the works with a genre element, not even something with a weak one (ala **The Mentalist**).

The SciFi Channel has announced a name change, to SyFy, with the new slogan "Imagine Greater". No, this is not an April Fools joke. According to the associated their press release, "the new brand broadens perceptions and embraces a wider and more diverse range of imagination-based entertainment including fantasy, paranormal, reality, mystery, action and adventure, as well as science fiction. It also positions the brand for future growth by creating an ownable trademark that can travel easily with consumers across new media and non-linear digital platforms, new international channels and extend into new business ventures." The new name will go into affect on July 7th to coincide with the debut of the new series **Warehouse 13** and the return of **Eureka**.

On SciFi, they've just finished the last half of the final season of **Battlestar Galactica**, but we're not quite done with that universe. As a coda to the series, we've got the **Battlestar Galactica** movie **The Plan**, written by **Jane Espenson**, coming up sometime in June on SciFi (and likely quickly to DVD like was done with **Razor**). According to **Jane Espenson**, the movie shows things from the Cylon point of view from the time before the opening miniseries into some part of the second season. Not all of the Galactica regulars will be in it, but we will see **Edward James Olmos** as Admiral Adama (and he is also directing the film), **Aaron Douglas** (Chief Tyrol), **Michael Trucco** (Sam Anders), **Dean Stockwell** (Brother Cavil), **Tricia Helfer** (No. 6), **Grace Park** (Boomer/Athena), **Rick Worthy** (Simon), **Matthew Bennett** (Doral) and **Callum Keith Rennie** (Leoben). SciFi's description of the film is "In the beginning, the Cylons had a plan, but it didn't account for one thing: survivors. During the chaotic aftermath of the destruction, two powerful Cylon agents struggle with plots and priorities on the human ships that got away, and among the resistance fighters who were left behind." **Ron Moore** has even admitted that they didn't really know what the plan was to start with and

that the use of the "they have a plan" slogan was mainly a marketing gimmick. So, it looks like we will finally find out what the Cylon's plan was to begin with and how it fell apart as things progressed.

SciFi has committed to the spinoff series **Caprica**, which is planned to start airing early next year. However, the two hour pilot film for **Caprica** has been completed and an extended version will be released direct to DVD on April 21st to give fans something to chew on for a while until the series debuts in early 2010. SciFi's press release describes the series as "The Twelve Colonies are at peace, 51 years before the reimagined series, when an act of religious terrorism sets the worlds of the Adamas and the Graystones onto a collision course. Brought together by the grief over their lost daughters, prominent civil liberties lawyer Joseph Adama, father of future Battlestar commander William Adama, and Daniel Graystone, a wealthy technologist, find they are both struggling to keep going. Obsessed, Daniel sets his considerable wealth and sprawling industrial corporation to the singular task of bringing the girls back to life. After experiments with startling breakthroughs in robotics and AI take a questionable turn, Joseph becomes a vehement opponent of the path Daniel starts down." **Eric Stoltz** stars as Daniel Graystone, **Esai Morales** as Joseph Adama, **Paula Malcomson** as Amanda Graystone, **Polly Walker** as Sister Clarice Willow, **Alessandra Toreson** as Zoe Graystone, and **Sina Najafi** as William Adama. **Remi Aubuchon** wrote the pilot and will be the show runner for the series with **Ron Moore** and **David Eick** as executive producers.

With the end of **Stargate Atlantis**, the next chapter in the **Stargate** franchise, **Stargate Universe**, has started filming in Vancouver. The main cast will be **Robert Carlyle** as Dr. Nicholas Rush, **Justin Louis** as Colonel Everett Young, **David Blue** as Eli Wallace, **Brian J. Smith** as Lieutenant Matthew Scott, **Jamil Walker Smith** as Master Sergeant Ronald Greer, **Alaina Huffman** as Master Sergeant Tamara Johansen, **Elyse Levesque** as Chloe Armstrong, and **Lou Diamond Phillips** as Colonel Telford. The series will launch with a three part episode, titled "**Air**", which will bring the crew together on the Ancient ship The Destiny and set them off on an ongoing series of adventures as they travel on the ship through new territories. In a post on his blog reporting on the start of breaking down the initial batch of episodes, executive producer **Joe Mallozzi** described **Stargate Universe** as "a series that draws on established mythology yet blazes a bold, new path for the franchise. It's definitely more character-centered and intimate in its exploration of the interpersonal dynamics that will drive a lot of the shipboard developments (and, no, I'm not talking about romance). The premise of this ship hurtling through uncharted territories offers up unbounded

story possibilities, yet also forces us to adopt a very different approach toward alien encounters and planetary investigation. Twin themes mentioned over the course of today's conversations: survival and sacrifice."

As for more TV/DVD movies featuring the first two **Stargate** series, there are indications that they would like to do more **Stargate SG-1** movies and follow up on **Stargate Atlantis**, but currently nothing has been announced. At the end of March and early April, SciFi has aired the two **SG-1** movies that had been released on DVD last year. If those do well, SciFi might be willing to commit some funds towards more movies in the **Stargate** universe.

Coming up immediately on SciFi in April and May looks to be not much of anything new. With the end of **Galactica** on Friday nights, SciFi has been rerunning episodes from **Moonlight** and in early April will start airing episodes of **Primeval** which have already been screened in the U.S. on BBC America. SciFi will debut the four hour miniseries **Knights of Bloodsteel** on Sunday April 19th and Monday, April 20th. In the world of Mirabilis, bloodsteel is a rare metal that is the source of all magical power, and it is running out. The evil ruler Dragon Eye descend on Mirabilis to take control of the remaining supply of bloodsteel. The elf wizard Tesselink

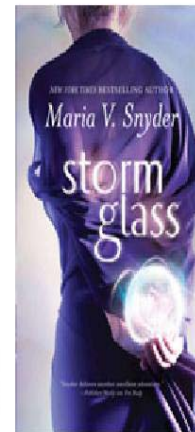
(**Christopher Lloyd**) recruits a foursome to save Mirabilis, the human vigilante John Serragoth (**David James Elliott**), the elf bounty hunter Perfidia (**Natassia Malthe**), the goblin Ber-lak (**Dru Viergever**) and the young conman Adric (**Christopher Jacot**) who become the Knights of Bloodsteel! They set out to find The Crucible, supposedly the source of all bloodsteel, and must find it before Dragon Eye and his army find it first.

In the works for a likely December miniseries on SciFi is a new four hour miniseries based on **Philip Jose Farmer's Riverworld**, this time scripted by **Robert Hewitt Wolfe** for production by RHI. Filming on the **Riverworld** miniseries is expected to start in April with **Stuart Gillard** directing, so we should have some casting to report next issue. According to **Wolfe** on exisle.net, this miniseries has no connection to the previous **Riverworld** TV movie aired on SciFi six years ago and that it is an "an all new take with (mostly) different characters and situations." According to **Wolfe**, SciFi did not like how the last movie turned out, but it did decent ratings initially and in repeats and they have been looking at reviving it. **Wolfe** and **Hans Beimler** did a one hour pilot script three years ago and **Wolfe** adapted some of that work into the four hour miniseries script. **Wolfe** has indicated it is not a

(Cont'd on page 5)



Wednesday, April 29th at 12:00 p.m.
Maria V. Snyder signs Storm Glass



Saturday, April 25th at 12:00 p.m.
Writer's Workshop with Michael A. Stackpole
Cost is \$35.

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For more information on this and other upcoming signings with science fiction and fantasy authors at the Poisoned Pen, please visit our web site at www.poisonedpen.com or call 1-888-560-9919

In order to participate in the signing, we ask that customers purchase the author's new book at the Poisoned Pen.

SF Tube Talk (Cont'd from page 4)

direct adaptation of the novels, but that “I have preserved much of the tone, philosophical underpinnings, sense of adventure, and existential angst of the original novels. And told a good yarn that fits into four hours, sets up a possible series and includes enough contemporary characters to hook a modern audience. But it’s more of a **Ron Moore BSG** type re-imagining than a ‘film the book’ approach. “As for who or what we’ll see in the miniseries, **Wolfe** has promised “a River, a riverboat, a certain post-bellum Southern author and an assortment of conquistadors, courtesans, codgers and contrarians. One of the worst people in history. One of the best (said author). A half-dozen or so way cool historical figures (including two from the novels) plus some contemporary point-of-view types. “RHI is also working on two other miniseries for SciFi, **Alice**, a contemporary re-telling of *Alice in Wonderland* (as was done for the *Wizard of Oz* with **Tin Man**) and a project adapting *The Phantom* for TV.

From across the pond there’s several series heading their way to BBC America with a third season of **Primeval** and the debut seasons of **Survivors** and **Being Human** (both of which have been picked up for a second series by the BBC).

The first of four **Doctor Who** specials, *Planet of the Dead*, will air on BBC1 over Easter weekend. It features **Michelle Ryan** guest starring as Lady Christina de Souza. The Doctor and Christina join up for an adventure that takes them to a desolate planet via a double decker bus and not via the TARDIS. Also appearing is **Noma Dumezweni** as Captain Erisa Magambo, who was seen in the episode *Turn Left*. The plot appears to have something to do with some alien pictographs that Lady Christina and The Doctor are investigating. According to producer **Russell T. Davies**, it features two different alien races not before seen in Doctor Who. After that, the remaining three specials are expected to air around Christmas and the New Year, leading up to a very exciting and emotional “death” and regeneration for The Doctor.

For the 2009 Red Nose Day, BBC viewers were treated to a special episode of *The Sarah Jane Adventures* featuring comedian **Ronnie Corbett** and production is gearing up for a third season of the show. Also in the works is a new **K9** spinoff series being filmed in Australia. The series will not have any direct connection to **Doctor Who** since K9 itself was co-created by **Bob Baker** who will be overseeing the new series. Reportedly, the series is set in 2050 London and features 14 year old characters Starkey and Jorjie along with a Professor Gryffen, and 15 year old Darius who runs errands for Gryffen. Professor Gryffen is experimenting with space-time portals in which a deadly alien appears shortly followed by K9 Mark I who helps save the humans and continues to provide help in protecting Earth against alien threats.

Torchwood will return in the summer for the week long event *Children of Earth*. According to BBC America, they are planning to show it the same week as the BBC does in the UK. The overall story concerns a deal the government made with aliens in the 1960’s that now threatens all the children on Earth, who become immobile. The Torchwood team is still down to Jack, Ianto and Gwen following the events of season two, with Gwen’s husband Rhys helping out. Also appearing are **Katy Wix** (Rhiannon, Ianto’s sister), **Rhodri Lewis** (Johnny Evans, Ianto’s brother-in-law) and **Lucy Cohu** as Alice, Jack’s 30 something daughter (!).

Primeval returns to ITV in the UK for its third season at the end of March. At the start of the season, Cutter’s team will discover a sun cage at a museum that holds an anomaly and with its help they are able to predict future anomalies. As the series progresses, the team will encounter Helen Cutter and end up being caught in a trap and transported into a dangerous future.

Returning to UK TV screens over Easter will be **Red Dwarf** in a set of three specials being broadcast on the cable channel Dave (formerly known as UK Gold 2). After several attempts to make a **Red Dwarf** movie have fallen through, **Doug Naylor** has brought the regular cast back together for a set of specials titled “*Back to Earth*”. At the start of the specials we catch up with the crew nine years after we last saw them and things are pretty much normal until Lister realizes that there is a dimension hopping leviathan in their mile long water tank. Also, a new hologram appears, Katerina (played by **Sophie Winkleman**), who was a Red Dwarf science officer who aims to replace Rimmer. As part of Katerina’s plans to replace Rimmer, the Red Dwarf is brought back to Earth - in 2009! Returning are **Chris Barrie** as Rimmer, **Craig Charles** as Lister, **Danny John-Jules** as Cat and **Robert Llewellyn** as Kryten.

A Conversation (Cont'd from page 1) paid 9% less than average while attractive people get paid 5% more. In the future, where I believe genetic selection and manipulation will be more common (not to mention cosmetic surgery), I thought that unattractive people would stand out even more and be subject to extreme distaste.

...
CP: What does this say about human nature? Isn’t the preference for beauty offset by an appreciation of character and ability?

JAG: In evolutionary terms, what we consider beautiful is strongly linked with health. You’re more likely to reproduce if you choose a healthy mate, so we’re psychologically biased to find healthiness attractive. Our instincts aren’t perfect, and they can also get twisted into knots by cultural factors—for example, back in the 1950’s simply being blonde outweighed a lot of negatives, and today some people value skinniness far too much—but historically, beauty has correlated well with health. And health has correlated well with character and ability. A sickly body has difficulty sustaining a strong brain. You can find plenty of exceptions, but they *are* exceptions. There’s only one Stephen Hawking; there are many other people with the same condition who are perfectly decent folks but who are never going to be Fellows of the Royal Society. Good health contributes to character and ability...and character/ability can also contribute to good health, since “smart” people tend to take better care of themselves.

So throughout evolutionary history, beauty has been tangled up with health, which has been tangled up with ability. Our prejudices are based on real statistical likelihoods, which is why they

developed and why they persist. Those prejudices are cruel to the exceptions, but they’ve never been so wrong that they were bred out of the species. But in the past century or so, things have changed. A hundred years ago, you didn’t develop ability unless you were healthy enough to survive bouts of serious childhood disease. But now, the correlations are breaking down. You can look good even if you don’t have great genetics. You can survive to do important things even if you’re in lousy shape. There are going to be more and more exceptions to the beauty-health-ability linkage, and it will be interesting to see where society goes with that. In my books, I decided that Technocracy society would be even more shallow than we are today; many of the non-Explorer characters are almost infantile. These people have such easy lives, most of them don’t develop character and ability, and they can’t recognize it in others.

...
CP: What are some of the main influences, strong or subtle, on your ideas?

JAG: I love comedy—funny writing of all kinds. I read Terry Pratchett’s books the instant they come out, and I soak up humor from anything else I can get my hands on. (I consider myself a comedy writer, although my editors never let me say that.) I’m also very fond of Christopher Brookmyre, a Scottish writer who does black-comedy thrillers. In addition, I grew up reading comic books, first DC, then Marvel. Comic book concepts underlie almost everything I write, especially great sweeping visions of cosmic destiny.

...
CP: Many of your stories take a turn into extreme violence. Where does this predilection for mayhem *come* from?

JAG: I like action. I like adventure. I

(Cont'd on page 6)

DARK CON 2010

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A Conversation (Cont'd from page 5)

miss the pulp-tinged feel that science fiction used to have, and I want to bring it back. So I'm writing the sort of books that I like to read and that I wish other people were writing.

...

CP: Even though the League of Peoples prevents interstellar wars in your SF, the Explorer Corps is still a military organization. Have you ever been in the military? If not, what are your resources for portraying the mindsets and procedures?

JAG: I've never been in the military, but my father-in-law was in the Canadian armed forces for most of his life.

...

CP: You have a background in martial arts. What do you practice, and how does it affect you?

JAG: I have a second-degree black sash in Shaolin Five-Animal Kung Fu. First of all, it keeps me from turning into a puddle of lard who does nothing but sit at a computer. Second, it helps give me background for writing fight scenes. Third, it keeps my brain awake—there's nothing like a kick in the stomach to teach you not to let your mind wander.

...

CP: You have a talent for writing the kind intriguing context-details that Zelazny used to scatter throughout his novels. In *Radiant*, for example, you mention the '5 Worthy Themes of Cashling city design: water, mirrors, shadow, illusion, and knots.'

JAG: The five worthy themes are what I call "serendipity fodder". All SF writers must suggest that there's more to their worlds than is shown on the page. Sometimes you actually work out details; that's important on the basics like how societies feed themselves and how they survive. But sometimes you just throw in cool details for the heck of it: window dressing that may or may not mean anything. I just put the themes out there in case they became useful later in the book. I deliberately didn't flesh them out (on the page or in my head) so that they'd be adaptable if I decided to use them later on.

...

CP: And what of the grandiose names of the two Cashling spacefarers? What are the footnote explanations of the names Lord Ryan Ellisander Petrovaka LaSalle and Lady Belinda Astragoth Umbatti Carew? I love to know the stories behind names, and if felt to me that there was more to these than mere parody.

JAG: A friend of mine named Belinda loved to make up extravagant names for herself when she was young. Later on, when I was writing *Ascending*, she married a guy named Ryan...so the names are a sort of wedding present to the two of them.

...

CP: While there is no lack of new and sometimes very good fantasy literature, there seems to be less and less *science* in SF these days — you are one of the exceptions to this trend, with plenty of nanotech and space hardware and alien

culture. What factors do you see driving SF towards fantasy and away from science?

JAG: Science fiction has serious accessibility problems. How many modern science fiction books could a 12-year-old understand? The science is too difficult, and the demand for "something new" is a real barrier. After all, suppose you want to write a time travel story. After decades of other time travel stories, experienced science fiction readers won't be satisfied with simple time paradoxes, but new readers can't follow anything too convoluted. This makes for a lack of "entry-level" stories: ones that can be read by people (especially 12-year-olds) who are bright but not necessarily well-versed in the niceties of molecular biology and neuroscience.

Contrast this with fantasy. The prerequisites are low. I'm not saying that fantasy is simpleminded—a lot of it is quite sophisticated—but you can pick up almost any fantasy book and understand what it's saying, without any academic background or prior reading in the field. Science fiction desperately needs entry-level books...and of course, that's what I try to do in my own writing. While I use nanotech and space stuff and aliens, one of my main goals is accessibility. I want to be read by 12-year-olds...and by people with the hearts of 12-year-olds.

...

CP: That helps explain the PG rating, as far as intimacy goes. When your characters have relationships, these happen off stage. Does Festina ever get lucky? She's so lonely.

JAG: Yes, she does. I have a whole story plotted in which the main character is the man she is meant to be with. It won't be easy for them, of course.

...

P: What are the antecedents of your most mysterious character, the Pollisand?

JAG: The Pollisand comes from an unpublished book about the youngest Spark Lord. (The Spark Lords appear in *Commitment Hour* and *Trapped*.)

Roughly speaking, he's an immensely powerful being who'd love to be a *deus ex machina* but isn't allowed to. Various circumstances prevent him from providing actual help to mortals, so he just shows up and makes himself a pain in the ass. Kind of like a professor looking over your shoulder when you're sweating over a final exam.

...

CP: You occasionally attend conventions. What have been some of your favorite convention panel discussions?

JAG: I love creative ones...like impromptu world-building or plotting. It's fun to get a set of writers to brainstorm on how they'd build a story around a particular theme, scientific discovery, etc.

...

CP: What questions are you never asked, that you'd love to answer?

JAG: Grammar questions. I love putting words together. I love writing sentences. When new writers pick my brains, they always want help with ideas...but often what they *really* need help with is constructing interesting sentences.

...

CP: True! You also write some of the funniest dialogue it has been my pleasure to read and make literary jokes. In *Ascending*, you manage to make light of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (one of my favorite poems), in a passage discussing the danger of eating peaches that may actually be your alien host's nephew in chrysalis form. If you could time travel, when and where would you go?

JAG: I've actually written a story about this (for a con chapbook). What I'm attracted to is messing around with people's heads—leaving a cell phone in Tutankhamen's tomb, that sort of thing. This is now espoused by the Society for Creating Anachronisms ("creating" not "creative") but I had the idea thirty years ago.

...

CP: There is an archetypal component to your stories. Is that deliberate?

JAG: I like archetypes; I think they provide much of the energy for fiction. But it's important to realize that archetypes are surrounded by great snarls of personal and cultural connotations. They're powerful precisely because they make so many different connections inside our brains. I have no qualms about using them deliberately.

...

CP: In *Commitment Hour* the characters grow up alternating between male and female, experiencing the range of male and female potentials, then choosing which to be for the rest of their lives at age 21. A few, a very few make the hard choice to choose neither, and opt to be 'neuts,' even though this leads to ostracism. What kind of feedback have you gotten from readers?

JAG: Some readers love the fantasy of alternating genders: really knowing how the other half lives and being able to choose which way you'll go. The idea is liberating, and it's interesting to think how it would be to live that way. Other readers are drawn to the idea of neuts—to have it both ways, to be (in a sense) complete.

...

CP: You get right into your characters' dark stuff: their fears, remorse, rages, and frustrated longings. What scares you — what's your dark stuff?

JAG: When I was a kid, I was scared of basements and second floors—something to do with ghosts and monsters. These days, I'm most afraid of losing my mental edge.

...

CP: What would you like to accomplish before you die?

JAG: Many more books (and ones that I'm proud of).

...

CP: What is a good death, by your lights?

JAG: One you can stay awake through.

...

CP: In many ways, your novels strike me as wake up calls. You make some astute comments and observations, not just about individuals, but about trends. Has anyone ever told you that your stories made a real difference in their lives? Have any sleepers awakened?

JAG: I can only hope.



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In Memory of Kelly “The Sarge” Sabucco

Kelly “The Sarge” Sabucco
1967-2009

We lost a member of our family this past weekend— Kelly Sabucco, aka “The Sarge”. He left us at 5:30am on Saturday, March 7th, 2009. He was 41. He leaves behind his mother Nancy and a daughter, Jonna-Rae.

He was the one-man “Brute Squad” for ROCKY HORROR security, a lifelong fixture at Phoenix-area science fiction conventions and other fandom events (SCA, Corsairs, etc), the guy who provided all the free posters at Chandler Cinemas, and the man who had not paid to see a movie in almost ten years (because he always saw the sneak previews!). He was a true comrade, a gentle giant, and a gentleman.

His mother is not planning any services, but has given her blessing for his friends to do so. He will be missed and mourned by so many of us, in all the different social scenes that he moved within—and which he helped network between, and glue together.

A memorial page can be found at http://azrocky.com/index_files/Page385.htm and

his Myspace profile is at www.myspace.com/itsthesarge
Matthew Yenkala

Memories of Sarge

I first met Kelly (Sarge) at a movie screening. He was the one giving away posters without asking for anything in return. Since then I have seen Kelly to be one of the most generous people I have met in the screening and fandom worlds. Kelly gave away most of the prizes he won with many going to his daughter. Kelly helped with the poster tables and the trailer presentation forums and asked for nothing more than any other



attendee at the con. What I did not know was another side of Kelly – his minister side. Shortly after his death I found out he was a licensed minister. One of his favorite lines was “I never married my daughter’s mother but I married my daughter’s mother” (not quite a direct quote but close enough). Yes, Kelly performed the ceremony when his daughter’s mother was married to another man. Then, at the Rocky Horror memorial I learned that countless people were helped, even saved, by Kelly. It was really touching to hear the stories – I only wish I had known this side of Kelly before his

death. Kelly was way too young to pass and we will miss him forever.
- Len Berger.

~~~~~

I saw him last at Phoenix ComicCon’s Sunday Barry Bard’s Memorial Movie Preview. He was happy to let other people know about the free promotional posters that he got from work. His voice boomed about his work at Chandler Cinemas. Sarge was cool in giving his swag so others may have a chance to grab some cool movie stuff. One girl was overjoyed in snatching one of

Sarge’s swag. She was smiling as she left the room carrying the horror movie promotion.

At first, this huge guy may seem intimidating. When one got to know him, he had a wicked sense of humor but also a fan for life. He was and always will be a cool guy.

His friendship and humorous stories at the local conventions were always a delight. Others will miss him. I do and am sad to find him gone at a young age of 41. He was a presence that will be hard to fulfill. - Jeffrey Lu

Sarge  
(In memory of  
Kelly Sabucco)  
by Jeffrey Lu

Security and sensitive,  
Fan for life,  
Deep-rooted Sith,  
Humorous storyteller  
Are samples of what I  
remembered about him.

He was big  
But honest.  
He was loud  
But soft with friends and  
family.  
He was Sarge.

And so,  
I did not see it coming  
To hear his last laugh in  
one discussion  
Echoing throughout  
Phoenix ComicCon 2008:  
His love of life.

So, farewell Sarge.  
With a drink raised high,  
I remember thee.  
I sip and sit  
To a really cool guy.

## CASFS Book Discussion

Bent Cover Books  
12428 N. 28th Drive, Phoenix  
3rd Tuesdays, 7pm, in the Coffee Bar  
Sponsored by Central Arizona  
Speculative Fiction Society (CASFS)  
email questions to [book@casfs.org](mailto:book@casfs.org)

Come do some face-to-face interaction with your fellow readers and SF/Fantasy fans! Haven't read the book? Don't worry, there's no quiz or anything. You can use the rest of us as your personal book reviewers to see if it's something you'd like. We start out with the book discussion, but the conversation can go anywhere. The get-together is held in the coffee shop of Bent Cover Books near 28th Drive and Cactus Road in Phoenix. We welcome potential new friends.  
**May 19, 2009 - *Tarzan of the Apes*** by Edgar Rice Burroughs  
**June 16, 2009 - *Wyrd Sisters*** by Terry Pratchett

## BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS

**Fantasy/Sci-Fi Discussion Group**  
4th Wed, 7pm  
Borders, Glendale

**Path of the Craft Discussion group**  
discusses Neopagan theories inspired by both fiction and non-fiction books about magic, nature, mythology, and spirituality longest-running pagan book group in Phoenix. -4th Saturday of the month at 6pm  
Borders, Phoenix Camelback

**Manga Bookclub**  
1st Tuesdays, 7pm  
Borders, Chandler

**Manga Bookclub**  
April 18, 7pm  
May 16, 7pm  
Barnes & Noble, Goodyear

**Sci-Fi/Fantasy Book Group**  
Apr 9, 7pm  
Changing Hands Bookstore

## SPECIAL BOOK RELEASES

This listing is to introduce you to smaller publishing houses that offer exclusive or limited edition books that you wouldn't be able to find at your local chain bookstore.

**Borderlands Press**  
"Black Wind" by F. Paul Wilson  
"Dark Ride" by Michael Laimo

**Cemetery Dance Publications**  
"Screamplays" edited by Richard Chizmar & Martin H. Greenberg  
"Hell Hollow" by Ronald Kelly

## PS Publishing

"Harsh Oases" by Paul DiFilippo  
"The Bridge" by Zoran Zivkovic  
"Shrike" by Quentin S. Crisp  
Ray Bradbury Gift Set

## PYR Publishing

"Always Forever: Age of Misrule 2" by Mark Chadbourn  
"Blood of Ambrose" by James Enge  
"Crossover" by Joe Shepherd  
"Stalking the Dragon" by Mike Resnick

## Subterranean Press

"The Steel Remains" by Richard Morgan  
"Metamorphosis" by James P. Blaylock  
"Marionettes, Inc." by Ray Bradbury  
"Wild Thyme, Green Magic" by Jack Vance  
"Trips" by Robert Silverberg  
"The City and the City" by China Mieville  
"Fool Moon" by James Butcher  
"The Other in the Mirror" by Philip Jose Farmer  
And too many more to mention....

## Wildside Press

"Best New Paranormal Romance" ed. Paula Guran  
"Jade Tiger" by Jenn Reese  
"Myth Fortunes" by Robert Asprin & Jody Lynn Nye  
"Science Fiction: The Best of the Year: 2006" ed. Rich Horton  
"The Strangeling" by Saskia Walker  
"Unveiling the Sorceress" by Saskia Walker

## GAMING EVENTS

### DRAWN TO COMICS

*HeroClix*. Tuesdays 4pm-7pm. Fridays, 8pm-11pm. Saturdays, 3pm-6pm  
*Star Wars Miniatures*. Sundays, 1 - 4pm  
*Sit-and-Sketch* with local artists. 3rd Saturday, 6pm-8pm

### GAME DEPOT

*HeroClix & MechWarrior* - Wednesdays, 530pm  
*Magic, The Gathering* - Thursdays, 6pm-9pm  
*Monsterpocalypse*. Wednesdays, 5pm  
*Pirates* - CCG Fridays, 5pm.

### IMPERIAL OUTPOST GAMES

*Federation Commander* - 2nd Saturdays, noon  
*RPG* - 1st & 3rd Sundays  
*Boardgames & Demo Nite* - Thursdays, 6pm

### SAMURAI COMICS

(check website for correct store location)  
*HeroClix Tournament*, Fridays, 6pm  
*Mechwarrior Tourney*, Wednesdays, 6pm  
*Yugioh Tournament*, Sundays, noon  
*Anime Club*, Sundays, noon  
*Pokemon*, Sundays, 2pm

### SPAZDOG COMICS

*HeroClix Tournaments*, Fridays, 7pm  
*Pokemon League*, Saturdays, 3pm

## SCIENCE EVENTS

### ASU

Science lectures and news: <http://asunews.asu.edu/news/science>

### ARIZONA SCIENCE CENTER

New **Rock Wall** opened Feb 16th, climbers aged 8 and above  
"U2: A Digital Dome Experience" show times on website.  
Materials Science Workshops  
These workshops provide fun hands-on experiences to help participants understand how materials scientists manipulate the properties of various materials to create the products that we use in our everyday life.  
Check website for dates and topics.  
Nanotech, Apr 3-5  
**The Search for Life of Mars**, Apr 3, Planetarium  
**Through the Eyes of the Hubble**, Apr 11, Planetarium.  
**It's Easy Being Green**, family event, Apr 11  
**Learn about Volcanos "There She Blows!"**, family event, Apr 25  
**Invisible Forces That Shape the Universe**, May 1, Planetarium  
**Astronomy day-24 hour event**, May 2, Planetarium  
**"Have You Used a Mineral Today?"**

family event, May 9  
**Simplifying Complexities: Understanding Autism**, Jun 5  
**Archeo-Astronomy**, June 13, Planetarium  
**Moon Mission Apollo**, Jul 18, Planetarium  
**Mars, What's New (part II)**, Aug 15, Planetarium

### CHALLENGER SPACE CENTER, PEORIA

**Adventures in Space Summer Camp**, Jun 8-Jul 31, ages 5-14  
**Family Fun day**, Apr 25, May 30, 10am-4pm Stargazing. Starlab Planetarium.  
*Check website for dates and times*  
**The Space Place** is a 2-hour interactive program for little ones with big imaginations! Designed for children ages 3 through 6, the program features age-appropriate activities designed to teach preschoolers about our planet and solar system. Call for reservations. *Neptune*: Apr 13-14, 930am-1130am. *Pluto*: May 11-12, 930am-1130am.  
**ASU Meteorite Exhibit**  
**Columbia Shuttle Memorial Display**  
**Iridium Satellite Model**  
**Lowell Observatory Display**  
**Journey Thru the Space Program**  
**Atlantis Space Shuttle Model**

(Cont'd on page 9)

[www.leprecon.org](http://www.leprecon.org)

## LepreCon 35 - Fall 2009

For **LepreCon 35** in 2009, instead of holding a full scale LepreCon convention in the spring, Leprecon, Inc. plans to have the LepreCon 35 convention be a relaxacon in the fall of 2009 following our other events, FiestaCon and the North American Discworld Convention - location and date TBA.

## LepreCon 36 - May 14-16, 2010

For 2010, **LepreCon 36** will be a full-sized convention May 14-16, 2010 at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa in Mesa, AZ.  
Artist Guest of Honor: **Charles Vess**  
Author Guest of Honor: **George R. R. Martin**  
Local Artist/Author Guest of Honor: **James A. Owen**  
With More Guests To Be Announced

LepreCon 36 will have a full art show, charity auction, gaming, hospitality suite, filk & music, and more.

Look for more details soon on the Leprecon website at [www.leprecon.org](http://www.leprecon.org)

### Membership Rates for LepreCon 35 & 36

LepreCon 35 - \$10 thru 5/31/09, more later

LepreCon 36 - \$25 thru 5/31/09, more later  
Kids 7-12 half price, Kids 6 and under Free

### LepreCon 35 & 36 Contact Information

Write: LepreCon 35/36, PO Box 26665, Tempe, AZ 85285  
Phone: (480) 945-6890  
Email: [lep35@leprecon.org](mailto:lep35@leprecon.org) & [lep36@leprecon.org](mailto:lep36@leprecon.org)



## MOON SOCIETY MEETING

3 PM at orders Book Store, 1361 S. Alma School Rd. (Alma School and Southern) Mesa. For more info contact Craig Porterat [portercd@msn.com](mailto:portercd@msn.com)

## PIMA AIR &amp; SPACE MUSEUM, TUCSON

**New Volunteer Orientation.** Apr 11, May 9, Jun 13, 930am  
**Easter Bunny Fly In,** Apr 5, noon-2pm  
**Space Day,** May 1, 1pm-430pm. Build your own balloon, learn about helicopters.  
**Space Sundays:** how to build and fly rockets, May 31, Jun 28, Jul 26, Aug 30, 11am-3pm  
**Titan Missile Museum Tours.** Reservations only  
 The only publicly accessible Titan II missile site in the nation. Tour the underground missile site. See the 3-ton blast doors, 8' thick silo walls and an actual Titan II missile in the launch duct. Visit the launch control center, experience a simulated launch, and more. Top to Bottom Tours: Apr 14,17,18,25, May 12,16,22,23, June 9,20,27. More dates avail on website.-8pm

## SETI Institute's Weekly

**Science Radio Program**  
 Mondays, avail as podcast  
<http://radio.seti.org>  
<http://podcast.seti.org>

## OTHER GENRE-RELATED EVENTS

**ARIZONA SCIENCE CENTER**  
*The Star Trek Exhibit* - opened Nov 16

**BOOKMANS, PHOENIX**  
*Arizona Browncoats Shindig.* 1st Saturday, 7pm  
*Scimitar-Talon* is a group of people wanting to enjoy recreating portions of the middle ages prior to 1600 AD. Classes on Medieval Arts and Sciences.. 1st Saturdays, 130pm-230pm  
*Across Plus Anime Club.* Sundays, 6pm

**BOOKMANS, GRANT RD, TUCSON**  
 Free Tarot Readings with Pandora, Wednesdays, 6pm

**BOOKMANS SPEEDWAY TUCSON**  
 Meet the Inventor of Biosphere 2, Apr 2, 4pm

**BORDERS AVONDALE**  
*Metaphysical Wednesdays Discussion*  
 Wednesdays, 7pm

**LOFT THEATRE, TUCSON**  
 Screenings of movies, many SF genre. Check website for times and listings.

**Northern Arizona Book Festival**  
 Apr 24-25, 9am-10pm  
<http://www.nazbookfest.com/new/>

## ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

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

## Vidi, Vidder: I Came, I Saw, I Videoed

By Shane Shellenbarger

I was listening to National Public Radio the other day and heard the story of vidders, movie and television fans that make unauthorized underground videos using audio and video clips. That brought back a few fond memories because in the 1980's I was one of those fans.

Of course, we didn't think of ourselves as vidders, we were just fans inspired by songs that took video clips and made music videos. Serious, adventuresome, and humorous songs inspired us. For example, I took "Shades of Gray" with music by Barry Mann and words by Cynthia Weil as performed by the Monkees and turned it into the loss-of-innocence story of Luke Skywalker's (as portrayed by Mark Hamill) growth from moisture-farming callow youth to older and wiser Jedi. The performance of Tom Jones singing the title song for the James Bond film, "Thunderball," with music by John Barry and lyrics by Don Black inspired me to tell the tale of *Star Trek's* Khan Noonien Singh (Richardo Montalban.) Hamill reappeared in "Yoda," the "Weird Al" Yankovic parody of "Lola," a song written by Ray Davies and performed by The Kinks. In that song, the line "I'll be playing this part 'til I'm old and gray . . ." was conveyed by using a clip of Hamill as an old hermit/collector from the 1986 Steven Spielberg television series "Amazing Stories" episode "Gather Ye Acorns."

I made my videos with the help of the

editing capabilities of my Sony SLHF-900 & 1000 (with flying erase heads) and the graphic/titling abilities of my Amiga 1000 & 2000. Unlike today when you can go on the internet, type a song title and the word "lyrics" into Google, and you'd have the song in its entirety, I'd listen to the song over and over again while writing down the words. I'd then try to match the actions, emotions, or concepts portrayed in the songs to the available clips from the television or movie video tapes I had available to me. Remember DVD box sets and Netflix were decades into the future.

Of course, some fans were itching to be creative before video recorders were available to consumers-at-large. Credited with creating the genre of the fannish synchronization of music and slides in 1975, Phoenix fan, Kandy Fong, took filmstrips purchased from Gene Roddenberry's company, Lincoln Enterprises, made slides from them and choreographed slide shows at Star Trek conventions. One projector became two in order to better to co-ordinate the audio transitions from one idea to another. Fong and her friend (and sometime collaborator), Linda Brown, were invited to contribute to this piece, but had not responded by press time.

I was able to contact New York area fan, Thomas Monson, who performed a multi-media presentation in the late 70's.

...  
**Shane Shellenbarger:** Tom, thanks for talking to me. When did you do your first Music Video/Presentation?

**Thomas Monson:** September 2-5, 1977. It was "Hailing Frequencies Open" at the Statler Hilton Hotel in New York City, NY for the Star Trek America Convention. It was scheduled as a half-hour Multimedia Slide show with special effects set to music).

...  
**SS:** What was the song and subject?

**TM:** I used multiple Science fiction/fantasy pop songs, with the themes of Star Trek, Futurism, and NASA's Space Program. Let's see, I remember using STYX-*Come Sail Away*, KLAATU-*Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft*, *Loneliest Creature in the Universe*, *Hope*, INTERGALACTIC TOURING BAND-*Silver Lady*, DAVID BOWIE-A *Space Oddity*. There were many more I can't remember by various artists.

...  
**SS:** Which of those songs were your personal favorites?

**TM:** I'd have to say Klaatu's - *Hope* for "Hailing Frequencies Open" show was closest to my heart.

...  
**SS:** Do you have a favorite Video/Presentation created by someone?

**TM:** None comes to mind.

...  
**SS:** What equipment and software have you used to create your Video/Presentations?

**TM:** Let's see, I had slide projectors utilizing a cross-fader, a neon laser with motorized diffraction disc, a 60's style

( Cont'd on page 10 )




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**Vidi Vidder** ( Cont'd from page 9 )  
moving colored oil disc projector, an optical colored glass special effects projector, a speaker with rubber membrane and mirrors attached with a high intensity spotlight (produced an oscilloscope- type projection effect). For the audio portion I had a Quadraphonic Reel-to-Reel tape deck, Quad Amplifier, 8 speakers paired x2 in each corner of the hall.

...  
**SS:** That sounds like an awful lot of work. It must have been a bear to set up and tear down. When was your most recent Video/Presentation?  
**TM:** Never did another one.

...  
With the advent of digital editing on software programs such as Adobe's Premier Elements and Microsoft's Windows Movie Maker, video editing and synchronization to audio is easy enough that I might even jump back into the editors' chair.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101154811>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eelggme\\_-Ww&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eelggme_-Ww&feature=related)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEIA3PQ8UKO>  
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/videos/2007/11/19/celebrating-kandy-fong-founder-of-fannish-music-video/>

**Gamer's Corner**  
**Fate**  
**Wild Tangent**  
**Fate \$19.99**  
**Undiscovered Realms \$19.99**

This column's game comes as a result of my computer having to have a complete system restore done to it. When I first set up my system I immediately removed all of the Wild Tangent games as I didn't need/want the games to distract me. Upon restoring the system I was bored and wanted to try some of them. Fate was the first I tried. I have since bought the game and it's sequel.

The game seemed, at first, to have nothing much to separate it from any other dungeon delve. In fact, many people who have watched me play have thought it one of numerous other games. However, the things that make it different are the companions you take and the magic items you find/make.

First the companion - you bring your pet; specifically, either a dog or a cat. There are ways to transfigure your pet into other creatures for differing amounts of time depending on the item you use. Mostly these are various types of fish, but in the UR there are two potions you can use. Pluses: he cannot die - when he would die he merely flees and runs wildly around the area, he can carry as much as you can, and he can go to town to sell everything he is carrying and bring the gold to you. Minuses: he tends to wander,

frequently going down a corridor you didn't, attracting the attention of monsters while you are casting healing spells, and generally wasting his hit points as fast as you replace them.

Now the magic items. Items come in four basic forms, non-magical (base item), magical (some small power), unique (named item with multiple powers), and artifacts (major named items, strong powers). To this is added several other conditions: socketed (has a place or places for gems to be added), elite (needs higher reputation to use), superior (works better than normal items IE: higher damage or better armor protection), and legendary (a combination of superior and elite with some extras thrown in.)

Crafting items is an exercise in luck. Gems do specific things so when added they do what you expect. Other enhancements are added by either the local enchanter (you pay him and hope he rolls well and adds things) or finding a magic anvil in the dungeon (same as the enchanter but without spending any gold). Major drawback is sometimes the item is cursed (example -20% to your mana) or even drained of magic.

I would recommend that you use headphones and take a cat companion the first time, the purring is soothing even when strangely set. I have noticed that the cats always seem to purr immediately after you kill a monster that has attacked them, try it and see.

I like the game. I have put over 5 days (120 hours) into it already and will likely put another 5 before you read this. My one request would be a manual. Everything I learned was through trial and error. It was still fun but instructions would have saved me the first thirty or so deaths.

4.5 Stars out of 5  
See you next time.  
**Bob LaPierre**

**Warhammer Gotrek and Felix**  
**The First Omnibus**  
**by William King**  
**Black Library Publication, \$10.99, 767 pages.**

Here is a fantasy volume of an unusual pair: Gotrek one-eyed berserker dwarf, and Felix, an educated human fighter. They faced perils together against undead, rat men, and other monsters in order for the dwarf's final quest- a glorious death in battle. On the other hand, Felix swore an oath to fight with Gotrek and to record the dwarf's death in an epic poem. Yet, will both of them survive the odds against infinite monsters?

This omnibus contains the novels "*Trollslayer*," "*Skavenslayer*," and "*Daemonslayer*."

What a hoot to see the difference between humans and dwarves. Gives a new definition to "battle-brothers." Highly recommended to dark fantasy and Warhammer fans. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Warhammer Marhias Thulmann**  
**Witch Hunter**  
**by C.L. Werner**  
**Black Library Publications, \$13.99, 761 pages**

These are the stories of Witch Hunter Mathias Thulmann and his henchman, Streng, in their pursuit of the enemies to the Empire- vampires, zombies, Chaos, mutants, and other dark creatures. Even though Mathias will have to obey orders from his own political rival, Thulmann will not stop pursuing an evil doctor named Weich.

This omnibus contained three novels, "*Witch Hunter*," "*Witch Finder*," and "*Witch Killer*." It also has two short stoires, "A Choice of Hatreds" and "Meat Wagon." This also has an introduction to the author's creation to this series.

Enjoyable. This is a similar vein to H.P. Lovecraft's witch hunter creation, Solomon Kane. A definite read for dark fantasy readers and Warhammer fans. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Warhammer 40,000 Cain's Last Stand**  
**by Sandy Mitchell**  
**Black Library Publications, \$7.99, 409 pages.**

Hero Ciaphas Cain is a retired commissar who is now teaching his new students at a school in the planet Perlia. Little does he know that he will need to bring his charges to the real experience of war against aliens and a new Chaos Black Crusade. Some of these students will not survive.

This is fifth book of Commissar Ciaphas Cain's adventures.

Loved it! Dark but entertaining. Recommended for Warhammer 40,000 readers and dark sci-fi war readers. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Warhammer Blood for the Blood God**  
**by C.L. Werner**  
**Black Library Publications, \$7.99, 416 pages.**

A bloody champion of Khorne, Skulltaker, arises again. He is stalking eight Chaos chiefs in their domains. Will these clan chiefs unite against a common foe or will they perish all together by Skulltaker or by themselves?

Interesting. Betrayal galore! Liked it. Recommended for Warhammer and dark fantasy readers. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Warhammer Palace of the Plague Lord**  
**by C.L. Werner**  
**Black Library Publication, \$7.99, 410 pages.**

Einarr, a warrior, is the last survivor of his village. He becomes a champion for Chaos after killing a "god-like" monster. Afterwards, Einarr will decide to go on a quest for a Chaos god's favor-return back in time before the creature destroys his home and love. With eight others, he will go on a quest for a stolen

artifact in the palace of the plague lord. He will not only have to face a dragon and a plague lord but also his own team mates.

A good read. Betrayal galore. Recommended to Warhammer and dark fantasy readers. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Warhammer 40,000 Imperial Guard Omnibus: Volume One**  
**by Mitchel Scanlon, Steve Lyons, and Steve Parker**  
**Black Library Publications, \$13.99, 768 pages.**

In this volume, there are three main stories about the imperial guard of the future. One is how long a regular Imperial trooper survives in battle. The second one is where elite jungle fighters have to fight literally a world gone mad. Third and last, how politics and firefights do not always work together.

This book contains the novels- "*Fifteen Hours*," "*Death World*," and "*Rebel Winter*." This also fills with three short stories- "*Knee Deep*," "*Better The Devil*," and "*The Citadel*." Another factor is this tome includes an introduction by Dan Abnett, writer of eleven Imperial Guard books of Gaunt's Ghosts.

Good reading. The short stories clarify some things in the novels. Recommended to Wahammer 40,000 fans and dark sci-fi war readers. - **Jeffrey Lu**

**Screening Room**

**Monsters vs Aliens**  
**Knowing**  
**Race to Witch Mountain**  
**Watchmen**

**Monsters vs. Aliens in 3D**  
**Voices by: Reese Witherspoon, Seth Rogen, Hugh Laurie, Kiefer Sutherland**  
**Directors: Rob Letterman, Conrad Vernon**  
**Running Time: 94 minutes**  
**Rated: PG**  
**Produced by Dreamworks Animation**  
**Distributed by: Dreamworks Distribution**  
**Release Date: March 27th, 2009**

Wow what a rush, this was a surprise for me. I went expecting this to be an hour and a half of mindless fluff, I was wrong. The story, though silly and trite, was very well thought out and, a very fine homage to fifties science fiction books and movies.

The general W.R. Monger (Kiefer Sutherland) was strait out of those fifties stories and would have been perfectly at home in any pulp magazine of the era. Ginormica (Reese Witherspoon) is a perfect update of the "50' Woman" except she's taller. All of the others are consistent with the movies of the time as well.





# Musty Tomes

**Empire of the East:  
The Broken Lands (1968)  
The Black Mountains (1971)  
Ardneh's World (1973)  
by Fred Saberhagen  
Tor Books, 1979.**

I sometimes wonder how much of science fiction would remain if there were no tales of war in outer space. Think of it: no Star Trek, Star Wars, Stargate, Doc Smith, space opera, military scifi, much of the pulps. Then I wonder: is this why the public has tolerated no manned space exploration for 40 years since we abandoned the Moon? Because the average person thinks, "All our future in space is good for is bigger and better wars. To hell with that. – who needs it?" Have all of the aforementioned stories backfired and had the opposite of their intended effects? Please tell me I'm wrong. You can argue that the future on Earth will have terrible wars that don't go out into space. Civilization may be destroyed merely by the machines to stop atomic missiles, and humanity may rebuild only to have more wars. Then give me an example such as Saberhagen's trilogy.

Each of these three novels has one piece of old technology as its focus of interest, although it serves merely as a platform for the saga to unfold. What is so amazing about this series is the blending of magic and science. Oh, it's common now for any tale of magic in our time to coexist with our mundane reality, and thus technology. But this tale is set in a post-apocalyptic far future, when atomic war destroyed civilization, the remnants rebuilt, and discovered new magics that worked. So all of the common devices of magic from most fantasy stories never DID work – our world went on just as it is until it ended. Humanity is now at the stage of armies on horseback, medieval warfare, and an evil tyrant who'd conquer the world. He sits at the top of a hierarchy of equally evil warlords, main opponents in each novel.

The good guys have ancient artifacts to recover in their war for survival. The first novel's is an atomic-powered army tank. The second is a medical Lake of Life, which heals the mortally wounded. The third and final item is the sentient computer complex that handled missile defense for North America. Its mind was an unforeseen product of its complexity, perhaps a common idea in scifi, but what this one does is unique for a computer. It develops psi powers, finds other computers with psi powers, and then finds the other dimensions where magic works and evil spirits roam. Those spirits want our world, and the tyrant is their ally. Each novel builds up to grand armies battling, with talking eagles on the good side against winged dragons on the bad side. Think Tolkien, only written as scifi, with none of the pseudo-fairy tale tones, but instead a hard-hearted simple realistic style. Darn, I didn't know that high fantasy ultimate good-vs-evil to save the

whole world could be so interesting.

Reminds me that many of the world's wars have been just that: ultimate contests to save the whole world from great evil. Is that why we like tales of space wars, or pure fantasy wars like Tolkien's? It's our history. There's still my nagging question about space, though. Now that the big war in Saberhagen's future is over, will they turn their attention to other things? I wonder what kind of space exploration they could do with their combination of magic and science. Maybe someone could make a movie like that. If there were no wars or violence, would anyone want to watch it? – **M.L. Fringe**

**Beyond the Blue Event Horizon  
by Frederik Pohl  
an Orb Trade Paperback  
published by Tom Doherty Associates  
\$14.95, 320 pp.**

Wow! A rerelease of one of my favorite books. And it's not even my birthday.

When this novel was first released I was a poor high-school student that read everything at the library. This novel and Larry Niven's "Ringworld Engineers" were the only two books I can recall buying that year. The following year I would be introduced to many other authors but this was one of the first SF novels I actually purchased.

The story is about a family that agrees to fly by rocket to an ancient Heechee device and attempt to bring it back to earth. Their problems on the way and the situation on earth makes for a very thought provoking read. The "fever" that hits earth approximately every 14 days, the lack of food, the general poverty, the fact that those with the money get full medical (and thus are essentially eternal) and those without get basic medical are, with the exception of the "fever" very real possibilities with just a little change to our current situation, makes it all the more poignant to our current lives.

The old ones will make anthropologists wish they were real, and the solution to the food problems may still be achievable by the idea Pohl used.

4 out of 5 stars  
– **Bob LaPierre**

**The Regiment: A  
Trilogy  
by John Dalmas  
Baen Books, 747  
pp**

Whether you get the separate paperbacks on this hardcover edition, the *Regiment* series is well worth discovering. Full of action, humor, surprising develop-

ments, and a storyline that spans millennia, it has been endorsed by both Spider Robinson and C. J. Cherryh, and it's a good bet Bujold fans will like it also.

The premise is that the marginal planet, Tiss, has only one export: mercenaries – but very *unusual* mercenaries. They only hire out as independent units; they require a contract that defines their objective, and *they* decide how that objective will be fulfilled; they never replace fallen comrades – when a unit is to decimated to function, it is retired; and each soldier has the equivalent of a PhD in applied philosophy and practical psychology. Scattered throughout the books are explanations of the life and death philosophy of the T'swa warriors, including the chart of the Matrix of T'sel. It's kind of a cross between Maslow and Zen.

In the first book, Varlik Lormagen is a reporter who gets imbedded with a T'swa mercenary unit, which has been hired by one side of a planetary insurrection. Konni Wenter is a rival reporter who does camera interviews. Both reporters become acquainted with fractal-fragments of the Matrix, and they reinterpret their lives in terms of it. Varlik becomes the first T'swi warrior not from Tiss, discovering a brotherhood that renders almost all aspects of his former life trivial; his closest relationships with people from his home world, however, are only deepened. As a result of his experiences, and the reports he and Konni send back to the Confederation of Worlds, Varlik becomes an ambassador of sorts, and the Confederation of Worlds begins a social and scientific renaissance. The story ends with Varlik dreaming of one of his fallen comrades, with the promise that they will meet again.

Volume two, *The White Regiment*, is a great book for adolescents and young adults. The entire population of Tiss is dark-skinned, almost obsidian black. Varlik was the first Euro-descendant to become T'Swa; decades later, a Confederation world is about to graduate the first

class of homegrown T'swa: 594 twelve-year-old boys, all "warriors born." But Varlik and his associates are concerned about a large number of social misfits – teenaged trouble-makers. It turns out that when tested against the Matrix, over 70% of these boys are also "warriors born," but they preceded the school's recruitment and training period. So they have the souls of T'swa, but lacking the education and grounding, they are wild cards: "An unprecedented bunch of little warriors have gotten themselves born, with nowhere to fight." A special military training school is started just for them, under the guidance of retired T'swa, survivors of old campaigns, and the new wave of Confederation T'sel psychologists, some of whom are no older than the recruits. One of the worst of the recruits, Romlar, has an epiphany that turns him around. Romlar becomes a commander of The White Regiment. Several romances develop: one between another Regiment leader, Jerym Alsnor, and a journalist named Tain; one between Romlar and Jerym's sister, Lotta.

*The Regiment's War* pits two mercenary units of T'swa against each other. Romlar has to figure out the politics of war, all the while fighting against friends and former mentors. Furthermore, there is a *wrongness* to the situation, beyond the whole I-am-killing-guys-I-went-to-school-with that is giving him nightmares. Eventually he has a presentment that a galactic war is in the offing, and the Confederation will need all the T'swa it can muster.

For the full story, you will also need to track down *The Kalif's War* and *The Three-Cornered War*, in which Romlar's premonition is proven. All the books are readily found on Amazon.com, if your local bookstores cannot oblige. – **Chris Paige**



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## An American in New Zealand Part Four: Lord of the Ring Second Blunder-Wellington Choice Taken

by Jeffrey Lu

There are times in life when one has to choose one path or the other. I had a chance to see the elvish lands or be able to visit four areas- meeting with Daniel Reeve who was an artist for Lord of the Rings movies, eating at the Chocolate Fish Café, go to Stansborough Fibres where they made the elven cloaks for LOTR, and seeing WETA, the production company by Peter Jackson. I decided to go for WETA and maybe purchase an elven cloak.

First, there was a hotel stop. I got off the bus and went in. With me was a crowd of at least fifty people going into an exclusive ballroom. There sat a man who was an artist of LOTR.

To be honest, I had no idea who Daniel Reeve was. Instead of words, he told everyone in the room to look at the artwork and mentioned most were for sale. I took a look and realized I've just made a big blunder- he was the artist who did not only all the maps but also the calligraphy in the movies. In other words, Dan made the famous elvish letters on the ring. He also taught Elijah Woods how to write in Frodo's journal for the movie. After the meeting, I purchased a few items including a Bilbo Baggin's invitation for myself.

Second, we had lunch at the "Chocolate Fish Café." This was a place that all the actors ate. Strange but this was generally an entirely vegetarian restaurant. I had the mint pea soup. A potential blunder, I thought I was going to be sick when I saw the soup. Surprisingly, the dish was fresh and delicious. I ate it up. For desert, I had a chocolate fish- a chocolate marshmallow in a shape of a fish. I found out later this place will be relocated due to the landlord's raising the rent. They will close to relocate for a few months. Sad to see it go.

Third, the group including me went to the Stansborough Fibres. This is the place where they literally make the famous elvish cloaks for LOTR. Another blunder for me. This was a cloaking factor. I thought one cloak would cost me around \$100. Instead, the price tag was \$700. Sure, the cloak was made from a rare breed of sheep combined with another animal's wool. But \$700 for a blanket? No, I don't think so. Instead bought two balls of yard for around \$20 each. (Can't afford it. Instead, I hope to make myself a scarf, one day.)

Last, our bus went near a building with huge posters draping on its wall, "Lovely Bones." This was what the next Peter Jackson movie. Unfortunately, there was no access to WETA studio unless one was an employee. The tour guide mentioned that there were thousands of people from all over the world applying for a job in WETA. There was a security checkpoint. The bus had to go to the back of the WETA building.

When we got there, there was a lone sentry in one of the top room of WETA. It was an Orc dummy.

After finishing that day, I knew I had a great day. I may not have gone to where the elfish land was filmed but I knew I can always go that route at another time. I choose this road and found out one place will be gone, one person who may not be there again, one cloak place not bought, and one lifetime chance to see WETA. One American enjoying the second tour of four LOTR in one stop at Wellington, New Zealand.

Next: Ice Cream and Art Deco at Napier, New Zealand

## In Our Book

**The Unincorporated Man**  
by Dani Kollin and Eytan Kollin  
SciFi/Tom Doherty, \$25.95, 479pp

This is a debut novel and a very interesting effort, very reminiscent of Heinlein. Justin Cord is a time traveler – he put himself into a cryogenic suspension in our century when he found himself dying. But Justin didn't manage that feat in the ordinary way; Justin was far from ordinary himself. Since he was extremely wealthy, he contracted for his own design and then hid himself in a cavern. Because of this, he survived for 300 years, missing a huge societal collapse. By the time he was found by a prospecting miner, he was easily revived to good health and a younger body; but into a world he couldn't accept. The collapse was so bad, the world had turned to a radical idea to save itself.

The authors postulate the idea that since capitalism only works for those on top and we still have the starving masses; and communism takes away individualism; then we need something in-between. And what they came up with is a world where every living person is incorporated. What this means is that you are born owning a specific number of shares. Your parents retain a percentage; possibly the hospital where you are born retains a percentage, and the government retains the standard 5%. As you age and have a need for higher education, you sell off your shares to pay for that, and a car, and a new computer, and so on. From then on, you work for the benefit of your shareholders. People aspire to buy back their shares and reach a majority when they have more control over their lives. For example, if you wanted to go sky-diving but your shareholders object since they don't want their investment to be damaged, then you don't get to go sky-diving. You also lose control over certain other choices – job, place of residence, and even what you eat or drink. But what is gained is unprecedented in human history – no one is hungry, no one is unemployed. And this is because everyone is responsible to everyone else. We care about each other because they are our income. And, there are no taxes.

Into this brave new world comes a man who stands outside the system. And we're talking about a really huge system – mankind has left for the stars and most

of the population is off earth. Justin Cord is the 'one free man' left in the system. But is that freedom everything he thought it was? Was his society really free? How free is the bum on the street pushing a cart, wondering where his next meal is? And how free is the corporate executive who wears Armani but who works eighteen hours a day?

In this world, everyone is free of hunger and fear; and they believe they are the first truly free society in human history. Taxes has become a foul word and everyone expects Justin Cord to become incorporated. But in his heart, he cannot. To him, this society is a breath away from slavery and he refuses to own anyone.

So the stage is set: the system against Cord. The system, represented by the most powerful corporation and its Chairman, fighting against the growing anarchy, is trying to protect the billions who view Justin Cord as a romantic hero. Justin Cord, who feels justified in

maintaining his moral high ground despite the growing riots and deaths, cannot accept that the current system is the best thing to ever happen to mankind.

This was a very enjoyable read; as I said earlier, very Heinlein-esque. I could almost see Lazarus and Jubal. It was a very well-thought-out plot, and good characterizations. The pacing was good for most of the book; although there was some time in the middle when I thought the authors indulged in a little too much exposition. I look forward to their next effort. - Catherine Book

**Keeper of Light and Dust**  
by Natasha Mostert  
Dutton Penguin Group, \$25.95, 299 pp

I did not want to put down *Keeper of Light and Dust*, and I did not want it to end. Well-written – British writers usually have a good command of Queen's English and irony – and masterful, here is

( Cont'd on page 14 )

# FiestaCon

(Westercon 62)

**July 2-5, 2009**

Tempe Mission Palms Hotel, Tempe, Arizona

**www.fiestacon.org**

## FiestaCon Guests of Honor

**Artist Todd Lockwood**

**Author Alan Dean Foster**

**Editor Stanley Schmidt**

**Fans Jim & Doreen Webbert**

**Toastmasters Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden**

FiestaCon will be the 62nd annual Westercon, the Western regional science fiction and fantasy convention for North America. Programming will feature many local and regional authors, artists, and scientists. We will have a Masquerade, Art show & Auction, Charity Auction, Writing Workshops (YA & Screenwriting), Dealers Room, Gaming, 1632 minicon, and more.

Confirmed participants include Ben Bova, Sarah Clemens, Virginia DeMarce, Sheila Finch, Eric Flint, Diana Gabaldon, Paula Goodlett, George Huff, Dani & Eytan Kollin, Dennis McKiernan, Craig Miller, John Jos. Miller, Janni Lee Simner, and more to be announced.

## Tempe Mission Palms

60 E. Fifth St., Tempe, Arizona

Room Rates: \$119.00 per night + tax

800-547-8705 (or 480-894-1400)

Online Group Code 2T80CO

**www.missionpalms.com**

## Membership Rates

Full attending is \$80 thru 6/30/09,

\$85 at the door, \$30 Supporting

See [fiestacon.org](http://fiestacon.org) for info on discounts if you pre-supported or voted in site-selection.

## FiestaCon Contact Information

Chairman: Mike Willmoth

Mail: FiestaCon

c/o Leprecon Inc

PO Box 26665

Tempe AZ 85285-6665

Phone: 480-945-6890

Email: [info@fiestacon.org](mailto:info@fiestacon.org)

Westercon is a registered service mark of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, Inc.

## In Our Book (Cont'd from page 13)

a story about one man's hunt for eternal life crossed with the lives of professional fighters, plus the presence of a young woman who is a hereditary Keeper: one with the esoteric power to safeguard the warriors under her protection.

The man whose avatar goes by the name of Dragonfly has used many names as he travels and befriends pugilists, each of whom dies mysteriously several days after a major fight. To keep himself young and powerful, Dragonfly steals their energy, their heart, their *chi*, using techniques developed centuries ago by a Chinese physician, Zhang Sanfeng.

Nick is a 30 year old kickboxer training for a fight, when he isn't running his popular network site with the assistance of a young techno-wizard named Flash. He is also trying to transition from the *friend* category to *lover* with Mia. Mia owns a small tattoo studio in London, in the neighborhood where she and Nick grew up as childhood pals. They both train at Scorpio's, he with the hard-hitting grunts, she with the vogues, attaining perfection of form with the katas of martial arts. A triangle forms with the arrival of the enigmatic Ash. During the day Ash helps Nick get into the best fighting shape of his life; at night he is getting an elaborate tattoo and making seductive moves on an intrigued Mia.

This is the third book I've reviewed recently with a heroine who is presented with a choice between the best friend as lover and an alluring, dangerous, and worldly paramour. Interestingly enough, Mia makes a dual choice on different levels, rather like the protagonist in *The Blue Sword*, by Robin McKinley. There's this life, and then there is the life to come. Her ultimate affinity with Ash is subtly foreshadowed by chapter quotes and occasional passages.

If you already know something about Chinese medicine, martial arts, and quantum physics, you will recognize some of the territory; if you don't, you will get quite an education embedded in engrossing story-telling. *Keeper of Light and Dust* is SF at its best. Strongly recommended. — **Chris Paige**

### **Escape from Hell** **by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle** **Tor Books, \$24.95, 325 pp**

They did it! They wrote it! Here, after 33 years, is the sequel to *Inferno*, which in 1976 was a bestseller, nominated for both Hugo and Nebula awards.

Never read *Inferno*? Agnostic SF writer Allen Carpenter is at a convention dominated by a more popular, successful writer – a thinly veiled Isaac Asimov – where he tries to impress a dwindling circle of fans with a stunt. This goes badly; he ends up dead, and comes to his senses in the Hell of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Carpenter wasn't a bad man, but he is trapped like a djinn in a brass bottle in the Vestibule where the souls of ditherers wind up...until he asks for help. A mysterious fellow releases him, offers to show him the way out of hell, and

becomes his guide. Allen Carpenter is skeptical of the whole thing; at first he hypothesizes that the place is a construct, a high tech 'Inferno-land.' Slowly he changes his mind as evidence presents itself. Along the way, he meets many denizens of Hell who were part of American culture and history. Carpenter comes to the conclusion that, however much any one deserves to *go* to hell, anyone who makes the choice and sticks to that resolve can *escape* Hell. But he decides to stay behind and help others find the way out.

So now, in *Escape from Hell*, Carpenter is the guide.

With great difficulty he frees the poet Sylvia Plath from the forest of suicides. Their reminiscences and conversations become the main vehicle for exploring the sense, the purpose of Hell. Traveling together, they are joined by NASCAR racer Oscar White, evangelist Aimee McPherson, and others, including Carl Sagan. Niven writes from the heart here, because Sagan had been a huge influence on his thinking and writing. If you ever wondered how Niven could go from warning about an incipient ice age in *Fallen Angel* to grappling with global warming in *Venus*, the Carpenter-Sagan conversations lay it out.

But the paradigm of Hell is changing radically. Many souls have heard about the guide who knows a way out of Hell, so they are actively seeking Carpenter. Furthermore, in the wake of the Vatican II judgment that you do not have to be Catholic to go to Heaven, souls are entitled to a Review, and Hell is becoming a processing bureaucracy. To Carpenter's chagrin, many of the souls he tries to guide out of Hell opt to become part of the staff instead. Others make the same choice he did – they will be bodhisattvas, although that word is never used, going back to offer help to other souls. Much of the suspense of the story lies in who chooses what, and why.

Niven & Pournelle have had a hell of a lot of fun bringing *Inferno* up to date, peopling it with politicians who were asleep at the wheel in New Orleans, or who profited from the 9-11 attack; putting molesters in their place; and depicting suicide bombers as spiritual anti-matter. They pay special attention to falsifiers of scientific research, with good reason. And an entirely new nether region is opening up for people who abandon themselves to the distractions of technological escapism. (*If you do not see a possible destination for yourself somewhere along the route, you're a better man than I am, Gunga Din.*) Throughout the book, the authors provide the kind of biting cultural analysis that Dante gave in the original. And I bet they are smacking their heads that they sent this to print before the financial bailouts gave new candidates for the circle of Hoarders and Wasters.

I am so very, very glad Niven & Pournelle lived to write this book. Thanks, guys. — **Chris Paige**.

### **Made to be Broken** **Kelley Armstrong** **Bantam Dell, \$6.99; 400 pp**

Well, it seems that sometime when I wasn't looking, Ms. Armstrong started another series, this one about an assassin. No ghosts, necromancers, or werewolves; just an assassin, her bed and breakfast, and her friends.

Nadia (or Dee to her current employers) has her own idea of right and wrong. She is an ex-cop working as a hitman for a New York crime family. But in this volume her main concern is that her young employee Sammi has disappeared and noone seems to care. The title seems to refer to rules, both societies and Nadia's.

I don't know how much of this is revealed in the first volume but in this one you get snippets of Nadia's past. Including how her past affects her dealings with the local cops and others in town.

Ok gotta go, I need to find the first volume now. 4.5 out of 5 stars - **Bob LaPierre**

### **The Sharing Knife: Horizon** **Lois McMaster Bujold** **Harper Collins, \$26.99, 453 pp**

Bujold has already established these characters and the storyline, so volume four tells us What Happened Next for 19 year old Fawn and her Lakewalker husband Dag, a Malice-hunter turned Maker and healer. A Malice is an entity which drains life energy from animals, people, even the land itself in a bid for immortality and mastery. The only thing that kills a Malice is a Sharing Knife, prepared by a Maker from the bone of one Lakewalker and the heart-blood of another.

Fawn and Dag are a mixed marriage, the first formal one between Farmer-settlers and Lakewalkers. They are hoping to show that their precedent is a workable alternative to the misunderstanding and hostility that lead to tragedies. It's bad enough that tabu-defying lovers come to grief and half-breed children are ostracized; worse, Malices come to power in the places where Lakewalker patrols are thin and Farmers are ignorant. Then hundreds of farmers are killed or enslaved, and their families blame the very Lakewalkers who fight and die in their defense.

In their travels, Fawn and Dag have befriended farmers, rivermen, and Lakewalkers, and Fawn's brother, Whit, has married river-captain Berry. Best of all, they have found that along the river, cooperation between settlers and Lakewalkers is more accepted. They begin to have hopes for a home and a family of their own.

Dag even finds a sorely needed teacher, the old Healer Arkady, to help direct his emerging talents. But a beautiful Lakewalker, Neeta, becomes deathly jealous of Fawn, and a powerful Malice is battening off an unwatched trade route.

If this is the final installment, it brings the series to a satisfactory moment, with enough resolution that we can trust the protagonists to fare well. The last line is lovely. -**Chris Paige**

### **Hope's Folly** **by Linnea Sinclair** **Bantam Books, Mass Market paperback, \$8.99, 430 pp**

This book is the third novel in an excellent series by that Mistress of SF Romance, Linnea Sinclair. The other two told the story of Chaz and Sullivan. This one settles the love life of Chaz's ex-husband, Philip Guthrie who has been given Command of Hope's Folly, an antique warship rescued from a career as a fruit hauler. On his way to his new command he encounters Rya, the daughter of one of his old commanders. Assassins are out to kill Philip and the two have their cut out for them just to reach *Hope's Folly*. There they find the ship is afflicted by non-functional equipment and the battered cat *Folly* after whom the ship was named. Plus it is pursued by well-equipped military ships. Survival is in doubt, romance is in the air and the adventure begins.

The fate of the rebellion is in doubt. The *Folly* must be brought to a repair station. Philip must find out who leaked his itinerary and the location of the ship.

The characters are vivid, the situation believable and the good writing carries the story forward. Recommended. — **Gary L. Swaty**

### **Busted Flush** **A Wild Cards mosaic novel** **Edited by George R.R. Martin** **TOR Books, \$24.95, 398 p.**

*Busted Flush* continues the adventures of next generation of Wild Cards, with a few of the originals in pivotal roles. All of them are survivors of the deadly alien Joker virus that triggers strange deformities and powerful abilities, and most of whom work for various governments as authorized superheroes or weapons. It's set in a 10 degree variant universe, wherein *American Hero* is a *Survivor*-style show for testing/recruiting new Wild Cards, the U.S. President is named Kennedy, the Attorney General is Hilary Rodham, and fuel from the Mideast costs 300 dollars a barrel, so not many people are driving cars; and evidently our politicians are still clueless and ineffective, because no one is producing ethanol from hemp. If only Arizona could send Leslie Fish to the Senate.

The "Double Helix" pieces are by Melinda Snodgrass, who wrote *The Edge of Reason* last year. Teleporting hermaphrodite British Interpol ace Noel leads a duplicitous life as a double-agent. As assassin Bahir, he spies on/works for/sabotages the United Arab Emirate's Prince Siraj, the man who sets the prices on oil. As Lilith, she spies on/works for/sabotages the Committee, the organization which directs superhero activities of Aces on this side of the pond. Lilith is

(Cont'd on page 16)



# A NEW Gaming Convention comes to Arizona

## WHY?

WesternSFA is pleased to help Fabien Badilla bring the gamers of Arizona their own event. If your club or group is interested in participating and helping to make RandomCon a convention that is truly for gamers and run by gamers please contact us.

## WHAT?

**RPGA** - plans include Living Forgotten Realms, Arcanis and Pathfinder. (*tentative*)

**Amber Diceless** - In the tradition of AmberCons across the World, RandomCon brings you the Chronicles of Amber in roleplaying form in a variety of games

**PLUS --- Card Games, Board Games, Miniature Gaming, LARPs, and much more!**

## ALSO

Consuite, Dealer Room  
Surprises!

## Special Events

on Thursday night, May 7, for  
Pre-registered members **ONLY**

## GAME MASTERS & VOLUNTEERS

**Event Coordinator/GM benefits**  
(Run 3 games OR 12 hours  
worth of gaming events):

- \* Get your Membership for \$10.
- \* Get access to the meals and drinks of the Staff Lounge.
- \* Free Membership for the RandomCon 2010

## Volunteer benefits

(Help out at or before the  
convention for 12 hours):

- \* Get your Membership for \$10.
- \* Get access to the meals and drinks of the Staff Lounge.
- \* Free Membership for the next RandomCon 2010



## Guests, Participants & Demos

**John Wick** will be demo-ing his BIG game: *Houses of the Blooded*, a wonderful Role-Playing Game that puts narrative control into the players' hands! Also, look forward to *Houses of the Blooded LARP* on Saturday night! (Find out more about John Wick and Houses of the Blooded here, <http://housesoftheblooded.net> )

**Eric Torres**, who will be demo-ing and selling his new Card Game, *Iconica* (find out more about Eric Torres and Iconica, set in the World of Rynaga here, <http://www.rynaga.com/?p=230>, <http://www.rynaga.com/?cat=20> )

**Todd VanHooser** will be present and his crew will be running role-playing games based on his popular book: *The Barren Twelve* (from the Laughing Moon Chronicles). The game, entitled *Adventures under the Laughing Moon*, takes you on a journey to the world of Mythren. Come meet the Author and discover the rich world he has created! (Find out more about Todd VanHooser and The Barren Twelve, <http://toddvanhooser.com> )

**Eric J. Boyd** will be demo-ing *The Committee for the Exploration of Mysteries*, his storytelling game of Victorian era adventure, as well as playtesting *House of Cards*, a quick-play heist game he is designing! (Find out more about this local creator and his games here, <http://ericjboyddesigns.com> )

**The Guise Knights** will be running two tables worth of games around the clock, offering you a wide variety of games and running Open Gaming for your late night insomnia at the con! (Find out more about the Guise Knights here, <http://guiseknights.com> )

**SAGA (the Southern Arizona Gamers Association)** will be running the Open Game Library in the open gaming room, offering you a wide array of Board Games, Card Games and more, for your enjoyment! (Find out more about SAGA, <http://sagagamers.com> ).

**Across Plus** will be hosting a console gaming room with xBox, Wii and PS2 games such as Dance Dance Revolution, Guitar Hero, Kung Fu Panda and others

## WHEN?

May 8-10, 2009

## WHERE?

The Grace Inn, 10831 S 51st St  
Phoenix, AZ 85044,  
(480) 893-3000  
[www.graceinn.com](http://www.graceinn.com)  
Rates are \$75 S/D, \$85 T, \$95 Q

## HOW MUCH?

\$20 Jan 1 to April 30, 2009  
\$25 at the door  
Pay on-line with Paypal

## CONTACT

RandomCon  
PO Box 67457  
Phoenix AZ 85082  
[www.randomcon.org](http://www.randomcon.org)  
[info@randomcon.org](mailto:info@randomcon.org)

## A WORD FROM OUR CONVENTION CHAIR

We've decided to call this new gaming convention RandomCon for two chief reasons.

The name ties in with the random element of many games we've known and have yet to play. Combined with a pair of dice, it works very well to invoke the very idea of gaming.

Secondly, I am very fond of the Amber Diceless roleplaying game. It was my first introduction to role-playing games and it's inspired by a book series I will probably continue to read constantly. Earlier in 2008, armed with a handful of helpers and GMs, as well as many, many printed character sheets, we organized the first AmberCon Arizona event at CopperCon, as part of their gaming event. Since CopperCon will not be happening again in 2009, we've decided to tie in our love for the game with this new Gaming Convention. Although the game itself is diceless, the name Random is not without meaning: it is the name of the Royal Amberite who becomes King of Amber. King Random.

So, for very selfish reasons you now understand, I give you the first RandomCon!

- Fabien Badilla

**In Our Book** (Cont'd from page 14)

sexy and snarky; Bahir is, by turn, respectful and flippant with authority figures; but Noel is trying to cope with a dying dad and accumulated self-loathing. “Could, Would, Shoulda,” penned by Caroline Spector, follows the activities of Bubbles, who has PTSD from her rescue work in Egypt and a troubled relationship with her girlfriend, but still has the heart to visit young jokers and aces kept in hospitals or other holding facilities. She befriends a Wild Card named Niobe, after the Greek queen who grieved inconsolably for the death of all her 14 children. Niobe births fully activated Wild Cards every time she breeds, but all her children die in a matter of days.

Niobe also shares the “Political Science” storyline with 13-year-old Blake, who mysteriously survived a nuclear explosion in a two-bit, played-out oil town in Texas. Blake’s reaction to the Joker virus is just emerging, and when it proves to be out of control, he’s slated for termination. Niobe and her children bust Blake out, but they inadvertently release some of the most dangerous criminal Jokers on the planet, and the Committee sends some of its finest to clean up the ensuing mess. John Jos. Miller gets to tell part of that story with “Mortality’s Strong Hand.”

Ian Tregellis and Walton Simons write this story arc.

“Just Cause,” by Carrie Vaughn, follows Committee members Ana, Kate, and Tinker, who specialize in mitigating natural disasters. Kate is involved in a romantic triangle with her boss, John “Fortune” Tipton-Clarke, and fellow Ace Michael, aka Drummer Boy, who gets his own storyline in “Dirge in a Major Key” by Stephen Leigh.

Kevin Andrew Murphy’s “The Tears of Nephritus” follows the senior Ace, Ellen, who can channel the memories and abilities of others if she has something of theirs to hold onto. Too bad for Ellen – she’s in love with a ghost.

Victor Milan writes the other sections, giving each its own title. These are the darkest, since his focus is the politics of genocide and power plays, featuring the seemingly indestructible shadow Ace, The Radical.

George Martin edited but did not actually write any of the storylines that are woven together to make up *Busted Flush*, which I will only forgive if he is working on another *Tuff Voyaging* story. That being said, his touch at the helm is sure, and the actual authors do this series fantastic justice. It’s the literary equivalent of The Traveling Wilburys -Chris Paige

**Kitty Raises Hell**  
by Carrie Vaughn  
Grand Central Pub, \$6.99, 336 pp

Following directly on the heels of the action on *Kitty and the Dead Man’s Hand*, this installment finds Kitty and Ben back in Denver. It soon becomes clear that the problems they had in Vegas have followed them home and now not only they, but all their friends, are in

danger. Add in a group of TV Paranormal investigators, a curse, and a demon hunter who is also a vampire with plans of his own and we have yet another rip-roaring installment in the Kitty series.

Highly recommended. I picked it up to read a few chapters before bed and the next thing I knew it was daylight and I had read the whole book. I can’t wait for the next one. - **Stephanie L Bannon**

**Fables – A Graphic Novel Series**  
by Bill Willingham  
Vertigo – DC Comics

The premise of *Fables* is that certain characters from fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and classic children’s literature are living *sub rosa* in New York, either in Manhattan, if they look human, or upstate on The Farm, if they would attract undue attention in the Big Apple. Why are they in Mundania? They had to flee their respective Homelands as these were conquered by a merciless Adversary who only offers two options: surrender to die. (The Adversary’s identity is revealed eventually.) But some escaped through portals.

The cover of the first volume, *Legends in Exile*, shows Snow White in running shoes racing to catch a subway crowded with characters, including Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard, Prince Charming, and a Flying Monkey. This first story arc is a tribute to film noir, with a humanized Big Bad Wolf as the sheriff, called on by a frantic Jack to solve the murder of his girlfriend, Rose Red. Since Rose is her estranged sister, a distraught Snow White involves herself in the investigation. The seductive but impecunious Prince Charming also shows up, which raises Bigby Wolf’s hackles, because his own nostrils are wide open for Snow White.

*Animal Farm* introduces the wilder elements, as Snow White runs for her life from an uprising of disgruntled Fables. When Reynard the Fox isn’t making the moves on her, Shere Khan is trying to make a meal of her. A murderous, gun-toting Communist Goldilocks leads the rebellion.

*Storybook Love* brings the Bigby Wolf-Snow White story arc to a crisis, while Bluebeard and Goldilocks connive to take over Fabletown.

In volume four, *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, Fabletown is threatened with exposure by an observant journalist, and it becomes apparent that the Adversary plans to bring the war to Fabletown. The rest of the series divides between following the Snow White-Bigby Wolf saga, and the unfolding epic of the war for the Homelands, in which a most unlikely hero emerges. Along the way are background material stories, such as Mowgli’s mission to win Bagheera’s freedom and a visit to the Arabian Nights realm to win allies in the war against the Adversary. Jack goes to Hollywood to make himself the most popular, and thereby the most powerful, of all Fables. *That’s* a funny storyline. There is considerable humor throughout, and more character development than any review can summarize. At the same time, some segments are R-rated

for graphic sex and/or violence. All the stories are magnificently written by Willingham, and the many illustrators include Lan Medina, Alex Maleev, Mark Buckingham, and Steve Leiahola – who makes the Snow Queen look *fine*. (He did a lot of work on the X-Men in the Chris Claremont days.)

This is the ongoing graphic novel series to look for when you have reread *Watchmen* enough times to memorize it. I simply cannot say enough good things about it. With 12 volumes in print, and more are on the way (Yes!), it is one of the treasures of comicdom. -Chris Paige

**Spell Games**  
by T.A. Pratt  
Bantam Spectra, \$6.99, 336 pp


*Spell Games* is a continuation of the Marla Mason series which includes *Poison Sleep* and *Blood Engines*.

Felsport has a bunch of new problems for its chief sorcerer, and they come generated by her own brother Jason.

Jason is a scam artist, a grafter, and on the pretext that he is trying to make up with his sister, he plans a major scam that will end with his sister holding the bag with her dead hands. His scam brings in a vegetable magic sorcerer and his mushroom god to Felsport invading the city, at the same time. This is a bad trip if Marla can’t stop him and stay alive as well

This is a fast-paced, action-filled thriller featuring the hardcore otherworldly monster sorcerers (continued on page 18) sorcerer with a major chip on her shoulder. Pratt’s thrillers keep getting wilder and more fun. Get the plastic out. You know you want to. Pratt’s fans will love this, and if you haven’t met her - you should. - Pam Allan

(Cont'd on page 17)



**THE TURTLE MOVES!**

**www.nadwcon.org**

**Sept 4-7, 2009**  
Tempe Mission Palms Hotel,  
Tempe, Arizona

**Guest of Honor**  
**Terry Pratchett**

**With Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Esther Friesner, and Bernard Pearson**  
**More Guests to be Announced**

The first North American Discworld™ Convention will be a celebration of Terry Pratchett’s Discworld series.

We are planning for panels and presentations with Terry Pratchett and our guests. Events and activities will include a maskerade, exhibit room, hospitality suite, a charity auction to benefit the Orangutan Foundation and Alzheimer’s Research, workshops, discussion panels and more. There will also be a banquet for an additional cost (to be announced). Join us for a fun weekend!

**Tempe Mission Palms Hotel**  
60 E. Fifth St., Tempe, Arizona USA

**Room Rates:**  
\$119.00 per night S/D, \$129 T, \$139 Q  
Hospitality Fee of \$9.75 per room per night  
includes airport shuttle, valet parking or self parking, wireless high speed Internet, bell service, etc. All rates are in US dollars and do not include tax.  
Call 800-547-8705 (or 480-894-1400) or visit [missionpalms.com](http://missionpalms.com) for reservations.  
Online booking code is 2TC4Y9

**Membership Rates**  
(all rates good through 8/15/09)

**Full Attending Membership : \$90**  
**Supporting Membership: \$30**  
**Child Membership (ages 6-12): \$45\***  
**Children 5 & under free\***  
\*with paid adult membership

Memberships are non-refundable but are transferable

**Contact Information**

**Write:** North American Discworld Convention, c/o Leprecon, Inc.  
PO Box 26665, Tempe, AZ 85285  
**Phone:** (480) 945-6890  
**Email:** [info@nadwcon.org](mailto:info@nadwcon.org)

Discworld is a trademark of Terry Pratchett



## In Our Book (Cont'd from page 16)

**Foxfire**  
by Barbara Campbell  
Daw, \$7.99, 628 pp

*Foxfire* is Volume 3 of *Trickster's Game*.

Exiled from their tribe, after Keirith's rescue, the family and their closest friends found a new home hidden from former allies and the invading Zherosi.. But with lands of their birth being devastated by the invaders, and Darek's own daughter leading the rebels trying to reclaim their home, trouble is on its way. The greatest danger may be Rigat, the youngest son. Gifted with greater powers than Keirith's forbidden talents, Rigat is only controlled by his mothers love and his desire for his fathers approval. But when he learns he is the son of the Trickster God, The Trickster God leads him onto the path to chaos. The world will change for everyone.

*Foxfire* is great fantasy with well-drawn characters that you care about, a plot that moves fast enough for action lovers. It's hard to put down so don't take it to work to read on break. You, like I, will be hunting for the first 2 volumes for a complete set. [*Heartwood* and *Woodstone*] - **Pam Allan**

**Mortal Coils**  
by Eric Nylund  
Tor, \$14.95, 606pp

*Mortal Coils* begins a new epic series by the author of the Halo series, and *A Game of Universe*.

Nothing exciting ever happened to fifteen-year-old twins Eliot and Fiona living in the strict oppressive household of their grandmother. But unknown to them, they are the children of a goddess and the Prince of Darkness.

To settle the epic custody battle that ensues between the two families, the fallen angels {Infernals} create three diabolical temptations, and the gods [Immortals] whip up three heroic trials to test the twins. Fiona and Eliot must learn how to use their emerging talents quickly in order to survive and determine who they are in the shifting politics of the secret world they have entered.

This looks like an exciting new series, mixing urban fantasy, and supernatural horror with political intrigue and a touch of mystery. The writing is good, the characters well-drawn, if not always likable. I had trouble putting it down. This is one that crosses subgenres with delightful impunity. I look forward to the next one. This series is shaping up as Keeper with a capital K - **Pam Allan**

**Wings of Wrath**  
by C. S. Friedman  
Daw, \$25.95, 406pp

*Wings of Wrath* is Volume Two of the *Magister Trilogy*.

Against all odds, a peasant woman has proven strong enough to master the sorcery of the Magisters, draining the soulfire of others without dying for it. But now her survival rests in fleeing to the

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Northern Protectorates guarded by the spell-warping barrier called the Wrath. Intended to protect humanity from the Soul Eaters, the barrier is weakening and the ancient enemy is returning.

In the High Kingdom, the monk Salvator Aurelius claims the throne of his slain father, and brothers, but abjures the power of the Magisters. To the North, a dying queen accepts immortality but at the price of losing her humanity, and paving the way for the return of the Soul Eaters. Now, they have allies. Things become exceedingly interesting.

Friedman is a master of dark fantasy. Her characters are real and haunting, and her plots complex and engrossing. Lots of action with complex issues of ethics and the use of power. This is a book worthy of getting out the plastic. You'll want to read it again. - **Pam Allan**

**Evil Ways**  
by Justin Gustainis  
Solaris, 334 pp, \$15.00

*Evil Ways* continues the series of supernatural thrillers starring Quincy Morris and Libby Chastain

Supernatural investigator Quincy Morris, and his partner, white witch Libby Chastain, are together again. Quincy is blackmailed by the FBI to investigate the occult end of child murders where the organs are removed while they are still alive...and it's happening all over the country. After a botched murder attempt on Libby, she discovers someone is killing all the white witches and it is soon obvious that the two investigations are related. Dying billionaire, Walter Grobius is fascinated by evil dating back to biblical times and plans a ritual to summon the Devil to give him life. What's more - he is involved with a sick scheme for white supremacy. Morris, Chastain, FBI agents Fenton and McDonnell, and the Sisterhood of white witches will have a lot to undergo to prevent the apocalypse from being unleashed.

Is it dark fantasy, or supernatural thriller? You decide. But you'll enjoy reading it to make up your mind. Enjoy. - **Pam Allan**

**Mirrored Heavens**  
by David J. Williams  
Random House, \$6.99, 401 pp

*Mirrored Heavens* begins a new series.

In the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, the wonder of the world is the Phoenix Space Elevator built by the US and the Urasian Coalition following a second cold war. And it has just been totally destroyed. Claire Haskell and Jason Marlowe are counter-intelligence agents, possibly former lovers or maybe constructs designed by their handlers. They can trust no one. As the

crisis mounts, the lives of everyone will converge in a startling finale that will rewrite everything they thought they knew.

This is a powerful rapid fire adventure with lots of action. Cyberpunk may have been its granddaddy but it makes Neuromancer seem like early Jules Verne. This is a bonanza for hard SF fans. Enjoy. - **Pam Allan**.



Audio Entertainment changed, right when you were looking at it. Portable Media expanded and exploded before you had fully grasped the meaning of the name.

iPods, Video iPods, Sony PSP, iRivers, and more... so many players to choose from, and you still have the option of burning a show to a CD to listen to in your car.

What began as The Dragon Page with Michael and Evo has evolved into something greater, reaching farther into the entertainment industry with a broader selection of shows that appeal to a wider variety of tastes and interests, from humor to high quality audio drama productions, and from fiction to the latest news and entertaining interviews, there's something here for everyone.



The New **Cover to Cover** features hosts Michael R. Mennenga and fantasy author Michael A. Stackpole, and has expanded its coverage to include occasional forays into mysteries, thrillers and the writing process, while still highlighting the newest in science fiction and fantasy.

**Slice of SciFi** is the favorite of SF fans hungry for the latest news and developments in upcoming films and television, featuring interviews with the cast, producers and creators of our favorite shows, films, fan films, comics and more.

**Technorama**, with hosts Chuck Tomasi and Kreg Steppe, takes a lighthearted look at the world of tech, science, sci-fi and all things geek, spotlighting recent tech and science news, interviews with respected industry leaders, all interspersed with original humor.

Sit back and take a listen to any of our shows. We think you'll enjoy what you hear.

[www.farpointmedia.net](http://www.farpointmedia.net)



# Club Listings

**ACROSS PLUS** - So you live in North Phoenix and are interested in anime? Well there is a club out there available for you people.

Across Plus is a social club that discusses anime, video games, manga, other animation, and the Japanese culture. We meet at Bookman's on 19th Ave and Northern on Sundays at 7:00pm until 9:00pm. In general, we explore anime, manga, and other styles of animation, creative educative demonstrations, participate in interactive discussions, attend local Arizona conventions, and make cosplay. We are willing to gain any new members out there who are interested. Our members are very friendly, respectful, and fun. We welcome any and all. For more information, contact Shane Bryner at [acrossplus@westernsfa.org](mailto:acrossplus@westernsfa.org)

**ADRIAN EMPIRE** A medieval and renaissance recreationist club. Sword-fighting, arts, banquets, masquerades, dances. meets every Wednesday night from 7-10pm at Encanto Park. All are welcome. Free.

**AERIAL MIRAGE JUGGLERS.** Meets Wednesday 7-10pm in Encanto Park, 15th Avenue, south of Encanto. No dues, everyone welcome. All levels skill exchange in many areas of object manipulation Dave Davis <[aerialmirage@gnersds.com](mailto:aerialmirage@gnersds.com)>, 602-955-9446; or Ron Harvey <[rbh1s@yahoo.com](mailto:rbh1s@yahoo.com)>, 480-775-4690 for more info or impromptu juggling sessions.

**ARIZONA LANBASHERS LEAGUE** A collaboration of computer gaming enthusiasts, the Arizona LANbashers League throws quarterly LANparty events. Between parties, support is given to local groups who wish to advertise their own gatherings. We have no set genre of games and play anything from strategy games to first-person shooters to driving/flying simulations. No annual membership is required and admission to an event ranges from \$5-\$15. See our webpage for current events. Email: [azlanbashers@earthlink.net](mailto:azlanbashers@earthlink.net) Web: [www.lanparty.com/all/](http://www.lanparty.com/all/) VoiceMail: 602-306-9339

**ARIZONA PARANORMAL INVESTIGATIONS** We are a highly trained, non-profit paranormal investigation group, registered with the state of Arizona, providing service to Arizona and the Southwest since 1994. Having served the public for 12 years, we are one of the oldest, most respected paranormal investigation groups in Arizona. We are primarily science based and don't go on an investigation looking for ghosts, we go looking for answers. There is never a charge for an investigation. Contact us at by e-mail at [info@arizonaparanormalinvestigations.com](mailto:info@arizonaparanormalinvestigations.com) or visit our website at: <http://www.arizonaparanormalinvestigations.com/>

**THE AWAY TEAM:** The Away Team, is a general sci-fi appreciation group that meets once a month for discussion of various sci-fi news regarding several mediums to include: television, movies, video, books, comics, magazines, collecting, and so forth. The meetings are comprised of news, review and comment, BBS/computer news and help, meeting new members, video presentations, games, and socializing fun! Food and drinks are provided, via a \$3 munchie fee (per meeting) to compensate the host. (No other fees are involved.) The electronic home of the Away Team, is the Lightspeed Space Station BBS at (520) 325-6674.... Member ages for the group range from 13-40-something with both male and female members. Other activities include null-modem link gamefests, group theater movie viewings, convention trips and more. Have sci-fi fun in a relaxed, low-structure environment. NO RUBBER

EARS ALLOWED!! For questions, you can call the BBS, or write to: LSS c/o R. Martin; 2522 N. Sparkman Blvd.; Tucson, AZ 85716

**BASFA** Local Tucson science fiction group that puts on TusCon. Contact us at PO Box 2528, Tucson AZ 85702-2528 or [basfa@earthlink.net](mailto:basfa@earthlink.net) our website at <http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa/>

**CENTRAL ARIZONA SPECULATIVE FICTION SOCIETY, INC. (CASFS)** The non-profit corporation that puts on CopperCon conventions, SmurfCons, HexaCons, occasional regional cons, and publishes Con-Notations. Best described as SF/F generalists with a strong bent towards literary SF/F. Guests welcome - meets at 8pm on the last Friday of each month in January thru September and the second Friday in October, November and December at JB's Restaurant, 1818 W Montebello in Phoenix, AZ. For information: write PO Box 62613, Phoenix, AZ 85082-2613 or email [info@casfs.org](mailto:info@casfs.org) Web [www.casfs.org](http://www.casfs.org)

\*\*\*\*\***C.R.O.E.T.** Celtic Reenactment of Fellowship and Trades is Phoenix based Reenactment group specializing in the western European renaissance. We research lifestyles and trades concurrent with the Celtic Peoples from 400 BC until 1746 AD. We emphasize Scots, Irish or Welsh crafts and do Celtic re-enactment. We open participation to anyone with an interest in period crafting and entertainment. Demonstrations occur at the Highland Games, Scarborough Fair, and the Arizona Renaissance Festival. Web page <http://www.crofters.org> We meet in Tempe at the Pyle Adult Center SW corner of Rural and Southern on the 2nd Saturday of every month, phone number (480)350-5211. The Board meeting will be at 2:00 pm with the General meeting starting at 2:30 pm.

**THE DARK ONES** (Dark-wunz) n. 1) An organization formed for the expression and exploration of various cultural themes including, but not limited to, the Dark Ages and the Renaissance through forms of art including, but not limited to, painting, drawing, writing, photography, spoken word, and acts of characterization. 2) a member of this organization. 3) Information available at [www.darkones.org](http://www.darkones.org)

**THE EMPIRE OF CHIVALRY AND STEEL, INC.** The Empire of Chivalry and Steel specializes in the general recreation of the culture of the Middle Ages including all of the Art Forms, Events (Feasts, Tournaments, Ceremonies and Wars) and Combat Arts covering the years of 800AD up to 1650AD and any location within Europe or its explored territories. For more information contact Leonard Byrd (Tucson) (520)742-2432 Web: [www.galandor.org](http://www.galandor.org)

**A GATHERING OF PLAYERS-** Find Your Adventure Our club is running into our sixth year. Join us for games and adventure set in the Dungeons and Dragons realm. We offer Living Forgotten Realms and Pathfinder Society. We welcome both new and experienced players. Visit <http://www.warhorn.net/> gathering, to see what we have coming up. If you have any questions email us at [agatheringofplayers@gmail.com](mailto:agatheringofplayers@gmail.com)

**THE JEDI KNIGHTS** (Founded 1977) Meetings are the 3rd Sunday of each month. For more information call Carol Alves, Publicity, (760)244-9593 or write Jedi Knights, c/o Carol Alves 8038 "I" Street, Hesperia CA, 92345-7066.

**LEPRECON, INC.** One of the two Phoenix area corporations that put on yearly conventions. Best described as SF/F generalists with a main thrust into SF/F art. Guests are welcome. The meetings are quarterly on the second Saturday of February, May, August & November unless otherwise notified. August

is the annual meeting where board positions are deter-mined. For more information, write PO Box 26665, Tempe, AZ 85285; call Mike Willmoth, 480-945-6890, Email [mwillmoth@earthlink.net](mailto:mwillmoth@earthlink.net) Webpage: [www.leprecon.org](http://www.leprecon.org)

**MIB** The Men in Black is the official global organization of field operatives for Steve Jackson Games. We attend local conventions to demonstrate and promote products of Steve Jackson Games. We also schedule demos in local gaming stores as well as community service events. If you have a gaming store, convention, or community service that you would like to have official Steve Jackson Games representation at, please contact the MIB Arizona Cell Leader at [MIB.6361@cox.net](mailto:MIB.6361@cox.net). We are also recruiting new MIBs in some areas of Arizona. If you're interested, contact us. You can find additional information about the Arizona MIB at our website <http://members.cox.net/mib.6361/>

**MVD GHOSTCHASERS**—The MVD Ghostchasers are a paranormal team established in 1995. This band of ghost hunters conducts regular investigations of haunted, historical locations throughout Arizona. They also research and investigate "house call" hauntings for the public. The MVD Ghostchasers lead Spirit Photo Workshops/Tours to various haunted locations across Arizona. These workshops give ghost hunters, paranormal team members and folks wanting to learn the art of ghost hunting a chance to work and learn techniques together. The MVD Ghostchasers team are guest speakers at many venues and have appeared on TV news reports and the subject of several newspaper stories. For more information contact: MVD Ghostchasers—Debe Branning, Director—480-969-4049 Web page: [www.mvdghostchasers.com](http://www.mvdghostchasers.com) or [Nazanaza@aol.com](mailto:Nazanaza@aol.com)

**ORANGE COUNTY SCIENCE FICTION CLUB** meets last Wednesday of every month (except Dec.) in Fullerton. The meetings are built around guest speakers. We've had authors such as Octavia Butler and Greg Benford. Non-members are welcome. For details of current events and location see our website [www.ocsf.org](http://www.ocsf.org) or email [info@ocsf.org](mailto:info@ocsf.org)

**PAReX** is a non profit organization dedicated to building and promoting Autonomous robotics. The club has been in existence since 1998. Meetings are currently conducted twice a month at two different Phoenix, Arizona locations, <http://www.parex.org/meetings.shtml>. Club dues are on an annual basis: Regular members \$20 Student members \$15 Of course visitors are always welcome because we know you will eventually become a member anyway Web page: <http://www.parex.org/> E-mail Contact: [parexteam@cox.net](mailto:parexteam@cox.net)

**THE PHOENIX FANTASY FILM SOCIETY** A Phoenix based club interest-ed in the entire realm of SF, Fantasy and Horror film. PFFS has been in existence for 30 years, meeting every 6 weeks in member's homes. Dues are \$10 per year. Membership includes newsletters, an annual film awards and various outings. For information, contact PFFS, P.O. Box 34023, Phoenix, AZ 85067 or call David Storck at (602) 274\_7404, e-mail: [Menzeez@aol.com](mailto:Menzeez@aol.com).

**RAGE ACROSS THE SOUTHWEST** A Live Action Theatre Troupe based out of the ASU campus in Tempe, AZ. It is dedicated to the game Werewolf: The Apocalypse by White Wolf publishing. Contact Mike McLaughlin at (602)461-5842 or write 1730 W Emelita Place #2025, Mesa AZ 85202-3144 or [warlok@aztec.asu.edu](mailto:warlok@aztec.asu.edu)

**RAW GAMES (Role-players & Wargamers, Inc.)** Role-players & Wargamers, Inc. is the Valley's oldest role-playing and wargaming club. Currently meeting at 8159 W. Weldon in Phoenix every Sunday from 12noon-5pm (except during conventions and other special events). Open to new members - call (623) 849-9515.

**SHIELD OF ALMOR** The Shield of Almor is a RPGA club located in the greater Phoenix area. If you are interested in Living Greyhawk catch one of our meetings the 1st Sunday of every month at Imperial Outpost Games ([www.imperialoutpost.com](http://www.imperialoutpost.com)) in Glendale. If you are interested in Living Arcanis or Living Spycraft catch us on the 3rd Sunday of every month also at Imperial Outpost Games. The Shield of Almor hosts RPGA events at the local Phoenix conventions. For more information visit us at [games.groups.yahoo.com/group/AZ\\_RPG/](http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/AZ_RPG/) or you can sign up for games at [www.nyron.org](http://www.nyron.org). Or you can just stop by the 1st Sunday of the month. Meeting starts at 10am. Hope to see you there.

**THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM** The kingdom of Atenveldt doth lie in the state of Arizona. Within the fair kingdom can be found six Baronies: Atenveldt, Mons Tonitrus, Twin Moons, SunDragon, Tir Ysgithr and Ered Sul. For more information on any of these or for general information on contact the Kingdom Seneschal. Email: [seneschal@atenveldt.com](mailto:seneschal@atenveldt.com) Web [www.atenveldt.com](http://www.atenveldt.com)

**SOUTHWEST COSTUMER'S GUILD** The Southwest Costumers Guild is a loose organization of persons interested in all facets of historical, cultural, science fiction, fantasy, and humor costume. Members are often seen on stage and behind the scenes at local and regional Science Fiction Convention masquerades. They meet on the last Sunday of each month at various members' homes in the greater Phoenix area. For details. Southwest Costumers Guild, PO Box 39504, Phoenix, AZ 85609 or Randall Whitlock at [costumers@casfs.org](mailto:costumers@casfs.org) or [www.southwestcostumersguild.org](http://www.southwestcostumersguild.org)

**SPACE ACCESS SOCIETY** Space Access Society's sole purpose is to promote radically cheaper access to space, ASAP. We think it's possible within ten years, with a little luck and a lot of hard work. Join us and help us make it happen! SAS membership is \$30 for one year, which gets you emailed Space Access Updates the instant they pass final edit, plus discounts on our annual conference on the technology, politics, and business of radically cheaper space transportation, featuring leading players in the field. Email us at: [Space.Access@Space-Access.org](mailto:Space.Access@Space-Access.org) Web page: [www.space-access.org/](http://www.space-access.org/)

**SUPERSTITION SPACEMODELING SOCIETY** is Arizona's club for builders of model and high-power rockets and those who love to see them fly. Launches are held on the second Saturday morning of each month in Rainbow Valley. SSS hosts the annual G Harry Stine Memorial Rocket Launch every October. Visit [www.sssrocketry.org](http://www.sssrocketry.org) for membership information, directions to the launches and meetings, and to read the monthly newsletter, "Newton's Minutes."

**TARDIS** is a Phoenix-based General SF/Fantasy Fan Club, specializing in International media SF/Fantasy since 1983. **TARDIS** meets every two weeks at different locations around the valley. Activities include watching videos, discussions, parties, games, and occasional outings with more to come now that Doctor Who is returning from hiatus. Many members maintain an active presence at conventions. You can contact us at 2243 W Wagon Wheel Dr, Phoenix, AZ 85021, Voice Mail at (602) 864-0901, E-mail [TARDIS-Info@cox.net](mailto:TARDIS-Info@cox.net) or visit us at <http://members.cox.net/tardisaz/tardis.html>

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**TEKWAR FAN CLUB** Sanctioned by the series’ production companies and the USA Network! It is THE information conduit between the fans and the series! Fan club membership will bring you the following 1) subscription to the info filled Tek Informer newsletter; 2) official TekWar Fan Club membership card and kit. Membership is by regular mail only and the newsletter and materials will not be reproduced electronically. To join the action and initiate your annual membership, make check or money order out for \$12.50 to: Official TekWar Fan Club (Membership section), 2522 N Sparkman Blvd., Tucson AZ 85716-2417

**T.H.E.M.** is ASU’s science fiction and fantasy club. Weekly meetings are held on the Arizona State University campus, with dates and places to be announced after the semester starts. For more information, Email [them@themonline.org](mailto:them@themonline.org) Web [www.themonline.org](http://www.themonline.org)

**TUCSON FAN ALLIANCE** E-Mail Address is [Bkoehler@Juno.com](mailto:Bkoehler@Juno.com) or [DMitchell1@Juno.com](mailto:DMitchell1@Juno.com)

**UNITED FEDERATION OF PHOENIX** A Phoenix area Star Trek and general SciFi fan club. We are a social club that meets every two weeks at various locations around the Phoenix area. The UFP has been meeting for over 30 years of continuous activity. Dues are \$15/per year prorated when you join; no restrictions. Membership includes membership roster and monthly newsletter. Come to any two meetings at no obligation. For information, write the UFP at PO Box 37224, Phoenix, AZ 85069, or call Jim Strait at (602) 242-9203. Web page: <http://www.U-F-P.org> or Email to [Info@U-F-P.org](mailto:Info@U-F-P.org)

**USS LEONIDAS** The Leonidas is a member of Region IV of STARFLEET International. The chapter is an opportunity for those that share a love of Star Trek to have fun and help the community at the same time. The Leonidas stresses uniforms or other costumes to have the ability to participate actively in various events as they present themselves but they are not required. In an effort to expand membership the USS Leonidas has assisted in the formation of a High School Star Trek club called the STARFLEET Science and Tactical Academy. Students participate in a wide range of activities with the hope that they will become interested in Star Trek and join STARFLEET as officers. The USS Leonidas has a crew of 30. Starfleet Science and Tactical Academy has 52 cadets. Members age from 14-65 years old. Average age is 20-25. Club meeting locations vary due to scheduled away missions and such, but usually meet in a classroom at Apache Junction High School. Membership with Starfleet International is required. [www.sfi.org](http://www.sfi.org) Upon joining STARFLEET a member is a Cadet. Upon passing the Officer’s Training School Exam at

the Online Academy, the member becomes a Commissioned Officer aboard the Leonidas. The chapter does not have dues as of yet. The dues to be a member of STARFLEET International are \$15 a year. No newsletter, but members do receive an activities E-mail update. No web site yet. Contact : Jonathan Krieger, 480-677-0269, [LAHCommander@mchsi.com](mailto:LAHCommander@mchsi.com)

**USS STORMBRINGER** The Stormbringer is a correspondence Star Trek fan club chapter of Starfleet, Intl. based out of Tucson AZ. The chapter was commissioned as the USS Stormbringer NCC-74213, attached to Division 31, Starfleet Covert Operations, on 10/31/98. As of 11/29/98 there were 32 members. There are no dues other than the \$15 for joining Star-fleet Intl.. Members are scattered world wide but the primary clusters are in Tucson, AZ and Plano, TX. They don’t meet on a regular basis since they are a correspondence chapter. Their web site is: <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Vault/9505/> and their contact/CO is Capt. Dave Pitts, [thepitts52@hotmail.com](mailto:thepitts52@hotmail.com)

**WESTERN SCIENCE FICTION ASSO-CIATION (WesternSFA)** A non-profit corporation that sponsors AniZona, the ConRunners seminars, Across Plus Anime Club and sponsored the 2004 Westercon. Dedicated primarily to educational activities relating to literature, music, and visual and performing arts, especially in the genres of Anime, science fiction, fantasy, costuming, gaming and science. Applicants for membership in WesternSFA must be sponsored by a current active WesternSFA member. Dues are \$10 yearly plus a \$5 non-refundable application fee. General Meetings are held on the first Friday of February, May, August and November, check our website for meeting location Guests are welcome. For more info contact Craig Dyer at WesternSFA, PO Box 67457, Phoenix AZ 85082 Email: [craig@westernsfa.org](mailto:craig@westernsfa.org) Webpage: [www.westernsfa.org](http://www.westernsfa.org)

**Z-PHILES** are the ariZona x-PHILES. We maintain a mailing list for news and get-togethers of fans of the X-Files living in Arizona. We get together in both the Phoenix and Tucson areas. To subscribe, send an empty message to [z-philes-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:z-philes-subscribe@egroups.com)

Convention Listings

**RandomCon** (May 8-10, 2009) a **NEW gaming convention** to be held at The Grace Inn, 10831 S 51st St, Phoenix, AZ 85044, (480) 893-3000, [ww.graceinn.com](http://ww.graceinn.com) Our rates are \$75 S/D, \$85 T, \$95/ Q. For our games we plan to have **RPGA** - plans include Living Forgotten Realms, Arcanis and Pathfinder. **Amber Diceless** - In the tradition of AmberCons across the World,

RandomCon brings you the Chronicles of Amber in roleplaying form in a variety of games. **Houses of the Blooded - John Wick’s** new ‘big game!’ Come try out this new system that puts narrative control in the players hands! **Eric Torres**, will be demo-ing and selling his new Card Game, Rynaga **Todd VanHooser** will be present and his crew will be running role-playing games based on his popular book: The Barren Twelve (from the Laughing Moon Chronicles). **Eric J. Boyd** will be demo-ing The Committee for the Exploration of Mysteries, his storytelling game of Victorian era adventure, as well as playtesting House of Cards, a quick-play heist game he is designing **The Guise Knights** will be running two tables worth of games around the clock, offering you a wide variety of games and running Open Gaming for your late night insomnia at the con! **SAGA** (the Southern Arizona Gamers Association) will be running the Open Game Library in the open gaming room, offering you a wide array of Board Games, Card Games and more, for your enjoyment! **PLUS Console Gaming, Card Games, BoardGames, Miniature Gaming, LARPs**, and much more! There will be a consuite and a small dealer room. Cost is \$20 Jan 1 to April 30, 2009 and \$25 at the door. Pay now via Paypal on our web site at [www.randomcon.org](http://www.randomcon.org) or mail check or money order to RandomCon, PO Box 67457, Phoenix AZ 85082. Check our web site for updates or contact us at [info@westernsfa.org](mailto:info@westernsfa.org)

<http://www.adventurecon.com>**FiestaCon** (Westercon 62) ( July 2-5, 2009) Tempe Mission Palms, **Tempe, AZ.** 60 East Fifth Street, Tempe, Arizona 85281 Artist GoH: Todd Lockwood, Author GoH: Alan Dean Foster, Editor GoH Stanley Schmidt, Fan GoHs: Jim and Doreen Webbert, Toast-masters: Partick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. FiestaCon is also hosting the 1632 Minicon with Eric Flint. Memberships \$70 thru 12/31/08, \$75 thru 3/31/09, more later. Phone: 480-945-6890 Write: FiestaCon, c/o Leprecon, Inc., PO Box 26665 Tempe, AZ 85285, Email: [fiestacon@leprecon.org](mailto:fiestacon@leprecon.org) web: [www.fiestacon.org](http://www.fiestacon.org)

**North American Discworld Convention** (Sept 4-7, 2009) Tempe Mission Palms, Tempe, AZ. 60 East Fifth Street, **Tempe, Arizona** 85281 Guests: Terry Pratchett, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Esther M. Friesner and Bernard Pearson. Memberships \$80 thru 3/31/09, more later. Phone: 480-945-6890 Write: NADWCon, c/o Leprecon, Inc., PO Box 26665 Tempe, AZ 85285, Email: [info@nadwcon.org](mailto:info@nadwcon.org) Web: [www.nadwcon.org](http://www.nadwcon.org)

**Saboten-Con** (Oct 30-Nov 1, 2009) Hilton Phoenix East/Mesa, 1011 West Holmes Avenue, **Mesa, AZ** 85210. The special Saboten-Con room rate is \$109 for a single/double or junior suite. Guests: Vic Mignogna with more to come. Tickets: \$35 **Membership capped at 1500.** For more info [www.sabotencon.com](http://www.sabotencon.com)

CASFS Business Report

Attendance at the **CASFS Bookclub and Social** is increasing with six or more at our discussion of *Starship Troopers* and *Old Man’s War*. Don’t miss the discussion of *The Incomplete Enchanter* in March on that greenest of days, March 17 at the Bent Cover in the Coffee Shop at 7 p.m.

The **Strategic Planning Committee** presented its SWOT Analysis of CASFS’s strengths and weaknesses and CopperCon’s strengths and weakness at the January Meeting. CASFS STRENGTHS were delineated as Book Discussions, ConNotations and CopperCon. CASFS WEAKNESSES were Low Membership, Publicity/Advertising [ Perhaps Personal referral by attendees and Chat rooms on the net], No United Fund raising [Need sponsors and fund raising events]. CASFS THREATS – Threats to CASFS are Loss of exclusivity as a source of SF information and content the web text media, the current economic climate, Hotel rate increases. COPPERCON ANALYSIS: Many people don’t know about CopperCon. We are in a programming rut. We need innovation. We have too few Core workers. Our Core is hidebound and resistant to new ideas. We fail to capitalize on our two year lead time. Dragon Con takes away some members. Hotel costs are up Fans don’t like the high outside temperatures. Tasks need to be spread out to more people and over the full lead time.

In the light of the SWOT Analysis **CASFS** is attempting to define what it wants to do with itself in times to come. Change seems to be needed. Vigorous discussion ensued at the February meeting of the organization. Mark Boniece presented a spread of options for CopperCon ranging tiny literary cons to huge media cons and everything in between. No consensus was reached. More discussion next time. Come in to the next meeting. Acquire the Handout on Convention types. Join the discussion. This is important. The one thing we agreed on was that while money is not our prime motive we must work to have the conventions cover their own costs, those of the organization, seed for future conventions and continuing publicity. Publicity must be improved. Participation of members in these discussions is important.

What is CASFS?

What is really behind putting on a convention? What are the funds raised by a convention used for? Why not attend a meeting and find out? We’re the sponsor of ConNotations, CopperCons, HexaCons, SmerfCons and other conventions. We are a charitable, non-profit organization that exists to further science fiction, fantasy and science fields in Arizona. CASFS currently meets at the JB’s Restaurant at 1818 W Montebello in Phoenix The meetings begin at 8PM and are held on the last Friday of the month Jan. through Sept. and on the second Friday of the month Oct through Dec. Everyone is invited to attend two meetings as a guest (non-member). Membership rates are \$12/year plus an initial \$3 application fee and rates are prorated for the amount of the year remaining. For more info: Webpage: [www.casfs.org](http://www.casfs.org) Email: [info@casfs.org](mailto:info@casfs.org)

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